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Inquiry into the Latin and Spanish Cultural Presentations of Spanish First Year Textbooks

Max Joe Young

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE LATIN AND SPANISH CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
OF
SPANISH FIRST YEAR TEXTBOOKS

by

MAX JOE YOUNG JR.

Under the Direction of William Reynolds

ABSTRACT

This thesis uses critical theory perspectives and qualitative research methodology to explore the cultural content of three first-year Spanish textbooks. These three textbooks are currently being used or have been used recently in the region of southeastern Georgia. The researcher seeks to discover what cultural aspects are actually being presented to students who most likely have little knowledge of cultural expression in Latin America and Spain. The researcher also seeks to explore the Americanization of Latin culture. This study focuses upon three areas of cultural presentation found in the three texts: cultural paragraphs and essays, illustrations and photographs, and vocabulary. All areas are the means in which the authors present cultural representations. This thesis will explore what kind of life is portrayed to students studying Spanish for the first time and how accurate the cultural representations are and how many cultural representations are a reiteration of American culture under the guise of cultural relevancy.

INDEX WORDS: First-year Spanish, Spanish, Latin culture, Textbooks, Spanish textbooks, Critical theory, Vocabulary, Illustrations, Photographs, Cultural essays

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B.A. Maryville College, 1987

M.A. University of Tennessee 1998

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2007

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Electronic Version Approved:
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to the three most important people in my life. First, I dedicate my dissertation to my wonderful wife, Mirna, who was patient with me for so long in finishing this project. Second, I want to dedicate my dissertation to my two beautiful daughters, Abby and Caroline. You are truly the light of my life, and you bring me joy each and every day.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Spanish-speaking world encompasses vast numbers of persons whose ancestry represent all of the races found on the planet. Whether they are of Maya descent in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala of European descent in Bilbao, Spain, everyone shares a common culture characteristic—the Spanish language. In the United States with the growing Latin and Spanish population, the Spanish language becomes increasingly important. According to the United States Census Bureau, the Hispanic population will grow tremendously from the year 2000 till 2050.

(<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>). Furthermore, the region in which we live has attracted large numbers of Spanish-speaking immigrants due to both the agricultural and industrial base located in the southern part of the United States.

(<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>). In southeastern Georgia, the majority of students is monolingual and would have difficulty communicating with these immigrants, however, Spanish teachers in the region are attempting to correct the deficiency. English-only and English-first campaigns have recently dominated the news and are current hot-button political topic, but oral and written communication is only one component of language learning.

Learning a foreign language is not limited to the acquisition of vocabulary, nor the mastery of the conjugation of verb tenses. An exceedingly vital component of foreign language learning is the thorough understanding of cultural customs which the first-year Spanish student will encounter in his or her journey into acquiring the knowledge of a

new language. It is especially true of people living in the southeastern part of the state of Georgia, as daily immigrants from nations in Latin America arrive to provide economic sustenance for their families.

For years though in the classrooms of foreign language teachers, students have been teaching the components of Spanish to native English speakers. The importance of culture as an essential element of language learning has not been ignored in the last fifteen years or so. It has been recognized that the function of language learning is to provide a foundation of cultural understanding. Proof of this particular mode of thinking is found in the *Quality Core Curriculum Guidelines*, the basis for what is taught in the State of Georgia. One of the stated primary goals for most Spanish teachers is to teach aspects of culture. For example, in the *Quality Core Curriculum Guidelines* of the state of Georgia declares the student will “gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures” (p.1359). Among the numbered objectives in the *Quality Core Curriculum Guide* culture is second which suggests the teaching of culture has a high status within the state guidelines.

Another source of what should be taught in foreign language classrooms is the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. This volume represents not local standards, but national requirements for the attainment of proficiency in all foreign languages taught in the United States. The five primary goals of proficiency according to this tome are communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. “Cultures” is listed second when going in a clockwise direction among the five circles which represent the design of the book on standards. On page 9, the authors

list two objectives relating to culture. Standard 2.1 states, “Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.” Standard 2.2 follows with, “Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspective of the culture studied” (p. 9).

As with all subjects throughout all levels of education, the one constant in successful mastery rests with the educator. The educator who constantly attempts to inspire his or her students with new pedagogical methods and ideas will generally be successful. In the Spanish classroom, the teacher must bring the five elements of language learning to his or her students. These elements are reading, writing, listening, speaking, and finally an understanding of the culture of the target language.

The conscientious language teacher who desires to enlighten his or her students has a number of methods to bring the knowledge of the target language’s cultural features to the student. One method is through guided reading taken from magazines and newspapers in the target language. Another method is through the use of videos and DVDs which allow the students to view the rich panorama of the culture of the target language. A further method is for the teacher of the particular target language to share personal stories with students of personal visits to countries where the target language is spoken. All are viable methods and strategies to bring the target language’s culture alive, and all of these aforementioned strategies rely upon the foreign language teacher.

Apart from the teacher who plays the most critical role in the foundation of learning in a particular subject area, the primary tool that teachers use in the classroom is the textbook. As will be noted later in this study, many authors have focused their

inquiries on the textbook in this essential role of education. Ian Westbury (1990) notes, “It is a truism that textbooks are the central tools and the central objects of attention in all modern forms of schooling. The implicit and explicit tasks that they prescribe define the core work of the school”(p.1). Westbury is writing about the role of textbooks in general and not specifically about foreign language textbooks. Today, textbook companies create products which are closely aligned with the stated curriculum of the public schools. Based upon this fact, textbooks form the core around which teachers express their lessons to the students because the teacher’s lessons must conform to the state of Georgia’s curriculum standards. This core is also the foundation of cultural understanding for the students in a first-year language program.

Westbury goes onto to discuss some of the themes of inquiries focusing upon textbook analysis. He writes,

The themes of this work have ranged far, as the chapters of this yearbook suggest. Textbooks are being criticized for their representation of content, their implicit assumptions about teachers, students, teaching and learning, and for their social and cultural biases. The industry that produces these textbooks has been charged with shoddy workmanship.

However, research seeking guidelines for the improvement of all aspects of school textbooks has also burgeoned and for some, this new interest in the textbook holds that new kinds of books, and perhaps renewed approaches to

teaching and learning, are possible (p. 2)

The idea of using textbooks to analyze a particular problem in the field of education is not a new subject area. No specific study has been done though to examine the way cultural presentations are shown to students learning a foreign language for the first time.

Therefore, at both the national and state levels of education, an importance seems to be placed upon the acquisition of cultural knowledge within the foreign language classroom. In terms of local guidelines, the county where I teach does not maintain separate specific guidelines. Rather the reliance for guidelines is based upon the regulations put forth by the state of Georgia. Since my expertise is in teaching Spanish to high school students, the target language which I refer to is Spanish and the study will examine elements of culture within first-year Spanish textbooks.

Based upon the evidence as stated in both state and national standards it seems evident that culture is supposed to play an essential role in students' learning of a foreign language. Culture appears to make an important part of both national and state level standards. If foreign language teachers are following the prescribed avenues of teaching, then it stands to reason that the culture of the target language must be taught.

At an even more basic level, students will gain cultural knowledge from simply looking at pictures, and reading the information provided in the textbooks, apart from whatever personal stories and anecdotes the teacher may provide in the course of studying a foreign language. Studies done by authors such as Sherry Keith (1991) and Michael Apple(1991) and Linda Christian-Smith (1991) suggest in general terms how influential the textbook can be. For example, Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith

mention this influence in their article, “The politics of the textbook” They write, “This is a distinct problem since texts are not simply ‘delivery systems’ of ‘facts’. They are at once the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises. They are conceived, designed, and authored by real people with real interests” (p. 1-2).

The scope of the cultural breadth of Spanish-speakers is surprisingly diverse. A personal anecdote illustrates a common misperception among native English speakers here southeastern Georgia. Because of the geographic proximity to the United States, it is common to think of most Spanish-speakers as being from Mexico. My wife is from Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and is a native Spanish-speaker. Over the years many people have asked me how much spicy food I eat. These individuals do not understand that in Bolivia, an Andean nation in South America, spicy food is rare, except for the occasional condiment. The greater influence is from the beef-producing nation of Argentina. This may be a trivial point as to whether Bolivians eat spicy food, but implicitly it brings a much larger issue to the forefront.

Actually the occurrence of such thinking is not limited to southeastern Georgia, because as Alice Omaggio-Hadley writes, “How many Americans have the strong impression that all Spanish speaking peoples eat tacos and hot foods, go to bullfights, and take abundant naps?” (p. 380). These ideas come from the popular cultural expressions in our media.

In the introduction of his important work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979), states
For the general reader, this study deals with matters
that always compel attention, all of them connected

not only with Western conceptions and treatments of the Other but also with the singularly important role played by Western culture in what Vico called the world of nations. Lastly for readers in the so-called Third World, this study proposes itself as a step toward an understanding not so much of Western politics and of the non-Western world in those politics as of the strength of Western cultural discourse, a strength too often mistaken as merely decorative or “superstructural”. My hope is to illustrate the formidable structure of colonial domination and specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure on themselves or upon others (p.24-25)

While not related to the examination of textbooks, Said’s work relates directly to this study as a description of what is being done and has been done over the years to a non-Western culture. As this study will ultimately show the culture presented in the three first-year Spanish textbooks has a particular bias

In *Understanding Curriculum* (1996) the authors Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman discuss the idea of reproduction theory where the society is reproduced through established institutions (p.244). The authors write, “Relying on this principle of correspondence, Apple and Giroux argued that schools functioned to reproduce the class structure of the workplace (p. 245). Michael Apple becomes even more specific as he describes the role of the textbook in curriculum. It is well-established that textbooks play

an essential role in the development of the educational foundations of students. This is especially true in the realm of foreign language learning because unlike other subjects where the student may have gleaned information in earlier years, the first-year foreign language student is learning something completely different from other areas of study.

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) write, “Specifically, the social relationships of education—the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students, and students and their work—replicate the hierarchial divisions of labor” (p. 131).

Since textbooks are a large part of the educational institution, then it stands to reason that textbooks contribute to the reproduction of the societal norms. Michael Apple (1991) brings this idea out as he writes, “This knowledge, and one’s ‘ability’ to deal with it, has served as one mechanism in a complex process in which the economic and reproduction of class, gender, and race relations is accomplished” (p. 23) Textbooks assist in the reproduction of society as it is now.

