The Big Glossies: How Textbooks Structure (Special) Education

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Representatives from major textbook publishing companies regularly come by my office to convince me to buy their big glossy wares. In the past, conforming to academic routines, I required such texts for undergraduate courses. A walk through the bookstore at the beginning of the semester reveals that most of my colleagues use textbooks, especially for undergraduate and master’s level courses. Similar to the customs of elementary school teachers who use basal readers and workbooks rather than a whole language approach to literacy and high school teachers who teach from subject matter texts, these fully packed textbooks do make the difficult task of teaching a bit easier. New take-over-your-course versions of textbooks are not only convenient, but make decision making on the part of faculty and students virtually unnecessary. Textbook packages are equipped with such enticements as teachers’ guides, test item banks, templates to make over­heads for lectures that follow textbook themes, and supplementary CDs with step-by-step instructions for writing individual educational plans or doing curriculum-based assessments. Given the similarities among all these expanded textbooks, perhaps uniformity has been brought to university teacher education methods and survey courses across the country.

THE NONRANDOMNESS OF RESILIENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Theorists inform educators that there are hierarchical patterns and structures in society that are reproduced in school; they maintain these are neither random nor meaningless in terms of their influence on human rela­
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...ions (e.g., Apple, 1990, 1995; Ball, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Tyack and Tobin (1994) surmised that the grammar of schooling is resistant to internal and external pressures for change (see also Britzman, 1991; Fullan, 1993; Sarason, 1990). This structural resiliency is likely to be precisely because those who wield power do not want change (Brantlinger, 2003). The particular pattern that I address in this chapter is the ubiquitous teacher education practice of requiring what I call big glossy textbooks for use in survey and methods courses and, in turn, for these texts to have an impact on preservice teachers’ thinking about education, and hence on the eventual nature of practice. In addition to analyzing textbook content and the control aspects of textbook usage, I illustrate that textbook use is counterproductive in preparing future teachers for their lives in classrooms and schools.

I reviewed 14 textbooks designed for use in introduction to special education courses for special or general education majors (see starred list in reference section and/or Table 3.1). The selection criteria was simple: I included all textbooks sent to me over the past few years. Three textbooks had an inclusion focus and were substantially different from the other 11 (Miller, Peterson & Hittie, Salend). They were included because they were designed for an introductory class. Methods used for this study were document (textbooks, syllabi) or content analysis (Merriam, 1998). It also might be considered a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992).

FALLING INTO ROUTINE TEXTBOOK USAGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICE

Given the current intensification of demands for productivity and excellence in research, service, and teaching at the university, faculty may feel it necessary to rely on the convenience of comprehensive texts and their prepackaged accouterments. Furthermore, once adopted, an easy next step is to have the course conform to the structure of the text, especially now that the add-ons are available. An inspection of archived syllabi at my institution reveals that, for example, in the introductory exceptionality course the first week, and corresponding chapter, focus on “history of the field,” the second on “the law,” with subsequent weeks/chapters spent on disability categories—learning disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, and so forth. This course schedule replicates the table of contents of the required textbooks.

When doctoral students are hired to teach undergraduate courses, which often is at the last minute, they turn to knowledgeable faculty models and mentors and copy their syllabi and adopt the same texts. This quick and dirty induction further cements textbook-oriented traditions in professions...
I. HOW TEXTBOOKS STRUCTURE (SPECIAL) EDUCATION

Even graduate students who are fresh out of years of actual classroom teaching experience are likely to come to understand that teacher education is based on standard textual knowledge, rather than the personal knowledge they acquired during teaching. Faced with similar busy schedules and survival needs as faculty, the embellished textbooks are hard to resist. Graduate students may realize that textbook knowledge is mostly irrelevant to actual classroom teaching, but also know they must compete for popularity in course evaluations and prepare preservice teachers for required standardized national exams. Socialized during their public school careers to comply with pressures for accountability through measurable outcomes and to avoid the dangerous consequences of “rocking the boat,” these teacher educator inductees quickly learn to conform to demands for safe, official knowledge and known practice.

Not only do faculty depend on texts, but, based on their K–12 school experiences, by the time they reach college, students have grown to expect course content to be neatly packaged in and around texts. Furthermore, in today’s teach-to-the-test educational climate, preservice teachers must pass national teacher exams that, not coincidentally, include the exact information provided in texts. The circularity is apparent. The test and textbook companies—often one and the same outfit—clearly have a good thing going. Speculations are that test/test conglomerates are responsible for creating the conditions that have culminated in this form of teacher preparation (see Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Kohn, 2003; McNeil, 2000a, 2000b; Metcalf, 2002; Miner, 2003). Moreover, corporations exert continuous efforts to keep us hooked on texts not only by upgrading their products, but by attempting to control or eliminate alternatives. They bring lawsuits against duplication companies for breaking property rights1 and for using journal articles and book chapters in course packets custom designed by course instructors. Under an “all is fair in love, war—and capitalism” morality/climate, perhaps capitalists have the right to go to extremes to maintain a lucrative trade. The consequence of text publishers’ monopoly on producing school knowledge is that knowledge is only as good as the texts used.

To avoid the omnipresent big glossy standard texts for a methods course entitled “Teaching Students With Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities,” for several years I used each updated version of Good and Brophy’s (1984) Looking in Classrooms, although the book did not mention disabilities. The first edition was published before the idea of inclusion became the norm in schools. Nevertheless, the book incorporated the essential rudiments for developing inclusive, democratic classrooms. Thick and

1Some conglomerate owners of tests and texts also own journals so they can charge exorbitant prices for use of these articles, which increases the price of course packets, often prohibitively.
dense with information that was, in fact, mostly based on research, and hence was science- or evidence-based, it also included vignettes describing classroom interactions that were so realistic they obviously came from field notes of empirical observations. These were a good source for discussions about the implications of various classroom practices. In retrospect, I think *Looking in Classrooms* does not qualify as a “big glossy,” first, because it was written in meaningful narratives not sound bites, and, second, at least the early versions were not packed full of glossy sales catalogue or magazine type pictures.

**STRUGGLES WITH BUCKING THE SYSTEM**

Texts are convenient for faculty, but, perhaps more important, students are used to them and suspicious of alternatives. When our undergraduate special education program merged to include elementary education courses and certification and the secondary courses (my area of expertise) were no longer offered as in the previous all-grade special education major, I suddenly found my name next to the “Introduction to Learning Disabilities” course. The program coordinator, who taught the course in the past, dropped her copy of the text *Introduction to Learning Disabilities* on my desk, “highly recommending” its use. She asked me to pass it along to the instructor of the other course section, who promptly decided to use it and urged me to do the same so both sections would seem equivalent to students.” In addition to uniformity, my colleague justified his choice by claiming the text would prepare students for the exam required for state certification.

