CALIFORNIA'S HINDU TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY:

REDEFINING HINDU AMERICAN IDENTITY

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SOUS LA DIRECTION DE

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September 2016

ABSTRACT

Identity is neither fixed in time nor can it reach a point of stability or stagnation. The definition of one's identity is a constantly evolving process not independent from a greater complex social structure. This is the case for Californian Hindus in the Hindu Textbook Controversy in which Hindu advocacy organizations participated in the California textbook adoption process and partially attained their goal of modifying the text in accordance with their agendas. While they attempted to establish a particular image of Hindus and Hinduism in California education, the fate of their edits remained under the power of the State Board of Education. Furthermore, their edits, unrepresentative of all Hindus in California, led to a backlash from the Hindu community across the U.S. The backlash demonstrates pluralism among Hindus in California. The representations of Hinduism and Ancient India in the history textbooks directly affect the way Hindus are viewed in California, and thus directly affects their identity as a collective minority. California's multiculturalist policy, the foundation of California's textbook adoption process, which includes public participation, aims to allow minorities to take part in the way they are represented in history textbooks. In the end, Hindu advocacy groups and their adversaries alike succeed in reshaping the image of Hindus and Hinduism, although within the constraints of the State Board of Education. Therefore, through analysis of textbook adoption and the textbooks themselves, we can see how California Hindu identity is shaped and reshaped, within the limitations imposed by a greater social structure. In the California Hindu Textbook Controversy this occurs through an exchange between the state of California (and its policies), Hindu advocacy organizations and those who have opposed the advocacy organizations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In a post-9/11 era, the question of American identity has come to the forefront of political and social discourse in the attempt to discern who is with 'us' and who is against or unlike 'us'. Often, those prescribed as against 'us' are those who are (physically/culturally) different – the *other*. Yet, the limits of such classification are hazy and unclear. Who has the right to define and categorize cultural identities? Is it a right to claim personal identity or is it for others to impose it? These questions have become vital in our daily interactions with one another. As American society becomes increasingly pluralistic, notably in religion, the American media has stressed the need to label the other as friend or foe, giving rise to fear and suspicion of the other. Recent global events, such as 9/11 or the 2005 bombings in London "resulted in a greater tendency to religiously categorize non-Western groups and, for the other groups themselves, a greater need to manage and positively represent their religious identities in the public sphere" (Kurien 2006: 723-724). However, in the U.S. religious categories conflate race, religion, and culture. Non-Western groups not only have to "positively represent their religious identities in the public sphere", but also have to ideologically distinguish themselves from other non-Western groups.

One aspect of the public sphere where religiously categorized non-Western groups seek to positively represent themselves is in public education. As religions are taught in public school, school district offices receive constant complaints from parents, religious advocacy groups, conservatives, liberals, etc. Some of these complaints receive more media attention than others, depending on what Pierre Bordieu calls social capital of a particular group (Bordieu 1986). Because a national collective identity is in part conveyed to students through a constructed ideology, which is generated through the public education system, the representation of minority religions is often controversial, especially in the state of California. California has a history of ambivalent multiculturalist policies that aim to integrate minorities into society. For example, the public is invited to participate in textbook adoption by commenting on adopted textbooks. Yet the California Department of Education (hereafter CDE)[1] has discovered that implementing a multiculturalist approach causes new debates and tensions to emerge. The most recent case has been among Californian Hindus.

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[1] See Appendix 1 for a complete list of acronyms and their meanings.

The year 2005 marked the beginning of what would be a ten-year battle between Californian Hindus and the California Department of Education to transform the way in which history textbooks (and later, the overall curriculum framework) portray Hinduism and its history. It began during the textbook adoption "social content review" stage when the Vedic Foundation and Hindu Education Foundation, Hindu advocacy organizations, launched an online petition against the manner in which Hindus and Hinduism were portrayed in the history textbooks recommended for adoption, a process scheduled to take place every six years, 2005 being an adoption year. The significant amount of comments and submitted modifications to the textbooks caused the CDE to create an Ad Hoc Committee "that included members of the Curriculum Committee and a Content Review Panel Expert", Shiva Bajpai,[2] in order to examine the submissions (Padmanabhan 2006: 1761). The closing of the thirty-day public comment period marked the beginning of the debate on Hindu representation in California.

Critical Language Study (hereafter CLS), as outlined by Norman Fairclough in his book *Language and Power*, is an inclusive method that applies linguistics, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics in order to identify and understand unequal relations of power. "CLS analyses social interactions in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements, and which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system." (Fairclough 1989: 5). Power struggle and the result of unequal relations of power can be seen in language. Therefore through study of language in both its immediate and global context, these relations become apparent, notably in ideologies, which are "pervasively present in language" (Fairclough 1989: 3). In the context of the Hindu Textbook Controversy, this entails analyzing the language used in the textbooks as the immediate context and documents, articles, reports and videos on or about the 2005 textbook adoption case as the global context. By cross-analyzing these sources, the greater workings of ideologies become apparent. Since ideology is one of the strongest forces of influence on identity, identifying the ideologies, which are an integral part of language, is imperative to the study of identity formation.

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[2] Shiva Bajpai was recommended by the organizations as "an expert on ancient Indian history" (Padmanabhan 2006: 1761) and "a retired professor at California State University, Northridge, and a member of the World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES), an organization known for its Hindutva ties" (Visweswaran 2009: 4-5).

Ideology is inherent in language, in its structure, in the vocabulary and tone used to convey one's message. In certain contexts, ideology in language can be more blatant, such as in a political speech. However, ideology is constantly present in daily interactions. Norman Fairclough gives examples of this in context, such as a dialogue between a doctor and a patient (Fairclough 1989: 44). He points out that ideologies in everyday situations shape society even more because they often go unnoticed. This is why CLS is imperative in deconstructing power relations and the tension that arises as a result.

In this paper using CLS, I will show how defining Hindu American identity is an ongoing project, both self-constructed and externally imposed, maintained by a continuous exchange with the social structure at large. In this particular case, I will demonstrate one way in which sixth grade Hindu American students' cultural identity is globally influenced by and locally influences the California public education system by analyzing two ancient world history textbooks approved by the CDE and the State Board of Education (hereafter SBE) (a sub-entity of the California Department of Education). Fairclough states, "a text is a product [...] of the process of text production" which "includes the process of interpretation" (Fairclough 1989: 24). In order to understand the inner-workings of identity formation in the context of California sixth grade Hindus, we must analyze and interpret all social aspects involved, the ideological power behind the texts (Fairclough 1989: 33) and its corresponding spheres of influence.

The process of textbook production/adoption is a product of the "system of social relationships" such that the textbooks intertwine with each acting body – CDE, publishers, academics and organizations. Secondly, textbook production/adoption embodies the struggle to reclaim power over Hindu identity. Hindus in California are a minority and thus must define their identity against both the stereotypes represented in the textbooks as well as the collective Hindu identity represented by advocacy organizations. Lastly, the power struggle to define one's identity serves as a means to deal with and overcome racial discrimination in schools.

To demonstrate this I have divided my arguments into three sections. The first part consists primarily of theoretical concepts necessary to fully grasp the extent of the relations of power represented in textbook production/adoption. I first show how a social hegemonic process functions as the strongest influence on identity representation in the context of minority communities. Then, I demonstrate the inherent authority in textbooks, which accounts

for the influence of textbooks in the classroom. Lastly, I analyze the way in which the textbook adoption process influences the textbooks. The second part of this paper focuses more on a closer linguistic reading of the content in the textbooks, as outlined by the state standards and curriculum framework, of which I highlight the most controversial content. Thus the second section begins with an analysis of the state standards and curriculum framework, then continues with three major debates I have identified from comments made by Hindu advocacy organizations as well as individual blogs, online forums and op-eds. These debates include India vs. South Asia, Aryan invasions, and teaching of the caste system. The last section of this paper deconstructs the underlying issue of each of these debates – that Hindu is an imposed racial category in California and those who identify with it must battle for ownership over it.

Although there were a total of eleven sixth grade social science/history programs proposed, only nine were officially adopted by the CDE.[3] Among the adopted programs, I chose two[4] widely used sixth grade textbooks to study more closely: the Teachers' Curriculum Institute's (hereafter TCI) *History Alive! The Ancient World* (2004) and McDougal Littell's *World History Ancient Through Early Modern Times* (2006).[5] The adoption process began in 2004 when the SBE invited textbook publishers to submit "instructional materials" for Kindergarten through eighth grade (CDE Adoption Report 2007: 3). Accordingly, the two textbooks under study are rather similar in terms of basic content and structure as stipulated by CDE; yet, they differ in detail and extra-textual content (images, student assessment and support/activities). I will deconstruct the textbooks solely in the context of what has generally been termed the 'Hindu textbook controversy' in which only the sections on India and Hinduism are relevant. For McDougal Littell, this includes a single chapter, *Chapter 7: Ancient India*, located in *Unit 2: Ancient African and Asian Civilizations* (Carnine 2006: 215-247). While for TCI, this section consumes an entire unit, *Unit 3: Ancient India*, comprised of six chapters (Frey et al. 2004: 122-178). This analysis is intended to be a case study of *one of* the

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[3] Publishers of the eleven approved programs include: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, Harcourt School Publishers, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, McDougal Littell, Oxford University Press, Pearson Prentice Hall, Pearson Scott Foresman and Teachers' Curriculum Institute.
[4] I had initially chosen five widely used textbooks. However, due to logistical issues (ordering the textbooks from California, availability, etc.) I was able to obtain only two.
[5] McDougal Littell's *World History Ancient Through Early Modern Times* is identical to that of Houghton Mifflin. The two companies merged in 1994.

many possible ways in which minorities struggle against institutions in order to create a place for themselves in society.

1.1 THE CONTEXT

The Hindu Textbook Controversy began in 2005 and was recently concluded in July 2016. It began with the California textbook adoption process in which the public is invited to comment on the proposed textbooks during a thirty-day period where the textbooks are accessible for preview at various locations throughout the state. Unsatisfied with the proposed content, two major advocacy organizations, Hindu Education Foundation (hereafter HEF) and Vedic Foundation (hereafter VF), sent pages of edits to be made to the SBE. Due to the amount of comments received, the SBE created a special Ad Hoc Committee to process the suggestions made, of which the majority fell under one of three categories – 'India' as the correct term for the ancient subcontinent, the teaching of the Aryan invasions and the caste system. The organizations argued that these topics do not properly represent Indian civilization and/or Hinduism; they focus only on negative aspects and therefore unjustly represent the Hindu/Indian minority ("Hindu Comments at California's Department of Education" 2015).

However, upon learning about the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation's suggested edits, certain academics across the U.S. contested and asserted that the organizations shared an agenda with the *Hindutva* movement in India and were attempting to disseminate a similar ideology in the U.S. In opposition, Dr. Michael Witzel, Harvard Professor of Sanskrit, wrote a letter to the School Board of Education president, Ruth Green, claiming

> "The proposed textbook changes are unscholarly, are politically and religiously motivated, have already been rejected by India's national educational authorities, and will lead without fail to an international scandal if they are accepted by California's State Board of Education." (Witzel 2005).

