



Poverty, Unemployment and Homelessness: What do the Textbooks Say?

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Abstract

In a critical analysis of the programs that lift children out of poverty, Shore (2013) stated, "The gap between what we know about what children need, and what we do to ensure that they get it, has grown larger than ever." The premise of this study is to report the role played by social studies textbooks in addressing poverty so that we can potentially shrink the widening gap between knowledge and need. To explore the United States recorded knowledge of poverty, unemployment and homelessness, the author analyzed two K-6 social studies textbook series. Historical depictions of whites during the Great Depression, Native-Americans when their land was absconded, and African-Americans, who were enslaved, reinforce the horrors as well as ethnic stereotypes but do not place the events into an ongoing contextualized legacy of the complex relationships among class, race, ethnicity and gender. The study illuminates the important contributions offered by social studies textbooks and provides a critical analysis of the ways in which the textbooks fall short of incorporating the national dialogue among scholars who debate the underlying causes as primarily grounded in macroeconomic structures, microeconomic issues of individual responsibility, or both.

Keywords: *poverty, homelessness, unemployment, community programs*

Critics argue that the US economy, while strong in some areas, has not overcome the stratification of wealth that has limited economic access and social efficacy for marginalized groups. In addition, there are many aspects of poverty that still remain far from our grasp in curriculum materials. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall views the teaching of history as an opportunity to inspire the ideals of social service and unselfishness. Addressing poverty is one way to expose harsh realities that require attention.

Textbook publishers take a somewhat positive orientation as it is difficult to sell books that are written from a critical perspective. In *Language Police* Ravitch (2004) reported the limitations and challenges in writing for the masses in public education. Through censorship, value differences often become sanitized to the point of obscurity. If social studies textbooks are not addressing issues of poverty, homelessness, and unemployment, a significant proportion of the school population is being ignored, another significant portion of the school population is being reinforced as privileged, and no one is charged with responsibility for changing the status quo.

Textbooks are not the only sources of information for learning about poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. The review of literature revealed a variety of studies that explored effective ways to learn about these social conditions through service learning and juvenile literature (Fox, 2010; Martin & Smoken, 2010; McEachron, 2005; Gorski, 2004). These efforts on the part of teachers are noteworthy, but the focus on textbooks for this study is intentional because textbooks are constructed by a cadre of professionals—teachers, teacher educators, historians, and economists, for example—who are aware of the latest scholarship in the social sciences. As stated by Clawson (2002), textbooks are often the most visible part of the curriculum and are presented to students as objective and factual rather than through a critical lens. Barnes & Keleher (2006), for example, point out that some textbooks are written from an individual agency and foundational ethical standard that operate outside of cultural pressures.

In elementary schools, textbooks continue to be a major source of information. The two companies selected for this review are major publishers of educational materials. McGraw-Hill Education (MHE) publishes educational materials as both traditional and online/multimedia learning tools and has a division devoted to Pre-K through 12th grade. Pearson Education is the world's largest educational publisher, publishing textbooks, workbooks, and other materials for K-12 classrooms. See Appendix A for list of textbooks reviewed.

Theoretical Framework and Empirical Research

Critical pedagogy is a theory and philosophy that is based on the work of Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire challenges students to think critically about their education so that they will not be oppressed but rather liberated by the potential of a good education. He developed the notion of *praxis*, the notion that an individual can make a difference in the world when actions are based on sound theory and values. Building on Freire's theory, Giroux's critical analyses maintain that social reforms should be considered through analyses of white privilege. Giroux investigates racism and classism in relation to those who have been privileged in the US as a result of the history of Anglo dominance during and after colonization. Giroux (1997, p. 315) argues that "educators need to connect Whiteness with a new language of ethnicity, one that provides a space for White students to imagine how Whiteness as an ideology and social location can be progressively appropriated as part of a broader politics of social reform." Through the following alarming quote, Nietz reveals the tradition of white privilege bias in textbooks. In *Old Textbooks*, Nietz (1965) quotes an author published in 1840:

The European or Caucasian is the most noble of the five races of men. It excels all others in learning and the arts, and includes the most powerful nations of ancient and modern times. The most valuable institutions of society, and the most important and useful inventions, have originated with the people of this race. (p. 216)

Other more recent scholars such as Asimakopoulos (2011) argue against corporate exploitation on behalf of the working class. His scholarship examines power relationships based on socio-economic levels, corporations, and employment. When combined, the theoretical approaches by Freire, Giroux and Asimakopoulos encourage educators to critique the family, the workplace, and local, state and national policies that affect the overall economic structures and individuals in the US. In the section that follows this approach will be explored in relation to knowledge about poverty, homelessness, and unemployment found in textbooks.

As early as the 1960s, educators have conceptualized curriculum as a spiral, whereby groundwork is laid for concepts that increase in levels of detail and sophistication as students progress through their formal schooling. Support for this notion comes from the cognitive theory advanced by Bruner (1960, p. 33) who stated that any subject, “in some intellectually honest form” and with the proper structuring, can be taught to individuals at any stage of development. With this theory in mind, the current study makes an important contribution to textbook portrayals of poverty by investigating the elementary levels, previously unexplored. The investigation of elementary social studies textbooks is guided by the research questions: How do K-6 textbooks depict poverty, unemployment, and social programs historically and in the modern era? In what way do K-6 textbooks address the intersection of ethnicity, race, class, and gender in cultural contexts? In what ways do K-6 textbooks address poverty in relation to individual responsibility (micro), social structures and values (mezzo), and institutional policies and values (macro)? Critical pedagogy provides a theoretical structure from which to challenge the manner in which texts are written from limited perspectives.