After thumbing through this learning disabilities text, for reasons that will be explained later in this chapter, I decided it would not do. Instead I ordered Rodis, Garrod, and Boscardin’s (2001) *Learning Disabilities & Life Stories*, which includes essays by young adults who reflect on their experiences with being classified and specially educated as learning disabled. I combined that insider perspective with Sapon-Shevin’s (1999) *Because We Can Change The World*, which provides concrete, creative suggestions for nurturing inclusion in elementary classrooms. I quickly turned in my textbook requisition so I could say, “Sorry, I already ordered my books,” in case my colleagues would press the uniformity and test preparation case and pressure me to use the recommended text with its “prerequisite information” for the next course/text in the series, *Teaching Students With Learning Disabilities*, which was written by the same authors.

A few days after crystalizing my book selection, still feeling somewhat guilty about my noncompliance with colleagues’ expectations (a common
occurrence, I confess), I was at a social gathering of special education teachers who had become friends during the years I placed and supervised field experience students in their classrooms. I told them of my dilemma and asked whether they thought I should call back my bookstore order and require the text that offered preservice teachers the officially sanctioned versions of learning disabilities. Fortunately, these experienced teachers, many of whom were former students, reinforced the validity of my impression that the knowledge packaged in these texts was largely extraneous to actual teaching.

Despite collegial pressures, as a tenured full professor who does not have to worry much about course evaluations (except for the pain and embarrassment of being criticized or unpopular), I have chosen to venture out and avoid standard texts in my undergraduate courses. However, I have not sunk to the anti-intellectual level of appeasing students by validating their current knowledge as sufficient or by concurring with their opinion that they are already finished products—the good teachers they know they will be simply because that is what they want to be. The slim paperbacks I require—unfortunately also overpriced and some published by the main textbook publishers—convey knowledge that is less standardized. Indeed most of the ones I use take the iconoclastic position of challenging foundational special education knowledge. Initially, some college students are angry that these books or articles imply that, despite their own good intentions and conscientious teaching, they still may be complicit in an oppressive system. Many do not find uncommon knowledge useful or practical, and they wonder what complex theories or radical approaches to inclusive schooling will mean for them as classroom teachers. Given their intense orientation to grades, preservice teachers mostly worry about how they will be tested on these nonstandard and often complex course materials.

Once I used Julie Allan’s (1999) Foucauldian analysis of special education, *Actively Seeking Inclusion*, with a senior class. The night before we were to discuss the first chapter in class and students were to turn in short reflection papers, I received a rush of panicked e-mail messages. Students claimed to be confused by the book and “did not know what I wanted” in the required response papers, although I had included a list of ways to approach these papers in the course syllabus. Some already worried about how the book would figure in the midterm exam.

In class the next morning, a feisty student, who I will call Rochelle, confronted me with the announcement that the book was full of jargon that she and others did not understand. I clarified the difference between jargon (highly extracted or particularistic terms that substituted rather artificially for familiar words that have the same meaning and are more common to experience) and difficult but useful terminology that was necessary to meaningfully convey unique ideas. Rochelle persisted in mutiny, announc-
ing that she was speaking for the whole class in expressing her opinion that I had required an inappropriate book. With her outspoken, confrontational manner, Rochelle had the potential to be a feminist; however, in conveying her desire not to be challenged or even taught, she unfortunately fell more into the category of whiner. In an attempt to appease the furious masses squeezed into my class (fully awake and, because of the exciting mood of rebellion, also uniformly attentive perhaps for the first time that semester), I smiled at Rochelle and said I would make a stab at defining the “p” word that she complained was repeated continuously in the text but not defined. She could not recall the word, but opened her book and found it: *pedagogy*. I tried not to look shocked as I glanced around the room for a volunteer to define it. Heads shook in admission that they did not know the word. Often when I ask questions I get blank stares or, as I scan the class for potential respondent, students look downward to signal they do not want to be called on. This time I got well-choreographed and exaggerated back-and-forth head shake motions. A helpful person, who already had come across as a venturesome risk-taker not to be intimidated by me or her peers, blurted out that she had “heard the word before” and thought it had something to do with teaching or curriculum.” I put a blank sheet on the overhead and wrote a definition. Students knew that anything I wrote on the Formica board or a transparency might be on a test, so they dutifully copied my definition.

To be transformed from villain to helpful professor, I countered class resistance with a routine they understood, suggesting we identify complex words in the book and work together to define them. Most seemed satisfied with this solution. Rochelle was not happy to have lost her following and tried to reclaim the hostile mood with this challenge: “I don’t understand why you picked this book if we are all having so much trouble reading it. Besides the author is not American. What does she know about special ed in this country?” I confessed that I selected the book because I thought it was unusual, interesting, informative, and had a new take on special education, albeit foreign. Drawing on the “because-it-is-going-to-be-on-high-stakes-test” rationale, I also argued, “if you decide to get a master’s degree, having an improved vocabulary as a result of reading this book, you will do well on the GRE,” then mumbled, “then you will thank me.” Rochelle’s peers were satisfied with my explanation and proceeded to outdo each other to find big words and strange names and ideas in Allan’s book. They stayed alert and surprised themselves by identifying ways that Foucault’s mechanisms of surveillance—hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and the examination—applied to their experience in school. As we hypothesized about word definitions, meanings, and applications or significance to real-life classrooms, and especially special education practice, the students stayed interested. At the end of the class session, as one cheerful student
walked past me to leave the room, she whispered, “That was fun!” At the end of the course, expecting the worst, I did not read my course evaluations for several weeks. To my delight, many praised the Allan book as “unique,” “exciting,” and “hard but interesting”—only 2 of the 31 checked the category “Never use this book again.”

REVELATIONS OF A CLOSE TEXTBOOK READ

I suspect that busy faculty often select textbooks without carefully reading them. Instead they glance at the table of contents and pictures and gauge their potential for guiding lectures and providing testable content. One way to thoroughly get to know a textbook is to review it for a publisher, which I recently did for a text undergoing revision as well as a unique manuscript being considered for publication. In the case of the former, I was asked to focus especially on the high-incidence chapters, which the publishers perceived as my area of expertise. As I read about disability etiology, I was alarmed at the pervasiveness of the cultural deficit perspective. Overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in special education was not addressed, and there was no hint that the structure of school practice or school personnel might have an intrinsic social class and racial/ethnic bias.

