

## “Georgia on My Mind”: Writing the “New” State History Textbook in the Post-Loewen World

Scott L. Roberts

*Central Michigan University*

ON A WARM SPRING EVENING IN 2010, a publisher asked me a simple question that simultaneously excited and terrified me: “Do you want to write a textbook?” In a way, I knew that this question was coming. I was invited to dinner by the editor of a Georgia history magazine for whom I had written several articles and curriculum guides. Additionally, I was in my seventh year teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade Georgia Studies and had recently written a book of Georgia history lesson plans with a focus on economics for the Georgia Council for Economic Education.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, I had made several presentations at the Georgia Council for the Social Studies’ annual conference concerning best practices for teaching Georgia history, and had recently finished my Ph.D. in Social Studies Education. Nevertheless, I was still quite surprised by the request. I felt as though I was too young to write a textbook. I wrote, “isn’t this what full-time college professors and retired teachers do?”<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, my Ph.D. dissertation was a scathing critique about the inaccurate and biased portrayals of U.S. presidents in state history textbooks, and the 2005 textbook I examined in my study was published by the same person who would become my co-author on this new project, a revised edition of *Time Travel Through Georgia*.<sup>4</sup> In addition to my dissertation, I had already written a manuscript concerning the weaknesses found in Georgia history textbooks from 1951-2005, and had just presented

a workshop to my school's faculty called "How to Make Your 'Biased' Textbook a Valuable Teaching Tool."<sup>5</sup> When I voiced these concerns to the publisher, she said, "That is exactly why I want you to co-author the second edition."

As the meeting progressed, the publisher, who ran her own company for over fourteen years, began to talk about the business end of the operation. She discussed who our business partners would be—the county and city school systems that had purchased her last text—our competition, our market share, and more information about our state's textbook adoption process. However, I was only thinking about two things during this conversation, and unlike Irwin Unger, it had nothing to do with how much money I could make for this book.<sup>6</sup>

My first thought was if it would be possible for me to write a balanced textbook that was also entertaining and unbiased, and that discussed all of the Georgia Performance Standards. In other words, the question I asked myself was, "Will I be able to practice what I preach?"<sup>7</sup> What I found to be even more interesting was, after spending two years reading, writing about, and primarily critiquing Georgia history textbooks written from the years 1884-2005, I suddenly envisioned myself as the "keeper of the flame" of Georgia history. I felt honored that "my textbook would be put on the library shelf beside those books written by Evans, Coulter, Saye, McCullar, Jackson, and London."<sup>8</sup> What began to worry me was that this self-important vision, according to James Loewen, is one of the major weaknesses of those who write history textbooks.<sup>9</sup> Due to this realization, I chose to document my experiences writing the textbook in hopes of "checking myself," and to assist in writing the best Georgia Studies book possible.

### **Rationale and Purpose of this Study**

This paper is by no means the first time a state history author has documented their experiences concerning the textbook writing process. In fact, though the number of studies concerning state history courses and the textbooks used in them is limited, two authors wrote about their experiences composing these types of texts.<sup>10</sup> Loewen, in his introduction to *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, discussed the issues he underwent while writing a textbook for a Mississippi history course. Some of these challenges led to his decision to file a discrimination lawsuit that was eventually decided in the case *Loewen et al. v Turnipseed et al.*, a suit that Loewen won.<sup>11</sup> Two years earlier, Linda Menton wrote about her struggles and successes in co-authoring a Hawaii history textbook. Menton's primary purpose was to explain the procedures she and her co-author established in order

to “collaboratively work with scholars and teachers to produce materials that were both historically accurate and pedagogically sound.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, my account of a textbook author’s journey offers important additions to the literature. After conducting an extensive review of the pertinent literature, I found Menton’s article to be the last in-depth accounting of textbook authorship. However, since the article’s publication date, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001, resulting in substantial changes that have affected America’s public schools, along with the textbooks written for them.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since 1993, many analyses have challenged and critiqued textbook authors, adoption boards, and publishers. The most influential was *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. With this in mind, this paper offers a glimpse inside the thought processes of a textbook author whose theoretical framework has been significantly impacted by NCLB’s focus on curriculum standards as well as Loewen’s analysis, and the textbook examinations that followed.<sup>14</sup>

Two other elements make this paper unique. First, unlike similar works, this commentary offers the perspective of a textbook author who was a classroom teacher at the time of the book’s publication, and I wrote the book with my students in mind. To my knowledge, there is no other instance of a K-12 classroom teacher and author who has documented the process. Second, this work offers a unique examination of the changes of a textbook from a first to a second edition. Unlike other works where authors document their textbook writing experiences, I was given the opportunity and encouragement to make changes to a textbook based on the critiques found in the existing literature. Armed with this literature, and determined to use textbook critics’ ideals and suggestions in my writing, I hoped to offer my student readers the most accurate portrayal of Georgia’s history as possible.

