Totally Invisible:
Asian American Representation in the
Dewey Decimal Classification, 1876-1996

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Abstract: The term "Asian American" emerged on college campuses in the 1960s to replace the term "Oriental." It was a political term, chosen by students to gather people from different ethnic communities under one pan-ethnic banner. We examine the representation of Asian American materials in the first twenty-one editions of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (*DDC*) and discusses the findings in relation to the history of the term "Asian American." We aim to 1) relate existing literature on bias and knowledge organization to Asian American studies and critical race theories including the possessive investment in whiteness and racial formation; 2) compare the history of the term "Asian American" as a self-identifying term to the evolution of the term in *DDC*; and 3) lay a historical foundation from which to consider the treatment of the term "Asian American" in the contemporary *DDC* and by extension other modern knowledge organization systems.

1.0 Introduction

In 1968, the University of California, Berkeley was the site of the longest student strike in United States history. It was a time of civil unrest around the country as the civil rights movement gave way to black power, and protests against the Vietnam War gained traction. Students rose up to demand ethnic studies programs. One group of students banded together to join the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA). It was the first time the term "Asian American" had ever been used. It was a political term, chosen to gather students from different ethnic communities under one pan-ethnic banner. Students chose the name to replace the term "Oriental," a label that had been thrust upon them. It caught fire, because Asian American communities felt empowered, standing together and naming themselves (Asian American Movement 1968, 2008).

This is the story that I heard as an ethnic studies major at Berkeley forty years later. In those forty years from 1968 to 2008, "Asian American" has come to encompass more

communities and is often used synonymously with "Asian Pacific American," or "Asian Pacific Islander American." It has become a racial category on the United States Census, represented in the acronyms of countless community organizations, and is the term designating the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. It has become a widely accepted yet sometimes problematic term.

The term "Asian American" is widely accepted in daily life, but what about in knowledge organization systems (KOSs)? One might assume the answer is yes, but "Asian American" is a complicated term. Further, bias in KOSs is well documented (Olson 2002). Taking the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (*DDC*) as an example of a well-established KOS and examining its portrayal of Asian American materials, this paper has three goals:

1. To relate existing literature on bias and knowledge organization to Asian American studies and critical race theories including the possessive investment in white-

ness (Lipsitz 1998) and racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994);

2. To compare the history of the term Asian American as a self-identifying term to the evolution of the term in *DDC*; and,

3. To lay a historical foundation from which to consider the treatment of the term Asian American in the contemporary *DDC* and by extension other modern KOSs.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Knowledge organization system

"Knowledge organization system" (KOS) refers to tools like library catalogues, taxonomies, and thesauri. These systems attempt to place information in a useful order and to help users understand and use that information. These systems are interpretations of the domains they represent, and they influence the way users interact with information within the KOS and potentially beyond its boundaries (that is, users can adopt the KOS's interpretation of a given domain).

2.2 Asian American

"Asian American" is a racial term. Although we do not define race extensively, we treat it as a concept socially constructed (through law, politics, religion, etc.) with no biological foundation (Omi and Winant 1994, 60). It has very real effects in the lives of individuals, communities and nations. It is fluid and context specific. As a concept, race is related to but separate from ethnicity (biological and cultural heritage), culture (historical and contemporary practices of a given community), language (learned spoken, written, and visual communication), and nationality (geopolitical identifications). In addition to these characteristics, we define Asian Americans as people who trace some part of their ethnic heritage to Asia or Asia and the Pacific Islands, and who self-identify as Asian or Pacific Islander American.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Bias in knowledge organization systems

Bias is well documented in KOSs and not just in reference to race. Melanie Feinberg (2007) argues that all information systems, whether they focus on one domain or encompass multiple domains, are biased. She argues that since it is not possible to eliminate bias, the most responsible thing to do is to illuminate it. If system creators are clear about their choices, the user should be able to better understand and navigate the system. We aim to illuminate

the biases of the *DDC*, helping to improve scholars' understanding of the *DDC* and to hypothesize how to better represent Asian Americans in developing KOSs.

The structure of the *DDC* can be a source of bias. In *The Power to Name* (2002), Olson focuses her discussion of the *DDC* on the form of the KOS. Olson reads its structural divisions—forcing concepts into subdivisions of 10, relegating non-Anglo Saxon/Christian concepts to the '9' classes, creating false dualities, and perpetuating the oppression of hierarchies (which she links strongly to patriarchy)—as acts of violence. In her vocabulary, she identifies "the ghetto" and "the diaspora" as two equally unappealing results in the marginalization of underrepresented populations in library catalogues.

The semantics of systems are also bias incursion points. Keilty (2009) addresses word choice in classifying queer materials. "Queer," like "Asian American," is a constantly shifting, highly politicized category that has historically been treated badly in cataloguing. Keilty recognizes the powers of access and legitimacy that categories have but resists normalizing queerness according to systems rooted in the "spectacle of discovering and ordering exotic plants and animals" (2009, 244) and colonialism.

