Marginal Identity: Depiction of The US-Vietnam War in the California and Vietnam High School History Textbooks

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Thesis Presentation
Introduction

• Heaven Wonders: Conflict of a young girl
• High school history textbooks in America
  – James Loewens:
    • “Textbooks are often muddled by conflicting desires to promote inquiry and to indoctrinate blind patriotism” (Lies, 1995, p.14)
  – Paul C. Cline and Anthony J. Eksterowicz:
    • “Textbooks are influential because students are exposed to them at formative periods of their lives. Often this provides the first and primary for critical thinking about complicated issues.” (Vietnam., 1998, p.147)
Research Questions

• 1.5 Generations: Children of the third wave Vietnamese refugees
• How are chronological knowledge and spatial thinking about the US-Vietnam War presented in history textbooks in Vietnam and in California that educate high school students about war-knowledge/US-Vietnam War?
• What are the similarities and differences in historical research, evidence, and points of view regarding the US-Vietnam War that would influence the process of building critical thinking or critical consciousness for students in Vietnam and in California?
• With historical interpretations presented in high school history textbooks in both countries, how would students’ sense of nationalism influenced by these interpretations?
Education Content in CA and in VN

• In California: The History-Social Science standard in CA K-12 does not require the US-VN war lessons. It was only briefly included in the context of Immigration Issues and the US Foreign Policies.
  – Teaching of the US-VN war lesson is not guaranteed.

• In VN: Ed. Sys. Is influenced by colonizers
  – Worker-Peasant Complementary Education after revolutionary period.
Theoretical Perspectives

• Paulo Freire
  – Banking Education
  – Dialogue-interactive learning

• Edward Said
  – Dehumanization
  – Self-orientalizing/Internalization

• V.N. Volsosinov
  – Language
  – Consciousness
Content Analysis

Ngo Dinh Diem, Identity, Persons in History

Nationalism, textbook writer agenda, definitions of political terms Vietminh v. Vietcong

Geneva Conference, International Pressure and Interest
The Textbooks

2000, 11x17, 1020 pgs/35pgs, 43 photos

2007, 6.5x10.5, 204 pgs/64ps, 12 half pg photos
Geneva Accords and The Beginning

- Textbooks coverage of Dien Bien Phu
  - *Lich Su 12*: 3p. “56 days and nights, 16200 chaps, 17 battalions of armies and paratroopers, 3 battalions of artillery/heavy guns, 1 lieutenant general, 16 colonels, 1749 officers, 62 airplanes, etc.”
  - *The Americans*: 2 sentences: “The final blow came in May of 1964, when the Viet Minh overran the French outpost at Dien Bien Phu, in northern Vietnam. The Vietnamese surrounded the fort and pounded it with heavy artillery for nearly two months.”
Geneva Accords, “Facts”

• Geneva Accords:
  – LS12: 4 main players, US, SV, Britain, France
  – “The Vietnamese was preparing 3rd attack at DBP while the conference started”
  – CA: 9 attendees, + SVN, NVN, Cambodia, Laos, China.
  – Country Division of North and South Vietnam

• The Role of China and USSR
  – Zhou Enlai and Vyacheslav Molotov

• The Legitimacy of the document
  – VN divided as an outcome
  – Document was not signed.

• It was never about Vietnam as a country or a people
Ngo Dinh Diem, Identity, & The Persona in History Texts

• Lich Su 12
  – Diem: “The American Puppet,” “old mandarin of Hue,” “worked as lackey for Japanese, French, trained at CIA”
  – Ho: No mentioning
  – Suggested Leadership in Vietnam during the US-VN War

• The Americans
  – Diem: “Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia,” “strong anti-communist,” “a deceptively dainty-looking man,” “one who cancelled the election.”
  – Ho: “Indochinese Com. Party leader,” “a thin, middle-aged man, trademark goatee,” “was condemned to death in 1930”

Assimilation Message
Omission of South Vietnam Population
Sabotaging of historical figures
Vietminh-Vietcong Ambiguity

• Lich Su 12
  – Vietminh: not mentioned in the period of analysis ('54-'75)
  – Vietcong: 2x in the context of the U.S. attack, “Vietcong Holy land,” “Breaking the backbone of the Vietcong,” and in the footnote, “Vietcong is a name the American gang and the puppets called the land areas that are controlled by the revolution” (p.142)

• The Americans
  – Vietminh: 2p,8x, “an organization of Vietnamese and other nationalist groups b/w ’46 & ’54, fought against the French.
  – Vietcong: 13/35ps; “the South Vietnamese Communists, with North VN support, fought against the government of South VN

Edward Said’s dehumanization counter-theory

Complexity and Flexibility of the Vietcong, Vietminh entities

Land as tools of control, and Language as tools of Manipulation and Confusion
Image Analysis

Identity, Loss and Fear

Nationalism, Agriculture, Land, Economics

Propaganda, Gender, Historical Bias, Emphasis of Meeting Importance,
Despite racial tensions, black and white soldiers fought side by side in Vietnam.
“The VietCong saw the United States and South Vietnam as oppressors. This VietCong propaganda poster reads, “Better death than slavery.” (The Americans, p. 726)
Propaganda

- "(Chinese Character translated"
- "The Vietnamese are bound to victory!"
- "Americans are bound to defeat!"
  (Trans.)
Exoticism-Gender Issue
Despite racial tension, black and white soldiers fought side by side in Vietnam.

Individualism-Collectivism, International Influences
Marx-Leninist Ideology in Vietnam Textbook
Conclusion

- Insider v. Outsider
- Exoticized VNese people, imposed ideology, legitimized an illegitimated document, sabotaged historical figures, confuse on the existence of political bodies, dehumanized people into a land
- Omission of Historical Knowledge
- Internalization/self-orientalization
- Nothing to help connecting the dots