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**Recent Historiographical Work  
on Chilean History Textbooks**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines historiographical work in Chilean school textbooks. Hermeneutic analysis was conducted on 16 textbooks issued by a range of publishers between 1980 and 2010 in order to analyse the historiographical perspectives of the books' various authors. The findings of the analysis reveal that textbooks from the 1980s, published in the period of Chile's military dictatorship, do not include any historiographical work. Textbooks from the 1990s include organised accounts of events which incorporate views from conservative historians without any critical analysis. Only after 2000 is there evidence of an increasing tendency to incorporate recent historiographical work from a number of different ideological perspectives in secondary school textbooks. We close the article by discussing the implications of these findings.

Key words: School textbooks, recent Chilean historiographical work, hidden curriculum, history didactics

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Her main areas of interest are the history of Chile and the hidden ideological and gender curriculum in school textbooks.

## **Introduction: The Importance of School Textbooks**

Since World War Two, we have been able to observe increasing interest in school textbooks research across the globe due to the influence of textbooks on official curricula. Studies in textbook research have generally focused on ideological aspects of the medium, its use, and content. Johnsen (1996) addressed the ideological dimension of textbooks, attempting to identify the hidden curricula that emerge in their historiographical interpretations of historical events.

World-leading research is currently being conducted at the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig, Germany, Emmanuelle in France, and the MANES Research Centre under the authority of The National University of Distance Education (UNED) in Spain. Nordic countries have extensively produced research on textbooks; Seelander, Englund and Lundgren are among the best-known Swedish authors in the field. In the United States, the work of M. Apple (1986 onward) is key to the discipline. Since the 1980s, research in this area has been evolving in Latin America, particularly in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Chile, in connection with international projects such as the MANES Research Centre at UNED. Research has focused on issues including textbooks, authors and publishers; handbooks for teachers training; approaches to issues in textbooks from specific disciplines; and national identities.

Textbooks are channels of knowledge and information for students, containing socially approved knowledge which is legitimised by the society in which the textbook is published or by its dominant class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1995). They also represent organised and artificial constructions of knowledge (Ochoa, 1983). Textbooks contain the moral positions that shape the mores of a society. We might consider them to be “kaleidoscopes”, as each person coming to them and interacting with them will see a different image. When we study them, we bring to this study ourselves and our specific point of view on curricula, teaching, knowledge and learning (Johnsen, 1996).

School textbooks impart to successive generations a filtered and refined image of a type of society and a vision of humankind which a group of people or a social class conceives, designs, prints and distributes, and which it subsequently imposes on children and teenagers. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1995), school textbooks tend to “reproduce” the dominance of one class over others, perpetuating what they refer to as “symbolic violence” and “cultural arbitrariness”. Following this view, textbooks are evidently powerful tools in the process of education. For decades now, textbooks have been virtually the sole communication channel between society, the educational system, teachers and students. They are of such value that, according to Rodriguez (1996), between 70% and 90% of curriculum and methodological decisions at classroom level at primary learning institutions are based on textbooks; students spend between 30 and 70% of classroom time working on textbook activities; and textbooks may be, in some cases, the only books students will ever read.

In Chile, history textbooks have been studied from a range of perspectives. Research has focused on issues including the treatment in textbooks of topics such as: homeland, school, work and family (Ochoa, 1998; Ochoa, 1990); ideology and authoritarianism (Minte, 2005; Cisterna, 1999); national identity (Espinoza, 2010); other academic disciplines (Eyzaguirre and Fontaine, 1997); the use of textbooks (Leiva et al, 2000; Rodriguez, 1996); educational discourse within them (Oteíza, 2006); and their treatment of citizenship (León and Alvarado, 2011).

Guereña, Ossenbach and Mar del Pozo (2005) argue that the powerful role of school textbooks in the process of creating identities and collective mindsets becomes evident in various subjects and disciplines. It should thus be of little surprise to us that ideological analyses of textbooks represent a major strand of research in this field (Johnsen, 1996). It is in this context that our analysis of Chilean historiographical trends and their occurrence in Chilean history textbooks is situated.