3.2 Racial bias in *DDC*

Other authors, namely Furner and Beall, directly address race in the *DDC*, choosing to look at Table 5 in its contemporary form. Furner (2007) uses critical race theory as a lens to interpret the *DDC*'s decision to deemphasize race in Table 5. In the 22nd edition of the *DDC*, the editors renamed Table 5 "Ethnic and National Groups." Since its emergence several decades prior, it had been called "Racial, Ethnic, and National Groups." Along with the name change, the editors removed the "basic racial categories," reasoning that the literature being written no longer required them and that sources referring to a specific race might now be classed under "ethnic group that most closely matches the concept of race described in the work" (Furner 2007, 156). Using critical race theory (CRT), Furner (2007, 164) shows that this decision to remove race from Table 5 "is perceived to have the effect merely of sustaining the hegemonic status quo in which discrimination and economic and social inequities in favor of whites are institutionally maintained." This act ignores the racialized reality of United States' power structures and takes away the power to self-identify. He also argues that we cannot work towards a more equitable library classification system without clearly defining what a just system might look like. He argues that CRT can help people envision that. This echoes Feinberg's (2007) argument that bias should be illuminated, if not eliminated.

Self-identification takes center stage in Beall's work on mixed-race representation in Table 5 (Beall 2009). Beall, who worked as an assistant editor for the *DDC* from 1986 to 2014, concludes that Table 5 notation in the 22nd edition of the *DDC* does not help racially-mixed people search by terms they might self-identify with, because different searchers have different preferred terms, and the *DDC* 22nd edition does not represent all of those terms. This is important, because "Asian American" began as a self-identifying term. This begs the question: how long does the *DDC* choose to maintain older preferred terms, and at what point will the editors change the scheme? While data collection for this project stops at the 21st edition of the *DDC*, the lack of terms available to racially-mixed people mirrors the lack of terms available to monoracial Asian Americans and Beall's point that expanding existing KOS structures cannot match the flexibility of unrestricted self-identification.

3.3 The possessive investment in whiteness

The possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz 1998) describes whiteness in the context of institutionalized racism. It refers to the ways in which public policy and private prejudice work together to preserve white privilege, which Lipsitz defines as resources, power, and opportunities. Systems, from popular movies to housing to criminal law, ensure that whites have a better chance of accumulating assets than nonwhites. Not all white people buy into these systems and not everyone who buys into the systems is white, but protecting these systems ensures that white communities maintain their privilege, and so many of them choose to invest in whiteness and protect the systems.

Lipsitz cites ethnic studies scholarship and the research of George Rawick (who compiled and analyzed narratives by black Americans on their experiences in slavery) as two important sites of anti-racist actions. Lipsitz's claim about resources can be extended to assert that knowledge is an important resource. Like other resources, knowledge can be generated, accumulated, and passed down from generation to generation. KOSs, as systems that deal in knowledge, can be examined, to see whether they encourage a continued investment in whiteness. This lends greater urgency to this research, because bias in these KOSs has real consequences in communities' abilities to generate capital and pass resources down from one generation to the next.

3.4 The perpetual foreigner

In writing about Asian Americans Lipsitz touches on the idea of the perpetual foreigner. This idea frames the sentiment that no matter how long Asian Americans as individuals or communities live in the United States, they are always viewed as foreigners, and therefore their loyalties to the United States are suspect. This was the basic reasoning behind the Japanese Internment during World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans of all ages, citizen and noncitizen, were evacuated from the West Coast and sent to internment camps for the duration of World War II. Their Japanese heritage, not their actions or connection to Japan, made them potential enemies and spies of the United States in the eyes of the government (Takaki 1989, 392).

The treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II mirrors the treatment of Muslim and South Asians after September 11, 2001. This facile "if you look like the enemy, you must be the enemy" reasoning led to the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi. He was shot at his gas station by a self-proclaimed patriot and protector of the United States, because he was a brown man wearing a turban. Sodhi, a Sikh who had emigrated from India, was neither Muslim nor Arab (Potts 2001).

This stereotype continues to manifest in small daily encounters called microaggressions (Sue et al. 2007). There are countless stories of Asian Americans being told that they speak good English, or that they should go back to their country. Indeed, the experience is so common that Takaki begins his 1989 history of Asian America with his own story of being cast as the perpetual foreigner, despite being American born. Given that *DDC* editors are influenced by their own cultural biases, this perception has impact on the use of the term "Asian American" in the *DDC*.

3.5 Racial formation

The last theory that we borrow from ethnic studies is Omi and Winant's racial formation. Racial formation posits that conceptions of race have always been central to conceptions of American identity and power, even as the articulations of racial meaning have changed. Race cannot be simplified to class, nation, or ethnicity. Racism hinged on biological definitions of white supremacy through slavery, the post-Civil War period known as Reconstruction, and early Jim Crow, which enforced racial segregation through laws and extralegal racial violence. Then, with new immigration waves in the early twentieth century, the U.S. moved from a system of racial categorization to a paradigm of ethnic difference, where different ethnicities could be assimilated into the melting pot. The civil rights and black power movements shifted the conversation back to race, but did not quite usher in a new paradigm. In the 1980s, there was a push towards what has been termed color blindness, and racial language became coded in race neutral code words. Given this his-

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tory, Omi and Winant (1994, 91) define racial formation as "the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meaning." In our examination of the *DDC* as a racial project, we will compare the evolution of the term "Asian American" in the *DDC* with Omi and Winant's timeline of racial meanings.

4.0 Methodology

Because of the modern political history of the term "Asian American," we do not expect the term to appear in the *DDC* before 1968 or immediately after 1968. As Asian American identity developed and "Asian American" became a widely recognized and acceptable term, it should appear at some point, perhaps in the late 1970s or 80s. These assumptions influence the design of the empirical part of this study.

