

# The "California Effect" on Textbook Adoptions

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option of making these changes, if they so desired, in their national editions. When publishers felt these changes would increase their national sales, the California modifications eventually became incorporated into the national editions. Although many of the modifications might have had an impact on education par excellence, many changes never filtered into the national editions for economic and social reasons.

For the 1974 adoption, California for the first time is adopting a multiple list of textbooks in the field of language arts instead of the past single selection or very limited list. This decision was made in order to provide the schools with a wide variety of programs from which to choose and to enable the schools to have a balanced selection of the many types of materials presently available from the publishing world to meet the diverse needs of all students. This multiple list may make it economically impractical for California printers to continue to print, inventory, warehouse, and ship the many adopted textbooks. The State therefore has included the option it may exercise for each program, for each buying cycle: to print the state-adopted materials or to purchase the state-adopted materials from the publishers. This makes it mandatory that the changes the State wishes incorporated in the materials to be used by children in the State of

**T**WENTY-FOUR states have an evaluation and endorsement of curriculum materials in the form of state adoptions. However, no other state has such a definitive effect on educational change as has California. California has been a pacesetter in this field for many years. Now, however, its pace-setting has swung to an ultimate. A new law gives the State of California the right, during each buying cycle, to print the State adopted textbooks and pay the publishers an agreed upon royalty or to purchase the textbooks from the publishers. To understand the impact of this new law, one must review the past California adoption procedures for incurring change and compare those with the present procedures.

Until the 1974 adoption, the State of California printed all its State adopted textbooks. If the State Commission of Education or the State Board of Education felt changes would be beneficial in otherwise "select" instructional materials, these changes were made for the California editions by the California state printers with the approval of the publishers. The publishers then had the

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California become incorporated in the publishers' national editions to ensure their availability whether the textbooks are supplied by the California state printers or the publishers.

Thousands of evaluators were involved during the nine-month evaluation period; they included personnel from school systems and other interested citizens. The major concerns were: the structure of the materials, the portrayal of sex relationships, and the portrayal of race and minority relationships.

### **Learner Verification Required**

Learner verification was required to validate the structure, but much of the evaluation depended strictly upon the matter of human judgment since we were dealing with many issues that could not be quantified. A

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legal and factual analysis committee was appointed to make an in-depth study of all of the 6,500 titles submitted for the 1974 California language arts adoption (2,394 titles made the final list; reading and literature received the largest number of submissions). The large number of titles made it impossible to cover all the materials. However, many were reviewed and this committee made recommendations to the commission in the form of majority and minority reports. The publishers were given the opportunity to defend their programs, change their programs, or withdraw their programs.

When human judgment, with its underlying human emotions, becomes part of an evaluation, there always will be many unanswerable questions. When sexism and racism are discussed, emotional overtones may dominate the considerations. Materials and textbooks tend to lag behind the changes in social values, simply because, if for no

other reason, it takes several years to produce a textbook. Wilson Riles, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, pointed out during the June State Board of Education meeting at which the final textbook adoption was approved, that ten years ago the Board first considered the ethnic question and that textbooks have come a long way since that time. He stated that now, for the first time, the Board is considering sexism and in view of the past cooperation of the publishers he knows the publishers will produce what the Board wants.

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The racial and minority criticisms basically fall into the following categories: the segregation of minority groups; the derogatory portrayal of minority groups; and the lack of portrayal of minority groups and their contributions to American society. (It was brought out that some stories or books do not lend themselves to the portrayal of all groups residing in the State of California and by having a multiple adoption the teacher can select a balance to meet the needs of his or her pupils.) The commission is composed of members representing both the majority and minority populations in California. On occasion, a text with questionable interpretations received special attention and explanation by commission persons with minority identities.

One of the stories recommended for elimination by the legal and factual analysis committee involved the portrayal of life in the barrio (the Spanish American slums). It was suggested that the story was degrading to the Mexican American:

A knock was heard on the door. The mother opened the door. She did not want to invite the person into her house, so she closed the door.

One of the members of the committee responded that he was from the barrio and that was what his mother might have done. That would be her way of nonverbally expressing disapproval and did not represent

an aggressive act. The English as a Second Language subcommittee of the commission decided that the story was fine, but needed an introductory paragraph so the reader would not misinterpret the story as the committee had done to represent typical Mexican American behavior. One person could react in this manner and another person might react differently whether Mexican American or Anglo.

## Issues of Sexism

The commission experienced more general agreement on racial and minority issues than on the sexism issues. When minority problems arose, the opinions of the minority commission members generally were respected. This was not the case with the sexism protagonists.

The commission, as well as the California citizens who were heard during open hearings, had divided views on the sexist issue. During an open hearing in Oakland, a large group of women "marched" into the commission meeting. Among the group was a woman who appeared momentarily ready to give birth. She turned out to be the speaker representing a church group. Her opening statement was, "The most rewarding thing a woman can do is to bear children." Another citizen, taking the point of view that many a female child's self-esteem was being damaged, quoted two versions of a textbook:

Mark said, "She gives up just like a girl."

The revised edition, she informed the audience, reads:

Pedro said, "She gives up just like a girl."

Dr. Vernon L. Grose, a commission member and Vice President of the Tustin Institute of Technology, in his speech entitled, "Second Thoughts About Textbook Sexism," questioned whether the textbooks should represent norms or expectations, and whether it may be that the majority of American women feel their first obligation is rearing children and being a homemaker.

Dr. Tessa A. Warschaw, a commission

member and special education and family consultant, and Dr. Junji Kumamoto, a commission member and a chemist with the Department of Plant Science at the University of California at Riverside, replied to Dr. Grose's presentation. In "First Thoughts About 'Second Thoughts . . .,'" Dr. Warschaw said:

The work of Kagan and Moss (1960) illustrates . . . carefully controlled longitudinal data showing passive dependent behavior is more consistent for females than for males. They attribute this difference, in part to environmental pressures and, in part, to the influence of symbolized models in children's books which generally portray girls as passive and dependent and boys as independent and adventurous.

Dr. Kumamoto, in his impressive rebuttal, began his speech with:

It is difficult to judge how much influence children's books have in shaping a child's life. One cannot be certain whether the structure of society is simply reflected in the books, or whether the books help in perpetuating the structure of society. That content is presented in a prejudicial sense, can be readily documented.

As a result of criticisms, extra legs were removed from a beetle; a cigarette was removed from a mouth; pictures representing minority groups were changed; punctuation and spelling errors were corrected; women's roles were expanded from women shown almost exclusively in many programs as mothers, chauffeurs, teachers, or nurses, to women of the world. A resolution was passed calling for serious consideration to be given at the time of the next biennial review to the deletion or addition of certain words in dictionaries for grades four through eight.

Many publishers appeared receptive to the constructive criticisms and were willing to modify their materials. Others felt it was not feasible to make changes for economic reasons. Some publishers' representatives had to return to their home offices with the difficult problem of explaining to their superiors why their program(s) was (were) not adopted. The school systems of California were left with an adoption list of carefully screened materials.

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