Divergent Representations of Africa: A Qualitative Analysis of Georgia Social Studies Textbooks

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Abstract

The Georgia Department of Education has clearly defined standards for learning about Africa in the seventh grade. However, there exists great variation in how textbooks present this material and address these standards. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, we assess the presentation of Africa in three widely used Georgia social studies textbooks. We document and analyze coverage of Africa across Georgia's seventh grade world studies learning domains. Our research demonstrates: 1) that, despite widespread calls for decolonization of education and strengthening of multicultural education, Euro-American perspectives on Africa are still prevalent; 2) textbooks vary widely on how they choose to address the social studies standards for Africa; and 3) negative stereotypes of Africa and its peoples continue to be reaffirmed, to the detriment of Georgia students. Lastly, our research also contributes to larger conversations on the utility of content analysis as a methodology for understanding educational practices.

Keywords

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Introduction and Background

American social studies textbooks play a critical role in how students learn about countries outside of the United States, and yet, studies point to highly divergent ideological approaches to global education (Gaudelli, 2012, 2013). Though students are expected to develop an increased understanding of cultures different from their own through the social studies discipline, social studies curricula and teaching often misrepresent non-western cultures (Marmer et al., 2010; Seker & Ilhan, 2015; Shear et al., 2015). Historically, African cultures and people have been particularly misrepresented in U.S. teaching and textbooks (Bennett, 1986; N. Ukpokodu, 1996; Wilson, 1995). In spite of the central role Africa has played in both global historical events and contemporary political and economic processes (French, 2021; Stahl, 2014), there is little scholarly literature documenting how much U.S. students learn about Africa outside of a narrow range of topics such as Ancient Egypt and the Atlantic Slave Trade. Instead, historical and contemporary lessons about the continent of Africa are absorbed into lessons on Black or African American studies in classrooms. While there is substantial scholarship on the teaching of African-American Studies and U.S. slavery in k-12 classrooms there is very little research on how the continent of Africa is or is not taught in U.S. schools (Alpers, 1995; Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Bery, 2014; Kidula et al., 2013).

Research also finds that educators are often ill-prepared to teach global perspectives in the social studies curriculum and that teachers' biases and Eurocentric framework for teaching material can reproduce misconceptions about other countries (Gaudelli, 2003; Mangram & Watson, 2011; O. N. Ukpokodu, 2010). Although social studies teachers are often dissatisfied with the content included in textbooks, they may still rely on textbooks as a supplemental tool in the classroom (Brown & Hughes, 2018).There has been increasing research on how instructional materials such as primary documents and pre-service teacher training materials translate into classroom instruction (Kim, 2017; Odebiyi & Sunal, 2020). Across numerous educational contexts, textbooks are significant socialization agents and can shape students' preconceived notions about people, traditions, and cultures outside of the United States (Weninger, 2018). Textbooks transmit ideas about dominant cultural norms and in the case of social studies, play a role in shaping students' concepts of citizenship (Biesta, 2007; Parker, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Textbooks are also useful tools for investigating instructional material and for providing information about broad educational emphases over time and across countries (Keles & Yazan, 2020; Meyer et al., 2010; Myers, 2001; Triguero Roura, 2022).

Recent changes in the education landscape have seen a new push for what is called Multicultural or Culturally Responsive Education, a set of practices that recognize the need for students to have a global perspective that decenters the dominant Western framework in U.S. schooling (Gaudelli, 2013). Relatedly, many educators and administrators are calling for the decolonization of education in order to create more inclusive classroom spaces and help students gain a perspective outside of the traditional Eurocentric lens (Gorski, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2021; Wiggan et al., 2022). Social studies textbooks are centrally located in these efforts, as they have the potential to either reproduce or challenge existing historical and cultural narratives. While there is a great deal of writing on why and how to provide culturally responsive, multicultural education, very little of this focuses on the role of teaching about the African continent within these efforts. Our analyses below demonstrate why the presentation of Africa within social studies curricula matters for these timely debates.

