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Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Secondary-School United States History Textbooks

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IT IS NOW RATHER COMMONPLACE to decry the poor quality of United States history textbooks at the university and precollegiate levels. Criticisms range from the general to the specific. While the first include such practices as “dumbing down” (that is, the rewriting of texts for a lower reading level than their intended audience should have already attained), the second focus more directly upon content.¹ Often inspired by well-defined political agendas, these criticisms encompass issues of inclusion or omission of certain topics and the endorsement of particular values or behavior. Special-interest lobbying to change textbook content is well worth the effort, however, since American history textbooks are the single most significant source of information on many vital topics for high-school teachers as well as their students. Textbook treatments of Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans are a case in point.

American students are usually introduced to Mexico in primary-school geography and middle-school world history. However, it is secondary-school United States history textbooks that offer the fullest, most sophisticated and widely disseminated images of Mexico and its peoples.² At a time when United States relations with Mexico command ever greater attention, when Mexican Americans represent one of the fastest-growing

ethnic constituencies on the United States political scene, and when scholarship on Mexican Americans has achieved a new level of proficiency and recognition, it is appropriate to examine how Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans are portrayed in ten of the most influential textbooks presently on the market.

In fact, current textbook treatments do represent a distinct improvement over earlier ones. However, this essay also analyzes why inconsistent, idiosyncratic, incorrect or empty images still prevail, while its bibliography points the way towards revision and enhancement. In addition, the conclusions suggest what explicit and informed treatment of Mexico and its peoples can tell us about the past and present of the United States from a domestic as well as a foreign perspective.

The ten textbooks under scrutiny here are those approved by the state of Texas for use between 1986 and 1992, five for the typical, year-long eighth grade course in pre-Civil War United States history, and five for the comparable ninth grade course in post-Civil War United States history. It is necessary first to understand the Texas adoption system. A State Textbook Committee compiles a list of texts from which school districts are required by law to make their choice; the state then provides the books free of charge. The system was enacted by progressive reformers early in this century who were concerned about corrupt purchasing practices at the local level as well as unequal access to newer materials for students throughout Texas.

At the outset, it is important to observe that the influence of the Texas procedure for approving textbooks extends far beyond the boundaries of the Lone Star State. While it is true that many local school districts all across the United States do choose their own titles by different methods, statewide adoption systems in Texas, Florida, and elsewhere exert profound pressures upon the national market.³ For example, Texas stands as one of the two largest markets for pre-collegiate educational publishers, who find that sales soar in other states once books are adopted there. Conversely, some national publishing companies have gone out of business after failing to place their products on the approved Texas list.⁴ Thus, in economic terms, the stakes are high; put simply, the Texas market exercises disproportionate influence upon the availability and pricing—not to mention quality—of textbooks throughout the entire United States. Moreover, of the ten United States history titles adopted in Texas and analyzed in this essay, five of the same ones are also approved for purchase in Florida between 1986 and 1992, and several are currently in use in the ten largest school districts in California, a limited-adoption state. Students outside Texas often come to American history a few years later than the eighth and ninth grades in their secondary curricula, but they frequently

use the same textbooks that are written for thirteen year-olds in that market.⁵

Given its proximity to the border, its large Mexican American population and its system of adoption hearings open to public participation, Texas might seem a likely candidate to approve books sensitive to Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Yet this turned out not to be the case, for reasons discussed below in the conclusions. In short, no vocal nor effective lobby has emerged to argue for a coherent and informed treatment of Mexico and its peoples. For example, in the official transcripts of three days of public adoption hearings held in Austin in July 1985, the words "Mexico," "Mexicans" and "Mexican Americans" never appear.⁶ Before attempting to explain why this happened, it is instructive to review the contents of the textbooks themselves. Full citations for each of the books appear at the end of this paper. The ten books will be referred to by their authors' names, since the titles (like the nearly universal red, white and blue covers!) are confusingly similar.

Each text and its accompanying materials (including photographs, charts, captions, maps, and annotations for teachers) was evaluated according to criteria used in similar studies: inclusiveness, accuracy, currency, balance, comprehensiveness, concreteness, and unity.⁷ However, to facilitate more substantive and issue-based historical comparisons, the findings are organized according to the four principal epochs covered by all of the textbooks. The first era stretches over several centuries from pre-Conquest times to the 1820s, which witnessed the end of Spanish imperial rule, the Latin American wars for independence and the United States articulation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. The next period focuses upon the 1830s and 1840s, featuring the Texas rebellion and the War of 1847. The third covers the decades from 1850 through 1920, with specific attention to the French intervention (1862-67), the Porfiriato (or authoritarian rule of Porfirio Díaz from 1876 to 1910), and the Mexican Revolution (which began in 1910). Finally, the fourth period extends from the 1920s down to the present and encompasses such wide-ranging topics as postwar United States-Mexican relations and Mexican Americans in the United States today.