The basic methodology is straight forward and easily replicable—we hand search the schedule and indices of the first twenty-one editions of the *DDC*, compiling a list of terms that might be used to identify materials about Asian American individuals, communities or artifacts. This list, as explained below, encompasses a range of historical terms (given that "Asian American" is a relatively modern term) and a range of Asian-specific terms that might be used to create Asian American descriptors (given the semi-faceted nature of the later editions of the *DDC*). We examine both schedules and indices because while there is some overlap between them, they produce different results. Terms on the list are then tracked through the first twenty-one editions of the *DDC*, mapping their appearance and evolution through time. We then create a table for each term. See tables 2a-2c as an example.

As explained previously, "Asian American" was coined the late 1960s as a political term, to create a pan-ethnic coalition of separate communities who had experienced similar racialized types of discrimination. Exactly who has been considered Asian American has been a product of politics, history, and self-identification. In our analysis, we choose to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. Therefore, if a term is expected in one period of time, its presence is tracked in every edition. Vietnamese Americans, for example, only became a sizable community after the Vietnam War, but the term "Vietnam(ese)" is tracked through all editions. This also means that terms are tracked for some communities that do not uniformly identify as Asian American, such as Pacific Islanders. We do not intend to impose definitions of Asian American onto these communities, but rather to include the possibility of a broad interpretative Asian American identity.

Before the creation of the Asian American moniker, other pan-ethnic terms were applied to Asian American communities. These include "Oriental," "yellow-races," "Malays," and "Mongols." While all of these are now considered politically incorrect, if not outright offensive, they were commonly accepted terms in the past, so they are included in the data.

We track some terms, which are specific to Asian America, such as "coolie"; "alien owners" (in respect to land) because of the Alien Land Laws; "railroad employees" because of the many Chinese American railroad employees; "other" when used to reference all things non-Western; and "educational museums" because the scope note says to include international expositions (at the time, non-Western peoples, including people from the Philippines were imported as live displays for events such as world's fairs).

References to Asian countries and areas, including South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands are included, because the *DDC*, being American, is American-centric. It seems reasonable that an American editorial team would include Asian immigrants to America by their Asian identity rather than their American identity. If the situation were reversed, as in an Asian publication that describes emigrants to the United States, their American identity might be more relevant. Given that the *DDC* allows a great degree of faceting, Asian and American can represent two separate facets.

We track all of the Asian ethnicities included in the *DDC* in the full data set, but not all are included in the tables shown. Instead, the tables include an illustrative range of ethnicities, from those with large populations (e.g., Chinese), to ethnicities with small populations (e.g., the Gilbert Islands). Because the *DDC* classes are based on literary warrant, a range of communities is represented to represent a variety in the way Asian American is handled over time. In some cases, ethnic groups that are not directly analogous with nation states, including the Hmong, have been included, but subdivisions of nations, like Hong Kong, were not included even if they have distinct cultures.

The inclusion of a term in this paper does not assume that ethnicities should identify as Asian American. Neither does exclusion from this paper mean that those groups as less Asian American. We simply tried to represent a range of Asian American communities, and focus on pan-ethnic representation in the *DDC*. Similarly, it did not directly examine mixed race peoples, although as a mixed race person myself, I certainly believe that mixed-race individuals are full and equal members of the Asian American community. Neither do we track traditional Oriental terms that refer to the Middle East. Although the historical Middle East has a legitimate connection to modern Asian American identity, it is more related though Orientalism as a

theory than through modern notions of Asian American identity (Said 1979). We also take geography as a limiting factor. While Asian American can legitimately include transnational communities and individuals, as well as parts of the Americas outside of the United States, this study is limited to Asian Americans in the United States.

Given that Asian Americans make up a diverse set of communities with multiple identities and interests, many categories that are not distinctly Asian American may have materials by Asian Americans or may have subjects to which Asian Americans are tangentially related. To include all of these categories (any part of class 920 "Biography" may have a book about or by an Asian American) does not contribute to this investigation of the racialization of *DDC* that we examine. According to this thinking, we do not include "American history" and "Literature" unless those categories explicitly referenced Asians or Americans. For example, in "Education," from a relatively early year, the *DDC* includes "Orientals" as a special class [371.96 "Education. teachers, methods, and disciplines. Education of special classes. Orientals"]. The only known instance of the exact term "Asian Americans" is also in education [371.829 950 73, "Asian Americans, education"] in *DDC* 21 (1996), and the Table 5 reference that same year [950 73].

5.0 Findings

We split the *DDC* into two time groups. The first time period, 1876-1958, covers those editions that do not include Tables to synthesize numbers. This includes the 15th edition, published in 1951. The 15th edition reduced the size of the *DDC* roughly by half, accounting for the reduction in terms related to race and ethnicity as well. The second time period, 1969-1996, covers those editions that include Tables. The 1965 edition does not include Table 5, and may be considered a proto-table edition, but for the sake of presentation, we include it in the second time period. A third period, covering the two most modern editions of the *DDC* also exists, but because of the switch from the print editions to WebDewey, it is not included in this project because the advent of the online search mechanism offers new search possibilities that significantly change the way that catalogers and users interact with the *DDC.* Rather than incorporate these search mechanisms into our methodology, the most recent editions are areas for further study.

5.1 The appearance of terms in the indices

We split the tracked *DDC* terms into three categories:

1. Geo-political terms, which map to ethnic groups and national political boundaries. We recognize that many

of these overlap, some of the terms refer to boundaries that no longer exist, and not all ethnicities exist within an autonomous nation state. Examples include Afghanistan, China/Chinese, the Gilbert Islands, and Vietnam/Vietnamese;

2. Macro-regional terms, which map to general geographic areas that encompass more than one nation state. Some of these terms have racial meaning as well. We include them here if they can function as macro-regional terms as well as racialized terms. Examples include Asia/Asian, Austroasian/Austronesian, and Pacific Islands/Islander;

3. Racialized terms, which carry racial meanings but cannot be mapped to a political or geographic region. Terms are included if they cannot function as macro-regional terms, regardless of distant ties to geographies. Examples include alien, Asian American, coolie, and Mongol.