In the view of Rengifo (2002), academic historians in Chile do not write curriculum guidelines without apparent political intention or a given ideological orientation. Instead, they gather and elaborate upon input which they provide to handbook authors, who, in turn, in the course of a complex task of bringing together the Ministry of Education guidelines and their own political orientation, create the handbooks perpetuating the status quo, which has great influence on citizens' formations.

The nature of textbooks' content depends on the viewpoint of the historiography that finds its way into them, the ideological stance of the authors, the historical moment in which they are

written, the national political environment, and their use of language. In Chile, the content of textbooks is based on the programmatic objectives set out by the Ministry of Education; they can therefore find themselves being revised in accordance with the line followed by the government of the day. In other words, textbooks are never objective, despite the tradition of assuming objectivity sustained since the positivism of the nineteenth century. From their inception onward, textbooks have served to communicate facts and knowledge deemed “legitimate” by a specific society (Negrín, 2009).

Gonzalez (2010) observes that textbooks are educational tools that help communicate cultural content and ideological values due to their correspondence with the official culture of a specific system or nation. Textbooks, as primary sources of knowledge, form part of the foundations of a country’s culture that unifies and creates a national identity based on a largely hidden ideology. Choppin (2000) asserts that textbooks have an ideological and cultural function which has its origins in religious literature, and that from their beginnings their main objective was to incorporate young people into a system of moral, political and religious values. A recent study of developments and trends in school textbooks (Repoussi & N. Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010) found that history textbooks tend to be a mirror of the predominant content, discourses and practices predominant in society at the time of their writing, and that they are instruments of persuasion exercised by the dominant culture and its underlying ideology.

## **Historiographical developments in Chile**

The nineteenth century in Chilean historiography was dominated by the liberal-positivist school of historiography associated with the historians Diego Barros Arana, Juan José and Miguel Luis Amunátegui, and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna. The most relevant features of historiography in this period are detailed reconstructions of events and enhanced epic histories, the revision of a large number of sources, the adoption of positivism as a scientific theory and liberalism as a political stance, and a critical view of the colonial period.

Among the leading authors during the first half of the twentieth century were Francisco Antonio Encina, Alberto Edwards and Jaime Eyzaguirre, who are associated with the trend towards “nationalist revisionism” which was in evidence at that time and was characterised by a more interpretative type of historical analysis, based on essays. This period saw the historical record of the Chilean oligarchy and of traditional values from a different perspective; and focussed as well on national history with a critical view of liberal historiography.

Overall, Chilean historiography of the twentieth century, in particular that of its second half, can be divided into three major trends, each identified with specific social and political groups: a) conservative or right-wing; b) meso-history or liberal-progressive; and c) left-wing or Marxist.

Right-wing or conservative historiography adheres to the values of occidental Christianity. Gonzalo Vial Correa, a vocally anti-Marxist historian, and Ricardo Krebs are representative of

this trend; both supported the military government which ruled Chile between 1973 and 1989 and proposed a conservative vision of the history of Chile in the twentieth century that lasts until today. Mario Góngora and Bernardino Bravo Lira can also be included in this group. The emergence of this trend, as that of the liberal strand of historiography, can be traced back to the nineteenth century; however, it developed primarily during the early twentieth century, gradually displacing the liberal historiography of the nineteenth century and holding a predominant position until the turn of the millennium.

Conservative historiography has particular core features: it emphasises individual historical figures and military history, and places considerably value on respect for private property and civil obedience to the national emblems. Economic, cultural and social topics receive insufficient attention, and where they are dealt with, their treatment centres principally on political and military aspects of the issues or on political leaders. This form of historiography approaches history on a linear or chronological basis.