A literature review revealed no studies that specifically examined poverty, homelessness and unemployment in the context of K-6 social studies U.S. textbooks. However, there have been numerous studies that have critiqued the ways in which social studies lessons have not only oversimplified historical events but through an over-simplification have contributed to the stereotypical depictions of various peoples. For example, Brophy and VanSledright (1997), reported that:

...many students' learning was distorted by certain persistent naïve conceptions or confusions...Some images of Native Americans were rooted in the Ice Age and pictured Native Americans migrating to a continent that contained animals but no people, whereas other images were rooted more in the eighteenth or nineteenth century and depicted Native Americans retreating westward ahead of an advancing frontier. (p. 119)

Loewen's (2010) research on textbooks makes explicit the limits to depicting what actually happened in relation to what textbook writers and publishers are comfortable exposing. Loewen writes:

Whatever the specific reasons that prompt textbooks to lie or omit, what is distorted or left out usually points to times and ways that the United States went astray as a nation. The reciprocal relationship between truth and justice suggests that such issues usually remain unsolved in our own time. For that reason, it may be more important to understand what textbooks get wrong than what they get right. (p. 80)

The premise of this study is the exploration of texts that may have not quite yet gotten right the themes of poverty, homelessness and unemployment. In the tradition of Locke (2009) one of the desired outcomes is to discover ways in which critical pedagogy can be applied through classroom discourse in relation to the examination of social studies textbooks. In a study conducted by Locke (2009) in Costa Rica, critical pedagogy was applied to the manner in which environmental education was taught through elementary science textbooks and teachers. Locke (p. 97) found that the curriculum allowed teachers to encourage “their students to actively interrogate and analyze contradictions between the reality in their communities and official economic and environmental policies.” Despite the absence of critical pedagogy in relation to poverty in elementary social studies

texts, there have been empirical studies that provide valuable insights for the manner in which poverty is addressed in college and high school textbooks.

Research Studies

In a study of the “race coding” of poverty in college government textbooks, Clawson and Kegler (2000, p. 185) find their research “dismaying that the portrayal of poverty in American government textbooks is nearly as inaccurate and stereotypical as its depiction in mass media sources.” The images in the college textbooks could lead college students to think that African Americans make up 50% of all poor people when in reality they constituted 27% of the poor in 1996; Latinos were represented as 15% of the textbook poor, but constituted 24% of the poor; more adult males are depicted as poor (56%) compared to 44% females when among the true poor, men make up 38% of the adults in poverty. In a later study, Clawson (2002) found that economics textbooks perpetuated the race coding of poverty, mirroring the findings in government textbooks. For example, Clawson reported more than 60% of the poor people pictured in the textbooks were Black, which is in contrast with previous research that demonstrated that 26% of the poor are African American. Whites made up 26% of the textbook poor, but in reality represented 46%. Clawson (2002, p. 352) also reported that White faces were associated as the deserving poor with the most popular social welfare program in the US, Social Security, whereas Blacks were linked with “nonsympathetic portrayals of the poor....”

In another college study, Gardner, Tuchman, & Hawkins (2010) developed a problem-based learning project for students working on their Masters in social work. The purpose of the project was to challenge students to move beyond narrow views of poverty tied to individual failing and investigate the interrelated micro (individual), mezzo (family and small social groups), and macro (large institutions) factors that contribute to urban poverty and community well-being. Social workers view poverty as “rooted in historic and contemporary social structures, policies, and values that support the inequitable distribution of resources among individuals and communities” (p. 147). The following indicators of community well-being resulted from their exploration of urban poverty: education and human capital, public and mental health, labor and employment, housing and asset development, and family and social structure. Additional variables were listed within each category.

A review of high school textbooks reveals similar patterns with regard to the intersection of race, ethnicity and class. Kears (2011, p. 59) reports that “poverty is not pictured among the photographs that surround textual discussions” of the urban riots of the late 1960s. Kears argues that high school textbooks feature photographs and images that tell one of two visual narratives: either the riots are not “in harmony with existing forms of complaint as practiced by the Civil Rights Movement or they were motivated by the [Black Panther Party]” (p. 56). By focusing on individual rioters, Kears (2011, p. 84) maintains that the textbook authors “conceal the economic and structural conditions that found African American[s] predominantly located in the declining urban centers of the 1960s.”

Another study relevant to middle school social studies curricular approaches investigated adolescents’ beliefs about poverty and inequality. Misty, Brown, Chow and Collins (2012) investigated the reasoning of eighth graders about the causes of poverty and economic inequality. The eighth graders’ teachers provided explicit teaching about the complex reasons for poverty to counter and reduce youth’s predominant tendency to endorse individualist explanations for why people are poor. The authors expected the curriculum to affect attitude change because of the emphasis

upon perspective taking and empathy toward the poor. Instead, while students showed gains in their knowledge of the causes of poverty and success and deemphasized individualistic causes of poverty, there was no change in their beliefs about the government's responsibility, nor were references made to structural factors. The authors concluded that not enough explicit information about the structural causes of economic inequality was included in the curriculum.