The second textbook manuscript I reviewed balanced the focus on societal structure, including social class and racial/ethnic bias, and students’ and teachers’ perspectives about the meaning of school and typical special education practice. Despite my own glowing review, the manuscript was not accepted. The publisher perceived that, because of its nonstandard format and content, its audience would be too small—it would not be viable in the competitive textbook market. An additional comment on the rejection letter was that the proposed text, which was based on actual situations of students, parents, and teachers, was not science-based. In other words, it did not contain the results of a host of mostly inane studies that boast conclusive evidence about best special education practice. It is important to note here that the same scholars whose evidence is routinely found in textbooks complain about the gap between research and practice. Apparently, teachers do not find the evidence included in texts compelling enough to use as a basis for classroom instruction. Despite their preference for the use of standard textbooks because they know what is expected of them in terms of content and course grades, informal checks with some of my undergraduate classes reveal that many students think textbook information will not be relevant to their teaching—that it is not useful. Evidence for the accuracy of these brief surveys is that most students promptly sell the texts at the end of the semester. Because of my own disgust at the price of textbooks, when I...
use cheap books or course packets, I expect students to be pleased to be saving money. It turns out most charge the textbooks to their parents at the beginning of the semester and pocket the refund when they resell the book.

**TEXTBOOK CONSTRUCTIONS OF DISABILITY**

All but 3 of the 14 reviewed textbooks were organized around disability category chapters (see Table 3.1). In these categorically focused textbooks, each disability category or disabling condition was outlined as including students who were clearly distinctive from students with other types of disabilities and students without disabilities. It was inferred that consistencies and regularities exist among students with the same disability. Conditions were described as remaining stable over time and context—an idea that Mercer (1973) debunked three decades ago in her theory of the “6-hour-a-day retarded” child.

Disability studies theorists have identified distinctive discourses about a disability that take place in the special education community and in general. Based on his review and analysis of the literature, Danforth (2001) delineated three models of disability that undergird research and service provision. With an emphasis on individual imperfection and abnormality, the “functional limitations” (i.e., medical, deficit) model frames disability as a condition of biophysical essence and origin within certain individuals that renders them unable to perform expected, valued, or normal human activities. This has also been called the “epidemiological model” (Richardson, Rasanova, Placier, & Guilfoyle, 1989, p. 3). In England, Ball (1990) contended that the medical model portrays certain children as having technical trouble so they need professional intervention to become normal or the same as peers. Ball also named a “charity” model, in which disabled people are tragic figures—either objects of pity or sources of inspiration. Tomlinson (1982) claimed that the benevolent humanitarianism surrounding special education permeates both medical and charity discourses.

In addition to the medical (deficit) and charity models, Ball (1990) named a “market” model, in which the language of choice, efficiency, and management are deployed. Such terms as due process, most appropriate environment, and evidence-based practice reveal the legalistic, technorational, supposedly scientific, and also the market model permeation into special education discourse and practice. The language of evidence-based practice is consistent with Giroux’s (1994) idea that education, including teacher education, is seen as a matter of being able to use techniques. According to the conservative ideal of market efficiency, manageable teachers are to rely

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[3] This has elements of legal language and so might also be called a legal model.
### Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Date</th>
<th>Universal Design</th>
<th>Ethnic / Racial Overrepresentation</th>
<th>Social Class or Structural Issues</th>
<th>Poverty in At-Risk Context</th>
<th>Disability Studies or Rights</th>
<th>Includes Unrealistic Pictures</th>
<th>Stereotyped or Staged Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackbourn et al., 2004</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, brief</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Yes (label a problem)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No (black &amp; white)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culatta et al., 2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (black &amp; white)</td>
<td>Staged (pp. 115, 121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallahan &amp; Kauffman, 2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions briefly</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Cultural deficit perspective</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Stereotyped (pp. 235, 243, 353)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardman et al., 2002</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions briefly</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Stereotyped (pp. 239, 263, 265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heward, 2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (very unrealistic)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Doorman, 2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (very unrealistic)</td>
<td>Staged and stereotyped (pp. 407, 411)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, 2002</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sensitive discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson &amp; Hittle, 2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, excellent coverage</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Some (black &amp; white)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salend, 2001</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One paragraph</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sensitive discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (p. 83)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, 1989</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No pictures</td>
<td>No pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, 2004</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mentions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith et al., 2001</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, at risk</td>
<td>Yes, at risk</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>disabled</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Staged (pp. 200, 206, 412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith et al., 2004</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, at risk</td>
<td>Yes, disabled</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Staged (pp. 395)</td>
<td>Stereotyped (p. 12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull et al., 2004</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, excellent coverage</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
solely on standardized techniques that they transmit to docile students. Incorporation of foundational knowledge and mastery of prescribed techniques is equated with professional competency. The proliferation of specialized techniques and science-based interventions are viewed as progress in the field. Inspection of special education textbooks indicates that they are replete with prescribed, standardized, legislatively endorsed, or litigation-grounded technical knowledge to be learned or mastered by pre- or inservice teachers. Textbook authors convey that what is detailed in their books is essential, fundamental, and foundational knowledge—that is, “what every teacher needs to know” (see Culatta, Tompkins, & Werts, 2003).

In contrast to assessing and classifying deficits, individuals who adhere to the “minority group” model view people with disabilities as an oppressed group subjected to dominant groups’ prejudices and biased practices (Danforth, 2001). This model is grounded in an assumption of the prevalence of biased attitudes, institutional barriers, and exclusionary practices—for example, ability-based reading groups, secondary school tracking or streaming, special education pullout, class/race segregated schools, property tax-based school funding, segregated living and working arrangements, disparate wages, nonprogressive taxes, public universities requiring tuition, within-district disparities in school funding, and material and human resource distribution. These traditions, structures, and barriers have distinctive outcomes for dominant and subordinate group members. Subordinates inevitably are at the bottom of school and society’s hierarchical structure. Despite the huge amount of evidence of discrimination and disparities in school and society, there is little account of structural bias perspectives in the textbooks I examined. A few touch on the theme of minority ethnic/racial overrepresentation in special education or the history of racism and poverty in this country, but this coverage is brief and cursory, especially compared with the detailed overview of individual deficiencies. The message often is that problems existed in the past, but disappear when the fair prescriptions offered in the textbooks are faithfully followed.