### Theoretical Perspective

Several textbook analyses have influenced my perspective concerning the writing of textbooks, as well as the weaknesses and potential biases found in them. In analyzing other state history textbooks and comparing them to my own writing, this study also used critical theory—in particular, concerns of “ideology and domination”—to frame the content analysis. It can be argued that elements of critical theory are often found in textbook analyses. As Leah Wasburn explains, textbooks are “often presented to students as factual accounts which give an unbiased narrative of the origins and development of social, political, and economic institutions of their society.”<sup>15</sup>

By incorporating critical theory into her analysis, Wasburn viewed the wording found in textbooks as a way to “gain knowledge about dominant ideologies and groups as well as societal change.” Many textbook

researchers suppose that textbooks are presented in a way that serves the purposes of those who believe in the “dominant ideologies.” In turn, researchers consider these dominant ideologies to contain the potential of repression for those students who are required to read them.<sup>16</sup> In state history courses, due to the localized control of adoption boards and the influence of state legislatures, it has been argued that writers of state standards and textbooks likely hold dominant ideologies. These dominant ideologies can cause inaccurate depictions of historical events and figures found in state history textbooks.<sup>17</sup>

In his groundbreaking study of this genre, John Moore discovered that there is a level of ethnocentrism present in state history textbooks, as historic people and events at a national level are regularly passed over in favor of local figures. Moore lambasts state history textbooks for their “ethnocentric belief in the superiority of the state’s culture and disparagement of ‘outside’ contributions.” He goes on to claim that state history textbooks “rarely satisfy...the requirements of scholarship, the curiosity of students, or the needs of society.”<sup>18</sup>

In my own research, I have found that even after forty years, these weaknesses are still prevalent in many of Georgia’s state history textbooks both past and present.<sup>19</sup> All of these critiques, especially Loewen’s and Moore’s, were at the forefront of my mind as I began writing my own text. With my understanding of the problems associated with history textbooks, and those of state history in particular, I sought to write a textbook that would come as close as possible to meeting some of the recommendations made by textbook critics.

## Method

I chose to use qualitative content analysis, in tandem with self-study approaches, as the method to evaluate my experiences writing a state history textbook. Douglas Ezzy describes content analysis as the “most deductive of all forms of data analysis,” and believes it should be used when “a preexisting theory is tested against empirical data.”<sup>20</sup> Since the principal purpose of this study was to analyze the similarities and differences between my textbook and those written by others, I believed that content analysis was the best approach. My primary sources of data were the first and second editions of the textbook *Time Travel Through Georgia*.<sup>21</sup> I also critically analyzed other Georgia history textbooks, written from 1884-2005, in order to gain a better understanding of the subject and the longitudinal changes made to specific topics in the state’s history, such as the portrayal of Nancy Hart, Sherman’s March through Georgia, and the presidencies of Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, I used elements of a self-study methodology in teacher education and adapted it to analyze and describe the processes I undertook in writing the textbook. Self-study is defined as “the reflective, critical examination of the self’s involvement both in aspects of the study and in the phenomenon under study.”<sup>23</sup> Overall, I modeled this study on Vicki LaBoskey’s elements of a self-study methodology, including using self-study to “identify and reframe problems of practice,” using multiple methods to “systematically examine problems of practice,” and maintaining data sources in order to make my findings “public for the purpose of consolidating understanding and suggesting new avenues for research.”<sup>24</sup> In addition, other data sources I examined were personal reflections, e-mail correspondence and meetings with the publisher, rough drafts of the text, and findings from prior studies I conducted concerning the content found in state history textbooks.<sup>25</sup>

## Findings

In this section, I will discuss the six goals I developed for writing my textbook based on the critiques I found in the literature, along with a self-evaluation of how well I met these goals. Based on my review of other textbook analyses, primarily Loewen, Moore, and my own research, I determined that there were six limitations of textbooks I could control as the textbook author, noting that the critiques concerning textbook publishers, special interest groups, and adoption committees were out of my hands. Combating these six limitations became my goals for writing the textbook. These goals were 1) to remove unnecessary information and focus on the standards; 2) to remove elements of heroification; 3) to make the people and events discussed in the textbook book more relevant to students’ lives; 4) to remove elements of an omniscient and noncritical narrator; 5) to provide a discussion of primary and secondary sources; and 6) to identify and reconcile Moore’s critiques of state history textbooks, such as limiting “the ethnocentric belief in the superiority of the state’s culture and disparagement of ‘outside’ contributions.”<sup>26</sup>

In order to achieve the first goal, I attempted to remove all topics that were not part of the state’s “performance standards.” Though I had the directives of the textbook adoption board in mind as I removed “unnecessary” information, my primary objective was to offer students a more detailed examination of each of the topics required by the state. To reach the second goal, I analyzed the portrayals of several historic figures in the text and attempted to balance the content by discussing both the positive and negative qualities of each individual. I approached the third goal by including direct notes to the students that asked them to apply the information they learned

about particular topics to their everyday lives, such as learning how to decipher biases and use multiple sources in any decision making process. I hoped these techniques would make the text more relevant. To reach the fourth goal, I attempted to remove omniscient and uncritical writing that can often be found in most textbooks. This was accomplished by “breaking the fourth wall” and writing directly to the students in a conversational or non-formal manner. In addition, based on Loewen’s discussion about Columbus and the “founding” of America, discussion of historical questions, debates, and inaccuracies were embedded directly in the text. An effort to meet the fifth goal was made by adding more primary and secondary sources to the text. Unlike most textbooks that place snippets of primary and secondary sources in sidebars or excerpts at the end of the chapter, I made an attempt to place and discuss the additional sources directly in the body of the text. The final goal, attempting to reconcile Moore’s critiques about state history textbooks and their “ethnocentric beliefs,” proved to be the most difficult to achieve due to the nature of the subject of state history in general; it is a course that requires students to learn about the most important historic figures and events of the state.<sup>27</sup> Still, similarly to the second goal, I attempted to balance the language about those people, places, and events.

Overall, after examining the data, I believe that I was reasonably successful in meeting most of these goals. However, due to the unforeseen influence of the textbook publishing industry and the Georgia textbook adoption committees, I did not meet them all. The following section discusses each of the six goals and offers the reader more detail about how I altered the original edition of the textbook to meet the suggestions of Loewen, Moore, and other critics.