Yet, Seider (2011) conducted a study with adolescents and found a significant decline over the course of the semester in their support and empathy for Americans contending with homelessness, despite achieving "a greater recognition of the role that situational factors—low wages, job shortages, racism, lack of affordable housing, poor educational opportunities, and so on—can play in contributing to poverty and homelessness" (p. 22). Seider concluded that protecting their existing world views and sense of self required the adolescents "to characterize the position of the homeless at the bottom of the class structure as warranted" (p. 24).

Jordan (2004) argues for the fusion of theories that explain poverty in cultural and behavioral terms with theories that explain poverty in economic and structural terms. Jordan's theoretical model stresses the integration between cultural models, structural environments and behavioral outcomes. Investigating the integration among these modalities as well as the intersections with race, class and gender are major objectives of this textbook review.

Methodology

The methodology employed a structured approach to document analyses. According to Maxwell (2013), structured approaches help to ensure the comparability of data across times, settings, and researchers. The structured approach entailed: (1) selecting social studies textbook series across seven grade levels from two publishers, (2) developing operational definitions for the concepts and themes for investigation, (3) conducting a pilot study to refine coding instrument and develop inter-rater reliability protocols, (4) textbooks examination by the researcher and graduate assistants, (5) cross-referencing concepts and themes identified by researcher and graduate assistants to ensure inter-rater reliability, (6) creating data tables for each grade level for the mutually agreed upon categories of poverty, programs, homelessness, unemployment and historical events, (7) interpreting the data tables with regard to the theoretical constructs of individual (micro), small family/social units (mezzo), and large institutional units (macro), (8) interpreting the data tables with regard to the theoretical construct of examining social justice issues in relation to the intersecting domains of race, class and gender

Data Sources: Textbooks

Textbooks for seven grade levels (K-6) from two publishers, McGraw-Hill (Banks, et.al., 2011) and Pearson (Boyd, 2003), were examined for their attention to the following themes: poverty, historical events that illuminate economic conditions, programs developed to address impoverished conditions, unemployment, and homelessness. Contents of text narratives as well as photographs were analyzed. The textbooks were selected from The College of William and Mary Learning Resource Center, which is a designated holdings site for the State of Virginia state-adopted textbooks and through Inter-Library Loan.

Operational Definitions

To guide the focus of the textbook reviews the following operational definitions were developed: community programs—programs designed by local, state, and federal governments or the private sector to lift individuals and families out of poverty; historical events—events in US history that describe individual and/or widespread conditions of poverty (impoverished conditions may have been caused by natural disasters, failing economies, or political regimes); homelessness—people who do not have a regular dwelling; poverty—a stated economic level of poverty or reference to conditions due to poverty such as poor healthcare, housing or education; unemployment—a condition in which people who are without work and actively seeking work.

Pilot Study and Inter-rater Reliability

Bresciani et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of a shared vocabulary in rating sheets used by multiple reviewers. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the author and a graduate assistant examined upper elementary and primary level social studies textbooks that were not a part of those selected for the current study. Prior to reviewing textbooks, coding sheets were developed with careful attention to operationally defining areas to be coded. After reviewing the textbooks separately, the author and her graduate assistant compared coding sheets. Areas of agreement were noted. Discrepancies were discussed and, when appropriate, textbooks were re-examined together to reach greater consistency. It became evident that some of the visuals were ambiguous with regard to the context in which they were placed in the texts and therefore the ambiguity would need to be noted during data collection. It also became evident that researcher bias manifest itself in interpreting the images when there was no description to go along with the visuals. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the researchers added a section for comments by the researchers to keep separate their interpretations from descriptions of text narratives and visuals. In qualitative inquiry, each reviewer brings a unique perspective, so greater emphasis in these discussions was placed on whether each reviewer had recorded textual and visual representations in a congruent manner than achieving complete agreement, consistent with the recommendations of Harris, Pryor, and Adams (1997). *The Depictions of Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment and Historical Events Coding Instrument* is shown in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher and two graduate assistants reviewed the textbooks over a period of several months during 2013 and 2014. After reviewing the textbooks the data was categorized into organizational, substantive and theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2013). The organizational framework was by grade level, K-6. The substantive framework was poverty, homelessness, unemployment, historical events and programs. Both the organizational and substantive framework is evident in Table 1. *The Depictions of Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment, and Historical Events Coding Instrument*. Using the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, notions of privilege were analyzed in relation to race, gender, class and poverty. Once the tables for each grade level were developed which showed the intersection between grade level and the substantive categories, the author highlighted the information based on contextual references to individual (micro/green), small family/social units (mezzo/yellow), and institutional units (macro/aqua). Inter-

pretations based on category were then developed and summarized in Table 2. *Grade Level Depictions of Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment and Historical Events*. A further analysis resulted in noting whether or not the examples linked any combinations of race, class and gender, as indicated by shading in red. A synthesis of the findings is presented in Table 3. *Concept Alignment for Interpretations of Poverty, Homelessness, Programs, and Unemployment in Relation to Micro, Mezzo and Macro Contexts and the Intersections of Race, Class and Gender*.