For example, the common term “Hispanic” with which many people are familiar, does not accurately describe people living in Latin America and Spain. Larry L. Naylor(1998) writes, “Demographically speaking, Hispanic is the term used by the Bureau of the Census to identify a racial/ethnic social group composed of Americans of Spanish heritage or who speak Spanish. However, the term Hispanic American or simply Hispanic, is another of those categorizations terms that masks a broad variety of ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds within the group established” (p. 133). People of Spanish or Latin American heritage are forced by the United States government to

identify themselves as a group even though they may not even think of themselves in that particular manner.

The term “Hispanic” is so common today that most people do not even give it a second thought, so those people are labeled “Hispanic” whether they actually would classify themselves as Hispanic. By using such a term, the government creates a label and therefore helps perpetuate a myth of ethnicity even though the community may choose not to label itself as such. A more preferable term to Hispanic is the geographically-based term Latino or even Latin.

Even this term is not all-encompassing because of the population of person of Spanish origin, which includes people who live or are from Spain. In this study, I will be using the terms Latin, referring to those who have national origin in Latin America as opposed to Anglo-America which of course would include only the nations of the United States and Canada. The term Latin America refers to the area outside of the United States and Canada and will include the national boundaries from Mexico to the tip of South America, an area owned by the two South American nations of Chile and Argentina. The region also includes a number of Caribbean islands as well.

One of the most common themes occurring in all of the currently used Spanish textbooks is an emphasis upon the manner in which students from various Spanish-speaking nations live. Other themes are present as well, but if one examines the presentations of the textbooks, one will observe how the lives of Spanish-speaking students compare to those of the students living in the United States. It is understandable why the authors use this particular underlying theme. Students here in the United States

would be much more interested in what their counterparts are doing in the nations of Latin America and Spain.

It is important to make a distinction between various groups who represent the terms Latins and Spanish. These groups vary greatly in terms of ethnic heritage and socioeconomic status as well. The first group is the highest socioeconomic group and those are the Spanish, and therefore would tend to have the most in common with middle class students here in the United States. Spain is considered by most to be a first world nation and the standard of living is comparable to the United States. From a cultural perspective the emphasis upon consumer capitalism is considerably less in Spain when compared to the United States. Those who reside in Spain enjoy the same level of prosperity that the citizens of the United States do. It stands to reason that students living in Spain would have more in common with students in the United States than perhaps other groups of students.

The second group of people are the Latins who permanently live here in the United States. Many have become United States citizens and if they are not citizens, they are most likely permanent residents. These individuals have the most in common with the students in the United States who are learning about Latin and Spanish culture. Their cultural mores may be closely aligned with people of Anglo or other descent. Of the groups of students, these would be most like students studying Spanish in rural Georgia. In fact, many of the second or third generation students would be in Spanish classes learning what should be their native or second language.

The third group of people are the children of parents who have come to the United

States to escape desperate poverty conditions. Students who come under this category live in poor conditions and are part of marginalized society. They may or may not live the rest of their lives in the United States. For their parents, the journey to the United States may be temporary. They may have dreams of returning to their native land much richer than they left it.

The final group of Latins is made up of those individuals who live their entire lives in Latin America. These individuals may or may not travel to the United States, and in all likelihood will not. However, in the number of representations in the top Spanish textbooks used in the state of Georgia, these individuals are least represented. Instead, the authors and publishers have chosen to be selective in their choice of who is shown in their textbooks.

Evidence of this characteristic can be observed in the selected textbooks themselves. Chapter Four of this qualitative study examines many specific examples of how the publishers are extremely selective in what they choose for the students to see when reading Spanish I textbooks. The first example comes from *Paso a Paso* and is found on page 278. On this page is a photograph of a Spanish-style house with palm trees adorning the exterior. On page 279 another photo exists of a different residence. Both homes are certainly of Spanish style, but they are located in Los Angeles. If students were not observant, they could easily mistake these homes for typical ones in Latin America.

Unfortunately, these are not the only two photographs present in the three textbooks. In a more recently published textbook, *Realidades*, the authors use a similar

cultural example. Located on page 296-297 as an introduction to Chapter 6B is a photograph of a large home located in Santiago, Chile. The house has a wall around it protecting it from outsiders.

Furthermore, in the use of photographs in the Buen Viaje textbook, a photo is shown on page 49 of a group of Latinos with the Golden Gate Bridge in the background. San Francisco is a multicultural hub, but it is not primarily associated with Latinos as its primary ethnic base. It appears as if the publishers simply selected people and places for the sake of convenience instead of providing engaging examples of photographs for cultural enrichment. Many other examples exist throughout the three textbooks, but these three show an interesting trend in all of the textbooks under consideration in this study.

Benjamin Barber (1996) in *Jihad vs. McWorld* makes the argument that the people of the United States have become obsessed with consumer capitalism largely due to the influence of business. It is this obsession which has permeated our school systems and been filtered into the textbooks used in the classroom. Alfie Kohn (2002) describes the relationship between business and education when he writes, “Thus when business thinks about schools, its agenda is driven by what will maximize its profitability, not necessarily by what is in the best interest of the students. Any overlap between those two goals would be purely coincidental...” (p. 118). Therefore, the business world would prefer to have consumers. If students learning Spanish were exposed to a culture similar to their own, then the idea of consumer capitalism is reinforced and students continue to follow the path of consumerism. In terms of cultural reality, what is being described by the textbook isn't necessarily the culture one would encounter while traveling in Latin

America.

By exploring the role of how Spanish language textbooks perpetuate the capitalist system by showing students that most people live as we do is a major component of the philosophical foundation of critical theory. It is from this perspective of creating a view of Latin and Spanish culture to primarily white children who have cultural reference point on which to gain understanding of the Latin and Spanish world except through the textbooks used that the study will be based. Of the philosophical foundations available, critical theory with its emphasis upon Marxist thought is appropriate for this particular study. The textbooks will be examined from a variety of areas in terms of cultural content. Today, in Spanish classrooms, the focus is upon the communicative approach to language learning which implicitly states that cultural understanding is of paramount importance. The examination of the current textbooks will focus upon various aspects of the cultural learning process. These aspects include visual references comprising of photographs, pictures, and realia, written cultural references, both in essay form and the captions describing the visual references, and finally the vocabulary chosen to be taught within the chapters.

Personal perspective

From a personal standpoint, I have a vested interest in the proposed study. Since I have been involved in the teaching of Spanish for a number of years and continue to be directly involved in the teaching process. Given the fact that by the year 2050 the Latino population will encompass about forty-five percent of the population of the United States, I believe it is vital that students taking Spanish in high school today have a better

understanding of the different cultures. Personally, I became intensely interested in Spanish while in high school but had little knowledge of the culture I was studying. In those days (the early 1980s) culture was not the major emphasis of language learning. I do not recall watching a film (videos were almost unheard of in the early 1980s) concerning Spanish culture. The focus was on merely learning grammatical concepts and using them to translate sentences from English to Spanish and vice-versa. College Spanish was much of the same. A great emphasis was placed on the conjugation of verbs. No real conversation ever took place. In more advanced college classes, the emphasis was placed upon reading short novels and then discussing them in English. I place no blame on my teachers because they did the best they could under the circumstances and language pedagogical concepts at the time. The idea of actual communication in the Spanish classroom was a foreign concept. It was not until I finished college that I began thinking about a career in teaching and I certainly never thought that the Spanish language would play such an integral role in my life.

After graduate school I had the unique opportunity to spend a year teaching English in a rural town in Japan. I worked as an assistant English teacher and helped prepare lessons and I team taught with the Japanese English teachers. Upon my return to the United States I began seeking a position as a social studies teacher. At the time there was a surplus of social studies teachers but Spanish teachers were more difficult to find. I obtained a provisional teaching certificate and began teaching four Spanish classes and one social studies class. In order to receive a regular teaching certificate I had to take a certain number of classes. At Georgia Southern University I was first introduced to the

concept of the communicative language approach. This approach placed the emphasis not from the comprehension of grammar but to the idea that true language learning is communication. It matters little if the student is able to conjugate the verbs but unable to speak the language in real life situations.

This methodology did not strike me as very important at first because I was merely trying to survive my first years of teaching and I had other ideas on what I wanted to achieve. In 1993 I accepted a position as a social studies teacher at a private school located in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. It was there that I learned first hand how important it is to be able to communicate in a foreign language. I spent two years in Santa Cruz and came home with a new appreciation for Latino culture. I spent one year teaching Spanish again at an inner-city high school in Nashville, Tennessee, and again I focused on teaching a group of lower economic students and maintaining order in the classroom, instead of attempting to achieve a higher level of educational awareness as Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator describes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Conditions at this high school were incredibly pessimistic in the sense that both student and teacher expectations were low. Assigning homework was a pointless task for teachers because students rarely completed assignments. At the end of the school year in 1996, I decided that I needed a change.

In order to give perspective to my view concerning teaching in those days, I am forced by academic honesty to admit that I was extremely dependent upon the textbook during my first tenure in Effingham County and my one year experience at the inner-city high school in Nashville. I must admit that I relied heavily upon my textbook to assist me

in planning and implementing both unit and daily lessons. In terms of the subject I am now analyzing, except for the recounting of adventures I had in Costa Rica and later Guatemala, I rarely delved outside the textbook in teaching about culture.

Furthermore, I was extremely dependent on the textbook for the lessons I used to teach culture as well. In those days I was more concerned with presenting a decent lesson instead of critically analyzing what the students and I were exposed to in the textbook itself. It would have never occurred to me to analyze the vocabulary that was presented in those textbooks from a critical theory perspective or for that matter, any critical perspective. In those days it was simply to present the material as best I could.

In 1996 I was offered an assistantship to study Spanish at the graduate level at the University of Tennessee. I spent two years studying Spanish literature and teaching undergraduates basic Spanish. It was in this setting that I was briefly introduced to post-modern thought. When I left Knoxville and returned to Southeast Georgia, I was ready to apply what I knew about teaching Spanish in a more realistic setting and not just on the finer points of grammar. It was in the spring 1999 that I entered the Ed. D. program in Curriculum Studies.

Like many doctoral students I was unclear upon what my dissertation would focus on and I spent the first year of classes attempting to understand the jargon and ideas behind the program. It was in my final year of doctoral classes that I began examining what I wanted to do with my dissertation. And here I am, at the point of investigating my chosen topic which meshes the passion of teaching Spanish which I developed long ago with my newest interest of post-modern thought which blossomed in the Ed D program.

