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The Silence in America's Classrooms: The Portrayal of Women and Gender in United States High School History Textbooks

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The Silence in America's Classrooms: The Portrayal of Women and Gender in United States
High School History Textbooks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

by

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, the process of adopting statewide history textbooks has become a political battleground surrounding concepts of race, gender, and identity in American history. By contextualizing the current discussion surrounding content in American history textbooks, I examine the portrayal of women in secondary United States social studies textbooks from the 1960s to the 2010s. In doing so, I show how portrayals of women's history evolve in the most widely adopted high school post-Civil War American history textbooks in each decade from the 1960s through to the 2000s. By comparing the evolution of the women's and gender historiography to the change in high school history textbooks, this analysis reveals new information about the level of pedagogical cogency in teaching social and cultural history to high school students. Textbook publishing data does not indicate the most popular textbooks nationwide or even statewide, with ample options available on the market. However, I am able to narrow the source material to the twenty states with a statewide textbook adoption process to examine commonly approved textbooks. I then calculate the approximate population of secondary high school students in those states to quantify students' intake of the adopted textbooks. While considerable scholarship analyzes the portrayal of women in high school history textbooks, this study emphasizes slight improvement of the textbooks and offers a solution to creating more effective learning material.

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Introduction

Since the 1960s, women's and gender historians have made great strides in writing a more complete and accurate history of the United States. Historians have ambitiously interrogated and challenged traditional frameworks to show how women were active agents in constructing the nation's history and illustrate their diverse experiences at the local, state, and national levels.¹ Despite the pathbreaking studies on women and gender in the historiography, careful research demonstrates the continued inadequacy of high school history textbooks in teaching women's and gender history.²

These findings are more troubling when studies have also consistently agreed that school textbooks are an important source for young peoples' understanding of the history of women, gender, and race. Corbin Schrader and Christine Wotipka argued in "History Transformed? Gender in World War II Narratives in U.S. History Textbooks, 1956-2007," that textbooks "reveal acceptable and desired social identities" shaping "individual and collective attitude and

¹ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," *Social History* 10, no. 3 (1985): 300, 305; Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9; Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carroll DuBois (Eds.), *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* 3rd ed, (New York: Routledge, 2000), xi-612; Joanne Meyerowitz, "A History of 'Gender,'" *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1346; Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor and Lisa G. Materson, "Women, Gender, and American History," In Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, and Lisa G. Materson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Women's and Gender History Oxford Handbooks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-16; Chen Yan and Karen Offen, *Women's History at the Cutting Edge* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 2020), 21; Anne M. Valk and Nancy A. Hewitt (Eds.), *A Companion to American Women's History*, (Hoboken: Wiley, 2021), i-xviii.

² Janice Law Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High School Textbooks," *International Review of Education* 19, no. 1 (1973): 249-60; Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault, "Integrating Women's History: The Case of United States History High School Textbooks," *The History Teacher* 19, no. 1 (1986): 211-262; "How Schools Shortchange Girls," *The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation*, (1992): 1-8; Roger Clark, Jeffrey Allard, and Timothy Mahoney, "How Much of the Sky? Women in American High School History Textbooks from the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s," *Social Education* 68 vol. 1 (2004): 57-62; Corbin Elizabeth Schrader and Christine Min Wotipka, "History Transformed? Gender in World War II Narratives in U.S. History Textbooks, 1956-2007," *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 3 (2011): 68; Li Lucy, Dotorttya Demszky, Patricia Bromley, and Dan Jurafsky, "Content Analysis of Textbooks via Natural Language Processing: Findings on Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in Texas U.S. History Textbooks," *AERA Open* 6, no. 3 (2020).

action.”³ According to a 1994 study that examined women in high school history textbooks, women, especially women of color and women of lower classes, had been largely absent in textbook narratives, sending a message to students that “to be female is to be absent” in shaping American life.⁴

To determine whether this is still the case, I analyzed the representations of women in a number of high school United States history textbooks found in Texas, Florida, and Georgia classrooms from the 1960s to the 2010s. I examined how these textbooks frame women’s and gender history and how closely they tracked the progress of academic scholarship about women and gender. Through this qualitative analysis, I seek to determine when and how the textbooks incorporated new frameworks from women’s and gender historiography into their texts. By comparing the evolution of academic scholarship to changes over time in high school history textbooks, this study shows narratives have remained mostly unchanged, offering a consistent message for the last sixty years.

Coding Scheme: Historiography of Women’s and Gender History

This section identifies five key perspectives of women’s and gender historians’ interpretations of the history of the United States. By introducing the development of academic scholarship, we can begin answering: 1) What frameworks from the field of women’s and gender history do textbooks use, if any?; and 2) How long does it take from its first introduction in the

³ Schrader and Wotipka, “History Transformed?,” 69; David Sadker and Karen Zittleman, “Gender Bias From Colonial America to Today’s Classrooms,” in James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2007), 144; Rae Lesser Blumberg, “The Invisible Obstacle to Educational Equality: Gender Bias in Textbooks,” *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Education* 38, no. 3 (2008): 346.

⁴ Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 9.

field of academic scholarship for a framework to be incorporated into high school history textbooks?

I identified the five schools of interpretation of women's and gender history by distinct historiographical moments in which new research changed the field's trajectory. For this study, I used the term framework to describe the lens or lenses through which the schools of interpretation viewed and organized their historical subjects. The five schools of interpretation are 1) Compensatory and contribution history; 2) Ordinary women's differences and intersectionality; 3) Gender; 4) The connection of the local with the national; and 5) The history of sexuality. The five perspectives tended to spread along a timeline, with the first perspective emerging in the late 1960s, the second perspective in 1980, the third perspective in 1986, the fourth perspective in the 1990s, and the fifth perspective in the 2000s. However, the perspectives are undoubtedly fluid and only loosely linear. This is not to say there were no women's historians before 1966 when Barbara Welter published her work, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860."⁵ But the 1960s saw the real legitimization of women's history as a field of historical analysis.

Similarly, no perspective abruptly vanished, with historians never again utilizing that framework to organize their research. The framework of gender, the everyday lives of women, and intersectionality continue to dominate the field. However, some key publications represented breaking points with the preceding frameworks, usually as a critique of the state of the field and to introduce a new lens to examine women's and gender history. In 1980, for example, Ellen DuBois opened a symposium to debate the dominance of the separate spheres and women's culture perspective and to discuss a new framework that could eliminate the blind spots of the

⁵ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, No 2 (1966): 151.

field's dominant lens.⁶ In 1986, Joan Wallach Scott published "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," which created a new subfield of women's history.⁷ Scott's contribution to the historiography did not repudiate an earlier framework. Rather, Scott built on a postmodern wave of scholarship to expand the field of women's history.

Identifying these schools of interpretation can aid us in understanding what we might expect from a textbook. While it might be unreasonable to expect a textbook to include information on the intersectionality of women's experiences when the academic scholarship had not yet fully developed that framework, the textbooks published in the 2010s might be expected to incorporate, at the very least, perspectives that had been well-developed for decades. This occurred to some extent. By the 1990s, textbooks began to treat women's differences, including passages about working women and women of color. By the 2010s, textbooks showed modest progress toward incorporating intersectionality and gender history. However, the dominant means of treating women's history remained the compensatory and contribution modes that first appeared in the earliest stage of the historiography.

I: Compensatory and Contribution History, 1960s to 1970s

Women's historians in the 1960s used concepts central to the women's movement, namely, patriarchy, oppression, and community, as their guiding framework in viewing women's pasts. Influenced by the civil rights movements, early women's historians investigated the past to help understand the origins of feminist discontent. Gerda Lerner, a women's historian among the first generation of scholars, reflected on her and her colleague's work in forging this new field of

⁶ Ellen DuBois, Mari Jo Buhle, Temma Kaplan, Gerda Lerner, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium," *Feminist Studies* 6, no. 1 (1980).

⁷ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075.

historical scholarship, remembering that the “contempt in which work on women in history was held in the 1960s not only represented career obstacles for the few of us who ventured into that field but also limited our training and command for methodology.”⁸

Lerner described the state of women’s and gender historiography in her 1975 article, “Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges,” introducing the “conceptual framework and methodology appropriate to the task” of developing women’s history into an independent field.⁹ Lerner identified the earliest framework in which historians trained, approaching women’s history as “compensatory history” or the “notable women who were missing from historical narratives.”¹⁰ Lerner then identified the next level of the conceptual framework as “contribution history,” where historians emphasized “women’s contribution to, their status in, and their oppression by male-defined society.”¹¹ Both frameworks were created by applying the same questions from traditional history to women’s history, revealing the extraordinary women and how women fit within the male-dominated society.¹² This thesis uses Lerner’s description of the two conceptual frameworks to identify the first school of interpretation in the 1960s to the 1970s.

Compensatory History

Compensatory history does not describe the history of most women but the history of the exceptional woman who deviated from traditional female expectations. For example, Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer wrote *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* in 1971 to fill in the gaps in women’s history by cataloging prominent

⁸ Gerda Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

⁹ Gerda Lerner, “Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges,” *Feminist Studies* 3, no. ½ (1975): 5.

¹⁰ Lerner, “Placing Women,” 5.

¹¹ Lerner, “Placing Women,” 5.

¹² Lerner, “Placing Women,” 7.

individual individuals from American history.¹³ Biographies of exceptional women exemplified the framework of compensatory history, mostly dwelling on women in male-dominated workspaces, including female lawyers, writers, or women in politics, such as Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁴ Illuminating notable women's histories is important, but it runs the risk of overemphasizing one woman's experience in representing the mass of women's histories.

Contribution History

Most of the scholarship during the 1960s and 1970s aimed to emphasize women's status and oppression in a patriarchal society, mostly relying on the prescriptive language of the "women's sphere" to describe women's experiences. Just as the women's movement in the 1960s emphasized community in the face of a common oppression designed and propagated by the patriarchy, this early perspective on women's history emphasized women's oppression and their response to their subordination. Women's historians used innovative archival material to reveal evidence of a separate sphere, or the rhetorical, and sometimes the physical, space designated for a women's place and the bonds women created within it. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, this domestic sphere was often synonymous with women's subordinate roles as housewives.¹⁵

¹³ Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950; A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

See also Mary Lynn McCree, *Interesting Women*, (Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 1974); Dorothy Thomas, *Women Lawyers in the United States* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1957); Jill Conway, "Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870-1930," *Journal of Social History* 5, no. 2 (1971): 164-77.