Findings

Review of K-3rd Grade Textbooks

The primary grades textbook references structurally aligned with the small family and community groups, individual contributions, and occasional references to larger national units.

Kindergarten. Visuals depicted small family and community groups (mezzo). However, they were ambiguous and left open to interpretation by teachers and students. For example, one visual of people serving food could be interpreted as serving the poor or it could be a community event such as a picnic. At first glance, another depiction of a family alongside a trailer could be in a trailer park, but upon closer examination the family could be on vacation. These visuals and lack of text which clarifies the context for the picture fall short of introducing topics about those who receive food through food banks, for example, or families who may live in trailers or other forms of housing that are not typically middle-class, but not necessarily poor. Biographies could also be included to address the micro levels of economic understanding. Macro levels might be addressed by discussing programs such as Head Start.

First grade. The two textbooks series addressed individual (micro) contributions to help the poor through biographical information about Jane Addams, George Washington Carver and Eleanor Roosevelt. The Glencoe McGraw-Hill series made explicit that Eleanor Roosevelt was assisting the homeless and stressed her humanitarian efforts during the Great Depression. At the small and family group levels (mezzo) programs such as *Kid's Kitchen* and a *Global Awareness Activity* whereby students and their families collect resources such as food, school supplies, and medicine, for the impoverished in other countries. In a Pearson-Scott Foresman text, the point was made that Abraham Lincoln was poor and a picture of his log house was shown. In other pictures, Native Americans and enslaved Africans were also depicted in impoverished contexts. Without explanations or parallel structures, first graders could be receiving mixed messages about the masses of Native Americans and enslaved Africans as poor whereas the young poor White becomes President of the United States. Recalling that Clawson (2002, p. 352) reported that White faces were associated as the deserving poor with the most popular social welfare program in the US, Social Security, whereas Blacks were linked with “nonsympathetic portrayals of the poor...” it is an important insight for curriculum developers to note. When inserting visuals and text, it is important to look critically to determine if using the example of White poor is contextualized as a positive example of the Horatio Alger myth while using the minority examples as massive poor are used as examples of stereotypes without examination of the social and political causes.

Second grade. The second grade visuals and texts featured individual (micro) contributions through César Chavez's activism for workers' rights and Anna Beavers who mended and

bought new clothes for children in need. *Kids Care Clubs* were shown to represent small community efforts (mezzo) to support the homeless. Pictures of immigrants are shown in the context of describing historical events such as coming through Ellis Island and seeking jobs and a new life in the United States. While still ambiguous regarding macro or structural differences, Pearson-Scott Foresman did point out that the enslaved were not paid for their hard work. Enslaved by whom is not discussed or explained, again another missed opportunity to educate students about structural and policy issues (macro) rather than leave the second graders with unanswered questions regarding why. The intersection of class and race takes place through the power of suggestion, that is, by showing pictures of the enslaved as black and the “masters,” e.g., enslavers, as white. When describing César Chavez, Pearson-Scott Foresman also points out that the migrant workers lived in cars and trucks, another way to depict homelessness in relation to migrant workers.

Third grade. Individual (micro) contributions of Jane Addams, Emily Bissell, César Chavez, and Madame C. J. Walker were featured. Small family and social groups (mezzo) such as Hull House for immigrants, Project Backpack for students to support Hurricane Katrina victims, and community service home-building projects to help the homeless were presented. On a larger scale (macro), company efforts to give college scholarships, the founding of the Red Cross chapters, Chavez’s fight for new laws that gave migrant workers fairer pay, medical care and better housing, Mansa Musa’s use of taxes in ancient Mali to support schools, libraries, mosques and farmers, and discussing the class differences between plebeians and patricians in ancient Rome which sometimes resulted in homelessness for the plebeians, were events that illustrated class differences and large-scale efforts to support people across the class divide. When examining these ideas through the lens of the intersection of race, gender and class, more could have been done with Madame C. J. Walker’s biography of humble beginnings as an African-American to millionaire, not necessarily to emphasize that she was an exception in her time, but to describe the significance of the accomplishments by explicating the cultural context that was far from supportive to African-Americans generally.

Review of 4-6th Grade Textbooks

At the fourth grade level, social studies textbooks focus on state history, in this case, Virginia history. In Virginia, state standards emphasize social studies content divided by history up to 1865 and history from 1866 to the present. When teachers present the information varies among school divisions, but regular assessments are given in fifth through eighth grades. Generally speaking, upper elementary texts included historical events that economically disenfranchised people through natural events, enslavement, colonialism and imperialism. Yet, these events were locked in time and locked in ethnic groups to these time periods. For example, Native Americans were often depicted losing their lands to European colonizers and visually presented walking in horrible conditions on the Trail of Tears, but their ongoing efforts for federal recognition, for example, were either ignored or vaguely referenced. African-Americans were also depicted in severe conditions as enslaved, oppressed by Jim Crow Laws, or victims of segregation, but ongoing issues related to re-segregation were absent. Indigenous populations and later Hispanic-Americans were portrayed as losing their territories during Spanish colonization and later the Mexican-American War, but ongoing issues related to bilingual education and immigration reform were absent. Asian-Americans were depicted as exploited during the building of the railroads and gold rush, but the need to address ongoing stereotypes associated with being the *model minorities* was absent.

