The purpose of this study is to analyze the treatment of Japanese-American internment during World War II in high school United States history textbooks. Four reasons highlight the selection of this topic for study. First, this historical event was selected because a little over a year ago was the 60th anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order No. 9066, setting in motion an unprecedented internment of Japanese Americans and those of Japanese descent. Even more than fifty-six years after the last center was closed, the Japanese-American internment experience continues to deeply affect the Japanese-American community. Second, the event has enormous relevance to contemporary issues of interest to high school students including equity and social justice. Discriminatory policies, programs, and practices are still present today. Disparities and inequities manifest at local, state, and federal levels, and in both public and private domains. Since the September 11th attack on the United States, which is often compared to the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, the need for understanding of the democratic ideals of social justice and equity and the issues of national security has never been greater. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Arab-American and Muslim communities have been subjected to many of the same experiences that were once visited on Japanese Americans. Third, the event was selected because of my experience teaching the topic at a high school located in a large Japanese-American community, in which approximately 1,000 Japanese Americans currently reside. Finally, I selected the event because of my interest in and concern about teaching this topic in Japan, my home country. In a previous study, I found that Japanese textbooks pay little attention to the event and present only scant officially sanctioned information about the Japanese-American internment during World War II.

Review of Related Literature

Present social studies standards and current emphases on multicultural education support a curriculum that promotes multiple perspectives and use of myriad of materials, multimedia, and electronic resources. However, many teachers persist in using history textbooks as their primary instructional tool in their classrooms. In the United States, people place great faith in United States history textbooks to supply their children with an understanding of American history. Thus, teachers and textbook authors have struggled with the fundamental questions about what content should be included in textbooks because the United States houses the most diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic school population in the world. One of the fundamental questions concerns the presentation by textbooks of issues that are important to understanding the experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States.

After the social protest movement in the 1960s and the 1970s, many scholars engaged in content analysis research focusing on the ethnic treatment of minority groups in textbooks. James Banks examined the treatment of African Americans and race relations in thirty-six history textbooks published in 1964 and 1968. Jesus Garcia examined eight United States history textbooks for secondary students published in 1978 and 1979 and found that writers provided readers with limited descriptions of Hispanics. In a similar analysis of Native American treatment in texts, Garcia reported that authors used a variety of themes to chronicle the role of Native Americans in United States history books; however, the
treatment itself was uneven. A more recent investigation by Harada concentrated on the treatment of Asian Americans in high school United States history textbooks published between 1994 and 1996. Harada discovered that Asian Americans were depicted as passive rather than active agents in texts. She also found that textbooks cited how industrious Asian Americans had successfully assimilated into the mainstream culture, emerging as the “model minority culture.” However, none singled out their recent efforts to organize for greater visibility and voice through such groups as the Asian American Political Alliance and the Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans.

Researchers have also analyzed the treatment of historical events or historical eras in textbooks. Of particular interest to these previous studies was Romanowski’s examination of the treatment of the Japanese-American internment during World War II in five secondary school United States history textbooks published between 1988 and 1992. He found that most of the textbooks examined failed to: (1) provide students with a complete description of the internment camps; (2) develop an adequate discussion concerning the loss of personal property suffered by the victims for the internment; (3) discuss other possible motives for the internment; (4) question American government action; (5) mention restitution made to Japanese Americans; and (6) raise issues centering on democratic ideals and related issues. He concluded that most textbooks presented knowledge in a technical manner, excluding important information and divorcing significant moral issues.

Research Methods and Data Sources

For this study, six high school United States history textbooks were selected. These textbooks were readily available at the Curriculum Resource Center at Boise State University. The six textbooks were adopted for use in Idaho schools in 2002; they will be used in that state for a period of five years.

Content analysis techniques were used in this study. It is important to analyze the content and construction of textbooks and the impact textbooks have on classroom teachers and children because textbooks reflect basic ideas and social values about a national culture. The analysis of textbooks began with a careful reading of each book. Every reference to Japanese-American internment was recorded and the pages were copied for subsequent data analysis and preliminary categorization. References included mention in textual passages, photographs, maps, tables, charts, and captions. References to Japanese-American internment were found in chapters titled “America and the World, 1921-1945,” “The United States in World War II,” “World War II, 1941-1945,” “World War II: Americans at War,” “The World War II Era,” and “A World Conflict.”