Terms in the indices are relatively stable and persist over time. Once they appear, they tend to remain in subsequent editions and once they are phased out they rarely reappear. In cases where one term is replaced by another term (Siam/Thailand, Formosa/Taiwan, Annam and Cochin China/Vietnam), both terms appear for several editions before the older term is completely phased out, if it is phased out at all. This does not comport with the changes observed by Tennis (2007) and might be considered in his taxonomy of changes. Annam and Cochin China/Vietnam are shown below in Table 1 as an example of a cluster of related terms. A letter "Y," shaded in grey, indicates that the term appears. A letter "N" indicates that it does not.

Surprisingly, "Asian American" does not appear in the schedule or the index until *DDC 21*, in 1996, one hundred twenty years after the publication of the first edition. In the 21st edition, "Asian American" appears twice in the index—once in reference to Table 5 and once under the heading "Asian American, education" (371.829 950 73). This number does not appear in the schedule. The closest class is 371.82 ["Education. schools and their activities; special education. Students. Specific kinds of students; schools for specific kinds of students"], which includes a scope note that says (1996, 52):

> Class here comprehensive works on education of specific kinds of students. Add to base number 371.82 the numbers following—08 in notation 081-089 from Table 1, e.g. Education of women 371.822 (formerly 376), Education of students by racial, ethnic, national origin 371.829; however, for students who are the focus of special education, see 371.9.

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	Vietnam/ Vietnamese	An(n)am/ An(n)amese	Cochin China
Pre-tables era			
1876	N	N	Y
1885	N	Y	Y
1888	N	Y	Y
1891	N	Y	Y
1894	N	Y	Y
1899	N	Y	Y
1911	N	Y	Y
1913	N	Y	Y
1915	N	Y	Y
1919	N	Y	Y
1922	N	Y	Y
1927	N	Y	Y
1932	N	Y	Y
1942	N	Y	Y
1951	Y	Y	Y
1958	Y	Y	Y
Proto-tables and tables era			
1965	Y	Y	N
1971	Y	Y	N
1979	Y	Y	Y
1989	Y	N	N
1996	Y	N	N

Table 1. The appearance of selected geo-political terms in the Index

This standard subdivision is a way to account for people "outside of normal" or people who "need extra description." This is distinct from students with exceptional and remedial learning needs who are classed in 371.9.

Most of the other references refer to Asia or to specific ethnicities. Ethnic terminology, consistent with the *DDC*'s American bias, uses colonial titles to classify peoples and places. In the schedules, there is no easy search mechanism. The best method is to pay extra attention to those areas in the schedules that historically held relevant classes.

Given that "Asian American" does not appear until 1996, and then only in the index, where might Asian American materials be classed over time in the *DDC*? The two most obvious options are 1) under more specific ethnic terms; or 2) under more general racial/ethnic terms. The next sections look more closely at several of those possibilities. To save space, years with identical entries are combined. Additionally, we do not track terms that refer to objects rather than people, racial processes, or cultural practices, such as references to China porcelain and chickens.

5.2 Macro-regional terms

We begin here with "Asia/Asian," because Asian and Asian American are sometimes inaccurately elided as with the U.S. Census (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011).

From Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c below, "Asian" and "Asian American" are not interchangeable. Asia is firmly linked to the Asian continent, and the languages, geographical features, and history associated with it. The one exception is 331.625, "Asiatic labor." Variations of this class (classes starting with 331.6) are linked to "Asia/Asian," "China/Chinese," "Ethnic," "Foreign," and "Race/racial," as the later tables show. In the schedule, the description for this number, when it appears, is a variation of "[Pauper Labor. Cheap Foreign Labor. Chinese.]" This indicates that these terms are at least related in the minds of the *DDC* editors from 1927-1932.

The general expansion of the terms associated with "Asia/Asian" parallels that of the major geo-political terms, which we detail in our description of the "China/Chinese" below.

5.3 Major geo-political terms

There are two kinds of geo-political terms: major and minor geo-political terms. Major geo-political terms are terms that appear in every edition and have a set of unique terms associated with them (that is, these terms describe historical events or cultural practices that are specific to the geopolitical area, such as the Chinese Republic or Chinese communism). For our discussion, we use "China/Chinese" as an example.

The expansion of terms related to "China/Chinese" parallels the general expansion of the *DDC*. It starts with a small set of categories; it then continues to expand until the 14th edition in 1942. The number of terms shrinks in the 15th edition, matching the reduction of terms throughout the 15th edition; it then expands again. In 1965, area tables are introduced, followed by the full tables in 1971. The presence of the term "China/Chinese" is very consistent, but the classes within it are not. Chinese history, language, and literature appear in most, but not all, editions. Sometimes "Chinese history" is shortened to "China," and then specified to be modern or ancient. Most of the terms are not specific to Asian America, and are most likely intended to describe Chinese in China.