¹⁴ Jane Addams, *The Social Thought of Jane Addams*, edited by Christopher Lasch (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); Clarke Chambers, "Addams, Jane 1860-1935" in *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies* (New York: Scribner, 1979); James Hurt, "Walden on Halstead Street: Jane Addams' Twenty Years at Hull-House," *The Centennial Review* 23, no. 2 (1979): 185-207; Elizabeth Comstock Mooney, *Jane Addams* (Chicago: Follett Pub. Co., 1968); Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, *Mother R.: Eleanor Roosevelt's Untold Story* (New York: Putnam, 1977); Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor And Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971).

¹⁵ Kerber, "Separate Spheres," 9.

For example, Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood" used prescriptive literature from the 19th century, such as ladies' magazines, college lectures by male professors, and novels, to argue that 19th century America forced women to become the "perfect woman" or the "True Woman" in order to be at peace with others and themselves.¹⁶ However, Welter's framework dwelt on men's demands or expectations of women. The contribution framework limits women's history by fitting them into categories men have deemed as significant--most notably, as Gerda Lerner suggested, the ways in which women "were aided and affected by the work of these 'great women'" and "the ways in which they themselves grew into feminist awareness, are ignored."¹⁷

Another characteristic of contribution history was historians' focus on how women responded to their oppressive place in a male-dominated society. Scholarship detailed the women's rights struggle, particularly highlighting women's suffrage, the history of women's organizations, and movements' female leaders to emphasize women's resistance.¹⁸ However, most of these histories highlighting women's progress toward equal rights tended to neglect the everyday experiences of ordinary women. Another group of women's historians argued that the separate spheres ideology created a women's culture that served as a platform for women's protest against their oppression.¹⁹ For example, women created networks in social clubs and at work that acted as a support group and breeding ground for feminist consciousness. By collectively articulating their discontent in these relatively safe spaces, women created coping

¹⁶ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 173.

¹⁷ Lerner, *Placing Women*, 6.

¹⁸ See also Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: from Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Anne Firor Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

¹⁹ See also Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-29.

strategies, ranging from friendships to joining women's rights movements.²⁰ However, these early historians tended to overemphasize the experiences of mostly white women and assume that there was a collective fight against oppression while neglecting to detail the diverse experiences of women from other backgrounds.

By the early 1970s, contribution history became the dominant paradigm for women's historians. While the first early research answered essential questions, such as "Who are the missing women in history" and "What have women contributed to abolition, to reform, to the progressive movement, to the labor movement, and to the New Deal," the limitations of using traditional frameworks for women's history became a growing concern.²¹ The first perspective assumed women's experiences were similar, represented by the history of the great women and the struggle for women's rights.

II: Ordinary Women's Differences and Intersectionality, 1980s-1990s

In 1980, Ellen DuBois, Mari Jo Buhle, Temma Kaplan, Gerda Lerner, and Carroll Smith Rosenberg challenged the first school of interpretation.²² DuBois opened a symposium, "Politics and Culture in Women's History," by raising critical questions about women's culture that the framework of compensatory and contribution otherwise would not have answered. DuBois warned future women's historians of the risks of evaluating women's experiences through this framework, arguing that it undermined the historical reality of women's oppression, neglected women's political history, and overemphasized women's similarities. This symposium prompted historians to interrogate the differences between women's experiences and refute historians'

²⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," 1.

²¹ Lerner, *Placing Women*, 5.

²² DuBois, et al., "Politics and Culture in Women's History," 13.

emphasis on extraordinary women and men's historical expectations of women's roles. Most importantly, the symposium aimed to correct the limitations of the earlier framework, moving beyond a history of white, elite women.

There were two reasons why the early scholarship tended to produce histories of white, middle-class women. First, the scholarship on separate spheres and women's culture mostly featured white, middle-class women because the physical space of this group was where women's historians found the evidence to support research. Second, working-class, rural, and people of color's households did not have the economic or social means to sustain the separate sphere model. Thus, it was difficult for the framework of the separate spheres and women's culture to include women outside the elite, white, and middle-class group. Furthermore, this reflection undermined the concept of sisterhood, as many doubted anything as simple as uniform oppression and collective resistance existed or that white middle-class woman represented women of color's and working-class women's experiences and aspirations. As Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen DuBois later argued, women's history in the 1960s and 1970s had replaced the "universal man" with "the universal woman."²³

To be more accurate about women's experiences, historians of the 1980s researched diversity, discontinuity, and conflict rather than insisting on women's common experiences.²⁴ Black and working-class women's experiences flooded the historiography, introducing agendas that often conflicted. For example, Paula Giddings' history of Black women emphasized the tumultuous relationship between Black women and white women, arguing that feminist

²³ Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carroll DuBois, (Eds.), *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), xi; Hartigan-O'Connor and Materson, "Women, Gender, and American History," 3-4.

²⁴ S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz, (Eds.), "Introduction: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues," In *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 3.

movements were less successful than they might have been because white women did not overcome their racist and elitist views and allow poor, working-class Black women to join the campaigns.²⁵ Other studies, such as Susan Glenn's *Daughters of the Shtetl*, Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Issei, Nisei, War Bride*, Sarah Deutsch's *No Separate Refuge*, and Catherine Clinton's *The Plantation Mistress*, also made a strong case against collective womanhood by detailing women's diverse experiences in different times and places.²⁶

By the 1990s, in the wake of the political conservatism of the 1980s, it also became more difficult for women's and gender historians to ignore the history of women that acted against feminism. Many women's historians began investigating the differences between women's political ideologies and the ways in which some white evangelical Protestant and Catholic women fought against women's liberation. While the historiography of women's and gender history widely investigated women's experiences through their resistance to their subordination, by the early 2000s, historians began increasing their attention to the politics and influence of conservative women.

The most prominent histories of women as oppressors were found within the previously male-dominated study on the Ku Klux Klan. For example, Kathleen Blee's *Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, in 1991, forced women's and gender historians to confront the research on the

²⁵ Paula Giddings, *When and where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1984).

See also Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

²⁶ Susan Anita Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Evelyn Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

women in right-wing resistance.²⁷ Kathleen Blee shifted the paradigm from solely researching progressive movements to including an analysis of their conservative opponents. Linda Gordon added to the growing scholarship on the history of women oppressing other women by publishing *The Second Coming of the KKK*.²⁸

An important perspective on the diversity of women's experience came in 1989, when Kimberlé Crenshaw, a feminist legal scholar, first coined the term "intersectionality" to address the lack of analysis of the multiple ways "Black women are subordinated."²⁹ According to Crenshaw, women of color's experiences "are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" and "because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both."³⁰

In 1990, women's historians Ellen DuBois and Vicki Ruiz spearheaded the campaign to include more women of color in historians' analysis. Their collection of essays introduced a multiracial model, comprehensively challenging the notion of universal womanhood.³¹ DuBois and Ruiz viewed Asian American, Latina, Native American, and African American women, and women from differing economic classes and sexual orientations to reveal their coping strategies within a male-dominated society. DuBois and Ruiz's model not only reinvigorated the scholarship on the intersection between race, class, and sexuality but also incorporated the

²⁷ Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

²⁸ Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

²⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1, Article 8 (1989): 140.

³⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1242–43.

³¹ Ruiz and DuBois, *Unequal Sisters*, xiii.

paradigm of gender and the interconnectedness of micro-histories with macro-histories. The essays featuring women of color also discussed women's influence on larger historical trends, connecting the local histories of women of color to their national impact.

These histories proved that while a women's culture might have existed among the elite or white middle-class women, it was not a framework fit to analyze all women. Instead, women's historians differentiated between race, class, region, sexuality, and political affiliation. While the framework of individual experiences of women's history overtook the separate spheres and women's culture, in 1986, Joan Wallach Scott argued that women's historians should use the concept of gender to reveal the full complexity of women's experiences. By prompting women's historians to rethink their consistent guiding framework, Scott initiated a debate that shifted the historiography once again.

III: Gender, 1986

Joan Wallach Scott's pathbreaking article, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," argued that historians should study gender by examining the language and meaning underlying societies' oppression of women. In a postmodern critique, Scott challenged the existence of experiences and fixed identities. Language fabricated histories rather than uncovered historical reality. Scott criticized the constricting language of "women's history" and "women's experiences," calling for the "refusal of the fixed and permanent quality of the binary opposition, a genuine historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference."³² Most importantly, Scott aimed for historians to critique the dominating paradigms of women's history, including the first two schools of thought, to open new discussions of the past. As Scott proposed

³² Scott, "Gender," 1065.

language as a new framework for historians, she first defined gender as a term and then as an ideology: “Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”³³

Furthermore, Scott introduced key factors in analyzing societies’ determination of which perceived differences between the sexes should be highlighted and maintained. Societies evoke different cultural symbols, such as Mary in the Western Christian tradition, to represent women as light, pure, and innocent. Similarly, normative concepts within different societies used such symbols to limit and contain their expectations for the different sexes. They were expressed in “religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines and typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine, and feminine.”³⁴ Scott urged historians to use gender as an analytical tool to disrupt the fixed definitions of men and women and investigate why and how societies chose their binary definitions and expectations for the sexes. Scott used the example of politics and power to convince women’s historians of the benefits of utilizing gender as a mode of historical analysis, showing historians their untapped insights into women’s experiences beyond the household.

Joan Wallach Scott’s gendered analysis inserted women into histories that men have otherwise dominated. By questioning gender representation within all historical inquiries rather than accepting sexual differences as a fixed phenomenon, scholars could move beyond women’s experiences within their designated spaces, such as the home, work, or political movements, and consider military, political, and diplomatic history as well. For example, Arnaldo Testi’s “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity” argued that

³³ Scott, “Gender,” 1067.

³⁴ Scott, “Gender,” 1067.

while historians have considered the extension of rights to propertyless men, immigrants, formerly enslaved men and disenfranchised Black folks in the 1960s to be “epochal turning points” that “substantially changed local, regional, and national public life,” historians have neglected women’s political activity after the Nineteenth Amendment.³⁵ Testi argued that “it is necessary to adopt the language of gender and to explore its usefulness beyond the field of women’s history.”³⁶

Several prominent women’s historians resisted Scott’s proposition to center gender history as the mode of analysis.³⁷ The strongest grievance against the framework of gender was the belief that it would force women back into a subcategory of men’s history. However, gender did not supplant women’s history, despite the fears of some women’s historians. Instead, Scott’s introduction of gender as a historical framework formed a “big tent” of women’s and gender history, ultimately producing a richer historical field.³⁸ Gender history adopted and maintained women’s historians’ vision of centering the diverse experiences of women by illuminating those outside the binary model of femininity or masculinity. Women’s and gender historians re-evaluated the challenge of balancing social history with political history and emphasizing the local histories of ordinary women with the histories of women that led national movements. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, women’s historians once again tackled the challenge of a historical balancing act.