Six categories, modified from previous studies about the Japanese-American internment, emerged from the textbook data about the Japanese-American internment. Analysis of the textbooks’ content, developed from the general research questions below:

1. Japanese Arrive:
   - How do textbooks mention the Japanese immigration experience in the early twentieth century?
2. Motives for Internment
   - How do textbooks portray people’s reactions to Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor?
   - How do textbooks discuss the motives for internment?
3. Expulsion and Detention
   - How do textbooks discuss Executive Order No. 9066?
   - How do textbooks explain why Germans and Italians were not interned?
   - How do textbooks present the conditions of internment?
4. The Question of Loyalty
   - How do textbooks discuss Japanese-American loyalty?
   - How do textbooks include information about Japanese-American soldiers?
5. Returning Home
   - How do textbooks describe Japanese Americans after they returned from the internment?
6. Seeking Justice
   - How do textbooks discuss several Japanese Americans who challenged the internment policy?
How do textbooks mention the redress and reparations?

Discussion of Findings

Harada found that Japanese-American internment received the most coverage among the historical events regarding Asian Americans in textbooks published between 1994 and 1996. However, each textbook in this study devoted only from one-half to four pages to Japanese-American internment during World War II. McDougal Littell’s *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century*, with four pages, presents the largest number of pages about the Japanese-American internment. *The Americans* is the only text with a two-page specific section about the 1994 Supreme Court case *Korematsu v. United States*.

Japanese Arrive

All textbooks for this study discuss the topic of the Japanese immigration experience in the early twentieth century. Most of the references to the early Japanese immigration are found in different chapters from those that discuss Japanese-American internment. The depth of coverage varies among texts. Three textbooks develop specific reasons about why and how the Japanese came to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the textbooks include information about early Japanese immigration only briefly, the terms *prejudice* and *racism* often appear in references to the early Japanese immigration. A description of the legal discrimination faced by the Japanese immigrants is found in Prentice Hall’s *Out of Many: A History of the American People*:

> Between 1898 and 1907, more than 80,000 Japanese entered the United States. The vast majority was young men working as contract laborers in the West, mainly California. American law prevented Japanese immigrants (the Issei) from obtaining American citizenship, because they were not white.

Some textbooks provide detailed information of the anti-Japanese campaign in the early twentieth century. For example, three of the six textbooks discuss the 1906 San Francisco Board of Education’s order that Japanese Americans had to attend the designated segregated schools with Chinese and other Asian Americans. These textbooks also provide information about the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907-1908, a decree that the Japanese government agreed to limit the immigration of unskilled workers to the United States in exchange for the repeal of the San Francisco segregation order. Two textbooks provide detailed information of the 1922 Immigration Exclusion Act, barring all immigration from Japan.

Photographs of Japanese Americans are rare in United States history textbooks. Two textbooks contain photographs of the early Japanese immigrants. A photograph in Prentice Hall’s *America: Pathways to the Present* illustrates “picture brides” wearing kimonos with the following caption: “These immigrants from Japan, shown in traditional dress, were known as “picture brides.” Their parents arranged their marriages to Japanese men in America by exchanging photos across the Pacific.”

Longman’s *America: Past and Present* provides a famous photograph of Japanese immigrants including picture brides arriving at the Angel Island immigration station near San Francisco. The caption explains the quota system, limiting immigration from foreign countries and prohibiting immigrants from Japan. However, this photograph suggests the opposite intention.

Motives for Internment

Four of the six textbooks studied limit the discussion of possible reasons for internment to the issues of fear and the need for national security. These textbooks state that many Americans were genuinely fearful of a Japanese attack on the United States after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. Most of the textbooks fail to raise other possible motives for internment camps. Certainly, the related issues of racism, discrimination, civil rights, and ethnocentrism are raised. In most cases, however, they are mentioned only in passing and are marginalized as primary motivations for internment. These textbooks seem to justify internment based solely upon fear and military necessity:

> Japanese and the Americans of Japanese ancestry had long faced discrimination on the West Coast. After Pearl Harbor, their situation became much worse. For no good reason, other citizens blamed them for what the Japanese militarists
had done and even began to suspect that they might be helping the enemy across the Pacific. Western politicians and frightened military men pressured FDR to remove them from the coastal states.18

Prentice Hall’s Out of Many: A History of the American People raises the issue of institutional racism by mentioning the titles of popular songs and a racist comment credited to General John L. Dewitt. The text indicates that the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast and their incarceration couldn’t have occurred without the prior history of prejudice and legal discrimination:

Charges of sedition masked long-standing racial prejudice. The press began to use the word “Jap” in headlines, while political cartoonists employed blatant racial stereotypes. Popular songs appeared with titles like “You’re a Sap, Mister Jap, to make a Yankee Cranky.” The head of the Western Defense Command, General John L. Dewitt, called Japanese “an enemy race,” bounded by “racial affinities” to their homeland no matter how many generations removed. “The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date,” an army report suggested, with twisted logic, “is a disturbing and confirming indication that action will be taken….”19

Only one textbook, McDougal Littel’s The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century, notes that Japanese Americans who lived in Hawaii experienced vastly different treatment during the war than Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast:

The surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii had stunned the nation. After the bombing, panic-stricken citizens feared that the Japanese would soon attack the United States. Frightened citizens believed false rumors that Japanese Americans were committing sabotage by mining coastal harbors and poisoning vegetables.

This sense of fear and uncertainty caused a wave of prejudice against Japanese Americans. Early in 1942, the War Department called for the mass evacuation of all Japanese Americans in Hawaii. General Delos Emmons, the military governor of Hawaii, resisted the order because 37 percent of the people in Hawaii were Japanese Americans. To remove them would have destroyed the islands’ economy and hindered U.S. military operations there.20

Expulsion and Detention

All textbooks for this study discuss the topic of President Roosevelt’s order requiring the removal of the people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. Two textbooks use the term “Executive Order 9066.” Although most of the textbooks don’t develop any clear reasons why President Roosevelt signed the order, two textbooks discuss the fact that he signed the order for the national security:

Western politicians and frightened military men pressured FDR to remove them [Japanese Americans] from the coastal states. President Roosevelt gave in. Early in 1942, under the excuse of national security, 110,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up.21

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order requiring the removal of people of Japanese ancestry from California and parts of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona. Based on strong recommendation from the military, he justified this step as necessary for the national security.22

Of the six textbooks analyzed, only one text includes information on American citizens of German and Italian ancestry when President Roosevelt signed the order. However, this description is very brief. “Officials told foreign-born Italians and Germans to move away from the coast, but within a few months they canceled those orders.”23

All other texts exclude the information that nationals of Germany and Italy were interned for a short period of time but not en masse. Additionally, no textbook explains why American citizens of German and Italian ancestry weren’t interned, while American citizens of Japanese ancestry were interned. No textbook discusses the racial prejudice including rampant anti-Japanese sentiment.

A rich textual and visual treatment in textbooks of the conditions of internment is vital in order for students to gain a complex understanding of the event. All textbooks discuss the conditions of the internment camps, however the textbooks tend to differ in discussion of the living conditions experienced by Japanese-American citizens subjected to life in the internment camps. The coverage ranges from a brief description that is rather incomplete to a complex portrayal that encourages students to look at issues of justice, equality, discrimination, and prejudice. Two of the six textbooks exclude particular information pertaining to the conditions of the camps, while the other four textbooks provide details about internment
such as the personal property losses suffered, and personal accounts of victims of internment. The following excerpts illustrate the various textbooks' portrayal of the conditions of internment:

All the camps were located in desolate areas. Families lived in wooden barracks covered with tar paper, in rooms equipped only with cots, blankets, and light bulbs. People had to share toilet, bathing, and dining facilities. Barbed wire surrounded the camps, and armed guards patrolled the grounds. Although the government referred to these as relocation camps, one journalist pointed out that they seemed “uncomfortably close to concentration camps.”

Herded into ten hastily built detention centers in seven western and southern states, they lived as prisoners in tar-papered barracks behind barbed wire, guarded by armed troops.

Four textbooks contain photographs regarding Japanese-American internment. All of these photographs illustrate Japanese Americans during some phase of being forcibly relocated to one of ten internment camps in the United States. None shows photographs of the internment buildings, dining halls, schools, or the interior of the internment camp barracks. Two textbooks, Prentice Hall’s *America: Pathways to the Present* and Longman’s *America: Past and Present*, use the same photograph of one Japanese-American family waiting for a bus to take them from their hometown in California to the internment camp. Six children on the photograph seem not to know where they were going. A photograph in Prentice Hall’s *A History of the United States* depicts one Japanese family in Los Angeles waiting for a train to take them to an internment camp. A photograph in McDougal Littell’s *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* shows a Japanese-American woman carrying her sleeping daughter during their relocation to an internment camp. A photo in Prentice Hall’s *The American Nation* illustrates several Japanese Americans boarding a bus for an internment camp. One textbook, Prentice Hall’s *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, contains a picture drawn by a Japanese-American artist. The picture illustrates several Japanese Americans who were forced to move to an internment camp.