Left-wing approaches to historiography, among whose exponents are the historians Hernán Ramírez Necochea (orthodox), Luis Vitale (Trotskyist) and Gabriel Salazar (neo-Marxist), are known for studying and interpreting history from the point of view of the people involved, particularly the so called by them “lower class”. These historians study in detail the role of workers, farmers, and proletarians in historical events, explain the historical background to events and situations in terms of socio-economic developments, and criticise the capitalist system for not being capable of ridding contemporary Chilean society of poverty and injustice.



The Marxist ideology which informs the work of this historiographical school examines socio-economic processes and analyses them historically. This form of historiography completely identifies with the “Chilean way to socialism” pursued by Salvador Allende during his time in presidential office from 1970 to 1973. Among its best-known representatives, besides those already mentioned, are Julio César Jobet, Manuel Antonio Garretón, Tomás Moulián and Marcelo Segall.

The Marxist trend emphasises social and cultural studies above political and warlike ones, in other words it has introduced a new investigative vein.

Meso-history, or liberal-progressive historiography, proposes a balance between the right-wing and left-wing trends in the discipline. This school of historiography focuses on subjects related to the economy, society and culture, approaching them from a more descriptive and neutral standpoint rather than providing critical analysis. Some of this school’s representatives are historians Cristián Gazmuri, Sergio Villalobos, Rafael Sagredo, Sol Serrano, and Carlos Bascuñán. Meso-history views the history of Chile as showing a positive evolution throughout the entire twentieth century; it regards this evolution as being particularly clearly observable in events and historical phases such as the first administration, commencing in 1920, of the former Chilean president Arturo Alessandri Palma, some achievements of the Popular Front coalition of 1936 to 1941, such as the creation of CORFO (the Production Development Corporation), and the increase of state participation in the country’s economy (Cruz, 1991).

In the 1980s, a new historiographical trend, known as “sceptic liberal interpretation”, emerged in Chile; its main exponent was Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, who reintroduced into the right-wing

school of historiography concepts which, he argued, it should never have rejected – respect and tolerance for differing ideas, a strong appreciation of democratic standards, and the promotion of the secularisation of Chilean society. Jocelyn-Holt is considered a liberal historian, as he regards history as an “achievement of freedom”, predicated upon tolerance and respect for human beings as values essential to society (Cruz, 1991). Jocelyn-Holt affirms that the study of history should be reflexive, explanatory, and analytical, not merely a simple narration of events, acts or processes. He identifies himself as part of the middle class, a liberal thinker in favour of change, and differs from Krebs and Vial in his emphasis on the reaffirmation of freedom and democracy; he is open to discussion and the confrontation of ideas with one another, and does not believe they should be suppressed.

“Sceptic liberal interpretation” is based on the central idea that no single factor has a solely determinant role in the historical process, which is not monocausal. Historians following this approach tend to prioritise some political events over others. Even where economic and cultural aspects of events and issues are incorporated into historiography of this type, they are not presented as connected, but rather depicted in an atomised manner. In this school of historiography, neither a critical nor a pluralist vision of history is attained, even where it does not restrict attention and emphasis to military aspects of history, such as wars and leaders, as frequently occurred in traditional nineteenth-century historiography.

In the mid-twentieth century, other historians, who can be counted as part of the historiographical school of structuralism, emerged in Chile; Mario Góngora, Álvaro Jara, and Rolando Mellafe are known for extending historical research to incorporate new themes and

protagonists and embracing what is known as the “history of mentalities”, which focuses on social and cultural attitudes rather than political and military history. They have contributed to the study of the colonial history of America and Chile, while sharing with Marxist historians a focus on the analysis of economic and social structures in line with the French *Annales* School.

From the 1980s to the present, a number of Chilean historians have become known for using a variety of research approaches. Historians who can be counted within this group include Gabriel Salazar, Julio Pinto, Sergio Grez, Cristián Gazmuri, Maximiliano Salinas, Sofía Correa, Jorge Pinto, Patricia Arancibia, Gonzalo Vial, Sergio Villalobos, José Bengoa, Nicolás Cruz, Gonzalo Izquierdo, Sol Serrano, María Angélica Illanes and others. They are developing interdisciplinary research on current issues, attempting to understand history in all its facets.

