

This is the authors accepted manuscript (AAM) of:

Allen, A., Kavanagh, A.M., & Ni Cassaithe, C. (in press). Disrupting single narratives through the power of story. In Allen, A., Kavanagh, A.M., & Ni Cassaithe, C. *Beyond single stories: Changing narratives for a changing world*. Information Age Publishing.

## **Disrupting single narratives through the power of story**

Amy Allen, Virginia Tech

Anne Marie Kavanagh, Dublin City University

Caitríona Ní Cassaithe, Dublin City University

*I learned my name.*

*I rose up. I remembered it.*

*Now I could tell my story.*

*It was different*

*from the story told about me.*

(Mother Ireland, Boland, 1989)

“Mother Ireland”, by Irish poet Eavan Boland, is a powerful example of how storytelling and counter-narratives can be used to challenge dominant narratives and to elevate the voices of those who have been marginalized and silenced by more powerful elites. Here, Boland uses story and counter-narrative as a powerful example of how storytelling and stories can be used to challenge the traditional representation not only of Ireland but of Irish womanhood as well as to [re]place the voice and agency of women in Irish history and society. Through the use of counter-narrative, Boland presents an alternative story of Mother Ireland, one in which she becomes active, self-conscious, and articulate, challenging the male-centered narrative that has dominated Irish history and culture. For us, this poem reflects not just ‘Mother Ireland’ but all places where stories have been silenced, hidden, or erased. The chapters in this volume seek to recapture and give voice to these silenced stories in a variety of contexts.

Stories are comprised of socially constructed narratives that make sense of experiences, events, and phenomena. In doing so, they inform and (re)shape our (inter)subjectivities, identities, and understandings of the past, present, and future (Bamberg, 2021; Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Sonn et al., 2013). In this way, stories serve a unique function in all cultures. Stories and the act of storytelling enable societies across the globe to make and sustain meaning, build collective identity, illuminate, humor, instruct, guide, share, question, and remember. Stories are not neutral, they can have many purposes and agendas. They can be political; they can challenge and resist or silence, they can dehumanize and erase or illuminate, they can Other and oppress or emancipate (Arday et al., 2021; Dominguez, 2017; Dunn et al., 2019; King & Swartz, 2018; Krueger, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). They can affirm or deny agency and humanity and legitimize or delegitimize ways of being, seeing, and knowing the world. Stories continually shape and reshape how we see, understand, and treat ourselves and others and the value we attribute to communities, their identities, practices, and knowledge systems. As a result, they exercise significant social, cultural, economic, and political power, playing a key role in agenda setting, priming and framing.

In this volume, the authors have interrogated those agendas: some challenge the dominant stories of a nation, some seek to re(place) Indigenous knowledge and ways of being, some seek to uncover or challenge the discourses that permeate curriculum and textbooks, and some call for meaningful engagement with controversial issues often avoided. Many of the chapters in this volume name, unsettle, and disrupt powerful and problematic hegemonic stories and their taken-for-granted assumptions, norms, and values. This type of critical engagement is increasingly important in the context of confronting the multiple and intersecting social, ecological, and climate crises we are currently experiencing (Kavanagh et al., 2021). Climate change, global conflicts, the growing chasm between rich and poor; the rise in racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and misogyny, fuelled by the growth of right-wing politics and fake news, present particular challenges for what is an increasingly globalized and diverse world. Business-as-usual politics simply will not work. We need alternative narratives and perspectives in order to meaningfully connect with and address the complexities and challenges of our changing world in ways that are just and support the dignity and rights of all living things.

### **The origins of story**

Human beings have told stories since time immemorial. In fact, some may argue that the ability to tell a story is uniquely human, and it is often said that *we* are *the* storytelling beings. While storytelling might be a human universal, it is not just confined to humankind; the soil, the rocks, the stars above us, and the geology all around us tell their stories, if we are willing to listen (Magan, 2022). There is a story in every individual atom on this planet, the story of who they are, who they were, and how they came to be. Again, some would argue that what marks humankind is not the ability to tell a story, but the ability to receive it and pass it on; yet once more, that is not confined to humans. Bees, for example, communicate through symbolic dance. Through this dance, bees pass on information about potential food sources and possible difficulties in accessing them. They pass on information of past experiences to the new generations on where to go, what to do, how to behave, and how to pass the story on (Crist, 2004).