The primary objective in conducting this research is to determine if the presentation of culture within currently used Spanish textbooks promote a sufficient understanding of the Latin and Spanish culture or if the cultural norms portrayed in the textbooks produce a culture similar to our own. The four textbooks being used in Georgia Spanish classes today will be examined for their portrayal of Spanish culture.

Philosophical foundation of study

The basis of this cultural analysis of textbooks is critical educational theory. While other philosophical perspectives may provide a specific way of viewing the role of textbooks, analyzing from a perspective of critical theory lends itself more readily to today's school experience, especially with the emphasis upon testing as a means to bring about more of a business-oriented approach to education. Although critical educational theory is not as popular as postmodernism today, successful curriculum theorists continue to pursue critical educational theory as a basis for the exploration of curricular issues. Most notable critical theorists are Henry Giroux (1988,1993,1994,2000), Peter McLaren (1989,1997,2000), and Michael Apple (1982,1986,1991,1999). Apple has done extensive research in the realm of textbook analysis. Using a philosophical background based on critical educational theory, coupled with the examination of the cultural aspects presented in today's Spanish textbooks will enable others to see this material in a different light which will add to the validity of this study.

In one respect it may be somewhat controversial to use this philosophy because of the conservative nature of the area in which I live. Some educators for which I am doing this study may not understand the implications of critical theory and furthermore may not

even agree to its propositions. It would be remiss for me, however, to abandon the study because of the difference of opinion. One of the most helpful authors who has written on this subject prior to my study is Michael Apple. Apple (1991) examines the controversy from a Marxist point of view (p.23).

Statement of purpose

Publishing companies produce textbooks in order to make a profit, even though people generally regard textbooks as an instructional tool. Like other school subjects which rely upon textbooks to help teachers convey information to students, in Spanish classes the textbook assists the teacher in presenting three aspects of the language, those being vocabulary, grammatical structures, and culture. The emphasis of this study will focus attention upon the presentation of cultural themes within the Spanish textbook. The study will examine four Spanish textbooks currently being used from the approved list in the state of Georgia in terms of their cultural content.

In any research inquiry, a predisposition to a particular philosophical understanding is necessary in developing the thesis. In my study the basis is critical theory. Critical theory has its roots with Marxist thought, but was developed in the early part of the 20th century by members of the Frankfurt school, specifically Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno, and later Jorgen Habermas. Of these four critical theorists the most active in the area of aesthetics and culture was Theodore Adorno and Walter Benjamin. Critical theory derived from several disciplines including economics, sociology, psychology, and history. Critical educational theory moves directly into the field of education and attempts to bring about power to those who have

little or no power. Critical educational theory will guide this dissertation.

By selecting a sample of currently-used textbooks, the study will emphasize the way in which Latin and Spanish culture is presented both fairly and unfairly to students who might otherwise be deficient in knowledge concerning the way Spanish-speaking people live in the world today. Three textbooks from the state-approved list will be analyzed. The selected Spanish textbooks will consist of first-year levels because it is largely those textbooks that present the initial exposure for the students to the differences and similarities between contemporary American culture and Latin and Spanish culture. The textbook analysis will have three areas of emphasis which include visual references, written examples, and selected vocabulary within the textbooks. These three areas of analysis were chosen because they are consistent in all four textbooks. By using these three areas of analysis, the study will be able to draw specific conclusions concerning the way that the Latin and Spanish culture is being reproduced.

Context of study

Upon deciding what my topic would be I was forced to take a hard look at the parameters of my study. The most influential trend in the area of Spanish education is the idea that we teachers should help our students in a communicative approach in order to learn the foreign language which we are teaching. Thus, instead of rote grammar memorization or even the substitution drills of the audio-lingual approach to language learning, Spanish teachers have learned in recent years to focus more upon genuine use of the target language instead of the classical grammar-translation model that so many teachers were taught when they were students.

The communicative trend had its origins in 1979 when a presidential commission began looking at the reasons for lackluster performance in the area of foreign languages. This commission arrived at the conclusion that what was needed was a change in the approach to foreign language learning and thus the idea of a communicative approach was conceived. Prior to this event, the two principal means of studying foreign languages were the grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual approach. Before discussing the actual way that my study will operate, I would like to provide some background on the other two most popular approaches to language learning.

The grammar-translation method was based on classical learning and involved the translation of the target language into the vernacular which the students and teacher spoke. This method helped students understand grammar of both languages, but did very little in terms of actually using the target language to communicate. Rote memorization was the method of learning applied in this particular approach to language learning. As the student progressed to higher levels of language learning, the teacher would instruct the class on more advanced grammar concepts and longer passages would be translated.

The audio-lingual approach focused not so much on translation (although it remained an integral part of the process) but rather on the idea that the teacher was a maestro in the art of language learning. This method focuses on grammar concepts and the substitution drill where the students learn a particular phrase or sentence and use various terms in substitution. For example, the students might begin by saying “I go to the bank” and then the teacher gave a cue and the students would say “You go to the bank” which is a different sentence in a Romance language such as Spanish or French.

The substitution drill would be carried even further by changing “bank” to “hotel”. In this method the teacher maintains control by suggesting what words are substituted and the students simply follow the teacher’s lead.

The communicative approach follows a different set of guidelines. The aim of this method is to help the students gain competency in the area of speaking foreign languages and much less emphasis is placed on grammar construction and rote memorization. It is thought that it is much better to help the student learn naturally instead of correcting the student on his or her mistakes. The communicative approach is the most contemporary of the language learning approaches and can be found in most textbooks today. It is this approach that teachers are encouraged to use because it creates communication and ultimately better cultural understanding.

Although it appears to be possible to examine this topic from a quantitative point of view, I believe that readers will be better served if I do a qualitative study on the textbooks themselves. The qualitative study will take the form of a textual analysis of certain Spanish textbooks. These first-year textbooks include the following; *Paso a Paso* (1996), *Realidades* (2004) *Buen Viaje* (2004).

The particular method of textual analysis is extremely important. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (1998) write, “Textual analysis in literary studies, for example, often treat texts as self-contained systems. On the other hand, a researcher employing a cultural studies or feminist perspective would read a text in terms of its location within a historical moment marked by a particular gender, race, or class ideology”(6). Since this is not a literary study, I will take a specific perspective in

examining these textbooks which will be from a critical theorist point of view.

It is my belief that the textbooks that Spanish teachers use today, send a clear message of how the publishers want to create the image of the Latin and Spanish culture. I will examine how the current image of people living in Spanish-speaking countries is portrayed. This study is extremely important in comprehending the cultural representations which are given to an audience largely unaware of what they are actually seeing in the course of a foreign language class. The next step is to portray the philosophical foundations of this qualitative study. Since this study is a textual analysis of Spanish textbooks themselves, it will also be essential to examine not only the area of textbook analysis, but also the presentation of foreign language acquisition as well.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research necessary to explore the role of textbooks in the perpetuation of the Latin identity causing an underlying misconception of cultural values begins with a review of prior research in the area of textbooks. The following literature review has its focus on three separate areas of primary importance in this dissertation. The first section considers the theoretical framework of critical theory as the basis of the study. The second part explores the analyses of textbooks in a general sense using other subjects as a basis for study. The final segment of the literature review focuses upon the current research in foreign language pedagogy and ramifications for the study of culture as a part of first-year Spanish classes.

Background on critical theory

The theoretical framework I will use to guide my research is critical educational theory which is derived from critical theory. One of the contemporary critical educational theorists is Peter McLaren, professor at UCLA. On one of McLaren's websites he shows by means of a flow chart the evolution of Critical Theory in terms of its philosophical roots. (<http://www.vms.utexas.edu/~possible/flow.html>) McLaren begins with with Plato and Aristotle as the fundamental basis for the critical theory philosophical thought. These roots begin in the modern age with Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1776-1831), and Karl Marx (1818-1883). While Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Marx lay the philosophical foundation for Critical Theory, others promoted the actual practice of Critical Theory much later during the early to mid

part of the 20th century.

According to McLaren the Frankfurt School remains influential when he wrote in *Life in Schools* (1989), “A number of critical theorists, Henry Giroux, for example, continue to draw inspiration from the work of the Frankfurt School of critical theory which had its beginnings before World War II in Germany’s Institut fur Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) (159). However, Peter McLaren is not the only legitimate source for the tracing of the critical theorist philosophy.

Tracing the development of critical theory to the early 20th century one finds the now famous Frankfurt School. The leaders of the Frankfurt School are Max Horkheimer (1885-1973), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Leo Lowenthal. In addition, others contributed as well. Eric Fromm, like Sigmund Freud used psychoanalysis and their ideas became part of the basis for later critical theorists. Henryk Grossman and Frederich Pollack were economists who were also a part of the Frankfurt School. Jurgen Habermas 1929- serves as a post-war critical theorist who examines the earlier work of the original members of the Frankfurt School. (Slater, p.157)

Another important text that follows the development of critical theory is David Held’s book, *An Introduction to Critical Theory* (1980). Held traces the roots of the leading critical theorists and specifically focuses on Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas. Held describes the evolution of thought from the 1920’s through the 1960’s and beyond to show how critical theory changed as the times changed and how the roots of Marxist thought continued to be followed even though Stalinism had taken over the Russian experiment with the Marxist tradition.

Held does an exceptional job describing the activities of the members of the Frankfurt School. His book is divided into three distinct sections. The first section is a historical overview of the leading members of the Frankfurt School. Held gives an outstanding overview of the areas the members of the Frankfurt School explored along with their political slants and how the occurrences of the time affected the philosophy that developed. It must be remembered that during the development of the Frankfurt School's philosophical formation, the social and political events on the world's stage were particularly frightening.

Some of the men had endured the horrible reality of World War I, not necessarily as participants, however, certainly as more than idle spectators. Also political struggles in Russia led to the Bolshevik Revolution which shook the foundations of the Western democracies. Following the First World War came a period of extreme economic hardship as the world-wide Depression hit first Germany, then the rest of the world. Finally, Germans made the choice to accept one of the most infamous characters the world has ever seen to lead them into the most destructive war known to man. All of these events profoundly influenced the members of the Frankfurt School.

In the second part of David Held's book, the author discusses the role of Jurgen Habermas in the development of the Frankfurt School's philosophy of critical theory. Habermas is the youngest of the group joining the other members in post-WWII Europe. Held states, "Under the influence of among others, Adorno (to whom he became an assistant), Habermas discovered the systematic use that could be made of Marx and Freud."(249). Held is very detailed in his description of the contributions Habermas made

to the Frankfurt School.