## Methodology

In order to carry out this research, we collected a sample of Chilean history textbooks published in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The sample encompassed 16 textbooks issued by a number of different publishers, most of them edited by the Mare Nostrum editorial and publishing house, which are distributed for free to all students attending public and state-supported private schools. Other publishers involved in the textbooks we studied were Salesiana, Universitaria, Arrayán, Santillana and Zig-Zag. Two textbooks were issued in the 1980s, four in the 1990s and ten in the 2000s. Table 1 shows the years of publication and publishers of the textbooks used in this research.

Table 1 Chilean History Textbooks in Our Sample

<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Year of publication</i>	<i>Number of textbooks</i>
Arrayán	2001	1
Mare Nostrum	2001, 2004, 2007, 2009 (2)	5
Salesiana	1990	1
Santillana	1982 (2), 1994, 2006, 2009	5
Universitaria	1991, 1998	2
Zig-Zag	2002, 2004	2

Hermeneutic analysis was conducted to detect the presence of recent historiographical work. Each textbook was studied to identify historiographical trends and quotations which exemplify them, whether as a source contained mainly in tasks for students presented in the textbooks or as part of various different authors' views of the same historical event. We did not include bibliographical references suggested to students for further reading. We reviewed excerpts from documents presented in the textbooks in order to uncover the "hidden curriculum" underlying each text by comparing historiographical work across the three decades studied and to determine the impact of political shifts and predominant ideologies of the time.

## **Findings**

The textbooks in the sample which were published in the 1980s, throughout most of which the military dictatorship was in power in Chile, do not incorporate any historiographical work. However, they do include sources from two historians that correspond to different historiographical traditions. Gonzalo Vial follows the liberal-positivist trend and Francisco Encina represents the conservative school. None of those historiographical visions allowed unveiling the hidden curricula. These textbooks only contain content, with little support and documentation of sources; they do feature some illustrations and activities, but they do not show different historiographical positions on events or historical processes.

Textbooks from the 1990s tend to incorporate excerpts from documents written by historians with liberal-positivist and right-wing tendencies. Those mentioned the most frequently are

Encina, Barros Arana, Castedo, Frías Valenzuela, Vial, Eyzaguirre and Heise. Even where the contributions of some of these historians are mentioned, their historiographical tender is not stated explicitly for students' comprehension.

Political topics discussed in these textbooks include historical processes that took place in the nineteenth century as the administration of the republic, the advance of liberalism, the political dominance of the oligarchy, the redefinition, consolidation, democratisation and crisis of the republic. Economic and political issues are examined; other topics such as education, society and culture are mentioned, but not analysed in detail. The 1990s textbooks in our sample tend to present chronological narratives of history based only on descriptions of events, with scarce reference to illustrations or written sources. These textbooks seemingly prefer to include quotations from poets and other writers rather than from historians. We thus might infer that these textbooks have no intent to motivate critical analysis or comparison between events and ideas as addressed by different authors or historians. The narrative in these textbooks is eloquent and attempts to be neutral, precluding the contrast of a number of interpretations on specific historical events and processes.

A particular example of the overall absence of historiographical work in a textbook is offered by a textbook aimed at year 8 of schooling and published in 1991 by Universitaria. The book approaches Chilean history without any reference to historians or their historiographical work. Its text represents a chronologically organised and coherent account of series of events, attempting to be objective, and includes some educational activities consisting of questions for students. The text contains no historical analysis, no references to historians, and no effort to offer contrasting interpretations.

Another history and social sciences textbook for secondary education, published by Santillana in 1994, follows the same pattern. Even where the text in this book includes some sources for historical analysis, it still lacks any discussion of historiographical positions or trends.