The third model that Danforth identified is the “social construction of disability” or “social model,” for which Danforth referred to McDermott and Varenne’s (1996) description: “It takes a whole culture of people producing idealizations of what everyone should be and a system of measures for identifying those who fall short for us to forget that we collectively produce our disabilities and discomforts that conventionally accompany them” (p. 337). In Successful Failure, anthropologists Varenne and McDermott (1998) described American schools’ preoccupation with failure and how schools “naturalized ways of talking about children as successes and failures” (p. xiii). Claiming that “education is discovering, taming, and transforming our humanity” (p. 154), these authors maintained that certain
words (e.g., skill, ability, disability, intelligence, competence, proficiency, achievement, motivation, self-esteem, objective test, grade level) come easily. These supposedly scientifically derived concepts have become the content of big glossy texts.

There is little evidence of a constructivist viewpoint in textbooks. Those with categorical chapters are firmly embedded in medical or deficit models. Apparently, however, some textbook writers have become aware of the hazards of these models. At the beginning of a chapter on mental retardation, the commentary accompanying a picture of an elderly woman (apparently retarded) nuzzling a guinea pig states: "Professionals are more cautious than they once were about identifying and labeling mental retardation due to the concerns about the consequences of misidentification, and the idea that some definitions may have been socially constructed" (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003, p. 113). Their use of some (instead of all) definitions is indicative of their lack of understanding of the social construction model.


Critical theorists highlight the oppressively negative identity constructions for subordinate groups claiming that it is not an unintentional by-product of useful practice, but a purposeful way to retain social hierarchies that benefit dominant groups. One critical British scholar, Tomlinson (1995), claimed her radical structuralist theories point out how powerful social groups control and dominate weaker social groups as they treat them differentially and unequally. Tomlins, in gave the example of IQ testing as a prevalent mechanism used to label and separate children in school and le-
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Who Benefits from Special Education? : Remediating (Fixing) Other People’s Children.

Critical theorists take an openly value-oriented or political stand in scrutinizing power differentials in order to eliminate them in current educational practices. In contrast to the touted objectivity, neutrality, and scientific basis of the medical/deficit or market models, critical theorists are dubbed uniquely political (e.g., Walker et al., 1998). These mainstream scholars claim to their own apolitical stance is naïve. Informed theorists (Thompson, 1990; Zizek, 1994) pointed out that those who endorse status quo practices in hierarchical societies are the most political because they remain power discrepancies between the most and least advantaged. Because there is so much consensus about the validity of the prevalent deficit models, however, their political aspects remain relatively opaque (see Ryan, 1971; Valencia, 1997; Wright, 1993). Tomlinson (1995) claimed that faulting context rather than individuals identified with disabilities is not popular in Western democratic societies, where citizens like to think schools are harmonious, ordered places organized around a consensus of values.

Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) wrote that textbooks selectively frame and organize the vast universe of possible knowledge into specific narratives for specific audiences; experts who write textbooks tell a certain way to interpret classroom phenomena. Textbook authors conceptualize some children as inferior and label them—a labeling that places value on certain kinds of students. An example of this is the commentary by a picture of racially/ethnically diverse students in a classroom, which states: “The dynamics of a classroom are determined by many different student factors” (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2001, p. 383); teacher or structural factors are not mentioned. The caption by a picture of two dark-haired boys writing on a graffiti-covered wall states: “Researchers define the externalizing dimension of disordered behavior as striking out against others, for example fighting, disruptive behavior, or damaging property” (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003, p. 227). An alternate interpretation of graffiti as creative expression is not suggested. In this picture, one of the boys sits on a skateboard—a prompt present in many at-risk and behavior-disordered textbook illustrations. Another picture in the same textbook is of three boys standing by an angry-looking youth. This picture is accompanied by the statement: “Children who act out aggressively or impulsively with frequent negative confrontations are not well liked by their peers” (p. 243). Again, here, the personal pathology description of origination anger trumps the peer pressure for conformity explanation for violence. Stoughton (2003) found that children with what their peers perceive as odd characteristics are ostracized and bullied, hence they become frustrated, depressed, and angry as a result of their peers’ persistent abusive actions.
SELECTIVITY OF TEXTBOOK GAZE

Clearly, textbook authors' conceptualization of disability influences how children and adults are portrayed in their books. Unfortunately, a perusal of current textbooks indicates that authors are securely situated in the medical model, with shades of Ball's charity and market discourses infused as well. Like other authority sources, special education textbooks assume representational politics that reduce or abolish the complexity of human acts; that is, they function as myth (Barthes, 1972). By excluding the potentially damaging aspects of school structures in their diagnostic gaze, special education text authors reinforce the notion that disability is intrinsic to the child and not the system and sustain the myths of special education helpfulness to classified students and technical progress in the field (Slee, 1998). Instead disability should be seen in terms of uneven power relations and privilege. Slee suggested schools should pathologize themselves to acknowledge their own failures, thus speaking of political rather than individual pathologies. Little of the friction endemic to professional and consumer relations or conflict among scholars regarding assessment, classification, and the best ways and places to educate students makes it into these texts. Court cases are summarized, however, the included cases are always ones that have established landmark practices such as access to education, least restrictive environments, and due process in decision making. The current view of consumer-initiated court cases against school districts are not detailed or even summarized. In these textbooks, the world of special education is a peaceable kingdom of consensus and cooperation—what Barthes and Slee would call a myth.

It is particularly noteworthy that for decades many educational journals have included articles that address social class, race/ethnicity, and gender bias issues in schools and society. Nevertheless, in contrast to the strictly technical publications, little of this scholarly evidence has made it into textbook print. This politics of selective content and silencing of certain information and perspectives is addressed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

THE THIRD-PERSON VOICE OF TEXTBOOK AUTHORITY

Textbooks are written as authoritative documents. A text title touts the ultimate authority of having "the fundamentals of special education" (Calatta, Tompkins, & Werts, 2003). Perhaps the most effective way to claim authority is to write and state things as if they were not coming from a particular human perspective. The third-person style common to scholarly writing—that Nagel (1986) called "the voice from nowhere" and Haraway (1988)...
the “God trick”—prevails in texts. With this rendering, authors’ position and perspective vanish. Textbook content appears as not necessarily based on any particular slant on the social world or unique experience in the field. Impersonal narratives create an aura of universal or eternal truth. Barthes (1972) argued that such written words diffuse a simplicity of essences as they do away with dialectics and organize a world without contradictions to establish a blissfully clear, but detached reality so that things seem to mean something by themselves. Using the third-person voice, texts transmit ideas about people and practice that seem technical, scientific, and, hence by implication objective, neutral, and free of subjectivity. According to Giroux (1994), content is presented as “seamless, disinterested, and authoritative and their hierarchies of value as universally valid, euc­

VISUAL RHETORIC OF IDEAL PRACTICE

The clichéd phrase, “Pictures say it better than words,” is relevant to messages gleaned from the glossy, colorful photographs that dominate textbook pages. When initially examining a book, reviewers might be pleased that illustrations show diverse children eagerly working in well-lit, modern classrooms and, with the exception of pictures in behavior disorder or at-risk chapters, playing cooperatively in playground settings. Advanced technology is apparent. Books and other supplies and equipment look new.