In the third and final section of the book, Held concludes discussion of the Frankfurt School philosophical roots by evaluating the Frankfurt School's achievements and placing the activities in the scope of history. Held terminates his book by examining the role of each of the members and what place in history each will have in terms of historical and philosophical context. Held's last two chapters examine the principal members of the Frankfurt School in this regard.

While textbook analysis was not primary in the focus of the Frankfurt School, certain members of the loosely associated group lend themselves more aptly to this study than other members. Two members of the Frankfurt School are most closely aligned with the philosophical foundations of this study, and they are Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin.

Of these two men, Benjamin is the person who relates more directly to the study, and therefore his life and work needs to be further examined. Benjamin, according to David Held had "outer circle" status in the Frankfurt school (14). Benjamin's main function was that of literary critic and he expressed his views by writing essays (Held, 14). David Held writes later on summarizing Benjamin's point of view.

Held writes, "Benjamin argued that what mattered then was art's 'existence' not its 'being on view'. Embedded in ritual and tradition, these works had an 'aura'; that is, a 'unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be' conditioned by a magical authority and authenticity." (87).

Phil Slater (1977) connects the some members of the Frankfurt School with the

topic of culture and art. While the textbook analysis has little to do with art per se, in the entire foundation of the study of culture is paramount. We must remember that much of the Frankfurt School assertions occurred during the Nazi regime, but as Slater points out to us, “The Frankfurt School framed their critique of cultural manipulation as an attack not simply on fascism(as if on some ‘thing in itself’), but essentially, as an attack on monopoly capitalism as a whole” (Origin and significance of the Frankfurt School, 122). Members of the Frankfurt School followed Marxist philosophy and viewed not only fascism, but capitalism as well as an ideology that controlled and manipulated.

Earlier in Slater’s work, he focuses upon what monopoly capitalism was for the Frankfurt School as he writes, “Monopoly, in the sense of monopoly capitalism, designates a stage of capitalism where, even given a number of large corporations operating within the same market, a monopoly operates, in as far as prices are fixed (jointly, by the corporations), and price-war is seriously curbed” (16). If we use the preceding quotation in the context of textbook production, it is possible to see that if few choices are available to the public school systems, then certain ideologies can prevail and individuals have little resource to battle them. Surprisingly, the textbook industry is controlled by only a few companies, so little choice is actually available in terms of what type of textbooks are available. Several factors influence this trend of fewer textbook choices.

Antonio Gramsci was the founder of the Italian Communist party and heavily influenced Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator later on in the latter part of the 20th century. One of the most important elements of McLaren’s flow chart is the description

he gives the foundational philosophers and the modern educational critical theorists. McLaren calls the current educators “critical pedagogues” while the others are referred to as “critical theorists”. (<http://wwwvms.utexas.edu/~possible/flow.html>) For the philosophical foundation of the study, more attention should be focused upon the Frankfurt School itself.

Antonio Gramsci even comments in his work, *The Prison Notebooks* about the state of education. “The fundamental division into classical and vocational (professional) schools was a rational formula: the vocational school for the instrumental classes, the classical school for the dominant classes and the intellectuals”(p. 26). Gramsci wrote these words many decades ago and yet the same sort of system continues today in U.S. high schools even though they are not labeled as such. Gramsci is included in the flow chart of the critical theory development provided by Peter McLaren. Gramsci and Freire bring issues of class and oppression to the forefront in the critical theory movement, even though neither were members of the Frankfurt School.

Paulo Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and is highly regarded in terms of his ideas on critical pedagogy. Freire writes, “This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.”(p. 26) The basis of my research proposal is to examine how textbooks treat Latin and Spanish culture. However, Freire writes, on the following page, regarding what happens when the oppressed gain a modicum of power,

The very structure of their thought has been conditioned
by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by

which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressor. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience adopt an attitude of ‘adhesion’ to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot ‘consider’ him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him—to discover him ‘outside’ themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression (p. 27).

Freire concentrates upon the plight of the economically oppressed throughout his book, and is regarded as a major influence in the philosophical school of critical theory. Freire though, was considered more than a critical theorist philosopher and his influence is quite far-reaching. So much so, that any work with roots in critical theory cannot begin without at least some reference to Freire. Freire was not interested so much in the use of textbooks in the reproduction of certain class structure. However, like members of the Frankfurt School, he was very much interested in the over-arching aspects of the idea of people being economically oppressed. Freire’s work dealt with educational issues especially in less-developed nations on his home continent of South America, which is predominantly made up of Spanish-speakers, even though, Freire himself was from the Portuguese-speaking nation of Brazil.

Another important figure related to the philosophical background of critical theory is Henry Giroux. Giroux's many works deal with numerous topics related to educational issues. In certain works he has discussed such diverse topics as the current business approach to education (Giroux had the foresight to discuss this trend in the late 1980s long before others joined the bandwagon), the Disney Corporation, and portrayal of educational issues in film.

One book which Giroux authored was his 1992 work, *Disturbing Pleasures* which discusses the visual aspects of advertising. While textbook analysis of cultural presentations does not directly apply to advertising campaigns, a relationship exists between the presentation of cultural values and the promotion of certain products for the profit of business. Giroux writes about how the fashion giant Benetton was able to gain international success through innovative advertising. He notes,

Given a free hand with the advertising budget, Toscani[an award-winning photographer] focused initially on culturally diverse young people dressed in Benetton attire and engaged in a variety of seemingly aimless and playful acts. Linking the colors of Benetton clothes to the diverse 'colors' of their customers all over the world, Toscani attempted to use the themes of racial harmony and world peace to register such differences within a wider unifying articulation...He selected a series of highly charged, photojournalistic images referencing, among other things, the AIDS crisis, environmental disaster, political

violence, war, exile, and natural catastrophe.(pp. 6-7)

Obviously, the themes within *Disturbing Pleasures* does not have a direct relationship to Latin cultural portrayals in Spanish textbooks, but the book does indicate that some members of the critical theory school of philosophy do see images as important symbols, and these symbols can lead to cultural understanding or even possibly misunderstanding of cultural images. One of the areas that the subsequent analysis will focus upon is the photography that was chosen to represent Latin and Spanish culture in first year Spanish textbooks.

In a similar vein, Bill Nichols (1981) discusses the role of movies and how subjective ideas are presented as factual information. Nichols writes,

To serve ideology, representations must be made to appear to be other than what they are. After all, they must appear to lack these very contradictions that informed their production. They must appear as signs of eternal values—harmony, wholeness, radiance, a natural and ideal world spun from the representations of an existing social order. (p. 290)

Nichols, like Giroux is describing how representations affect the manner in which we perceive certain images. In Nichols case, he is studying film images. The same can be said for other types of media, such as books and more specifically, textbooks. A major difference, though, between the two types of media is that movies are generally perceived as fiction while textbook images on the other hand are presented as fact.

David Held refers to the perception of art by Walter Benjamin as he writes, “The

age of mechanical reproduction, the age of photography, cinema and other mass cultural apparatuses, detached artistic artefacts from the domain of custom” (p. 87). The mass reproduction which Benjamin saw as extremely problematical relates to today’s use of textbooks as a means of reproducing certain stereotypes within the Latin cultural sphere. This cultural sphere is presented to students as a part of an implicit curriculum by the authors of the textbooks.

Reproduction theory and culture

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the idea of a reproduction theory is brought to the forefront in Pinar’s, Reynolds’, Slattery’s, and Taubman’s *Understanding Curriculum* which is a survey of the trends that have occurred in education since the inception until the mid-1990s. Reproduction theory, deals with various strains of thought in the socio-economic realm and the educational implications of these topics.

Philip Wexler, another contemporary of Giroux and McLaren writes in an article directed specifically at the state of affairs in the textbook industry. Wexler, examining Michael Apple’s study of textbook analysis, adds to the knowledge base by stating,

I think that this work is an important contribution to the analysis of school knowledge. It is certainly replacing an earlier portrayal of knowledge in schools as a socially transcendent, taken-for-granted occasion for invidious individual differentiation. The new sociology of school knowledge and curriculum demonstrates that

social power is culturally represented, and that knowledge and culture are essential moments in the process of social domination and capital accumulation. The selective transmission of class culture as common culture silences the cultures of the oppressed, and legitimates the present social order as natural and eternal. (p. 279)

Wexler deals with several issues that may impact the following analysis. Like others, Wexler sees culture as power and the dominant culture controlling aspects of members of another culture. The dominating culture that Wexler is describing is the contemporary consumer capitalist society in which we are living today. Wexler ends the quotation in a Freirean model of thinking with the dominant culture creating a legitimating of its own culture against other cultures it deems as inferior whether it be through economic or social lacking.

Wexler also sees this oppression much as Freire sees it and attempts to bring it to light. It is also possible to see historical similarities within a context of a dominating society. In terms of presentation of culture inside a first-year Spanish textbook, a student merely sees his own culture being reflected and publishers, by doing so, create an artificial impression that the consumer capitalist society is the one true and eternal model which has to be followed in order to spark progress for everyone.

Bowles and Gintis famous work *Schooling in Capitalist America* reveals the

historical background on groups migrating to the United States. The authors describe how members of the Northern European region found better paying and more prestigious work upon their arrival to the New World and became a part of the entrepreneurial spirit that has made the United States such a powerful force in the world today. The authors then compare the experience of Southern European immigrants who found low paying, menial jobs for the most part and how they had to deal with greater hardships than their Northern European counterparts. Bowles and Gintis relate these migration experiences to the educational state in the United States (p. 66).

The authors' ideas are based upon historical events and the analysis is related to the philosophical foundations of the Frankfurt School as we have discussed earlier. Another important idea that Bowles and Gintis present is contained in the following quotation. They write, "A large portion of the jobs in the small-scale entrepreneurial capitalist sector may be considered part of this secondary labor market although the lowest-level white and blue-collar jobs in the corporate sector also may take this form. Secondary employment is the expected lot of the most oppressed social groups: blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, native Americans, women, the elderly, youth, and other minority groups"(p. 67).

Of the groups mentioned as among the oppressed in the United States capitalist system, two of the specified groups belong in the larger group whose culture is being discussed, those being Latin Americans and specifically, people who originate in Puerto Rico and Mexico. Bowles and Gintis focus upon the identity reproduction as it is related to economic class structure within the United States. Whereas the Frankfurt School

focused their attention primarily upon the state of affairs within Europe, Bowles and Gintis rely upon the important events which has led to the development of the public school system here in the United States.