### **Goal 1: Remove Unnecessary Information/Focus on the Standards**

From Frances FitzGerald to the Fox News Network, critics of textbooks have complained about their sheer size.<sup>28</sup> The primary reason for the large number of pages in these textbooks is due to the great amount of “unnecessary” information found in them. As a history teacher who viewed the textbook as simply one of many tools at my disposal, my first goal of writing a textbook was to “trim the fat” and streamline the amount of information found in my text. Though social studies researchers and critics often criticized state standards, I used the Georgia Performance Standards as my guide for two reasons.<sup>29</sup> First, I had the state adoption committee in mind and knew that they required all textbook authors to complete a document that displayed the correlations between the content of the textbook to the standards. My publisher informed me that any textbooks that did not display an appropriate correlation to the standards

would not be approved by the state board and would not be placed on the adoption list. Second, and more importantly, I chose to use the standards as a way to remove unnecessary information and go into much more detail about the importance of each of the individual “indicators of success” (i.e., specific people, places, and events). As a classroom teacher, I understood that educators are required to discuss the standards in their classes, and that these people, places, and events would most certainly be on the state-mandated test. Nevertheless, I hoped that with my in-depth discussion of each standard, students would receive a more realistic and unbiased, yet interesting, portrayal of each indicator required by the state.

In the end, I was unable to meet one of the components of this goal. Due to the publisher’s concern about competition from other textbook companies, the number of pages in our second edition actually increased from 281 pages to 291, though most of those pages were due to the addition of several appendixes, along with an expanded index. I was, however, able to remove several events and historical figures that were not part of the state standards while devoting more space and, more importantly, enriching the text by providing a detailed discussion about those figures and events listed in the standards, such as Georgia’s civil rights leaders Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, John Hope, Lugenia Burns Hope, and Andrew Young.

One example of expanded discussion was in the portrayal of William T. Sherman. In most of the Georgia history textbooks written from 1884-2005, Sherman was vilified due to his infamous Atlanta Campaign and “March to the Sea.”<sup>30</sup> Even recently published Georgia history textbooks offer myopic accounts of Sherman’s alleged brutality in Georgia. For instance, one textbook claims that Sherman’s army “burned **everything** [emphasis added] in a path sixty miles wide...”<sup>31</sup>

In my book, I was determined to share all elements of Sherman’s story and let my student readers determine their own opinions about Sherman and his actions during the war. The first step was to add more pages about Sherman while removing information about figures that were not listed in the Georgia state standards. This was accomplished by removing two pages about General Robert E. Lee and replacing them with a full biography of Sherman. In all, the discussion of Sherman was expanded from four pages to six in the new edition.

Secondly, I added a primary source, Sherman’s letter to Atlanta Mayor James M. Calhoun, to the text to allow Sherman the chance to “speak for himself” concerning his rationale behind the burning of the city. This letter, dated September 12, 1864, served as a warning for Atlanta’s residents to leave the city almost two months before it was set ablaze. It also gives the reader a chance to consider if the city was destroyed as punishment or

as simply a military strategy to end the war more quickly due to Atlanta's manufacturing capability and its role as a major railroad hub.<sup>32</sup>

Third, unlike most textbooks, I discussed Sherman's relationship with the South prior to the war. This included Sherman's acquaintances with several prominent families in Charleston while stationed in South Carolina, along with his position as superintendent of what became Louisiana State University. Finally, after reminding students about Sherman's campaigns throughout Georgia, I asked students to be the judge of Sherman and his actions during the war. To conclude Sherman's biography, I wrote:

Was Sherman really cruel? Or was he just following orders and doing his duty to quickly end the war? The answer is still being debated by writers and historians. As a student of history, this is one of the many topics that, by analyzing primary and secondary sources, you should determine on your own.<sup>33</sup>

### **Goal 2: Remove Heroification**

Loewen specifically cites heroification, "the process of textbook authors making historical figures into heroes," as one of the major weaknesses of history textbooks.<sup>34</sup> In my textbook, I attempted to neutralize the discussion of all historic figures by offering students a balance of both positive and negative characteristics of each individual in order to portray them for what they were: human beings. The portrayals of the historic figures that I believe became more balanced from the first to the second edition of the book included Georgia's "founder" James Oglethorpe, Senator Tom Watson, and Governor Eugene Talmadge. However, where this counterbalancing was most needed was in the portrayal of two presidents connected to the state: Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter.

Interestingly, one of Loewen's primary targets in *Lies My Teacher Told Me* was the portrayal of President Woodrow Wilson, which he used as an example of the extreme biases that can be found in history textbooks. In my own research, perhaps due to Loewen's influence, I have been interested in and researched the portrayals of presidents in state history textbooks. My investigations have also been based on political scientist Thomas Cronin's textbook presidency theory, the idea that the office of the United States President, and certain presidents in particular, are "over-idealized" in political science and history textbooks. Both authors' critiques, along with my past research about the portrayal of presidents in state history textbooks, served as major influences in writing my description of each Georgia-connected president in my textbook.<sup>35</sup>

Loewen's principal issue with the textbook portrayal of Woodrow Wilson was the fact that most textbooks leave out more information about

Wilson than what they describe. In the textbooks Loewen analyzed, Wilson was described as a progressive president who reluctantly led the United States into World War I. What most textbooks left out, according to Loewen, were Wilson’s discriminatory racial policies and his “military interventions in foreign countries.”<sup>36</sup> I found that Georgia history textbooks have tended to follow this national pattern of not offering the most accurate portrayal of Wilson’s presidency. In addition, many textbooks have made it a point to mention that Wilson also spent his boyhood in Georgia, started his law practice in the state, and married a Georgian, thus increasing his overall positive portrayal and connection to the state.<sup>37</sup>