Pictures show teachers and students constructively participating in one-on-one or small-group instruction with an ideal teacher-to-pupil ratio (rarely more than four students are shown together). A long-term myth of special education—one that perhaps convinced me and others to enter the field and parents to allow their children to become part of the system—is that classified and placed children receive individualized instruction by expert teachers so they catch up with peers and are subsequently successful in school and postschool life. Textbook illustrations capture that story line well. Unfortunately, the staged conditions in pictures in many textbooks do not resemble the reality of schools and classrooms. During more than 40 years of teaching and field supervision, except occasionally in wealthy suburban schools, I rarely saw such positive school conditions. Instead I saw that instruction in pull-out or inclusion settings takes place in groups that have large student-to-adult ratios—never one on one and rarely fewer than eight even in resource settings. Regardless of the actuality of school life, text pictures show clean, well-equipped classrooms with contented children and calm teachers. The contrived portrayals give a false impression of special education. Based on textbook images, preservice teachers would gain little idea about the reality of sites where they will teach.
Textbook pictures represent a diverse array of students in various classroom, school, family, and neighborhood contexts. Most, but not all, teachers and other professionals shown in these pictures are White—something that accurately represents the current teaching force. A close look at pictures reveals signs that children are middle class, even when racially diverse. Perhaps the biggest deception of these texts' visual rhetoric in illustrations is the clustering of ethnically and racially diverse students together. Based on what I observe in schools, and what statistics indicate (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Connor & Boskin, 2001; Patton, 1998), special education clientele are mainly low income—often exceedingly poor and racially segregated—especially students, but also faculty. Some pictures are more obviously staged than others.

In a supposed gang picture in a chapter called “Teaching Students Who Are At Risk,” a group of eight racially diverse adolescents stand on a doorstep holding skateboards (Smith, Pollock, Patton, & Dowdy, 2001). A similar picture in an at-risk chapter of another text shows four racially and gender-mixed teenagers in front of a wall with graffiti (Lewis & Dooralag, 2003). Their faces supposedly reflect a bad attitude; however, a couple of youths appear to be having trouble keeping from laughing.

Perhaps the most problematic textbook picture is actual not staged, although this is unknown because the source was not given. An African-American youth stands with his hands behind his back (perhaps handcuffed) surrounded by three serious looking elderly White people, one of whom is pointing at him (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). The picture is located in a “Cultural Factors” section. The caption reads: “Questions about the influence of culture on behavior include the degree to which violence in the media affects behavior. This thirteen-year-old boy was convicted of murdering a six-year-old family friend, but said he was only imitating wrestling moves he'd seen on television” (p. 235). The stereotyping in this picture is pernicious. It seems a more appropriate commentary would have been that African-American and other minority youth find themselves controlled by White authority figures who have little empathy for them and little understanding of the impact of race/class privilege/dominance of such public institutions as schools and legal systems.

For legal and ethical reasons, children in pictures that represent high-incidence disabilities may be actors who do not actually receive special services. Often my own children and their friends were recruited to be in videos or illustrations. Recruiting actors is convenient and retains the confidentiality of those classified. Such casting, however, misconstrues the reality...
of who receives special education services. Using actors and enriched settings indicates such problems as: students who receive special education services may not want it to be known and thus will not be in pictures, authors' contacts are solely with middle-class children, and/or reality must be concealed even to potential special education teachers. Defenders of these deliberately staged pictures might claim that schools should be integrated, that practices related to identifying and teaching low-income and racial/ethnic minority students should be fair, and that all children should attend schools with adequate resources. I agree with these wishes. Nevertheless, class and minority race/ethnic overrepresentation exists in low-status placements just as underrepresentation is common in high-status arrangements.

Teachers and other citizens must be made acutely aware that schools and society do not distribute resources equally to all children and low-status school arrangements are resented by students. They need to know that routine classification and placement practices often are biased.

When issues of discrimination are addressed in texts, it is done to reassure readers that it happened in the past or in other places, but is no longer a problem. The message that comes across is that the authors and readers are innocent. The text is clean, neutral, objective, and not complicit in biased practice. Nevertheless, the reality is that American schools are largely segregated by social class and race/ethnicity (Orfield, Eaton, & the Harvard Project on Desegregation, 1996). It is deceitful to pretend otherwise by picturing or describing inaccurate social situations.

It seems valid to conclude that text photographs are a socially conscious art meant to deceive readers into thinking that special education is a beneficial service that results from humanitarian motives. Texts' visual rhetoric is a controlled representation of school conditions and diversity that masks identities and realities and hides power differentials endemic to special education and schools generally. The popular textbooks I reviewed did not trouble the hierarchies or challenge the basic foundations of meritocratic schools or unequal relations within society. Textbook content is euphemized. The subaltern voice is silent except as it is portrayed; asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural spaces are erased (Mohanty, 1994). Text coverage indicates that poverty and low status are comfortable, just as high status and authority are benign.

Although the significance of this pattern is unclear, a trend over time that might be noted is that earlier textbook covers included pictures of children with physical stigmata that made them recognizable as disabled or some showed typical-looking children assumed to be learning disabled or in another high-incidence category. A few newer editions of texts or new textbooks still have photographs of a child or children on the cover, and others have drawings of diverse children that looked somewhat like UNICEF greeting cards. Most new textbook covers have colorful abstract art that is
cheerful and upbeat. Because many textbooks were published by the same companies, it might be that their cover designs were done by the same artists.

**SOFTESTING DISTANCE AND OBJECTIVITY WITH PERSONALIZATION**

A seeming improvement to the most recent textbooks is the personalized touch of inserting short stories about children with disabilities, their families, and professionals. The strictly factual content of earlier texts may have seemed too dry to engage young adult readers. An alternative rationale is that authors became aware of and bothered by children being reduced to labels, traits, and social roles. Now, in addition to details about disabling conditions, personal stories cast a human glow on the texts' subject matter. Voices in these vignettes talk about needed services. Faces smile with pleasure at the helpfulness of special education teachers and supportiveness of parents. Contented parents mention being respected as partners and listened to in case conferences. These personal tangents make the object of texts (i.e., disabled other) seem as one with authors and readers. Although these personalized episodes may seem an improvement, a problem is that all are positive, clean portrayals inconsistent with evidence that students often are not happy about being classified and parents are not satisfied with their interaction with school personnel (see Brantlinger, 1986, 1994; Cook-Sather, 2002; Harry, 1992; Lee, 1999; Stoughton, 2003). The factiousness apparent in the burgeoning of special education-related lawsuits does not appear nor are there traces of the tensions that pervade special education labeling and service delivery.

