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Political Agendas and Education: Textbook and Geographical Impacts

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Political Agendas and Education: Textbook and Geographical Impacts

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Abstract

This research project analyzed high school United States history curriculum by examining textbooks through a political lens. It questioned who makes curriculum decisions, what the goals of these policy-makers are, and what the implications of an agenda-driven curriculum are. Three textbooks were used and chosen from politically relevant states—California, Texas, and Florida. In addition to being typically “Blue,” “Red,” and “Swing” states, these states are also the three most populous states in the country, respectively. This project studied how students of American public schools learn about the history of their country through a qualitative content analysis, particularly an approach called “grounded theory,” which means allowing the codes and categories to derive from the data itself. From there, a process of coding was performed and then codes were organized into categories and subcategories. Following that was the determination patterns or other relationships present in the data. The simplest analysis comes from counting, focusing on words, themes (strings of words), concepts (theoretical ideas), and semantics (the strength of the words in regards to the overall tone of the sentence or paragraph it is located in). I will be doing frequency distributions of these elements throughout the text, as well as using them as a means of coding the texts. The research focused not just on the words on the page, but also on interpreting the presentation and any implicit messages present in the texts.

Political Agendas and Education: Textbook and Geographical Impacts

Introduction

Background

High school is a period in which students mature, but they also take many things for granted. I personally took home-cooked meals, access to my parents' assistance on homework, and the presence of my dog and her unconditional love for granted; these were some things I missed just three days into college. As applied to my schooling, I also took the content in my textbooks for granted. The textbooks served as sources for the foundational material we learned in our classes; what was presented in the book had to be right. The book also had to meet the standards set by the state—standards that are heavily influenced by the states' politicians through the legislative process. This led me to question whether or not the textbooks students use end up promoting specific agendas that align with those of the politicians who legislate the standards.

While at college, I also came to learn that I had taken my social studies education as a whole for granted. Throughout the K-12 education system, students often utilize one big textbook per class, filled with almost all the information they'll need to study and succeed in that class. In social studies, particularly in history, these textbooks get more detailed and address more serious issues and facts as students grow older. Students typically accept that the information in the book is factual, but do not think about how the presentation of this content affects how they interpret history. That is, students do not always read a textbook through a critical lens. One prime example of this is Christopher Columbus and other explorers, who many textbooks portray as heroic for their “discovery” of America. Many textbooks gloss over or outright eliminate reference to what happened to the native peoples—slavery and death. In my high school, my teachers made a point to open our eyes to the parts of history that get glossed over in favor of the “hero narrative.” Upon entering college, I discovered that my experience with learning history this way was not typical and that many of my peers only heard the “hero narrative” outlined in their approved state standards-aligned textbooks.

While this story is personal, it is aimed at illustrating broader, more national stories about how local context can and does determine what students learn in the history classroom. In Missouri, a former state that had slavery but did not secede and join the Confederacy, a state representative called the federal Freedom of Choice Act the “most egregious power grab since the ‘War of Northern Aggression’” (Trekkel, 2009). People like this representative make educational decisions for all the students in their respective states, and so the language they use has the power to shape not just the educational experience of students, but the political leanings of students who turn into voting adults.

This is not to say that the politicians legislate standards to include blatant untruths—no student will read and believe a textbook that claims General Ulysses Grant surrendered to General Robert Lee to end the Civil War. Facts are facts. They cannot change. Rather, the context in which the textbooks present the facts change. The surrounding context can therefore influence how students read history, and how they come to perceive certain political events.

One War, Three Names

My passion and choice to study the Civil War stemmed from multiple sources. On a personal level, I have family that could be impacted by politicized standards and textbooks. I have two young nephews in Georgia. When they study United States History, they will learn about “The War of Northern Aggression” or the less politically charged “The War Between the States,” even if their textbook explicitly says “Civil War.” The adults influencing students’ education will utilize specific terminology to perpetuate a specific idea about the war. Furthermore, in my academic career, I found studying war eras to be the most fascinating, and the Civil War always struck me. It tore the country apart physically and interpersonally, and the course of this war changed the course of American history.

As I grew older, I followed the stories about controversial textbooks. The Civil War was an event that received a great deal of attention in the press before because of its portrayal in textbooks, and continues to do so. In researching these stories about textbooks, stories about how some states’ standards are written in more politically motivated ways came to light. The state named most often was Texas; but southern states in general received a lot of media attention in this area. For example, Oklahoma Representative Daniel Fisher proposed legislation that would cut funding to the course Advanced Placement U.S. History until the curriculum was rewritten to include and exclude documents specified in his bill. These documents include the Ten Commandments, two sermons, and the exclusion of any documents from the Democratic Party since the 1970s. Indiana, a northern but conservative state, has recently adopted a similar legislation (Klein, 2015). In another northern state, Colorado, students and teachers protested a curriculum review that emphasized a more “patriotic” view of the United States, the benefits of the free market system, and respect for authority, while discouraging use of materials that promote civil disorder or disobedience (Paul, 2014). All three of these stories happened within the past year.

In each of these cases, the proposed changes came from a rewriting of standards and curriculum. It got me thinking about whether or not states beyond this region had similar standards but only the very political Texas was receiving attention for it. Were other political states, like California and Florida, doing the same thing but not receiving attention for it? Digging into this topic helped me to discover the many different ways that textbooks and the information presented in them has a political foundation. But for me, it always come back to the Civil War.

What This Means

Determining why the Civil War is such a controversial subject was a process in and of itself. First, I needed to learn that history went beyond facts. History is not only names, dates, places, and other facts. History is interpretation of those facts. The break between the northern and southern states came about due to multiple factors, and history is the study of each of those factors and determining what happened and how. The process of learning that occurred throughout my study of history since high school, where I was first presented with the story of Columbus as not a “hero-narrative.” From then on, my high school teachers and college professors have taught me how to analyze history, how different interpretations of the facts can change how people look at events.

For Politicians: Although politicians work outside the realm of teachers and students, they make the decisions through the legislative process, influencing the content in all subject areas in the

realm of education. Politicians, especially at the state level, strongly influence the content teachers teach and students learn in school. These politicians, at state and local levels, often have their own political agendas which get inserted into educational standards. Once standards are written from biased viewpoint, textbook companies must publish books that meet these standards or risk the state not purchasing their books. This phenomenon causes the state versions of the same textbook to appear, as the corporations edited the content to match each state's standards. States will adopt those books and students will use them as the core source of factual knowledge, not realizing these books were made to fit an agenda. Students accept agenda-laden facts that perpetuate one viewpoint, that of majority politicians' political party. The textbook then influences their developing political identities to match that of the majority party, theoretically influencing them to vote for that party. Once the party controls local or state government, the cycle continues.

For Educators: Standards are set as a baseline for students to meet. But this can translate into a checklist of topics that teachers must cover in order for their students to pass the tests required of them. In many states, the absence of standardized social studies tests grants the teachers more freedom in planning their lessons and units as their students will not specifically get evaluated on the content. The students must complete the courses as part of a graduation standard or must pass district-wide exams, but not at the state level. The standards set at state level still apply, and some districts may adopt even more. The student-teacher protest in Colorado—the one protesting the “patriotic” curriculum-- resulted from a change in curriculum at a local level rather than state level. But the point is the same. We should question whether agenda-laden curriculum exists as a means to influence future voting patterns.

