

AMERICAN INDIANS IN THE TEXAS FOURTH GRADE CLASSROOM: AN
ANALYSIS

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Abstract

In fourth grade social studies, students are mandated by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to learn about the beginnings of Texas and within this, various tribes of American Indians. However, there are many issues surrounding the appropriateness of depictions of American Indians throughout history and today. By examining larger issues of stereotypical portrayals of American Indians in the media and bias in the Eurocentric school system of the United States, this thesis will shed insight on how these issues are manifesting in the curriculum and classrooms of Texas today. This thesis aims to help teachers critically analyze the Texas fourth grade social studies curriculum and the materials used to teach the curriculum.

Foreword

Students enrolled in Texas elementary schools are required to gain knowledge and skillsets based on their grade level which are adopted by the Texas State Board of Education. This knowledge and skillset is delineated by the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) (Chapter 113, 2010). Fourth grade marks the first time that the TEKS require students to learn about a specific culture in social studies classes. While there are open ended TEKS about good citizens, prominent authors or artists, and historical figures that could include any culture, in the fourth grade it is explicitly stated that Texas students need to learn about several nations of American Indians. While talking about any group of people, terminology is especially important. There is much debate on what to call the indigenous people of North America as a whole whether it be Indigenous, Native American, American Indian, Native, Indian, or many other titles that various individuals use and whether the groups that these persons belong to are tribes, nations, bands etc. Although there are many reasons to use or avoid these terms out of respect for unique individual purposes, there is no unanimously agreed upon term. Therefore I will use the term American Indian(s) as I talk about the important issue of how Texas teachers educate students about American Indians and the representations of American Indians in literature available to students. This term is used for consistency as it is the term used in the TEKS which are heavily focused on in this thesis and due to the use of this particular term in many resources that I have referred to in writing this thesis. Just as it is important to realize that there are hundreds of nations included under the all-encompassing term “American Indian” and within those nations are unique and diverse individuals, it is also important to acknowledge the varied personal preferences of these

individuals in regards to which term is the most suitable. The preferences of each individual in regards to how they identify and wish to be addressed should always be respected. Due to the impossibility of my knowing the preference of every individual who may read this thesis, I use the term “American Indian” with the hope that any displeasure with the terminology selected will not detract from the message and/or content of this thesis.

The Formation of Stereotypical Views of American Indians

Schemas are cognitive tools that help us organize and store new information. They help us categorize the vast amounts of information that we take in and make it easier to recall information. When information that does not fit into our schema is encountered there is a feeling of disequilibrium and the mind has to accommodate the schema to incorporate the new information. This results in higher order thinking and cognitive development (Pitts, 2013). Stereotypes occur when new information is not learned, therefore not accommodated, and persons act solely on the information already within their schemas. This is why when many non-native people hear the words “American Indian,” images of tipis, headdresses, moccasins, buckskin with fringe and war axes come to mind. This happens despite the fact that there are 566 federally recognized Nations in the United States and that each of these Nations has a distinct culture (“Tribal Governance,” n.d.). Stereotypes are not inherently bad, but when living people are the subjects of stereotypes, ills of society such as discrimination and prejudice can arise. When children are only exposed to oversimplified and misrepresentative media, they are prone to generalizing diverse and culturally rich tribes into one stereotypical view of American Indians. This, unfortunately, is happening in classrooms

across the United States. A poignant quote from poet Adrienne Rich articulates the feelings that many young American Indians are subjected to when their history is left out or misconstrued in the classroom and/or their culture is portrayed stereotypically: “When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (Rich, 1986). This has implications for young American Indians in the public school system. American Indians are very often portrayed as being a part of the past and not members of modern society, a view that, according to Rich, takes away the reflections of young American Indians. In fact, Shear, Knowles, Soden and Castro found that in the United States, 86.66% of state-level history standards dictate the teaching of American Indians in the context of pre-1900 U.S. History. This is perpetuated by the Eurocentric master narrative that controls the media used to educate students and that places value on painting American Indians as relics of a far off past (Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015). This generalization can have negative effects for non-American Indian students as well. Non-American Indian students who buy into this view of “extinct” American Indians gain an education where they are ill-informed of a large and diverse group of individuals. This contributes to the cultural insensitivity that we continue to see in our society at large (e.g. offensive Halloween costumes, appropriation of traditional clothing, and stereotypical mascots). This is a serious issue that must be battled anywhere and anytime American Indians are discussed, such as in social studies curriculum. The obstacles teachers face, effectiveness of the current Texas fourth grade curriculum in combatting stereotype formation and ways for teachers to foster an authentic knowledge of American Indian history and culture follow.

The Educator's Role in Breaking down Stereotypes: Fighting the White Wash

According to the National Council for the Social Studies,

Our global community owes children opportunities to explore the variety and complexity of human experience through a dynamic and meaningful education. By grounding children in democratic principles and immersing them in age-appropriate democratic strategies, they will acquire the foundational skills that prepare them to participate respectfully and intelligently in a nation and world marked by globalization, interdependence, human diversity, and societal change. (Bennet, Berson & Dobson, 2009)

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educator to not only teach the state required curriculum, but to also help children create a strong foundation of democratic principles such as tolerance, appropriate discourse strategies, and active participation.