Pre-Conquest America and Spanish Colonialism

The history of Mexico before the 1820s is treated by all texts in a relatively more extensive and objective manner than that of subsequent periods. Each team of authors devotes from one to three complete chapters to the Indian and Spanish empires in the New World. Perhaps because these distant events and processes appear to bear less directly on contemporary stereotypes, it is easier to grant them a degree of depth and

complexity. Even so, with the conspicuous exception of the Aztec, Maya and Inca, the diverse peoples south of the Rio Grande are overlooked. Moreover, there are few attempts to link preliminary descriptions of the great American civilizations with the major themes of later chapters. The big story still begins with the arrival of the Europeans. And, as is the case with many college textbooks as well, the focus shifts irrevocably to the north after 1607, once the British founded Jamestown.

To some extent, this is understandable, in that the books are not intended to be histories of the Western Hemisphere *per se*, and the authors face tremendous pressures to include all manner of topics and information.⁸ But still, there is an implied value judgment here: “real” history begins with a successful British presence in the New World, despite the fact that much of what became the United States was settled first by American Indians and later colonized by non-British Europeans. At worst, the Indian and Spanish prelude to British settlement is a disjointed, albeit colorful and interesting story. As one egregious example puts it: “The immense land masses as well as the tiny islands that the Spanish explorers had found were like gift boxes still unwrapped.” Or, as another introduction asserts: “Europeans first put them [Native Americans] in touch with the world.”⁹

Discussions of the Aztecs vary widely in quality and scope. Henry Graff characterizes them not as a nation or an empire, but as a “tribe” who succumbed “readily” to the Spanish. Montezuma does not even merit mention by name; rather, he appears as “the Aztec emperor [whose] hold on his people seemed to be slipping.”¹⁰ The other texts are less condescending in tone, although coverage of the Aztecs rarely moves beyond the basic story that Cortes defeated them and that they were exploited ruthlessly by the conquistadores and settlers who followed. Carol Berkin and Leonard Wood include a segment on the declining, though “still thriving” Aztec Empire, but focus most of their attention upon Indians living within the current boundaries of the United States. Their end-of-section questions ask students to detail the “fall of the Aztec and Inca Empires,” but offer little in the text to elicit a complete answer. The acceptable response in the teachers’ notes reads simply: “The Conquistadors defeated these empires and shipped their treasure to Spain.”¹¹ Aside from the problem of incomplete information, the implication here is that Spanish colonialism was somehow more brutal and unsavory than the British variety.

In a positive vein, the text by James Davidson and John Batchelor devotes a considerable amount of space to a description of Aztec society. Moreover, there is a full-page exercise on analyzing primary sources, in this case a wall painting from a Mayan temple. A later skill lesson teaches

students how to read a line graph which depicts the demographic catastrophe that contact with Europeans brought to the Indians of Middle America. A section on Bartolomé de las Casas shows that there was criticism even within the Spanish elite of the process of Indian conquest. Finally, this text includes a half-page side bar on Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, identified as “the most famous poet of New Spain.” There is a rather debatable annotation in the teachers’ edition that characterizes “Doña Marina” (that is, Malinche, Cortes’ native interpreter) as a person much admired today because she wanted to save her people from Aztec rule. Overall, however, the Davidson and Batchelor text does a very good job with the Conquest and early colonial period.¹²

In another noteworthy effort, Ernest May and Winthrop Jordan dedicate the first two chapters of their book to an extended discussion of several Native American cultures. Regarding Mexico, they underscore that Aztec civilization at its height was comparable to the great societies of Europe. Master architects and builders, the Aztecs developed an agriculturally-based economy that supported a sophisticated urban class structure. Furthermore, May and Jordan are the only authors who treat the initial victories of the Aztecs over Cortes. These authors avoid attributing the Indians’ eventual defeat to a folkloric, one-dimensional belief in the divinity of the Spaniards. Rather, they examine several factors, including the role of firepower, “faith in the cause of conversion” and “great daring and good luck.”¹³ In short, this textbook tries to demythologize the conquest of Mexico and, in the process, to teach high-school students to construct multi-causal explanations of historical events. Finally, the discussion of the Spanish Empire concludes by emphasizing the central role played by Native Americans in the formation of a truly Mexican culture. Indians, the authors write, “became part of Spanish life in the New World. Over the year, a new culture, part Indian and part Spanish, took root in the Americas.”¹⁴ In short, May and Jordan’s is the only text that overcomes the problem of omission and, at the same time, accords dignity and historical significance to pre-Columbian peoples.