Dr. Witzel's claims refer to the political Hindu nationalist project of the rewriting of India's history textbooks between 1998 and 2004 when a Hindutva[6] party held the majority in the Indian Central Government (Kurien 2006: 735). Thus, his and his colleagues'[7] fears were that the Hindu organizations in the U.S. were attempting the same revisionist project. In response to

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[6] Hindutva is a term used to describe the Hindu nationalist movement in India.
[7] At the end of the letter, Dr. Witzel attached the names of 47 academics who endorsed his letter.

Witzel's letter, SBE approved additional Content Review Panel experts, composed of Witzel and two of his colleagues (co-signer and supporter of the letter). The fact that this was done "behind closed doors" and that "none of the members...are scholars of or have expertise on Hinduism" caused outrage from the advocacy organization, Hindu American Foundation (hereafter HAF), leading eventually to a lawsuit filed in 2006 against the SBE for not holding a fair and open textbook adoption process as well as not complying with Education Codes 51501 and 60044 (HAF letter to Ruth Green 2005). These codes prevent the adoption of textbooks that contain any "matter reflecting adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, handicap, national origin, or ancestry" (51501, 60044a) or "Any sectarian or denominational doctrine or propaganda contrary to law" (60044b). For the advocacy groups, the textbooks unfairly emphasize negative aspects of Ancient Indian society and Hinduism. HAF eventually won the case concerning the textbook adoption process, but the courts did not make any further decisions or comments in regards to their claim that SBE violated the Education Code (Bajpai and Arumuganathaswami 2016).

Once the textbooks were adopted, the organizations, still unsatisfied with the results, continued their fight to change the core of the curriculum – the curriculum framework and the state standards. These two elements are the foundation of California textbook content and are more difficult to modify. Recently in July 2016, after years of lobbying, the organizations succeeded in pressuring CDE to rewrite their curriculum framework. Although a new version of the framework was published, radical changes cannot be made without rewriting the state standards, which can only be modified at the state government level.

II. SPHERES OF INFLUENCE
2.1 RELATIONS OF POWER

The Hindu Textbook Controversy is an example of what Raymond Williams in his article "Hegemony and the Selective Tradition", calls "a lived hegemony" (Williams 1989: 57). It is an intricate web of the power of ideological influence in society, where "ideology", according to Williams, "in its normal senses, is a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a 'world view' or a 'class

outlook'" (Williams 1989: 56). A lived hegemony[8] relates the "'whole social process' to specific distributions of power and influence." Within the controversy, there are two pre-dominant competing systems of ideology or spheres of influence – California public education and Californian Hindus. However, if we read even deeper into the controversy we can find another sub-system of competing ideologies among Californian Hindus – those who share the political agendas and ideologies of grass-roots organizations and those who do not. The "complex interlocking" of these "political, social, and cultural forces" creates contention with the objective of achieving representational hegemony (Williams 1989: 56). Yet, this objective is unattainable, for hegemony, like identity, is perpetually challenged and reformed through counter-hegemony. All of which is represented in the 'Hindu Textbook Controversy'.

But how does the hegemonic process function on a greater scale? First generation immigrants may introduce, on a local level, a culture to the community that previously did not exist, which consists of certain ideologies or traditions. Subsequently their children, second-generation immigrants, proceed, for example, through the carefully structured system of education in California, which is less susceptible to change on a broader scale than daily social interactions have on the community. It is more probable that children, immigrant or not, will be influenced by the system of education – in ideology and identity – considering they become (or *should become,* as a goal of public education) a part of the American collective.[9] Consequently, two spheres of influence exist that are in constant interaction: the local and the global.

The local interaction involves what I will label the indigenous and the immigrant. The immigrant in making his/her place in society often adopts and/or adapts to certain aspects of the indigenous way of life. The adaptation of any given aspect becomes a reproduction of the original and thus is not the original. The immigrant's reproduction of the indigenous way of

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[8] "Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes..." (Williams 1989: 57)

[9] Collective identity, as outlined by Louis-Jacques Dorais in *La construction de l'identité* (2004), is defined in three types: cultural identity, ethnic identity and national identity. Here, by "American collective", I am referring to a common national and cultural identity. The former is more commonly shared whereas the latter is more ambiguous and is shared to varying degrees.

life then modifies the latter, generating diversification of the aspect that has been adapted or reproduced. A basic example of this could be parents packing a lunch for their child, an act that may not be necessary in their country of origin, yet they find themselves adapting to an aspect of everyday life, where children must take their lunch (or buy it on campus). The modification that may occur, for example, is the form that the packed lunch takes – what does the lunch consist of? In what is it packed? These may be details, but these details show a minute diversification at the local level of how adaptation can influence a predominant tradition driven by the whole; in this case, culture.

The global interaction focuses more on the interaction between individual and institution. Similar to the local interaction described above, the global interaction also involves the indigenous and the immigrant, where the indigenous however, is a larger collective and the immigrant is an individual or at most a small community. Unlike the local interaction in which the immigrant has space to create his/her place in society through modifications and adaptations of predominant customs, the global interaction does not provide that same space and thus directly or indirectly pressures the immigrant to adopt or accept the pre-existing and available institution(s), making it more difficult for immigrants to influence them. Using the same example above of the packed lunch, the fact that the immigrant parents have adopted the routine of packing a lunch illustrates that the system at large is much less malleable. Parents of a few children could not easily change the lunch routine simply because it does not correspond to the traditions they are accustomed to. It is difficult to alter the education system as an institution in the face of minute challenges. If an immigrant parent does not agree with the function of their child's school, any complaint may be documented but will most likely receive little to no attention at the state level (i.e. the institutional level). Yet, when a few parents and children become many, their voices are more easily heard – for instance, Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation in the Hindu Textbook Controversy. Conceptualizing the interaction between a minority community and the society at large is pertinent in order to grasp the process by which minority communities have influenced the institution of education and vice versa.

According to anthropologist L.J. Dorais, identity is comprised of three principal notions. The first is that identity is a relationship that only exists through contact with others. We identify ourselves in relation to others and to the world around us. The second is that

identity is constructed. Changes occur in the world thus our relationships also change. And third, identity is constructed while subject to the environment as a whole (geography, climate, languages, etc.) (Dorais 2004: 2-3). Using this definition of identity, one may conclude that identity encompasses many aspects of life and thus its development is shaped by many factors. This paper, however, aims to focus on one aspect in particular, a minority religion in California, Hinduism, in the context of sixth grade history textbooks adopted by the California State Board of Education.

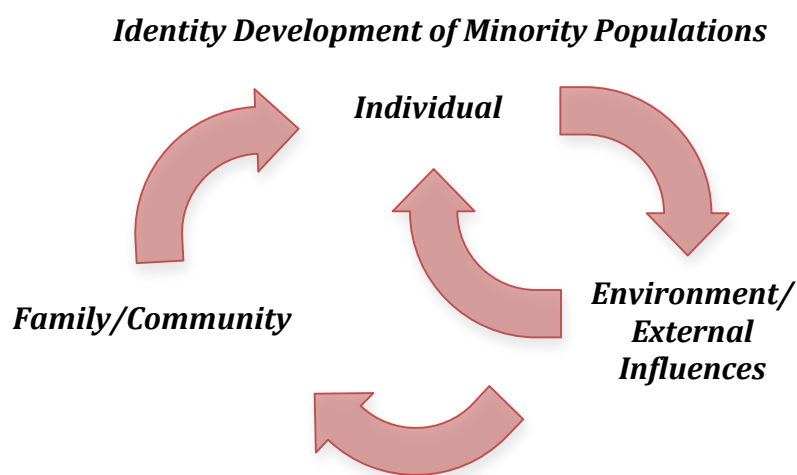**Identity Development of Minority Populations**

Figure 1. Social spheres of influence on the identity development of minority populations.

Although the process of local interaction between immigrants and community is fundamental in understanding how culture and customs shift and adjust to various changes, this study will primarily focus on the process of global interaction between immigrant and/or immigrant community and institutions at large in relation to a perpetual identity forming process of Hindu Americans that aims to create a place in society for oneself and one's community. It is a perpetual debate provoked by tensions between individuals, groups, communities and the world in which they participate.

2.2 TEXTBOOK AUTHORITY

One important element in this controversy is the inherent authority of textbooks. It is an overlooked aspect grounded in the fact that textbooks are the object of the debate. If the

textbooks carried no authority or importance to the said spheres of influence, the 'Hindu Textbook Controversy' would never have taken place.

Textbooks serve as primary material and a guide for teachers to follow.[10] They contain not only state approved content embedded with the corresponding state imposed standards but also how-to guides and hands-on classroom activities to assist the students in associating the material with the world around them. In his article, "On the Language and Authority of Textbooks", David R. Olsen argues that textbooks maintain authority for three reasons: "a distinctive linguistic register involving a particular form of language (archival written prose), a particular social situation (schools) and social relations (author-reader) and a particular form of linguistic interaction (reading and study)." (Olsen 1989: 241). The written text is a "material artifact" (Luke et al. 1989: 256) that passes information from one generation to the next. As information is passed down from generation to generation, that information becomes standardized in the form of knowledge. Furthermore, textbooks use a formal register which takes part in the authority of knowledge standardization (Olsen 1989: 234). Additionally, one must take into account the context in which textbooks are used – typically, the classroom. The functioning of the classroom does not allow for students to question the textbook, as they are taught and tested on the information in it. Furthermore, Olsen, "as Goody (1978), Lakoff (1977), Brown and Levinson (1978) and many others have shown", argues that, "to ask a question, to make an assertion, to issue a command, or to make a pronouncement, you must have the right within some relevant social group" (Olsen 1989: 240). Because they are not specialists in the subject, students do not have the right to question the content, and often, neither do the teachers. Lastly, the separation of the text and the author creates a "transcendental source" which makes texts "impersonal, objective and above criticism" (Olsen 1989: 239). Had the information been given by a speaker in person, the student may question the speaker's background or beliefs. Instead, textbook authors are faceless and often the sources of the information are either unknown or ambiguous. The information printed in the textbooks has already been chosen and filtered, first by the authors and then by the editors and publishers. It then arrives in the hands of students with built-in ideologies and biases that have passed many obstacles in order to be published.

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[10] The fifth and final criterion for textbook adoption is the presence of teacher support materials.

Although the educational program in California, in practice, may be carried out in different ways according to different schools and their districts, the core materials, textbooks approved at the state level, remain the same for everyone. According to studies performed by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, about 80 percent of classrooms use textbooks of which some studies indicate that "80 to 90 percent of classroom and homework assignments are textbook-driven or textbook-centered" (Finn et al. 2004: 1). With such a crucial role in education one would believe the selection process to be rather rigorous, choosing from a wide range of competing publishers. Nonetheless this is not the case.