The responsibility of the educator is further magnified considering that the media that the child is exposed to do not do a sufficient job of accurately and authentically representing minority populations. There are a myriad examples of this point from Disney's Pocahontas to the name and mascot of the Washington Redskins. Children's literature is a vast source of information in a developing child's life. Where T.V. and computers may not be as accessible to some, books are utilized throughout school and are widely circulated. If books did an acceptable job accurately portraying the population then the educator would just have to provide books and the problem of stereotyping would be quickly remedied or at least less prominent. However, teachers must be incredibly selective of books because this is not the case. This is proven in a study by Agosto, Hughes-Hassell and Gilmore-Clough that found that out of 4,255 reviews of fiction published between 1992 and 2001, only 16 percent contained a non-white protagonist. These statistics are appalling in and of themselves, but shed even more light

on the problem when compared to the fact that the actual percentage of non-whites in the 2000 census was closer to 33 percent. The 16 percent figure is a combined grouping of minorities and, out of that 16 percent, 26 percent of protagonists were American Indian (Agosto, Hughes-Hassell, & Gilmore-Clough, 2003). The quantity of American Indian protagonists in the 16 percent figure representing minorities may seem promising, but it is necessary to note that the quality of these representations is just as, if not more, important than the actual number of them. Donna Norton argues the following criteria for books with minority characters (as cited in LaBonty, 1995):

The characters must be portrayed as unique individuals rather than cultural and/or racial representatives, the book must transcend stereotypes in appearance, behavior, and character traits, physical diversity must be evident, the culture must be accurately portrayed, if the story deals with factual information, it must be accurate, dialect cannot be presented as substandard English, and offensive and degrading vocabulary must be avoided. (LaBonty, 1995)

When critically examining popular books about or that feature American Indians that are available to students do they really pass the test? Consider *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* by Susan Jeffers, an incredibly popular and beloved book about environmental awareness based on American Indian beliefs. However well-intentioned Jeffers may have been in creating this work, she has still created a problematic text. According to Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* does not meet the criteria. In *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* the text of the book is attributed to Seattle, a leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish people from the Pacific Coast of North America. Since the 1800's, four different versions of Seattle's speech have been seen. Jeffers includes a note in her book stating that she has adapted Seattle's message as many have before her. However, The Suquamish tribe's website puts forward an 1887 version of the speech that pertains to the

Native-White relationship at the time rather than the environmental message that is in Jeffers's adaptation. Also, the illustrations in this book are problematic. Most of the paintings represent plains cultures even though Seattle and his people are from the Northwest. Several of the illustrations show the American Indian characters as ghost-like figures while the White main character is in full color. This coupled with a lack of any American Indians in a modern setting suggests that American Indians are no longer in existence (Mendoza & Reese, 2001). In most popular children's books concerning American Indians there are very problematic themes that can be seen as learning experiences if brought up and analyzed by teachers and students like Reese and Mendoza have done above. However, if those opportunities are not taken advantage of due to a lack of background knowledge, lack of time, or lack of resources, then students can, and most likely will, take the information that they are receiving from their teacher and author at face value and incorporate it into their working stereotypical knowledge of American Indians. Unfortunately, this problem is still widespread. According to the CCBC, in 2014 only about 1% of the 3,500 books they reviewed were about American Indians and only about .6% were by American Indian authors ("Children's Books," 2015). This data does not tell us that every book by American Indian authors was necessarily about American Indians or featured American Indian characters and says nothing about the quality of the books about American Indians that they reviewed. If the books reviewed were subjected to the guidelines set out by LaBonty or other prominent reviewers such as Mendoza and Reese, and were required to meet them before being included in the data, would these percentages be similar? Under-representation and misrepresentation are obviously still major issues in children's literature when it comes to American Indians. Therefore,

careful selection of quality children's literature is a way to help children broaden the nature of the information being incorporated into their schemas and can lessen the effects of stereotyping.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education in the United States can be traced back to the civil rights movement. With the demolition of "separate but equal" minority groups pressed for equal representation in the curriculum which at the time made their heritage virtually invisible. The National Association for Multicultural Education defines multicultural education as the following:

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents...it affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice (Definitions, 2015).

Multicultural education is very important in the United States as many cultures have called America their home in the past and the present. Therefore, it is essential that educators give students resources and information that authentically represent the past and present lives of people from various cultures such as well written children's literature. Another way to ensure the educational value of multicultural education is the use of primary sources, artifacts that were created during the era that is being studied. When created by a person from the culture that is to be learned about, these artifacts are generally more reliable than third party accounts from outsiders, and are good sources of

information from an opposing and often unheard viewpoint. However, just as with children's literature, educators must be critical of what and how they present. Because primary sources were created in the past, usually in the far past, the opportunity for various retellings to surface arises. By searching for and utilizing accurate materials that provide a context and background knowledge for the primary sources used, educators can assure that students get the full benefit of primary sources in the classroom: an accurate sense of the American Indian experience (Stanton, 2012).