Personal vignettes are a version of biography. Corbett (1996) argued that the confident authority apparent in portraying others in certain ways (i.e., distorting the subjects' views) serve to restrict thinking and justify the continuation of patronage. When those on the recipient end of special education speak in scenarios scattered through modern textbooks, it is a venniloquism of the text author's voice. Recipients' perspective and agency are diminished or eliminated. When personalization involves idealized imaginary that pacifies friction and avoids power differentials, the result is the colonization of disabled people by the expert writers of texts. Individuals with disabilities become commodities. Regardless of how classified students may feel about special education, representations of their contentment with the system are dutifully packaged for sale. Moreover, these brief personalized moments in textbooks retain the character of add-ons. Preservice teachers may decide not to read them because they know they will not be covered on tests.
In the revised textbook that I reviewed for the publisher, another new human touch was the author’s picture and a short bibliography of his life’s work in the preface. The book was dedicated to his parents, which fits the pattern of textbook dedication to authors’ family members, particularly children. A single author of a textbook is rare; most have two to four authors and, except for university affiliation, little information is revealed about them. Nevertheless, the short sidetrack about the author in the text I reviewed happened once; the remainder of the text is written with third-person distance and anonymity.

TRANSMODGRIFICATION TO WHAT SELLS

Although this review did not include a historical component of comparing textbooks over time, it is clear that with advances in technology most textbook packages have added to the print components of texts. For instance, the ninth edition of Hallahan and Kauffman (2003) offered the following supplements: student study guide with practice tests, companion Web site plus online study guide, instructor’s resource manual and test bank, PowerPoint electronic slide package organized by chapter for lecture use, computerized test bank, six “snapshots” videos (profiles of students), five “professionals in action” videos, package of 100 transparencies, resource guide for the Internet, and a free booklet of case studies. To compete in the lucrative textbook market, publishers have continuously embellished on their product by adding features and somewhat modifying the format or content of texts. Nevertheless, despite these changes, a perusal of recent textbooks reveals that the basic content and categorical chapter organization has remained stable over time.

One thing that has changed is that many texts now appear committed to inclusion, at least rhetorically. There was a notable absence of inclusion content in textbooks for several years after inclusion was advocated by teacher educators and became routine in school districts. Indeed for years after federal legislation prioritized it, inclusion was still omitted in many texts. That has changed. Inclusion has now worked its way into the textbook market, albeit in some rather odd forms. It has gained enough stature to be foregrounded in the title of some texts. Yet despite official support for inclusion, some authors still hold out and fail to recognize its importance. A 2003 textbook published by Merrill Prentice-Hall, Fundamentals of Special Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know, consists of an introductory and 10 categorical chapters. The index reveals that inclusion is mentioned on only four pages, and inspection of those pages reveals that this limited coverage includes commentary on resistance to it and why it does not work. This particular text is somewhat of an aberration. Textbook companies ap
parently have decided that inclusion sells and have encouraged even the most reluctant of authors to recommend its use and provide information on what they see as best inclusion practices. Despite what must have been unrelenting resistance on the part of some authors—prominent special education professors who vehemently criticized inclusion supporters as well as inclusion (see reviews by Brantlinger, 1997; Danforth, 1999)—inclusion is now present in their updated texts, although in rather ambiguous ways. Inclusion makes brief appearances in each categorical chapter in Hallahan and Kauffman (2003). However, the one generic index reference, “inclusive school movement,” includes this conclusion:

More radical reformers call for a single, unified educational system in which all students are viewed as unique and special and entitled to the same quality of education. Although many of the suggested reforms have great appeal and some could produce benefits for exceptional students, the basis for the integration of special and general education and the ultimate consequences they might bring have been questioned. [the authors list themselves a few times in this fairly long list of citations] (pp. 18–19)

Given that federal funding priorities and federal, state, and local legislation emphasize inclusion, these skeptics may realize that, to stay on top of the field (and the textbook market), they must turn into inclusion proponents. The depth and sincerity of their support for inclusion are questionable.

Slee (1993) noted that special education reinvented itself to stake its claim in the so-called era of inclusion. A close reading of these modified textbooks reveals that the title and section heads may have changed somewhat, but the content is still slanted toward assessment, identification, classification, and remediation—that is, practices that single out individual students as different and in need of specialized services rather than strategies to create inclusive classrooms that accommodate a wide (i.e., normal) range of diverse learners. The technically focused interventions are illustrated by a section headed “Inclusion Strategies,” which goes on to give a bulleted two-page list of “learning strategies including acquisition, storage, and expression levels of learning” (Smith et al., 2001, pp. 480–481).

Textbooks and Conservative Control of Schooling

Proponents of capitalism tout that a benefit of the free market is diversified products and consumer choice. The result of competition in the special education textbook arena has had the opposite effect—texts are remarkably similar. In fact the tables of contents seem hewn from the same template. Apple (1989) observed that K–12 and college-level textbook homogeniza-
tion has accompanied pressures to regulate curricula and teaching. An increasing emphasis on discipline-centered curriculum and tightening control of all curricula supposedly are done for purposes of efficacy, cost effectiveness, and accountability. Apple claimed the real impact is to reduce text content to narrow technical skills, which he called a “commodifying reorganization convenient for administrative surveillance” (p. 146). Brady (2002) attributed these trends to a “limited modernist, positivist paradigm with an agenda that seeks to define exemplary practices in order to package them for use in schools to ‘fix’ problems, and control and predict human behavior” (p. 63). Foucault would have seen these phenomena as part of an assimilating gaze that subjugates people and renders them controllable (see Allan, 1999). Techniques of power operate to simultaneously create whole domains of knowledge that are aligned with conservative interests. Pinar (1997) claimed that traditionalists (textbook producers and authors) see curriculum work as service to practitioners, but function under a bureaucratic model with an ameliorative orientation, an ahistoric posture, and an allegiance to behaviorism and technological rationality.