Some educators may embrace the ideology espoused by the book and feel comfortable teaching from the book because they fully support the underlying agendas. Teachers may go even further. Their textbook chapter may read “Civil War” but their teacher might use the term “War of Northern Aggression” in lecture. Teachers may find themselves in a predicament if their ideas clash with the standards, because the law requires them to teach their students the standards written. The students may fail and by extension, so does the school. Even if the teacher wants to present multiple viewpoints, standards might dictate that certain ideas not be taught. In Colorado, the new curriculum not only promoted a “more patriotic” view of the United States, but also discouraged the study of civil disobedience. A great many changes in American history came about as a result of civil disobedience, changes that teachers will either have to skip or teach under a specified context. Textbooks serve as a source of foundational knowledge, but teachers provide further context to scaffold student understanding about the material. If the teacher agrees with the politicians' agendas, they will set up a context further affirming a singular viewpoint on an event. But if a teacher doesn't agree with the contextual way the curriculum is being presented in a textbook, they could find themselves being evaluated as ineffective in meeting the standards.

Statement of Purpose

This research project combined three common areas of social studies content—history, political science (also called civics), and geography. Students taking classes in these three areas will learn the content from a textbook they're assigned and from the content standards the state decided the students needed to understand. But the standards and curriculum are determined

outside of the classroom, by politicians disconnected from the world of education and who haven't taken a high school history course in years.

This research looked for politically laden language in regional textbooks. . It questioned who makes these decisions, what the goals of these policy-makers are, and what the implications of a politically driven curriculum are. Answering these questions came in the form of a qualitative content analysis focused primarily on the study of the Civil War.

This research scrutinized the major and sometimes singular source used to educate students of history as future adult citizens who have a political voice in our country. How they learn about the history of the United States and what appears in their textbooks or their standards will affect the formation of their political identities. This project would also help educators, particularly in the social studies; understand how students from various parts of the country are learning about history. It will enlighten political scientists who study partisan politics and how political opinions form, as education, especially public education, is how a country creates its citizens. Furthermore, political scientists who study connections between religion and politics can analyze a manifestation of that utilizing this study. This project helps to develop ideas of how local and regional politics factor into educating the youth of that area.

Literature Review

This research examines a specific event, the Civil War, and the politicization of it in textbooks based on state standards. As such, a majority of the literature used related to high school history standards, textbook controversies, and studies by other researchers using a similar methodology as me, but not studying the same topic of controversy. Using studies in a literature review that are similar to one's own methodology but not ones topic is known as methodological review (University, 2016). The literature mostly surrounds the three focus states of Texas, California, and Florida. But as mentioned above, others have occurred in different states, and those were addressed and analyzed as well.

Model Studies

There have been many research studies done on textbook content, but there are still many open gaps for new information. My study will be done similarly to Mitchell's (2013) study, "The color line and Georgia history textbooks: A content analysis" which is about how Georgia textbooks present race and issues pertaining to race. She uses a mixed qualitative and quantitative content analysis method to examine racial biases in textbooks used by Georgia schools. While this study is from a sociological standpoint, the manner in which it is conducted and the usage of one of the same type of texts proved useful in the beginning of my research. In a study called, "Looking at history: A review of major U.S. history textbooks" done by O.L. Davis (1986), researchers evaluated history textbooks. Using eight different criteria to determine if the book would be an effective teaching tool. The content analysis showed that textbooks coverage of topics really only reach surface level with occasional dips into more thought-provoking material. The study concludes that the textbooks analyzed are arbitrarily good, but overly general with the main flaws being a lack of content specificity and how the "readability" of the textbooks taking away some of their depth. However, the study also discusses the selection of specific textbooks used in great length with more details about their positive and negative attributes. This study helped in shaping my own specific textbook

selection process. Ideally textbooks would improve in terms of specific coverage of content over time as students get older, but this study shows that history students are unlikely to ever encounter deep information; however that works to the benefit of trying to understand if a bias is present (Davis et al, 1986). Vanhulle's (2009) study, "The path of history: Narrative analysis of history textbooks – a case study of Belgian history textbooks (1945–2004)" does not look at American history, but it does provide a different way of analyzing textbooks through a narrative lens. Vanhulle discovers how different narrative types convey different ideas about historical events. This means that how the *story* of history is presented matters. This research provides me with a narrative context that some of the research content could fit into, and an idea of how the writers of the text want the information relayed to students (Vanhulle, 2009). Much of this research covers history textbooks in a more general format, so it exemplified how to conduct similar research rather than providing context as to how and what other researchers have covered in the past. These studies became models for how I would conduct my qualitative content analysis

Controversies in the Focus States

My study drew influence heavily from news stories about politics in education. Politicians influence the curriculum decisions that affect what textbook companies publish in their textbooks. This study specifically, the use of newspaper articles as the primary source for literature establishes the critical distance needed in a study such as this. This critical distance is the temporal space between the historical event and the present social context it is being studied. Utilizing current news sources establishes that the study examines how the Civil War is studied and taught today using present socio-political contexts, rather than those of the past. This is especially pertinent in studying the Civil War because it has been a rather contentious subject throughout time.

Texas

In 2015 an African American student posted a picture of their World History textbook. The image showed a map of slave migration with a caption that read "The Atlantic Slave Trade between the 1500s and 1800s brought millions of workers from Africa to the southern United States to *work* on plantations. The student wrote "We was real hard workers wasn't we" in response to the language. The publishing company, McGraw-Hill has since apologized and promised to correct the textbook. Kathy Miller, the president of the advocacy group Texas Freedom Network, remarked that it "it's no accident that this happened in Texas" (Collier, 2015).

Texas usually receives the brunt of criticism relating to textbook content, but it isn't surprising considering how politicized textbook content can be. In 2010, New York Times reporter, James McKinley Jr. reported on a Texas Board of Education vote that changed the standards of the content in the curriculum for history, economics, and sociology, a change that would impact the education of every high school student in Texas. In the area of history, the proposed standards diminish the idea that the Founding Fathers wanted a secular government and instead focused on the influence of Christian principles on the Fathers. It also included a new focus on the conservative resurgence. (McKinley, 2010. Once approved, the standards were written into the content of textbooks that would be up for adoption by schools throughout Texas. The conservative members of the board described their actions as necessary countermeasures to

the liberal biases in the classroom. (The Associated Press, 2014). This indicates that the adoption of this visibly agenda-laden content is clearly taking place. Further examples of agenda-driven legislation leaking into Texas classroom come from the Texas State board of Education member Pat Hardy (R) who emphasized that the causes of the Civil War were “sectionalism, states’ rights, and slavery.” The order is specific and politically important, as Hardy said that slavery is a “side issue” to the more important “states’ rights.” The sovereignty of “states’ rights” is a fundamental issue for the Republican Party. Hardy’s political assertion runs counter to that of Civil War historians who note that the states’ rights issue most important to the South was their ability to buy and sell enslaved people. The Texas standards require students to read Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ inaugural speech- which does not mention slavery- but not his vice president’s, which does. Furthermore, many of the states listed slavery in their declarations of secession. As a result, textbook publishers that adapt their books to fit state standards, like McGraw-Hill, must then edit their books to fit such a political purpose such as this and then find themselves apologizing when these political-agenda laden “facts” come under public scrutiny. (Brown, 2015).