Another way to provide good multicultural education is through the use of contrapuntal pedagogy. Contrapuntal pedagogy is the critical analysis of various forms of media in which students compare and contrast various perspectives, as well as come to conclusions about the effect of mainstream media on the history that is accepted by the masses. This framework boosts the effectiveness of multicultural education and is very effective for marginalized minority groups whose accounts are often unheard. This is due to the fact that the key point of this pedagogical practice is finding the truth by comparing and contrasting two or more perspectives on a subject rather than solely relying on the historical account provided by the dominant culture (Mason & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). This analytical take incorporates often unheard and under-used knowledge and contributions of American Indian peoples into the learning process, further enriching student understanding. Utilizing contrapuntal pedagogy in the classroom would help solve the problem that Shear, Knowles, Soden and Castro (2015) lay out as such:

The inclusion and exclusion of certain content, and the words by which those histories and cultures are presented, arguably promote a whitewashed version of history void of the multiple perspectives (or viewpoints) on Indigenous/U.S. settler relations that would promote a more rich and complex understanding of U.S. history. (Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015)

At the worst, multicultural education is a teacher dumping facts and art projects (usually related to spiritual or sacred items) on children on the day, week or month set aside for a particular culture, coined “tourist curriculum”. The focus is often on the differences between the culture to be “studied” and the dominant one rather than the similarities between them (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). A common practice that exemplifies this poor attempt at multicultural curriculum is having children dress up as American Indians for Thanksgiving. Children wear construction paper headbands with feathers sticking out and act “Native.” This activity, and others like it, do not teach students about different cultures. In fact, they are usually embodiments of the same racist stereotypes that the children have manifested after years of seeing the same portrayals in literature and in other forms of media (Lovern, 2012).

Another facet of poorly set up multicultural education is placing higher value on the perceived differences of the majority population and the culture to be learned about rather than the similarities. This is deemed *otherness*, and presents itself commonly in the instructional language used in the classroom. Due to this dichotomy between minority cultures and the dominant culture, discussions about minorities, such as American Indians, in the classroom often reflect a lack of traits that are seen as normal within the confines of the dominant culture, which in the United States would be white, middle class and male (Mason & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). This style of communication contributes to the idea that not being in the dominant culture is an inherently bad thing; the ideas, rituals, and other aspects of one’s life are not respectable and important in and of themselves, but are actually a deficiency due to their misalignment with dominant culture values.

At this time, it seems that most multicultural education is, to some extent, subject to the aforementioned shortcomings. However, there are techniques that are being tested and integrated into schools that help to remedy and improve multicultural curriculum in the classroom. Perhaps the most developmentally appropriate and promising solution to the problem of the “tourist curriculum” is to incorporate contributions and stories from various racial and cultural groups into the classroom environment and in all subject areas (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). This requires the teacher to have books by and about various culture groups in the classroom libraries, posters and materials that represent various culture groups, and a conscious effort to include notable people and ideas from different cultural backgrounds in all subject areas.

Now that some background information concerning some of the major issues concerning American Indians in the media and curriculum has been laid out, the specifics of American Indians in the Texas curriculum will be discussed.

American Indians in the Texas Curriculum

Texas educators are required to teach to the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) that are adopted by the State Board of Education. The TEKS are statements that describe what the student should know or be able to do by the end of the year. Teachers need to be very familiar with these TEKS in order to make lesson plans and activities for their students based on them rather than trying to choose specific TEKS to try and base activities on. This way, students get to experience the interconnectedness of history and are more likely to grasp more difficult concepts. Of all the TEKS in the Texas K-12 curriculum in all subject areas, American Indians are only represented in 4%

of them (Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015). Of the small number of TEKS that do represent American Indians, it is clear that there are issues with what the TEKS cover and the phrasing used to convey what needs to be covered. For example, in the fourth grade social studies TEKS, seven out of the eight total that refer to American Indians do so in the past tense, as if American Indians are now extinct and are meant to be studied about as ancient relics. Of the history specific TEKS that concern American Indians, two out of the four TEKS require that the information be limited to “before European colonization.” By limiting what is to be learned to “before European colonization”, the language used is implying that all the history that is significant to learn about American Indians took place before Europeans came to America and took over the land and, by default, the history. This promotes the Eurocentric narrative that permeates social studies education. In the fourth grade, learning about American Indians stops at the turn of the 20th century. This has implications for stereotype formation and the idea that American Indians are no longer a viable population. This abrupt stop in the timeline is not necessarily a malicious attempt to misrepresent American Indians by the State Board of Education, rather in the fourth grade students are looking at this particular time period. Students are supposed to learn about American Indians in a more modern setting in later grades. However, the number of TEKS that explicitly mention American Indians drops significantly as students get into higher grade levels. Due to this, educators need to make a conscious effort to include notable American Indian persons of various tribes throughout their curriculum to combat the lack of American Indians portrayed both in a modern setting and in general. This will help students integrate various views of American Indian peoples into their schemas and combat the formation of stereotypes.