Reviews of leading journals in the field of social studies education find that the content analysis of textbooks generally examine social groups, historical events, themes, and disciplines (Kim, 2017; Wade, 1993). Though Odebiyi and Sunal's recent analysis of Nigeria in U.S. textbooks (2020) is a notable exception, the continent of Africa is rarely a major topic of research for textbook analysis (Odebiyi & Sunal, 2020). Building on Odebiyi and Sunal's (2020) study of the coverage of Nigeria in textbooks used in Alabama, we examine three widely used textbooks in the state of Georgia. To examine how textbooks' misrepresentation may extend beyond country-specific evaluations, we assess all chapters, content, and teacher supplements about Africa. We also examine how the content aligns with Georgia state standards to clarify how constraints in state curricula may shape the content in textbooks used in Georgia. We qualitatively code three textbooks and corresponding teacher supplements as "ideological curriculum artifacts" (Apple & Christian-Smith, 2017; Keles & Yazan, 2020) to assess content related to the study of Africa. Using a content analysis approach, we analyze the prevalence of Euro-American perspectives on Africa, evidence of stereotypic representations and tropes of Africa and its people, and how the material aligns with Georgia's curriculum standards.

Study Context

Social Studies Curriculum in Georgia

The United States' growing racial and ethnic diversity among the school-age population and the rising numbers of immigrants and English Language learners requires curriculum development that is culturally relevant and provides accurate depictions of countries outside of the United States. This is particularly important considering that social studies is responsible for nurturing engaged

citizenship (Callahan et al., 2008, 2010; Merryfield, 2009). In the last 20 years, the nationwide Black immigrant population has grown over 200 percent and African immigrants represent the largest share of recent Black immigrants to the United States (Tamir & Anderson, 2022). As a state, Georgia has experienced rapid growth in its immigrant population. Atlanta has seen a 165 percent growth in its Black immigrant population (Grinspan, 2022). The growing African immigrant population in Georgia provides an important context for evaluating the social studies curriculum, as curriculum in schools plays a key role in facilitating immigrants' integration into American society and shaping how all students conceptualize and encounter those from the African continent (Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011).

The Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE) implemented the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) during the 2017-2018 academic year (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). The updated GSE standards were the result of feedback from various stakeholders, including over 9,000 teachers. Specifically, the GSE sought a more inquiry-based approach, and foregrounded the use of primary sources and the development of engaged democratic citizens. Financial literacy was expanded in the new standards, as was the time spent on Georgia history. Up until 2016, the GA DOE went through an approval process to select textbooks for school districts; this is now a decision left up to the discretion of individual districts (*Georgia General Assembly - HB 739*, 2016).

The GSE standards indicate that in seventh grade, students begin "the second year of a two-year World Area Studies course" (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). During the seventh grade, students study Africa and Asia with a particular focus on geography, government/civics, economics, and history. From a historical and geographic perspective, they are expected to analyze continuity and change, locate geographic features of Africa, understand environmental issues, explain the factors shaping population distribution and "analyze the diverse cultural characteristics of the people who live in Africa." To develop student's government and economic understandings, students are expected to learn about forms of citizen participation in government, the impact of government instability, different economic systems, voluntary trade, and economic growth specific to Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya (Georgia Department of Education, 2021a).

Methodology

Textbook Selection

Through correspondence with GA DOE employees, we identified three widely used textbooks in the state of Georgia. The Georgia Periodical[1] is used by 49 schools in Georgia. The textbook is an interactive and visual-oriented newspaper-style publication, offered in a non-traditional online and printer-friendly format. The textbook is customized to specifically meet the GSE for social studies in grades K-7 and is organized according to selected themes. Pace International is used by over half of all K-8 schools in Georgia. Pace International is a traditional textbook offered in workbook format.[2] The textbook is organized by units that correspond to the GSE. The Doyle World History textbook is used in 15 percent of Georgia middle schools. The Doyle World History textbook is a traditional textbook organized by topical area. Compared to Pace International and the Georgia Periodical, the Doyle World History textbook is less aligned with the GSE. We selected the six topical chapters within the Doyle World History textbook that incorporated content about Africa.

We chose to qualitatively examine these three textbooks because they are the most commonly adopted textbooks in the state and vary in style, coverage, and format. The number of pages and chapters dedicated to discussions of the African continent varied in length and style across the textbooks. The Georgia Periodical included a total of 32 weeks, 16 of which deal with Africa in some form. In the Doyle World History textbook six out of 19 topics focused on the continent of Africa and 240 pages out of 761 total pages discussed the continent of Africa. In the Pace International textbook 73 out of 190 pages are used to aid teachers in their lessons regarding the continent of Africa. The workbook features 16 total units and four units on Africa. See Table 1 and Table 2 for the raw number of pages and topics on Africa across the three textbooks.

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[1] The textbooks have been given pseudonyms to protect the publishers' identity. The exact citations for the textbooks are not in the References because the citations contain the real names of textbooks.