The textbooks with the strongest biases are those that present the most debatable content; in other words, subjects that require students to form their own opinion, are going to be at the top of the list. Among the subjects taught in school, history has taken much recognition for its bias and preconceptions on both American and world history. Textbooks provide the 'facts' of historical events and explanations and then leave the responsibility of drawing conclusions about the content to the students. So what happens when a diverse population comes together under a single system of education that teaches a supposedly objective one-size-fits-all curriculum, making claims about identity, history and origins? It becomes a topic of debate and conflict, particularly when textbooks are the primary source of information. "History and social studies teachers, for example, often rely almost exclusively on textbooks, instead of requiring students to review primary sources and read trade books by top historians" (Finn et al. 2004: 1, Ravitch 2004: 140). Even though debatable topics or explanations are addressed in history textbooks and covered in class curriculum, the textbook often serves as the sole authority on the subject leaving the students with a single-sided story.

History textbooks have been a source of widespread outspoken contention since the 1960s with the emergence of the Civil Rights movement, causing the historical representation of African-Americans and other minorities to come into question. Before the 1960s, Black history and the role of African Americans in national history were largely ignored. That is, until 1966 when the state of California attempted to adopt a highly controversial textbook, *Land of the Free* (1966), which opted for a more inclusionary narrative than what was

previously available. The textbook caused so much outrage among parents that the debate eventually ascended to the state level (Longmore 2007).[11]

Since then, much opposition has been expressed over the material and state curriculum, causing states to re-edit their standards and publishers to re-write the material. Moreover, publishers are simplifying the material and nearly erasing important historical conflicts, in order to "teach ethnic pride [...] and to boost the self-esteem of non-European children" (Ravitch 2004: 136). History textbooks often represent historical conflicts with at least one party involved at fault. If students identify with the party who is represented as "at fault" for the conflict, then those students may feel a sense of shame. As the state of California reformed their history standards to include minorities and evade possible marginalization of minorities, they allowed minorities to actively participate in the production of the representation with which they identify in the textbooks.

With its total population of 39 million (US Census Bureau 2010), California is bound to have a blend of cultures, languages, religions, histories and narratives from all over the world. Lack of religious identity is even more pronounced in California due to the fact that California was never established on a single religion or in light of a religious fervor, contrary to other states (Roof 2007: 85). Therefore, lack of a prominent religious identity has left space allowing for a religiously tolerant culture. In other words, religious minorities are less expected to assimilate than elsewhere in the U.S. (Roof 2007: 91), creating a pluralistic multicultural society in which minority groups are heard. The laws surrounding California textbook adoption are just one example of this. Furthermore, "Increased diversity within California has led to heightened visibility of global religious differences within its own borders and, consequently, to greater attention to religion (often linked to ethnicity[12] as with Korean Christians) as a basis of individual and group identification" (Roof 2007: 92). Californian culture was established on the grounds of self-interests and not religion, and therefore maintained a policy, particularly in education, directed towards multiculturalism. But, as the state population becomes more religiously diverse and followers of minority religions that previously went unnoticed increase in numbers, nuances within minority religions become visible.

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[11] More can be read on this topic in *The Story Behind "Land of the Free," a Controversial History Textbook* (1967) by Ford Sammis.
[12] In this case, Hindus linked to the expansive ethnic category of 'South Asian'.

In addition to simplifying text, publishers are increasingly creating more 'user-friendly' textbooks that include online activities, extra explanations and images to personalize the narratives of historical figures in the textbooks. Emphasis is now placed on the number of 'extras' a textbook contains, which are designed to appeal to the teacher and his/her students, distracting them from simplified and perhaps limited content. The problem then, is that basing an entire educational curriculum on a textbook allows little room for differing views because the history is already filtered and provided with a specific image allocated to text through language, pictures, and chapter organization. Dr. M. H. Romanowski writes in an article titled *"Problems of Bias in History Textbooks"*,

> Although textbooks claim [...] to be objective, they advance a value-laden perspective of reality. Because the selection and structure of knowledge affect our perception of the world, the language and context used to articulate knowledge are crucial. Textbook authors select particular language that creates impressions in the minds of students. These impressions have power and authority because they are presented in the printed and bound textbook with its aura of an authority that is beyond question and criticism. (Romanowski 1996: 171)

The fact that the information comes in textbook form, presents a concrete authority that goes unquestioned. If the teacher does not have an answer to a question, he or she consults the textbook. Students are tested on the material in the textbook and are expected to rely on it until they reach the university (if the opportunity arises) where they may or may not begin to question what they have learned. Because the curriculum of each consecutive grade or level builds on the previous, students are encouraged to store what they learn over the years, applying it where necessary. Thus kindergarten through twelfth grade public education becomes the official authority on information about the world, presented as fact to students at a highly impressionable age. Sixth grade, in particular, is the first year that students learn more in depth about different religions. The content with all its biases is then absorbed by students, regurgitated and applied in real-life situations. Students are influenced by textbooks and thus become products of the state education system at large.

2.3 TEXTBOOK ADOPTION

In the United States, curriculum development falls under state jurisdiction. Though some are similar, all states do not share the same curriculum and it is possible that some states will influence the curriculum of others. California, which has 11 percent of the textbook

market, has chosen the process of textbook adoption in which a commission selected by the SBE decides which textbook programs are to be implemented in the state curriculum. Because of this, California has become a target state for publishing companies in the U.S. of which only three remain as major players in the multi-billion dollar market (McClintick 2000), monopolizing both industry and information, and minimalizing textbook options for school districts ("Widely Adopted History Textbooks" 2015). Therefore, the "big-three" as they have been named - Pearson, McGraw Hill and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt – base their content on California or Texas[13] demands and if needed, make slight modifications for other textbook adoption states (Ravitch 2004: 98). Textbooks are not rewritten for every state. They are written for the customers willing to spend the most money, in this case California and Texas. Then, the material is slightly modified and republished for other states. This means that a large portion of textbooks in the U.S. follow the material proposed for the state of California.

Interestingly, according to a report published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a non-profit organization that works toward education reform, the practice of textbook adoption has roots dating back to the post-Civil War period when the major textbook publishers were located in the North. Southern states imposed textbook adoption in order to protect the interests of the Confederate South through the language in the textbooks. "Northern publishers obligingly complied, publishing separate textbooks for schools in the South and North. For decades, Southern textbooks referred to the Civil War as "the War for Southern Independence" or "the War between the States." (Finn et al. 2004: 6). Unsurprisingly, the majority of adoption states even today are in the South, Southwest and former Confederate states, California included. Therefore, historically textbook adoption was deliberately implemented as a tool to maintain a specific political agenda, influencing students' perspectives on their American identity.

The textbook adoption process,[14] according to the CDE published "2005 History-Social Science Primary Adoption Report", involves a three-fold protocol: social content review,

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[13] Even though Texas maintains its reputation as a 'big-spender', the controversies over textbook standards in Texas are recognized as loaded with Christian conservative bias. Publishers censor any content that may go against Christian conservative values and thus Texas textbooks are not re-adopted into other state curriculum unless that state shares a similar agenda. (Ansary 2004; "Widely Adopted History Textbooks" 2015; Collins 2012). Texas then, is not useful for this study; consequently only California history textbooks are taken into account in the analysis.

[14] See Appendix 3.

education content review, and public review and comment. The three review processes are conducted by a Content Review Panel (CRP) of "experts", an Instructional Materials Advisory Panel (IMAP) and "public volunteers from various organizations" (CDE 2005 Adoption Report: 4). Before the review processes begin, each group undergoes one week of legal training to ensure the publishers' compliance with Educational Code Sections 60040–60045, 60048, and 60200, SBE Social Content Standards and State Curriculum Standards as outlined in the History-Social Science Curriculum Framework. Once the review panels have received copies of each publisher's submission, each panel reviews the materials individually before determining which textbook programs to adopt and whether or not there are changes to be made based on the panels' recommendations. Following the adoption, the programs are then released for public review, accessible across the state at Learning Resources Display Centers (LRDCs), for a period of thirty days at the end of which a public hearing is held in order to present the comments. As I noted in the introduction, due to the quantity of comments received, it was at this phase in the 2005 adoption process that the Curriculum Commission created an Ad Hoc Committee to assist in reviewing the comments, of which a significant amount came from Hindu organizations. The comments were then analyzed and debated among the Curriculum Commission members, which resulted in two additional review periods, each time modifying and editing the material before final adoption.
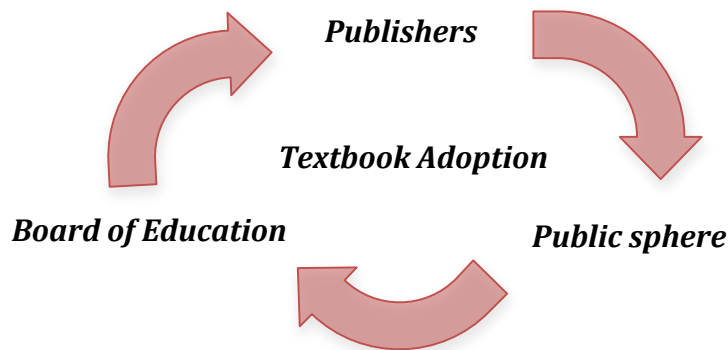

Figure 2. Spheres of influence in textbook adoption

So, the CDE analyzes the content of a proposed textbook, puts it up for public review, then reanalyzes it, writes a report, and votes on it. The document titled "Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content (edition 2013)" gives examples of what

social content to look for when reviewing textbooks.[15] However, the methodology is left rather vague. For example, the section on the methodology of representation of religion states, "The standards will be achieved by depicting, when appropriate, the diversity of religious beliefs held in the United States and California, as well as in other societies, without displaying bias toward or prejudice against any of those beliefs or religious beliefs in general" (CDE Social Contents Standards 2013: 10). The document does not specify exactly what content the textbook should have regarding minorities, only that it should be generally representative and unbiased. The expression "when appropriate" assumes that the Curriculum Commission is capable and has the authority to determine in the textbook where to depict different religious beliefs that exist or are "held" in the U.S. There are no clear guidelines in the standards as how to avoid bias, leaving the material to be reviewed to the discretion of the CDE Curriculum Commission.

What happens before the textbooks are submitted to the CDE review panels? How are textbooks compiled and edited? It begins with the authors, in this case teachers or historians hired by the publishers, who write the basic material for the textbook. Once the content is submitted to the editor, it is then put through what has been called the "chop shop" (Finn et al. 2004: 4) where it undergoes a series of reorganizations and rewording in accordance with the publisher's 'bias guidelines' which are tailored to California social content standards (Ravitch 2004: 107). Bias guidelines "combine left-wing political correctness and right-wing religious fundamentalism" and "regulate what writers are permitted to say about specific groups in society, including women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and members of racial and ethnic minorities." (Ravitch 2004: 34). These guidelines were created as a reaction to the evolving multicultural policies in California and are the main reason that history textbooks have been simplified and are lacking in historical content. The multicultural policies that took over California public education aimed to include and celebrate the different cultures coexisting in Californian society. One such example of this is the public review and comment stage of the textbook adoption process, where anyone is free to comment on the way their religion, culture, heritage, etc. is represented in the textbooks. However, when there are conflicting opinions, the State Board of Education must decide whose opinion is valid and whose is not.

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[15] See Appendix 2 for full text of the section on religion.