This limited overview does not address other groups such as the many various ethnic groups from the Middle East; such groups were, for the most part, invisible in the social studies textbooks. Collectively, however, the locked-in nature of depicting ethnic groups does little to present the ongoing legacies of historical events. Critical pedagogy in relation to the intersections of race, gender and class is weak or non-existent in social studies at these grade levels.

Fourth grade. The individual efforts (micro) on behalf of the poor by John Mitchell, Jr., Maggie Walker, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), Booker T. Washington and Arthur Ashe were described. At the mezzo level, activities such as soup kitchens and modern shelters and food banks illustrated ways to help the less fortunate. More macro descriptions provided the large scale efforts by the Freedmen's Bureau during Reconstruction, FDR's New Deal, and Habitat for Humanity addressing unfairness in the housing market. Other large-scale historical events that locked in ethnic groups were described above. Both Pearson-Scott Foresman and Glencoe McGraw-Hill described the intersection of class, race, and gender when explaining how sharecropping perpetuated a cycle of poverty for newly freed African Americans after the Civil War. Pearson-Scott Foresman also described the decimation of the Powhatans by the European settlers. Glencoe McGraw-Hill also explained that women, the enslaved, Native Americans, and white men who did not own property could not vote in colonial society.

Fifth and sixth grades, up to 1865. Individual contributions (micro) to help raise people out of poverty were described in relation to John Oglethorpe, Olaudah Equiano, Sojourner Truth, Jane Addams, Francis Cabot, Harriet Tubman and Clara Barton. Family and small social group efforts (mezzo) were described in relation to Sisters of Charity, Hull House, Lowell Girls, and the Underground Railroad which started small but became large-scale. Large-scale conditions and events (macro) were described in relation to the Dutch West Indian Company, the Virginia Company, the Freedmen's Bureau, indentured servitude, slavery and forcing Native Americans to leave their homelands. The intersections of race, class, and gender were explained in the context of the white southern class system (e.g., yeomen, tenant farmers, rural poor and plantation owners), Fallen Timbers, Treaty of Greenville, Trail of Tears/Indian Removal Act, imprisonment for those who could not pay debts, and Black Codes. Marriage and property ownership laws were discussed but overall impact on employment opportunities for women were not made explicit; Pearson Scott-Foresman did tie voting rights to male ownership of property.

Fifth and sixth grades, 1856 to the present. Individual contributions (micro) to help raise people out of poverty were described in relation to Jane Addams, Booker T. Washington, Mary Harris (Mother Jones), Jacob Riis, Eugene Debs, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and César Chavez. Family and small social group efforts (mezzo) were described in relation to Hull House, Habitat for Humanity, and *mutualistas*, community-based mutual aid societies for Mexican immigrants to the U.S. On a large-scale level (macro), numerous programs were mentioned: War on Poverty and public works projects whose abbreviations will be used due to limited space—RFC, NRA, PWA, TVA, HUD, CCC, FERA, AAA. Other social programs included American Indian Movement, National Congress of the American Indians; emergency relief programs for women; Indian Reorganization Act; the New Deal/Second New Deal; Social Security Act of 1935; Fair Labor Standards Act banned child labor; Medicare and Medicaid; emergency relief programs for women; National Organization of Women's effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment; United Farm Workers and Knights of Labor.

Other efforts with large-scale impact included the 1917 law passed to bar from voting immigrants who could not read in their own language. The forced confinement of Japanese-Americans to internment camps was also described.

Glencoe McGraw-Hill illustrated intersections between class and race during Reconstruction pointing out that between 1865 and 1896 African American struggled to get credit and jobs and that sharecropping lead to a cycle of debt for poor farmers. The same series tied poverty to crime, health problems, and orphans. Pearson-Prentice Hall pointed out that black soldiers were paid less than white soldiers. Pearson-Prentice Hall stated that many people left cities and moved to suburbs and, as a result, people in cities lost tax revenues. Glencoe McGraw-Hill stated that the rich found loopholes in the draft; inflation brought hardships for working class in nation and that child workers in sweatshops faced poor conditions and long days. McGraw-Hill specified that whites moved to the suburbs.