Background on textbook analysis

The purpose of my dissertation is to analyze particular textbooks in order to see how culture is presented and how this presentation may affect the users of the textbooks. Since the textbook used in a Spanish class affects both the teacher and students it is important in the review of literature to examine what has been written concerning the role of textbooks in the classroom.

The critical theorist most closely associated with textbook analysis is Michael Apple. Apple has written many articles on the role of textbooks upon the student, but he is by no means the only educator to do so. Perhaps the most famous article recognized by critical theorists is entitled, *The Culture and Commerce of the Textbook* (1988) in which Apple shows his framework for exploring the role of textbooks. In this article he states, “Even though the overt aim of our institutions of schooling has more than a little to do with cultural products and processes, with cultural transmission, only in the last decade or so have the politics and economics of the culture actually transmitted in schools been taken up as a serious research problem”(p. 23). Apple sees textbooks not as a necessary instructional tool used by educators in a free, democratic society as he describes them in this quotation,

In the absence of an officially recognized national curriculum—although proposals are now being promoted,

the textbooks provide the material basis for the construction of legitimate content and form in schools. Further, they are the results of hegemonic and counterhegemonic relations and social movements involving multiple power relations including but not limited to race, class, gender/sexuality, and religion. Finally, the textbooks are subject to processes of interpretation as they are used and read by teachers, students, parents, and other community members. (p. 170)

Based upon the information that Apple has provided, it is possible to see textbooks in a different light. The textbooks used in classrooms across America are not merely the information providers that most people would think; rather they form a part of the hegemony which makes up our current society. Apple published this work in the late 1980's and today in the early part of the 21st century we see a trend of schooling for the sake of continuity of a consumer driven society.

Michael Apple does not limit himself by discussing textbooks as the only educational forum, but also has written articles that have much to do with the discussion of class and economic reproduction. Apple sees this struggle as not merely relegated to the field of education. Apple (1982) writes in his essay entitled, "Reproduction and contradiction in education",

A number of issues immediately spring to the surface from the foregoing discussion. How do we think about culture? About the way a mode of production

‘determines’ education? About reproduction and non-reproduction going on at one and the same time? These are general issues that are not at all simple, ones which point to the tensions and controversies within a much wider range of scholarship on culture, politics, and the economy. In fact, the major problem facing all of those concerned with the relationship between education and the economic and cultural reproduction of class relations is not unique to education. It is one confronting every person who attempts to unpack the complex ties connecting economics and culture together.(p. 9)

As Michael Apple leads into other more specific subjects about the use of textbooks itself, it is paramount to see Apple in a light of not merely echoing what is mentioned in textbooks as the only form of culture, but as later writings indicate, certainly a tremendously influential source of information about the role of culture. Furthermore, Apple is discussing more of a broad-based view of culture related to the description of culture that will be examined in this analysis of cultural representation within the context of Spanish language textbooks. Apple though, sees the issue as one that is much greater than just a simple analysis of facts and pictures within a textbook.

Like Frankfurt School member Adorno who views culture in a much bigger context and sees various machinations in the process of reproduction, Apple discusses the bigger picture first. In subsequent articles, Apple and other writers examining textbooks

get much more specific regarding the role these instruments of instruction play in the classrooms across the United States. For example, in the first chapter of *Teachers and Texts: A Political economy of class and gender relations in education* Apple notes,

Two things are worthy of note from this discussion.

First, cultural forms and practices often have their own politics. They may be related to and limited by class relations and the economy, but they are also ‘relatively autonomous’. They have something of a life of their own and provide important grounding for action that may not simply reproduce existing relations of domination and exploitation. Second, there are at least two elements operating in this situation: class and gender. Thus, an analysis of dominant power relations in our society needs not only a theory of class, but just as much of a sensitivity to patriarchy and race as well.(p. 22)

The previous quotation shows Apple’s thinking in relation to two of the areas that this research project will examine. First, culture for Apple is paramount to an understanding of its relationship to other determining factors in society. Again, Apple is not specifically discussing cultural representations which may appear within the context of a first-year Spanish textbook, but rather he sees culture as an all-encompassing force in society. Second, Apple’s view is that the two dominating areas which deal with culture

are class and gender. An area that bears examination in the use of first-year Spanish textbooks is the economical status of those being portrayed within the confines of the textbook.

Regardless of what may be said by company spokespersons at book fairs, textbook publishing companies have a vested interest in selling textbooks to school districts. Textbook companies operate from a bottom line point of view. In order for textbooks to be used, they must be sold. Michael Apple (1991) comments, "Book publishing is an industry, one divided up by a variety of markets." (p. 28) In this case the markets are limited to those who have the most money and can help the textbook companies maintain the most financial success.

In another essay entitled Curriculum form and the logic of technical control by Apple (1982), though very much applicable to the state of affairs in the high school classrooms of Georgia, he states. "The best examples of the encroachment of technical control procedures are found in the exceptionally rapid growth in the use of prepackaged sets of curricular materials. It is nearly impossible now to walk into an American classroom, for instance, without seeing boxes upon boxes of science, social studies, mathematics and reading material..." (p. 253). Unfortunately, these prepackaged sets have infiltrated the foreign language classrooms as well. They do provide complete systems for teachers to use. These systems include workbook sets, compact disc recordings to help the first year student with pronunciation, and along with the newest innovation: video or DVD recordings of stories in the target language. Other than the textbook, these new recordings are designed to allow the students to see actual cultural information

through television.

Textbooks are so important in the education of American students that Sherry Keith (1991) writes, “School children in the United States are one of the largest captive reading audiences in the world today and textbooks account for at least three-quarters of their in-school exposure to the written word. Textbooks are frequently the students’ major source of information on a particular subject taught in school, and may even constitute the only exposure the student receives on a given topic within a subject area”(p. 43).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, one of the most startling aspects of the influence of textbooks is how few choices educators actually have in the selection of textbooks. Kenneth Wong and Tom Loveless (1991) write, “To be sure, publishers exercise a great deal of influence through both formal and informal channels during the selection process. While 80 percent of the nation’s textbook market is controlled by only seven major publishing firms, competition for a greater market share remains very intense. Lobbying directed at governmental bodies is well organized.”(p. 31) We are then faced with the truth that the publishing companies have more influence over the curriculum of the public schools than most people would think.

Since there are so few companies who are available to publish foreign language textbooks, this factor influences the selection process a great deal. Unfortunately there is another factor as well. States are not only limited by few publishing companies, the other factor is that smaller states are influenced greatly by the actions of larger states. Sherry Keith notes, “Adoption states tend to be concentrated in the South and Southwest regions

of the country...In short it is possible for one state to determine the content of textbooks used from Maine to Oregon. Texas and Florida, along with California , are currently in this influential position.”(p. 52) The local control that so many school boards like to think that they maintain in reality has evaporated in favor of larger markets and greater profitability.

Harriet Tyson-Bernstein writes, regarding the textbook adoption process, “Imagine a public policy system that is perfectly designed to produce textbooks that confuse, mislead, and profoundly bore students, while at the same time making all of the adults involved in the process look good, not only in their own eyes, but in the eyes of others.”(p. 3) By creating misleading textbooks, especially textbooks which do not, in reality, reflect the true nature of the Latin American culture and instead presents a distorted picture which mirrors our own society instead of reaching out to accept other points of view, the distortion actually occurs.

Tyson-Bernstein also comments,

To fend off criticism from the special interest groups swarming around the school policymakers, textbook publishers began the process of adding more and more material to textbooks. Suddenly there were pictures of multiracial groups, women, doing non-traditional jobs, active senior citizens and handicapped persons; there were biographies of formerly obscure figures; there were inspirational messages about the work ethic, environmental protection, and healthy food. The newly

required pictures and text had to be accommodated within the fixed confines of the standard-sized textbook, and therefore the treatment of all topics and ideas was somewhat diminished— however worthy all the causes. (p. 6)

Tyson-Bernstein notes the worthiness of the causes promoted and in the current textbook that I use, much emphasis is placed upon the protection of the environment and recognizing the uniqueness of handicapped individuals.

In an extremely important article which treats the underlying themes of which my dissertation will explore, Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant (1991) discuss the portrayal three areas of textbook presentation including the representation of gender, race, class, and finally disability within textbooks. In the following dissertation one of the most important ideas to come from the study is the lack of balanced presentation regarding the class structure found in first-year Spanish textbooks. Sleeter and Grant write,

Symbolic representations are important, and relate to power, for several reasons. First, symbolic representations in books and other media often are used to confer legitimacy on the dominant status of particular social groups. Usually controlled and produced by dominant groups, materials and other media confirm the status of those groups whose culture and accomplishments are deemed important enough to write about.

Second, symbolic representations in the curriculum render socially constructed relations as natural; subjective interpretations of reality and value judgements are projected as fact. (p. 79)

The authors also explore the way representations are made in certain textbooks. Their study is valuable as they analyze the textbooks in several different subject areas for the portrayal of race, class and gender. “Recently published reading texts and social studies texts have been analyzed; science texts have received some attention, but math texts have not”(p. 81). Sleeter and Grant take each subject area mentioned and analyze certain textbooks in terms of race, gender, and class. Their study does not include information on foreign language texts as they seem more concerned with general portrayals rather than a specific ethnic group.

Methods in teaching foreign languages and culture

If one were to examine the literature on the most effective way to learn a language, it would be of critical importance to first find out when the studies were written. Of primary importance to my study is the current emphasis on the proficiency or communicative approach to language learning. The proficiency approach to language learning is relatively new but has been embraced by many educators in the field of foreign language. In 1979 a committee named the President’s Council on Foreign Language advised then President Jimmy Carter to follow certain steps in order to foster improvement in foreign language learning.

The commission was charged with four tasks: (1) to

recommend how public attention should be directed to the importance of foreign language and international studies, (2) to assess the need in the United States for foreign language and area specialists and the job market for such specialists, (3) to recommend what foreign language and international education programs are appropriate at different levels, and (4) to specify legislative changes needed to implement the commission's recommendations(p. 30).

Frank M. Grittner(1990) writes, “ Through most of the history of foreign language teaching in America there has been concern in the profession about evangelistic movements that suddenly emerge, capture the attention of many teachers, cause an upheaval in methods and materials, and then—just as suddenly—fade from view”(p. 9). Grittner writes an interesting article on the “bandwagon movement” as he labels it. One of the most fascinating parts of his article is his critique of the various language learning models.