From ancient pictograms to digital representations, people have told their stories in numerous ways: orally, visually, in print, and through music, dance, film, and theater. While the means by which we tell a story have evolved, the key elements of storytelling, such as plot, characters, and settings, have remained unchanged. Paleoanthropologists generally agree that *Homo sapiens* had language some 200,000–300,000 years ago, indicating the existence of storytelling, or at least, the possibility of it (Pagel, 2017). Nowell (2023) argues that Paleolithic narrative scenes are almost certainly visual expressions of the oral narratives that were passed from one generation to the next. The earliest tangible forms of this narration can be found on the walls of caves dotted around every continent in the world (except Antarctica). Though not the oldest, the Lascaux Cave drawings in southern France contain drawings created over 30,000 years ago. Using images to communicate, the drawings tell stories of human encounters with animals such as bison, horses, deer, and bears. There is a lack of consensus today on the stories that are being told in Lascaux, but Davenport and Jochim (1988) argue the scenes depicted indicate “a single artist with a story to tell” (p. 560). Oral stories have been lost to the mists of time but the visual culture of this era strongly suggests a rich tradition of oral storytelling was in place (Nowell, 2023).

These oral traditions, often taking the form of myths and legends, were used for a variety of purposes: to entertain, to educate, to explain or provide explanations for the unknown, to

provide moral lessons for the next generation on acceptable social mores, and to communicate cultural beliefs, personal, family, or group history and experiences (Cajete, 2017). In some instances, the oral tradition may be the only record of a cultural history or event. For example, many Indigenous communities continue to rely on the strength of the oral storytelling tradition to preserve and pass on their history and culture. In this sense, the oral tradition still plays an important role in preserving the heritage of many cultures around the world. Additionally, and from a present-oriented perspective, these stories, often through the retelling of myths and legends, give modern societies insights into the customs, beliefs, and practices of ancient societies.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, argued to be the earliest surviving literary story, dates back to the 18th century BC and is said to be a thousand years older than the Iliad or the Bible (Zhu & Zheng, 2021). Since then, the art of storytelling has taken many forms, from the written word to digital yet, it has remained a constant of human culture since the earliest of times (Nowell, 2023). This book aims to capture the many ways in which ‘story’ can be used to challenge, disrupt and accommodate other ways of thinking.

### **Interpreting story through a critical lens**

The chapters in this book are informed by a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives. Broadly speaking, they fall within the critical paradigm as they seek to interrupt, interrogate, and challenge the hegemonic narratives and stories which dominate school curricula and suppress alternative points of view (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995) – that is, stories that deviate from the white supremacist, capitalist, anthropocentric, hetero-patriarchal and imperialist master script (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sultana, 2022; Zembylas, 2020). In privileging these hegemonic stories and relegating alternatives to the margins, these school curricula offer “a narrow, dislocating lens” (King & Swartz, 2018, p. xv) which distorts understandings of the self, of others, and of the natural environment and perpetuates myths of Eurowestern intellectual and cultural superiority. Our unequivocal stance is that these single stories are harmful to all but particularly to minoritized and marginalized communities. They create and perpetuate epistemic violence in the production of knowledge and in epistemological framing (Domínguez, 2017; Sultana, 2022). They do so by systematically inferiorizing, marginalizing, silencing, and erasing marginalized communities’ funds of knowledge and their intellectual, historical, and cultural contributions to knowledge production and society more broadly (Domínguez, 2017; King & Swartz, 2018; Zembylas, 2020). They also do so by framing stories of minoritized communities (when they are included) through the lens of the White gaze. In editing this book, we seek to disrupt the dominant narratives that permeate school curricula and educational spaces more broadly by de-cloaking and exposing their uninterrogated normativity and privileging stories and perspectives from the margins. These marginalized stories and alternative narratives “enable a different ‘truth’ to be told and heard, allowing alternate lenses of understanding of the same facts of an event” (Bamberg, 2021, n.p.). In collating this volume, we are conscious that although the stories told are coming from the margins, the tellers themselves are not always. This is symptomatic of the over-representations of dominant group members within academia (Bhopal, 2017; Doharty et al., 2021; Khamis, 2023), which itself is a product of social structures that are constituted in and reinscribed through hegemonic stories and discourses. As editors, we recognize our relative privilege as white, English-speaking (L1), cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied teacher educators. We seek to leverage it by editing this book which supports teacher educators, student teachers, and teachers to uncover and challenge the uninterrogated

assumptions which underpin dominant narratives. Additionally, many chapters center the stories, perspectives, and histories of marginalized peoples.