Teaching the Fourth Grade TEKS

As the content of the TEKS and strategies for teaching this content are addressed, a note on formatting needs to be made. Teachers are constantly differentiating and modifying curriculum to meet the needs of their diverse and unique students. This is to ensure that the material is being taught in the most developmentally appropriate way. According to renowned developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, children’s “understanding moves from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the complex, and from the known to the unknown (Pitts, 2013).” While there may be some debate as to the validity of Piaget’s stages and the lack of sociocultural influences in his work, it is generally agreed that children learn in this way. Keeping this in mind, while teaching the TEKS, or anything for that matter, it is important to build on the background knowledge that students already have and use that knowledge to connect to new information. A phrase that demonstrates how to learn about different groups of people in this developmentally appropriate way is “build on similarities, appreciate differences” which is used in the book *Lessons from Turtle Island: Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms* (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). By having students discover ways that they are similar to people of other cultures they develop empathy and respect among other traits. Helping children learn to appreciate other peoples’ differences helps them develop tolerance and understanding of different cultures. These are skills that will help children not only in the classroom, but in their lives. This format avoids the “study” of other cultures as separate units due to the interconnectedness of the material and the unique contributions of students based on their own diverse lives. The suggestions and activities that are included throughout this thesis are made to be in line with this way of thinking.

As Wayne Journell points out, the Texas standards are “weakly framed” meaning that the actual TEKS do not give a lot of information on the topic at hand and therefore the teacher must utilize various resources to supplement the TEKS to ensure learning goals are met. This is a time consuming task and due to the pressures of high-stakes testing, many teachers under such time restraints teach the information explicitly stated in the state standards and not much else. The increased focus on standardized tests has unfortunate side effects in the realm of multicultural education because the majority of social studies curriculum still perpetuates a Eurocentric narrative of conquest and triumph (Journell, 2009). This makes it especially difficult for teachers when trying to teach in a culturally balanced way. In doing so, teachers must teach beyond the TEKS. Teachers already have a tremendous workload and the pressures of standardized testing are immense making this moral obligation of culturally responsible teaching an incredibly daunting task. Adding to the difficulty is the lack of appropriate and unbiased accounts of American Indian life and interactions in curriculum material in the schools. For example, though the Karankawa people had renowned adaptability and survival skills, the prevailing notion in trade books and textbooks is the sensational idea that they were all savages and cannibals rather than a more balanced perspective that authentically portrays the tribe (Geneser, 2011).

The content of the fourth grade social studies TEKS focus largely on three groups of people: American Indians, Spanish settlers and American settlers. Though each of these groups had very significant roles in the creation of Texas as we know it today, the Spanish and especially the American settlers are often given the most attention. As Journell points out, “there is no shortage of Euro-American males that are guaranteed to

appear in an American history course. Yet, no American Indian appears overwhelmingly important enough to be included as part of a general survey of American history (Journell, 2009).” It is due to facts like these that a critical analysis of what is being asked to be taught is necessary. It is left up to the educator to consciously and conscientiously fill in the gaps in the curriculum with pertinent information to afford children a complete and balanced education.

Misconceptions about American Indians

Before educators delve into the content mandated by the TEKS it is likely that some students will come into the fourth grade with misconceptions about American Indians firmly rooted in their mind. This is largely due to the stereotypical depictions found in so much of the media. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take the time to clear up any misconceptions with students. Outlined are some of the more common misconceptions and information that can be helpful to contest them.

➤ All American Indians Look(ed) and Live(d) Alike

While this may not be something that persons are consciously aware of their belief in, the matter is that many representations of American Indians are usually based on plains culture. Headdresses, buckskin and moccasins commonly come to mind when someone hears the all-encompassing term American Indian. Due to the fact that this stereotype is perpetuated through so many media, it is up to the educator to debunk this myth explicitly in the curriculum. What a tribe or band wore or how they lived was largely dependent on where they lived as well as other cultural norms. The Karankawa who lived on islands and the coast off the Gulf of Mexico were known for their tanned

skin, scant coverings, tattoos and piercings, and adornment of shells and lived in portable ba-aks. They moved from island to mainland in small canoes and were known for their hunting prowess. On the other hand, the Caddo lived in southeastern Texas in villages with large huts and covered themselves with intricate cotton and leather outfits. They were a farming culture that utilized elaborate pottery to hold food and to cook.

Even the terms “Karankawa” and “Caddo” actually refer to multiple bands of people with their own distinct cultures. If this is the diversity in tribes that inhabited Texas, imagine the diversity across what is now the United States. It is simply irrational to think that such generalizations can apply to such a rich, diverse people. Even today there is great diversity among American Indians. Some live on reservations; others live in cities spread across the United States. Also, there is diversity in various physical traits depending on ancestry and location. Not all American Indians have long raven hair and dark skin like Disney’s representation of Pocahontas. It is important to respect and appreciate the diversity of American Indian people. It is up to the educator to lead this discussion and help children overcome this misconception.