An interesting contrast emerged when the coding sheets from *To 1865* were placed side-by-side with *Post 1865*. On the one hand, the historical narratives prior to 1865 described the past in terms that suggested that social injustices had occurred, though there seemed to be an absence of language like *social injustice* or other pejorative labels in reference to conditions of slavery, forcing Native Americans off their land, or exploiting women and children in sweatshops. On the other hand, the historical narratives after 1865 emphasize the programs that emerged to eradicate poverty, homelessness, and unemployment, especially after the Great Depression and World War II. The hidden message seems to be that as long as there is a program in place to address the issues, the issues have been addressed. This brings us full circle to the opening paragraphs which state that poverty, homelessness, and unemployment remain hidden in our educational discourse and, based on this study, in social studies textbooks.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that addressing controversial issues or sensitive topics continues to be a challenge for social studies textbook writers and curriculum developers. This is true at all K-12 levels. In October 2014 hundreds of high-school students in Jefferson County, Colorado, gained national attention as they protested a proposed curriculum review. The school board's recently elected conservative majority wanted the district's Advanced Placement history curriculum to present positive aspects of US history, promote patriotism and to avoid encouragement of civil disorder and social strife. Those in opposition argued that such goals reflected censorship and that the U.S. was founded on the principles that the conservative members of the school board were trying to prevent. Four Jefferson County high schools were forced to close when teachers didn't show up to teach in September and in October (Tumulty & Layton, 2014).

At the elementary level addressed in this study, there are no easy explanations for the vagueness, invisibility, and stereotypes that surround poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. It is far too easy to argue that elementary students are too young to understand or that they should be sheltered from such topics when the literature review revealed that the high school and college textbooks also are woefully inadequate. Scholars argue that our current malaise toward discussions of poverty is rooted in U.S. culture and institutions.

Sadker and Zittleman (2012, p. 218) offer historical antecedents regarding why Americans have tolerated economic inequities: the tradition since colonial times of having local communities, and thus local taxes, as a main source of economic support for schools; the Horatio Alger story which reinforces the individual's ability and will to overcome obstacles; genetics as promoted by

Hernstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve*; notions of the culture of poverty which purports that poor people live in and are shaped by the problems inherent in impoverished communities, problems that cannot be remedied through additional school funding; flawed studies on educational spending such as the Coleman study in the 1960s which had major methodological flaws; and examples where increased funding did not result in increased test scores.

To address some of the entrenched American values described by Sadker and Zittleman, Seccombe (2000) presents practical lessons learned from research conducted with families in poverty in the 1990s. Providing recommendations for the 21st century, Seccombe identifies six practical areas that policy makers should address before headway can be made: enforcing child support via the Child Support Act, addressing gender and racial discrimination, addressing childcare costs, increasing public transportation, raising minimum wage, and increasing access to health care. These timely policy issues capture the stress points for individuals and families living in poverty. Making these issues accessible to elementary and middle school students, as well as high school students, should be an important goal for curriculum reformers.

In addition to policy issues, *Abbott v. Burke* (1990, 1998) exposed a new line of litigation that focuses on *adequate education* guarantees. Such litigation has resulted in a more equitable distribution of funds to poorer school districts and, in turn, has addressed the long-term legacy of education limited by property taxes in lower income areas. More recently, DeMatthews (2015) reports the actions of an elementary principal in a high-poverty urban school who practiced social justice leadership to create a more inclusive school. Making these issues accessible in social studies textbooks would advance the thinking and potentially mobilize action on the part of future generations of citizens and policy makers. Such information would also provide insights into macroeconomic structural issues that impede educational progress for those living in poverty.

Gorski (2008a) cautions curriculum reformers with good intentions. In a critique of Ruby Payne's framework on poverty for educators, Gorski (2008b, p.131) identifies "eight elements of oppression" that contribute to classism, racism, and other inequities: (1) uncritical and self-serving "scholarship," (2) the elusive culture of poverty, (3) abounding stereotypes, (4) deficit theory, (5) invisibility of classism, (6) the "it's not about race" card, (7) peddling paternalism, and (8) compassionate conservatism. Gorski (p. 145) argues that authentic anti-poverty education requires the elimination of ways in which schools perpetuate systems and structures of poverty, including tracking, segregational redistricting, corporatization and the elimination of bilingual education, to mention a few.

Recommendations for Curricular Reform

Textbook publishers, including those reviewed in the current study, have made great strides in incorporating events that expose harsh realities throughout American history. But the ongoing legacies tied to these events remain vague and sometimes invisible, resulting in the perpetuation of oppression. Writing texts from a critical pedagogical perspective that challenges assumptions regarding the legacy of power has been a longstanding challenge for curriculum reformers. The following recommendations are proposed, especially with regard to writing about and visually representing the impoverished, unemployment, homelessness and historical events: (1) create parallel structures for various ethnic groups, (2) address micro, mezzo, and macro, economic perspectives and concepts, (3) balance inclusiveness symbolized in visuals with information about the collective cultural context, (4) present value positions and opposing points of view, (5) describe supports and obstacles to conditions of poverty, homelessness, and unemployment, (6) present

multiple economic models for governance, (7) represent the intersections among race/ethnicity, gender, and class. These recommendations, along with illustrations, are described below.