Regrettably, neither those discussed above nor any of the other authors devote much attention to the later colonial period and eventual collapse of the mainland Spanish Empire. For the most part, they fail to make explicit the fact that the colony endured for over three hundred years (nearly twice as long as the life of the First British Empire!) and that the twilight of Spanish rule was a much different experience than its foundation. In this instance, the authors miss a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the historian’s preoccupation with change over time. There are more obvious errors as well. In a glaringly inaccurate map, Berkin and Wood show the Rio Grande as the northern border of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, which severely understates the extent of its territory.¹⁵

Regarding the wars for independence, the team of Leonard Wood, Ralph Gabriel and Edward Biller identifies Mexico as one of the first Spanish colonies to rebel, but provides only dates, with no discussion of events or personalities. Davidson and Batchelor's volume offers the most extensive coverage of the Mexican war for independence—three paragraphs—and even mentions by name the “hero priests” Hidalgo and Morelos. Yet the third and final paragraph reads as follows: “Mexicans finally won independence in 1821. A few years later, Mexican leaders wrote a constitution that made Mexico a republic.” Save for a fleeting reference to the lack of colonial assemblies in Latin America, there is no elaboration, no clear explanation of this complex political transformation.¹⁶ More importantly, there is no caution against attributing American definitions of “constitution” and “republic” to a country with a radically different socioeconomic structure which certainly served to circumscribe political options.

Aside from these examples, the Spanish American independence movements are referred to mainly in the context of the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine and of United States relations with European powers. A map of the Americas in 1823 in Joseph Conlin's first volume conveys the apparent *fait accompli* that all of the authors fail to explain in detail: its map forthrightly labels Central and South America as areas “protected” by the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁷

The Texas Rebellion and the War of 1847

None of the textbooks covers Mexico's war for independence with even half as much attention and care as that given to developments in Texas in the 1830s and 1840s. Here again, the value judgment is clear: this rebellion in northern Mexico is more significant than the downfall of two of the most extensive and persistent empires the hemisphere has ever known because citizens of the United States were involved.

In the Texas War, Anglo settlers at least are portrayed as having disobeyed Mexican laws that they had agreed to obey upon immigrating. This is the case in every book except for Graff's where, amazingly, Texans are described as “dutiful citizens of Mexico who adopted the Roman Catholic faith.”¹⁸ Several authors, however, do question the validity of Mexican laws once the government began to enforce them more strictly. The narrative by Daniel Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley states that Texas settlers were not free and “missed the Bill of Rights and all the guarantees of the U.S. Constitution, including especially the right to trial by jury.”¹⁹ Wood, Gabriel and Biller's volume contains section questions that are implicitly judgmental. For example, it asks: “What Mexican laws caused problems between Texans and Mexicans?”²⁰ It does not ask: “What

tensions existed...?” or “Why were there problems...?” The message that Mexico was at fault comes across loud and clear, especially since any Mexican perspective is virtually ignored.

Once the fighting began, Mexicans are portrayed as a ruthless and blood-thirsty people bent on subduing the “brave,” “inspired” and “out-numbered” Texans, according to Davidson and Batchelor. Moreover, the teachers’ annotation asks students to compare the Declaration of Independence of 1776 with the Texas one, but never solicits contrasts between the two. Mexico is depicted as the enemy not only of a group of underdog Texans but also of the entire United States. Stephen Austin’s “wise leadership” of “hard-working” colonists and the “heroic,” “furious,” “hand-to-hand” defense of the Alamo contrasts with the “slaughter” and “bloody” actions of the Mexicans.²¹ The textbook accounts are completely one-sided; none point out that the Alamo’s defenders were given the chance to surrender or that the Mexicans viewed them as traitors, for whom the traditional punishment was death throughout Spanish America. Instead, the rebellion is seen as an “us versus them” story, with the Mexicans being flatly identified as “them.”

Treatment of the War of 1847 is somewhat less one-dimensional. The American President, James Polk, is portrayed as an aggressive expansionist in the best—or worst—tradition of Manifest Destiny. According to Berkin and Wood, when Mexico turned down his offer to buy almost half of its territory, Polk “concluded that force would probably be needed to achieve his goals.”²² It was Polk who provoked the war, but Mexicans are characterized as welcoming the opportunity to try to win back Texas. Similarly, May and Jordan’s text states that the Mexicans were “anxious for war.”²³ Thus, Polk’s expansionism is glossed over by depicting Mexico as eager for a fight. Apart from one source reading in the Wood, Gabriel and Biller volume, there is almost no account of a Mexican point of view.²⁴

May and Jordan point out that there was opposition to the war with Mexico in the United States. The relevant chapter begins with a juxtaposition of Polk’s views with the antiwar arguments of Abraham Lincoln. While they do not provide readers with much direct evidence, these authors do encourage them to consider both sides of the argument, to put themselves in the place of Mexicans by judging the situation from their perspective.²⁵ Likewise, Berkin and Wood’s volume includes a teachers’ note that contains two quotations from political commentators in the United States in the 1840s. One is for the war, the other, against. These authors give instructions to teachers to explain that not all Americans favored the war.²⁶ An explicitly Mexican point of view, however, is not spelled out in any of the materials.

Thus, the image invoked from coverage of the War of 1847 is that of a hierarchy of nations, with the United States on top and Mexico below. The United States may have fought a dubious war, but it was superior to Mexico nevertheless; some treatments even insinuate that the United States had a right to half of its neighbor's territory. By not presenting a full and comprehensive discussion of the respective viewpoints regarding American acquisition of land, the textbooks implicitly endorse Manifest Destiny. In essence, this is affirmation by silence and, consequently, the image of Mexico suffers. Berkin and Wood's discussion never even refers to the areas in question as Mexico. Turning back to its treatment of the Spanish colonization of Western North America, this last text states that the region "was believed to contain great wealth...like Mexico and Peru."²⁷ Yet, before 1848, much of Western North America *was* Mexico.