➤ American Indian Techniques Were Primitive

This may seem an inherent truth today, but if the lives of American Indians were looked at in a more fair way this way of thinking turns out to be very wrong. When someone is comparing the lifestyles of American Indians to other Europeans and coming to the conclusion that American Indians were primitive, it is largely due to the fact that they are comparing rural America to somewhere like urban London. If instead they compared the massive metropolises of the Incan or the city of Cahokia to the rural lands of Scotland during the same time period would the indigenous population still be seen as

primitive (Loewen, 2007)? In fact, many American Indians living in the times before the sprawling cities and highways we see today were extremely resourceful and employed very intelligent ways to make a living. Consider the case of Cahokia, a large sophisticated city in what is now St. Louis that was larger in the 1100's than London or Paris. Built there was the third largest pyramid mound in the world. Khufu's pyramid (also known as the Great Pyramid of Giza and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) was not as massive. However, many Americans today have not heard of Cahokia, or the pyramid mound known as Monks Mound (Kehoe, 2013). Evidence of American Indian prowess in the fields of agriculture, medicine, and adaptability are available as well. Also, American Indian prosperity and growth was stunted by invaders who brought plagues that wiped out villages and left economies and agricultural centers in shambles. When the TEKS limit much of the mandated curriculum to after European contact, students miss out on a rich history of advances and the beginnings of a lot of items that we eat or use today. Also, when coupled with a misrepresentative comparison of rural and urban societies, the curriculum promotes the Eurocentric viewpoint that European settlers were more advanced while the American Indian populations were primitive and ignorant.

➤ American Indians Foolishly Gave All Their Land Away or Didn't Use it Correctly

It is a common misconception to believe that American Indians foolishly signed away their land and were too incompetent to understand the concept of treaties and other European ideals. However, these occurrences did not stem from foolishness or ignorance, rather the radical differences in beliefs about ownership. American Indians in general were much less possessive of their property. Many things were shared including personal property and land. Due to the nomadic nature of many tribes, land was usually only

considered to be owned as it was being used. Many American Indians were more interested in claiming the resources on the land rather than the land itself. Due to the movement of game and changes in seasons, many tribes moved around a lot and therefore the land that they claimed changed with their movements. This is very different from what Europeans thought of as land ownership. To them, land was bought or traded for and was owned exclusively by the person who bought it. No one else could use the land unless the owner allowed it. Many times Europeans bought land from American Indians, but the forceful seizure of land was also very common. However, the purchase of land meant two different things to the Europeans and American Indians. When American Indians sold land to Europeans, it was not understood to mean a full transfer of rights to the land. Rather, it was typically understood to mean that Europeans could live on the land in a tribe's territory but rights to the resources such as game, plants and rivers would still be shared. Europeans also misunderstood the hierarchy of power in tribes. They assumed that the leader of a tribe or band could speak and act for all of his people when in fact his powers were much more limited (Walbert, 2008). On top of this, many distinct bands make up the encompassing terms foreigners gave certain tribes such as Jumano or Comanche. What was agreed upon with one band didn't make it agreed upon for another. With all of the cultural differences clashes seem almost inevitable and due to failing numbers due to disease and battles, the American Indians often ended up on the losing sides of these clashes. In very much the same way, when tribes such as the Lipan Apache signed treaties with the Spanish there were similar misunderstandings. It must have been baffling for the Spanish, who created a peace treaty with the Lipan Apache, when there were still raids on their settlements. However, they pushed their own monarchal

framework on the Lipan Apache, failing to recognize that it did not necessarily mean all persons identified as Lipan Apache felt bound to the treaty. Also, it was a foreign concept to the Lipan Apache that signing a piece of paper meant being bound to someone for eternity rather than solely when it was beneficial to both parties. When the TEKS mandate that teachers teach students about relations with American Indians, it is important for teachers to present the various interactions, whether it be the creation of treaties, the selling of land, or the passing of laws that impact American Indian lifestyles, with an emphasis on the importance of cultural norms rather than the perceived incompetence of a people that are different.

➤ American Indians Were Savages

As far as tribes in Texas are concerned, the Karankawa are perhaps the most fitting example of perceived savagery. Many accounts from Spanish, French and American settlers first describe the Karankawa as an attractive, athletic, adaptable and skillful people and many describe the tribe as friendly. In fact, diaries written by some of the first Europeans to make contact with the tribe describe how the Karankawa were integral to their survival. However, as the value of the ports and land that the Karankawa inhabited became clear, the view of the tribe began to change drastically (Geneser, 2011). They were seen as barriers to the land the Europeans thought they deserved and the settlers needed a reason to remove them from the equation. This put the settlers in a state known as cognitive dissonance where they held a set of contradicting beliefs, namely that the Karankawa were intelligent and resourceful people like themselves and that they were not deserving of the land that the settlers wanted. Loewen points out that the most common outcome of such cognitive dissonance is the modification of one's opinions so