Parallel Structures

The need for parallel structure emanates from the fact that certain ethnic groups remain stereotyped in specific historical events, images, or time periods. For example, in this study, Native Americans were portrayed in relation to their traditional clothing and shelters, again and again. Pointing out cultural differences and similarities during early contact between European settlers and Native Americans is instructive, but the perpetuation of this theme across time periods is primarily applied to the Native Americans. My ancestors, the Scots, wore kilts, but social studies texts don't perpetuate this traditional clothing across the centuries, even though both the Scots and members of Native American tribes wear traditional clothing to maintain their heritage and for contemporary cultural events. The Scots also lived off the land and used all parts of the animal for clothing, shelter and food, but why is it that these Celtic traditions are seen as insignificant yet the same Native American traditions are overemphasized? As one who participated in the inter-rater reliability review noted, "The texts emphasize the Native Americans using all parts of the animal as the English are writing Magna Carta!" (J. Randall, personal communication, March, 2013). Parallel structure is needed to ensure that economic and political achievements and/or travesties are described across cultural groups rather than emphasizing topics such as textiles and architecture for one group (e.g., Native Americans) and *manifest destiny* for another (e.g., Europeans). The effort to look for parallels in governance would reveal that the Sioux, for example, had elaborate democratic governance structures. Parallel structures also must be considered in relation to intersecting realities within and across cultural groups.

Intersecting Realities and Legacies among Race/Ethnicity, Class and Gender

This study reported many contributions by individuals from a variety of ethnicities and genders. Banks (1988) describes the many forms of ethnic integration in the social studies curriculum and, no doubt, was influential as one of the authors in the McGraw-Hill series. As Banks indicates, a focus on the contributions of individuals represents a lower level of ethnic integration when compared to the ways in which transformations were made socially and structurally. Writing in a similar vein for gender content in social studies curricula, Tetreault (1987) described levels of gender infusion, identifying the interactions and intersections of gender groups as the most difficult history to write. Historical events throughout the grade levels featured the changing roles for and rights of women. Not being allowed to own property, vote or have access to an education is stated for Anglo women and women of color. Eventually, these social injustices are presumably overcome through the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the right to own property, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), and individual state ratifications of the Equal Rights Amendment. However, describing these acts of legislation is only a first step in describing the ongoing realities. Passing the legislation did not necessarily change value structures. Balancing these historical events with statistics that describe current inequities in the workplace, women not being paid for their labor while working in the homes, lack of childcare support for mothers who want to work, and the ongoing disparities among men and women of Anglo heritage with men and women of color would go a long way to provide realistic portrayals of US society in relation to legacies of economic oppression.

Micro, Mezzo and Macro Economic Perspectives

The social studies curriculum has traditionally followed the expanding horizons approach, featuring individuals and smaller units of geopolitical space, gradually expanding to include states, nations and the world. This study reaffirmed that overall pattern, resulting in less attention to macro policies at the lower grades. However, the second grade Pearson-Scott Foresman texts did point out that the enslaved were not paid for their labor, not stating an actual policy or law that set this up, but nevertheless, a statement of fact that has the potential for the inquisitive second grader or classroom teacher who would like to pursue the topic further. Greater transparency is needed. Returning to Bruner's cognitive theory, any subject, "in some intellectually honest form" and with the proper structuring, can be taught to individuals at any stage of development. If students can learn about taxes in the often told historical narrative of the Boston Tea Party, they can learn about the US model of funding for education in relation to property taxes. By exposing this model, it would be possible to involve students in the national debate about how to improve education in urban areas.

Symbols of Inclusiveness and Collective Cultural Context

One of the challenges for curriculum and textbook writers is to write and provide visuals whereby readers can find themselves and their ancestors in the pages of history. While conducting text analyses during my social studies courses, students often point out that women and people of color are represented in photos but seldom included in text narratives. Thus, the visual becomes a way for text writers and publishers to demonstrate inclusiveness but, upon closer examination, it might be on a superficial level. In other instances, a visual may have text to support it, but the visual and text may mislead the reader when the collective context is omitted. The complexity of this challenge was evident in the text which depicted Madame C. J. Walker, the bank owner, as someone who had been able to raise her economic status from poor beginnings to becoming the first self-made female millionaire in the US. In this biographical narrative her success was partially attributed to the virtue of the US free enterprise system. Providing the broader cultural context would have been more informative and would have made her accomplishments all the more remarkable. "During the late 19th and 20th centuries, white workers initiated more than 100 strikes in order to keep black workers from gaining access to certain jobs" (Harris, 1987).

In addition, it might have been useful to place Walker's exceptional accomplishments in the context that was described by Licht (1988, p. 21) in the following manner: "In 1913, nearly 90% of the black population lived in the South and worked in private homes as servants and on the land as sharecroppers and tenant farmers." This is not an argument against identifying the exceptions who have overcome incredible obstacles; rather, it is an argument to describe the structures that presented the obstacles and the individuals who designed them.

Opposing Viewpoints and Economic Models

Representing multiple perspectives strengthens social studies curricula. The dynamism of social issues frames healthy debates and reinforces the notion that freedom of speech is valued. Poverty in the US, its root causes and efforts at eradication, should be at the forefront of contemporary social and economic issues in social studies textbooks. The textbooks reviewed in this

study could have been enhanced by including opposing values regarding economic systems globally and in the United States. For example, Brown and Lauder (2001) encourage a national debate regarding why millions of children in the US and Britain live in poverty, some neighborhoods lack basic amenities and the middle classes fear for their families, jobs and futures. They argue that the answer is not to be found in globalization, technological innovation, or personal failings to adapt to changing circumstances as often stated. For Brown and Lauder, the answer lies with the historical legacy of the 'golden era' and a narrow focus on market individualism. Instead of referencing one economic model, free enterprise capitalism, social studies textbooks could be improved by also teaching students about state capitalism, state-regulated capitalism, mixed state regulated and private enterprise capitalism, private enterprise capitalism, anarchism, communism, democratic socialism, Marxian socialism, and state socialism.