From the French Intervention to the Mexican Revolution

Except for Conlin's, which completely ignores the subject, the other textbooks paint a sketchy but undifferentiated picture of the French Intervention and subsequent reign of Maximilian (1862-67). Apparently the only reason that Napoleon III chose to enter Mexico in the early 1860s was that he realized that the United States, preoccupied with the Civil War, was unable to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. Moreover, the only reasons that the French left Mexico after 1866 were that the American Civil War had ended and that more pressing concerns in Europe claimed France's attention.²⁸ For the most part this reflects the more specialized standard accounts by American scholars. No mention is ever made of the over 5,000 Mexicans who lost their lives fighting the French, nor of the pivotal figure of Benito Juárez, popularly regarded as the Abraham Lincoln of Mexico. In short, the textbooks imply that it was the Monroe Doctrine that eventually saved the country, not the Mexican soldiers who drove out an invading army.

While the long rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) merits little scrutiny, treatment of the Mexican Revolution is organized mostly around the problems that it posed for the United States, particularly for President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. For example, General Victoriano Huerta's murder of Francisco Madero, the constitutionally elected successor to Díaz, is discussed in the context of Wilson's refusal to recognize the new government, which represented a turning point in United States foreign policy. In general, the texts suggest that Wilson's efforts to encourage the overthrow of Huerta, which culminated in the United States invasion of the port city of Veracruz, demonstrated mere ineptitude on his part. The issue of whether or not Wilson had the authority to intervene thus remains obscured, while the Mexican side

of the story, once again, is never told. Berkin and Wood's book offers an assessment that is typically patronizing and unreflective with regard to Mexican concerns: Wilson "had tried, however clumsily, to act in what he saw as Mexico's best interest."²⁹

There is one Revolutionary personality who appears in all of the books. Pancho Villa virtually gallops across the pages, but he is rarely if ever judged in terms of his popularity or ability as a leader in the Revolution. Rather, Boorstin and Kelley's narrative labels him a "bandit general," while other accounts emphasize his violent nature and his hatred of the United States.³⁰ Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico is not linked to the American invasion of Veracruz. Again, Boorstin and Kelley's assessment of the failure of General Pershing to capture Villa does not give any credit to Villa; according to this text, Pershing withdrew because the "thunder of the great powers in Europe put [Villa] in a new perspective. The United States might soon be drawn into a global conflict."³¹ Thus, Villa and, by association, Mexico are again unimportant when compared to grander events in the Atlantic world. In the authors', and eventually the students', conceptions of international relations, Mexico sovereignty and the struggles of her people rank considerably below the United States and other powers.

The Recent Past

Coverage of the decades from the 1920s to the present poses problems distinct from those outlined above. Almost all of the textbooks now mention Mexicans and particularly Mexican Americans more frequently than before, but there is a notable lack of integration of their experiences into a wider historical context. At its worst, this represents the kind of tokenism observed in treating other minorities in the American past. Boorstin and Kelley's volume even goes so far as to lump Mexican Americans into a catch-all "minorities" chapter that includes blacks, women, Indians and the disabled!³²

Not surprisingly, the most extensively discussed topic is Mexican immigration to the United States; however, the current situation is emphasized almost exclusively. Only Lewis Todd and Merle Curti take note of the substantial wave of immigration northward from Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a sophisticated seven-photograph spread on immigration, this textbook includes two photographs of Latin Americans and encourages teachers and students to deal fully with the topic.³³ In contrast, the impression conveyed by others is that the only immigrants to the United States at the turn of this century came from Europe and, to a lesser extent, Asia. Moreover, few explicit comparisons are drawn between Mexicans and other ethnic groups. Graff does

point out that Mexican Americans are “the fastest-growing segment of American society,” but the text does not discuss the implications of this fact. Berkin and Wood’s volume states that Mexican immigrants “become citizens at a much lower rate” than other groups. According to this account, Mexicans either “continue to think of Mexico as ‘home’,” or “do not want to give up their Mexican citizenship.”³⁴

With the two exceptions of Graff and Conlin, all other textbooks cite the activities of César Chávez on behalf of migrant farm workers in the Southwest. Highlighted even more frequently than the farm workers, however, are the twin problems of poverty and housing in the larger Hispanic community. The image conveyed is one of constant struggle and difficulty. Except for the photograph in Berkin and Wood of a Works Progress Administration mural whose inspiration is credited to Diego Rivera and José Orozco, there is little attempt to highlight any positive contributions by Mexicans and Mexican Americans to the culture of the United States.³⁵ Interestingly, though, virtually every textbook makes the effort to mention or include a photograph of Mexican American “role models.” Along with Chávez, the individuals spotlighted include San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros, former New Mexico Governor Jerry Apodaca, and United States Representative Henry B. Gonzáles. However, their respective achievements are never detailed, nor are they integrated into the texts in any substantive way. In fact, individual Mexican Americans are distilled down to a monolithic entity; there is no distinction made, for example, between a Chávez and a Cisneros, between a “radical” “Chicano” perspective from California and a more “establishment” “Hispanic” one from South Texas.³⁶