In history there are 'winners' and 'losers'; the problem in California is that publishers cannot portray the 'losers' or even certain conflicts because it shows bias and students who identify with the "losers" may be seen and see themselves in a negative light (Ravitch 2004: 34-39). Social content review is put in place to police any lack of diversity in the textbooks. Publishers must verify that all underrepresented groups, women and LGBTs[16] included, are represented and pay special attention to how they are represented.

This is where the pressure groups enter the process. As seen in the case of the Hindu textbook controversy, pressure groups can hold quite a bit of influence when it comes to adoption. If pressure groups notice any additional language that may be offensive or depict the group they represent negatively, then they send their proposed modifications and the textbooks are sent back to be re-edited (Ravitch 2004: 6-7). Naturally, if the publishers did not comply, they would not sell their product to the state. Concurrently, Prema A. Kurien argues in the article "Multiculturalism and "American" Religion: The Case of Hindu Americans" that the meaning of multiculturalism cannot be taken for granted and must be defined clearly.

> California makes multiculturalist policies in hopes of breaking away from stereotypes and stigmatization of students. Yet, this void of authority over academic texts allows religious political agendas to enter the academic sphere resulting in the complete opposite of what was attempted by implementing the multiculturalist policy in the first place. (Kurien 2006: 735-736)

This is what Ravitch refers to when she describes the 'bias guidelines' as the product of "left-wing political correctness" and "right-wing religious fundamentalism" (Ravitch 2004: 34). The 'left-wing' comes from the state and its multiculturalist policies while the 'right-wing' comes from outside pressure groups that aim to control the way certain identities (religious or cultural) are represented in textbooks. Right-wing pressure groups are founded on religious political ideologies and are not without an agenda or objective. In the 2005 Hindu Textbook Controversy, there were two Hindu organizations that submitted comments regarding religion on behalf of the Hindu population in California and by extension, the U.S.: the Vedic Foundation, based in Austin, Texas and the Hindu Education Foundation.

The Vedic Foundation (VF) mission statement on their website is as follows: (1) Re-establish the greatness of Hinduism, (2) Educate individuals about the Divine history of India and the original teachings of Bhartiya (Hindu) scriptures through logical, scientific, historical

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[16] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

and scriptural evidences and (3) To serve as an authoritative resource on authentic Hinduism. Let us consider each of these points. To 're-establish the greatness of Hinduism' is a presupposition in that Hinduism upholds greatness. Moreover, to 're-establish something presupposes that the object has previously been established and is no longer; thus it needs to be established again. The object in this case is the greatness of Hinduism. What is meant by 'greatness' is not defined directly. However, under the heading "Authentic Hinduism", there is a webpage titled "Is India Really Independent?"[17]. The article suggests that "Vedic culture" has lost its traditions and values to "modernization", which according to the article is the "westernization" of post-colonial India, (i.e. clothes, cable TV, convert schools, and British colonial authorized books still taught in school) and stresses the need to "return to [their] our roots", the Hindu scriptures. Therefore, 'greatness' most likely refers to Hindu civilization and a specific Hindu nationalism. As for the other two points in their mission statement, VF organizes and hosts public seminars and courses on "authentic" Hinduism. Likewise, they comment and review American textbooks, participating in politics where possible.

The Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) is subtler in their objectives. Their mission statement reads, "Hindu Education Foundation USA is working towards correcting misrepresentations, stereotypes and biases and enriching the understanding about Indian civilization and Hinduism in America." The foundation seeks to correct misrepresentations, stereotypes and biases, but they do not state how or where. What are the misrepresentations, stereotypes and biases? The only way to see what they mean by this is through their political participation. On the home page of their website, we can find photos and articles all linked to the Hindu Textbook Controversy and their role in it. The website is a testimony to their "victories" over the state of California. Based on the captions of the photos (which take up nearly the entire screen), we can conclude that what they claim as misrepresentation, stereotypes and biases, involves the portrayal of Hinduism in school textbooks, notably they are against the presence of a fifth caste, the "Untouchables" or *Dalits*, as part of Hinduism.[18] Furthermore, they ubiquitously amalgamate India and Hinduism,[19] thereby suggesting that the

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[17] Bakre, S. "Is India Really Independent?"
(http://www.thevedicfoundation.org/authentic_hinduism/is_india_really_independent.htm)
[18] "Don't use caste to erase Indian Civilization"
[19] "'India' restored in California textbooks", "California's new framework to have richer content on India and Hinduism" (http://www.hindueducation.org/)

notion that India and historically, Indian civilization, is and has been homogenously Hindu, devoid of any diversity among the Indian population both in India as well as abroad.

III. THE DEBATES

3.1 STATE STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK

Two aspects that govern the core materials in the textbooks are the state standards and the history curriculum framework as designed by History–Social Science Curriculum Framework and Criteria Committee. The sixth grade state standards are organized into seven categories (6.1 – 6.7), each with a list of specific objectives for the students to achieve. While the standards must be found in the order presented by the Department of Education, it is left to the discretion of the publishers to decide how much additional detail to include and how to organize the individual pages, adding images, classroom activities, keywords, assessment questions and reading summary tools; hence the discrepancy between Teachers' Curriculum Institute's (59 pages) and McDougal Littell's (35 pages) content on "Ancient India".

The framework is comprised of seventeen points that delineate the 'why' and 'how' learning objectives associated with the 'course description', which delineates the 'what'. In other words, the framework focuses on the importance of (accurately and chronologically presented) history and the role of religion,[20] history as inter-disciplinary,[21] the development of multicultural, ethical, civic and democratic values,[22] and supports teaching methods to encourage critical thinking skills.[23] The course description "provide[s] an integrated and sequential development of the goals of this curriculum", and is, however, "intended to be illustrative" (CDE Frameworks: 28). The curriculum framework, course description included, works in conjunction with the history standards to provide a more complete picture of state expectations of students' knowledge on the corresponding topic. For relevance purposes, I only take state standards 6.5.2 – 6.5.4, the sixth grade frameworks sections 8, 13 and 14, and the course description titled "West Meets East: The Early Civilizations of India and China" into account.

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[20] Curriculum framework points 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13 and 14 (pgs. 4-8).
[21] Curriculum framework points 2, 4 and 5 (pg. 4-5).
[22] Curriculum framework points 8, 10, 11 and 12 (pg. 5-7).
[23] Curriculum framework points 15, 16 and 17 (pg. 8).

The sixth grade standards regarding Indian culture and Hinduism are written as follows:

6.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of India.

> 2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.
>
> 3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.
>
> 4. Outline the social structure of the caste system. (CDE Frameworks: 84)

Immediately upon reading points two through four we notice that each one begins with a verb and is thus in the imperative mood: *discuss, explain, outline*. Although the result of these standards is destined for students, the language itself could just as easily be directed at publishers and teachers who are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the curriculum. Because the sentences are imperative, the textbooks, which serve as a guideline for the teacher, *must* discuss, explain and outline the corresponding topics. It is as if the Board of Education is voicing commands aimed directly at publishers, especially due to the first of five textbook adoption criteria,[24] "(1) History-Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards: The content as specified in the Education Code, the History–Social Science Content Standards, and the History–Social Science Framework (2001 Updated Edition)." Textbooks would be rejected if they did not comply with either the standards or the framework. Therefore, the standards' imperative structure reiterates the necessity of coherence between textbook content and students' acquired knowledge, reinforcing the state's authority over publishers.

Not only does state authority manifest itself in the particular sentence structure, but also in the production of truth, which can be seen in the author's use of the determiner 'the'. For example, let us consider *2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.* 'The' is used twice in this sentence, each time introducing a noun phrase, *significance of the Aryan invasions* and *Aryan invasions* respectively. The use of 'the' assumes either common knowledge or something that has already been defined or is about to be defined. Because the specificities of the 'Aryan invasions' and/or its significance are absent from the document, 'the' must indicate common knowledge of the said topic, presupposing that historically, 'Aryan invasions' occurred and, as an historical event, are significant. The presupposition of the second standard hides the fact that Aryan invasions are theoretical and disputed. At best, the course description

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[24] See Appendix 4.

offers some additional information but only in regards to "invasions", "After [the Harappan civilization's] collapse, succeeding waves of Aryans from the north spread their influence across the Punjab and Ganges plains." (CDE Framework: 78). In this case, "succeeding waves of Aryans...spread their influence..." can be understood as alluding to an invasion despite the inconsistency of vocabulary between the framework and the standards; the former uses the euphemism *spreading their influence* and the latter, *invasions*. So, by presenting Aryan invasions as significant (and this), as what should be common knowledge, the Board of Education becomes a knowledge producer, creating standardized knowledge through the publication of state standards. Similar arguments can be made for 6.5.3 (*the* major beliefs and practices) and 6.5.4 (*the* social structure of *the* caste system).

Knowledge is further produced in the creation of dichotomies in standard 6.5.3 *Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.* The adjectives used here, *major* and *early*, inherently consist of their respective opposites: minor and later. Thus, by claiming the existence (which it does through the verb *explain*) of major beliefs and practices, by default minor beliefs and practices must exist, which due to their lack of presence can be deemed not relevant enough to be covered in the curriculum. The same can be considered in the case of *early Hinduism* from which a *later Hinduism* derives. The choice in using both of these adjectival modifiers shows that there is a difference between major/minor and early/later from which we can draw two points: first, that Hinduism is not fixed in time and second, that the evolution of Hinduism originated in the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism but not the minor ones. As a result, 6.5.3 implies that Hinduism changed over time and is not bounded by a start or end point in time, making the argument of a 'pure' Hinduism, according to the standards, illogical (an argument to which I will return later).

Lastly, there is coherence between the three standards, more specifically, chronological order that demonstrates a cause and effect evolution of which the so-called "Aryan invasions" is chosen as a turning point in history that later led to the development of Brahmanism. Brahmanism, in turn, ceded to the development of Hinduism. The last standard, 6.5.4 *Outline the social structure of the caste system,* unexceptionally follows the same succession, making the noun phrase, *social structure of the caste system,* the next historical phase in the sequence.

Hinduism, then, resulted in the social structure of the caste system. Nevertheless, how each period evolves into the next is left for the publishers to explain.

The standards listed above are reductive and laden with assumptions, and consequently are the root of the debates between the proponents of Hindu lobbying organizations and their adversaries. The debates can be categorized under three main arguments that I have outlined below: identifying the subcontinent in its historical context as either India or South Asia, teaching students about Aryan invasions that have yet to be proven and teaching students about the caste system in Ancient India.

3.2 INDIA vs. SOUTH ASIA

The first debate involves the naming of the Asian subcontinent – "India" or "South Asia". At first glance at the content in both textbooks, the title "Ancient India" immediately draws the reader's attention. "Ancient India" is clearly meant to be a general qualitative description of the content to follow.