The first edition of *Time Travel Through Georgia* followed this pattern. In discussing Wilson’s decision to ask Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, Cathy Hodge wrote that the Zimmerman Telegraph was the reason behind Wilson’s action. She also included an excerpt of Wilson’s congressional speech and ended her discussion of the declaration of war with an anecdote concerning what Wilson said immediately after. Hodge quotes Wilson as saying, “My message today was a message of death for our young men. How strange it seems to applaud that.” This statement upheld the traditional account of Wilson as a reluctant war leader.<sup>38</sup>

Because Georgia’s state standards do not mention Wilson or his domestic policies specifically (they only discuss the causes of World War I and Georgia’s contributions to the war), I did not have the opportunity to discuss Wilson’s dreadful racial practices.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, I tried to offer a more balanced portrayal of Wilson’s military policies by discussing his willingness to engage in foreign interventions before World War I. Based on Loewen’s critiques, I wrote in the draft of the manuscript, “though he [Wilson] was willing to use his presidential powers to send American troops to countries such as Nicaragua...Wilson claimed that he was reluctant to join the Allies.” In order to make room to offer this analysis, I removed the excerpt from Wilson’s speech and the anecdote about the loss of lives.

Unfortunately, after reviewing the final printing of the text several months after I had finished it, I discovered that my publisher removed my critique about Wilson’s foreign policy decisions and discussed America’s entry into the war by simply writing, “When President Wilson found out about the telegram he asked Congress to declare war on Germany and, on April 2, 1917, Congress approved.”<sup>40</sup> In this case, while the overtly positive portrayal of Wilson was eliminated, so was my critical analysis of his policies. Upon realizing this, I wrote in my personal reflections:

Though I am angry that this passage was changed without my knowledge, at least she [the publisher] did not revert back to the overtly biased original passage. Nevertheless, this passage about a decision to involve the country in what at the time was the most destructive war ever, is unbelievably dull

and lacks any human emotion. I guess I still managed to meet my goal, but not in a way that I would have liked.<sup>41</sup>

My own interest in textbook research stems from what I considered to be an inaccurate depiction of President Jimmy Carter in the Georgia history textbooks I was using as a Georgia Studies teacher. As a teacher, it appeared to me that Carter's presidency was over-idealized in Georgia history textbooks, and a more balanced accounting of his presidential term was needed. In my writings and presentations, I have challenged textbook writers, teacher educators, and teachers themselves to offer their students a more balanced discussion of Georgia's only native-born president, or of any native Georgian for that matter.<sup>42</sup>

When I began working on my textbook, I knew that the first edition had an extremely biased and incomplete depiction of Carter. Carter was mentioned in this book numerous times, excerpts from his book *An Hour Before Daylight* were used as primary source descriptions of his experiences during the Great Depression, and his wife, Rosalynn, even wrote an introduction to the book.<sup>43</sup> No matter the contribution the Carters made to the book, based on the work of Cronin, Loewen, and my own critiques, I felt obliged to neutralize the depiction of Carter. I must admit that I was concerned that this belief may have removed me from the project, or even that the book would not be adopted. Luckily, the publisher was willing to accept my position and said nothing about the changes I made to the first edition's references to President Carter.

So, with the blessing of the publisher, I made important changes concerning Carter's depiction. These changes answered the call made by textbook critiques for authors to write more accurate depictions in their textbooks. One example of this includes the discussion about Carter's 1976 presidential victory. The first edition stated that Carter won the election with "297 electoral votes, while his opponent, President Gerald Ford had **only** [emphasis added] 241 votes."<sup>44</sup> I believed that this statement was inaccurate, as the election of 1976 was by no means a landslide victory for Carter, and was much closer than the narrative made it appear. To offer a more accurate depiction of the event, I wrote that Carter "won a close election in November of 1976 with 297 electoral votes, while his opponent President Gerald Ford, received 241 votes." In addition, I added the fact that Carter received 51% of the popular vote.<sup>45</sup>

A more important change I made concerned Carter's presidential record and his post-presidential endeavors. In the original text, Hodge wrote:

While President of the United States, Carter did many things that helped our nation. He increased jobs by 8 million and helped decrease the national debt. He added millions of acres to the national parks system and hired many minorities into government jobs. Internationally, he helped bring

peace to the Middle East by negotiating with the leaders of Egypt and Israel to sign an important treaty at Camp David called The Camp David Peace Agreements. Since leaving office in 1981, President Carter has become the most successful former President of all time.<sup>46</sup>

Certainly, this reference about the presidency and post-presidency of Jimmy Carter contains many flaws. However, the most critical flaw is the omission of important details about Carter’s administration, and most noticeably, his failures. Even his loss to Reagan is not mentioned. Additionally, Carter is heroified in the text as “the most successful former President of all time.” While this is quite obviously an opinion that cannot be proven, there is an omniscient non-critical supposition to his statement that textbook critics like Derrick Alridge, Cronin, and Loewen warn against. For example, other presidents also had successful post-presidential careers, and two, John Quincy Adams and William Howard Taft, returned to high public office after their one-term presidencies.