that they match one's planned actions. In this case it involved turning American Indians from hospitable to savage, and from intelligent to stupid in order to justify the seizure of their land and eventually the eradication of the tribe (Loewen, 2007). This happened to countless American Indian populations as European settlers needed to utilize a way of thinking that justified their westward expansion. This way of thinking has even showed up in textbooks and trade books used to teach children the history of Texas. Many texts focus on the negative and sensationalized views that enemies of the Karankawa put forth, particularly their reputation for cannibalism (Geneser, 2011). Though this ceremonial act was practiced by many cultures and involved the chopping off or eating of certain body parts of great warriors, it was hardly the exaggerated idea that the Karankawa were bloodthirsty and ate people for sport or nutrition. Rather, it was more along the lines of keeping or eating the finger of a renowned deceased bowman in order to absorb his proficiency with a bow for example. It is important that educators realize the power dynamic between the invaders and the invaded and seek to ensure that the result of the ideology that justified the upheaval and eradication of American Indian peoples does not become the sole account of history taught in the classroom.

➤ There Are No More American Indians in Texas

While there were massive campaigns by the Spanish, French, and Americans to relocate or exterminate American Indians in Texas, there are still hundreds of thousands of American Indians living in Texas today. There are three federally recognized tribes in Texas: the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, and the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. There are also members of other tribes living in Texas.

➤ American Indian Kids in the Past Were Completely Different From Kids Today

Despite differences in the time period and different living locations, American Indian children who lived in the past were very similar to children today. This is something that many students will be shocked to hear, but it is an important concept that can lead to appreciation and understanding of different cultures. The main difference is that American Indian children, for example Tonkawa children, didn't have the technology and luxury that we have today. Instead of helping their mothers in the kitchen with food bought for the grocery store, they helped their mothers skin the animals that were hunted and gather materials to make dinner. Like anyone living in Texas at the time, their main focus was on survival. Therefore, a lot of their day revolved around surviving whereas today a young Texan child's day might revolve more around going to school. Young American Indians who living in the distant past helped with younger siblings, played with friends, and loved their families. While these may seem like obvious connections, children are generally still rather egocentric in the fourth grade so taking the time as an educator to talk about these similarities and differences is very beneficial. It is also important for children to realize that American Indian children today are just normal kids like everyone else. They wear similar clothes, watch the same shows, read the same books. There are cultural differences, but there are also cultural differences from student to student in the classroom. Whether a child lives on a reservation or in a sprawling city like Dallas, they are still just kids. It is important for students to build on the similarities between themselves and other kids of all cultures and appreciate the differences that make all children unique.

Weaknesses of the Current Curriculum

- It Mandates the Comparison of Various American Indian Groups to Each Other, but Not to Other Culture groups

This way of teaching promotes the otherness that creates divides between groups. If children don't have the opportunities to make connections between culture groups, to build on the similarities and appreciate the differences between culture groups they are missing a vital part of their education and the human experience. One of the TEKS does mandate that students "identify the similarities and differences among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Texas" however this is rather vague while the TEKS that mandate comparison of American Indian groups reads like "compare the ways of life of American Indian groups in Texas and North America before European exploration" which is much more explicit (Chapter 113, 2010). There are benefits to this explicitness because it gives teachers a reason to highlight the diversity of various American Indian nations. However, without the comparison to their European counterparts of the time that demonstrate how though their cultures may be extremely different, their approach to problems and lifestyles had a lot of similarities, the prevailing misconceptions about American Indian "savagery" and their "primitive" living are continued.

- There is no Emphasis on Combatting Stereotypes or Training on How to not Perpetuate Them

If one were to look at the countless websites that are available to educators looking for lesson plans or materials to teach about American Indians, it would be fairly certain that Thanksgiving plays, instructions on how to make a construction head band

with feathers, or art projects that replicate objects that are considered sacred in some cultures would be abundant. This is an overwhelming problem that even raises some serious questions about whether the creation of these sacred objects crosses the line between church and state (Jones & Moomaw, 2002). However, it can be extrapolated that many people who post or reproduce these activities do so because they are not aware of the problematic nature of such activities and have never had training in how to appropriately approach teaching about different cultures. Therefore, districts and college programs should offer coursework or professional development focused on this important point. This will ensure that teachers employ the best practice and that students receive appropriate information about American Indians and history.

- There are no Fourth Grade TEKS that Mandate Students Learn about Concepts such as Bias, Prejudice and Privilege

Bias, prejudice and privilege are very important concepts that children will encounter for the rest of their life. Fourth graders can begin to build knowledge about these concepts and can begin to notice them in their daily lives. It is clear that these ideas would be especially important for social studies due to the nature of the content. The TEKS mention that “a greater depth of understanding of complex content material can be attained when integrated social studies content from the various disciplines and critical-thinking skills are taught together (Chapter 113, 2010).” Critical-thinking skills can be interpreted as determining bias or discussing the prejudice that can develop when exposed to repeated stereotypes, however it is so vague that any number of teachers can come to any number of conclusions of what it means. With more and more focus on how these concepts are present in the media we see every day, these concepts are no doubt

going to be important for students to understand. Teaching children about these concepts and how to identify the causes and effects of them will help them become stronger researchers and critical thinkers. Therefore, it is worthwhile for the TEKS to be explicit in requiring teachers to teach about these concepts in developmentally appropriate ways. However, as of now this is not a requirement so it is up to teachers to find time and resources to implement these concepts into their classrooms.