³⁵ Arnaldo Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity,” *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 4 (1995): 1509; Joan Law Hoff, *Gender and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1991); Mady Wechsler Segal, “Women’s Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future,” *Gender & Society* 9, no. 6 (1995): 757–75.

³⁶ Arnaldo, “The Gender of Reform Politics,” 1510.

³⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, “The Just Price, the Free Market, and the Value of Women,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 235–50.

³⁸ Cornelia H. Dayton and Lisa Levenstein, “The Big Tent of U.S. Women’s and Gender History: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 3 (2012): 793.

IV: Connecting the local with the National, 1990s

Women's historians in the 1960s and 1970s emphasized the oppression women collectively faced and the strategies women created to survive within the patriarchal system. The treatment of resistance to their oppression usually followed the framework of identifying the female version of "great man" history in a national movement or highlighting the empowerment of a women's culture. By the 1980s, women's historians sought to correct the limitations within the paradigm of women's culture and collective experiences by emphasizing women's differences. However, historians increasingly found that perhaps the two competing strains of women's history overemphasized their frameworks to a fault.

In order to investigate the ways that women's private and public activities shaped each other, women's and gender historians emphasized the interconnectedness between ordinary or seemingly mundane women's histories and gender's impact on the political economy. Elaine Tyler May pioneered the new perspective by producing her study of the American family and Cold War politics.³⁹ International affairs had been previously neglected within the histories of women. Still, May drew clear parallels between the foreign policy of containment and the post-war domestic policy that urged women to leave their factory jobs and return to their role as wives, mothers, and homemakers, arguing that both policies represented responses to potential threats to American life. Other studies investigated the ways in which ordinary women shaped American policy, producing intimate histories of labor and birth, motherhood, and housework, to illuminate women's greater impact on legal, political, and economic history.⁴⁰

³⁹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 284.

⁴⁰ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Perspective V: History of Sexuality 1990s to Today

The history of sexuality deconstructed the traditional assumptions about the romantic, personal, and commercial experiences of sexuality. John Boswell produced an early history of sexuality in 1980 when he researched the extent to which the Christian Church tolerated gay people.⁴¹ This revolutionary work investigated history beyond the heteronormative boundaries, but women's historians criticized his lack of research on gay women. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, in 1988, investigated the meaning of sexuality in different times and places. D'Emilio and Freedman's *Intimate Matters* argued that sexuality had evolved from family-centered reproduction in early America toward the pursuit of individual happiness.⁴²

The scholarship on the history of sexuality expanded from *Intimate Matters*, continuing to examine the various meanings of sexuality and the larger implications found within political, cultural, and social history. Clare A. Lyons' study outlined how the late eighteenth century destabilized the meaning of sexuality. In *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution*, Lyons argued that growing commercial cities, such as Philadelphia, opened the opportunity for sex outside of marriage, with increasing numbers of brothels, prostitutes, and pornographic works. Lyons found that while wealthy men partook in extramarital relationships, divorce, and desertion, women began to protest the movement of sex outside of marriage and emphasized middle-class white women's virtue, calling for moral reform in the next generation.⁴³

⁴¹ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁴² Estelle B. Freedman and John D'Emilio, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴³ Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

In addition to investigating the evolving meanings and expressions of sexuality, scholars explored how societies used sexuality to create, maintain, or strengthen social hierarchies. Charles Robinson's *Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South* examined anti-miscegenation laws in the American South, finding that Southern white men punished more Black men for being in a relationship with white women more than white men in a relationship with Black women.⁴⁴ Peggy Pascoe used marriage laws to reveal how the prospect of interracial sex created and maintained racial divisions. Furthermore, she showed Black women, whatever their class, did not inherit the privileges of "womanhood," a term that often represented sexual respectability and protection, because Black women's sexuality was defined as promiscuous by white people.⁴⁵ This definition of Black women's sexuality was employed to maintain the hierarchy of white people over Black people.

The framework of sexuality opened insightful histories of women, illuminating their experiences with sexual violence and abuse and women's experiences in their childhood and youth. For example, Hannah Rosen's *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Post-Emancipation South* investigated the history of sexual violence against Black women to reveal how rape reinforced the subordination of African Americans during and after enslavement and provided important insight into the impunity with which white men acted after emancipation.⁴⁶ Rachel Devlin's *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters, and Postwar American Culture* examined sexual abuse within the family

⁴⁴ Charles F. Robinson II, *Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

⁴⁵ Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁶ Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

to explain the origins of the growing attention and moral panics over child abuse after World War II.⁴⁷

Conclusion

My coding scheme identifies five schools of interpretation of women's and gender history to represent the main frameworks that illuminate women's histories, grossly oversimplifying a complex field. Even so, it becomes clear that the field of women's and gender history is stunningly expansive, introducing critical histories of those otherwise left out of historical discussions. As Chan Yan and Karen Offen suggest, "in the best of all possible worlds, all historians now and in the future... would integrate a gendered analysis into their thinking and writing about the past... They would 'see' that women are historical actors just as are men, that the work they do is just as valuable, and that their perspectives have great merit... However, we are still far from that point."⁴⁸

While the historiography of women's and gender history evolved from the 1960s and 1970s framework of compensatory and contribution history to the 2000s framework of the history of sexuality, the historiography of textbook-related research was also becoming a field of study. Beginning in 1973, the two fields of women's and gender history and textbook-related research intersected, producing a scholarship of women as treated in high school social studies textbooks.⁴⁹ This study contributes to this historiography by examining whether the evolution of high school social studies textbooks reflects the progress in women's and gender historiography.

⁴⁷ Rachel Devlin, *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters, and Postwar American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

See also Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Yan and Offen, *Women's History at the Cutting Edge*, 21.

⁴⁹ Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High School Textbooks," 133.

Textbook-Related Research

In the late 1960s, textbook-related research illuminated the role of national and state governments in creating history curricula and the publishing market.⁵⁰ Most notably, textbook studies analyzed the “master narrative” intended to create a unitary national identity.⁵¹ Researchers examined history textbooks’ critical role in legitimizing a nation’s “true” history for the next generation of citizens and future policymakers. Subsequently, textbook scholarship was primarily concerned with the controversial debates over which “true” narratives should be taught to students.⁵²

Researchers Gary A. Tobin and Dennis R. Ybarra argued that these instructional materials are “vital to the functioning and future of the United States,” as their role is to define the “character and soul of America.”⁵³ According to Gilbert Sewall, if students learn a false narrative that misinforms them about their relationship to the world, future leaders will not be equipped to make critical foreign policy decisions, making textbook content “a national security issue.”⁵⁴ However, as the interrogation of which master narrative should be included in the history textbooks shaped the initial discussion of textbook studies, the women’s history movement revealed the inherent flaws of a master narrative itself. Most publishers and authors of the textbooks seemed to have accepted the assumption that emphasizing presidential and war history creates the most informed citizens.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Eckhardt Fuchs, “Current Trends in History and Social Studies Textbook Research,” *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 14, no. 2 (2011): 17.

⁵¹ Fuchs, “Current Trends in History and Social Studies Textbook Research,” 19.

⁵² Fuchs, “Current Trends in History and Social Studies Textbook Research,” 17; Maria Grever and Tina van der Vlies, “Why National Narratives are Perpetuated: A Literature Review on New Insights from History Textbook Research,” *London Review of Education* 15 (2017): 286.

⁵³ Gary A. Tobin and Dennis R. Ybarra, *The Trouble with Textbooks: Distorting History and Religion* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 8.

⁵⁴ Gilbert Sewall, “World History Textbooks: A Review,” *Center for Education Studies dba American Textbook Council*, (2004): 32.

⁵⁵ Tobin and Ybarra, *Trouble with Textbooks*, 8.

Janice Law Trecker first recognized this issue in 1973 when she examined the most widely used textbooks in 1960s classrooms. Trecker found that women in United States high school American history textbooks were vastly underrepresented, concluding that “the resulting picture” of women's history in textbooks was "a depressing one."⁵⁶ Countless passages about women implied that they were passively granted their rights rather than actively earning them. Historical trends, rather than their own agency, allowed women to progress towards equal rights with men.⁵⁷ Trecker's conclusions were unsurprising, as in 1973, women's history was in its infancy. Over the subsequent years fifty years, women's and gender scholarship progressed and solidified itself as a major field of study, but scholars continued to suggest that textbooks neglect women, especially women of color.⁵⁸

Quantitative Versus Qualitative

Despite these assertions of neglect, quantitative analysis revealed a slight improvement over time. For most longitudinal studies, researchers found an increase in the number of women mentioned in high school history textbooks. For example, Roger Clark et al.'s study in 2004 analyzed nineteen textbooks from the 1960s to the 1990s.⁵⁹ They revealed that the ratio of women to men in textbooks' indexes increased over time, as did the percentage of pages that included women's history. Li Lucy et al. incorporated artificial intelligence in a recent quantitative study to overcome the “limitations of human coding” or qualitative methods within textbook-related research. Through natural language processing, the 2020 study found that

⁵⁶ Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High School Textbooks," 134.

⁵⁷ Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High School Textbooks," 133.

⁵⁸ Christine Woyshner and Jessica B. Schocker, “Cultural Parallax and Content Analysis: Images of Black Women in High School History Textbook” *Theory & Research in Social Education* 43, no. 4 (2015): 441; Lerner, *Placing Women in History*, 5–6.