California

California is often seen as the antithesis to Texas, especially regarding politics and education. Many see California as a place where the liberal bias those Texas board members spoke of exists fully. Even the state sees itself in that way. Following the approval of the new Texas standards and textbooks, a California state senator proposed a bill that would require the California Board of Education to look over approved textbooks to insure that none of the content that was approved for the Texas books would appear in their books (Hindery, 2010). Despite California’s insistence that it’s the opposite of Texas, the state practices similar political influence of textbook curriculum. In 2014 Assemblyman Chris Holden wanted to “*pressure* the state Board of Education to add the election of Barack Obama to the public school curriculum” (The Times Editorial Board, 2014). While this is not a requirement to include it, the legislature clearly wanted to influence the content included.

Another example from the state includes California Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation urging textbooks published in the future to include a section discussing the deportations of Mexicans in the 1930s to demonstrate the state’s willingness to acknowledge the mistreatment of a majority-minority population within the state. While this legislation exemplifies both a political motivation (improving race/ethnic relations with a large voting constituency) and just how specific politicians can be when dictating the content in textbooks. However, similar to the previously mentioned legislation the act only *encourages* publishing companies to insert this, rather than require it (McGreevy & Grad, 2015). While this may seem like a move in the right (or LEFT, pun intended) direction, California, like Texas, is not immune to spinning the language in a way that makes historical atrocities more palatable for discussion. This is event in an update to the California History/Social Science Framework made in 2016 which added information about “comfort women” to the 10th grade World History classes. “Comfort women” were women (often from Korea) coerced into sexual slavery for the Japanese imperial army. It was only about a month prior that the nations themselves reached an agreement about Japanese admittance and reparations for the actions of the 1940s. California has large populations descended from both countries. The Koreans are glad this issue is being brought to light, while the Japanese feel it’s unfairly portraying their home country. The article mentions that many racial groups have fought with the California government about their portrayal in

World History books as well (Kim, 2016). The California state government drives curriculum and content change by strongly urging the school districts to adopt their proposals, but does not usually explicitly compel them to do so. It's clear though, that there is a politically driven struggle to shape the history that students in an area learn and that agenda-laden curriculum is most influenced by the agenda of those in power.

Florida

Florida is the third most populous state behind California and Texas. It is a state at the center of many educational (and political) controversies. While it has historically been a swing state in terms of political leanings, it more recently has reflected more Conservative tendencies. This has resulted in communities questioning the content of textbooks more and more. Recently, Florida enacted a law requiring school districts to hold a public meeting about instructional materials before the district officially adopts any of it. The law also states that districts must enact policies that allow for parental objections to the adopted materials. (Florida Governor, 2014). This law comes on the heels of a controversy regarding content and (political) bias in 2013 when people protested the world history textbook adopted by Florida's Volusia County School District. The protesters criticize the world history textbooks for focusing too much on Islam and for presenting the information in a "pro-Islam" manner. The school defended their usage of the textbook, arguing that not only does it comply with Florida state social studies standards, but the book actually discusses Christianity more than Islam. A similar occurrence happened in Pasco County in which a Tea Party group complained that the book presented was pro-Islam, anti-Judeo Christian worldview. (Postal, 2013). And in yet another more current instance, a parent group went to the Highlands County School Board regarding their textbook World History: Ancient Civilizations, published by Holt McDougal. Parent Tom Barrett agreed the book should include Islam and students should study its historical impacts, but complained that the book only portrayed positive influences of Muslim culture, not any negatives. Barrett stated that he doesn't "believe it's about Christianity and Islam. Any religious teaching should be equal across the board. Taught in the same light with the same methods." However, the article mentions additional complaints made about the content regarding Islam in textbooks across the nation and asked whether or not religion can "simply be deleted" from history books (Pinnell, 2016). Despite Barrett's claim that the concern is not about Christianity and Islam, the concern seems to stem from the textbooks description of Islam in a positive or balanced way within a community that doesn't share that view. From a historical context, it is not possible to teach about the ancient civilization and the major religions stemming from those civilization while deleting the ones certain communities don't like. However, the argument about the presentation of religious cultures in history books will likely plague local, state, and federal politics for a long time (Pinnell, 2016).

Examples outside the Focus States

Politically driven and agenda laden curriculum happens in states other than those of high population and influence. In Oklahoma, legislators tried to cut funding for Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History based on the standards and framework developed by the College Board. The author, Representative Dan Fisher, proposed changes because he felt the current framework focused too much on the negatives in American history. Some of the proposed changes include adding the Ten Commandments as a founding document. (Klein, 2015). The College Board responded to these criticisms by changing their framework perhaps recognizing the negative

financial impact to College Board's AP programming if schools lost funding to offer their curriculum. The Board described this new framework as a "clearer and more balanced approach' to U.S. History" (Massey, 2015). However, now that College Board has responded in kind, critics on the other side are berating the organization for caving to such pressures. (Massey, 2015).

Issues with censorship in textbooks and the AP U.S. History curriculum turned into protest in Colorado. In 2014, students and teachers protested the formation of a review panel by a conservative bloc that would "promote patriotic material, respect for authority, and the free-market system. In turn, the panel would avoid material about 'civil disorder, social strife or disregard for the law.'" (Paul, 2014).

Methodology

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

As I discussed in the opening of the literature review, there has already been much research on the content of history books. Those studies have served as a model for my research methodology.

In conducting the textbook research, I used a grounded theory, mixed qualitative-quantitative approach to the content analysis. This means that when I read the texts, I allowed the codes and categories to derive from the data itself, *grounding* it in the data (Berg, 2004, p. 246). This leads to developing categories from my coded text with an inductive approach, one that involves me as the researcher "immersing" myself in the texts and data retrieved from the texts to identify the overarching themes of the documents (Berg, 2004). However, I also used a pre-determined category in the analysis: value-laden language. This stems from the entirety of the idea behind the project itself. I was looking for whether or not a political or religious agenda is found in a U.S. History textbook. Politics and religion inspire people's values, so looking for language espousing a particular value would be a category found even if it was not pre-determined.