In closing, this study demonstrated that the depiction of historical events and topics related to poverty, programs, homelessness and unemployment in K-6 textbooks illustrates both progress and weakness. One sign of progress is that, in comparison to the textbooks written during the 19th century, textbook writers and publishers have made strides in tempering their Eurocentric and Anglo-centric approaches. The challenge that remains is to demonstrate that learning occurs in interacting realities of race, gender, class, ethnicity, cultural identity, and religion and that developing knowledge of the structures and policies that create inequities among these realities will enable us to address issues of poverty, homelessness and unemployment.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment, Historical Events Coding Instrument

Depictions of Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment, and Historical Events Coding Instrument							
Publisher (circle): McGraw-Hill Pearson Reviewer: _____		Grade/Subject (Circle): K 1 2 3 4/VA 5 US-1865 US from 1865					
Page #	Visual	Description/Commentary	Programs	Pov-erty	Home-lessness	Unem-employment	Histori-cal Events
Notes about representations of middle/upper SES, general commentary							

Appendix B

Table 2

Grade Level Depictions of Programs, Poverty, Homelessness, Unemployment, and Historical Events

Programs	Grade Level ____
Publisher	Description
Pearson- Scott Foresman	
Glencoe McGraw-Hill	
Poverty	
Publisher	Description
Pearson- Scott Foresman	
Glencoe McGraw-Hill	
Homelessness	
Publisher	Description
Pearson- Scott Foresman	
Glencoe McGraw-Hill	
Unemployment	
Publisher	Description
Pearson- Scott Foresman	
Glencoe McGraw-Hill	
Historical Events	
Publisher	Description
Pearson- Scott Foresman	
Glencoe McGraw-Hill	

Appendix C

Table 3

Concept Alignment for Interpretations of Poverty, Homelessness, Programs, Unemployment and Historical Events in Relation to Micro, Mezzo and Macro Contexts and the Intersections of Race, Class and Gender

Grade	Micro					Mezzo					Macro				
	Pr	Po	Ho	Un	Hi	Pr	Po	Ho	Un	Hi	Pr	Po	Ho	Un	Hi
Kindergarten						X	X								
First	X	X	X		X	X	X								
Second	X	X				X						X	X		X
Third	X	X				X		X			X	X			X
Fourth	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fifth	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sixth	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. Pr=Program; Po=Poverty; Ho=Homelessness; Un=Unemployment; Hi=Historical Events; shaded areas represent evidence of intersecting realities of race, gender and/or class.

Appendix D

Textbooks Reviewed

McMillan/McGraw-Hill: Timelinks Series, Virginia Editions

- Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A. S., McPherson, J. M., & Ritchie, D. A. (2009). *The American journey: Early years*. Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. (Gr. 6).
- Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A. S., McPherson, J. M., & Ritchie, D. A. (2009). *The American journey: Modern times*. Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. (Gr. 7).
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- Banks, J.A., Colleary, K.P., Greenow, L., Parker, W.C., Schell, E.M., & Zike, D. (2011). *Virginia studies*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan/McGraw Hill. (Gr. 4).
- Banks, J.A., Colleary, K.P., Greenow, L., Parker, W.C., Schell, E.M., & Zike, D. (2011). *Exploring people, places, and cultures, Virginia edition*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan/McGraw Hill. (Gr. 3).
- Banks, J.A., Colleary, K.P., Greenow, L., Parker, W.C., Schell, E.M., & Zike, D. (2011). *People and places: The first Americans, Virginia edition*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan/McGraw Hill. (Gr. 2).
- Banks, J.A., Colleary, K.P., Greenow, L., Parker, W.C., Schell, E.M., & Zike, D. (2011). *People and places: Ancient Egypt and China, Virginia edition*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan/McGraw Hill. (Gr. 2).
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- Banks, J.A., Colleary, K.P., Greenow, L., Parker, W.C., Schell, E.M., & Zike, D. (2011). *All together civics: People and traditions, Virginia edition*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan/McGraw Hill. (Gr. 1).
- Hello, world!, Virginia edition*. (2011). Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (Gr. K.)
- Remy, R.C., Patrick, J.J., Saffel, D.C., & Clayton, G.E. (2010). *Civics today: Citizenship, economics, & you*. Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. (Gr. 8).

Pearson: Prentice-Hall Imprint, Virginia editions

- Davidson, J.W., & Stoff, M.B. (2011). *Prentice Hall America: History of our nation 1865 to the present, Virginia edition*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education. (Gr. 5-7).
- Davidson, J.W., & Stoff, M.B. (2011). *Prentice Hall America: History of our nation beginnings to 1865, Virginia edition*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education. (Gr. 6-7).
- Davis, J. E., Fernlund, P., & Woll, P. (2011). *Prentice Hall civics and economics, Virginia edition*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education. (Gr. 7-8).

Pearson: Scott Foresman Imprint

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