What the textbooks denote as "ancient" covers a highly fragmented period from 3000 B.C. to the mid-1900s in McDougal Littell (McDougal Littell 2006: 115, 136) and from 2500 B.C.E. to 550 C.E. in TCI (TCI 2004: 123, 168), where 3000 B.C. refers to the beginning of agriculture on the Indus River, from which civilization stems[25] (McDougal Littell 2006: 115) and 2500 B.C./B.C.E. to some form of organized society, either "early walled towns"[26] according to TCI (TCI 2004: 123) or "great cities" according to McDougal Littell (McDougal Littell 2006: 115). The terms "walled towns" and "cities" are modern concepts used to connote familiar images in the mind of the reader. Even though it is likely that the cities or towns of 'ancient India' did not resemble the urban communities as we know them today, the student may imagine a city they have visited and try to place it in the context of 'ancient India'. Such vocabulary aims to describe something entirely foreign to the readers while encouraging the image of history from the readers' worldview.

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[25] "As in other regions [of the world], civilization along the Indus River began with agriculture...By 3000 B.C., they were growing cotton and making it into fabric – the first people in Asia to do so." (ML, 115)

[26] "Early walled towns appeared on the Indian subcontinent in about 2500 B.C.E. Over the next 2,000 years, a unique civilization developed in India." (TCI, 123)
"By 2500 B.C., some villages had grown to be great cities." (ML, 115)

The second word of the title is "India", a geographic and political territory on the South Asian subcontinent. Both textbooks claim that "India is a subcontinent" (McDougal Littell 2006: 219; TCI 2004: 123) and not *on* the subcontinent or *a part of* the subcontinent. McDougal Littell goes further in stating that, "The subcontinent includes present-day Bangledesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and most of Pakistan" (McDougal Littell 2006: 219). Therefore, India is equated with all of these countries and no term is used to separate the difference between modern-day India and ancient India.

The use of the term "India" is an intensively debated topic. While one side argues that *India* has always been used to refer to the people and civilizations in the region, the other side argues that its use exemplifies a nationalistic view of history. According to the South Asian Faculty Group, "India" is a modern state and concept and did not exist as a nation until the end of British colonization in 1947 (South Asian Faculty Group 2016). Following the rise of the Indus Valley civilization, the region underwent a series of invasions and migrations, forming periods of changing kingdoms and empires (Murphy 2016). If referring to the region, 'India' does not give a comprehensive image of the entire subcontinent's history and to group the region under the umbrella of Indian hegemony ignores the struggle these nations underwent to fight for their identity (Pandit 2016; Soundararajan 2016). While the scholars of SAFG and those who share the opinion of Dr. Witzel argue for a more inclusionary term (Witzel 2005), Hindu Education Foundation, Vedic Foundation and Hindu American Foundation contest that 'India' historically was the name given to the peoples of the Indus River Valley and thus should not be changed (Pillalamarri 2016; Sinha 2016).

Changing 'India' to 'South Asia' in the textbooks would be more complicated than a simple cut/paste maneuver. This is due to a deeper issue that lies in the fact that, in the discourse on naming the region, the proponents of 'India' often conflate it with 'Hinduism'. Historically, they are inseparable. The Hindu religion was a major aspect of life in ancient India. If 'South Asia' replaces 'India', the link between *ancient* India and *modern-day* India is removed, resulting in a separation of Hindu and Indian. Many opinion articles, blogs and comments made on the subject display an identity conflation of Indian and Hindu or India and Hinduism, which would mean that a change to 'South Asia' would not properly represent Indian/Hindu identity.

At the December 2014 SBE Instructional Quality Commission meeting the commissioners heard a number of comments from individuals on the topic of history textbooks. In summary, the comments made request historical accuracy and a positive portrayal of Hinduism in the textbooks. Many of the speakers, most of whom are either parents or students themselves (twelve of nineteen speakers), spoke about personal experiences as Indian or Hindu Americans. Their personal testimonies with the textbook material shows that they identify with the categories used in the textbook and thus felt personally attacked when reading the material. For example, a tenth grader validates her opinion by stating, "I've grown up in the US but I have deep roots to my Indian heritage because my family visits India almost every year..." This statement legitimizes her opinion. She is American because she grew up in the US and thus, shares common ground with her audience. At the same time, she is Indian and maintains a connection with a country that she did not grow up in, but her parents perhaps did. The fact that she mentions her Indian ties shows that she has the right to participate in such a discussion of Indian representation. She feels personally concerned. Similarly, other speakers used the same approach to validate their opinion, using phrases such as "American citizen and Californian Hindu", or even making the claim that authors have forgotten about "my religion and my culture". The representation of ancient India and Hinduism is personal and not historical ("Hindu Comments at California's Department of Education" 2015).

This same sentiment is displayed on a number of websites arguing against the change proposed by South Asian studies academics. For some, to change 'India' to 'South Asia' is to erase India from history. One example comes from the website change.org, an online petition website where one can write a letter or statement and request electronic signatures. Here, the authors have requested signatures to protest against the use of 'South Asia' in place of 'India' in California textbooks. To date, they have obtained 25,802 signatures. Their letter to the Instructional Quality Commission uses a similar rhetoric, mentioning the effect this change would have on the individual lives of students asking, "Would you presume to deny the reality of India's existence and history, and its deep significance to Indian American students in California..." (Scholars for People letter to IQC 2016). Similarly, HAF used the same reasoning to rally the California Indian Hindu population under the social media campaign #DontEraseIndia to ensure "that the CA K-12[27] History-Social Science Framework depicts the

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[27] California grades kindergarten through twelfth

history, culture, and traditions of Indian and Hindu Americans accurately." (HAF 2016). Ultimately, to replace 'India' with 'South Asia' is to erase Indian Hindu American identity. Those opposing the change assert that the Indian Hindu American identity is at stake, not the identity, however, of Hindu Indians or Hinduism in India. On a global scale, the controversy is about identity in the U.S. and how a minority identifies with their land of origin.

3.3 ARYAN INVASIONS

The second contentious matter is the depiction of Aryan invasions in the text. The textbooks initially paint a picture of a people originating from Central Asia attacking and taking over the subcontinent. Aryans, in the textbooks, are credited with bringing early forms of Hinduism to the peoples on the subcontinent and later imposing a social structure in which Brahmin priests were the authority. The Hindu Education Foundation and the Vedic Foundation were clearly against such an image and hence suggested numerous edits concerning this.[28]

An example of this can be seen in the suggested edit made by HEF (VF wanted the sentence deleted altogether) on TCI's content. "Around 1500 B.C.E., invaders called Aryans conquered northern India." Replace with, "Around 1500 B.C.E., invaders called Aryans came to northern India." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 21). HEF presses to change the verb "conquered" and replace it with "came to". The subject in this sentence, *invaders called Aryans*, does not change. What changes is the transitivity of the verb. *Conquered* is a transitive verb in the past tense and thus requires an object (i.e. someone/something *conquers* someone/something). The object in the original sentence is a place, *northern India*. So, the text initially stated that someone conquered something. However, *northern India* is a symbol representing the contemporary people of northern India. The meaning behind this symbol disappears with the change suggested and *northern India* then becomes a geographical location. Also, by using *came to*, a prepositional intransitive verb, the action is more neutral and without an implied motive. One can *come to* a place deliberately or unintentionally; whereas *conquer* implies the intention to take over someone/something.

Interestingly, HEF had not commented on the term *invaders*, people who invade. Invader can be considered a synonym for conqueror, and therefore the global meaning of the

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[28] HEF edit numbers 14-18, 29, 41, 43, 48, 56, 67-68, 76-79, 81, 84, 90-92, and 97. VF edit number 38.

sentence is only slightly modified but does not change entirely. The difference is that with the suggested edit, the sentence can be understood in two ways. The first possibility is that people (invaders) came to northern India to invade. In this sense, the sentence does not dispel the notion that northern India was taken over. The second possibility is that people (invaders) came to northern India, by force or accident without the intention to take over. It could be that in these people's native land or place of origin, they were considered invaders but did not intend to do so in this time and place. To solve this problem, the CRP final recommendation was that the phrase *invaders called Aryans* should be changed to *groups calling themselves the Aryans.*

In addition to the comments made by HEF, the Ad Hoc Committee suggested that the "Publisher is directed to add a clarifying note that the "Aryan invasion theory"[29] has been contradicted by scholarly evidence." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 21). This counter-argument to the original statement shows the Ad Hoc Committee's desire for textbooks to distance factual language from the "theory" of Aryan invasion. The use of the present perfect verb *has been contradicted* indicates that the matter continues to be debated. Furthermore, the Ad Hoc Committee does not seek to state any references as to who has contradicted the theory; only that *scholarly evidence* exists. The adjective *scholarly* gives authority to their statement. It acts as proof alone for the reader. Had the comment read, "the 'Aryan invasion theory' has been contradicted by evidence", the reader may question the authenticity of this statement. To what evidence do they refer? Since the committee mentions *scholarly*, the reader is less likely to question the source for reasons I have previously discussed in the section titled *Textbook Authority*.

With the suggested modifications taken into account, the final published version reads, "In the second millennium B.C.E., people called Aryans migrated into northern India. Some historians credit the Aryans with bringing elements of what later became Hinduism to India." (TCI 2004: 144). All notion of possible invasion and/or conquering is completely erased with the noun *people* and the Aryans have gone from aggressors to wanderers by use of the verb *migrated*. Nevertheless, the Ad Hoc Committee's comment on the 'Aryan invasion theory' is not as explicit as they have requested in their reported decision, but rather embedded in the quantifier *some* in *some historians credit the Aryans*. Therefore, this example, one of many

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[29] The Aryan Invasion/Migration theory claims that Aryans originating from Central Asia invaded or migrated to the Indian subcontinent, bringing with them language and religion that were imposed on the indigenous people.

suggested edits made by the Hindu Education Foundation (the Vedic Foundation, again, wanted the entire sentence deleted), shows that the two groups as well as the Ad Hoc Committee advocate for a text that diminishes the role that Aryans played in Indian civilization.

In the same way, this debate continues in the following edit, which was the precursor to the second sentence of the published version above in TCI's textbook. The original text reads, "Hinduism is a blend of the Aryan beliefs and the beliefs of the people they conquered." HEF requested the sentence be changed to, "Hinduism is a blend of the Aryan beliefs and the beliefs of the people living in the Indus-Saraswati civilization." Again, this comment raises the same issue as above concerning the use of *conquer*, in this case, *the people they conquered.* Despite the CRP's recommendation to delete the sentence altogether, TCI authors kept the idea that Hinduism is a synthesis of foreign and indigenous practices. This can be seen in the paragraph following the sentence in the textbook, "Others believe that traces of Hinduism can be found in ancient artifacts left by India's original settlers." (TCI 2004: 144). So, one school, denoted by *some historians*, believes that Aryans brought *elements* of Hinduism with them; while another school, denoted by *others*, believes that *original settlers* left *traces of Hinduism*. The sentence beginning with *some historians* is affirmative – *historians credit Aryans*. The information is presented as fact while displaying possible doubt only in the word *some*. Yet, the second sentence begins with the pronoun *others*, which puts distance between the information to follow and the authority of *historians*. Moreover, the use of the modal verb *can*, in *can be found*, calls into question *traces of Hinduism in ancient artifacts*, implying a possibility but not certainty. Comparing these sentences demonstrates how publishers highlight certain historical perspectives while obscuring others, primarily with the objective of getting passed pressure groups and selling their textbooks.