If Mexican Americans do not figure meaningfully into the larger recent history of the United States, then neither does modern Mexico seem to matter much. The only reference to the post-Revolutionary government is a brief discussion in Boorstin and Kelley of Mexico’s oil industry and the problems that its nationalization posed for the United States in the 1930s. Indeed, Graff devotes only one sentence to either Mexico or Mexican Americans from the time of World War II to the present.³⁷ If Mexico is worth mentioning at all, then, it is so only in relation to American interests. Of course, the authors are not supposed to be writing histories of Mexico, and they operate under ever increasing space restraints. Still, their approach reinforces in students’ minds the view that there is only one side to a foreign policy dispute—that of the United States—and that countries other than ours lack a significant past of their own. In an era supposedly attuned to international concerns American ethnocentrism pervades these texts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At best, the ten United States history textbooks discussed above present mixed images of Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Two, by May and Jordan and by Davidson and Batchelor, stand out for their relatively sophisticated approach to pre-Conquest and colonial Spanish America, while another, by Graff, offers a notably deficient view of distant past that apparently reflects the overall quality of this book.³⁸ In contrast, after a rather unremarkable introduction in the first half of the Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich set, the second volume by Todd and Curti provides by far the most integrated assessment of modern Mexican immigration to the United States. The larger point is that no one textbook or series sustains its occasionally successful treatment across time. In particular, all are weak in their coverage of pertinent events and issues for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; for these years material on Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans is either nonexistent and incorrect, or idiosyncratic and inconsistent. The most obvious shortcomings involve simple omission, closely followed by a lack of unity and consistency in coverage. Mexican and Mexican American perspectives are almost never elaborated, even for key events in the histories of both Mexico and the United States, such as the War of 1847. Rather, things Mexican are implicitly and even explicitly characterized as problems for the United States.

Furthermore, it is striking how persistent are some of the same racial and sexual stereotypes regarding Mexicans and Mexican Americans that first emerged in American popular culture during the nineteenth century. Robert Johanssen's *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* should be required reading for those involved in the production of United States history textbooks, for it shows how white Protestant Americans have long used Mexico as a reference point to sharpen definitions of themselves.³⁹ Likewise, there are other historiographical resources available to those who need information on specific topics.⁴⁰ Moreover, a host of recent monographs forms a readily accessible basis for improving the quality of treatment, including David Montejano's *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, which won the prestigious Frederick Jackson Turner Award of the Organization of American Historians.⁴¹ Yet, instead of familiarizing themselves with this newer literature, the authors and their editors seem content merely to update old versions of existing texts, by adding a few disjointed and incongruous sentences on "minority concerns" or by inserting isolated, unanalyzed photographs of not always representative Mexican Americans. Again, these additions are rarely integrated well into the standing narratives.

Admittedly, the sense that Mexican and Mexican American history has little to contribute toward understanding the history of the United States is hardly confined to secondary-school textbooks. Not long ago, John Garraty, author of a, if not still *the*, best-selling university text for United States survey courses, published a list of "101 Things Every College Graduate Should Know about American History."⁴² Nothing pertaining to Mexico was included. At the very least, such myopia misses the opportunity to convey the ambiguities and complexities of our past, not to mention the uniqueness of the Anglo-American experience. For example, how better to make the point that political vocabularies are full of false cognates than to compare the efforts of early nineteenth-century Americans and Mexicans to forge "constitutional," "republican" and "democratic" governments? How better to test assumptions regarding upward mobility on the American frontier, or individual participation in the United States political process than by examining the experiences of generations of Mexican Americans in the Southwest? How better to comprehend concepts like "Manifest Destiny" than by analyzing their repercussions from another, that is, external perspective? If American students are ever going to acquire the global outlook now called for by educational and civic leaders, there needs to be explicit and sustained study of the decades of complex interaction between the United States and Mexico. Only those with an historically informed view of the dynamics of this relationship will be able to develop effective policies regarding immigration, drug trafficking, trade deficits, debt repayment and the border economy.

In fairness to the textbook writers, it must be said that they share responsibility for inadequate treatment of Mexico and its peoples with publishers, classroom educators and field experts, and the public at large. Even Mexican Americans themselves have been too preoccupied with other "bread-and-butter" issues to lobby for positive and informed treatment in textbooks.⁴³ In some sense, the problem stems from the practice of statewide adoption of textbooks, such as occurs in Texas. In response to lobbying by interest-group critics, publishers "bland out" their products to exclude the controversial. Their attempts to avoid offending anyone take two forms: reaction to public protests and preemptive self-censorship by in-house editors. In the first case, negative lobbying (against specific books that contain objectionable material) has proved quite effective. But positive lobbying (in favor of certain texts that include, for example, acceptable coverage of women and minorities) is a potentially fruitful tactic, too.⁴⁴ As long as the attention of publishing executives remains focused on the bottom line, *they* are not likely to take the initiative to improve the quality of American history textbooks. But they will be quick to respond to pressures that come from elsewhere.