This research was completed by using a qualitative content analysis approach within a grounded theory and phenomenological design (Berg, 2004). This design is better suited for collecting data from only one type of data source. This analysis technique applies to examinations of textual data, whether in the form of printed or written text or verbally spoken and recorded textually. This method does not simply count words, but rather its purpose is to analyze the content and interpret the meanings within the words themselves, studying the "explicit communication and inferred communication" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, 1278). As the name implies the analysis of data happens from the beginning of the research. While reading through the texts, I underwent a process of coding the material read and then organized these codes into categories and subcategories. From there, I determined patterns or other relationships present in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Topic Selection

My topic selection largely developed out of the literature I read. When searching for controversial matters pertaining to textbooks, I found numerous articles discussing the Civil War. Another factor in the decision came from the books themselves. When I read the titles, I noticed that the book from Texas focused on the period of 1877 and onward. I did not know until

physically attaining the book that the textbook did have information on events before 1877, just condensed. I thought it interesting that in high school, where students do the most thorough study of history, a textbook from a southern state began after both the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Participants

The participants in this study were the textbooks from the schools selected within the three most populous states in the union. Schools were chosen in each of the three states, California, Texas, and Georgia. From there, specific cities or counties were identified as meeting political qualifications. The largest schools in the districts for those regions were determined, and then the United States history textbooks used by those schools chosen. The political qualifications related to the extent to which these “typically” represent a specific political view.

Procedure

Qualitative data collection can come from four types of sources. These are interviews and questionnaires, observations, audiovisual materials, and documents (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, 256). However, this particular project focused only on documents as the main source of data. The documents were the three participant textbooks. This choice makes sense in the framework of the project because of the processes I am studying revolve around the content of the textbook and the before and after *implications* of it. These are the three specific textbooks used as data sources:

Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A.S., McPherson, J.M., & Ritchie, D.A. (2016). *United States History Since 1877*. (TEKS Teacher Edition). Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A.S., McPherson, J.M., & Ritchie, D.A. (2010). *The American Vision: Modern Times*. (Teacher Wraparound Edition). Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Lapansky-Werner, E.J., Levy, P.B., Roberts, R., Taylor, A., Wiggins, G. (2013). *United States History: 1850 to the Present*. (Florida Teacher’s Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

Participant Selection/Sampling

The participants of this study, the textbooks, were purposefully chosen as representatives of the possible phenomenon. The specific type of sampling used was maximal variation sampling because its intent is to “describe diverse perspectives” (Understanding Research, 254). In this case, the three participants selected theoretically represented the three types of states during elections, Red (Republican), Blue (Democrat) or Swing (not always the same). This method was selected because I wanted to examine each of the different kind of agenda rather than go in with the mindset that only one political viewpoint did this. Furthermore, adding the swing state presents the possibility of a neutral for comparison.

The first step was selecting the states to use in the research. Near the end of 2014, the official United State census determined that Florida passed New York as the third most populous state in the union, following California and Texas (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Texas and California receive a lot of coverage on the textbook issue because they are so populated.

More people means that more children are learning in their schools and learning from the textbooks used in those schools. It then occurred to me that the three most populous states, California, Texas, and Florida, represented the three ways states are classified for elections, Blue (Democrat), Red (Republican), and Swing (changes), respectively. It made sense in examining textbooks for political and religious agendas to look for differences between two states that vote opposite sides of the spectrum, but also at a state that goes back and forth. If California and Texas do promote agendas, does Florida have more neutral language? If so, how?

The next step was determining the cities in each of the states that represented best why their respective states were selected, i.e., the most liberal city in California, the most conservative city in Texas, and the most “swing” city in Florida. However, to keep consistency the city also had to be the most populous of its kind. For example, Los Angeles is the largest city in California but not necessarily the most liberal city. But in the case of the cities, political values matter more. From there I selected the most populous school in the district and determined the U.S. History textbook it used in its classes.

I utilized registered political party affiliation information in California. According to this data, the cities with the highest percentages of registered Democrats were Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco respectively (California Secretary of State, 2015). In an additional study using “data from several geographies to gauge the ideological skew of a city’s congressional representation... an analysis of the political spectrum of the members of the House of Representatives... [and] data [about] how residents self-report their own political leanings” found that Berkeley was the most liberal city across the nation, not just in California (Prall, 2014). From there, I found that the most populous high school in Berkeley utilized *The American Vision, Modern Times*.

For Texas, I used three different studies about Texas city political leanings. The first study was the *Livability* study listed above. It analyzed both liberal and conservative cities. According to that study, the best city for Conservatives based on congressional representation, analysis of the representatives on the political spectrum, and self-reports from residents was Odessa, Texas (Prall, 2014). The second study looked at voting patterns in cities nationwide for the Presidential election of 2004. According to this study, the most conservative cities in Texas were Plano, Arlington, and Corpus Christi (The Bay, 2005). The final study examined municipal policy conservatism, and through this the researchers charted the conservatism of cities with over 250,000 people based on policies. Only Arlington, Texas had a positive conservatism number (.16) in regards to their policies on a municipal level (Tausanovitch & Warshaw, 2014). From here, I determined the most populous high schools in each cities’ school district and found that high schools in both Arlington and Odessa used a Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) version of *United States History since 1877*.

Because Florida is the swing state, I chose to analyze election results rather than voter registration. People can vote for whomever they desire, so it was more logical to look at who the people voted for rather than their party registration for a state that votes both ways. This information could only be found on a county level rather than a city level, which further differs this method from those of California and Texas. Using election results from the Florida Department of Elections site, I created an excel spreadsheet that charted the election results for

an executive for every election from 2000 to 2014. I recorded the party of either the President or the Governor the county voted for, then added up how many times they voted for each party. Hillsborough County was the only county that had an even split, voting four times for a Republican and four times for a Democrat. The most populated city in Hillsborough County is Tampa Bay. Following the same process as before, I determined the most populous high school used *Prentice Hall United States History: 1850 to the Present, Florida Edition*.

Limitation

One flaw in this portion of the study was my inability to locate and/or use the same kind of information across each of the three states. As mentioned above, the logical path to follow for a swing state was looking at how people actually voted rather than their registration information. However, this would not have applied to Texas. I could not find the registered political party affiliation, for Texas voters. A second inconsistency was school selection. For California and Texas, I used information on a city-level, but for Florida I could only find it at a county level

Data Collection and Analysis

Using grounded theory allowed me to derive the codes and categories from within the data itself. Coding is an intensive process. There are three types of coding that are gone through—open, axial, and selective. Although the method is qualitative content analysis, quantitative elements also contributed to my project, much of which involved counting. In qualitative content analysis, there are seven different elements that can be counted: words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics. In this part of the project, I counted a combination of these elements, particularly words, themes (strings of words), concepts (theoretical ideas), and semantics (the strength of the words in regards to the overall tone of the sentence or paragraph it is located in) (Berg, 2004, p. 246). I will be doing frequency distributions of these elements throughout the text, as well as using them as a means of coding the texts. Furthermore, in my research I plan to examine both the manifest and latent content within my texts. The manifest content is that which is physically present, such as the words on the page. The latent content is an interpretation of the words, a message other than the explicit are the words trying to get across to readers (Berg, 2004, p. 242).

Open coding is the coding of the text itself. This is the actual “process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin). I was working with a small portion of text; the pages that discussed antebellum and pre-Civil War happenings. The exact number of pages changed depending on the book: Texas only had 10, and California only 17, while Florida 39. I coded in these small textual selections. I developed nine categories into which my codes fell. Two of the categories, Vocabulary and Balance, fit into the categories they follow, Book Organization and Democratic Values respectively. The categories are as follows:

- Emotionally Charged Language
- Morals & Religion
- Book Organization
- Vocabulary
- Political Alignment
- Democratic Values

- Balance
- Slavery & Blacks
- States' Rights & Secession

Many of these categories had overlapping data as often times the codes applied to multiple areas. While I intended to begin the coding with the predetermined category of "Value-Laden Language," I found that that idea was much more encompassing than originally expected. The initial thought behind value-laden language was that there might be words written in the manifest content. As I read through the texts, I did not find anything like this. But what I did find as value-laden could fit into other categories. I realized then that Value-Laden Language would not be an open-coding category, but rather something else.