The real issue at hand for Hindu advocacy groups, however, is not whether a group of people called Aryans came into what is now India. The issue is that there is a *theory* in which Aryans, an Indo-European people not originating from the subcontinent, are credited with introducing or even imposing a religion that would later become Hinduism. And, therefore, in using this theory, Hinduism cannot be considered indigenous to the subcontinent. In a later report titled *Teaching of Hinduism in the California State School System: Evaluation and Recommendations* Ad Hoc Committee member, Dr. Shiva Bajpai, and managing editor of

Hinduism Today Magazine, Acharya Arumuganathaswami, wrote

> Aryan invasion, Brahmanism and caste are closely tied together in the Orientalist construct of India: Invading Aryans subjugated the native population, and Aryan brahmin priests imposed the caste system upon them. But modern research—in climatology, archeology, geology and anthropology, DNA analysis of the Indian population and other developments—has eliminated the possibility of a military invasion and also points to caste being a long-standing aspect of Indian society, as it was of many ancient societies. Regardless, the textbooks of all states of America still teach the Aryan domination scenario. (Bajpai and Arumuganathaswami 2016: 8)

They argue that textbooks portray Indians as an ever-colonized people with a theory that is still debated. Aside from the academic world, this topic is often debated on online forums and blogs, mostly denying the accuracy of the theory and claiming that it was a colonial tool to oppress the Indian population by erasing any indigenous traditions (Lalitsharma 2016, Rane et. al. 2013).

Nevertheless, not all Indians and Indian Americans are against the Aryan Invasion Theory. Those who argue in favor of it as an historically accurate event, do so by associating it to the caste system. This allows them to conclude that the caste system is therefore not indigenous (Kaur 2014, Daniel 2005). If the caste system was brought in from outsiders, it does not derive from Indian culture/tradition – all the more reason to do away with it.

3.4 THE CASTE SYSTEM

The third disagreement is centered on the teaching of the caste system in Ancient India. There are two sides to this argument. The first is that the teaching of the caste system in public schools gives children a negative image of India and therefore Indian American children are subjected to bullying and ridicule. The other side claims that while it is true that Hindu/Indian American students are often mocked, not teaching the caste system leaves a false image of India with students and is thus more harmful to their comprehension of the world.

Both the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation agree on the fact that the caste system should not be taught to sixth grade students in order to protect Hindu/Indian American students from discrimination and marginalization in school. Yet, a closer look at the comments from each group shows that the issues they perceive in the text are not the same. HEF's objective is to dissociate the caste system from Hinduism, whereas VF denounces the texts' association of the caste system to any existence in present-day Indian society.

In McDougal Littell's textbook, a graphic organizer in the shape of a pyramid is situated on the top third of a page situated in Lesson 2: Origins of Hinduism and under the sub-section titled "Changes to Indian Life" (McDougal Littell 2006: 229). The pyramid is divided into four levels which represent the four varna[30]. Not as a part of, but beneath the pyramid are the "Untouchables". This was not the original image published on which HEF commented, "Page 229: depicts Untouchables as the fifth varna. Remove this." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 15). Originally, the pyramid depicted the Untouchables or *Dalits* as the base of the pyramid. Even though the term *varna* is not at all used to describe the social hierarchy, the different echelons are titled using the four varna, creating an association between varna and caste system. The caste system includes the Untouchables; the four varna do not. Furthermore, varna are ordained in Hindu sacred texts (*Vedas*) and thus cannot be separated from the religion. Therefore, the category *Untouchables* is described in small print below the word as "Untouchables were considered outside the system and below it." (McDougal Littell 2006: 229). The previous page explains that a "group" called Untouchables "came into being" centuries after the establishment of the varna (McDougal Littell 2006: 228). The verbs used to describe the Untouchables are both passive (*were considered*) and intransitive (*came into being*). It does not answer the question of who assigned this 'group' such duties that "no one else wanted" as sweeping or disposing of dead bodies (McDougal Littell 2006: 228-229).

To further exemplify the system, the publishers added an image of a "sweeper" in the top left-hand corner of the page, under the definition of *caste system*. The description of it reads, "This sweeper did not choose his job. In traditional India, jobs were passed down from father to son" (McDougal Littell 2006: 229). Through sentence association, the consecutive statements infer that the caste system is/was the passing of a trade from one generation to the next, not necessarily an imposed system. Therefore, it remains unclear in the textbook as to how the caste system functioned at the ground level. This may give the impression that the caste system was never imposed by any specific power, but rather organically came into existence and was sustained by family tradition. As this complies with the HEF's ideology that the term *untouchable* should not be associated with Hinduism, the rest of the McDougal Littell

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[30]The varna are described in the Vedas, Hindu sacred texts. The four varna are classified as Brahmin: priests; Ksatriya: rulers and warriors; Vaisya: traders and farmers; Sudras: services and laborers.

content on the caste system was not commented on.

In addition to the comment made on McDougal Littell's textbook, HEF continued to pursue their goal of dissociating the caste system from Hinduism by also commenting on TCI's content under the heading, "15.3 Hinduism and the Caste System" (TCI 2004: 145). Their comment reads, "Page 145, last paragraph: "The caste system is just one example of how Hinduism was woven into the fabric of daily life in India." Delete this part." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 22). Situated at the end of the section, this sentence summarizes and concludes the section. Based on the structure of this sentence we can infer two observations. First, the caste system was part of Hinduism and is not separate from the religion. And, second, the study of Hinduism cannot be separated from the study of Indian society. If the caste system is an example of the way Hinduism functioned in society, then Hinduism is part of society – it is "woven into the fabric of daily life". The caste system was a visual aspect of the functioning of Hinduism in society and thus a result of it.

Evidently, by the comment, "Delete this part." HEF as well as the Ad Hoc Committee, who approved the suggestion, were not convinced of the sentence's importance. Nevertheless, the final recommendation of the CRP was to keep the original text which eventually became, "The class system is just one example of how Hinduism affected the fabric of daily life in India." Interestingly, in the published version *caste* has become *class* and *woven into* has become *affected*. Caste, a key word in the chapter, is defined as "a class or group in Hindu society" (TCI 2004: 145). So, the keyword is replaced with part of the definition, forcing the reader to go one step further in order to make the connection between Hinduism and caste. Only used in one other place, *class* is found at the beginning of the section when used to define and describe the caste system. Nowhere else on the page does the text use the term *class system*, thus dissociating caste with Hinduism in this sentence. Furthermore, Hinduism is no longer embedded into society – no longer a part of society, but only *affected* it.

Contrary to the transitive verb *to affect*, connoting consequence, the complex transitive verb in the passive voice, *to be woven into*, connotes an interlocking of two objects dependent on each other. It is easier to separate the subject and object of a transitive verb into distinct ideas than a verb in the passive voice whose complement is inherently linked to the subject. In *Hinduism affected the fabric of daily life*, *Hinduism* can be separated as one idea and *the fabric of daily life* as another idea. This separation cannot be done with the original sentence because

the subject is part of the complement. Also, the use of the past tense *affected* demonstrates a completed action in the past, making the possible suggestion that the class system no longer continues to affect the fabric of daily life. Therefore, even though the publishers kept most of the original text, substituting only a few words changes the connotation and relationships between words and mental representations.

As previously mentioned, the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation have similar agendas, yet their suggested edits were not of the same nature. HEF was more interested in representing the caste system as outside of Hinduism, while VF sought to distance the existence of any remainders of the caste system from present-day Indian society. For example, in McDougal Littell's textbook, the original text stated, "Indian society divides itself into a complex structure of social classes based particularly on jobs. This class structure is called the caste system." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 28). VF disagreed on the use of the present tense in the first sentence, *divides*, claiming it "is out of place" for an ancient history textbook. They justify further,

> It presumes that the caste system is present in India today. According to the Indian Constitution, under the section, Fundamental Rights, the Right to Equality is guaranteed to all citizens, just as the U.S. has enacted Equal Employment Opportunity Laws to prevent discrimination. (CDE Memorandum 2005: 28)

The order of these sentences reveals a rationale where the latter serves as a counter-argument to the former. Even though the use of the present tense in the first sentence would indicate the existence of a continual social divide, VF does not actually deny the existence of the caste system in their comment. To clarify, they make a comparison between the Indian Constitution and the Equal Employment Opportunity Laws. Yet, the enactment of laws does not illustrate what occurs at the local level. Moreover, the Right to Equality, like the Equal Employment Opportunity Laws, guarantees citizens legal equality but not social equality. This passage deals with society and social division, not legal injustices against particular social classes. As a result their justification is misplaced. Indeed, VF succeeded in changing the verb *divides* to *divided*, but did not have as much success with all of their suggested edits.

The Vedic Foundation continues to distance modern-day Hinduism from any continuation of the caste system in TCI's textbook. In a comment referring to the introduction of chapter 15 "Learning About Hindu Beliefs" in TCI's textbook, VF comments "p. 143:

'Hinduism…has affected how people worship, what jobs they do,… And it has helped to determine the status of people in Indian society.' Remove." (CDE Memorandum 2005: 34). Hinduism, here, is linked to the caste system, particularly in, *what jobs they do* and *the status of people in Indian society*. As we have seen earlier, the verb *to affect* is a transitive verb where *Hinduism* is the actor and *people's jobs* and *statuses* are the objects of the actions. The sentences are structured in a cause and effect manner where Hinduism is the cause. Furthermore, this short paragraph refers to Indian society using the present perfect tense, *has affected* and *has helped determine*. The use of the present perfect makes it unclear as to whether the text is suggesting that Hinduism *still* helps determine the status of people in present-day Indian society or if it refers only to ancient Indian society. Moreover, the text is juxtaposed with a full-page modern picture of a Brahmin priest, linking the past and present. This lack of clarity could lead the reader to conclude that Hinduism still affects Indian society in this way. Although the link between Hinduism and the caste system is indirect, from this paragraph one could conclude that the caste system is still present in India. As a result, VF recommended deleting the statement (which the Content Review Panel did not uphold).

In the world of op-eds and online forums, the debate of whether the caste system should be taught in sixth grade history textbooks lives on. Upon hearing about the debate on 'untouchability' and the caste system, other organizations, such as South Asian Histories for All Coalition and Ambedkar Association of California, objected to the proposed edits made by the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation as well as the Hindu American Foundation's campaign. One Dalit activist, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, protests, "As a Dalit American, I am outraged at HAF and its alliance's[31] attempt to co-opt the language of bullying to put forward a sanitized Hindu origin story for the entire subcontinent." (Soundararajan 2016). Not learning about the caste system and the Untouchables is to censor Indian history and ignore the struggles of those who fought (fight) against social discrimination. Other articles have been published sharing a similar position and acknowledging a "multiplicity within Hindu Americans" (Pandit 2016; Sinha 2016; Chandra 2016). Therefore, both sides wish to portray Hinduism in a particular light for the sake of Hindu American identity. The problem is that they approach the matter in different ways and for different reasons, illustrating

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[31] The alliances of the Hindu American Foundation are the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation.

a heterogeneous pluralistic Hindu American community that cannot be represented by any single voice.