Classroom teachers are included on the advisory board of the Texas State Textbook Committee and do have some eventual input into local decisions on which approved textbooks to purchase; however, they are not part of the public debate regarding adoption. This is unfortunate, since current teachers are best equipped to explain how and what our students learn. Moreover, they also must deal with the consequences of adoption decisions for the following half decade or more.

Until textbooks are improved teachers can request supplementary materials on topics relating to Mexico and its peoples. An excellent example of this sort of teaching aid is the newly revised *Latin America Culture Studies: Information and Materials for Teaching about Latin America* from the Institute for Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.⁴⁵ Curricular specialists and subject experts should also redesign primary and secondary curricula so that students are systematically rather than haphazardly exposed to Mexican and Mexican American themes at several points in their careers. Above all, instruction ought to emphasize the positive, dynamic aspects of the past and present of Mexico and its peoples. Steps in this direction are currently being taken by the Task Force on Mexico in the K-12 Curriculum, a creation of the Bilateral Commission on the Future of United States - Mexican Relations.⁴⁶ Before the end of 1990, the Task Force intends to produce a set of "Key Understandings" and "Guidelines" for their achievements. As of this writing, preliminary versions of these materials are under review by educators in Mexico. Hopefully, these tools will help to diffuse recurrent complaints in the Mexican press of the "enormous ignorance that prevails in the United States with respect to Mexico."⁴⁷

Finally, it is clear that parents and the general public bear ultimate responsibility for what is taught in our schools and how it is taught. Textbook adoption procedures take this into account but the level of participation by concerned citizens remains surprisingly low. Thus, the extent to which the activities of a vocal few determine what the many will read and learn is sobering. For example, during the last round of adoption hearings for United States history textbooks in Texas, one witness, who identified herself as a "domestic engineer," objected to what she perceived as an excessively feminist perspective in one of the volumes under consideration. This speaker admitted that it was the only one of twenty-five competing titles that she had examined, and that its graphics had been responsible for first capturing her attention. The same book failed to win a spot on the approved list. While other factors may have been at work, the official transcripts suggest that such narrowly focused testimony contributed heavily to the defeat of the textbook. During the same hearings, another witness did lament the "inadequate treatment of Spanish-speak-

ing peoples" in all of the textbooks. While she went on to discuss coverage of Puerto Ricans, neither she nor anyone else ever mentioned the words "Mexico," "Mexican," and "Mexican American."⁴⁸ When the next round of adoptions takes place in 1992, surely we can all take heed of the following: "Whatever our background we need to speak up when we see the need to educate the ignorant and dispel the stereotypes. We need to speak out because it is our history, by which I mean American history. Our stories are yours. America and its self-image cannot be complete with us."⁴⁹

Textbooks Analyzed in this Study Approved for Use in Texas, 1986-1992

- Berkin, Carol and Leonard Wood. *Land of Promise: A History of the United States to 1877*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1986.
- Berkin, Carol and Leonard Wood. *Land of Promise: A History of the United States from 1865*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1986.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. and Brooks Mather Kelley. *A History of the United States since 1861*. Lexington, MA: Ginn and Co., 1986.
- Conlin, Joseph R. *Our Land, Our Time*. San Diego, Coronado Publishers, 1986.
- Davidson, James West and John E. Batchelor. *A History of the Republic: The United States to 1877*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.
- Graff, Henry F. *America: The Glorious Republic: Beginnings to 1877*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.
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- May, Ernest R. and Winthrop D. Jordan. *The American People: A History to 1877*. McDougal, Littell and Co., 1986.
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Notes

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PROFMEX-ANUIES Meeting in Mexico City, which coincided with the birth of my son in April 1988. The proceedings of that conference will be published in Mexico as Paul B. Ganster, ed., *United States - Mexican Reciprocal Images and the Bilateral Relationship*, (México, D.F., ANUIES). Several individuals in the educational bureaucracies of Texas, Florida and California also answered written and telephone requests for information on textbook adoption procedures. All but one of the publishers graciously supplied complimentary copies of the textbooks. Alida Metcalf, Char Miller and Richard Salvucci gave helpful critiques of the penultimate version of this article.

1. Examples of recent criticism include the report of the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, *Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools* (New York, 1988); Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr., *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?: A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature* (New York, 1987); Gilbert T. Sewall, *American History Textbooks: An Assessment of Quality* (New York, 1987); Paul Gagnon, "Why Study History?," *The Atlantic* 262 (November 1988), 43-66; and also the disputed but still influential Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1979).