The only terms that are explicitly Chinese American specific are "Chinese, discovery of America (1911-1942, 1963)" and "Chinese, exclusion act, U.S. history (1911-1942)." Strong arguments can be made for "Chinese immigration (1899-1932)," "Chinese servants, domestic economy (1911-1932)," and "Chinese, labor, political economy (1888-1932)." Anti-Chinese sentiment may account for

	1876	1885	1888-1891	1894-1899	1911-1922
000 General					
100 Philosophy					
200 Theology	275 Asia, ecclesiastical history				
300 Sociology	315 Asia, statistics 395 Asia, costumes and customs		315 Asia, statistics	315 Asia, statistics	315 Asia, statistics
400 Philology		490.6 Asiatic societies 491-495 Asiatic languages 495 Asiatic languages, eastern		490.6 Asiatic societies 491-495 Asiatic languages 495 Asiatic languages, eastern	490.6 Asiatic societies 491-495 Asiatic languages 495 Asiatic languages, eastern
500 Natural Sciences					
600 Useful Arts					
700 Fine Arts					
800 Literature	850 Asia				
900 History	915 Asia, geography 915 Asia, travel 950 Asia, history	950 Asia, history 956 Asia Minor, history	913.5 Asia, antiquities 915 Asia, travel 950 Asia, history	913.5 Asia, antiquities 915 Asia, travel 950 Asia, history	913.5 Asia, antiquities 915 Asia, travel 939.2 Asia, Western, ancient history 939.3 Asia, Eastern, ancient history 950 Asia, history

Table 2a. The appearance of "Asia/Asian" in the index, pre-tables era part 1, 1876-1922.

	1927-1932	1942	1951	1958
000 General				
100 Philosophy				181 Asian philosophy
200 Theology				
300 Sociology	315 Asia, statistics 331.625 Asiatic labor			
400 Philology	490.6 Asiatic societies 491-495 Asiatic languages 495 Asiatic languages, eastern	491-495 Asiatic languages		491-495 Asiatic languages
500 Natural Sciences				
600 Useful Arts				
700 Fine Arts		722.1-5 Asiatic architectural styles		
800 Literature		891-895 Asiatic literatures		891-895 Asiatic literatures
900 History	913.5 Asia, antiquities 950 Asia, history 939.3 Asia, Eastern, ancient history	950 Asia, history	915 Asia, geography 915 Asia, description and travel 950 Asia, history	915 Asia, geography 939.5 Asia, northwestern history, ancient 940.415 Asia, military operations, World War I 940.542 5 Asia, military operations, World War II 950 Asia, history

Table 2b. The appearance of "Asia/Asian" in the index, pre-tables era part 2, 1927-1958.

	1965	1971-1979	1989	1996
000 General				
100 Philosophy				
200 Theology				
300 Sociology				
400 Philology	491-495 Asian languages			
500 Natural Sciences				
600 Useful Arts				
700 Fine Arts				
800 Literature				
900 History			950 Asia 958 Asia, Central	950 Asia 958 Asia, Central 959 Asia, Southeastern
Tables	area-5 Asia area-174+ Asian ethnic groups area-175+ Asian lingual groups	area-5 Asia	T2-5 Asia T2-58 Asia, Central T5-95 Asians	T2-5 Asia T2-58 Asia, Central T2-59 Asia, Southeastern T5-95 Asians

Table 2c. The appearance of "Asia/Asian" in the index, proto-tables and tables era part 2, 1965-1996.

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immigration. Debates around Chinese immigrants stealing American blue-collar jobs as well as the large numbers of Chinese who ended up working as domestic servants or in laundries may account for the other two.

Interestingly, the *DDC* does not include a reference to "coolies" from "Chinese," although "coolie" is a pejorative term for immigrant laborers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Coolie" appears in the schedule and index from 1885-1942. From 1927-1942, "coolies, economics" and "Chinese, labor, political economy" direct users to the same class, 331.6.

5.4 Minor geo-political terms

We classify "The Gilbert Islands/Gilbertese" as a minor geo-political term, because none of the terms associated with it are specific to the Gilbert Islands. From these terms, a user can only assume that the Gilbert Islands are a place, have a history, and people live there. From these categories it is not clear whether there is even a language unique to the Gilbert Islands (the Gilbert Islands won their independence in 1979 and renamed the country Kiribati. The official languages are Kiribati and English). This is a direct contrast to "China/Chinese," from which a user can assume that a number of other subjects are associated with the place. The Gilbert Islands are a very small example, while China is a very big example. Most of the geopolitical terms fall somewhere between the two.

5.5 Racial terms

Geo-political terms, as discussed above, are more specific than the pan-ethnic term "Asian American." This section deals with conceptually broader terms, namely "ethnic" and "race/racial." The relationship between the two terms is complicated.

Before the introduction of the Tables, "ethnic" rarely appears in the index. Until 1927, it is only linked to religion. After the introduction of the Tables, however, the number of classes "ethnic" includes explodes in number. In the 1996 edition, everything from cooking (641.592 "Ethnic cooking"), to government programs (353.533 9 "Ethnic groups, government programs"), to history (940.403 "Ethnic groups, military troops, World War I"), and psychology (155.82 "Ethnic groups, psychology") can be defined by ethnic groups. Table 3 below shows the evolution of "ethnic" according to the frequency it appeared in each edition.

In the pre-Tables era, "race/racial" describes mainly scientific and legal/political classes, even if those scientific classes would be considered pseudoscience today. Scientific classes include 136.4, "Race influence on mind;" 324.1, "Race suffrage;" 572, "Races of man;" and 613.94, "Race

improvement, eugenics." There is much more change and expansion in classes linked to the term than there is in "ethnic" during the same time period, and very little overlap in the classes they describe. The comparison is clearest in the 1958 edition, shown in Table 4 below.