IV. HINDU/INDIAN AS A RACIAL CATEGORY
4.1 BULLYING HINDUS

What actually brought out the Hindu Textbook Controversy was not the initiative of Hindu advocacy organizations alone. Rather, the controversy initially emerged due to complaints made by parents among the Hindu community. Parents were hearing their children tell of their classroom experiences in which they felt singled out, bullied and needed to defend their religion from the negative portrayal of Hinduism, particularly in the textbooks. Students' experiences occurred both inside and outside the classroom, but students often claimed that the bullying and mockery was instigated by the textbook material ("Hindu Comments at California's Department of Education" 2015; Balaji et al. 2016). How the textbook portrayed Hinduism and Ancient India gave reason for non-Hindus to ridicule Hindu minority students. This, the Hindu American Foundation argues, especially occurred because the textbooks reinforce common stereotypes of Hindus or Indians in general by teaching notions such as the caste system, Aryan invasions, reverence for cows and worship of multiple gods.

In 2016 the Hindu American Foundation published a report titled "Classroom Subjected: Bullying and Bias Against Hindu Students in American Schools" in which the organization surveyed 335 middle and high school students to discover the extent to which students are "bullied and socially ostracized for their religious beliefs" (Balaji et al. 2016: 1), particularly in the school setting. According to the report, half of the students surveyed "indicated feelings of awkwardness or social isolation because of their religious identity" and a third "said they had been bullied for their religious beliefs" (Balaji et al. 2016: 2). While the report is clearly used to defend HAF's case in the controversy that textbooks reinforce Hindu stereotypes[32], the "Open Response" section of the survey provides an insight to some of the ways that discrimination and racism occur in schools. Personal experiences were noted including being subjected to racial slurs such as "dirty ass Hindu" or harassment in the form of verbal or physical violence (Balaji et al. 2016: 6-7).

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[32] The survey questions used in their research only pertain to classroom and school experiences. (See Balaji et al. 2016 "Survey on religious-based bias and bullying")

The Hindu American Foundation's research demonstrates that the students are seen as different by their peers, as the *other*. This is what J.L. Dorais labels "*la similarité et l'altérité*" where groups identify themselves as having a shared worldview or identifying others as having a different worldview from themselves. The students that share Judeo-Christian traditions and the culture of the majority in the U.S. are defined as the 'norm' and those who diverge from the 'norm' are different and categorized as such. Because Hindu/Indian students are marginalized and categorized as different, they reconstruct their identity within these terms. Researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) Aminah Mohammad-Arif argues, "the diasporic experience to some extent creates the conditions for an exacerbation of the religious sentiment, such that many immigrants 'discover' themselves as Hindus or Muslims when living in the United States" (Mohammad-Arif 2007: 3). Immigrants arriving in the U.S. suddenly become part of the minority and thus are more conscious of the differences between themselves and the majority. In the case of the U.S. this difference is often highlighted in religion. Therefore, immigrants are categorized by their difference (i.e. religion) and redefine their identity within the boundaries set out by the majority. Hindu/Indian minority students are seen primarily in terms of their religion and cultural difference, which limits the boundaries of the space in which they construct their identities.

4.2 COLLECTIVE SOUTH ASIANS

While some students identify with the Hindu/Indian category, the categories may equally be imposed upon a wider South Asian diaspora. Muslim Pakistani Americans, atheist or Buddhist Indians, Bangladeshis, etc. at one time or another have most likely been categorized as Indian or even Hindu by the majority non-South Asian origin (i.e. white) society. Anthropologist Shalini Shankar points out in her ethnography *Desi Land* (2008) that this shared experience of categorization and racialization among Californian South Asian youth draws them together to form a community. In her ethnography, her informants, which consist only of high school students in Silicon Valley, use the term Desi, someone from the South Asian subcontinent, to refer to themselves collectively. "Another reason Desi teens stick together is because, although racism is not reported to be a source of overt tension at their schools, racially insensitive comments are commonplace" (Shankar 2008: 66). One of her informants confirms, "You hear jokes about Desis. Our teacher likes to joke around about

bindis (a mark of Hinduism, worn on a woman's forehead), turbans, and camel riders – he's an idiot." Although we do not know for a fact from the student, one can infer that his teacher identifies, at least to some extent, with the majority white Judeo-Christian population. The teacher mocks physical aspects of stereotypical South Asian culture which may or may not be directly linked to religion or tradition. By stressing physical aspects of South Asian culture the teacher is stressing a physical difference between his culture and their culture (South Asians). He is categorizing South Asians as different.

In Shankar's ethnography, South Asians, regardless of their different backgrounds and religions, share a common identity, particularly in the school setting. Shankar argues that this is due to a prevailing "White hegemony" even though they attend "predominantly non-white schools" (Shankar 2008: 66), and that "unless events are explicitly labeled multicultural, school events are by and large classified as 'White'" (Shankar 2008: 66). Events such as school assemblies, the traditional American prom, field trips etc. play a significant role in the life of an adolescent growing up in the U.S. Students' participation in these events confirms their status as sharing (to a shallow level) the same culture. They are rooted in the majority white Judeo-Christian tradition. Yet, students whose parents do not allow them to participate, as a result of religious or cultural values, are seen as different and are not part of the White hegemony.

Despite the cultural and religious nuances among South Asian Americans, their identity and in part their community is heavily influenced by the fact that they are first and foremost physically different from the hegemonic majority. Secondly, they are influenced by the education system in that what students learn about South Asians (more specifically Hindus), exacerbates existing stereotypes and reinforces the dominant hegemonic culture.

4.3 PLURALISM AMONG THE MINORITY

Identity, nevertheless, is comprised of many layers. In her book, Shankar demonstrates a collective South Asian identity based on a shared experience as the cultural/physical other. At the same time, there is pluralism not only among South Asians but also among Hindu/Indian Americans. The Aerogram writer and member of South Asian Histories for All Coalition, Meghna Chandra, shares her experience:

Growing up, I fielded plenty of questions about the "dot on our foreheads", why gods and

goddesses were blue and had so many arms, whether or not I would have an arranged marriage, and which hand I used to wipe my shit. I endured racial slurs about the bindi worn by Hindu women and bizarre comments about the color of my skin and its proximity to the color of dirt. I internalized shame about all the ways I was different, and struggled to get by without drawing too much attention to myself. (Chandra 2016)

While her experience echoes that of other Hindu Americans, she does not agree with the Hindu American Foundation as to how the problem of racism against Hindu Americans should be remedied. Such experiences, the Hindu American Foundation argues, are reason enough to do away with all textbook and framework curriculum that focuses on negative aspects of Ancient Indian civilization. Chandra however, claims that by erasing "contradictions within the [Hindu] tradition" and "protect[ing] Hindu children from the shameful aspects of Hindu history", students are denied the opportunity to learn about social injustices and how those injustices are counteracted by movements of empowerment (such as the efforts to bring justice to Dalits in India led by B.R. Ambedkar) (Chandra 2016). What Chandra is referring to is the fight of Dalits or Untouchables for justice and equality in India, more specifically, the fight to abolish the caste system both institutionally and traditionally. So, to not teach the existence of the caste system is to do a disservice to Hindu American students who may only see the religion in a utopic light.

Other efforts to challenge the arguments of the Hindu American Foundation, Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation are illustrated by the mobilization of numerous organizations, such as the South Asian Faculty Group, Ambedkar Association of California (Choudhury 2016), Friends of South Asia and Coalition Against Communalism (Maira and Swamy 2006). The contradicting positions, the Hindu American Foundation, Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation on one side and the aforementioned organizations on the other, are not debating the fact or fiction of Ancient Indian history so much as they are fighting over the right to represent the category, *Hindu/Indian*. The right to represent this category is the right to redefine the category. Their interest in redefining *Hindu/Indian* as a racial category lies in their connection to it. They identify with it and thus these groups seek to re-represent *Hindu/Indian* as part of their identity.

The problem then, is that there is a pre-existing racism in the wider society and thus the textbooks are not the problem but rather embody and exacerbate the problem by validating stereotypes of Hindu/Indian Americans. Furthermore, the differing opinions and efforts made

in the controversy to remedy the misrepresentation of Hindu/Indians exemplify the minority's attempt to appropriate Hindu/Indian American identity and redefine it in their own terms. To redefine identity is to take ownership of it, and this would equally legitimize the minority as culturally significant in society. To have the power to define oneself allows mobility of one's status in society, and vice versa. By actively participating in the textbook adoption process, Hindu/Indian Americans challenged their status quo as a minority in society. Moreover, as shown by the disparity in proposed textbook edits the self-defined identity of Hindu/Indian Americans is fragmented and they thus do not define their identity as a collective in the case of the Hindu Textbook Controversy.

Instead of refuting their imposed racial category of *Hindu/Indian*, the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation, in their suggested edits and comments, reuse and apply the category, affecting their identity in two ways. (1) They reaffirm their status as a minority and different from the majority, which (2) causes the boundaries of their identity in relation to the majority to widen. Therefore, through their edits and participation in the textbook adoption process, they accept and confirm their status as a minority, while at the same time, they attempt to influence how they are represented and thus viewed as a minority. Despite their efforts, the School Board of Education rejected the majority of their edits and allowed only the edits that suggested minor modifications that would not change the overall curriculum. The Hindu advocacy organizations were able to reclaim their identity and redefine it only to the extent that the California school board allowed. Moreover, the pluralism and fragmentation of the Hindu/Indian American identity further weakens the organizations' efforts to define it. Because the State Board of Education is a dominant governing body that imposes their ideology. So although, they allow minorities to participate in the representation process, the State Board of Education ideology remains hegemonic over the minority ideology. Also, because the opinions of how Hindus and Hinduism should be represented were not unanimous, the separate groups had less authority on the subject. These power relations demonstrate that minority identity can only be reclaimed and redefined within the limits of the hegemonic culture or majority.

V. CONCLUSION

The Hindu Textbook Controversy represents the struggle of California Hindu/Indian Americans to define their identity as a minority through the historical representation of Indians

and Hinduism in sixth grade history textbooks. In this study of the Hindu Textbook Controversy, we have seen that sixth grade world history textbooks are influenced by and consequently emblematic of the existing hegemonic narrative of world history. This cultural hegemony represented in the textbooks is reinforced by the inherent authority of textbooks and the dominant role textbooks play in public education classrooms. Therefore, the way in which minorities are represented in textbooks influences the way they are identified in society as well as the way they define themselves. The analysis of textbook production and the textbook adoption process, then, is essential to understanding how Hindu/Indian Americans challenge the identity imposed on them in an attempt to redefine their identity, influence their status as a minority and create a place for themselves in society.

There are three major spheres of influence that affect textbook publication and are in fact intertwined.[33] The first major sphere is the authors and editors who write the material according to the publishers' stipulations which are guided by the textbook market and their clientele. The second sphere of influence, the California State Board of Education, a customer of the publisher, decides whether or not to buy the textbooks according to both public opinion and the state curriculum. Lastly, the third sphere of influence, the public (often in the form of organizations), comments on the content of the textbooks which must be in accordance with the social content standards of the state.