### **Every curriculum tells a story**

School curricula are comprised of a series of stories whose selection is inherently political and non-neutral (Kavanagh et al., 2021; Krueger, 2019; Miles, 2020; Nieto & Bode, 2018). As articulated by Nieto and Bode (2018), “even seemingly innocent [curricular] decisions carry an enormous amount of ideological and philosophical weight” (p. 142). In this sense, the inclusion or exclusion of stories, whether they are historical, geographical, or mathematical, is intentional and always towards a purpose or goal (Kavanagh et al., 2021; Broom, 2016). In most jurisdictions, curricular decisions are made not by academics or educational experts but instead by selected groups of key stakeholders whose value systems and ideologies appeal to those in positions of power (Miles, 2020; Broom, 2016). While appearing to be democratic, ultimately, those with power (usually members of dominant groups) more or less “get the curriculum outcomes they support” (Broom, 2016, p. 711). This is not always a bad thing as the outcomes may focus on concepts or ideas that are oriented towards social or environmental justice, or they may seek to mainstream previously marginalized or silenced stories and histories. However, more often than not, these stories reinforce the status quo, privileging the uninterrogated cultural norms, values, assumptions, perspectives, and ways of knowing of dominant groups (Arday et al., 2021; Dominguez, 2017; Dunn et al., 2019; King & Swartz, 2018; Krueger, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The omission of the stories, histories, and lived experiences of non-dominant groups from school curricula and standards leads to feelings of exclusion and marginalization for these groups as their knowledge systems and identities are denied and invalidated (Arday et al., 2021; King & Swartz, 2018; Leonardo, 2016). Yet when included, minoritized stories are often told from dominant perspectives and as such are often decontextualized, sanitized, misrepresented, or distorted (Dominguez, 2017; King & Swartz, 2018; Krueger, 2019). The stories most curricula tell are therefore framed around a single narrative grounded in the dominant group’s exceptionalism, thereby “destroy[s]ing the integrity of school knowledge” (King & Swartz, 2018, p. xiv). In this sense, curricula are deeply implicated and complicit in the perpetuation of asymmetric power relations, epistemic injustices, and cultural assimilation (Dominguez, 2017; Miles, 2020). The significant implications that this has for student identity development and emergent understandings of the world underscores the importance of teachers interrogating the assumptions that underpin their curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

### **Dominant narratives and counter-narratives**

Stories or narratives are social and cultural collective sense-making devices that “provide a framework for categorizing people, phenomena or events and infer how these should be understood and treated” (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017, p. 191). They are constitutive and performative as they construct understandings of past and present, self, others, the wider world, and the natural environment (Andrews, 2004; Frandsen et al., 2016). They validate or deny experiences, identities, and histories. As such, they have the capacity to be immensely powerful (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Their power is mediated by the social, historical, cultural, material, and political context in which they are told and the degree to which they are internalized (Hänninen et al., 2022; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Narratives that accrue power by virtue of being taken for granted as normative are often called dominant or master narratives (Hänninen et al., 2022; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017) and the assumptions grounded in negative stereotypes about marginalized groups which underpin these stories often go unnoticed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). Indeed, such is their seeming neutrality that they are

not considered stories at all but as simply “natural parts of everyday life” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016, p. 135). These master narratives are harmful when they distort or silence the voices and interpretations of minoritized groups’ historical experiences or present-day realities (Hänninen et al., 2022; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). Both dominant and marginalized groups accept and internalize these master narratives and reinforce them by simply acting as usual and going about their everyday lives (Bell, 2016; Kavanagh et al., 2021). Andrews (2004) argues that these hegemonic narratives are reproduced when we “[w]ittingly or unwittingly... become the stories we know” (p. 1).

School curricula are, more often than not, capitalist master narratives that erase and silence the experiences, histories, and perspectives of minoritized and Indigenous groups (Arday et al., 2021; Dominguez, 2017; Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021; King & Swartz, 2018; Krueger, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Shear et al., 2015). Such narratives, however, are neither stable nor absolute. Rather, they are negotiated and contested by students and teachers who can offer counter-narratives that present alternative experiences and perspectives (Frandsen et al., 2016). Andrews (2004) describes counter-narratives as “the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives” (p. 1). These counter-narratives in turn can be challenged and subverted by other counter-narratives (Frandsen et al., 2016). In the context of school curricula, Multicultural Education, Critical Race Theory, and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy are all examples of counter-narratives. These counter-stories can act as catalysts for conscientization, resistance, and social change by exposing the uninterrogated assumptions behind dominant narratives (Bamberg, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). They enable people to “resist harmful storyings of their lives” (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2017, p. 189) and to voice “new and more helpful stories” (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2017, p. 192). They enable marginalized communities to reclaim their stories. In this volume, we seek to give a platform to counter-narratives in social studies and, in doing so, to validate previously marginalized and silenced stories, experiences, and perspectives. However, we recognize that such inclusion does not necessarily alter power relations between dominant and marginalized groups as not “all people’s stories [are] heard the same way” and may be “persuasive when told by some groups and seen as unconvincing when told by others” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 114). However, at the very least, they have the capacity to unsettle and disrupt the hegemony of dominant stories.

### **The problem with the dominance of dominant narratives in education**

Dominant stories may be taught consciously or unconsciously and for a diverse range of reasons. In the first instance, these stories are embedded in mandated curriculum specifications and standards and in the corresponding high-stakes standardized assessments which are used to evaluate students (and teachers). Their embeddedness and related normalization as truth or official knowledge renders them invisible. Their selective and partisan nature is thus shrouded under the guise of common-sense knowledge. As Dunn, Sondel, and Baggett (2019) point out, many teachers enter the profession believing teaching to be politically and ideologically neutral and may be largely unaware of the pernicious implications of internalized dominant narratives for marginalized communities.