In summary, school textbooks from the 1990s do not tend to incorporate historiographical work. It is worth mentioning that, due to the political context of the time that was dominated by Chile's transition to democracy it appears that education authorities, textbook editorial teams, authors, historians and teachers were still afraid of discussing national history. The textbooks of this time presented content in an organised, chronological, coherent and structured manner, depicting events and processes as continuous, avoiding ideological analysis and attempting to be "neutral" and present history as "objective". Textbooks from this decade consequently fail to provide space for analysis, interpretation or the confrontation of opposing or conflicting ideas.

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, we observe that textbooks gradually and progressively begin to incorporate recent historiography, presenting ideas and analyses from a number of different perspectives including liberal-positivist, liberal-progressive, right-wing, meso-historical and Marxist interpretations. Authors cited in textbooks from this period in our sample, specifically those textbooks published in 2001 and 2002 by Arrayán and Zig-Zag, include Barros Arana, Encina, Heise, Edwards, Villalobos, Arancibia, Castedo, Eyzaguirre, Mellafe, Góngora, Pinto, Salazar, Grez, Moulián, Garretón, Ramírez, Krebs, Cruz, Illanes and Jocelyn-Holt.

From 2007 onwards, textbooks noticeably incorporate a wide variety of authors including structuralists, Marxists and neo-Marxists, without discarding other historiographical directions. Although these books include historians representing all tendencies, they still rarely feature confrontation between ideas and interpretations on a given historical event emerging from different ideological traditions. Some particular events and subjects appear to have been deemed particularly appropriate for discussion; these include the Arauco War, Chilean independence, the War of the Pacific, the crisis at the end of the nineteenth century, social change during the Parliamentary Era, and economic debates in the 1950s. Santillana and Mare Nostrum textbooks published in 2009 depict a number of different standpoints; for instance, the analysis of the Chilean war of independence in both textbooks includes the ideas of historians A. Jocelyn-Holt, S. Collier and S. Villalobos, represented through excerpts from their works. Another textbook, published in 2004 by Zig-Zag, presents five viewpoints on independence, from the authors Eyzaguirre, Villalobos, Ramírez, Collier and Jocelyn-Holt. In this case, the authors' views are presented as a listing of events rather than being shown through excerpts, because of the lack of historiographical sources; this method allows students to contrast their ideas and develop skills for critical analysis and interpretation of historical processes.

In the Zig Zag textbook the War of the Pacific is analysed using two pieces of text, written by S. Villalobos and the Bolivian historian H. Klein respectively, which present two different views of an event of international significance. This example demonstrates an attempt – albeit a partial one, due to its use of only two authors - to include in a textbook's depiction of events historiographical work emerging from both countries which had been involved in the conflict.



In this 2004 Zig-Zag textbook, the massacre at Lo Cañas is explained using an introduction to a number of different authors, incorporating an excerpt from a work by Frías Valenzuela and three documents, written by Ramírez Necochea, Heise and Blakemore respectively. This massacre took place on August 19 during the 1891 Chilean civil war and was called “the sad night” due to the assassination of eighty four young aristocrats that antagonised the presidency of J. M. Balmaceda. Similarly, the establishment of the Republic of Chile is studied through three historiographical interpretations about the political ideas of Interior Minister Diego Portales (1831 to 1837), which correspond to viewpoints held by the historians Álvaro Góngora, Patricia Arancibia, Gonzalo Vial and Jocelyn-Holt. While these viewpoints do not represent contrasting ideologies, their inclusion in the textbook does enable students to become acquainted with their points of view.

Other topics, contained in textbooks from 2001 to 2009, by means of contrasting, differing or opposing viewpoints; however, they do feature excerpts from the works of specialized authors such as Álvaro Jara, (on the Rate of Santillán), Julio Pinto (on the working class); Gabriel Salazar, (on labourers peasants and proletarians), José Bengoa (on the Mapuche conflict), Maximiliano Salinas (on rural banditry), and others. These books include both Marxist, structuralist, or neo-Marxist historians and right-wing or liberal-progressivist historiographers such as Sergio Villalobos, Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, Sol Serrano, Cristián Gazmuri and René Millar.