Only two textbooks contain maps in reference to the Japanese-American internment camps. The maps show the locations of the ten World War II-era internment camps located in the United States. The map in Longman’s *America: Past and Present* also shows a military area or an exclusion zone on the West Coast.

Inaccuracies regarding Japanese Americans in Hawaii are noted in one text, Prentice Hall’s *A History of the United States*. The text states that the Japanese Americans living in Hawaii weren’t interned. It was true that Japanese Americans in Hawaii weren’t similarly subjected to wholesale incarceration, however some were imprisoned on an individual basis and held in prison camps on the islands or transferred to mass detention or smaller internment camps on the mainland.

*The Question of Loyalty*

All texts concede that internment was harsh and unfair treatment for Japanese-American citizens. Three of the six textbooks indicate that there was never any proof of disloyalty by Japanese Americans. Only one textbook includes textual information about the 1941 confidential report to the President and the Secretary of State that certified the Japanese Americans possessed an extraordinary degree of loyalty to the United States: “Although a State Department intelligence report certified their loyalty, Japanese Americans—two-thirds of whom were American-born citizens—became the only ethnic group singled out for legal sanctions.”

All six textbooks address Japanese-Americans service in the military. All of these textbooks include information on the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, comprised of volunteers and draftees from the ten mainland internment camps. All textbooks praise the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as the most decorated American unit in United States military history, for its size and length of service. Two textbooks mention the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), made up of Japanese Americans who were sent to the Pacific Theater. Only one textbook illustrates the process by which some Japanese Americans were allowed to leave the camps and join the armed forces:

Beginning in 1943, individual Nisei could win release by pledging their loyalty and finding a job away from the West Coast. Some thirty-five thousand left the camps during the next two years, including more than thirteen thousand who joined the armed forces. The all-Nisei 442nd Combat Team served gallantly in the European theater, losing more than
five hundred men in battle and winning more than a thousand citations for bravery. One World War II veteran remembers that when his unit was in trouble, the commander would issue a familiar appeal: “Call in the Japs.”

Information about the loyalty review program administrated by the United States government isn’t found in any of the textbooks. In February 1943, interned men and women aged seventeen and older were required to answer a questionnaire swearing their loyalty to the United States. In each of the ten internment camps they had to vow their willingness to serve in the United States armed forces. The contradictory and confusing nature of many of the questions caused conflicts in families. The questionnaire seemed to be used to determine whether an individual would be “at risk” for committing espionage. Following the administration of the questionnaire, some Japanese Americans were allowed to work in war production facilities, serve in the military, or were released for other work outside the internment camp. It was also true that some refused to cooperate or didn’t sign the oath.

Returning Home

Four textbooks mention the unfair losses of individual property suffered by Japanese Americans during and through the war years. Two textbooks discuss Japanese Americans who renounced their American citizenship at the end of the war. Over five thousand chose to live in Japan at war’s end, a substantial portion of the population. In addition, details about the majority of Japanese Americans who returned to their homes in California, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona from the internment camps were excluded from the textbooks. No discussion was found related to the violence and discrimination experienced by Japanese Americans at the end of World War II. According to the Japanese-American Citizen League, more acts of violence and terrorism were committed against Japanese Americans at the end of war than at the beginning. Many restaurants, hotels, barbershops, grocery stores, and other public accommodations refused to serve Japanese Americans upon return to home communities. This lack of information in the textbooks seems to imply that “everything returned to normal” at the end of the war. Despite the well-publicized accomplishments of the 442nd Army Regimental Combat Team, the names of Japanese-American soldiers were removed from community honor rolls, and the remains of Japanese-American soldiers killed in action overseas were refused burial in some hometown cemeteries.