Dominant narratives are often built upon meritocratic ideologies, which is at its simplest level, the idea that you get what you deserve and you deserve what you get. If you are rich, it’s because you worked hard. If you are poor, it’s because you made bad decisions. Such is the power embedded in these narratives that they often become the stories that marginalized groups

tell about themselves (Godrej, 2011). In this context, the unequivocal sine qua non for counter-narratives cannot be overstated.

These narratives are equally evident in textbooks, which are widely used in classrooms as though they *are* the curriculum. These highly selective stories are frequently “inaccurate and irrelevant” (Krueger, 2019, p. 304). As Krueger (2019) argues, for some teachers, “Anything and everything worth learning is held within their [textbooks] pages” (p. 304) and anything that exists outside the textbook, for example, Indigenous or other localized knowledge, is seen as ancillary, superfluous or invalid (Krueger, 2019). A reliance on textbooks for some teachers within social studies is understandable in the context that many issues are profoundly complex, contentious, and emotive; there is a perceived safety in textbook reliance. However, if teachers are not provided with opportunities to engage with and interrogate the assumptions, values, and beliefs that underpin curricula and textbooks, they may unwittingly perpetuate damaging dominant narratives.

Other barriers include real or imagined time pressure as a consequence of perceived overloaded curricula and/or the pressure for high results that comes with standardized testing and end-of-year assessments (Gibbs, 2019). Fear of push-back or retribution from parents, the school district, and other local or federal stakeholders limits teacher agency and autonomy (Dunn et al., 2019; Hess, 2009; Ravitch, 2016) and therefore their capacity to introduce alternative stories or perspectives. Within some jurisdictions, there is also the real possibility of job loss as accountability reforms mean that teachers’ curricular and pedagogic decisions are monitored and policed (Dunn et al., 2019). The sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which teachers are working is hugely impactful and either expands or contracts pedagogical spaces for interrogating dominant assumptions and ideologies, by, for example, including counter-narratives.

### **Teacher agency and opportunities**

Whether made consciously or unconsciously, curricular and pedagogical decisions chosen by teachers impact on student identity development and emergent understandings of the world (Kavanagh et al., 2021). Within the classroom, the teacher serves as a gatekeeper who interprets curriculum and standards and “makes the crucial decisions concerning content, sequence, and instructional strategy that determine the social studies experiences of students” (Thornton, 1989, p. 2). This can include decisions on which stories are told and whether those stories include or exclude counter-narratives. Considering the constraints of social studies standards (An, 2016; Busey & Walker, 2017; Shear et al., 2015; Vasquez-Heilig et al., 2012), textbooks (Aldrige, 2006; Krueger, 2019; Litner, 2007; Loewen, 2008), and, in some settings, limited opportunities to learn social studies content (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Gibbs, 2019; Hawkman et al., 2015; Houser, 1995), teachers must learn to critically question the stories they are asked to tell through mandated curriculum standards and textbooks. This type of reflexive agency supports teachers’ critical awareness of their own biases and prejudices and those continued with curricula which can motivate them to act to challenge this unjust status quo.

Within the field of education, a uniform definition of agency does not exist. On the surface, it appears the word “agency” has been co-opted and applied to teachers without the field first agreeing on what it means. Rios (2018) defines teacher agency as a teacher's belief that they can “make a difference in the world that includes and extends beyond the classroom or school context... [It] involves a sense of empowerment and a feeling of control over important decisions as it relates to the education of students” (p. 41-42). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) propose

agency should be understood as a configuration of influences from the past, orientations towards the future, and engagement with the present, and Biesta and Tedder (2006) build on this definition, suggesting agency is concerned with the way in which actors “critically shape their responses to problematic situations” (p. 11). Combining aspects of these existing definitions, Allen (2021) defines teacher agency as “an empowered positioning of teachers as active and adept practitioners in their field, embodying knowledge gained in learning contexts through personal judgment and ability to act” (p. 176).

Critical literature emphasizes the importance of teachers exercising agency and engaging critically with their identities and taken-for-granted assumptions before exploring counter-narratives with children. Often, teachers experience emotional discomfort when teaching material that has been deemed controversial (Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). Teachers must engage “in reflexive work on their own complicity in the perpetuation of injustice through their own practices and policies and practices of the school” (Kavanagh et al., 2021, p. 9). Topics that venture into areas the teacher is unprepared to discuss can be dangerous. Often, these topics intertwine ideas of student identity, teacher identity, and personal experience. As a result, it is imperative for teachers themselves to do the hard work of discovering what they believe and reflecting on how these beliefs transfer to pedagogy before determining how to best embody these ideas in the classroom.