The next step is axial coding, which is defined as "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories." (Strauss & Corbin). Types of language stood out as a connection between the categories. It obviously applied to Emotionally Charged Language and the ever present but not technically a category Value-Laden Language, but could also include Vocabulary. Another connection made was between Democratic Values and States' Rights/Secession. The justifications for secession could often tie back to the core democratic values of the United States. Furthermore, differences in the economies and how labor was sectional can also encompass slavery.

Selective coding is the last step in the process. Selective coding is "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin). This was where value-laden language fit into the coding process. Value-Laden Language was the core category; there were elements of it in every other category. Even in the frequency counts, the number of times a book used enslaved as compared to slave represents a particular value that the state has. The types of value-laden language depicted throughout the findings in each category would end up allowing me to draw my conclusions.

Findings

The findings of this research were not obvious. I was looking at both the manifest (what is visible) and latent (what is implied) content presented in the textbooks. None of the books explicitly tell the students to vote one way or the other, but rather some of them indicate to students what they should think about regarding a particular subject. For example, a book might downplay the role of its respective state in the war or emphasize the opinions of one of the modern day political parties. Overly highlighting how one political party viewed the issues at the time may influence how students perceive the party today, despite both of them going through many changes. Nuances like these occur throughout all three of the textbooks used as data sources. The evidence presented in the Findings has value-laden language strewn throughout. Examining what values the language portrays gives an indication of what kind of values the book, and by extension the state standards, wants to emphasize.

Frequency

Although mostly qualitative, part of the research involved the quantitative aspect of counting the frequency of certain terms. The word most accounted for in the frequency tallies was “slavery.” This was the only word counted on its own, all others were counted as part of a comparison. Those terms used were “slave vs. enslaved,” “black vs. African American,” “free vs. runaway vs. fugitive” and by identifying states/people/concepts by either slave/free or North/South. One thing to note is that when counting the word “fugitive,” the totals only reflect how often it was used as a descriptor for a person; it does not include the number of times the “Fugitive Slave Act” was mentioned in the book. The totals are as follows:

Table A. Word Frequency by State

	California	Texas	Florida
Slavery	54	22	104
Slave	13	14	52
Enslaved	28	12	9
Fugitive	1	0	9
Runaway	4	3	3
African American	16	8	11
Black	0	0	11
North/South States	29	23	68
Free/Slave States	22	12	40
North/South states, people and concepts	67	47	140
Pages devoted to subject	17	10	39

A few of the frequency counters were chosen as comparisons, studying how often one word is used as opposed to the other. The first one used was enslaved vs. slave. According to Table A., only California used enslaved more than slave. Texas was almost even but Florida used slave 52 times as compared to using enslaved 9 times.

The frequency with which students are exposed to specific language matters. This comparison was selected because a parent from Washington, Wendy Jacobson, determined that the term slave should be replaced with enslaved as to place “culpability...where it belongs” (Textbooks, 2016). Determining where “culpability” lies then is a matter of specific word choice.

Using the term “enslaved person” indicates that the person is in a state of existence they did not choose. Furthermore, the word “slave” makes the person’s identity revolve around this unchosen status of labor.

California recognizes that the Americans of the time, the people who purchased others to do their labor for them as slaves, are culpable for the institution of slavery. It is not the fault of those enslaved or those on the other side of the world selling people into slavery; it is only the fault of the Americans. By using enslaved more than slave, they promote this idea that this status was forced upon them, it was not something they chose. Florida and Texas (though not by much for the latter) used the term slave more than enslaved. This is not to say that they specifically find the enslaved people culpable for the institution, but rather it promotes sense of complicity with how to view that issue. Of course the books acknowledge slavery is wrong; no textbook would likely promote any other idea. But it does promote the idea of “that’s just how things were; that person was a slave and that person wasn’t.” Promoting an acceptance of how things were also promotes an acceptance of how things are now. That’s a much more conservative and traditionalist viewpoint of how to look at things, that one should just accept them as they are.

From there I made two more comparisons: runaway vs. fugitive and African American vs. black. I chose the former because calling someone a fugitive has a negative connotation as it specifically means they are breaking the law, whereas runaway does not. The only textbook to use fugitive more than it used runaway was Florida. However, because both words were rarely used, one cannot infer that the choice had political motivation. In the latter comparison, the Florida textbook was the only textbook that even used the word “black” to describe people, and it used the term equally as much as it used African American.

This comparison has everything to do with being what is deemed “*politically correct* (PC).” First, according to that point in history the enslaved peoples were not citizens and therefore not actually Americans. However, the terminology for the past century has been to call this group African Americans, even during the period in which they were not legally American citizens. In fact, every book mentions that they were not considered citizens in their coverage of the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case. Second, the validity of the term “African American” is coming into question, because most people have little to no ties to Africa. There is a push for the adoption of the term black American, something that emphasizes that there’s an individual culture that does not fall back on Africa. However, most of the books still utilize the term African American because it is more important to use the PC terminology over a legally accurate description, despite the rise in popularity of the term “black American.” It would be difficult to account for the changing PC culture of today with black vs. African American, and as such usage of either term could be considered PC. However, the textbooks can be held accountable for not using PC language in the other two comparisons.

The California textbook used the most PC language to describe black people in the period studied. California’s book was the only one to use enslaved more than slave, used runaway more than fugitive, and only used the presently PC term of African American rather than black. Florida did the worst in regards to the usage of PC language. In the enslaved vs. slave comparison, Florida used slave almost 6 times more than it used enslaved and used fugitive 3

times more than it used runaway. Florida's textbook was also the only one to use black as a descriptor, but this could mean it is more in tune to the rising popularity of the term today.

Morals and Religion

Another noteworthy category that developed was around the issue of morals and religion and how those were brought up distinctly throughout the textbooks. It was brought up in regards to slavery, mostly on the side of the opposition but not always. The text was coded for Morals and Religion in order to see if any of the books would emphasize that religious groups felt a certain way or religion was used for justification on only one side. Religion itself is a value, and one that is attributed to a certain sector of society ("The Religious Right"). The analysis also examined if a state focused more on the idea of someone having a moral or religious justification for their beliefs.

The findings overall did not indicate that the language and context used was specifically value-laden as to propose religion went one way or another about the slavery issue. In Texas, the focus was just about even between morals and religion. The book addressed that many religious groups agreed that slavery was a sin, but also broadly mentioned that people had moral opposition to it. One such person was President Abraham Lincoln. The equal presence of morals and religion without a solid focus on one or the other indicate that there was not an effort to portray either in a certain manner. Although religion did play a role, it is noticeable that a book published for a state that is very much part of The Religious Right takes a very surface level approach to its role in this war and conflict. This may be a choice made on the side of the publisher to include only surface level information as not to bring the topic of religion into the public schools and public discourse.