NORMALIZING DISCOURSES

Foucault’s writings elucidate subtle aspects of social practice that are particularly relevant to disability studies. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (1973) introduced the idea of *governmentality* in reference to the presumption that everything can and should be managed by the appropriate authority. Administering *pastoral* (taking care of others) power and authoritative protective concern supposedly is done out of concern for others’ well-being. Foucault’s ideas about the medical gaze relate to this analysis of textbooks: Medical (special education professional) observation allows the construction of an account of what is going on with a patient (student) that connects signs and symptoms (slow acquisition of reading skills, acting out behavior) to diseases (mental retardation, emotional disturbance, attention deficit disorders) that, when identified, can be managed by the right authority.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) furthered his ideas about the gaze and its relation to disciplinary regimes. Alert to the *deviant*, the gaze uses three mechanisms of surveillance: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination. Observations are hierarchical in that only certain credentialed members of society are positioned to determine others’ deviance and establish norms for appropriate behaviors. Normalizing judgments become coercive principles that highlight difference (i.e., deviance, abnormality, pathology) and seek to eradicate it through assimilating practices. Standards for normality are incorporated into surveillance instru-
ments or examinations. Foucault delineated three imposing features of examination: (a) compulsory visibility; (b) mechanisms of objectification that facilitate forming categories, determining averages, fixing norms, and classifying individuals; and (c) documentation and description of individual cases so they can be judged, measured, compared with others, and then trained, corrected, and normalized or else excluded.

The usefulness of Foucault’s analyses to understanding special education discourse is readily apparent. Once children are declared deficient, they are marked for perpetual surveillance (e.g., regular evaluation is mandatory for the initial classification of children and must be repeated for children to retain the classification and specialized services); and the parents of disabled children and involved professionals are scrutinized as part of the constant review of each case (i.e., case conference and annual review). Correspondingly, special education textbooks detail the nature of deviance and then devote space to mechanisms designed to gauge variation from the norm that have been validated by scientific research (e.g., IQ and myriad of other tests and evaluation protocols for determining classification and eligibility for special education services). Texts then detail remedial strategies or interventions to correct or control a range of abnormalities. If difference from the norm is extensive or extreme and if modification of abnormality is impossible, then exclusionary practices in the form of the more restrictive options on a cascade of services or placements kick in. Individuals who remain abnormal cannot be part of the mainstream, hence the need for pull-out placements. The inevitable rationale for surveillance, modification, and exclusion is that it is necessary for the sake of the involved children—for their own good. Again teacher education courses and textbooks are the vehicles that socialize preservice teachers into their roles of recognizing deviance, making expert judgments about normality, conducting examinations, and implementing appropriate instruction. Appropriate, like normality, is a key concept in special education; practitioners and clients must do things appropriately—that is, according to the norm.

Foucault (1977) used the analytical technique of reversal or discontinuity to unsettle and subvert categories to make their meaning apparent. All (dis)ability categories are reversals of normed or expected abilities—to see, hear, think, be mobile, behave oneself, and so forth. Because disability is a lack of ability, to understand a society's meaning of disability, its ideas about ability must be clear. Nevertheless, definitions of normality and explanations about why normality is so essential are glaring silences in special education textbooks. For example, in learning disability chapters, reading interventions are provided based on an assumption that it is problematic to read less well than peers. Yet benefits of advanced or equal achievement (i.e., the necessity of normality and the insistence on equating normality with sameness or a statistical average) are not addressed. Special education
texts typically allot a chapter to each disability category, constructing each area of diversity as abnormal and problematic rather than natural and acceptable. Yet abnormality is explicated without articulating the nature of normality. “Normal children” are an assumed but insufficiently identified control group. Positivists insist that definitions be operationalized, yet the central concept of normality in special education textbooks and rationale justifying its importance remain elusive. Apple (1995) contended that textual silences reveal much about the ideological interests at work. Special education is not the only field that practices textual exclusions. Anyon (1983) noted the absence of working-class content and perspective in texts, and Kuzmic (2000) echoed Harding’s (1993) concern about the dominance of masculine standpoint in texts.

In his early work, Foucault directed attention to forces external to individuals, but by 1988 he noted how the external gaze was internalized so individuals policed themselves. Although Foucault claimed that normality is a fiction, he nevertheless noted that fictions or myths induce the effects of truth. His idea resonates with the well-known medical student syndrome, in which symptoms read about become imagined in self. It seems that disability identities detailed in special education texts are imagined in children who are then referred and their disability status becomes actualized. Because Foucault was gay, it is no coincidence that his *The Care of The Self* (1988) has the subtitle, *The History of Sexuality*, and that he was interested in the surveillance around gender generally and masculinity specifically. He used an *archeological* approach to examine the layers of sediment on which particular ideas or disciplines are built. Layers of special education practice can be traced, perhaps starting with the founding of the common school, to the educational emphasis on academic learning, the development of IQ and achievement tests to measure and sort students, the proliferation of disability categories, the formation of a cascade of placements and service provisions, and, eventually, the measures designed to monitor and modify deviance.

Theories offered by Foucault and his followers should be unsettling to textbook companies and the scholars who publish foundational knowledge about abnormality in these texts. As distributors of disciplinary routines, textbooks’ coverage fits into hierarchical schemas that anonymously descend from the authorities who originally research and delineate deviance to school personnel who eventually practice according to the strategies laid out in texts. Conditions and procedures are covered in textbooks as accurate, permanent, and objectively derived policy and practice. Special education law has codified conditions (classifications) that can be treated in schools and also details how procedures should be appropriately applied to school children. New versions of the law are portrayed as superior to previous ones and as part of progress in the field. Professionals are (re)assured that as they classify children at their locales, their observations and judg-
ments are sanctioned by higher, objective but anonymous legal expertise and professional wisdom that have been laid out authoritatively in textbook print. Textbook authors take on the responsibility of interpreting complex systems for naive readers and do so efficiently and succinctly in seemingly neutral and apolitical, but certainly dehistoricized and decontextualized ways. Expanding areas of expertise have been accompanied by increasing reliance on specialized credentials (Troya & Vincent, 1996), which has meant a lucrative and powerful professionalization of dominant group members just as the neediness and risks, and subsequent powerlessness, of subordinate groups have become more severe.

In contrast to permanent, accumulated, foundational knowledge (e.g., found in textbooks), Foucault recommended that theory be an attitude, a way of being, or philosophy that critiques everything in social life, especially limits placed on humans by prefabricated notions of normality. Foucault suggested creating new selves courageous enough to live in uncertainty. His work opened the scholarly world to postmodern and poststructural deconstruction of foundational knowledge and inspection of the dynamic, drifting, impermanent layers and sediments of language and practice.