In Alice Omaggio-Hadley's informative textbook on language learning entitled *Teaching Language in Context* (2001) the author also discusses the merits of proficiency-based foreign language education and gives a thorough overview of the various methods of teaching foreign languages. Omaggio-Hadley discusses not only the pedagogy of foreign languages, but devotes an entire chapter to the subject of teaching culture within the learning of the target language.

In terms of cultural presentations, Omaggio-Hadley writes,

There are several reasons why many foreign language courses today do not include the systematic study of culture. First, the study of culture involves time that many teachers do not feel they can spare in an already overcrowded curriculum...Secondly, many teachers are afraid to teach culture because they fear that they don't know enough about it... Another reason that some teachers neglect the teaching of culture is that it involves dealing with student attitudes...(p. 346-347).

Culture, therefore, becomes largely relegated to pictures and words in textbooks because of these several factors which foreign language teachers must deal with on a daily basis. The students' primary means of discovering the target culture of a foreign language becomes the textbook, unless the teacher takes Herculean efforts to relate cultural material to students. Students may learn very little about Latin culture except from their primary source, the first-year Spanish textbook. If a teacher is uncomfortable with teaching culture or has a lack of cultural knowledge, then the students will learn cultural information on their own through the textbooks themselves. How teachers go about doing this is questionable given the many restraints placed upon the teachers as Omaggio-Hadley has accurately noted.

Omaggio-Hadley makes important points that have to be considered in the teaching of culture. Given the stated importance of cultural understanding by both the state and national standards, a certain discrepancy exists in the written intentions and the actual outcomes in the cultural representations found in the textbooks themselves.

Linda Crawford-Lange and Dale Lange write briefly about the role of textbooks in a cultural context. “The texts, to varying degrees, show respect for culture in the anthropological sense as well as in avoiding stereotypes and encouraging cross-cultural comparison” (p. 145). Respect for culture may be shown, yet the textbooks do present a certain view and there is no way in which to create an alternative viewpoint.

In summary, the foundational aspects of Critical Theory have been discussed since the research framework will be based on this particular model. The roots and development of critical theory has been demonstrated through the use of various sources from critical theorists themselves and their predecessors. Research has indicated that a problem exists in the way certain groups of people are portrayed. Recognition of a need to present culture has been discussed in literature about foreign language teaching, but this project will address needs that have not yet been met. Other research has focused on general points of conflict in the representation contained within the textbooks. However, the research will emphasize how the cultural representations of a specific group are made to what could be considered a captive audience of school children.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

According to the department of education for the state of Georgia, seven textbooks are approved for use in the state's public school system. Foreign languages are one of the few subjects that is not under the auspices of the Georgia High School Graduation Test even though students must take a minimum of two years of a foreign language in order to receive the college preparatory seal on their high school diplomas. In 2008, however, foreign languages will have an End of Course Test to measure the knowledge of the students.

Three first-year Spanish textbooks will be examined in this study. These textbooks are not presented in any type of specific order, but rather as the state of Georgia lists them on the Department of Education's official website. The first textbook is entitled *Paso a Paso* and it is published by ScottForesman. The next textbook is named *Realidades* and this textbook is published by Prentis Hall.. The third approved textbook is published by Glencoe and its title is *Buen Viaje*. A list provided by the Department of Education's official website will be available in the appendices of this dissertation along with other information relative to this study.

By examining two of the currently used textbooks and one recently used text, my study can be more readily applicable to what is occurring today in Spanish classes throughout the state of Georgia. I will further limit my examination by only including textbooks which are used in the particular geographic area of South Georgia. I intend to

limit my study to the region of Georgia in I live, specifically certain counties within southeastern Georgia. The nexus of my research is Effingham County, the school system with which I am most familiar. By the time this textbook analysis is complete Effingham County will have used two of the three textbooks analyzed. The third textbook, *Buen Viaje* was the second choice by teachers in Effingham County and was adopted and is being used in neighboring Bulloch County.

Using this parameter has two valid reasons. The first reason is that Georgia Southern University is a regional institution committed to improving the quality of education within this region of the state and therefore the study would be directly applicable to teachers working in this area. The second reason concerns convenience in my obtaining the textbooks used in the counties. By analyzing the textbooks in this region, I will be able to find out how students might perceive the cultural content of the textbooks they use in class every day. Two groups of students from neighboring counties will have used them or will be using these textbooks, and the cultural content of these three textbooks have a direct relationship upon the population of two counties in southeastern Georgia.

As has been noted though, in the second chapter of this study, very few textbook companies exist and even though only two counties in Georgia are being represented officially, these textbooks are on the state-approved list of textbooks and meet both local and state guidelines for objectives. Furthermore, these textbooks are most likely used throughout the nation due to the limited choices of textbooks in the United States today..

Another limitation that I will place on my study is the number of textbooks

chosen to analyze. Since I intend to do a more localized study rather than national, I will most likely choose a rather small number of textbooks to examine. I will determine how the textbooks used in my geographic region compare to other counties in the other parts of the state. In order to select the textbooks to be analyzed, I will focus on some of the textbooks approved by the Department of Education. Other Spanish textbooks exist, but approved textbooks meet the criteria set by the State of Georgia through the use of the Quality Core Curriculum. Today textbooks used in the state of Georgia must be aligned with the QCC Objectives because this document is the basis of measure of academic achievement within the State of Georgia.

There are specific reasons why I have chosen to use this criterion as part of my parameters of the study. First, choosing to examine a number of approved textbooks increases validity to my study. If only a few students used a particular textbook which presented Latin culture in a particular way, then it would be difficult to see the relevance upon the population as a whole. However, if large numbers of students were exposed to a particular textbook which promoted the Latin culture in a particular way whether it be positive or negative, this could very much affect perceptions about the Latin culture in a most influential way.

For example, at Effingham County High School, the textbook currently being used is ScottForesman's *Paso a Paso*. This textbook presents certain cultural representations to which students are exposed. Students cannot make accurate cultural associations if the textbook they are using does not present a fair demonstration of the cultural aspects of given Latin American nations. Students may encounter certain

photographs that show only one side of Latin American culture. These photographs may only show one particular aspect society. For example, in the chapter on shopping in Paso a Paso, there is a nice color photograph of a Latin American shopping mall that closely resembles its American counterpart. Students may believe that all Latin Americans shop at these establishments because that is everything that they see in the photograph. The photograph shows nothing of other viable locations to buy clothing, such as open-air markets which are quite popular in most Latin American nations.

Because the communicative approach to language learning is most-widely advocated throughout academic circles, it seems most appropriate to use these particular parameters. By focusing on the most widely used Spanish textbooks in the state, it is logical to draw a correlation to other parts of the nation as well. By following this approach the study will conclude in a broader, more nationalist approach even though the parameters limit the study to certain approved texts in the state of Georgia. As mentioned in the Literature Review, previous studies have indicated that California and Texas schools systems have a solid grip on which textbooks are used throughout the nation, so the textbooks used in Georgia are most likely to be used in other states as well. From a personal perspective, I used the same textbook at a high school in Nashville, Tennessee that I had used in the early 1990's at Effingham County High School.

The next step is to develop a means in which to evaluate the textbooks. From a critical theorist perspective we can see that culture encapsulates everything. Defining what culture is composed of is practically an infinite study. Dozens upon dozens of books on the subject of culture appear in academic libraries throughout the nation. In Spanish

textbooks, cultural material may appear in a number of varied forms. In order to achieve the goal of cultural analysis, it will be necessary to identify all the places in which examples of Latin culture appear. In the analysis of such textbooks, it will be necessary to divide the components of the textbooks into areas that show examples of Latin culture. In this study, I will define the analysis of cultural features into three distinct categories: 1) photographs and drawings, (along with this information I will include the accompanying captions which give descriptions of the various photographs 2) realia and other forms of media, and 3) written cultural material including vocabulary presented to students and cultural essays or paragraphs.

Perhaps one of the benefits of providing a more proficiency-based approach to language learning is seen in the context of a more thematic approach. Added to the thematic approach is another element which is not limited to foreign language textbooks. The contemporary textbooks are bright fun-filled editions that attempt to make learning words and phrases more alive. Vocabulary, in most Spanish language textbooks, are filled with either drawings or pictures to represent vocabulary. Today's texts are filled with bright, colorful drawings which attract the students and attempt to make the learning of a foreign language much more relevant to their lives. However, in the same vein, these thematic approaches with specific language can reinforce stereotypes of the Latin culture which the same authors of the textbooks may believe they are lessening.

Today, language texts are generally organized by specific themes whereby the language learner can more easily make use of the language. For example, the themes of greetings and basic personal information appear in the first part of first-year Spanish

books because greetings are the primary way of meeting people who we do not know or have not seen in a while. Later, students learn how to convey important information such as activities in which they often participate and places they go to enjoy themselves. Even the older textbooks which relied on the grammar-translation model of language learning used thematic representations to help students learn the language.

In the past, foreign language texts were set up in a less thematic manner because of the concentration of grammar lessons within the textbook. For many years grammar was paramount and communication remained on the periphery of goals language teachers attempted to arrive. The importance of grammar has not subsided completely because learning grammar provides the teacher and the student with the most immediate feedback. Therefore, grammar still plays a key role in the learning of the Spanish language. Every textbook has a grammar section even though it might be called by a different name. The primary difference between textbooks of many years ago and those of today is the concentration of the thematic approach to language learning.

Today, the textbooks which use the communicative approach are no different in the use of themes to present language to students. Even though, today's textbooks (and those published in the mid-1980s as well) are much more colorful, the way textbooks present the language is not very different from the older approaches to language learning. Therefore, in order to examine the cultural content in a textbook several aspects must be examined.

The first area of examination which is much more explicit in nature than perhaps other examples of cultural content is the use of pictures and photographs within the

textbooks. Pictures represent drawings that are ever-present throughout Spanish textbooks, while photographs are actual representations of people and objects who participate in the Latin American and Spanish culture. As we have progressed into the 1990s and beyond textbooks have become much more colorful and exciting primarily for getting the students more interested in the subject. This is true today of most textbooks in whatever subject area. However, pictures and photographs play an extremely important role in the transmission of cultural images to the student. Students are much more likely to look at pictures and photographs than written text within a given textbook. It is for this reason, pictures and photographs which students encounter are the first and perhaps the most lasting set of images that students will see. Looking at a picture helps the student visualize the subject matter more easily and helps in understanding, especially in terms of cultural understanding.