⁵⁹ Clark, et al., “How Much of the Sky?” 57-58.

representations of race and gender were not equal to men's representation but that there were more women's names and women-centered topics in most recent textbooks.⁶⁰

Even in the textbooks used for this study, the number of women's names included in the index increased over time.⁶¹ By these quantitative standards, the textbooks did evolve toward a more inclusive curriculum. However, recent criticism has emerged within textbook-related research, revealing the limitations of quantitative studies. For example, textbook researcher Eckhardt Fuchs argued that quantitative studies “are not sufficiently relevant for investigating and analyzing the *multimodality* of the new history textbooks.”⁶² Maria Grever and Tina van der Vlies agreed, arguing that “an in-depth analysis of the *structures* within textbooks is needed,” emphasizing the importance of a qualitative approach.⁶³ Most notably, while quantitative studies reveal the number of women listed in the index or the number of passages women appear in, they do not reveal whether textbooks are evolving toward teaching women's and gender history more effectively to students. My study diverges from the historiography of textbook-related research by implementing the five schools of interpretation as an analytic device to decode the textbooks' overall narrative about women and to answer how well they have kept pace with the historiography of women's and gender history.

Methodology

I base my research on a qualitative analysis of widely used United States social studies textbooks from the 1960s to the 2010s. I focused solely on textbooks' treatment of women from

⁶⁰ Lucy et al., “Content Analysis of Textbooks via Natural Language Processing,” 2.

⁶¹ Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Eugene Curti, *Rise of the American Nation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 860–887; Rebecca Brooks Gruver, *An American History* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1976), I6- I43; Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, Nancy Woloch, *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), R72- R97.

⁶² Fuchs, “Current Trends in History and Social Studies Textbook Research,” 3.

⁶³ Grever and Vlies, *Why National Narratives are Perpetuated*, 291.

Reconstruction to the present. This not only limited the scope of this study to a manageable evaluation, but it also created more opportunities to locate and examine women's and gender history. The passages that discussed women the most, such as moral reform and the Nineteenth Amendment, occurred after Reconstruction. To identify women's and gender history in the social studies textbooks treating the Post-Civil War era through the present, I read through the entire text to determine where women's and gender history appeared. While occasionally referencing the index, I aimed to understand the textbook's overall message. Furthermore, by expanding beyond the index, I also examined sections on African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinx to determine whether the frameworks from the women's and gender historiography also applied to the textbooks' treatment of the history of race.

Textbook Selection

In an effort to determine the most widely used – and, presumably, representative – texts, I first narrowed the textbook selection to the states with textbook adoption laws.⁶⁴ In states that do not have statewide adoption laws, textbooks are chosen at the district level. For this study, I limited the textbooks examined to ones appearing on the state's Department of Education's list of approved textbooks, which usually offered five to six options that districts could choose from. I then chose the states with the largest K-12 population that implement statewide adoption laws. These were California, Texas, Florida, and Georgia in the decades this study surveyed.⁶⁵ However, California's state-wide adoption laws do not extend to secondary schools. Textbook-related research also corroborated my theory that the states with the largest K-12 population have the most influence over the textbook market, theoretically expanding the textbooks' readership to

⁶⁴ Vincent Scudella, "State Textbook Adoption," *Education Commission of the States* (2013): 1-13.

⁶⁵ Thomas D. Snyder, Lamar Alexander, and Diane Ravitch. *120 years of American Education: A Statistical Portal* (Washington D.C.: Department of Education, 1993), 26-28.

other states.⁶⁶ As one 1978 article put it: “When a single committee (15 educators in the case of Texas) chooses the textbooks to be read by 2.5 million Texas schoolchildren, and when that choice means \$48 million in yearly sales, publishers are going to tailor their products for the Texas market and concentrate selling efforts there.”⁶⁷ Gilbert T. Sewall’s and Stapley W. Emberling’s 1998 article agreed, arguing that without Texas’ textbook market, “publishers have no equivalent place to test drive their high school history books, and they face increased costs selling books state by state and locality by locality.”⁶⁸ Each textbook adoption list includes five to six approved textbooks. However, the availability of some textbooks limited the sampling of this study.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study involved the availability of state adoption information. While Texas’ Department of Education has made its list of approved textbooks for statewide adoption available since 1919, Georgia’s Department of Education began publishing its list of approved textbooks for statewide adoption in 1998, and Florida’s archived list of approved textbooks is only available for the 2011-2015 adoption cycle.⁶⁹ Thus, the 1960s, 1970s, and

⁶⁶ Raymond English, “The Politics of Textbook Adoption,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 62, no. 4 (1980): 275-78; Michael W. Apple, “Textbook Publishing: The Political and Economic Influences,” *Theory Into Practice* 28, no. 4 (1989): 282-87; Gilbert T. Sewall, “Textbook Publishing,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 86, no. 7 (2005): 498-502; Scott L. Roberts, “‘Georgia on My Mind’: Writing the ‘New’ State History Textbook in the Post-Loewen World,” *The History Teacher* 47, no. 1 (2013): 41-60; Keith Crawford, “The Manufacture of Official Knowledge: The Texas Textbook Adoption Process,” *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 25, no. 1/2 (2003), 7.

⁶⁷ Mike Bowler, “Textbook Publishers Try to Please All, but First They Woo the Heart of Texas,” *The Reading Teacher* 31, no. 5 (1978): 515.

⁶⁸ Gilbert T. Sewall and Emberling, Stapley W., “A Generation of History Textbooks,” *American Textbook Council* 36, (1998): 3.

⁶⁹ Georgia Department of Education, “Social Studies (1998),” in *Archives Past Listings of State Recommended Textbooks* (Atlanta: Georgia State Department of Education, 2023), 61SS-64SS; Georgia State Board of Education, “Recommendations from the 2004 State Textbook/Instructional Materials Advisory Committee,” in *Archives Past Listings of State Recommended Textbooks* (Atlanta: Georgia State Department of Education, 2004), 1-9; Florida State Board of Education, “2011-2012 Florida Instructional Materials Adopted for Social Studies K-12,” in *Instructional Materials: Archive* (Tallahassee: Florida State Department of Education, 2011) 7; Florida Department of Education. “2016-2017 K-12 Social Studies Adopted Instructional Materials” in *Instructional Materials: Archive* (Tallahassee: Florida State Department of Education, 2018), 6.

1980s textbooks examined reflect Texas' adoption lists.⁷⁰ From the 1990s to the 2000s, the textbooks represented Texas and Georgia; for the 2010s, textbooks from all three states were examined. The next significant research hurdle was obtaining textbooks. The textbooks were chosen from each state adoption archival list and almost entirely depended on the availability of that textbook. I am beyond thankful to Fayetteville High School for letting me “dumpster dive” through their old textbook collections.

Finally, this study's inability to observe how students and teachers used the textbooks represents a sizeable restraint. While I defer to several contemporary studies emphasizing teachers' reliance on textbooks, there is a critical absence of empirical data to represent decades before the 1990s.⁷¹ Despite the research limitations of this study, the qualitative analysis offers the best explanation of how well textbooks have included developments in the fields of women's and gender history.

Findings

The principal findings from this analysis suggest that high school American history textbooks have not evolved much past the first school of interpretation that emerged in the 1960s. Textbook authors have made some attempts to incorporate new frameworks, primarily ordinary women's differences, and intersectionality. However, for all five decades examined in this study, textbooks chiefly utilized compensatory and contributory history to describe women's

⁷⁰ Texas State Department of Education, “Catalogue of Current-Adoption Textbooks, 1919-1920,” in *Texas Adopted Textbook List* (Austin: The University of Texas Libraries, 1919); Texas State Department of Education, “Catalogue of Current-Adoption Textbooks, 2020-2021,” in *Texas Adopted Textbook List* (Austin: The University of Texas Libraries, 2020).

⁷¹ Charles W. Eagles, “Textbooks: Their History, Role, and Importance.” In *Civil Rights, Culture Wars: The Fight over a Mississippi Textbook*, 12–36, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Monica Reichenberg, “Explaining Teachers' Use of Textbooks,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society* 8, no. 2 (2016): 145–59; Kenneth P. Langton and M. Kent Jennings, “Political Socialization and the High School Civics Curriculum in the United States,” *The American Political Science Review* 62, no. 3 (1968): 852–67.

experiences. For over five decades, students have learned primarily about the extraordinary women that stepped out of their domestic sphere and into male-dominated spaces and the history of women's rights movements.

Additionally, the textbooks applied the same treatment of women to the treatment of people of color. The textbooks in every decade repeated the same structure, with sections on women, followed directly by sections on African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinx. In these passages, the textbooks detailed these groups' progress toward equal rights compared to white men's and occasionally named the "great figures" who influenced national movements. Thus, textbooks treated marginalized communities similarly, rarely integrating any other framework past the earlier stage of women's and gender history.

In the 1990s textbooks and thereafter, brief passages incorporated defining characteristics beyond the first perspective on women's and gender history. On a few occasions, textbooks did incorporate the second perspective, the history of women's differences, in discussions of women's economic status. In even fewer instances, the textbooks differentiated between Black and Brown women and white women's experiences. The third perspective, gender history, appeared in two textbooks from the 2000s and the 2010s within a comparative discussion of men's and women's economic roles. The fourth perspective, connecting the local and the national, was the most neglected framework within the later history textbooks. Despite decades of scholarship, there were no instances where the textbook connected women's everyday lives locally to discussions of the national political economy. For example, a textbook might allude to women's domestic work as important for the national economy, but the passages do not explain how or why. Finally, textbooks from the 2010s incorporated the fifth school of interpretation in one passage about gay rights. Arguably, this is just another example of a textbook applying the

earliest perspective to a marginalized community by emphasizing its progress toward equal rights.

This section examines the changes in widely used textbooks within each decade compared to the five perspectives of women's and gender history. Each section begins with a brief acknowledgment of the selection process for the textbooks that presumably represent each decade and the frameworks that the textbook could have incorporated. I use a five-year buffer before expecting a framework to appear in the textbooks. For example, in the section examining the 1990s to the 2000s textbooks, I begin with the fourth perspective that emerged in the early 1990s. I start by identifying the instances in which the most recent perspective was incorporated. I then work my way back to reveal the instances in which the textbooks use the first school of interpretation. To discuss every instance where the textbooks limited themselves to compensatory and contributory history would not only be repetitive but would also make this paper the same length as the textbooks. Instead, I highlight the instances where the textbooks incorporate frameworks past the earliest stage to provide some signs of progress. However, this structure should not negate the fact that the textbooks mostly dwelt on the first perspective.

1960s – 1970s Textbooks

For the 1960s and 1970s, I relied on Texas' list of approved textbooks to select the presumably most representative textbook. Georgia's and Florida's archived lists of approved textbooks for statewide adoption were unavailable until the 1990s and 2010s. Texas had the second-highest K-12 population, following closely behind California, whose statewide adoption laws only apply to primary schools.⁷²

⁷² English, "The Politics of Textbook Adoption." 275-78; Apple, "Textbook Publishing: The Political and Economic Influences," 282-87; Sewall, "Textbook Publishing," 498-502; Roberts, "Georgia on My Mind," 41-60.