2. Gerald Michael Greenfield, "Mexico in U.S. Primary and Secondary Schools," *Agenda, Papers, Background, Documents*, Bilateral Commission on the future of United States - Mexican Relations Workshop on Culture and Communications (2 vols.), October 1987, pp. 2, 9-11. Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*, p. 8, points out that the only history studies by most secondary students in the United States is a one-year survey of American history, with world history now reduced to the status of an elective or neglected altogether. The Bradley Commission, *Building a History Curriculum*, p. 1, found that fifteen percent of U.S. students do not take any American history in high school, and at least fifty percent do not study either World history or Western civilization.

3. See the Texas Education Agency, *Current - Adoption Textbooks, 1986-87* (Austin, 1986). As the publication dates of the 1986-92 textbooks indicate, publishers anticipate the adoption cycle by preparing new editions of existing books as well as completely new products. Sometimes only one volume of a publisher's two-book set is approved. Certain "classics" appear to have an edge; one version or another of Harcourt's Todd and Curti, *The American Nation* (vol. 2), has been on the list since 1962. Florida has a less rigid but comparable system, whereby at least half of allocated funds must be spent on state-adopted books; Florida Department of Education, *Catalogue of State Adopted Instructional Materials, 1986-87* (Tallahassee, 1986).

4. Peter Applebome, "In Texas, Book Salesman's Life is Mostly a Road Show," *The New York Times*, *Education Life* (Section 12, Supplement), August 2, 1987, pp. 26-27; Mike Bowler, "Textbook Publishers Try to Please All, But First They Woo the Heart of Texas," *The Reading Teacher*, 31 (February 1978), 514-18; and Eugene W. Jones et al., *Practicing Texas Politics* 6th ed. (Boston, 1986), p. 24; "California Controversy," *Social Studies Review*, 1 (Spring 1989), 4, for data on the influence of the four largest adoption states (California, Texas, Florida, North Carolina), which control more than twenty-five percent of the national market.

5. As of this writing, United States history textbooks for secondary students are still chosen by individual districts in California. A questionnaire was sent to the ten largest school districts in California asking which textbooks were in use, but an incomplete response yielded impressionistic rather than comprehensive evidence.

6. "Transcript of Proceedings before the Commissioner of Education and the State Textbook Committee," Austin, July 15-17, 1985. One witness, Elizabeth Judge of Broader Perspectives, Inc., did discuss the stereotyping of "Hispanics," but devoted most of her specific comments to Puerto Ricans (p. 88).

7. For the criteria, see Michael B. Kane, *Minorities in Textbooks: A Study of their Treatment in Social Studies Texts* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 5-6; and a very useful reference provided by Donald N. Clark, The Asia Society, *Asia in American Textbooks* (New York, 1976), pp. 31-33. There appears to be little difference in quality between treatment in the texts alone and treatment in the texts combined with accompanying materials.

8. The first volume of Graff has one chapter on native Americans, while May and Jordan devotes three full chapters to the subject. Also see Graff, I, pp. 35-39, 60; Davidson and Batchelor, pp. 32-47, 61-65, 76-83; Wood et al., pp. 3-24, 50; May and Jordan, p. 70; Berkin and Wood, I, pp. 13-21, 55.

At the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago on December 29, 1986, James Axtell delivered a piquant analysis of college level American history textbooks that was subsequently published as "Europeans, Indians, and the Age of Discovery in American History Textbooks," *American Historical Review*, 92 (June 1986), 621-632. Unfortunately, the insightful commentaries of Douglas Greenberg and Michael Scardaville from that same session did not find their way into print. It is striking the extent to which uninformed and ethnocentric attitudes regarding the history of pre- and non-British America persist in textbooks at all educational levels.

9. Graff, I, p. 45; Boorstin and Kelley, p. 2

10. Graff, I, pp. 46-47.

11. Berkin and Wood, I, pp. 13, 23. On page 26, there is a full-page photograph of a gold mask captioned, "Mixtec gold from Monte Alban site, Oaxaca, Mexico." However, the Mixtecs are never mentioned in the text of the chapter, leaving readers to wonder about their relationship to the Aztecs. This is but one example of how publishers fail to integrate visual material into the narrative.

12. Davidson and Batchelor, pp. 41-45, 79, 82. The annotation on Doña Marina on p. 62 is labelled "Citizenship," which is one of the "Essential Elements" of instruction mandated by the Texas Education Agency. Publishers often release special editions for Texas, which highlight these particular requirements.

13. May and Jordan, pp. 14-41.

14. May and Jordan, p. 44.

15. Berkin and Wood, I, p. 34.

16. Wood et al., p. 268; Davidson and Batchelor, p. 281.

17. May and Jordan, p. 388; Graff, I, pp. 270-71; Conlin, I (the first half of this set is not on the current adoption list, but was examined anyway), pp. 318-20, with map on p. 318. The theme of "U.S. protection" is followed in later graphics as well. For example, see Boorstin and Kelley, p. 195, for a half-page map of the Caribbean and Central America entitled, "Relations with Our Southern Neighbors, 1898 - 1933." It divides countries into categories of "U.S. Possession," "U.S. Military Intervention," and "U.S. Financial Supervision," with Mexico placed in the second category.