Unfortunately, the same barriers which lead to teachers teaching dominant narratives also prevent teachers from exhibiting agency. Some teachers continue to question whether or at what age students are mature enough to handle difficult history (Zembylas & Kambani, 2012) despite research showing that even very young students have the ability to critically engage in dialogue about complex topics (Hess, 2009; Paley, 1992). Another difficulty arises when teachers feel they must choose between following a student-initiated query and a felt need to cover specific content (An, 2022; City, 2018; Hostetler & Neel, 2018). Many teachers are also reluctant to discuss controversial topics because of a perceived threat to their social, professional, or personal security (Dunn et al., 2019; Engebretson, 2018; Gibbs, 2019), and over the past decade, these perceived threats have sometimes been realized. In 2016, two educators were placed on administrative leave after speaking out against then President-Elect Trump (Branson-Potts, 2016). In 2022, The Washington Post found that more than 160 teachers had lost their positions due to political debates (Natanson & Balingit, 2022). In 2023, a professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University was fired for teaching a racial justice unit, despite spending two decades as part of the staff (Sachs, 2023). Because of the risks associated with this work, the development of a network of allies is key for providing emotional support and leads to greater opportunity to enact transformative pedagogy (Kavanagh et al., 2021).

Despite these limitations, many opportunities exist for teachers and teacher educators to exhibit agency. As a starting point, educators at all grade levels can build their own content and pedagogical knowledge about counter-narratives and how to teach with them through readings, webinars, or resources, many of which are available for free (An, 2022). Though textbooks and standards are flawed, teachers can use mandated curriculum as a starting point to critically interrogate dominant narratives while also seeking out alternatives, like trade books or primary sources, to supplement required texts (An, 2022). While we have chosen to focus on teacher agency, we equally recognize the importance of student agency and the importance of creating pedagogical spaces that recognize, affirm and enable students to share their funds of knowledge (An, 2022; Gonzalez et al., 1995) and to develop critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2017)

so that they can counter the uninterrogated assumptions and myths behind dominant distorted curricular narratives. Chapters throughout this volume provide examples of what active agency might look like when teaching about national histories or Indigeneity, when disrupting Eurocentrism or Whiteness, when utilizing strategies like historical thinking or place-based education, when engaging in conversation about controversial issues with students, or when critiquing and using textbooks or social studies standards.

While this book focuses on teachers' agency and their capacity to unsettle and disrupt dominant curricular stories, we also want to acknowledge the importance of students' agency. Recognizing that structural and systemic constraints can limit student agency (and as addressed above teacher agency), we conceptualize students as capable and competent social beings who are actively engaged in the construction of knowledge and can bring about social change (Kavanagh et al., 2021). We want to emphasize the importance of centering students' rich funds of knowledge and providing pedagogical opportunities for them to share and reflect upon their own communities' cultural knowledge, histories, and experiences and to imagine and be provided with opportunities to work towards creating more just and sustainable futures.

### **Navigating this book**

This book is centered on the premise that school curricula more often than not focus on dominant and powerful master narratives and that counter-narratives are necessary to promote equity, inclusion, and representation as well as epistemic, social, and ecological justice. This volume supports student teachers, teachers, and teacher educators in recognizing and disrupting powerful and problematic curricular dominant narratives through the use of critical reflection and the inclusion of multiple perspectives and counter-narratives. More specifically, it seeks to support student teachers, teachers, and teacher educators in reflecting on their own taken-for-granted assumptions, norms, and biases by highlighting the political nature of social studies curricula more broadly. The chapters, which address a range of themes across the field of social studies, seek to illuminate and expose the partiality of the single stories embodied within these themes and to support and inspire educators to incorporate alternative stories or counter-narratives into their social studies teaching.

This chapter provides the context and background information for the book's central themes: stories as meaning-making devices, stories as dominant or master narratives which distort and silence the perspectives of minoritized communities, and stories as counter-narratives that teachers can deploy to disrupt and challenge damaging hegemonic narratives. It also provides a broad outline of the book's sections before offering a short overview of each chapter. The book is divided into three sections, each with a particular focus on the use of story. The first section considers themes relating to national history, controversial issues, and historical thinking. The second section includes themes such as Indigeneity, agency, and place-based education, and the third section is centered on themes related to Eurocentrism and whiteness, in classrooms, textbooks, and school standards.

In Section One, the ideas surrounding controversial issues and historical thinking are explored with a focus on exploring what it looks like to disrupt dominant narratives across five countries with contested national histories: Ireland, Canada, Northern Ireland, England, and the United States. The first chapter, by Torres, uses a historical event to interrogate and disrupt children's understanding of a present issue. Through the lens of the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s, the concept of migration and what it means to be a refugee was explored with primary-

aged children. Students engaged with historical perspectives to challenge dominant narratives about refugees in order to construct an understanding of the role of stereotyping and bias in the development of xenophobia and the use of propaganda to dehumanize. In Chapter Two, Lefrancois and Ethier look at how the national history of Quebec is taught through the lens of controversial issues, emphasizing the importance of problematization and investigative strategies related to historical thinking. Pace builds on the idea of controversial issues within national history, and, in Chapter Three, she follows two student teachers as they grapple with issues of context, identity, and emotion while teaching Irish history in England and Northern Ireland. Though they covered similar content, each student teacher had radically different emotional experiences due to distances in time and space. In the United States, national history often features narrow, simplified stories of citizenship which exclude ethnic studies and Chapter Four, using the conceptual framework of anti-oppressive elementary social studies and cultural citizenship, Stebbins examines ethnic studies as an avenue to (re)imagine elementary social studies to teach beyond a single story of citizenship.