Publishers' financial records that indicate the most popular selling textbooks are not disclosed to the public. Thus, some guesswork was involved in examining the most popular textbooks. For Texas' adoption cycle, 1962-1968, I chose Lewis Paul Todd's and Merle Eugene Curti's *Rise of the American Nation* as the most representative for the 1960s and 1970s because Texas re-adopted this same textbook for the adoption cycles, 1969-1973 and 1974-1977. This indicated that the *Rise of the American Nation* was a popular choice among the districts. I then chose a second textbook from Texas' approved list of adoptable textbooks to either confirm or refute generalizations found in the texts and consider similarities between them. Rebecca Brooks Gruver's *An American History* can also represent the latter half of the 1970s as it was published in 1976. There were no significant differences in the frameworks that Todd and Curti and Gruver used, only differences in formatting. For example, Gruver's textbook was simplified, lacking color and images. Todd's and Curti's textbook included colorful textboxes and usually at least one image per page.⁷³

Before the 1960s, textbooks were mainly "womenless" histories, only portraying the traditional white, elite male experience. By doing so, the textbooks assumed that these men's experiences were essential, normal, and self-evident narratives.⁷⁴ By 1960, however, social historians began to reframe the traditional focus on political and military history to incorporate women, people of color, and working people. Within this wave of social history, scholars expanded beyond the white male experience to introduce groups that traditional discussions did not acknowledge. Historians' first step in overcoming the historiography's neglect of marginalized communities was to incorporate the extraordinary historical actors that broke into

⁷³ Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Eugene Curti, *Rise of the American Nation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 860–887; Rebecca Brooks Gruver, *An American History* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1976), I6- I43

⁷⁴ "Women's Studies Scholarship: Its Impact on the Information World," *American Library Association*, 2019, <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/feminist-task-force/womens-studies-scholarship-impact> (Accessed April 28, 2023).

white male-dominated spaces. By the late 1960s, historians applied the same solution to women's history, highlighting the "great women" who contributed to a male-defined society. This compensatory history was the primary method of delivering women's history in textbooks.

For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, the textbooks examined most frequently featured Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt in their few discussions of women. To detail women's history within the Progressive movement, Todd and Curti named Jane Addams as the representative for women's contribution to moral reform. The 1964 text, under the "Other Progressive Leaders" section, declared that "Jane Addams, the social worker, attacked the problem of newly arrived immigrants living in the slums of Chicago."⁷⁵ But the background and information on her were limited to one sentence. Similarly, Gruver portrayed Jane Addams as an "American social worker" who "set up Hull House" and "even managed to get herself appointed garbage inspector of her ward."⁷⁶

To describe women in the New Deal, Gruver credited "Mrs. Roosevelt" as one of the few women who "won public recognition" as she "was the most influential First Lady to that time."⁷⁷ The 1976 text clarified that women such as Eleanor Roosevelt had political power because their influence "depended on their connections with the influential men; they had no independent influence of their own."⁷⁸

The only other instance in which the 1960s and 1970s textbooks represented women's history was in sections that described women's movements and rights. More specifically, textbooks focused on how women overcame their oppression without noting who oppressed them and the ways in which historical trends helped advance women's rights. Especially within

⁷⁵ Todd and Curti, *Rise of the American Nation*, 545.

⁷⁶ Gruver, *An American History*, 346.

⁷⁷ Gruver, *An American History*, 461.

⁷⁸ Gruver, *An American History*, 461.

the discussion of suffrage, the 1960s-1970s textbooks highlighted women's progress toward voting rights. However, the textbooks primarily emphasized the movement's history rather than the national impact it had. For example, *An American History* described the history of the women's suffrage movement as "a campaign for equality that dated back to 1848, when the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls."⁷⁹ Gruver detailed the movement's history of divisions, ultimately revealing that "once the suffrage movement attained its goals, it fell apart."⁸⁰

It should be noted that Todd and Curti did not include a section on the civil rights movement as it was much too recent for the authors and publishers to incorporate. Only the 1976 textbook briefly discussed the movement in one paragraph or less. In sections that detail women's activism, sections on African Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans directly followed, establishing that the perspectives used to represent women's history also represent the history of people of color. For example, directly after the discussion on "Women's Suffrage," Gruver discussed "Black Americans" and their "new source of energy toward racial equality" during the Progressive Era.⁸¹

It was not just suffrage that illustrated progress in women's rights. The 1960s and 1970s textbooks also underscored women's expanding opportunities within the workforce. For example, Todd and Curti revealed that while the Nineteenth Amendment was "the landmark in women's long struggle to win equality with men... equally important were the gains made by women in social and economic activities."⁸² New inventions, including irons, refrigerators, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners, released "housewives" from "long hours of drudgery

⁷⁹ Gruver, *An American History*, 405.

⁸⁰ Gruver, *An American History*, 405.

⁸¹ Gruver, *An American History*, 736-738.

⁸² Todd and Curti, *Rise of the American Nation*, 680.

by the new laborsaving devices...”⁸³ The same text emphasized that female college graduates “took increasingly active parts in civic affairs,” and the women who did not pursue education could find work in “stenographic jobs, banks, and industrial plants.”⁸⁴ In one example of the textbook crediting a historical trend, or this case, an invention, for granting women more opportunities, the typewriter was “a tremendous benefit to businesses as well as to women eager to take jobs outside the home.”⁸⁵ Gruver also credited the typewriter as leading “the introduction of more women into the labor force in clerical and secretarial positions.”⁸⁶ Rather than historicize women’s active decision to join the workforce or the economic circumstances compelling them to do so, the textbook used a typewriter to explain the phenomenon. Nevertheless, Todd and Curti and Gruver recognized non-elite women by discussing job opportunities for women who could not pursue a college degree but needed to work outside the home, whether by choice or out of financial necessity.

As the field of women’s and gender history was still developing, the high school history textbooks in the 1960s and 1970s rarely included frameworks past the earliest schools of compensatory and contributory history. By the end of the 1970s, however, women’s history had developed into a major field of historical inquiry. Women’s history was introduced into colleges’ academic fields, just as African American studies had been a few years before.⁸⁷ While the legitimization of these academic research pursuits was well underway by 1980, the textbooks continued to lag behind. As the textbook analysis shows, perhaps it takes longer than twenty years for innovative perspectives to seep into high school classrooms.

⁸³ Todd and Curti, *Rise of the American Nation*, 680.

⁸⁴ Todd and Curti, *Rise of the American Nation* 522-524.

⁸⁵ Todd and Curti, *Rise of the American Nation* 525.

⁸⁶ Gruver, *An American History*, 591.

⁸⁷ Hartigan-O'Connor and Materson, “Women, Gender, and American History,” 14.

1980s Textbooks

Similar to the selection process for the 1960s and 1970s textbooks, I relied on Texas' approved textbook list to determine the most representative textbook for the decade because of its large K-12 population and archive availability. From Texas' approved textbook list for the cycle, 1986-1992, I chose Todd's and Curti's *The American Nation* as the best representative because of the popularity of its previous version, *Rise of the American Nation*, as well as Todd's and Curti's reputable experience in the social studies textbook world. I then chose Joseph R. Conlin's *Our Land, Our Time: A History of the United States* to verify or refute generalizations drawn from Todd's and Curti's textbook. *Our Land, Our Time* was one of the 1986-1992 Texas-approved textbooks and the only other textbook available in the archive. There were no substantial differences in the narratives of the two textbooks.⁸⁸

While the first school of interpretation introduced important histories of women, by 1980, scholars began to warn of these frameworks' limitations. Historians articulated the risks of representing women by one extraordinary example or through women's rights alone, describing women's contributions to American history through the standards and expectations of men. The second school of interpretation that emphasized ordinary women's differences at the local level emerged from historians' critique of the frameworks that dominated the 1960s and 1970s. By detailing women of various economic statuses, races, and ethnicities and their everyday lives, the historiography of women's and gender history offer a richer and more accurate account.

For the textbooks listed in Texas' 1980s adoption cycle, the approved textbooks were all published in 1986. Gerda Lerner had published her critique of compensatory and contribution

⁸⁸ Lewis Paul Todd, and Merle Eugene Curti, *The American Nation: Reconstruction to the Present*. (Orlando: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1986); Joseph Robert Conlin, *Our Land, Our Time: A History of the United States* (San Diego: Coronado Publishers, 1986).

history over a decade prior. But while the 1980s textbooks included more women of color, they continued to use compensatory history as the primary framework to introduce exemplary women.

Perspective II: Ordinary Women's Differences and Intersectionality

When the textbooks did differentiate between women's political and labor histories, they recognized the existence of class differences without discussing the everyday experiences of working-class women. For example, Todd and Curti explained that "a great many women of the urban middle-class became members of the women's club... first concerning themselves largely with discussions of literary and cultural topics, but before the end of the 1800s, they were also fighting political corruption, working for better health and recreational conditions, and in some instances, taking up the battle for women suffrage."⁸⁹

Perspective I: Compensatory and Contribution History

Todd and Curti and Conlin mostly used compensatory history to introduce more Black and Brown women. In almost every instance where the texts mentioned Black and Brown women's histories, the authors framed them through the "great woman" thesis, revealing the extraordinary women of color who fulfilled men's expectations of them. None of these women appeared within sections that detailed women's activism but in sections about African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans. Though the textbook included more Black women, only more names appeared, not a substantive narrative of their everyday lives.

For example, in Todd and Curti's 1986 text, Sarah Winnemucca, an American Indian woman and "daughter of a Nevada Paiute chief, played a unique role in urging reform... as a scout, a guide, an interpreter at army posts, a teacher of Indian children, the widow of one army

⁸⁹ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 525.

officer, and the wife of another.”⁹⁰ Including a quotation from General Oliver Otis Howard, “for whom she was a scout and interpreter,” Todd and Curti emphasized “that [Winnemucca] should have a place beside the name of Pocahontas in the history of our country.”⁹¹ In another instance, Latina activist Vilma Martinez “took an active part in defending the rights of her people” during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s.⁹² Yet, it was unclear what other women were doing in the Chicano Movement, nor did the textbook explain what Latina women experienced daily life before the Chicano Movement.