With this in mind, I sought to offer my student readers a thoughtful, non-biased depiction of both Carter’s achievements and failures. I hoped that this depiction would offer students new insights about Carter, while also neutralizing elements of the idealized textbook presidency. I wrote:

In a recent poll of historians and presidential scholars conducted by C-SPAN in 2009, Carter’s presidency was ranked 25<sup>th</sup> out of 43. As with most presidents, Carter’s administration had some important successes and some major disappointments. The Camp David Peace Accords that Carter negotiated between Egypt and Israel is often cited as his most important act as president. However, his handling of the Iran Hostage Crisis is viewed as one of the reasons why he lost the 1980 election to Ronald Reagan. . . Since leaving office in 1981, President Carter has become one of the most active and respected former presidents.<sup>47</sup>

### **Goal 3: Make Text Relevant**

Another critique made by Loewen and other textbook critics is the lack of relevance textbooks have to the everyday lives of students. To help alleviate this problem, in the second edition of *Time Travel Through Georgia*, my co-author and I created sections entitled “Note to Students.” In many cases, these notes to students were created to increase the relevance of the text and to help students understand the importance of the topic they were reading. An example of this approach involves the legend of Georgia “heroine” Nancy Hart.

Nancy Hart was a frontier woman and patriot who lived in Georgia during the American Revolution. Legend has it that she captured five or six loyalists who barged into her cabin demanding she cook them a meal. Due

to her bravery, one of Georgia's 159 counties was named after her. This is the only county in the state named in honor of a woman.<sup>48</sup> For whatever reason, Hart is listed in the Georgia history standards and is required to be in all Georgia history textbooks to meet the state's adoption standards. However, as I reworked this portion of the text, I began to wonder why the Hart story was worthwhile and if it was truly relevant to students' lives. I also questioned, once I figured out Hart's relevance, "how could I relay this to my student readers."

After much deliberation, it became apparent that there were several things students could learn from the legend of Nancy Hart. Two of these included understanding author bias and the importance of analyzing multiple sources in order to better understand historic events. To discuss author bias in my text, I mentioned two other sources and the statements they made about the Hart story. One claimed that the loyalists Hart captured were given a trial (most accounts credit Hart for killing one or two immediately and hanging the rest).<sup>49</sup> Another source claimed that six bodies were found under the Hart cabin in 1912.<sup>50</sup> In discussing these differences between sources, I suggest that the author who wrote that Hart offered these men a trial may be trying to promote "the importance of following the rules," while the author who discussed the discovery of the six skeletons may be "trying to make their account appear more legitimate."<sup>51</sup>

In this Note to Students, I also offer an explanation of the importance of using multiple sources to understand history. I explain that the subject of history should not be simply viewed as a "bunch of dates and facts," but as a subject that students should analyze by using primary and secondary sources, along with some educated guesses, in order to determine their own conclusions about any historical person or event.<sup>52</sup> In addition, though not directly stated in the textbook, I offer teachers a full historical inquiry lesson plan in the text's supplemental materials that goes deeper into this concept by allowing students to actually examine three different sources about Hart and asking them to write their own version of what happened. This lesson offers students a more "practical" and realistic reason for learning how to use multiple sources for decision making by explaining that they will use this valuable skill throughout their lives, including when buying a car, choosing a college/career, and making informed political choices.

While pleased about this examination of Nancy Hart, I also felt as though I missed a chance to discuss gender inequality in this story. I could have embedded questions in the text or in a Note to Students such as:

- Why do you think that only one woman has a Georgia county named in her honor?

- With 159 counties, is this an equal representation of the role that Georgia’s women have played in the social, political, and economic development of the state?
- If you were to rename a county in honor of another influential woman, which county would it be and why? How does your choice compare and contrast to the man who is the namesake of that county?<sup>53</sup>

This type of discussion would have taken this story to a much more meaningful level and is one I will incorporate if there is a third edition of the text.

#### **Goal 4: Remove the Omniscient/Uncritical Narrator**

Another common complaint about textbooks concerns the way in which they are written. For example, Loewen claims textbooks are written in an omniscient, uncritical manner that makes textbooks “boring” to student readers. These boring textbooks cause students to be extremely disinterested in the subject of history. In order to avoid this pitfall in my textbook, my co-author and I developed two approaches to make the second edition of *Time Travel Through Georgia* less omniscient and uncritical. The first approach was by the Note to Students boxes previously discussed. We developed these in order to “break the fourth wall” and speak directly to the students in a non-formal manner. Not only did these Notes to Students often make the topics more relevant, but they also provided students with the understanding that they, not the authors, were the ones who should come up with their own conclusions about history.

Secondly, I made sure to embed historical questions, debates, and inaccuracies directly into the text. While this was actually one of the strengths in the first edition of the text, I still made sure to use this approach as often as I could. My own interpretation of this strategy was based on Loewen’s example about the importance of discussing Christopher Columbus’ voyage in more detail in history classes. Primarily, teachers should discuss the fact that Columbus most certainly was not the first to discover America, and may have actually been the least worthy of many who could lay claim to the title. Loewen argues that teaching the whole story makes history more fascinating to students and helps them understand the richness of historical inquiry.

In my text, I used this approach in discussing other standards such as James Oglethorpe, Sherman’s March to the Sea, and the New Deal. An example of how this was done can be found in both editions of the book with the discussion of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto. According to the state’s standards, Georgia’s students are required to learn that de Soto

was the first European to set foot in the state. Similarly to Columbus, de Soto is often considered in history as the man who “discovered” the land that became the state. However, in the chapter discussing de Soto’s failed journey, my co-author and I made sure students understood that there is debate concerning de Soto’s place in history. In order to remove the omniscience of the writing, we added:

Was de Soto really first? There have been several legends of other Europeans exploring Georgia before de Soto. Of the most feasible concerns the exploration of San Miguel de Gualdape who may have attempted to establish a colony on Sapelo Island in 1526.<sup>54</sup>

### **Goal 5: Add More Primary and Secondary Sources**

Another critique of textbooks concerns the lack of authors’ usage of primary and secondary sources. As Loewen explains, though additional sources, usually primary, are included in texts, they are typically placed in sidebars or as excerpts at the end of the chapter. Occasionally, the sources are followed by simple discussion questions. Though primary sources were included in the first edition of *Time Travel Through Georgia*, in the second edition, I made sure that I used and discussed as many sources as space allowed. As mentioned previously, I incorporated the 2009 C-SPAN poll results in the text to help frame the national view of Carter’s presidency. Additionally, my co-author and I placed as many primary and secondary sources as we could into the text in order to discuss a variety of historical topics including Georgia’s colonial malcontents, the U.S. Constitution, William T. Sherman, and the Great Depression.