➤ **Many of the Supplemental Materials Available are Problematic**

As mentioned before, children's literature and textbooks that include American Indians made available to students are often misrepresentative or stereotypical. This puts extra strain on the teacher to make sure to use each of these instances as teachable moments and to explicitly mention the problematic nature of the materials. Therefore, educators need to carefully select materials that authentically and accurately represent American Indian lives to the fullest and employ the very same critical thinking skills that they are teaching to their students to determine if a book, video, or movie is appropriate. Doing so can be difficult as there are many criteria that determine a form of media should be deemed suitable or not. Therefore, included in the resources section are materials that have been made by experts in the field that help educators select materials about American Indians to use or have in the classroom.

Activities

Listed below are some activities that cover some strands of the social studies curriculum in a way that promotes critical thinking and engagement. Depending on how these

activities are modified, they can be worked to include TEKS from other strands of social studies or even different subject areas.

➤ KWL Chart

KWL charts are popular primers for lessons because they help students to begin thinking about a subject and track their learning as the unit progresses. The students fill in the “K” column with what they know about the subject. If this were to be used for the unit on American Indians in Texas, the teacher would have plenty of data about what misconceptions are present among students and how popular these ideas are. The “W” column contains what students want to know about the topic. By utilizing the information that students provide in this section, instruction can remain engaging and student driven. The “L” column provides closure to the unit by having the students list what they have learned. This is a valuable opportunity to revisit what students thought they knew about American Indians tribes of Texas and to see their growth. Teachers can take this opportunity to talk about bias and stereotypes and about the importance of primary sources and varying viewpoints when learning about history.

➤ Government

Present the classroom with a question to answer or problem to solve. For example, “What color should our class shirts be?” First demonstrate the Comanche form of government. Have the students write down their choice. The teacher would be the leader because of his/her education and job title and gets to pick the color that he/she wants, explains why and has everyone who chose that color come stand with him/her. Other students group up based on what color they chose. Explain that even though the

teacher choose a certain color, certain bands of students chose differently and are free to disregard the teachers choice. Explain that though Comanche chiefs would not make decisions about such trivial things, that they would make decisions about political treaties, and listen to advice from a council of lower chiefs. For example, if a chief decided that the Comanche would sign a peace treaty with the Spanish, certain bands that disagree could decide not to uphold the treaty just like certain groups of students chose different colors. In the Comanche form of government, the individual had a great amount of freedom. Now demonstrate the Caddoan form of government. Explain that the teacher is still the leader but mention that instead of a college education and job title he/she would be the leader because his/her father was. Female teachers need to note that in actuality only males were chiefs. In Caddoan culture, the leader made political decisions for the entire community. Tell the students that the color shirt that the leader chose is going to be the color that the shirts will be and have everyone sit down now that they are all one group again. Once again mention that shirt color is trivial compared to treaties and whether or not to allow newcomers into the village etc. Though the TEKS only mention the government of these tribes in the past tense, an important and practical extension of this exercise would be to look at the government of these tribes today. Federally recognized tribal members are members of three distinct and separate governments: the federal, state and tribal government. The Comanche Nation democratically elects chairmen and committees to make resolutions and decisions about services and dealings of the nation. Have students vote for a shirt color and make a decision democratically to demonstrate this.

➤ Time Travel

Have students sit in rows cross-legged facing the teacher. Tell the students that they are going on a field trip to Austin, Texas. However, they aren't going in a bus, they are going in a time machine. Have students close their eyes as the teacher tells them about the time machine moving through the eras. Have the students open their eyes and announce that the year is 1608 and they are in central Texas, the land of the Tonkawa Indians. Have students brainstorm ways to compare and contrast what a day in the life of a Tonkawa child and their daily life. Talk them through what a typical Tonkawa campsite would look like, what a day consisted of, what children their age would be responsible for, and what their way of life was like. This can be used with other tribes and can be modified to highlight specific TEKS.

➤ Regions

Make students a worksheet similar to the following table, but large enough for student responses and drawings. Drawing on knowledge of the regions of Texas, have students pretend that they are living in the 1600's and work in groups to answer the questions below. Encourage students to use a lot of detail and add drawings if it helps them be more descriptive. Once students are done, fill out a master copy blown up on butcher paper with the students. Write and describe various ways that American Indian tribes who lived in these areas would have answered these questions. Discuss similarities and differences in what the students came up with and what American Indians did. Some tribes to consider using for this activity are Karankawa-Coastal Plains, Tonkawa-North Central Plains, Comanche-Great Plains, and Tigua-Mountains and Basins. Highlight the adaptability and resourcefulness of these tribes as you go through the worksheet. Discuss with students the reasons for American Indian practices based on things such as climate,

natural landforms, game migration, vegetation, water sources etc. Discuss other questions such as “What would you do about mosquitos?” or “How would you store your food?” and discuss innovative techniques tribes used such as the Karankawa using alligator fat to repel mosquitos and the Tonkawa using lightweight woven baskets and hot rocks to cook their food due to their need to move so often.