Todd and Curti treated Black women similarly, emphasizing a few “great women” who contributed to political movements. For example, the textbooks used Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Josephine Ruffin, Mary Church Terrell, and Rosa Parks to detail the entirety of Black women’s activism from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, the treatment of Black women’s activism was far from offering an in-depth analysis. One text described Ida B. Wells as a “teacher and publisher, [who] was dismissed from teaching for denouncing the inferior segregated schools for Black children.”⁹³ She then launched a “crusade against black lynchings...”⁹⁴ The next time Todd and Curti mentioned a Black woman was in treating the Civil Rights Movement after World War II, continuing the narrative of Black women’s history through Rosa Parks. Parks’ contribution was the most detailed, describing her as “a 40-year-old seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama, [who] took a courageous step” leading “to a nationwide protest movement.”⁹⁵ The textbook then described Parks boarding a bus and sitting in the front section for whites only, and when she defied the bus driver’s order to move back, “she was

⁹⁰ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 83.

⁹¹ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 83.

⁹² Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 508.

⁹³ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 57.

⁹⁴ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 57.

⁹⁵ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 443.

arrested.”⁹⁶ According to the textbook, Martin Luther King, Jr. then “organized a boycott with 50,000 Black people” against the Alabama bus system.⁹⁷

When the textbooks did not mention women through the compensatory framework, they mentioned them through the framework of contribution history. Besides the great women who stepped into public history as activists, the 1980s textbooks ostensibly fulfilled the demands of women’s history by treating women’s experiences in terms of national movements. For example, women, “having whole-heartedly worked for their political freedom... united in the League of Women Voters, determined that their first collective action should be to raise the standards of citizenship for both sexes.”⁹⁸ Conlin’s 1986 textbook left the reader to assume that all women shared a common experience in participating in such movements. Otherwise, women were silent and passive figures impacted by historical trends.

1990s Textbooks

For the 1990s, I relied on Texas’ and Georgia’s list of approved textbooks for the 1992-2003 adoption cycles. I chose Gary B. Nash’s *American Odyssey: The United States in the 20th Century* to represent the 1990s because it was the only textbook to be included in both Texas’ and Georgia’s list of adopted textbooks. Thus, it can be assumed that it had a wide readership based on the states’ large K-12 population. For the second textbook, I chose Henry W. Bragdon’s, Samuel P. McCutchen’s, and Donald A. Ritchie’s *History of a Free Nation*, also

⁹⁶ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 443.

⁹⁷ Todd and Curti, *The American Nation*, 443-444.

⁹⁸ Conlin, *Our Land, Our Time*, 317.

published in 1992. *History of a Free Nation* appeared on Georgia's approved textbook list and was available in the archives.⁹⁹

By the 1990s, women's and gender historians had mostly abandoned the first school of interpretation and had accepted ordinary women's differences as the dominant perspective. While Joan Wallach Scott argued in 1986 that gender as a category of analysis in women's history could allow women to be considered in categories that had been predominately male, Scott's perspective was still being debated. Textbooks in the 1990s, however, had over a decade to incorporate ordinary women's differences to reveal new histories of women. Yet, the 1990s textbooks continued to rely on the first school of interpretation to reveal women's experiences.

Perspective III: Gender

Unsurprisingly, textbooks did not incorporate gender as a framework in the 1990s beyond comparative studies of the expectations of men and women as workers. In teaching students about the separation of women's and men's work during the 1920s, Nash described women's work as providing "little chance for advancement except to the positions of cashier or executive secretary, or, perhaps, to marriage," while men found work as "managers, senior cashiers, chief clerks, head bookkeepers, floorwalkers, salespeople, or advertising workers."¹⁰⁰ The textbook further compared men's and women's work to detail the "new work environment of the 1920s" that "clearly defined the separate jobs of each sex."¹⁰¹ For women, "because secretarial work taught endurance, modesty, and obedience, many people considered it perfect preparation for marriage."¹⁰² Men's labor "favored energy, initiative, and creativity," which "could lead to a

⁹⁹ Gary B. Nash, *American Odyssey: The United States in the 20th Century* (New York: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 1997); Henry W. Bragdon, Samuel P. McCutchen, and Donald A. Ritchie, *History of a Free Nation* (Glencoe/McGraw-Hill: Ohio, 1992).

¹⁰⁰ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 281-282.

¹⁰¹ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 282.

¹⁰² Nash, *American Odyssey*, 282.

better position in the company.”¹⁰³ The textbook did not discuss why women were held to the standards of getting married rather than advancing in the workplace, once again obscuring the impact of living within a male-dominated society. Yet, Nash, a prominent exponent of “history from the bottom up,” was clearly attempting to incorporate a new framework.

In one other instance, the same text incorporated gender within the lesson on the women’s movement in the 1960s, titled “Social and Gender Relations.”¹⁰⁴ After a brief discussion of expanding rights for women, Nash added that “many men willingly examined and adjusted their attitudes in response to the evolving consciousness of women... For other men, reaching an understanding of their changing roles was a frustrating struggle in which they could not get beyond the most trivial issues.”¹⁰⁵ The textbook did not expand on these trivial issues. Still, the textbook recognized the impact of women’s rights on men’s assumptions, expanding beyond a simple discussion of the expansion of women’s rights.

Perspective II: Ordinary Women’s Differences and Intersectionality

While the framework of gender was relatively new within the field, the second school of interpretation that emphasized ordinary women’s differences had been developing for over a decade. By the 1990s, the diverse histories of women from various economic statuses, ethnicities, and regions flourished. In some ways, the 1990s textbooks incorporated passages that revealed the diversity of women’s everyday lives, providing signs of progress.

For example, in detailing the 1950s housewife, Nash clarified that “for women in the lower economic ranks, staying at home was not an option...”¹⁰⁶ In another instance, the textbook described the impact the 1980s economy had on families, explaining that “as real estate and other

¹⁰³ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 282.

¹⁰⁴ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 617.

¹⁰⁵ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 617.

¹⁰⁶ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 510.

prices rose in the 1980s, thousands of middle-class families found that they also needed two paychecks... As a result, hundreds of thousands of wives and mothers joined the workforce.”¹⁰⁷

Besides the distinction between women in lower economic ranks and middle-class mothers and wives, the same textbook differentiated Black and Brown women’s histories. In the discussion of the women’s movement in the 1960s, under the section “The Woman’s Dilemma,” Nash revealed that “minority women faced a special problem in that they encountered sexual and racial discrimination at the same time... Many women chose to seek full civil liberties for their ethnic group as their first objective... Equality between men and women would have to come later.”¹⁰⁸ This is unique as most women of color appeared outside women’s history and in sections about African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas. Nash’s *American Odyssey* recognized the intersectionality of race and gender, providing evidence that some attention was paid to the evolving historiography, particularly in discussing women’s differences.

Perspective I: Compensatory and Contribution History

Nevertheless, Black and Brown women were still almost always mentioned in the mode of compensatory history. In the section on Progressivism, Ida B. Wells, a familiar exemplary figure also mentioned in the 1980s textbooks, was “a leader of the anti-lynching movement” but “became a controversial advocate of equality for African Americans because of an incident on a train... Upon taking a seat, she was told by the conductor that she was in a car reserved for whites and that she would have to move... Wells refused... Though only about four and a half feet tall, Wells put up a fierce struggle.”¹⁰⁹ Again, Nash left the reader to assume that Ida B.

¹⁰⁷ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 784-785.

¹⁰⁸ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 615.

¹⁰⁹ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 165-166.

Wells' activism went beyond refusing her seat as the text never mentioned her impact on the anti-lynching movement again.

Ella J. Baker, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader and a powerful force during the Civil Rights Movement, was credited "as the executive secretary of King's Southern Christian Leadership Council."¹¹⁰ After witnessing the strength of sit-ins and the willingness of young activists, Baker invited "100 student leaders from the sit-ins to a conference, some 500 students showed up... Out of that meeting came a new civil rights organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee."¹¹¹ While Baker was introduced as an activist, Nash's profile of Baker lacked any further examination of her impact on the movement.

In the rarer instance of a textbook including a specific Latina woman's history, Nash credited Dolores Huerta, "a small, quiet woman" and a "tough negotiator," as an activist who demanded better working conditions and wages for the Latino grape pickers."¹¹² Huerta's story introduced the "Voices of Protest" passage within the section on Mexican-Americans in the 1960s.¹¹³ White women's activism was similarly described through biographical information. For example, Bragdon et al. described Jane Addams as "a deeply religious woman, was inspired by a passionate desire to work" and "determined to improve the life of the 'other half.'"¹¹⁴ Beyond interpreting who the "other half" was, Nash left the reader to assume that Addams was an influential leader in the social gospel movement.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 570.

¹¹¹ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 570.

¹¹² Nash, *American Odyssey*, 612.

¹¹³ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 612.

¹¹⁴ Bragdon, et al. *History of a Free Nation*, 572, 574.

¹¹⁵ Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2011).

For the 1990s textbooks, besides the anecdotal history of women's activism, compensatory history occurs most often within the discussions of cultural history. Prior to the 1990s, textbooks focused primarily on political, economic, and military history. However, there was a turn toward incorporating more social and cultural history. As part of my hypothesis, I predicted that the textbooks' treatment of women's history would improve when the authors incorporated social and cultural history into the curriculum. While the textbooks included more women in the 1990s, they subscribed to the same framework for revealing women's experiences. Thus, no real improvement in teaching women's and gender history effectively occurred when textbooks incorporated social and cultural history.

Nash and Bragdon listed Zora Neale Hurston, Marian Anderson, and Ellen Ochoa as cultural contributors. A new addition to Nash's 1992 textbook was the appearance of Gertrude Ederle, credited for her athletic ability and becoming "the first woman to swim the English Channel, beating the fastest man's record by a full two hours."¹¹⁶ Just as a student in the 1960s learned about Jane Addams' stepping into the male-valued space of politics, a student in the 1990s also learned about a female athlete who was included because she proved she could do what a man could.

The 1990s textbooks continued to rely on the contribution framework to describe the history of women's rights. They overstated women's gains without discussing why women had to catch up to men or how their activism influenced the larger historical story. Even when the textbook did recognize the prejudices women faced, the texts never explicitly explained why women were oppressed. For example, "NRA codes often granted women lower pay than men, even for the same jobs... Many businessmen refused to hire married women during the

¹¹⁶ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 302, 306, 796.