The same can apply to California. In terms of justification, the California textbook was also about even in focus. In describing different abolitionists, the textbook had that some believed "human bondage was morally wrong" while others believed "slavery was a sin." Religion plays a slightly larger role overall because California addresses John Brown, a man who had religious justification for raiding the Harper's Ferry arsenal and trying to begin a slave revolt. The book included a sample of writing he penned after his arrest for Harper's Ferry, in which he describes his actions as "done in behalf of [G-d's] poor." California, unexpectedly, had more specific religious examples than Texas, and stronger language used with it too. Less surprising is the exclusion of Brown's religious motivation for the violent uprising at Harper's Ferry in the Texas book. Texas would be more likely to exclude information that ties religion to violent abolitionist movements because many of its citizens fall into that Religious Right element of the Republican Party. It would not be a good idea for the publishers to alienate their consumers, so the Texas textbook did not include this kind of information.

Florida took a slightly different approach. This book also acknowledged that some people opposed slavery on moral grounds and others on religious grounds, but the Florida textbook also included a religious justification on the side of the slaveholders. It included slaveholders reasoning that "G-d intended that black people should provide the labor for white, civilized society." It was also included that John Brown saw himself as an Angel of G-d. So like the other two states, there was not a specified focus on morals vs. religion for justification, but Florida brought in religion the most often.

It is notable that only Florida, the Swing State and a Southern State, mentioned the religious justification behind owning slaves. Between “teaching them Christianity” to regulations about owning slaves written in the Bible, the southerners often justified slavery using religion. However, the contextual language does not present religion in a negative light because of this. Nor does the context in which the California and Texas textbooks present the information on religion only going against slavery make the books “pro-religion” per say. Rather, these two books presented a reason to which a large faction of the abolitionist movement ascribed their antislavery beliefs. Florida’s inclusion of religion used in an oppositional manner is noteworthy, but not so significant as to suggest political motivation for inclusion or exclusion in any of the books.

California

The textbooks from California, paired with Texas, presented an interesting case. The states were selected both because they are the two most populous states, but more importantly because they represent opposite sides of the political spectrum. But the books used in each of these states were published by the same company and accredited to the same authors. Sometimes the books even used the exact same language.

While the text in the California book does feature value-laden language, this book presents the most neutral look at the Civil War. In terms of overall book organization, seventeen pages in the California textbook were coded, placing it the middle of the three in terms of length devoted to the subject. The pages came from two chapters, the second of was fully devoted to the Civil War and Reconstruction. For a book without explicit years of study placed on it (unlike the other two), that makes logical sense to devote an entire chapter to the war. It is important to note however, that sometimes other topics were interspersed throughout the chapters as they occurred contemporaneously to the subject at hand (i.e., California Gold Rush). One thing that was examined in book organization was the order that issues were placed in, as they might indicate what a state feels is the most important. The section titles very often included the word slavery, indicating that as a primary issue of study in the coded section.

Part of this is because it often uses value-laden language that is the opposite of its political leanings, or does not always frame the opposite side as negative. For example, the book included the formation of the antislavery Free-Soil Party and their platform: “Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men.” The book describes the American Party as an anti-Catholic and nativist (anti-immigration) party that played on people’s prejudice and fears to gain power. The Republican Party eventually “absorbed” both of these parties. Had it described the Republicans as only absorbing the American Party, it would shed a more negative light on the party, but it includes the truly abolitionist party in the formation as well. The book also includes the reaction to the Dred Scott decision by both parties—the Democrats “cheered” for it while the Republicans called it a “willful perversion of the Constitution.” California’s book also takes it a step further, noting the decision angered Republicans in the sense that if Scott wasn’t a citizen, they should not have taken the case in the first place and they only did as a way to invalidate the Missouri Compromise. Not only did the textbook acknowledge that the Democrats were delighted by the result, but the textbook went on to explain the logical reasoning behind Republican anger.

When Southern states seceded, they compared their actions to the American Revolution. At the formation of the Confederate States of America, they wrote their own Constitution which used extremely similar wording to the original. However, the Confederate constitution “acknowledged the independence of each state, guaranteed slavery in the Confederate territories, banned tariffs, and limited the president to a single six-year term.” California included reasoning behind Southern Secession but framed it in such a way that they did so because the federal government of the United States was deficient in providing things like state independence and having a President serve two four-year terms was overpowering. The book also included some less than expected facts. For example, it mentions that there were some free blacks who came to own slaves themselves. It also mentions that not all Northerners were in favor of abolition, and actually had lots of objection to it, mostly due to racism and the desire to keep the established social hierarchy.

But value-laden language corresponding to California’s current political leanings is definitely present. In the California text, much of the emotionally charged language dealt with slavery. Of course, one would argue that everyone feels like this regarding slavery today, not just states in the Union. The book used terms like “dreadful lifestyle,” “suffered indignities,” and “human bondage.” These words are supposed to elicit emotion from the reader through description. Using dreadful rather than terrible, suffered rather than underwent, and even human bondage over slavery creates more emotion in the reader as they know that these words imply a greater amount of whatever feeling is being described; and this is pronounced most by the state that was part of the Union and against slavery.

The California textbook describes the issue of slavery taking center stage. In a depiction of their lives as slaves, the book says that “all enslaved persons, no matter how well-treated, suffered indignities” and describes it as “a ‘peculiar institution’ distinctive and vital to the southern way of life.” One unique inclusion in the California book was that in addition to becoming a slave state, Missouri’s state constitution prohibited free African Americans from entering the state. The California book also discusses slavery in regards to the values: “Many of the country’s founders know that the nation would have difficulty remaining true to its ideals of liberty and equality if it continued to enslave human beings.” Overall, slavery comes to the forefront of reasons why the Civil War began. Even the section headings point towards it: “Slavery and Western Expansion,” “Resurgence of Slavery,” and “Growing Division and Reform.” The political party associated with abolition was the newly formed Republican Party. The textbook describes the main goal of the Republican Party as “[stopping] Southern planters from becoming an aristocracy that controlled the government. Republicans did not agree on whether slavery should be abolished, but they did agree that it had to be kept out of the territories.” The book emphasized that abolition was not the main goal, but rather stopping the expansion of slavery. Rather than portraying the Republicans as negative, it dims the positive light of the Republican Party that ended up abolishing slavery.

There are other, individual inclusions in the California textbook that relate more towards their current political leanings. For example, it included the decision by *Republican* President Lincoln to suspend habeas corpus and impose a draft which *Democrats* opposed. Only California’s book discussed the Nullification Crisis within the examined text (versus Florida having it outside and Texas not having it at all). The Nullification Crisis is the first time the South threatens to secede from the union over sectional differences. The book also mentioned

that the South threatened to secede over the Kansas-Nebraska Act unless Senator Steven Douglas repealed the antislavery provision of the Missouri Compromise, which he did to appease the South. California emphasized the South's desire to secede the most of the three states, as it was the only state of the three to not have done so. California also described popular sovereignty, the idea that people that settled in the territory should vote on slavery in a way that is more conservative. The book noted how popular sovereignty "removed the slavery issue from national government" and "appeared democratic, since the settlers themselves would make the decision."