TEXTBOOKS AS AUTHORITATIVE PURVEYORS OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

In Education and Power, Apple (1995) made assertions consistent with Foucault’s claims that the world is discursively constructed by text and that textual discourses—and ideologies infused in these discourses—hide the particular interests they serve and uneven power relationships they maintain. Apple saw modern governments as hierarchical bureaucracies that are dependent on the circulation of ideas that promote their legitimacy. Whereas earlier governments were sanctioned by religious dogma, current ones rely on technical knowledge. Apple argued that bureaucracies are maintained by the development of control mentality, in which those subjected to its rules are to accept only technical authority and expertise as legitimate. Citizens must be oriented to rules and procedures, have compliant attitudes toward authority, and adopt habits of punctuality, regularity, and consistency. Apple claimed that the major function of the educational apparatus in bureaucracies is to maximize the distribution of technical knowledge supposedly so individuals can enhance their chances of attainment in a competitive market. However, drawing from Raymond Williams, Apple argued that the “actual stuff of curriculum” serves to retain hierarchical power relations through its “selective traditions” (p. 28).

In Teachers and Texts (1989), and later with Christian-Smith (1991) in the Politics of the Text, Apple examined the process by which curriculum
gets to teachers, including the politics of textbook production and sales, the ideological and economic reasons behind textbook decisions, and how culture, economy, and governments interact to produce official knowledge. According to Apple, teacher education texts define what should be taught and the nature of legitimate knowledge. He further claimed that textbooks represent the ideas and interests of state-represented policymakers. Apple found that a few large publishers (Prentice-Hall, McGraw-Hill, CBS publishing group, Scott, Foresman) controlled 75% of the total sales of college texts. Metcalf (2002) claimed that numerous politicians, including the current U.S. president and his cabinet members, own substantial shares in test and textbook companies. Thus, because they benefit from test and text sales connected with the tightening of standards around disciplinary knowledge, a conflict of interest is evident in these politicians’ educational decisions. Furthermore, the prescribed text and test content preserves the societal hierarchies from which they benefit (Brantlinger, 2003). Academic content is vast and the sanctions for not knowing it extreme, hence alternative curriculum geared toward progressive, democratic, and communitarian-oriented educational reform are squeezed out of schools.

Although teachers have always had relatively little control over their labor, Apple (1989) argued that with increasing state intervention in curriculum development and textbook adoption and the subsequent workload routinization and intensification, teacher autonomy has declined. This announcement was made before the accountability movement was in full swing. Apple noted that teachers (and teacher educators) interpret external pressures as professionalization and so do not protest state interference. This imposed professionalism and the discourse surrounding the need to control teachers relates to class and gender dynamics: A majority of teachers are women and/or first-generation college. This round of professionalization has not meant more power and autonomy, but rather the opposite; teachers must increasingly rely on highly educated experts.

Control-oriented trends change teachers’ relations with students and students’ status in schools. In the 1970s and 1980s, teachers were encouraged to be attuned to children’s feelings and life conditions. This emphasis on caring and multicultural sensitivity meant a rejection of meaninglessrote learning. Teachers were to eliminate the ranking practices in schools. Apple claimed that the right-wing educational reform agenda has been aimed at replacing teachers’ connections with diverse students with detached practice—to append a formalized agenda in which administrative oversight demands a responsiveness to textual authority and a reemphasis on the traditional western European canon. Text- and test-dominated practice ensures that sorting and ranking children (reproducing social privilege) is the uppermost responsibility of schools.
TEXTBOOK READERS BECOMING EXPERTS
IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ball (1990) pointed out that we do not speak the discourse, the discourse speaks us. Not only do textbooks construct the subject (children, adolescents, and sometimes adults with special needs or disabilities), they also construct readers as needing particular knowledge. Readers, however, are even less evident in textbooks than authors. Anonymous textbook consumers are blank slates or open vessels to be filled by text content. Text usage mythology suggests that as pre- or inservice teachers become acquainted with or memorize text content, they are filled with the knowledge necessary to become competent professionals who will benefit students.

In most of the textbooks I reviewed, routines of referrals, prereferral interventions, due process guidelines for handling case conferences, and legalities of assessment and service delivery are covered as depersonalized and even dehumanized events. The implication is that well-trained technical experts know the rules, follow them, and implement special education in a fair, neutral manner. The grand textbook narrative is that (special) education is a peaceable and righteous kingdom where all benefit and none suffer. Therefore, if preservice teachers learn everything in texts and follow provided rules and guidelines, they will become professionals who get it right.

In a high-stakes testing climate, textbooks have facts essential for passing required state certification examinations. However, textbooks were in style before the accountability movement became vogue. Texts have long been accepted as the primal source through which potential special education teachers gain expert knowledge and hence professional stature. Status as specially prepared teachers is dependent on being filled with the special education textbook knowledge that supposedly will transform college students into competent teachers who will be respected by their students, parents, administrators, and peers. Conscientious and erudite potential teachers who receive As in courses are assured that they have the foundational knowledge to implement the best technologies of science-based practice. They know that in their future jobs they will skillfully participate in the texts’ versions of meticulous assessments and fool-proof interventions. Schmidt (2000) and Martin (2002) claimed that much of professional socialization in many fields results in closing down the minds of their members.

Teacher educators may buy into the logic of the importance of textbook knowledge, expecting students to draw on texts’ essential facts in their teaching practice. In the highly competitive high-stakes atmosphere of academia, by using the big glossy texts, faculty encourage college students to be dependent on packaged knowledge. Preservice teachers become part of the intensified, depersonalized, and commodified world of modern education.
tion. Consensus about text accuracy and usefulness is part of the politics of text use that keeps the textbook industry in business. Ironically, when students enter the field, they pronounce much of what they learned in teacher education irrelevant. Rejecting text content and teacher education recommendations, they praise student teacher supervisors and current colleagues as well as their own survival skills for correct and useful induction into the field.

CONTROLLING THE DAMAGE OF TEXTS

College students are likely to see what is encompassed in texts as necessary and important, although a few are skeptical, wondering what the texts' content has to do with actual teaching. Many reject textbook information during their student teaching when they are positioned to maintain classroom order and be accountable for student learning. Others may retain respect for texts and worry about their own competencies as they struggle with the complexities of teaching in the messy context of schools. Some may be concerned that they did not sufficiently incorporate important text content and therefore lack the hoped for professional competency. They may feel let down by the texts' promise of expertise that they do not feel when on the job. The clean, unrealistic textbook portrayals of children and classrooms may do neophytes harm by setting up an expectation that, if the explicit and implicit guidelines in the text are followed, teaching will be smooth and uncomplicated. Hence, those who dismiss textual knowledge may be healthier, happier, and more prepared to teach than those who retain a nagging sense of personal inadequacy. Internalizing beginning teachers doubt themselves rather than the textual construction of special education service delivery as controllable and fairly easy.

REFERENCES


*References with an asterisk are found in Table 3.1.


I. HOW TEXTBOOKS STRUCTURE (SPECIAL) EDUCATION