[2] We analyze the teacher edition version (student edition with answers) of the Pace International textbook. For all other textbooks we examined the student and teacher editions.

Table 1. Raw Number of Total Textbook Pages and Pages on Africa

Textbook Title	Total Number of Pages	Number of Pages on Africa
Doyle World History	761	240
Georgia Periodical	128	64
Pace International	190[3]	73

Table 2. Raw Number of Total Textbook Topics and Topics on Africa

Textbook Title	Total Number of Topics	Number of Topics on Africa
Doyle World History	19	6
Georgia Periodical	32	16
Pace International	16	4

Analytical Method

We used a qualitative content analysis approach to systematically categorize the textbook data (Miles et al., 2014). Using Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software, we assessed the textbooks as language learning materials (Weninger, 2018) with the goal of identifying how lessons on Africa are covered and to identify differences in how Africa is represented across the textbooks. We developed an initial coding scheme based on the conceptual framework of the study and the themes represented in the GSE materials and the corresponding seventh grade social studies teachers' notes.

We linked the textbook material and the state curriculum material to the corresponding code in Atlas.ti. Using a content analysis approach, we identified and categorized repeated and emerging themes (Krippendorff, 2018; Krippendorff & Bock, 2009). Throughout our analysis we prepared research memos to ensure consistency and reliability. We used these memos to develop emerging themes for

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[3] The total number of pages for Pace International includes student and teacher workbook materials.

the next stage of the analysis in which we compiled codes that related back to our research questions.

In our last stage of analysis, we examined the content across these codes and emergent themes to identify patterns of similarity and difference. We looked closely at the coded data to identify high and low-occurring codes across the textbooks and in relation to the GSE and teacher's notes. After comparing the numeric representations across the textbooks, we found that codes related to environmental issues, flora and fauna, violent conflict, government and government instability, and economic systems occurred the most frequently. We also found that codes relating to ancient and contemporary Africa (east, southern, northern, and central) occurred the least frequently. We examined the representation of the high and low occurring codes across the three textbooks to identify emerging themes related to each learning domain (i.e., Historical Understandings, Geographic Understandings, Government/Civic Understandings and Economic Understandings) in the GSE.

Within the historical domain we identified uneven and limited representations of Ancient Civilizations across the three textbooks. We found that within the geography domain, environmental issues were framed from a Euro and US centric lens and that discussions of African peoples and cultures were simplified and stereotyped. Lastly, we found that misrepresentations of the European colonial legacy shaped coverage of the government' civic domain and the economic domain. The textbooks emphasized violent conflict and government instability at the expense of content on citizen participation and used suffering rhetoric and imagery in discussions of poverty.

Findings

Historic Domain: Ancient Civilizations

Across the three textbooks, the presentation of ancient African civilizations varied greatly in both breadth and depth. In the Georgia Periodical, the bulk of content on the ancient world focused on Egypt, reproducing familiar subjects for students like the pyramids, hieroglyphics, and mummification practices. This textbook had little coverage of the other complex civilizations that existed simultaneously on the continent, such as the many sub-Saharan African empires. Where other parts of the continent are mentioned in the ancient world, they are clearly associated with small-scale, unstratified social structures such as "tribes" or "family groups." Similarly, ancient practices are essentialized in ways that reduce them to simple and unnuanced categories, such as "traditional African religion."

For example, in the section of the Georgia Periodical on East Africa, the only ethnic group covered in any depth are the Maasai, a historically pastoralist

group that are frequently used as iconic representations of indigeneity and tourism in the region (Hodgson, 2011; Salazar, 2009). The coverage of this group is presented as ahistorical and unchanging and fails to mention the many Maasai people who live in urban areas and no longer practice pastoralism.

> The Maasai are members of an African tribe that makes its home in the Rift Valley region of Tanzania and Kenya. The Maasai own large herds of cattle and sheep and move these herds from place to place to give the land a chance to recover from the animals' grazing. Maasai men, who are often more than 6 feet tall, are warriors who take their responsibility to protect the tribe very seriously. They wear beads in their hair, wrap themselves in red-checked blankets and carry large clubs. The men are also responsible for herding the cattle and sheep. The women of the tribe are usually tall and slender. They braid their long hair and wear large, colorful necklaces. The women are responsible for milking cows, carrying water, cooking meals and caring for the children. They are also in charge of building houses for the tribe from mud, sticks, cow dung and urine. (Georgia Periodical, week 3, p. 3)

This type of presentation of African people likely reinforces students' stereotypes of Africa as rural, tribal, and not complex -with the exception of Ancient Egypt. Ancient Egypt is frequently set apart from other African countries, which also has adverse implications for cultural understanding of the continent.