One of the teacher activities mentioned in the book has gifted and talented students examining the Republican Platforms of 1854-76 and present day and comparing them. This one is unique in the sense that students do not see it; it's included in the teacher edition as an idea for differentiation for the gifted and talented students, to give those students more to study. But suggesting a comparison implies that there is a difference. Focusing on the Republican Party then suggests there is a difference between the abolition party of then, and the party of now. That then begs the question, then why wouldn't the state want students to compare the pro-slavery party of then and the party of now? Possibly because they believe students already know the party's platform, and know it is no longer like that; possibly because they do not want students digging into the Democratic platform, and want them to keep their assumptions intact. The textbook also mentions the coining of the phrase "civil disobedience" by Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau wrote in his "Civil Disobedience" essay that if the law "requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law." Thoreau wrote that essay in defiance to the Fugitive Slave Act. The Colorado case had conservative school board members trying to keep talk of that as much out of the books as possible, favoring conformity to the laws. It makes sense for a state with more left-leaning philosophies then to describe the origin of the idea in general.

California Conclusions

Despite what might seem like more evidence pointing to California leaning left, much of the contextualization of the information paints it less politically if not neutral. Furthermore, California does have the most information opposite to its current political view present. Although California was technically part of the Union and a "free state," its physical separation from the fighting probably makes it less contentious than in the other two states.

Texas

The literature also provided a context for examining Texas. Brown's (2015) article reported that a Texas board of education member wanted to emphasize the causes of the Civil War in a particular order—sectionalism, states' rights, and then slavery as a "side issue." I kept that in mind as I coded through the Texas textbook.

There were ten pages coded in the Texas textbook. This book covered two sections of a single chapter, each was shorter than in the California book. Civil War and Reconstruction was the last section of that foundational chapter. Taking for granted that the book is supposed to technically start in 1877, the book felt like it was shoving the Civil War and how important it was or wasn't aside rather than just the issue of slavery. The information was all rather basic,

which one would not expect from a book aimed at high school aged students. The very plain presentation of the text (Texas had the least amount of things outside the main body of text) and the simplicity of the information seem to suggest that the high school students reading the book are required to just use it as a refresher and move onto what happens after 1877.

There was value-laden language in favor of the currently popular political party throughout. One particular example would be noting that the press coined the term border-ruffians placed into a context portraying the press negatively. The most value-laden piece of evidence in the data was that Texas used the term “Northern Aggression,” however it was not used as the title for the war. It was used as one of the *three* sentences that described John Brown and his raid on Harper’s Ferry. As comparison, the California book, authored by the same people for the same company, had an entire subsection on John Brown. Another more value-laden piece was the inclusion of a section on American nationalism; Americans took pride in being American. Today, this feeds into the idea of American exceptionalism, an idea that Texas is accused of strongly pushing in its books. The value excluded in this book was that of civil disobedience, something that the right tends to look down upon. That not appearing in the Texas textbook is less surprising. But the book also described immigrants as foreigners and used “plotting revolt” in talking about enslaved peoples. The Texas textbook used the same quotes to describe how popular sovereignty “removed the slavery issue from national government” and “appeared democratic, since the settlers themselves would make the decision.” These two principles correlate to keeping decision-making powers to the states and the people of the states, something that conservatives emphasize for issues of today.

As for what causes of the war are placed at the forefront, one section title from the book is “The Sectional Crisis” and under “It matters because”, the book reads “Sectionalism and disagreements over slavery in the new territories intensified as the United States continued to expand west.” Both of these place sectionalism at the head of the disagreements causing the war, just as the board member wanted. Being sure to include the Revolutionary War comparisons and being the only book to describe the election of Abraham Lincoln as a “threat to their society and culture” that left the states no choice but to secede does indicate that there was some more value placed on the idea of sectionalism. Furthermore, the Texas textbook did not include information on the “Gag Rule,” a rule imposed in Congress that stated any abolitionist bills would be immediately shelved and not discussed. When describing how Southerner’s compared secession to the Revolution, the book called used the quote—“a necessary course of action to uphold people’s rights” and the described the similarities between the Constitutions. Through focus on sectionalism and exclusion of pro-slavery information, the textbook does meet the standard of making slavery a side issue. But that also demotes what really was an important cause to something tertiary and less relevant.

While the value-laden language in Texas is strong, there are elements that Texas has much of the same information about slavery as the California book. From Douglass to Stowe to “[suffering] indignities,” not much distinguishes how Texas discusses slavery from California. Texas also included the black slave owners and how the slaves resisted. The biggest difference is in the amount of information presented, rather than what or whether its inclusion was politically motivated. The information about slavery or slaves that did appear was often very simplistic or well-known. Under abolition the Texas textbook also discussed whether the nation could remain true to the “ideals of liberty and equality” if slavery persisted.

One noticeable difference was that an explanation of the Dred Scott case ruling was outside the main body of the text, rather than inside it like in the California book. But in the main body, the Texas book said “Southerners cheered the decision” while Republicans called it “willful perversion.” The Texas textbook opted not to display the favored political party as the more morally correct party in this case, just noting that the Republicans were against the ruling. The Texas textbook also included the quote questioning whether or not the nation could remain true to the “ideals of liberty and equality” if slavery persisted and mentioned the South’s threat of secession over the Kansas-Nebraska Act unless the antislavery provision of the Missouri Compromise was repealed. Despite not including the Nullification Crisis, Texas does include an instance in which the South threatened secession earlier. And, this instance is specifically about slavery.

Texas Conclusions

The question that stems from that then, is why? High school is where the study of content is supposed to be the most in-depth because high school students’ brains are more developed and can therefore handle it. But this is not the case, the textbook just pushes past it to 1877, the year in which Reconstruction ends. It might suggest that Texas does not want to have students analyze the Civil War in-depth, partially because it sheds a bad light on America and Texas. It does not fit the idea of American exceptionalism that Texas tries very hard to keep up. So by providing only the very basic facts in a very basic way, Texas can have students move on to discuss something else and not look into a negative period of American history.

Florida

The material covered in the Florida textbook spanned 39 pages. Because of this, Florida also had the largest counts in the frequency. Just the word slavery was mentioned 104 times. This textbook also had a Civil War and Reconstruction chapter; one entire section was dedicated to the abolitionist movement. On two different pages of the textbook, the order in which issues are presented is Slavery, States’ Rights, and (Western) Expansion. This book seems to indicate that the issue of slavery is the most pertinent in analyzing the causes of this war, followed by states’ rights and expansion. The two issues following slavery can be tied back to slavery, such as a state’s right to allow slavery and how the expanding United States brought the issue of slavery to the forefront more and more often as the country grew.