Depression, and married women whose husbands worked were often forced to resign.”¹¹⁷ Nash could have described men’s historical assumptions about women, such as the oppressive expectations that women should stay out of the paid workforce and remain at home. Despite recognizing women’s oppression, Nash dwelt on how far women had progressed.

According to Nash, “the Gibson Girl” was the “ideal of feminine beauty before World War I,” where women had “long flowing hair,” and “her dress emphasized her womanly figure, highlighted her tiny waist, and covered her legs.”¹¹⁸ Yet, women earned newfound freedom in the 1920s, when she “turned this modest figure upside down and inside out and emerged the flapper.”¹¹⁹ These freedoms translated into allowing women to smoke and publicly use profanity without arrest. Ten years after World War I, “the flapper smoked, drank, left her corset in the cloakroom at the dance, and went for joyrides in automobiles.”¹²⁰ Nash recognized women’s newfound freedom, implying women’s agency in claiming their own identity and benefitting from the Flapper’s relaxed rules for women. However, it was unclear how women earned these freedoms and which women were excluded.

In discussing women’s suffrage and equal rights, the textbooks further described women’s success in advancing their rights, mostly by focusing on women such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Betty Friedan. When the textbooks moved beyond the “great women” framework, the texts, once again, emphasized the history of women’s organizations. For example, to describe the history of the National Organization for Women, Nash explained its history as “a large and powerful national organization that has helped elect politicians and has helped correct inequality in women’s employment and that widens considerable lobbying

¹¹⁷ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 379.

¹¹⁸ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 295-296.

¹¹⁹ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 295-296.

¹²⁰ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 295-296.

power.”¹²¹ Despite Nash’s *American Odyssey* and Bragdon et al.’s *History of a Free Nation*’s incorporation of new frameworks, including gender and intersectionality, signaled progress, they still relied chiefly on compensatory and contribution history.

2000s Textbooks

To represent the 2000s textbooks, I referenced Texas’ and Georgia’s list of approved textbooks for the 2004-2010 adoption cycle. Both states adopted Andrew R. L. Cayton’s *America: Pathways to the Present*. Furthermore, *America: Pathways to the Present*, published in 2003, reappeared in Texas’ list of approved textbooks until 2015 and in Georgia’s until 2017. I then chose Paul S. Boyer’s *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*, which was published in 2004 and included in Georgia’s list of approved textbooks, to compare to Cayton’s textbook.¹²²

By the 2000s, the fourth perspective, connecting the ordinary with the extraordinary and the local with the national, had become familiar to women and gender historians. Scholars connected seemingly isolated and intimate histories of women to their larger political, economic, and social impact. Around the same time, the history of sexuality emerged from the foreground. However, the fifth school of thought did not gain prominence until the late 1990s. Thus, I did not expect the frameworks of the fifth perspective to be incorporated into the 2000s textbooks. Despite the twenty-year gap, the story remained the same. Just as textbooks had before, these textbooks mostly deferred to compensatory and contribution history to reveal women’s experiences.

¹²¹ Nash, *American Odyssey*, 617.

¹²² Andrew R. L. Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present* (Needham Massachusetts: Prentice Hall, 2003); Paul S. Boyer, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 2004).

Perspective IV: Connecting the local with the national

In the 2000s textbooks, there were no instances where the textbooks connected women's everyday experiences to the national experience. Despite several passages that could have attached one sentence incorporating women's impact on American policy, the textbook left the reader in the dark about how women's history shaped larger historical trends, going no further than stating that "women worked in most sectors of the economy and many areas of public life" as "their work at home continued to be essential."¹²³ The textbook certainly made progress by mentioning women's work in the home. However, the textbook could have described how and in what ways their domestic work continued to be essential to the American economy. In another example, Cayton had the opportunity to connect women's social clubs to their increased feminist awareness. Instead, he said no more than that women's voluntary associations gave women invaluable experience in "speaking, writing, and financial skills..." and "helped women increase their self-confidence and take their first steps toward public life."¹²⁴

Perspective III: Gender

Just as the textbooks from the 1990s used gender as a comparative framework for describing the differences between men and women, both texts in the 2000s detailed expectations concerning women's work compared to men's. In his 2003 text, under the "Working Women and Children" section, Cayton explained that "employers in industry excluded women from the most-skilled and highest paying jobs..." and "factory owners usually assigned women to the operation of simple machines" where "women had almost no chance to advance in factory work." Cayton clarified that "of course, not all men had good jobs, either..."¹²⁵

¹²³ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 504.

¹²⁴ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 504.

¹²⁵ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 421.

Perspective II: Ordinary Women's Differences and Intersectionality

Despite four decades of historical analysis detailing women's ordinary lives and diverse experiences, only one of the two textbooks differentiated between white and African American women's labor. Cayton's 2003 text included a passage that revealed how "domestic work was an important source of income for many women..." and "in 1900, about one in fifteen American homes employed live-in servants.... Most were women from foreign countries or African Americans."¹²⁶ Before the 2000s, textbooks rarely described labor specific to Black women. Thus, there is a notable shift toward differentiating between the type of work done by white and Black women.

In another instance of progress, Boyer's 2004 text explored Black and working-class women's life after emancipation, revealing that "Black women's desire to secure the privileges of domesticity caused planters severe labor shortages... many black women had returned to agricultural work as part of sharecropper families... others took paid work in cities, as laundresses, cooks, and domestic servants."¹²⁷ In the same section, Boyer continued to clarify that "white women often sought employment as well, for the war had incapacitated many white breadwinners, reduced the supply of future husbands, and left families destitute or in diminished circumstances."¹²⁸

Perspective I: Compensatory and Contribution History

Aside from the instances in which they alluded to women's differences and the analysis of gender, the 2000s textbooks still treated women's history chiefly through compensatory and contribution history. Women such as Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Eleanor Roosevelt,

¹²⁶ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 504.

¹²⁷ Boyer, *The Enduring Vision*, 493.

¹²⁸ Boyer, *The Enduring Vision*, 493.

and Ida B. Wells continued to appear as extraordinary women who courageously pursued activities suited for men. Cayton introduced Madam C.J. Walker, whom no other textbook had mentioned before 2003. While including a successful Black businesswoman and activist could be interpreted as an improvement, Cayton used Walker's achievements to introduce the topic of African Americans' progress in the labor market. The 2003 text revealed that Madam C.J. Walker was "a notable example of African American achievement. She did so by developing her own preparations to style the hair of African American women."¹²⁹ Cayton went on to reveal Walker's activism within African American campaigns, such as anti-lynching.

The 2000s textbooks used contribution history to treat women's history within national movements. Within the discussion of progressivism, a typical textbook section included Jane Addams and women's relationship with reform. For example, *The Enduring Vision* revealed that "as middle-class women joined clubs and reform organizations, they became powerful voices in addressing the social issues of the day."¹³⁰ When the text did specify women's political impact, it was always to describe the changes in women's--mostly white, middle-class elite women's--lives. Cayton described the impact of women's activism, revealing that "by the time of NAWSA's founding, women had won many rights... married women could now buy, sell, and will property."¹³¹ Still, the 2000s textbooks incorporated frameworks beyond the earliest stage of women's gender history, mainly describing women's differences.

¹²⁹ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 501.

¹³⁰ Boyer, *The Enduring Vision*, 642.

¹³¹ Cayton, *America: Pathways to the Present*, 501.

2010s Textbooks

For the 2010s textbooks, I assumed that Gerald A. Danzer's, J. Jorge Klor de Alva's, Larry S. Krieger's, Louis E. Wilson's, and Nancy Woloch's *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* was the most representative because all three states, Texas, Georgia, and Florida included this textbook in their list of approved adoption materials. I then chose Edward L. Ayers', Jesus F. de la Teja's, Deborah Gray White's, and Robert Schulzinger's *American Anthem: Modern American History* as the supplementary text to compare to *The Americans* because it was included in both Texas and Georgia's list of approved textbooks for the 2010s adoption cycles.¹³²

By the 2010s, the historiography of women's and gender history had established all five schools of interpretation. While the history of sexuality was the most recent, it had been developing for nearly two decades. The most recent textbook, published in 2012, provided the most substantial evidence for this study's findings. *The Americans* physically separated notable women's history into introductory paragraphs set off in boxes labeled "One American's Story," while earlier textbooks had integrated women into the main text (if sparingly). As quantitative data revealed, the 2012 textbook included more women's names than ever before. Yet, the 2012 textbook's structure arguably devolved from the relatively integrated history in the preceding decades. While there were rare cases in which the 2010s textbook used frameworks two through five, that text remained committed to the first school of interpretation that used exceptional women to represent women's and gender history.

Perspective V: History of Sexuality

¹³² Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch, *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Orlando, 2012); Edward L., Ayers, Jesus F. de la Teja, Deborah Gray White, and Robert Schulzinger, *American Anthem: Modern American History* (Austin: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 2009).

Of the two textbooks, only Danzer et al. briefly discussed gay rights, and it was through the framework of contribution history. Under the section “Gay Rights Movement Advances,” the text revealed that “gay men and lesbians began to fight openly for civil rights... By the late 1980s and 1990s, a new surge of gay activism was underway.”¹³³ Danzer et al. also introduced sexual harassment against women. This topic had yet to appear in any other textbook examined. Discussing George H. W. Bush’s supreme court nominations, the text addressed the controversy surrounding Clarence Thomas’s potential appointment when “law professor Anita Hill testified that Thomas had sexually harassed her when she worked for him in the 1980s.”¹³⁴ Ayers et al.’s 2009 textbook explained that Hill “underwent aggressive questioning by Republican Senators defending Thomas, which offended many women.”¹³⁵

Perspective IV: Connecting the local with the national

Despite many opportunities to emphasize women’s critical roles in shaping the economy and American politics, the textbook emphasized women’s experiences at the local level. For example, when describing “farm women,” the 2012 text detailed how “women often worked beside the men in the fields.... also sponsored schools and churches in an effort to build strong communities.”¹³⁶ While the textbook incorporated the history of ordinary women, a framework that characterized the second school of thought, the textbook could have connected women’s labor to their larger influence on the success of American politics and economics. Scholars have expanded beyond crediting women for building strong communities by showing how these women-created communities ultimately increased their power to influence political decisions by

¹³³ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 1051.

¹³⁴ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 1042.

¹³⁵ Ayers et al., *American Anthem*, 719.