In the Tables era, the number of terms related to race and ethnicity increases. As in the pre-Tables era, both have a large proportion of classes in the 300s, some of which overlap (both groups are associated with education, legal status, and labor relations) and some of which are unique. Between 1965 and 1986, "race/racial" seems to fall out of favor as a term. The 1965 edition has several "see" redirects, sending users to "Ethnology," "Civil rights," and "Ethnic groups." "Ethnic" expands while "race/racial" contracts, but then in 1996, "race/racial" expands significantly.

6.0 Discussion

In his short story *Yellow*, Don Lee (2001) writes about the ways that the ghosts of racism can control an individual's life as strongly as racism itself. Likewise, it is possible the burdens of Dewey's original biases will haunt us longer than the biases themselves. Through these tables, we see how knowledge builds like compound interest, constrained as it is by its original structure. Dewey designed it to describe the world that he knew, America in the mid-nineteenth century. The first edition relegates non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Christian concepts to the edges of the classification literally, labeling them "other" and putting them in the 9s. Religion is an enduring example of this. In the original *DDC*, Dewey reserved the first 8 classes for different aspects of Christianity. 290 holds all non-Christian religions. And although much work has been done to expand the range of the *DDC* and increase its sensitivity, much of the original structure remains. No matter how far the *DDC* expands, it is still operating within the constraints of its form.

Naming normalizes, legitimizes, and reinforces ways of thinking (Olson 2002). If the *DDC* continues to reflect the worldview that it was built upon, then it can continue to legitimize them in the present day. If the class "other religions" is seen as a marginalized social category (for example, if one considers Judaism or Hinduism as a marginalized community in history or the present), and one agrees with Lipsitz that resources are used to maintain privilege, then the *DDC* can be seen as a tool of knowledge, still reproducing the narrative of possessive investment in whiteness.

At the outset of this project, we set out to trace an intellectual history of the *DDC*'s conception of Asian American through the first 21 editions of the *DDC*. This intellectual history proves difficult to illuminate for several

	1876-1927	1932	1942	1951	1958	1965	1971	1979	1989	1996
000 General	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
100 Philosophy	0	2	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	1
200 Theology	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
300 Sociology	0	0	0	2	9	3	13	26	19	16
400 Philology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
500 Natural Sciences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
600 Useful Arts	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2
700 Fine Arts	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
800 Literature	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
900 History	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	4	4
Tables	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	2	3	2	5

Table 3. The table below shows the evolution of "ethnic" according to the frequency with which it appeared in each edition.

	Ethnicity	Race/Racial
000 General		
100 Philosophy	136.48 Ethnic psychology	136.45 Race, difference, psychology 177.5 Race discrimination, social ethics
200 Theology		216.83 Race Relations and Christian religion
300 Sociology	301.451 Ethnic sociology 301.451 Ethnic minorities, sociology 301.451 Ethnocentrism, of state 320.12 Ethnic unity, theory of state 323.1 Ethnic groups and state, political science 323.1 Ethnocentrism, political science 325.1 Ethnic immigration and emigration 320.12 Ethnic boundaries of state 371.97 Ethnic education	312.9 Race. population statistics 331.113 Race discrimination, employment practices, economics 323.41 Race equality, political science 324.1 Race, suffrage, qualifications, political science 325.1 Race, immigration limitations
400 Philology		
500 Natural Sciences		
600 Useful Arts		613.94 Race improvement, eugenics
700 Fine Arts	793.31 Ethnic dances, recreation	
800 Literature		
900 History		

Table 4. "Ethnic" and "race/racial" in the 1958 *DDC* indices.

reasons, including the *DDC*'s lack of definitions and number building. Those two issues are discussed in greater detail below, as well as several of the observations we were able to make.

6.1 Definitions

The *DDC* is intended to be a classification system, not a detailed outline of knowledge (Eaton, in Miksa 1998). As a classification system, it includes scope notes for some terms but leaves most undefined. This lack of clarity may cause confusion for catalogers and users and forces us as researchers to make assumptions about terms' definitions. These definitions may have seemed simple to a contemporary audience, but many definitions change with time or become obsolete. "Oriental," for instance, has referred to areas from Palestine to Korea. The *DDC* editor may assume that cataloguers know that Oriental churches refer to

ancient Christian churches in Asia Minor, but what is to stop a cataloguer from placing the Jews of Shanghai in the same class?

Variations of "Mongol" present a similar challenge. The *DDC* consistently classifies Asians and indigenous peoples into one basic race, "Mongoloid." In 1925 and 1932, "Mongolian" is related to "yellow races," but then that reference disappears, and "Mongolian" seems to refer to the country of Mongolia. In the 1989 and 1996 edition, there is a difference between "Mongols" (942, presumably the country) and "Mongoloid race" (035, the basic race). The term "Mongolism" is also found in many editions to refer to forms of mental disability.

Even more problematic for this project is the lack of definition for racial, ethnic and national groups. In 1971, the *DDC* starts using the phrase "Racial, ethnic, and national groups" to denote a set of concepts. These are divided into three basic races, mixed races (made of permu-

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tations of the basic races), and many other categories that roughly correlate with the geographic subdivisions. This persists through several decades until the 22nd edition when the editorial board "deemphasized race" (5) in favor of the phrase "ethnic and national groups."