In Section Two, the focus shifts to the inclusion of multiple perspectives and counter-narratives through discussions of Indigeneity, agency, and place-based education. Kavanagh and Ní Cassaithe investigate how socio-ecological issues such as climate change can be explored using Indigenous and ethnic minority knowledge systems and stories. Drawing on stories from the Mincéir (Irish Traveller) community, Chapter Five demonstrates how these stories can be used to uncover relational Indigenous onto-epistemologies which can support children to think differently about how humans relate to the natural world. Similarly, Durham investigates onto-epistemological shifts that attempt to flatten our understanding of the interspecies hierarchy of agency. Using the American chestnut tree epidemic and the Irish potato famine as case studies, in Chapter Six, he analyzes how the inclusion of other-than-human agencies are entangled with that of the human. In Chapter Seven, Allen uses the five dimensions of place to examine the experiences of students during travel to Savannah, Georgia; Montgomery, Alabama; and Tulsa, Oklahoma, to study slavery, civil rights, and mass incarceration. The chapter explicates ways teachers can utilize place-based education as an opportunity to decenter dominant narratives. Tying many of these ideas together, Guerrero, Jimenez-Silva, Mercado, and Alarcon use the GeoCivics project to provide a place-based teacher professional development experience with the goal of increasing content knowledge with pedagogical and cultural knowledge while increasing confidence in teaching underrepresented populations. In Chapter Eight, they focus on these authors' experiences as teacher-mentors during the project, working alongside Indigenous scholars and communities to integrate multicultural content into history instruction.

In Section Three, the included studies pivot towards a critical interrogation of counter-narratives with a focus on the presence of Eurocentrism and whiteness in the classroom, in textbooks, and in state standards. In Chapter Nine, using Werner's content analysis framework, Li analyzes the representation of Africa in a Chinese world history textbook and examines how the narratives contained can sustain anti-Black racism. Based on this analysis, she finds that textbook narratives of Africa and Black history are largely fragmented and superficial. Rock, Handler, and Brooks invited local teachers to help them create instructional resources (which included narrated videos of lessons, annotated lesson plans, and critical reflections) to capture teachers in-the-moment pedagogical decisions that connected with students' lived experiences, assets, and funds of knowledge. In Chapter Ten, they share an illustrative example of the power of allowing teachers to analyze and reflect on their beliefs and practices for the purpose of telling their story as a tool for teacher education. Using grounded theory, Perry, Missias, Vesperman,

and Blankenship analyze four Evangelical Christian American history textbooks' treatment of the Progressive Era in Chapter Eleven. This analysis revealed important patterns of whose story and perspective are prioritized, demonstrating how the portrayal of historical agency in textbooks influences the ways students interact with the stories of the past and their impact on the present. Finally, in Chapter Twelve, Bordwell considers how state standards shape the stories that get told in social studies classrooms, sharing his experiences as a committee member during the revision of the Minnesota state standards, questioning the role of the committee, and putting into the field questions and challenges future standards writers may experience.

Together, these twelve chapters provide a broad view of what moving beyond a single story might look like in practice, addressing themes relevant to student teachers, teachers, and teacher educators.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout time and space, people have constructed and shared stories of their people, their histories, their experiences, their imaginations, their dreams, and their lives with each other. They have shared stories of other people and the natural world. While some stories may flatter and ascribe status to other beings (human and other-than-human), others malign and diminish them. Stories are critically important in shaping how we construct and understand the world around us. Single stories, however, can be limiting and dangerous (Adichie, 2016). In this volume, these twelve chapters articulate stories that disrupt dominant narratives, elevate marginalized voices, and provide examples of what counter-narratives and the alternative perspectives they embody might look like in practice.