¹³⁶ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 1036.

strengthening social capital and local democracy.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the textbook's inclusion of women's daily experiences on the farm is a step in the right direction.

Perspective III: Gender

Once again, the 2010s textbooks used gender to highlight the differences between men's and women's work. For example, *The Americans* recognized that "women moved into jobs held exclusively by men" during World War II.¹³⁸ Women's and men's roles in the family after World War II highlighted their differences, revealing that "traditionally men were the breadwinners and heads of households, while women were expected to stay home and care for the family."¹³⁹ While the textbook did not necessarily challenge the patriarchal approach to history, which portrays the binary expectations of men and women, the inclusion of a gendered lens to describe women's history in comparison to men's shows the textbook's acknowledgment of a gendered ideology,

Perspective II: Ordinary Women's Differences and Intersectionality

Danzer et al.'s *The Americans* most often detailed the differences between women's experiences through class distinctions. In the 2012 text, middle-class women, "before the Civil War... were generally expected to devote their time to the care of their homes and families... By the late 19th century, however, only middle-class and upper-class women could afford to do so... Poorer women usually had no choice but to work for wages outside of the home."¹⁴⁰ In another example, the textbook recognized that women's reform movements in the late nineteenth century were "run largely by middle-class college-educated women."¹⁴¹ Women of lower economic

¹³⁷ Marilyn Gittell, Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, and Tracy Steffy, "Social Capital and Social Change: Women's Community Activism," *Urban Affairs Review* 36, no. 2 (2000): 123-124.

¹³⁸ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 394.

¹³⁹ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 840.

¹⁴⁰ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 519.

¹⁴¹ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 472.

statuses were pushed to reform labor laws by the “dangerous conditions, low wages, and long hours.”¹⁴² By including working women’s distinct experiences, the textbook shows progress toward greater acknowledgment of working-class women, moving beyond the traditional focus on elite women.

The 2012 textbook followed the same pattern as the earlier textbooks, using economic status as the chief means to differentiate between women. There were some instances in which women of color’s experiences were described. For example, in the section that detailed Native American history, a passage titled “Family Life” clarified that the “women helped butcher the game and prepared the hides that the men brought back to the camp.”¹⁴³

In addition, Danzer et al. treated the influence of women in the conservative movement by including Sandra Day O’Connor and Peggy Noonan. Both women introduced the chapter on the wave of conservatism during the 1980s. The 2012 text recognized O’Connor as the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court.¹⁴⁴ Peggy Noonan appeared within the separate introductory section, “One American’s Story,” to introduce the chapter’s main narrative, Reagan’s presidency. The extent of Peggy Noonan’s story included her appointment as a speechwriter for Ronald Regan, emphasizing Noonan’s experience as an example of the wide appeal of Reagan’s conservatism.¹⁴⁵

Perspective I: Compensatory and Contribution History

But, continuing the pattern first shown in the 1980s textbooks, 2010s texts represented Black and Brown women chiefly through compensatory history. More than any other textbook, the 2012 textbook illuminated the notable women, placing their histories at the beginning of each

¹⁴² Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 520.

¹⁴³ Danzer et al., *The Americans* 519.

¹⁴⁴ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 1036.

¹⁴⁵ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 1036.

chapter under "One American's Story" to introduce the main topic. The textbook separated over thirty women from the main narrative of the chapters. For one example, Danzer et al. detailed Zitkala-ša's experience with "the clash of two very different cultures that occurred as ever-growing numbers of white settlers moved onto the Great Plains."¹⁴⁶ The textbook used Zitkala-ša's "story" to introduce the main topic of the chapter, Native American activism.

Similarly, *The Americans* credited Mary McLeod Bethune as "an educator who dedicated herself to promoting opportunities for young African Americans" to introduce the chapter on "African American Activism."¹⁴⁷ Most notably, the treatment of Ida B. Wells was confined to her separate box, revealing that she was a reporter until "the events of March 9, 1892, turned [her interest in racial justice] into a crusade."¹⁴⁸ Wells' activism is not incorporated into the main narrative. These introductory paragraphs, "One American's Story," also illuminated many white women, including Mary Elizabeth Lease, Carrie Chapman Catt, Jeanette Rankin, and Betty Friedan.¹⁴⁹

Black and Brown women were consistently neglected within the main discussions of African American activism, which detailed the history of Black men, assuming that it represented women's histories too. For example, the textbook revealed that African Americans fought legal discrimination during the late nineteenth century by continuing "to vote and occasionally hold political office."¹⁵⁰ The textbook's treatment of women's rights continued to downplay women's oppression by overemphasizing their economic gains. For example, the treatment of women in the workplace consistently emphasized their "new options for finding

¹⁴⁶ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 188.

¹⁴⁷ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 711.

¹⁴⁸ Danzer et al., *The Americans* 492.

¹⁴⁹ Danzer et al., *The Americans* 219, 982.

¹⁵⁰ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 286.

jobs... in offices, stores, classrooms...” and as “bookkeepers and stenographers, as well as training female typists to operate the new machines.”¹⁵¹ Yet, Danzer et al. also credited inanimate objects rather than women’s agency for their gains, citing that “electrical appliances made the lives of housewives easier... and coincided with a growing trend of women working outside of the home.”¹⁵² The textbook also emphasized World War II’s role in pushing more women into the workplace, “which offered women more challenging work and better pay than jobs traditionally associated with women, such as waitressing, clerking, and domestic service.”¹⁵³ While the 2012 textbook did not include discredited information within its sections on women, the significant imbalance of frameworks, despite at least a fifty-year buffer period, signals a much larger issue.

Conclusion

In the initial stage of research, I predicted that there would be an evolution in how and when American history textbooks treated women’s and gender history. After all, how could publishers and authors of American history textbooks ignore the innovative and pathbreaking research that women’s and gender historians introduced? The literature review of women in high school history textbooks showed some progress in the textbooks’ portrayal of women’s and gender history. Yet, this study reveals that while there has been some effort to include more perspectives, it is slow going compared to the scholarship. Furthermore, textbooks tend to add only a few instances of new frameworks in women’s history and generally dwell on compensatory and contribution models.

¹⁵¹ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 519.

¹⁵² Danzer et al., *The Americans* 631.

¹⁵³ Danzer et al., *The Americans*, 797.

Textbook authors' and publishers' responses to the critiques of their patriarchal and whitewashed history lessons tend to abuse textbooks' relationship to civic duty. To defend the neglect of women and racial minorities, textbook authors and publishers argue that their primary aim is to prepare students for productive citizenship. By doing so, authors emphasize textbooks' introductory purposes that require strong narrative structures to keep young people's attention. However, recent studies have revealed the importance of cultural representation within the students' social studies curriculum, making it critical for women and people of color to see themselves as active participants in the nation's history.¹⁵⁴ To work towards a more accurate and richer history of the United States, one solution might include hiring more scholars of women's, gender, and ethnic minority history to write high school history textbooks.

Of the thirty-one historians that authored the twelve textbooks I reviewed in this study, only sixteen percent were women's historians, and fourteen percent were historians of race. Before the 1990s, no textbooks I surveyed included authors outside of political, diplomatic, and intellectual history. By including professional women's and gender historians and historians of race in the writing process, textbooks could finally incorporate long-overdue conceptual frameworks. However, recent studies suggest a nascent issue within textbook-related research that extends beyond who writes textbooks. While including more diverse authors to write textbooks may solve the issue of updating old frameworks, publishers, state standards, and politics continue to fuel a systemic lockdown on textbooks' progress toward equitable education.

¹⁵⁴ Sadker and Sadker, *Failing at Fairness*, 5, 6; Leah S. Stauber, "Turning in or tuning out? Listening to silences in education for critical political consciousness," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30, no. 6 (2017): 567; Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 37; "How Schools Shortchange Girls," *The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation*. (1992): 3.

For high school American history classes, textbooks are conceived, written, and sold within constricting oversight from state standards, markets, and political actors.¹⁵⁵ Features of the publishing industry and textbook development can filter out controversial values, thinking, and concepts into a safer assemblage of conventional lessons.¹⁵⁶ While this study compared the evolution of textbooks with the evolution of academic scholarship to determine whether textbooks integrate professional historians' frameworks, a more complex study of the politics of publishing and standardizing is required to fully grasp why textbooks have not kept pace with the historiography. I hope to explore this topic further, but for the purpose of this study, I defer to education historians' recent literature.¹⁵⁷

This study corroborates Janice Law Trecker's interrogation of women in high school history textbooks fifty years ago. While women's and gender historians have produced cutting-edge research that shifted the way other scholars view history, the findings of this study present a story similar to that found in Trecker's, resulting in a "depressing" conclusion.¹⁵⁸ By primarily relying on the same framework to illuminate women's and gender history, the same narrative repeats itself. The textbooks consistently highlighted exceptional women like Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, and Carrie Chapman Catt because they stepped into the male-dominated society to reshape male-valued institutions. The texts mostly placed these notable women in sections about labor reform and civil rights movements.

¹⁵⁵ Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith, *The Politics of the Textbook* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 2.

¹⁵⁶ Laura Elizabeth Pinto, "Textbook Publishing, Textbooks, and Democracy: A Case Study," *Journal of Thought* 42, no. 1/2 (2007): 99.

¹⁵⁷ Michael W. Apple, "Textbook Publishing: The Political and Economic Influences," *Theory Into Practice* 28, no. 4 (1989): 282–87; Krishna Kumar, "Textbooks and Educational Culture," *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, no. 30 (1986): 1309–11; Raymond English, "The Politics of Textbook Adoption," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 62, no. 4 (1980): 275–78.

¹⁵⁸ Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High School Textbooks," 134.

However, while the textbooks' dominant mode of analysis dwelt on compensatory and contributory history, by the 1990s, textbooks did begin acknowledging frameworks beyond the earliest stage. With the current state of the textbook market and the ongoing debates over issues such as Critical Race Theory and LGBTQ+ rights, it is unclear whether progress will continue. As of 2023, Florida, the third largest K-12 population, following closely behind California and Texas, is in the process of selecting textbooks for their next adoption cycle in 2024.¹⁵⁹ Studies that examine how textbooks treat women, people of color, working people, and people who identify as LGBTQ+ continue to be critical in revealing the progress, or lack thereof, in the social studies curriculum.

¹⁵⁹ Florida Department of Education, "2022-2023 K-12 Social Studies Adoption Year," Instructional Materials (Tallahassee, Florida 2018), 6.

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