	Mountains and Basins	Great Plains	North Central Plains	Coastal Plains
What food would you eat?				
How would you get your food?				
What would you do for shelter?				
What would you do for water?				
How would you dress?				

➤ Trading Economies

Teach about trading with a modified brown bag art challenge (found here: <http://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/2015/04/get-kids-collaborating-with-the-brown-bag-art-challenge.html#comment-832190>). The goal of this activity is to have students work together within their groups and problem solve to complete their challenge. Students are grouped into four or five students and given a brown bag with a strip of paper that has a challenge printed on it. Examples would be “build the tallest free standing object you can” or “create the longest object you can.” Give each group of students a different challenge and an assortment of supplies to create with. Make sure that you give them some materials that are very helpful to their challenge and others that are helpful for other challenges throughout the room. Students are allowed to send out one ambassador at a time to try and find the best materials for their challenge. They must trade materials they possess to acquire materials more suited for their purpose. After students have had enough time to create their objects, have the students reveal what their challenge was to the other groups and show their finished projects. Next have all the students gather for whole group discussion. Ask them about what was easy and what was difficult about the process, patterns that were made (if anyone visited the same table more than once, if anyone didn’t trade with a certain table), how the routes around the room the ambassadors took varied, if everyone would trade for the same object, and strategies students used to convince other students to trade with them. Next, drawing on this activity, talk to students about the trading that many tribes did among themselves as well as with Europeans. Tell them that each tribe had various challenges to overcome and

having something that another tribe needed or wanted helped everyone meet their goals. Talk about how some tribes had resources that they were good at creating or capturing and some that they didn't and how they supplemented their lifestyle by trading. Tell students that instead of traveling in a classroom, tribes traded using complex trade routes that spanned states. The Spanish found these routes in Texas and used them. Now one of the most popular trade routes is the Camino Real which is paved over and now a state highway.

➤ Guest Speaker

Having American Indian authors, artists, scholars or community members come into the classroom to talk to students about their culture, history, jobs, or hobbies is perhaps the most enriching way to combat stereotype formation. They can offer a first person perspective to many issues as well as expertise in their respective field. Many artists and authors have websites where your school can book visits.

Resources

There are a vast amount of websites on the internet that can assist educators with finding books and articles pertaining to American Indians. Included here are some websites that serve as great places for beginning the search for materials or knowledge. These websites are a good jumping off point for the search for well written children's literature and information on issues about American Indians in the media and the schools.

➤ American Indian Library Association

(<http://ailanet.org/>)

Contains reviews of literature and awards books that portray American Indians authentically. Educators should read the criteria for awarding the American Indian Youth Literature Award and consider how to use these criteria in the classroom.

➤ American Indians in Children's Literature

(<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>)

Blog run by Debbie Reese, who has an extensive background in children's literature and education. She reviews children's literature that contain American Indian characters, writes articles and posts a wealth of resources such as full text articles, author pages, and awards lists.

➤ Great Promise for American Indians

(<http://www.austinpowwow.net/>)

Organization based in Austin, Texas concerned with preserving the culture and heritage of American Indians. They have a program called "Red Voices in the Schools" that work to bring American Indian artists into classrooms. They also put on an annual Powwow and heritage festival every year in Austin.

➤ Oyate

(<http://oyate.org/>)

Organization that offers book reviews, workshops, resources, and an online store containing excellent American Indian literature. Of special interest to educators in their "How to Tell the Difference" criteria for selecting books that contain American Indian characters.

➤ Teaching Tolerance

(www.teachingtolerance.org)

Contains a myriad of resources, lesson plans, books, and articles that focus on equitable education, culturally responsive teaching, and promoting tolerance among other things.

Goals and Limitations

The goal of this thesis is to get educators critically thinking about the curriculum that they are required to teach and how it influences their responsibilities as educators. By looking at the shortcomings and the vague nature of the current fourth grade Texas curriculum, it is clear that more obligation is shifted over to the educator if students are to develop a balanced social studies education. This is a truth despite the fact that teachers already have an outstanding workload and there is ever increasing pressure to teach exactly to the mandated curriculum due to the increased value of standardized testing. This thesis is meant to help educators who wish to overcome the shortcomings of the fourth grade TEKS in regards to the mandated information about American Indians. By looking at general problems facing the portrayals of American Indians, how these stereotype forming depictions effect the classroom, and how the gaps in the TEKS all interact, educators should have a clear idea of how they can make small changes that will make big differences in social studies instruction. However, the activities, suggestions and resources described are not meant as a solution to all problems facing education about American Indians in Texas schools, but rather as a step in the right direction

towards portraying American Indians more authentically and respectfully in the curriculum.

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