The case of dispelling one of the most common myths about Georgia’s origin serves as an example of using the approach of mentioning outside sources in the text. A widespread misconception concerning the founding of Georgia is that it was a debtors colony, settled by men who were released from prison and sent to the territory. However, this simply was not the case. In 1943, Professor Albert B. Saye wrote *New View Points in Georgia History*, and discussed that his discovery of British archival evidence proved no debtor was released from prison to settle the colony.<sup>55</sup> Still, many textbooks written since 1943 have done little to dispel this myth (e.g., McCullar, Jackson, and Wingo et al.). In order to correct this misconception for both students and teachers, I wrote that “no debtor was released from prison to come to Georgia. Many people forgot this fact until it was rediscovered by historian and political scientist Albert B. Saye in 1943.”<sup>56</sup> Additionally, in order to encourage both teachers and their students to examine the influence of Georgia historians, I included the following corresponding lesson idea in the teacher’s edition:

Three UGA professors are extremely well known for their research concerning Georgia history. These men were E. Merton Coulter, Albert B. Saye, and Kenneth Coleman. Have students read about the historians using the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Then have students create their own reading comprehension questions about their lives, their perspectives about Georgia’s history, and their discoveries.<sup>57</sup>

### **Goal 6: Reconcile Moore’s State History Textbook Critiques**

As previously mentioned, state history textbooks have been an under-researched curriculum tool, though used in the vast majority of states throughout the nation. Of all the research concerning state history textbooks, none have been as concise or insightful as Moore’s study examining thirty state history textbooks and their depictions of several different eras in United States history. In his study, Moore describes how the “admirable objectives” of these texts can be detrimental to students’ understandings of history. These “admirable objectives” included “appreciation of the state,” “building good citizenship through the knowledge of the society in which he lives,” and “relating the state to the United States and world history.” He also discussed several weaknesses in these state history texts, including that they produce an “ethnocentric belief in the superiority of the state’s culture and disparagement of ‘outside’ contributions,” and that they “rarely satisfy...the requirements of scholarship, the curiosity of students, or the needs of society.” Finally, he argues that in order for these books to be more reliable, they must “demonstrate the state’s capacity for self-criticism and analysis.” In my own research concerning state history textbooks, I discovered that most state history texts have not met Moore’s challenges.<sup>58</sup>

As I began reworking several sections of my state history textbook, I hoped to take into account both Moore’s praises and critiques of state history and write a text that included some of Moore’s admirable objectives, while at the same time make changes based on his proposals that would dramatically improve the text. This goal proved to be the most difficult to accomplish, due to the nature of the subject of state history in general, which requires students to learn about the most important historic figures and events of the state. As I was writing, I felt that “**everything** [emphasis added] had to be connected back to the state.”<sup>59</sup> However, with my previously discussed portrayals of William T. Sherman, Woodrow Wilson, and Jimmy Carter, along with many of the other historical figures and events the state deemed to be the most important, I believe there is evidence that I offered my student readers the opportunity to critically analyze each one and come up with their own conclusions about the significance of each. At the very least, I think

I was able to balance the overtly positive, or in Sherman's case, negative, language about these topics and meet Moore's challenge.

### **Discussion**

The implications of this study not only have the potential to assist in the creation of stronger and more accurate state history textbooks, but also to explain to classroom teachers, teacher educators, and textbook critics the difficulties and challenges that even the most contentious author can face while writing a textbook. First, authors of state history textbooks, or any history textbook for that matter, should analyze their portrayals of historical figures or events and do their best to meet the six goals discussed in this manuscript. Overall, I found it fairly simple to achieve most of these goals in writing the textbook. In most cases, a few simple word changes helped to make descriptions of historic figures and events, such as Hernando de Soto, Nancy Hart, and Sherman's March, more accurate. In other cases, it took a major contextual overhaul of some of the historical topics, such as the portrayals of the presidencies of Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter, to attempt to achieve this balance. Even with all of these changes, the second edition of my textbook was accepted by the textbook adoption committee without controversy. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of all textbook authors to make sure they offer students the most accurate depiction of the historic topics they are discussing.

In turn, teachers, teacher educators, and textbook critics should understand the difficulties in writing a textbook. I do not believe that most textbook authors intentionally misrepresent history in their texts. For instance, I was not informed about the changes to my passage about Woodrow Wilson's use of American troops before World War I and yet my name is still on the cover as the book's author.

It should also be noted that textbook authors must make compromises, should consider state standards and adoption committees, and are simply restrained by the practical realities of trying to "cram" a large amount of information into a relatively small amount of space. For example, in a textbook adoption meeting in one district, one teacher said he would never allow his system to purchase our textbook "because there was not enough information about the Battle of Gettysburg." I purposely reduced the amount of references about this national battle in order to focus more on Sherman's March through Georgia.