## References

- Adichie, C. (2016.) “*The danger of a single story.*” Ted.com.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en).
- Alridge, D. P. (2006). The limits of master narratives in history textbooks: An analysis of representations of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Teachers College Press, 108*, 662-686.
- Allen, A. (2021). Embodied knowing in teacher education: Factors that lead to teacher agency. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma]. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/331297>
- An, S. (2016). Asian Americans in American history: An AsianCrit perspective on Asian American inclusion in state U.S. history curriculum standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 44*, 244-276.
- An, S. (2022). Navigating a curriculum of American exceptionalism: An Asian American child’s story. *Multicultural Perspectives, 24*(2), 62-74.
- Andrews, M. (2004). Counter-narratives and the power to oppose. In M. Bamberg & M. Andrews (Eds.), *Considering Counter-narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense* (pp. 1-6). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Arday, J., Belluigi D. J. & Thomas, D. (2021). Attempting to break the chain: Reimagining inclusive pedagogy and decolonising the curriculum within the academy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 53*(3), 298-313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1773257>
- Bamberg, M. (2021, May 21). Master and counter narratives: Same facts - different stories. *Research Outreach*. Retrieved from <https://researchoutreach.org/articles/master-counter-narratives-same-facts-different-stories/>
- Bamberg, M. & Andrews, M. (Eds.) (2004). *Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bell, L. A. (2016). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams & L. A. Bell (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 3-26). Routledge.
- Bhopal, K. (2017). *The experiences of black and minority ethnic academics: A comparative study of the unequal academy*. Routledge.
- Biesta, G. J. J., & Tedder, M. (2006). *How is agency possible? Towards an ecological understanding of agency-as-achievement* (Working Paper 5). Exeter: The Learning Lives Project.
- Boland, E. (1989). *A kind of scar: The woman poet in the national tradition*. Attic Press.
- Branson-Potts, H.. (2016, Nov 13). Bay area teacher put on leave after comparing Trump to Hitler. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-teacher-trump-hitler-20161113-story.html>
- Broom, C. A. (2016). Power, politics, democracy and reform: A historical review of curriculum reform, academia and government in British Columbia, Canada, 1920 to 2000. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 48*(5), 711-727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.20>
- Busey, C. & Walker, (2017). A dream and a bus: Black critical patriotism in Elementary Social Studies Standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 45*(4), 456-488.
- Cajete, G. A. (2017). Children, myth and storytelling: An Indigenous perspective. *Global Studies of Childhood, 7*(2): 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/204361061770383>
- City, E. A. (2014). Talking to learn. *Educational Leadership, 72*(3), 10-16.
- Cornbleth, C., & Waugh, D. (1995). *The great speckled bird: Multicultural politics and education policymaking*. Routledge.
- Crist, E. (2004). Can an insect speak? The case of the honeybee dance language. *Social Studies*

- of *Science*, 34(1), 7-43.
- Davenport, D., & Jochim, M. A. (1988). The scene in the shaft at Lascaux. *Antiquity*, 62(236), 558–562.
- Doharty, N., Madriaga, M. & Joseph-Salisbury, R. (2021). The university went to ‘decolonise’ and all they brought back was lousy diversity double-speak. Critical race counter-stories from faculty of color in ‘decolonial’ times. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(3), 233-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1769601>
- Domínguez, M. (2017). “Se Hace Puentes al Andar”: Decolonial teacher education as a needed bridge to culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogy: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 225–245). Teachers College Press.
- Dunn, A. H., Sondel, B., & Baggett, H. C. (2019). “I don’t want to come off as pushing an agenda”: How contexts shaped teachers’ pedagogy in the days after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(2), 444–476. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218794892>
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 962–1023.
- Engebretson, K. E. (2018). One novice teacher and her decisions to address or avoid controversial issues. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 42(1), 39-47.
- Fitchett, P., & Heafner, T. (2010). A national perspective on the effects of high-stakes testing and standardization on elementary social studies marginalization. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 38(1), 114-130.
- Frandsen, S. Lundholdt, M. & Kuhn, T. (2016). Introduction. In S. Frandsen, M. Lundholdt & T. Kuhn (Eds). *Counter-narratives and organization* (pp. 1-14). Routledge.
- Gibbs, B. (2019). Patriotism, pressure, and place: Civic agency in base country. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 94(1), 97–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2019.1553584>
- Godrej, F. (2011). Space for counter-narratives: The phenomenology of reclamation. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies*, 32(3), 111-133.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., Tenery, M. F., Rivera, A., Rendon, P. Gonzalez, R., & Amanti, C. (1995). Funds of knowledge for teaching in Latino households. *Urban Education*, 29(4), 443-470.
- Hänninen, V. Nguyen Long, L.A., Sools, A. (2022). Cultural story models in making sense of a desired post-corona world. *Futures*, 141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2022.102989>
- Hawkman, A. M., Castro, A. J., Bennett, L. B., & Barrow, L. H. (2015). Where is the content? Elementary social studies in preservice field experiences. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 39(4), 197-206.
- Hess, D. E. (2009). *Controversy in the classroom: The democratic power of discussion*. Routledge.
- Hostetler, A. L., & Neel, M. A. (2018). Difficult discourses: How the distances and contours of identities shape challenging moments in political discussion. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 42(4), 361-373.
- Houser, N. (1995). Social studies on the back burner: Views from the field. *Theory and Research in Social Education* 23(2), 147-168.
- Krueger, J. (2019). To challenge the settler colonial narrative of Native Americans in social studies curriculum: A new way forward for teachers. *The History Teacher*, 52(2), 291–318. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26646491>
- Kavanagh, A. M., Waldron, F. & Mallon, B. (2021). Teaching for social justice and sustainable