Seeking Justice

Although all but one textbook discusses the redress and reparations for the Japanese-American internees, the depth of coverage about Japanese Americans’ seeking justice varies among texts. Three of the six textbooks discuss the 1944 Supreme Court case, Korematsu v. United States. McDougal Littell’s The Americans is the only text with a two-page section about the case, while two other texts provide only a short paragraph. The Americans contains a photograph in which President Bill Clinton is presenting Fred Korematsu with a Presidential Medal of Freedom during a ceremony at the White House on January 15, 1998. Five of the six textbooks discuss the court cases and government actions that formalized apologies and compensated the ancestors of internment camp victims after World War II. These textbooks discuss Public Law 100-383, signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, in which formal apologies were made to Japanese Americans who were interned during the war. In addition, President George Bush issued redress payments of $20,000 along with letters of apology to approximately 60,000 survivors of the Japanese-American internment in 1990. However, only two textbooks mention the important role of the Japanese American Citizen League. Additionally, there is scant reference to the role played by third generation Japanese Americans, the Sansei, in bringing about the redress legislation forty years after internment.

Conclusion

Compared to the 1991-1992 textbooks cited in Romanowski’s study, this investigation finds that more recently published textbooks have improved. For example, references to Public Law 100-383 are found in four of the six textbooks analyzed in this study, while only one textbook in Romanowski’s study
referred to the topic. Additionally, recently published textbooks attend to the important Supreme Court case, *Korematsu v. United States*. One text allowed two pages, with sufficiently rich information about this case, which should enable students to think critically about the diverse reasons why Japanese Americans were forced to move from their homes into internment camps during World War II.

This study also finds some consistencies with Romanowski’s findings. First, most of the textbooks surveyed in this study still don’t provide sufficient information about early Japanese immigration. Additional information is necessary to explain why many Japanese migrated to the United States, why they established communities in California, and why they had long faced discrimination. Second, most of the textbooks limit the discussion of possible reasons for internment to the issues of fear and the need for national security. Most of the textbooks fail to raise other possible motives for internment camps and the issues of racism, discrimination, civil rights, and ethnocentrism are eliminated from the discussion. Most of the textbooks seem to justify internment based upon fear and military necessity. Third, most of the textbooks exclude information about the different historical and economic situations faced by Japanese Americans living in the mainland and in Hawaii. Textbooks need to provide reasons for why there wasn’t an internment camp in Hawaii. Fourth, all textbooks fail to ask an important question about why American citizens of German and Italian ancestries weren’t put into the internment camps. Textbooks should include sufficient information for students to judge whether the restrictions were based on military necessity or on racial discrimination. Fifth, some textbooks still exclude particular information pertaining to the conditions of the camps. All textbooks don’t include depictions or photographs of the conditions inside the internment camps, and four of the six textbooks don’t provide a map of the locations of the internment camps. Some textbooks lack personal accounts of internment, which would assist students in engaging in historical empathy. Incorporating literature, art, and poetry, through the presentation of visual materials, would assist teachers in integrating diverse perspectives on the Japanese-American internment experience. Sixth, most of the textbooks studied fail to define the meaning of loyalty. Textbooks don’t all include information about the 1943 Loyalty Review Program. Teachers should provide an opportunity for students to think deeply about the meanings of “loyalty” and “disloyalty.” Teachers also should present the experiences of Japanese Americans who didn’t substantiate their “loyalty.” Finally, textbooks fail to address that more acts of violence and terrorism were committed against Japanese Americans at the end of war than at the beginning. Additional information is necessary to help students understand that discrimination toward Japanese Americans didn’t end after the war.

Finally, most of the textbooks don’t fully assist students in obtaining the judgment, perspectives, and knowledge of humans that are important to the study of society. These findings also suggest that several textbooks fail to develop students’ critical-thinking skills and critical knowledge about citizenship by presenting a mystified representation of American history. Thus, these types of textbooks could be viewed as imperfect educational tools. In response, teachers must develop a “critical eye” when reading and using these textbooks when they teach history. Teachers must attempt to go beyond textbooks. Various alternative methods other than textbook-based teaching of the Japanese-American internment should be used to provide students with additional interpretive and analytical opportunities.

Textbooks Included in the Study

1. *A History of the United States*  
   Prentice Hall  
   2002

2. *America: Pathways to the Present*  
   Prentice Hall  
   2003

3. *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century*  
   McDougal Littell  
   2003

4. *America: Past and Present*  
   Longman  
   2003

5. *Out of Many: A History of the American People*  
   Prentice Hall  
   2002

6. *The American Nation*  
   Prentice Hall  
   2003

NOTES


12. Ibid., 37.


24. Ibid., 859.