With this in mind, teachers should also understand that no textbook is perfect and may not be likely to offer students the most accurate or detailed accounts of any historic figure or event. For example, though I wrote two sentences about de Soto's "murder and devastation" of Native

Americans in Georgia, when one of my co-workers read my description of Hernando de Soto’s expedition, he said, “you really let de Soto off the hook didn’t you”—in his mind, I did not discuss de Soto’s mistreatment of the Native Americans in enough detail.<sup>60</sup> As I responded to him, it is up to the teacher to use the textbook less often and multiple sources more frequently. Textbooks should be one of many tools used to teach the subject of history, and if you are not satisfied with the textbook, by all means locate and use better sources that meet both your needs and the needs of your students. With this in mind, those who educate teachers should understand that they play a major role in helping preservice teachers learn how to locate and use different sources in order to prevent the overuse of textbooks that researchers have been lambasting for years.

Finally, though many of their critiques about the misrepresentation of historic people and events are interesting, textbook critics may want to consider examining textbooks as a whole. It may be time for them to avoid simply analyzing a specific historical topic or topics that they are most interested in and be more worthwhile for them to use some of the six goals explained in this paper as a rubric of sorts to judge the merits and the weaknesses of each textbook. More importantly, these researchers, who are often historians or teacher educators, should offer more pedagogical examples about how educators can better teach topics they believe are misrepresented in the books while offering fewer examples of the topics that the textbooks “got wrong.”

## Notes

1. I am extremely grateful for the advice, feedback, critique, and suggestions offered by Dr. James W. Loewen, Professor Emeritus at the University of Vermont, who graciously agreed to read a draft of this manuscript. Comments made by Dr. Ceola Ross Barber of North Carolina A&T State University at the 2011 CUFA Annual Conference were also invaluable in the development of this manuscript.

2. Scott L. Roberts, *Georgia Economic History: Lessons for Implementing the GPS in Grade 8* (Atlanta, GA: Georgia Council on Economic Education, 2009).

3. Scott L. Roberts, Personal Reflection (13 April 2010).

4. Scott L. Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory and its Relationship to the Portrayals of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Presidents found in the Middle Level State History Textbooks of Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia* (Ph.D. diss., The University of Georgia, 2009), <<http://athenaeum.libs.uga.edu/handle/10724/11791>>.

5. Scott L. Roberts, “Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike? Perceptions of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Presidents in Georgia History Textbooks: 1951-2005,” *The Georgia Social*

*Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1-18.

6. Irwin Unger, "The Adventures (and Misadventures) of a Text Book Author," *The History Teacher* 16, no. 2 (February 1983): 201-207. In his article about his experiences writing a college-level U.S. history textbook, in the very first line of the piece, Unger writes, "Nobody I know of has written a text book except for money..."

7. Roberts, Personal Reflection (20 April 2010).

8. These authors wrote some of the best-selling Georgia history textbooks from 1884-2005. E. Merton Coulter, Albert Berry Saye, and Spencer King, *History of Georgia* (New York: American Book Company, 1954); Lawton B. Evans, *The Student History of Georgia: From the Earliest Discoveries and Settlements to the End of the Year 1883* (Macon, GA: J. W. Burke & Co., 1884); Lawton B. Evans, *A History of Georgia for use in Schools* (New York: University Publishing Company, 1906); Edwin L. Jackson, Mary E. Stakes, Lawrence R. Hepburn, and Mary Hepburn, *The Georgia Studies Book: Our State and the Nation* (Athens, GA: The Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2004); Bernice McCullar, *This is Your Georgia* (Northport, AL: American Southern Publishing Company, 1966); Bonnie London, *A History of Georgia* (Montgomery, AL: Clairmont Press, 1992); Albert B. Saye, *Georgia History and Government* (Austin, TX: Steck-Vaughn, 1973).

9. James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

10. Though limited in number, there have been some studies concerning state history. These include Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, "Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?"; Richard DeLuca, "In Search of the 'Real' California History: History in the Fourth Grade Textbook," Paper presented at the CLIO conference (Berkeley, CA, 22 August 1984); Gloria R. Lothrop, "Women's Place in California History: An Overview," *Social Studies Review* 29, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 8-13; Melton McLaurin, "Images of Negroes in Deep South Public School State History Texts," *Phylon* 32, no. 3 (1971): 237-246; John R. Moore, "State History Texts: Essays in Ethnocentrism," *Social Education* 33, no. 3 (March 1969): 267-278; Steven M. Terry, "Depiction of the Reconstruction Period in Georgia History Textbooks," *The Georgia Social Science Journal* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 5-10; Jeremy Hilburn and Paul G. Fitchett, "The New Gateway, An Old Paradox: Immigrants and Involuntary Americans in North Carolina History Textbooks," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 40, no. 1 (2012): 35-66.

11. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 281.

12. Linda K. Menton, "Researching and Writing State History: Theory and Practice," *The History Teacher* 26, no. 2 (February 1993): 221.

13. For more information about the impact that standards have had on U.S. history courses, see Carl B. Anderson and Scott A. Metzger, "Slavery, the Civil War Era, and African American Representation in U.S. History: An Analysis of Four States' Academic Standards," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 393-415.

14. See Derrick P. Alridge, "The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 4 (April 2006): 662-686; Van Gosse, "Consensus and Contradictions in the Textbook Treatments of Sixties," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 658-669; Dennis Gilbert, "Emiliano Zapata: Textbook Hero," *Mexican Studies* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 127-159; Leah H. Wasburn, "Accounts of Slavery: An Analysis of United States History Textbooks From 1900 to 1992," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 470-491.

15. Wasburn, "Accounts of Slavery," 471-472.

16. Ibid.

17. Moore, "State History Texts." A recent example of the bias—or at the very least,

historical inaccuracy—in a state history textbook was a passage found in a Virginia history textbook that claimed “thousands of African-Americans fought for the South during the Civil War,” a claim that is “rejected by most historians but used by groups to play down slavery’s role as a cause in the conflict” and caused a nationwide controversy. See Kevin Sieff, “Virginia 4<sup>th</sup>-Grade Textbook Criticized Over Claims on Black Confederate Soldiers,” *The Washington Post*, 20 October 2010, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html>>.