The other two textbooks offered a somewhat more complex portrayal of Ancient Africa. For example, the Doyle World History textbook offered a far broader range of topics, including the role of Islam in ancient West and North Africa and ancient trade routes along the Indian Ocean. There is also mention of the great wealth of ancient West African kingdoms, challenging narratives of Africa as poor and solely the object of European exploitation. These types of representations, which show Ancient Africa as part of larger global networks, are critical in breaking down stereotypes and challenging dominant narratives of Africa as isolated, timeless, or traditional. The variation in presentation of Ancient Africa across the textbooks attest to the widely divergent messages Georgia students receive on this topic.

Geography Domain: Environmental Issues and Culture

Clear representational devices were used in textbooks to depict Africa (Myers, 2001). Similar to past representations of Africa as a 'Dark Continent,' (Appiah, 1993; Bassil, 2011; Jarosz, 1992), the textbooks used alarmist language to characterize African geography. The code for topography and geography was the most highly occurring code across all the textbooks. Within the code for topography

and geography, content related to environmental issues, trade and the economy, population distribution, and flora and fauna occurred the most frequently.

Negative narratives dominated discussions of topography, geography, and the environment. For instance, Pace International devoted an entire chapter of its student workbook to environmental issues facing Africa. The section focused on the water-related challenges, deforestation, and desertification. The textbook highlighted crises and disasters:

> Unfortunately, safe, clean water is often hard to find. The two biggest causes are water pollution and unequal access to water. Today water scarcity (lack of clean water) is an ever-growing crisis in many African nations. (Pace International, p. 34)

The textbooks frequently linked environmental issues to the actions of African people and inadequacies of African governments, rather than structural or historical factors. Representations of environmental issues that center blame on African people and nations reproduce negative stereotypes and limit students' understanding of local agricultural innovations and technological innovations in farming that have met success (Carney, 1991; Kandel et al., 2022; Katic et al., 2013).

In addition to highlighting environmental challenges, codes related to trade and the economy commonly used disastrous rhetoric to link environmental challenges to limited economic development across African nations. For instance, the Georgia Periodical emphasized the impact of resource depletion on trade.

> The Sahara makes up about one fourth of the entire continent. Africa's rainforests are home to a variety of plant and animal wildlife. Approximately 80 percent of the rainforests are located in the middle of Africa along the Congo River Basin. Unfortunately, these lands are being destroyed by development, agriculture, and forestry. Both the Sahara and the rainforests have slowed down trade in Africa because of the physical difficulties each of them present *[sic]* for travelers. (Georgia Periodical, week 2, p. 2)

Framing underdevelopment in trade as an environmental issue means students lack a nuanced understanding of how European colonization shaped modern-day economic development in African countries. Likewise, students have little context for understanding how current environmental issues are linked to global capitalist systems that continue to impoverish Africans.

Like discussions related to trade and the economy and environmental issues, content on population distribution in Pace International and the Georgia Periodical

textbooks similarly explained how population growth across African countries contributed to vast environmental issues. Content in the Doyle World History textbook offered a more nuanced picture, encouraging students to apply economic reasoning to discussions of resources, scarcity, and human-environment interaction through teacher-guided activities:

> Give students two minutes to brainstorm a list of ways in which humans change the physical environment. Then ask them to share their ideas in a class discussion *[sic]* and evaluating *[sic]* the impact each has on the environment. Then discuss ways humans have adjusted their activities or lifestyle to their environment. (Doyle World History Teacher Edition, p.HT28)

Lastly, content related to flora and fauna occurred most frequently within the geography domain. Flora and fauna-related codes frequently focused on species endangerment and commonly blamed government inaction. In some cases, flora and fauna codes also exoticized African wildlife and African eating habits.