As we can see from these findings, textbooks of the period, particularly as it continues, incorporate some academic discourse derived from historiography. When, however, we

compare the nature of historiographical methods with the history taught in Chilean schools, we can perceive a noticeable gap between them; textbooks frequently become a cause for a discourse that depends more on the decisions made by groups in power than on the findings of historians.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Chilean history textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s are characterised by traditional forms of political history, with historical facts presented using a chronological, linear approach and research on economic or social history, the history of mentalities, the life of communities, and the history of women, marginalised people, or minorities being virtually absent.

For Spanish history didactics specialist Pilar Maestro (1997), history as taught in Chile does not incorporate any new or innovative topics, approaches or issues; neither has it adopted narratives from non-hegemonic perspectives, such as those found in oral history or collective memory, or reinterpretations of political history. The current historiographical approach allows a different explanation about facts and processes that the traditional historiography has shown only from their point of view. The new socioeconomic interpretation unveils the hidden curricula in an easier way in the Chilean History textbooks (Maestro, 1997). The most recent textbooks of Chilean history contain a range of tendencies in historiography; however, these changes are as yet only incipient, and the traditional, conservative, positivist approach continues to be the priority in the history taught through school textbooks. Martínez and Rodríguez (2010) state that the content taught in schools presents an image of a common normality, encouraged by the culture of uniformity which tends to dominate schools and the ubiquity of textbooks in classrooms. Therefore, even though we know that the images presented in them are socially constructed, textbooks can become an educational and curricular discourse which acts in support of particular ideological, social and professional sectors. In other words, textbooks are responsible for communicating an official discourse

which, in order to become apparent, must be read “between the lines”, a task that entails uncovering the hidden meaning, the silence, the omissions, and the stereotypes that shape mentalities and the reproduction of ideologies.

For Callai (2008), history currently calls for forms of explanation that exceed the heroic, factual, and simplistic vision which has dominated history teaching. It is evident that Chilean history still holds these characteristics, and they are shown particularly clearly in textbooks published in the 1980s and 1990s, which overwhelmingly represent the predominant ideology of the period. Critical analysis has enabled us to uncover the authoritarian nature of that ideology as represented in the textbooks of the time. According to Negrín (2002), critical, historical, and ideological studies on the content of textbooks has the purpose of disclosing the explicit or implicit ideology within textbooks: the visions “others” provide, the problems that are discussed and those that are hidden, the voices included and those unheard, the cultural stereotypes that are reinforced and those that are questioned. Moreover, Carretero (2010) points out that societies tend to facilitate the process of transitory “silence” or “omission” of traumatic events from public discourse and memory; and schools have a highly important role in securing this process. Textbooks explored in this study evidenced the silence or (voluntary) omission of recent historical events, which the books fail to mention or discuss in vague terms; such events include the military coup of 1973, the dictatorship that ensued, and the transition to democracy in 1990.

Textbooks from the 2000s likewise reflect this omission of and silence on recent conflicts or ideologically charged issues, only incorporating current historiographical work on non-recent historical topics; overall, their presentation of events tends to be biased, incomplete and

superficial and to follow the positivist logic of the nineteenth century.

History teaching plays a significant role in the construction of national identity. By selecting, omitting, emphasising or leaving aside particular issues and aspects; textbooks present students with specific paths that must be followed in the interpretation or remembrance of the past (Pohl, 2008). Omissions and additions of content in Chilean history textbooks continue to shape national identity by means of their emphasis on political events, heroes and leaders. On another note, a gradual introduction of social, economic and cultural issues into Chilean textbooks has been observed; this new content is related to Chilean historiographers' prolific recent productivity.

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