Of course, like Texas, Florida does not just present a conservative viewpoint throughout the entirety of the coded text. This book includes the value of civil disobedience in reaction to the Fugitive Slave Act. The Florida textbook concentrated heavily on popular sovereignty. It was seen as a middle-ground, a democratic method of solving the issue of slavery. One suggestion the book has for teachers is having advanced students evaluate whether or not of popular sovereignty reflects the principles of democracy. Having students take all the violence, and just the idea of slavery, into account, they might decide that having this “democratic” method is not so democratic after all. Florida includes the same Free-Soil Party Platform that California did, “Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men.” However, the book also said that platform of the party was to “resist aggressions of slave power” and “keep slavery out of the western

territories.” The first phrase is clearly both emotionally and politically charged, and its inclusion is surprising coming from a state that had slavery.

In regards to slavery, the textbook used in Florida included more distinctive details as compared to the others. There were more details on abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and the Grimke sisters, people who only had one sentence about them in the other books. This book also noted that southerners wrote books in response to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that depicted slaves as happy and that a southern doctor declared slaves that ran away suffered from a mental illness known as Drapetomania. The Florida textbook also included a large amount of information on violent black resistance—Nat Turner’s Rebellion, the Christiana Riots, and Martin Delaney’s novel *Blake* were all only mentioned in Florida and all have to do with enslaved peoples resisting through violence. In discussing the actual secession, Florida also explicitly that South Carolina seceded because of slavery; not to ‘uphold people’s rights,’ but slavery. It does go on to say however, that some states voted to secede “to protect their property and way of life;” two values which many Americans held and still hold dear. But Florida is the state that emphasizes the role of slavery in secession the strongest.

The Florida book traces the formation of the Republican Party to “antislavery zeal” and describes the popularity of it in the North. In this book, one mostly reads Abraham Lincoln associated with the party, and the party associated with being antislavery, whereas in the others he is not. Even the Texas book said that the Republican Party was founded on preventing the *expansion* of slavery, *not* antislavery itself. Neither party was mentioned in describing the reactions to the Dred Scott case; “Southerners celebrated the decision, but the North viewed it with alarm.” One unique element of Florida’s textbook in political alignment was that Florida discussed in-depth how the Democrats and the Whigs actively avoided saying their political opinions, especially about slavery, until the presence of the Free-Soil Party forced them to do so.

The strongest use of value-laden language was about states’ rights, and the issue is portrayed in an extremely conservative way. In fact, there is a full page of the book dedicated to exploring the issue. Students “Track the Issue,” which in this case is Federal Power and States’ Rights. The opening paragraph reads:

Under the Constitution, all powers not granted to the federal government belong to the states. Over time, however, the federal government has expanded its scope, especially in the area of social programs. Use the timeline below to explore this enduring issue.

The paragraph reminds students of the language of the tenth amendment to the Constitution, but then goes on to suggest the federal government is not respecting that amendment. The use of “enduring” and the context in which the page is placed indicates to students that this is something the federal government has done since the Civil War, and have been steadily taking more power over time. One of the teacher activities had students reading Florida’s Ordinance of Secession. The book then says to “make sure the students understand exactly what the ordinance was intended to do (make Florida independent from the Union) and what it was not meant to do (make Florida part of the Confederacy).”

The Florida textbook also has a full page about understanding “Federal Power and States’ Rights” which describes expansion of federal power. Within the text itself, Florida is the sole

state to include “personal liberty laws,” which were northern statutes designed to make the Fugitive Slave Act null. The book describes the resent northerners felt about an “increasing federal intervention in the affairs of the independent states,” in regards to slavery at least. This further emphasizes the idea of states’ rights and independent states, a concept written into the Confederate Constitution. States’ rights, or just wanting the states to have more power is typically a conservative value. The strength of emphasis on this in the Florida textbook indicates a more conservative outlook on the Civil War. And yet, Florida does join the Confederacy less than a month after declaring its independence from the United States. The framing of Florida’s secession in this way seems to indicate a separation between then and the present. Florida recognizes that it did play a role in the Confederacy, but wants to remind students it was more about states’ rights not being in the Confederacy that protected slavery. It’s almost like Florida wants to be as least related to the war itself as possible.

Florida Conclusions

At the heart of Florida’s textbook is comparison which seems about right for a swing state. Florida attempts to portray every small detail with two sides. For example, with the inclusion of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that features a runaway slave and one that accepts getting sold down South, there was the inclusion of *Blake*, which featured a violent slave revolt. Groups used religion as a reason to both support abolition and support the institution of slavery. Pro-slavery “border ruffians” and antislavery settlers both committed violent acts in the name of their political opinion. These examples in sum portray a value that the Florida textbook tries to project, that of neutrality. In order to seem unbiased at any minute examination, the Florida textbook includes something that represents the opposite viewpoint, as to counter the hypothetical claim of bias.

Moreover, Florida was the sole state to call the Civil War by a different name. The chapter title read “The Civil War” but on the next page over under “Witness History” is “War Between the States.” As mentioned early on in this research, this title is less politically charged than calling it the War of Northern Aggression. So what is the difference in calling it the Civil War or The War Between the States? A civil war is defined as a war between citizens of the same country; and it doesn’t matter how or why the citizens are divided. Using War Between the States does two different things. First, it places it solely on the states and eliminates the citizen aspect of it; that is where the “civil” in “civil war” comes from. More importantly though, it takes away the idea of it being between people of the same country. The word state can apply to how America is divided, but also can refer to an entire country, i.e. Israel is referred to as the “Jewish State.” This means acknowledging the Confederacy as an entirely separate entity that was not part of United States and was in fact its own country. This would extremely exaggerate how successful the Confederate States of America actually were in being their own country. Abraham Lincoln waged a war to keep the southern states in the Union and prevent their becoming a fully functioning country; he did not wage war on a separate country that was formerly of the United States. So, despite being the Swing State that could vote either way, Florida ended up having the most value-laden language of all, and it leaned more towards the right which also makes sense when one looks at the political positions Florida has taken since the early 2000’s.

Conclusion

Textbooks do impart values onto their readers. I learned going in with my supposed pre-existing category of value-laden language that it rarely will be in the manifest content. Even simple things like what words are in the headings of the main content or using enslaved as opposed to slave make a difference in how students grow to view things. And despite the fact that the Civil War was over 150 years ago, the research indicates that present-day values and issues do play role in the presentation of the war, at least to an extent.

It is impossible to pronounce that my research proves a causation of students in Texas growing up to vote Republican based on the fact that their high school U.S. History textbook mentioned that some called John Brown's Raid a sign of Northern Aggression. Or that students in California must learn their values from elsewhere because their textbook was rather neutral. Education is political; and the political views of those legislating the standards do seep into the education system. Whether or not it's the physical textbook that is supporting certain views, the best option for educators no matter what book they're using would be to have a serious discussion with their students. Talk about if they notice a certain viewpoint is always reinforced while another voice is always drowned out, and discuss why they think that is. Establish the critical distance and then contextualize the class in present day and during that time. This applies beyond the Civil War; classes should do this from exploration to present day. It goes beyond American History; talk about why there's an abundance of European history classes but very few African. It goes beyond history or social studies in general; think about how evolution is presented in the biology textbook. When educators get students to really think about these bigger questions, it will strengthen their ability to think critically and challenge them to really think about their beliefs and opinions; and whether or not they actually hold up.

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