Subsequently, the three spheres of influence affect the content in the textbooks. The textbook content is the primary debated material in the Hindu Textbook Controversy and it represents Hindu/Indian American identity. The three major debates emanating from the controversy were the naming of the ancient subcontinent – either India or South Asia, the teaching of the disputed Aryan invasion theory and the teaching of the caste system either as a result of or separate from Hinduism. Each debate reveals a more obscure conflict regarding Hindu/Indian identity and the way it is represented by the aforementioned topics.

The way in which Hindu/Indian identity should be represented in the textbooks illustrates a plurality of opinions that redefines identity in layers among the Hindu/Indian Americans in California. One group of Hindu/Indian Americans challenges the hegemonic representation of India and Hinduism. Then, an opposing group emerges to challenge the hegemonic representation of Hindus and Hinduism among Hindu/Indian Americans.

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[33] See Figure 3.

Religio-cultural identity

Textbooks

Publishers

Authors/Editors

SBE ⟷ **Public**

Jury

State standards

Educational Code

Individuals
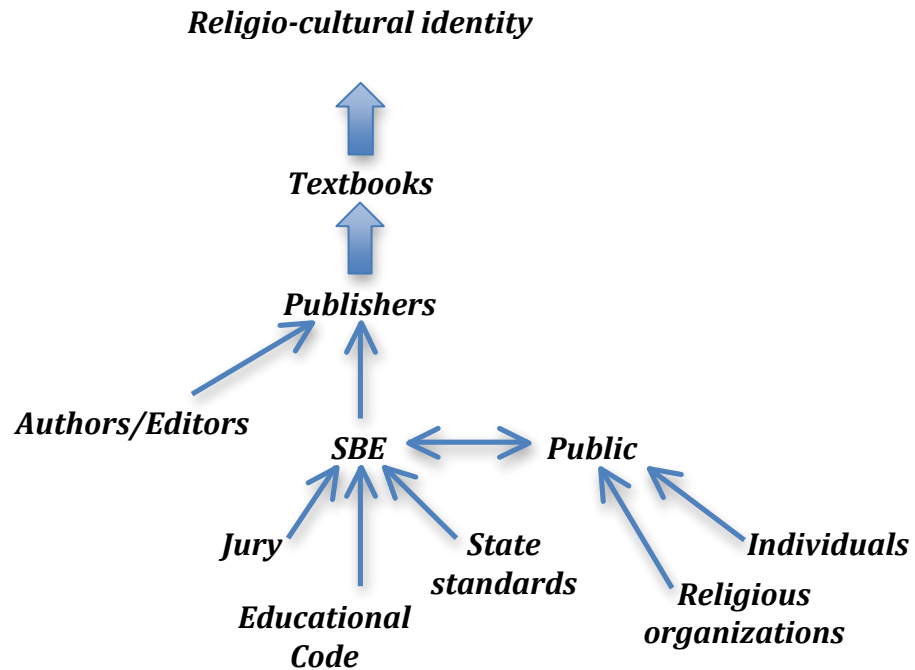
Religious organizations

Figure 3. Chain of influence on Hindu/Indian American's religio-cultural identity.

This study of the Hindu Textbook Controversy is a brief survey of one of the ways Hindu/Indian Americans actively redefine their identity by challenging the hegemony at hand. Nonetheless, this study remains an interpretation of text (my analysis of the textbooks/documents), as well as an interpretation of an interpretation (my analysis of Hindu advocacy organizations comments on the text). Since this is my interpretation from my distinct worldview, there is a possibility of other interpretations. This is an inherent problem in discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a useful tool to explore possible ways that power structures function; but there will always be more than one single way.

Finally, this study opens the door for future analysis in education and the representation of religion. Similar debates also exist among Jews and Muslims in California. Additionally, due to financial constraints, I was only able to obtain two textbooks. A more thorough study could be done comparing several, or even all, of the approved textbooks in order to have a more complete picture of Hindu/Indian representation. Likewise, carrying out a similar study in different states may clarify how Hindu/Indian identity development functions on a national scale. Additional work needs to be conducted, notably, fieldwork in classrooms, to see how minority identities are reconstructed and how hegemonic structures maintain power.

APPENDIX 1.

List of Acronyms

CDE – California Department of Education

CLS – Critical Language Study

CNRS – Centre national de la recherche scientifique

CRP – Content Review Panel

HAF – Hindu American Foundation

HEF – Hindu Education Foundation

IMAP – Instructional Material Advisory Panel

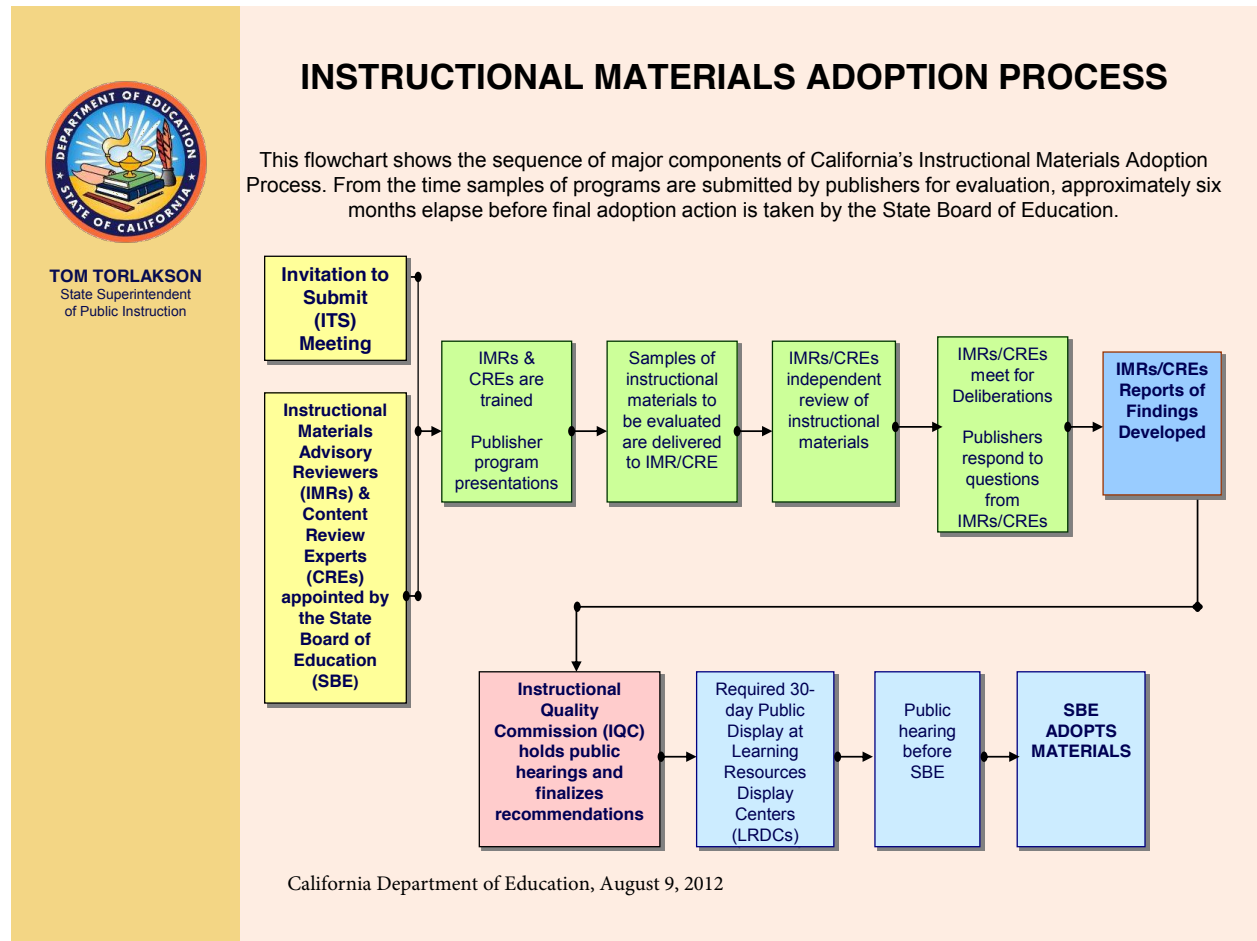**LRDC – Learning Resources Display Center**

SAFG – South Asian Faculty Group

SBE – State Board of Education

TCI – Teachers' Curriculum Institute

VF – Vedic Foundation

APPENDIX 2.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ADOPTION PROCESS

This flowchart shows the sequence of major components of California's Instructional Materials Adoption Process. From the time samples of programs are submitted by publishers for evaluation, approximately six months elapse before final adoption action is taken by the State Board of Education.

TOM TORLAKSON
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Invitation to Submit (ITS) Meeting

Instructional Materials Advisory Reviewers (IMRs) & Content Review Experts (CREs) appointed by the State Board of Education (SBE)

IMRs & CREs are trained — Publisher program presentations

Samples of instructional materials to be evaluated are delivered to IMR/CRE

IMRs/CREs independent review of instructional materials

IMRs/CREs meet for Deliberations — Publishers respond to questions from IMRs/CREs

IMRs/CREs Reports of Findings Developed

Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) holds public hearings and finalizes recommendations

Required 30-day Public Display at Learning Resources Display Centers (LRDCs)

Public hearing before SBE

SBE ADOPTS MATERIALS

California Department of Education, August 9, 2012

Source: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/imadoptionprocess2012.pdf

APPENDIX 3.
Standards for Evaluating Instructional Material for Social Content

Religion
Education Code Sections 51501, 60044(
a) and (b)

Purpose. The standards enable all students to become aware and accepting of religious diversity while being allowed to remain secure in any religious beliefs they may already have.

Method. The standards will be achieved by depicting, when appropriate, the diversity of religious beliefs held in the United States and California, as well as in other societies, without displaying bias toward or prejudice against any of those beliefs or religious beliefs in general.

Applicability of Standards. The standards are derived to a degree from the United States and the California constitutions and relate closely to the requirements concerning the portrayal of cultural diversity. Compliance is required.

These standards should not be construed to mean that the mere depiction of religious practices constitutes indoctrination. Religious music and art, for example, may be included in instructional materials when appropriate.

1. *Adverse reflection*. No religious belief or practice may be held up to ridicule and no religious group may be portrayed as inferior.

2. *Indoctrination*. Any explanation or description of a religious belief or practice should be presented in a manner that does not encourage or discourage belief or indoctrinate the student in any particular religious belief.

3. *Diversity*. When religion is discussed or depicted, portrayals of contemporary American society should reflect religious diversity.

Source: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/lc.asp

APPENDIX 4.

Criteria are organized into five categories:

(1) History-Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards: The content as specified in the Education Code, the History–Social Science Content Standards, and the History–Social Science Framework (2001 Updated Edition)

(2) Program Organization: The sequence and organization of the history–social science program

(3) Assessment: The strategies presented in the instructional materials for measuring what students know and are able to do

(4) Universal Access: Instructional materials that are understandable to all students, including students eligible for special education, English learners, and students whose achievement is either below or above that typical of the class or grade level

(5) Instructional Planning and Support: The instructional planning and support information and materials, typically including a separate edition specially designed for use by teachers in implementing the History–Social Science Standards and History–Social Science Framework

Source: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/im/documents/historyadoptrpt05f.pdf

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