18. Graff, I, p. 366.

19. Boorstin and Kelley, p. 21-22.

20. Wood et al., p. 391.

21. Davidson and Batchelor, pp. 315-19.

22. Berkin and Wood, I, p. 341.

23. May and Jordan, p. 462.

24. Wood et al., pp. 632-34; this excellent excerpt is adapted from *Viva la Raza* by Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez.

25. May and Jordan, pp. 454, 462-64; there are no books on Texas or the War with Mexico listed in the relevant chapter bibliography on T-71.

26. Berkin and Wood, I, p. T62.

27. Berkin and Wood, I, p. 35.
28. Todd and Curti, II, p. 233; Graff, II, p. 130; Berkin and Wood, II, p. 125; Boorstin and Kelley, pp. 162-63.
29. Berkin and Wood, II, p. 170.
30. Boorstin and Kelley, p. 196; Berkin and Wood, II, p. 169. In Graff, the only photograph that accompanies a two-page discussion of the Mexican Revolution is one of General Pershing and his troops on the hunt for Villa: Graff, II, p. 179.
31. Boorstin and Kelley, p. 197.
32. The tone is reminiscent of the "we were there, too" genre of some of the earliest scholarship in American women's history, such as the book by Barbara M. Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York, 1977). Also, see Boorstin and Kelley, pp. 466-69, part of Chapter 22, "A New World of Competition."
33. Todd and Curti, pp. 128-29, 483. The two photographs are captioned as follows: "Every year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants become American citizens. Recently, most have come from Latin America and Asia." The image conveyed here is a positive one, as Latin Americans are put on equal footing with the immigrants from Europe that occupy most of the space in other texts.
34. Graff, II, p. 420; Berkin and Wood, II, p. 381.
35. Boorstin and Kelley, pp. 466-69; Graff, II, p. 420; Berkin and Wood, II, pp. 380-81, 530-32. The photograph of the mural, found in a California post office, accompanies a discussion of the New Deal; Berkin and Wood, II, p. 259.
36. For a good example of the radical Chicano perspective, see Rodolfo Acuña, "Freedom in a Cage: The Subjugation of the Chicano in the United States," in *Reinterpretation of American History and Culture* (Washington, DC, 1973), pp. 113-37.
37. Graff, II, p. 420, for the unelaborated comment that Mexican Americans are "the fastest-growing segment of American society."
38. The Center for the Teaching of History at Pan American University runs a Textbook Advisory Service which issued overall reports on the ten titles analyzed in this essay. Both volumes of Graff ranked at the bottom, while May and Jordan, Davidson and Batchelor, and Todd and Curti received relatively favorable reviews. Interestingly, both volumes by Berkin and Wood were the most highly rated. Indeed, they are excellent in many respects, despite the shortcomings pointed out here in their treatment of Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Hopefully, these problems will be rectified in a future edition.
39. Robert W. Johanssen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York, 1985); also see Philip Anthony Hernández, "The Other North Americans: The American Image of Mexico and Mexicans, 1550-1850," Ph D. diss., The University of California at Berkeley, 1974.
40. Albert Camarillo, ed., *Latinos in the United States: A Historical Bibliography* (Santa Barbara, 1986); Matt Meier, comp. *Bibliography of Mexican American History* (Westport, 1984); as well as reviews and articles cited in the bibliography, especially those by Ruiz, Sierra, and Poyo and Hinojosa.
41. David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, 1987).
42. John A. Garraty, "101 Things Every College Graduate Should Know about American History," *The Boston Sunday Globe*, February 15, 1987, Section B, pp. 43-46.
43. See Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *"Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (Austin, 1987) and Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven, 1989).

44. For example, see the favorable comments on certain textbooks by the People for the American Way in "Transcripts of Proceedings before the Commissioner of Education and the State Textbook Committee," Austin, July 15-17, 1985, especially pp. 30, 34.

45. Gloria Contreras, ed., *Latin American Culture Studies: Information and Materials for Teaching about Latin America* (Austin, 1989), which supercedes the 1981 edition edited by Edward Glab.

46. Established in the spring of 1989, the Task Force on Mexico in the K-12 Curriculum is a group of some one dozen academic and educational specialists from both Mexico and the United States. Contact persons are Elsie Begler, Director, International Studies Education Project of San Diego (ISTEP), San Diego State University and Peter W. Smith, Director, Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, University of California at San Diego.

47. "Nos quejamos con justicia de la enorme ignorancia prevaleciente en Estados Unidos respecto a México": Gabriel Székely, "USAMEX: El avance de la integración," *Nexos*, 144 (December 1989), 44.

48. Testimony of Jennifer Amo, pp. 12-21; and of Elizabeth Judge from Broader Perspectives, Inc. (which Judge describes as a group working towards "a bias-free society"), pp. 88-93, both in "Transcripts of Proceedings," Austin, July 15-17, 1985.

49. René Abelardo González, "Hispanic History is U.S. History, Too," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 8, 1990.

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