The Tables comparing the use of the terms "race" and "ethnic" show that the concepts of race, ethnicity and nationality are related in the *DDC*. The choice to deracialize the *DDC* coincides with a more general movement toward colorblindness in the United States. According to Omi and Winant (1994), as well as Lipsitz (1998), colorblindness is a reaction to cultural-nationalist movements, an articulation of a post-racial society that positioned racial discrimination in the past. In reality, however, colorblindness delegitimizes efforts to address racism, simultaneously perpetuating existing systems of inequality and making them harder to fix.

This confusion and lack of clarity is consistent with shifting nature of what Omi and Winant call racial projects. Racial projects may not have racial formation as their goal, but they form, transform, destroy, and re-form racial meaning all the same. Racially implicit and explicit policies reinforce the racial politics of everyday life. They shape and are shaped by conceptions of race and the political demands that result from them. In this paper, we read the first twenty-one editions of the *DDC* as a racial project. Because racial projects shape and are shaped by conceptions of race at the same time, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to separate cause from effect.

6.2 The foreigner and the *DDC*

Asians appear most consistently in the tables in relation to history, literature and religion. These categories position the Asian as non-normative and foreign, often literally by using the term "other." Asian Americans and Asians in America appear most consistently in the tables in relation to immigration, labor, and education. To find these classes in the index, a user may search by the terms "Asiatic," "Chinese," "foreign," "ethnic," or "race." All of these index terms position Asian Americans as Asian, not American, perpetuating the stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners.

Similar classes for education, legal status, and labor relations are consistently associated with race and ethnicity. These classes include 323.63, "Race and citizenship, political science;" 323.11, "Ethnic groups and state;" 371.99, "Races, coeducation of;" 371.97, "Ethnic groups, education, special education;" 331.6, "Race discrimination in employment;" and 331.6, "Ethnic groups, labor economics." It is interesting to note that the categories associated with people of color back to the 1800s are very similar to the categories that continue to inform immigration debates

today—decreasing the number of immigrants and refugees allowed into the United States in the name of national security; protecting American jobs from foreign competition; and the rights of immigrants to education, namely the DREAM Act (2009). This continued depiction of immigrants as inassimilable foreigners suggests that this racialization has more to do with public policy than racial characteristics, and that the *DDC* reflects this way of thinking.

The *DDC* defines Americans narrowly. In the 21st edition, the scope note for T5-13, "People of the United States ("Americans")," reads "class here United States citizens of British origin, people of the United States as a national group." Thus, the *DDC* defines normative Americans as those of British descent. Everyone else should be properly identified as ethnic groups living in America using their ethnic subdivision + 073 (meaning "in the United States").

6.3 Number building

A prescribed solution for creating Asian American categories emerges with the advent of Standard Table 5 in 1969. This solution combines racial, ethnic, or national terms with location terms, giving us 089950073 as an add-on to most subjects (089 ("Racial, ethnic, and national groups") + 950 ("Asians") + 073 ("America")).

To equate Asians in America with Asian Americans is problematic. International students, tourists, or business people who spend several months per year in the U.S. might not want to be considered Asian American. Conversely, Asian Americans who have lived in the United States their entire lives, or for several generations, might not consider themselves Asian at all. Rather, they are Asian Americans living in the United States.

The ability to build numbers raises an interesting dilemma—the classes enumerated in the schedule are a small number of the possible classes listed in the index. The index, in turn is only a small portion of the numbers that might be constructed using the "divide like" mechanism or the standard tables. We define these possibilities into three separate categories—what is described, what is prescribed, and what is possible. What is described is the most explicit level of inclusion. These are instances found, verbatim, in the schedule or index. For Asian Americans, the only instance of described inclusion is 1996, in the index, under Table 5 (950 073). What is prescribed refers to *DDC* supported options not enumerated in the schedule or index. According to the usage notes, again in the 1996 edition, the proper way to indicate Asian Americans would be to use Tables 1, 2, and 5. After any subject then, Asian American could be denoted with 089 ("Racial, ethnic, and national groups"), + 950 ("Asians"), + 073 ("America"). Aside from what is described and prescribed, there are a great many

things that are possible to do but not supported by the *DDC* as such.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The *DDC* as a racial project

Although the *DDC* does not explicate racial theories, it does situate race and ethnicity within a greater knowledge organization structure. This qualifies it as a racial project. A general progression of race and ethnicity as separate concepts in the early editions is discernable, leading to a closer conflagration of the two terms with the advent of the Tables. With the advent of Tables, racial classes decline while ethnic classes expand, suggesting a preference for ethnic, rather than racial terms. The deracialization of the *DDC* can be understood as a late move towards colorblindness (Omi and Winant place the beginning of colorblind policies in the 1980s). Throughout all the editions, racial classes maintain a link to science that is not present in ethnic categories.

7.2 Semantic warrant as a codification mechanism for whiteness

Beghtol (1986) identifies four types of semantic warrant—literary, scientific/philosophical, educational, and cultural—as justifications used in the construction of KOSs. Literary warrant links KOS structure and subject inclusion to an existing body of literature. This idea of literary warrant would seem to absolve *DDC* of direct responsibility. According to literary warrant, the editors of the *DDC* expand and discontinue classes not according to their own desires but as knowledge production demands it.

Other types of semantic warrant, however, describe how structure and subject inclusion convey meaning and values. Cultural warrant, for example, acknowledges that KOSs reflect the cultural values of the society in which they were created. Beghtol (1986, 120) identifies what she calls "the American middle-class biases of the *DDC*." Cultural warrant allows us to ask "Whose literature? Who ranks as important?" Non-Christian religions certainly existed in Dewey's day and a large body of literature on them existed, but that did not stop him from relegating them to the very end of the class.