> Each year, about 1 million tons of bushmeat is eaten in Middle Africa. It would take at least 4 million cattle to produce that much meat. Bushmeat is meat that comes from wildlife killed in the "bush," another name for the rainforests of Africa. Bushmeat comes from wildlife such as elephants, gorillas, forest antelope, porcupines, bush pigs, cane rats and monitor lizards. More Africans than ever before are hunting and eating bushmeat. (Georgia Periodical, week 4, p. 1)

Stereotypical portrayals like the Georgia Periodical's discussion of bushmeat discouraged student's multicultural awareness and often limited students' understanding of ethnic groups and diverse culinary practices across the continent. Such depictions also erase African-led efforts to combat the bushmeat trade, such as the widely successful gorilla conservation and education programs of the Rwandan government (Sabuhoro et al., 2021). The GSE Geography domain outlines expectations for students to develop a comprehensive understanding of culture and people across Africa, yet codes related to topography and geography through the textbooks in most cases use alarmist language to discuss environmental issues, trade and the economy, population distribution, and flora and fauna.

Government/Civic Domain: Violent conflict and government instability

According to the GSE, students are expected to learn about citizenship participation in government and government instability within the government/civic domain. The code for government was the second-highest occurring code after the code for topography/geography. We focus our analysis

here on the codes specific to the government/civic domain: citizen participation and government instability. Similar to Myer's (2001) discussion of how "tribal fixation" and "disastrous rhetoric" are used in human geography textbooks to portray the African continent, we noted that violent conflict and corruption dominated discussions of African governmental systems. We found clear variation in how the textbooks contextualized government instability and violent conflict. Some textbooks connected discussions of violent conflict directly to European colonization. Other textbooks focused only on modern-day corruption, providing little or no historical context. We also found that relative to discussions of government instability, the content on citizenship participation occurred less frequently but offered students a broad range of perspectives on the responsibilities of good citizenship.

In some instances, textbooks provided important political and historical contexts for understanding modern-day conflicts, as seen in the following quote from Pace International:

> But Europe had drawn political boundaries with no respect for existing African boundaries, cultures, and political traditions.… Once African countries began to gain independence after World War II, the problems that had begun under European colonization continued. Conflicts and even civil wars began to erupt at once over the artificially drawn European boundaries…. The effects of colonization are still present today. (Pace International, p. 70)

Discussions of the social, political and historical context of present-day boundaries appropriately introduce students to the role of European colonialism (Mamdani, 1996). In contrast, the Georgia Periodical textbook provided little historical background on how European partitioning has led to present-day government instability and conflict.

> The Europeans who came to Western Africa during the 1700s and 1800s came to trade for slaves and to purchase some of the unusual crops grown along the coast. Portugal, Great Britain, Germany *[sic]* and France all built settlements in Western Africa. In 1957, Ghana became the first country to break away and become an independent nation. By 1974, all the countries of Western Africa had become independent. Most of the governments that took control of these nations were controlling and unfair, causing many bloody battles and wars to erupt. (Georgia Periodical, week 7, p. 3)

Variation in how the root of violent conflict is described makes it difficult for students to understand the historical underpinnings of European partitioning and the impact on African countries today.

Within the government/civic domain, discussions of citizenship participation occurred less frequently compared to codes related to government instability, corruption, and violent conflict. Pace International aligned all discussions of citizenship with the Government and Civic domains, often focusing on how corruption in some African countries limited citizen participation in government:

> Kenya and Nigeria both have democratic governments, and both are presidential democracies. However, each government has serious flaws. While both countries have constitutions designed to protect citizens' rights and freedoms, including the right to vote and freedoms of speech, press, religion and assembly, these rights are not always protected. (Pace International, p. 44)

Pace International provided exercises and comparison charts to help students identify and assess their understanding of different types of governmental systems, leadership, and legislation in the three African countries of focus: Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa.

The Georgia Periodical and Doyle World History textbooks provided similar content on varied governmental structures across African countries. Different from Pace International, Georgia Periodical and Doyle World History textbooks offered students broad and wide-ranging ideas about citizenship. For instance, the Georgia Periodical called on readers to imagine they are students in Nigeria:

> For just a few minutes, imagine that you are no longer a seventh grade *[sic]* student in the United States, but instead you are a middle school student in Nigeria. You have similar goals - do well in school, have a career one day, be a good citizen of Nigeria. What does that last goal mean? (Georgia Periodical, week 9, p.3)

The Georgia Periodical diverges from this focus on citizenship in discussions of South African governmental systems and devotes noticeably less content to Kenyan governmental systems.

Like the Georgia Periodical's reference to responsible citizenship, the Doyle World History textbook also incorporates exercises to help students understand responsibility and citizenship and encourages students to take a global perspective.