- development across the primary curriculum: An introduction. In A. M. Kavanagh, F. Waldron & B. Mallon (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice and sustainable development across the primary curriculum* (pp. 1-17). Routledge.
- Kavanagh, A. M., & Dupont, M. (2021). Making the invisible visible: Managing tensions around including Traveller culture and history in primary and post-primary curricula. *Irish Educational Studies*, 40(3), 553-569.
- Khamis, R. (2023, February 23). An emerging index of inclusive universities. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2023/02/24/colleges-should-help-disadvantaged-faculty-attend-conferences-opinion#:~:text=BIPOC%20faculty%20members%20are%20usually,full%2Dtime%20faculty%20were%20white.>
- King, J. E., & Swartz, E. E. (2018). Introduction: A conversation. In J. E. King & E. E. Swartz (Eds.), *Heritage knowledge in the curriculum: Retrieving an African episteme*, (pp. 1-24). Routledge.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2017). The (R)evolution will not be standardized: Teacher education, hip hop pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 141-156). Teachers College Press.
- Leonardo, Z. (2016). The color of supremacy. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (2nd ed., pp. 265-277). Routledge.
- Lintier, T. (2007). Critical race theory and the teaching of American history: Power, perspectives, and practices. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 2(1), 103-115.
- Loewen, J. W. (2008). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. The New Press.
- Magan, M. (2022). *Listen to the land speak: A journey into the wisdom of what lies beneath us*. Gill Books.
- McKenzie-Mohr, S., & LaFrance, M. N. (2017). Narrative resistance in social work research and practice: Counter-storying in the pursuit of social justice. *Qualitative Social Work*, 16(2), 189-205.
- Miles, J. (2020). Curriculum reform in a culture of redress: How social and political pressures are shaping social studies curriculum in Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(1), 47-64.
- Nanaston, H., & Balingit, M. (2022, 16 Jun). Caught in the culture wars, teachers are being forced from their jobs. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/06/16/teacher-resignations-firings-culture-wars/>
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2018). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson.
- Nowell, A. (2022). Oral storytelling and knowledge transmission in upper paleolithic children and adolescents. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10816-022-09591-5>
- Pagel, M. (2017). Q&A: What is human language, when did it evolve and why should we care? *BMC Biology*, 15(64). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12915-017-0405-3>

- Paley, V. G. (1992). *You can't say you can't play*. Harvard University Press.
- Polletta, F., Chen, P. C. B., Gardner, B. G. & Motes, A. (2011). The sociology of storytelling. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37(1), 109-130.
- Ravitch, D. (2016). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. Basic Books.
- Rios, R. (2018). *Teacher agency for equity: A framework for conscientious engagement*. Routledge.
- Sachs, S. (2023, 16 March). 'Toxic political ideology': Florida English professor fired over racial justice unit blames DeSantis. WFLA News. Retrieved from <https://www.wfla.com/news/politics/toxic-political-ideology-florida-professor-blames-desantis-fired-for-teaching-racial-justice-unit/>
- Shear, S. B., Knowles, R. T., Soden, G. J., & Castro, A. J. (2015). Manifesting destiny: Re/presentations of Indigenous peoples in K-12 U.S. history standards. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 43(1), 68-101.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2016). Critical race methodology. Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (2nd ed., pp. 131-147). Routledge.
- Sonn, C. C., Stevens, G. & Duncan, N. (2013). Decolonisation, critical methodologies and why stories matter. In G. Stevens, N. Dunan, D. Hook (Eds.), *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive. Studies in the psychosocial*. (pp. 295-214). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Storycommons. (n.d.). *Home*. Retrieved from <https://lifestorycommons.wordpress.com/>
- Sultana, F. (2002). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. *Political Geography*, 99, Article 102638. Retrieved from <https://www.farhanasultana.com/wp-content/uploads/Sultana-Unberable-Heaviness-of-Climate-Coloniaity-onnline-April-2022.pdf>
- Thornton, S. J. (1989). Aspiration and practice: Teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper in social studies. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association.
- Vasquez-Heilig, J., Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2012). The illusion of inclusion: A critical race theory textual analysis of race and standards. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82, 304-424.
- Zembylas, M. (2020). Toward a decolonial ethics in human rights and peace education. *International Journal of Human Rights Education*, 4(1). Retrieved from <https://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/vol4/iss1/2>
- Zembylas, M., & Kambani, F. (2012). The teaching of controversial issues during elementary-level history instruction: Greek-Cypriot teachers' perceptions and emotions. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 40(2), 107-133.
- Zhu, P. & Zheng, Y. (2021). Constructivist retelling of the Epic of Gilgamesh: Implications for the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 34(3), 245-253, DOI: 10.1080/10720537.2020.1786867