There is a story from the early days of Asian American studies about an author named John Okada that can help to contextualize this position. He wrote about Japanese Americans and their experiences in the 1950s and 60s before most people thought Asian American literature even existed, much less considered it in any discussion of literary warrant. His first book, *No-No Boy*, tells the story of a young man who is sent to prison during World War II (the historical background involves a loyalty questionnaire distributed in internment camps). The book was published as a small run and gained very little notice. Okada was so discouraged that no one cared about his book or Asian American literature that his widow burned his second book. It was only after his death that a group of young Asian American writers rediscovered the book and reprinted it on their own. *No-No Boy* is now considered an Asian American classic, but that second book is lost (Inada 1981).

This story makes a point about literary warrant—more publications do not necessarily make a subject more important. To the contrary, emerging topics and unpopular subjects can be of incredible importance. The principle of least effort says that information seekers will "adopt a course of action that will expend the probable least average of their work" to satisfy their needs (Case 2005). In view of the possessive investment in whiteness, if information on Asian Americans is difficult to find in the *DDC* (as we show to be the case), it is likely that no one but the most motivated researchers are likely to find it, perpetuating its seeming unimportance.

The possessive investment in whiteness describes how investment in the status quo is an investment in a system that compounds privilege for white Americans, while compounding disadvantages for people of color. Literary warrant is an example of the possessive investment in whiteness, as it reinforces colonial terminology for Asian ethnicities. This outdated and inaccurate terminology delegitimizes and obscures sources that deal with Asian American subjects, making them more difficult to study.

7.3 Self-identification and the *DDC*

The basic goal of the first edition of the *DDC* was to organize a universe of knowledge into arbitrary base 10 divisions, based on the world vision of the white, nineteenth-century, American male. It assumes that subjects and people can be assigned a correct term and location. The subsequent editions struggled to expand the *DDC* to encompass expanding world views. "Asian American" and its sister/twin "Asian Pacific Islander American," in contrast, were born out of political struggle, pan-ethnic identities to unite diverse communities that suffered similar racializations in the U.S. As an identity, it signifies personal choice and contextual flexibility. Because these terms are difficult to define, change over time, signify different things to different people and are not uniformly adopted within communities; they can be difficult to fit into the neat categories required by traditional KOSs.

A large part of the problem is that these categories were originally created without input from Asian or Asian American communities. And while this is understandable

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in the historical context of the creation of the *DDC*, we have shown how the structure of the *DDC* continued to perpetuate whiteness through the first twenty-one editions. Omi and Winant highlight the importance of community control for Asian Americans. Because historical Asian American communities (like Chinatowns and Manilatowns) are located on prime downtown real estate, they often have to fight off commercial obliteration (often cast as urban renewal and gentrification) and being overrun by tourists. Many Asian American communities build alternate institutions to deal with issues like equal housing and culturally appropriate education. Rather than fight for representation in the dominant Eurocentric cultural discourse, many Asian Americans seek to create alternate avenues where they can develop "genuine oppositional culture [that] could be distinguished from assimilationist practices" (Omi and Winant 1994, 105).

This is apparent in cultural production sites like The Center for Asian American Media 2016) and Angry Asian Man (Yu 2002), which seek to provide alternate avenues to Asian American representation. This suggests that accuracy and self-identification are more important than mainstream acceptance. It also suggests that if KOSs do not accurately portray Asian Americans, or are not useful to their needs, Asian Americans might build alternate systems. Whether or not Asian American cultural production includes alternate KOSs, mainstream KOSs lose an important facet of American culture if they do not allow for the accurate representation of works about Asian America by Asian Americans.

These difficulties are not unique to Asian Americans. Other communities have already begun theorizing and building alternate KOSs that allow for more flexibility and self-identification. Keilty's work shows the problems inherent in normalizing queer vocabulary (2009). Feinberg argues that the goal is to recognize and ameliorate bias, because it is impossible to purge it from systems (2007). In the last chapter of her book, Olson (2002) enthusiastically supports hyperlinking to improve the representation of underrepresented minorities in KOSs. Brian Deer, one of the first indigenous librarians in Canada developed the Brian Deer classification scheme to describe and organize the indigenous materials he was working with, outside of the Eurocentric systems like the Library of Congress *Classification*. Rather than attempt to encompass multiple indigenous world views in one scheme, his system is context specific (Cherry and Mukunda 2015) that can be adapted for every new context it is applied to.

7.4 Considering modern KOSs

This project serves as an overview, a new way of approaching the *DDC*. The first twenty-one editions of the *DDC* are an incredibly large body of work. Closer readings should be done on the ontogeny of single ethnicities and the development of Table 5. Close comparisons should be done with these findings and other racial projects like the U.S. Census forms. Work should also be done comparing these findings to where Asian American literature is classed in libraries that use the *DDC*.

Examining the pre-digital *DDC* as a racial project paves the way to practical applications to ameliorate the effects of bias in KOSs, including more community control over structure and definitions. Within the digital world, free from the restraints of physical space and linear thinking, lie new possibilities for KOSs like hyperlinking, social tagging, and user-sourced knowledge. Technology, however, is always a tool and never a holy grail. Further research has the opportunity to engage with emerging technologies and ameliorate bias as systems develop, rather than try to adapt to ill-fitting legacy systems as is evidenced by the *DDC*'s historical attempts to accommodate Asian Americans.

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