Today the world faces many problems that go beyond the borders of any one country. When people travel, disease can spread quickly. Because economies are connected, economic problems in one country can affect other countries. In addition, more world leaders believe that people should have certain basic human rights. World leaders often work together to address these issues. Being a globally competent citizen means thinking about how you can make the world a better place. Staying informed and respecting the views of others helps all Americans. Through that same effort, you can help the rest of the world. (Doyle World History Teacher Edition, p. HT26)

The textbook provides multiple activities and research options to help students understand more about global citizenship. For instance, the Doyle World History textbook encourages students to research international organizations and to discuss specific examples of responsible citizenship in relation to current events. Though the textbooks offer broad-ranging perspectives on citizenship, the focus on government instability, violent conflict and corruption dominates the GSE's government/civic domain severely limiting student's understanding of positive citizenship efforts and examples of government stability across African nations.

Economic Domain: Discussions of Poverty

While discussions of poverty and development on the African continent varied across the three textbooks, an overarching deficit-based and Eurocentric approach was evident. Root causes for African poverty were often located within the continent itself, rather than situated within larger systems of colonial and capitalist oppression. In the Georgia Periodical, a passage states that "industrial development in many countries in Africa has been stalled since the 1970s. This is due in part to the fact that many countries in Africa do not plan for the benefit of their people. There is a personal rule system where public resources are used for private purposes" (Georgia Periodical, week 32, p. 3). This quote ignores the global economic structures that keep African countries in debt as well as the postcolonial legacy that has led to governmental instability in many nations. The language used in the quote also casts African cultures as irrational and greedy, rather than acknowledging the democratic checks and balances that existed in many pre-colonial African societies (Cheeseman & Sishuwa, 2021; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Similarly, in detailing poverty in Angola, the Georgia Periodical stated that the country "is a major producer of oil in Africa, but it is one of the poorest countries, mainly because dishonest government leaders have kept most of the oil money for themselves" (Georgia Periodical, week 4, p. 3). The quote fails to mention the decades-long Civil War that was a proxy for the Cold War conflict between the

United States and the former Soviet Union and involved terrible loss of life and devastation of the country's infrastructure and economy.

The textbooks also tended to encourage Western-based solutions to African poverty. In the Georgia Periodical, one of the assessment exercises in the unit on Africa asked students to:

> Research an African country that receives aid from outside sources, including the United Nations and/ or the United States. Write a letter to your legislator in Washington or to the U.S. Representative to the United Nations urging them to A.) continue sending money to this country B.) increasing the amount of money being sent to this country or C.) stop sending money to this country. Use evidence from your research to support your position. (Georgia Periodical Teacher Supplement, p. 21)

This exercise suggests to students that the primary solution to African poverty comes from legislators in Washington or representatives at the United Nations, rather than from within African communities themselves. This conveys the message that African nations are unable or unwilling to help themselves, and reliant upon international aid for poverty alleviation. The conclusions drawn from the textbook also ignore the role of hegemonic economic institutions in global poverty, such as The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Goldman, 2005).

By comparison, the other two textbooks were more likely to connect contemporary African poverty to the legacy of colonialism. The Doyle World History textbook, for example, outlined in detail the atrocities of King Leopold II's rule in the Belgian Congo, including pictures of child workers who had been subjected to amputations for not meeting rubber quotas. However, this connection was not consistently linked to the present; the textbook states that "war, drought, and famine made it difficult [for African nations] to build modern societies" (Doyle World History, p.750). The assessment for this section asks students why "many African countries struggle to feed their people" (Doyle World History, p. 752) rather than push them to make a direct link to colonialism or the larger global political economy and its inequalities.

Conclusion

Detailed content analysis of three widely used Georgia social studies textbooks offer the potential to better understand the types of lessons on Africa middle school students are receiving throughout the state. Our analysis here argues that Georgia textbooks tend to promote Euro-American perspectives on the African continent, despite widespread calls for decolonization of education and strengthening of multicultural education at the national level. However, our

research also shows that individual textbooks vary considerably on how they choose to address the social studies standards on Africa, meaning that textbook choice has a considerable impact on how students learn about and understand the continent. Overall, our analysis suggests that negative stereotypes of Africa and its peoples continue to be reaffirmed in much of the textbook content. This means that a teacher, principal, or school district's choice of textbook has huge consequences on efforts at multicultural education and cross-cultural understanding. As textbooks look to produce future editions of their products, and as educators choose which textbooks to adopt in their classes, we hope the lessons contained here will be considered and integrated into how Africa is presented to all Georgia students.

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