It is vitally important to see how essential the images that are placed in the textbooks are in providing cultural context for students who have little real world experience and must rely upon those images to create their understanding of the world around them. The pictures of the Latin and Spanish culture in the textbooks may represent what one may refer to as a sanitized version of the way of life in those nations. It is for this reason that I will examine pictures in a given textbook for their cultural authenticity to their representations of Latin society. For example, I will examine the pictures and photographs on several different levels for both what they show the students and what is omitted.

At one level, I will look at the socio-economic standing of those individuals

pictured in the photographs when the pictures are of Latin people. The most important question from a critical theorist perspective is how do the photographs help in the maintaining of capitalist power that the text exerts against the reader? In order to answer that fundamental question I will have to pose other minor questions. Some of the minor questions which will draw back into the central question will be: Why are the pictures of a particular group or social class? Why are there not images of poverty in Latin America? Who benefits from not showing the poverty which truly does exist? What messages are being sent by the omission of such photographs? Part of Henry Giroux's book *Disturbing Pleasures* (1994) deal with imagery associated with advertisements and how influential visual images can be.

In *Disturbing Pleasures*, Dr. Giroux writes, "On the other hand, difference is also a dangerous marker of those historical, political, social, and cultural borderlands where people who are considered the 'Other' are often policed, excluded, and oppressed." (12) While Giroux is not specifically talking about groups of Latins and Spaniards, as a cultural group, the textbooks that contain descriptions which may not be entirely accurate can lead students to a false belief of what constitutes life in Latin America and Spain.

It is an extremely serious situation if students are basing their perceptions upon a false premise presented by the textbooks. If the students' only perceptions about the cultural aspects of Latin America and Spain come from the textbooks that they used in high school, then it is a grave situation at best. Obviously, the Spanish teacher will play some role in the development of cultural perceptions. However, as was mentioned previously with reference to End of Course Tests (EOCT), the continuing pressure to

present material that is relevant to the test-taking abilities of students will perhaps limit the Spanish teachers' ability and time to adequately teach about the cultural aspects of Latin America and Spain.

Furthermore, if the students have a different view of the realities of life in Latin America and even Spain, they may be less inclined to help people who are here working, and certain prejudiced thoughts may develop. This could be especially true if students feel as if life in Latin America is extremely similar to the students' own lives here in the United States.

Another aspect which the photographs show are the people themselves. Throughout Latin America there are various regions and an equal number of people who do not fit the mold of the stereotypical image of what Americans perceive Latins to look like. For example, I will need to look at skin color of the people in the photographs. Are they light-skinned? And if so, why are there no pictures of darker-skinned people? Do the images in the photographs portray an accurate reading of the people who live in the region? Where are the photographs from? Are they predominantly pictures from Mexico and Spain or is there a great variety of locales that the pictures come from? If the pictures primarily come from Mexico and Spain, what is that telling the students about the population of Spanish speakers? In addition, it is well known that a large Native-American population exists in Latin America. Are there photographs of this demographic group? If not, why are they not included as part of the cultural landscape? These are important questions that perhaps are not adequately addressed in the Spanish classroom and help perpetuate stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings.

A further aspect of the photographs would include the type of clothing that the individuals have on and where the photographs are taken. Are the people wearing clothes that the students might themselves wear? Or are there pictures of Latin Americans dressed in traditional clothing and what message does that type of clothing convey to the students. Are the people in the photographs participating in activities that the students reading the textbooks are likely to participate in? If so, what does that say about the culture of Latin America? Is the portrayal of Latin culture merely a way of our own society's reflection can be conveyed to the students? These are only the beginning of questions that I will be able to pose regarding the photographs and pictures contained in the textbooks.

Along with photos is the subject of realia. Realia are photographs that are of specific items and are differentiated by the textbook companies because realia include pictures of cultural representations. For example, in Costa Rica one of the most popular cultural items that a tourist can buy is a replica of an oxcart. Some textbooks may contain a photograph of simply an oxcart or a replica located on a page within the textbook. Usually a brief explanation is included along with the realia in order that the student may attain greater cultural understanding. The examination of such realia would provide an interesting analysis of what the authors may be explicitly or implicitly attempting to convey to the students.

Within this same subject of realia there may exist certain omissions of cultural realia which may exclude specific groups of people in Latin America and Spain. A Continental example may be the absence of the Basque people who live between Spain

and France. While they may not be of Spanish descent and they may live in conflict with the Spanish government, if they are not mentioned within textbooks, an alternative reason may exist for this omission.

Spanish textbooks also contain short articles about the Latin culture. These brief essays contain cultural information which assists the student in gaining a better appreciation for the Latin culture. For my dissertation, I will examine specific articles which are included in the textbooks and compare them to other sources such as books, articles and internet information which may share similarities or perhaps there may be glaring differences. If there are differences, then I will have to entertain questions as to why there are differences in opinion regarding certain cultural features of the Spanish and Latin cultural practices. Within the articles, what are the primary points of the articles? Are they accurate in their portrayal of Latin culture? Do they only deal with a particular group of people? If this is so, then why is it that way? Within the articles, we can also search for socio-economic status. Since the majority of people in Latin America live in poverty, why would textbooks virtually ignore this issue? Or perhaps in certain textbooks the issue of poverty may be dealt with at great length. Do textbooks only show what is considered the upper middle class or even upper class? Of course, these questions are only a few which can be included which deal with economic realities.

Photographs and articles are only two examples of what is being taught in the area of culture. A more implicit means of conveying culture is the vocabulary that is taught in each section of the book. Generally, most textbooks contain two vocabulary sections which help the student to develop proficiency within the context of a specific theme.

What does the chosen vocabulary say about the way Latin culture is treated? One aspect is that Spanish, like English is dependent upon the region it is spoken. For example, in a section on food, students might learn that a *popote* is the word for a drinking straw. However, someone in Bolivia would not know what the word means and would ask for a *bombillo*. This concept is similar to using flats in the United States as footwear and a place to live (apartment) in Great Britain. Spanish, like other languages, has variations due to regional differences.

Obviously, it would be virtually impossible to include every conceivable variation in the Spanish language, but it is essential to realize that a certain set of Spanish words are being taught within the particular textbooks. If the students are unaware of this practice, then perhaps there is a reason behind it. This analysis is not intended to be negative. In Effingham County's adopted textbook, *Paso a Paso*, each vocabulary section has a small box that shows variations in words used throughout Latin America and Spain and gives the students a fairer idea of the differences in the use of vocabulary.

This phenomenon is not rampant through the Spanish language. A *casa* is still a house in most Spanish-speaking regions and most words are easily understood throughout the Latin world. However, the authors' choice of what words are taught to American students is important in terms of cultural content. If Mexican Spanish is the choice of language, then 19 other nations are left out. The aspect of language choice will have to be addressed within a specific context. Additionally, one may be able to draw certain conclusions in order to arrive at the reason for choosing a certain set of vocabulary.

Cultural values and the manner in which they are interpreted will play a role in the outcome of the dissertation because of the nature of the questions which will be discussed. While the idea of gender portrayal is not a primary aspect of the study, it will play a role just as other points such as racial contexts will play a role as well. For example, if in fact the portrayal of Latin culture simply mirrors our own in that capitalism and business growth is promoted, then the Latin culture is being destroyed in a rather subtle manner.

An example of the idea of cultural values being transmitted by the textbooks is found again in *Paso a Paso*. One of the fascinating aspects of this textbook is found in the drawings which help the students retain the vocabulary. In one such instance, in the first chapter, a drawing depicts a group of students going to school. One of them is in a wheelchair. Students might tend to think that handicapped persons are treated as handicapped people are treated here in the United States. However, sadly this is not the case. In Latin American nations, less facilities exist for handicapped people compared to the United States. The cultural values in Latin America cannot be transposed as easily as some textbook authors might imagine. Unfortunately, this is yet another example of how values in the United States are placed upon a Latin American culture.

These are the obvious explicit areas of culture which are most likely to appear in any recent Spanish textbook. However, while the explicit demonstration of culture may appear to be important, it is in reality, the more implicit way the culture is portrayed that perhaps is more insidious. In order to encounter enough meaningful details within the textbooks, it is necessary to look beyond the more obvious. One of the ways that I intend

to do this is to look at the way the themes of certain chapters are presented and who gets the most benefit of these presentations. For example, in two textbooks which I have used, the presentation of clothes and colors centers around department or clothing stores. Why do the authors present clothing in a shopping district? Is it because students might find something more in common with the textbooks instead of some other theme? Why is it based on the model of commercialization? This is only one example. However, the question of who benefits with such a presentation bears asking.

Another implicit area in the presentation of culture within the textbooks is the importance that the teaching of culture is emphasized. Where are the cultural sections placed within the confines of the textbook? Are they tucked away in a specific section where culture can be neatly and concisely brought out? The answers to these questions are likely to be varied as the authors of specific textbooks will place a different emphasis depending upon their point of view to the extent which culture is important to them.

This, however, is an extremely important issue. In order to be accepted by the State of Georgia, certain criteria must be met, including elements of culture. If the authors of accepted textbooks do not give much emphasis to culture in their textbooks, should the state accept these textbooks as they are? It is reasonable to make the assumption that the authors wish to follow the national standards of foreign language learning. As mentioned earlier, the national standards include culture as one of the five major components of learning a foreign language.

The way that culture is presented in the above example may cause students to look at Latins as miniature Americans who are simply attempting to imitate our own way

of life. Even if the students are willing to look beyond the stereotypes presented, it may be nearly impossible to do so, when the textbook, serving as the primary source of information teaches certain erroneous information. Why are there similarities regarding this compulsion of buying? If the Latin culture is presented in this manner then it causes two things to occur. First, it creates a myopic view of the Latin culture. Students who take Spanish are more likely to believe that Latinos and the Spanish are exactly like us in what they desire to consume. This may or may not be true. American popular culture has infiltrated much of the world, yet even more pervasive is the advent of American products such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, and clothing products.

Second, it reinforces our own culture of consumption by repeating the same message over and over in a different context. By doing so, the students are being led to believe that consumption of material things is of vital importance. The underlying messages sent by the textbooks simply lead to more consumer capitalism. Students exposed to a message of consumer capitalism will simply become better consumer capitalists. If they see this message over and over again, then they will begin to believe its veracity.