18. Moore, “State History Texts,” 267, 275.

19. Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, “Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?”; Scott L. Roberts and Brandon M. Butler, “Idealizing and Localizing the Presidency: The President’s Place in State History Textbooks,” in *The New Politics of the Textbook: Critical Analysis in the Core Content Areas*, ed. Heather Hickman and Brad J. Porfilio (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishing, 2010), 287-305.

20. Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2002): 82-83.

21. Cathy M. Hodge, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, first ed. (Athens, GA: Wesmar Publishing, 2005); Cathy M. Hodge and Scott L. Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, second ed. (Athens, GA: Wesmar Publishing, 2011).

22. These texts included: Coulter, Saye, and King, *History of Georgia*; Evans, *The Student History of Georgia*; Evans, *A History of Georgia for Use in Schools*; Jackson, Stakes, Hepburn, and Hepburn, *The Georgia Studies Book*; London, *A History of Georgia*; Bonnie London, *Georgia and the American Experience* (Atlanta, GA: Clairmont Press, 2005); McCullar, *This is Your Georgia*; Saye, *Georgia History and Government*; W. Bruce Wingo, Steven M. Terry, and Ron Bussler, *Georgia in American Society* (Stone Mountain, GA: Linton Publishing Company, 1987).

23. For more information about the self-study methodology, see M. L. Hamilton and S. Pinnegar, “Conclusion: The Value and Promise of Self-Study,” in *Reconceptualizing Teacher Practice: Self-Study in Teacher Education*, ed. M. L. Hamilton (Bristol, PA: Farmers Press, 1998), 240.

24. As cited in Jason K. Ritter, “Revealing Praxis: A Study of Professional Learning and Development as a Beginning Social Studies Teacher Educator,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 38, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 549.

25. Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, “Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?”; Roberts and Butler, “Idealizing and Localizing the Presidency.”

26. Moore, “State History Textbooks,” 267.

27. Ibid.

28. Fox News Network, “Fox News Reporting: Do you Know What Textbooks Your Children are Reading?” 17 September 2010, <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,545900,00.html>>; Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1979).

29. For critiques about state standards, see: Anderson and Metzger, “Slavery, the Civil War Era, and African American Representation in U.S. History”; Michael W. Apple and Linda Christian-Smith, *The Politics of the Textbook* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 1991); Linda K. Salvucci, “Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans in Secondary-School United States History Textbooks,” *The History Teacher* 24, no. 2 (February 1991): 203-222.

30. See Coulter, Saye, and King, *History of Georgia*; McCullar, *This is Your Georgia*; Saye, *Georgia History and Government*.

31. London, *Georgia and the American Experience*, 273.

32. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 168.

33. Ibid., 169.

34. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 19.
35. For more information about the textbook presidency theory, see: Richard W. Alsfeld, "The Presidency Reconfigured?: The Textbook Presidency Yet Again," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 677-682; Thomas E. Cronin, "The Textbook Presidency and Political Science," in *Perspectives on the Presidency*, ed. Stanley Bach and George T. Sulzner (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1974): 54-74; Thomas E. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975); Douglas J. Hoekstra, "The 'Textbook Presidency' Revisited," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 159-167; J. M. Sanchez, "Old Habits Die Hard: The Textbook Presidency is Alive and Well," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29, no. 1 (March 1996): 63-66. For my analysis of the textbook presidency in state history textbooks, see: Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, "Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?"; Roberts and Butler, "Idealizing and Localizing the Presidency."
36. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 23.
37. Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, "Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?"; Roberts and Butler, "Idealizing and Localizing the Presidency."
38. Hodge, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 201.
39. To examine the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade Georgia Performance Standards, see Georgia Department of Education, "Georgia Performance Standards: Grade Eight: Georgia Studies," <<https://www.georgiastandards.org/standards/Georgia%20Performance%20Standards/Gr8-Social-Studies-Standard.pdf>>.
40. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 201.
41. Roberts, Personal Reflection (30 November 2011).
42. Roberts, *The Textbook Presidency Theory*; Roberts, "Did Georgia (Eventually) Like Ike?"; Roberts and Butler, "Idealizing and Localizing the Presidency."
43. Hodge, *Time Travel Through Georgia*.
44. *Ibid.*, 275.
45. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 275.
46. Hodge, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 275.
47. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 275.
48. For more information about Nancy Hart, see Clay Ouzts, "Nancy Hart (ca. 1735-1830)," *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2876>>.
49. London, *Georgia and the American Experience*, 159.
50. Ouzts, "Nancy Hart (ca. 1735-1830)," paragraph 9.
51. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 93.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Roberts, Personal Reflection (30 November 2011). However, I later developed a lesson based on this idea. See Scott L. Roberts "Women of Action and County Names: Mary Musgrove County—Why Not?" *Middle Level Learning* 48 (September 2013): M12-M16.
54. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 43.
55. Albert B. Saye, *New Viewpoints in Georgia History* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1943).
56. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia*, 68.
57. Cathy M. Hodge and Scott L. Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia: Teachers Edition* (Athens, GA: Wesmar Publishing, 2011): 68.
58. For more information about the "admirable objectives" of state history textbooks along with their weaknesses, see Moore, "State History Textbooks," 267, 275, and 276.
59. Roberts, Personal Reflection (20 April 2010).
60. Hodge and Roberts, *Time Travel Through Georgia: Teachers Edition*, 43.