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The illuminating educational histories of the five ethnic groups depicted in this book are linked by a number of overarching and compelling themes. They include the ways in which each group experienced powerful and destructive forces to assimilate into U. S. society and to develop strong national loyalties while being denied structural inclusion and full citizenship. These groups were also victimized by mainstream institutionalized knowledge that depicted them as intellectually inferior to Whites, by being forced to attend segregated and inferior schools, and by a school curriculum that reinforced the negative images of them that were constructed by mainstream scholars and textbook writers that were widespread within schools and the popular culture.

A cogent and significant theme that unifies the case studies in this book is the powerful ways in which each of the five groups resisted victimization and oppression and pursued self-determination, cultural maintenance, and agency. Chinese and Japanese American communities established schools that taught their languages and cultures. Scholars of color played major roles in countering stereotypes and misconceptions about their groups by creating transformative and oppositional knowledge (Banks, 1993). They constructed counternarratives that contested mainstream narratives that were detrimental to students and communities of color. George Y. Sanchez (Munilla, 1996) challenged the widely held belief that Hispanic students were intellectually inferior to Whites; he described how Hispanic students were victimized by tests that were not in their home language. Carter G. Woodson (Rocha, 1996)