A further way of examining how culture is presented is to look at the words that are used in conjunction with the chapter themes. Language is all-encompassing and is essential to our understanding of what we think and feel. Obviously, thematic lessons are useful to teach language. It is probable that thematic subjects in language help the students retain more and become more comfortable with the language. Why do the authors though, choose certain words to be taught? Why are particular words chosen in

the learning of a language? Are there other reasons besides the thematic trends of the textbook? The words that the students learn in Spanish are important because it helps the students to understand the concept of culture as well as language. Students generally are naturally curious when it comes to a foreign language because it is a new subject for them, and they have not been exposed to such a school subject. The words that they use on a daily basis stay with them as they delve further into the language. The practice of the language whether it is spoken or written or aural is their first glimpse into a completely foreign world.

In order to understand how the textbook operates in the teaching of culture I will also have to look at another issue; what the positive aspects of the presentation of the Latin culture is. It would be much easier in this analysis to examine all that was wrong with the current and recent Spanish textbooks, but it would be unfair if there was no examination of the more prominent positive features of these textbooks regarding the presentation of culture. As was alluded to earlier, the current crop of textbooks in Spanish have a great deal going for them with the amount of cultural information they provide. Compared to older textbooks, contemporary texts remain light years ahead. In terms of piquing the interest of the students, the contemporary textbooks cannot be surpassed compared to past editions of foreign language texts.

In other areas, the current communicative approach is much more practical than the old grammar-translation models of textbooks. Students generally leave even a Spanish I class with more speaking proficiency than students who studied under a different methodology. Certainly, the fact that culture takes a more visible role in today's

textbooks and those of the recent past is heartening and there is much more emphasis upon culture in these current textbooks. Today, (and even in the late 1980s and early 1990s) one can find cultural examples on almost every page. Familiarity with cultural issues is certainly a step in the right direction. These are only a few of the avenues that could be examined. This study must be taken as an attempt to look at these textbooks in a more friendly manner. Both the positive and negative aspects of the current textbooks contain much information regarding not only the perceived Latin culture, but the culture in which we live as well.

Importance of study

Finally, the question of why this study is important comes to the forefront. Because in recent years we have become more and more familiar with Latin culture through various media outlets, including popular music, television, and movies, many students choose to take Spanish as their foreign language elective because of the vast access and immediate use that they potentially have in their world today. Another obvious reason for the selection of Spanish instead of another foreign language is the availability of use. In the region where we reside, numerous inhabitants are of Spanish or Latin descent. Migrant workers are seen frequently in shopping centers, fast food restaurants, and other establishments. If students begin working in retail, they will most likely encounter the need to speak Spanish often. Peter McLaren (1998), a well-known figure in the field of critical theory writes on the current state of affairs here in the United States, "We are not autonomous citizens that can simply choose whatever ethnic combinations that we desire in order to reassemble our identity. While the borders of

ethnicity overlap and shade into one another, it is dishonest to assert that pluralized , hybridized identities are available to all citizens.(p. 418)

If we look at McLaren's comment honestly we are forced to admit that the far more important aspect of learning a foreign language has little to do with verb conjugations and grammatical constructions. However, these same verb conjugations and grammatical structures help with the most important goal of all in foreign languages. The ultimate goal of learning a foreign language is to gain understanding into another culture. If that particular group of people are portrayed in a light in which they simply mirror our own society or even worse are painted as inferior to our culture, then the practice has to be explored in a critical manner. For better understanding to occur, a study of the way Latin culture is presented in current and recent textbooks must be done.

Since this study is limited to the state of Georgia, it appears that foreign language teachers would be able to use the study to gain a fresh perspective on the textbooks they are currently using. For those teachers who rely upon the textbooks in order to teach the subject of Spanish, this analysis enables those teachers to discover how the textbook operates in creating the typological centerpiece that is the perception of Latin culture. Also some teachers may not feel as competent in the area of teaching culture and may have an over-reliance upon the textbook to teach aspects of culture. Even worse, may be the harried teacher who is much more concerned about curriculum alignment and state mandates to worry about culture. The study permits these individuals to see the manner in which culture is brought to the students through the textbooks in a different light. If teachers can perceive of a problem, then they are better able to seek solutions.

I have hopes that my study would bring about a change in the way teachers are able to view the operation of the textbook in the presentation of culture. In addition, perhaps my study will be able to help teachers create more opportunities for advancement in the promotion of cultural values which do not necessarily follow the current patterns of teaching. My hope is that through the study, teachers will be able to use the information to bring about new discussions of Latin culture. For example, little is known concerning the United States' role in the domination of certain nations through intimidation, diplomacy, and the outright hostile overthrow of legitimately elected governments including, Chile, Guatemala, and Cuba, just to name a few.

Unfortunately, due to the end of course testing which will be implemented in the coming years, Spanish teachers will be forced to follow stricter guidelines in order to aid students in the passing of these onerous tests. For many years foreign language teachers have been largely exempt from the testing mania which has been encircling the state. This exemption will soon change and Spanish teachers will be forced to adhere to strict guidelines which teachers in other subject areas have had to work.

This textual analysis will not change the world of textbooks, yet it will be able to demonstrate how the Spanish textbooks operate in terms of portraying an ethnic minority which for many years has been perceived in a negative light and continues to be perpetuated. If an educator in the field of foreign language, through this study can achieve cognitive dissonance in terms of how cultural themes are presented, then the study will have been successful.

Since critical theory is the underpin of the process of this study, it is important to

understand how the textbooks create a perception of a diverse ethnic group which in reality should not be considered an ethnic group because the labeling of such a wide number of individuals does no one good. Labeling is convenient only in that it affords another group to create a name. The variety of the individuals who speak the Spanish language as their native tongue is astonishing. Spanish is one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world and the population that speaks Spanish is incredibly diverse.

Another important aspect of the study centers on the discussion of what the textbooks are saying by omission. When the authors of Spanish textbooks omit details of the culture of a given group of Latins, they do not represent the culture completely. The lack of information can be just as meaningful as the direct presentation of themes within a language textbook. Each text will be examined in this area, along with the other features which represent culture.

For example, in *Paso a Paso* book 1 chapter six is devoted to shopping. It is the manner in which the theme of colors and clothing is presented. The use of clothing, money, and colors in presenting this aspect of language is certainly a common way of teaching important words. The clothing though widely used in the United States and the places where clothing is purchased is quite familiar to the students as a popular shopping mall. This particular textbook leaves out an important area for purchasing clothing—the open-air market, popular with shoppers in almost every Latin American nation.

These are the goals in which I hope to accomplish along with probably the most important aspect of the study. Fellow human beings who speak the beautiful Spanish language are made into charactitures of not who they truly are, but rather what someone

else perceives them to be. Unfortunately, it is largely due to the media of which textbooks are a part, which causes these misrepresentations to occur. My sincere hope is, I will be able to show the readers that even what educators consider the best textbooks help to perpetuate a misinterpretation of how people live in the many nations “south of the border” and the one Spanish-speaking nation on the Iberian Peninsula.

. Before commencing with the formal analysis of each of the textbooks, it is necessary to provide a description of the three textbooks. Instead of laboriously giving readers minute details about how each of the textbooks are constructed, it is more logical to discuss the similarities and differences between the three textbooks. Virtually every textbook has particular similarities because the authors are pursuing a common goal; the teaching of a foreign language. It is for this reason that the Spanish textbooks analyzed in chapter four of this study bear many more commonalities than diversity. However, the placement of certain features of cultural material bears importance in their location within each of the textbooks.

Similarities of textbooks

Every one of the textbooks begins the adventure of learning a foreign language by having a preliminary section prior to the actual chapters of the text. The preliminary sections present interesting points such as greetings and leave-takings, numbers, body parts, and telling time and dates. By having such an introductory chapter apart from the normal numbered chapters, the authors give the students the opportunity to experience the excitement of learning a new language without the baggage of having to learn strict rules of grammar. The emphasis in these chapters is a basic knowledge of the Spanish

language. Grammar points are not expressly presented as they will be in the actual numbered chapters.

Each of the three textbooks opens every chapter with a photograph and list of language competency objectives which the authors intend for their readers to learn. It is at this very early point that the authors and publishers almost produce identical textbooks. The photographs at the beginning of each chapter are colorful and show various people and places in the Latin and Spanish world. These photographs tend to be quite large in comparison to the other photographs in a given chapter.

One interesting phenomenon concerning the similarities between *Paso a Paso* and Realidades is the use of the exact same photographs in various places throughout the textbooks. The location of the photographs are not placed in the exact location, however, these photographs do appear in the same thematic areas from time to time. The difference in publication dates are notable because the photographs that are used in *Realidades* are quite dated considering when *Paso a Paso* was published. Students using *Realidades* might be surprised to discover that the photographs in a new textbook are older than they may think.

Every textbook then follows another primary similarity. After the objectives page the chapters begin with a set of vocabulary words to be learned in the given chapter. All three of the textbooks include either photographs or drawings to accompany at least a portion of the vocabulary words. The reasoning behind this trend is to help students to visualize vocabulary words in order to facilitate the learning of the presented words. Visualization assists the students to retain more words than would be possible in the

traditional memorization of vocabulary word lists.

Following the vocabulary presentation page each of the textbooks provides at least one page of practice with the new vocabulary. It is at this point that the third similarity between the textbooks occurs. The authors move from vocabulary to the grammar points which will be presented in a given chapter. Generally within a particular chapter the authors will present two or three grammar points. Following each grammar point that is presented, a number of short exercises are given in order that the students may have the grammar point reinforced.

Subsequently, the authors of the three texts give the students the opportunity to learn more about the grammar points through reading and writing activities. These exercises are located toward the end of the chapters and are optional for the Spanish teachers to use. In terms of cultural information, both *Buen Viaje* and *Realidades* follow a similar pattern. In both books, the authors leave cultural essays near the end of the chapters. By doing this, the cultural information in a given chapter may or may not be utilized. These cultural essays may reflect the history and literature of Spain and Latin America, or they may include aspects that tend to be more popular with the students, including food and shopping.

Following the cultural information contained in the textbooks, each of the textbooks contains a review section of the vocabulary and grammar points presented in the chapter. Vocabulary lists without pictures are given to the students while grammar points are presented in a succinct fashion. Additional review practice is given on these pages in preparation for a chapter test which is often given at the completion of each

chapter.

All three textbooks conclude each chapter in a similar manner although slight differences do exist. Each chapter contains at least one page of grammar review where the students can see what they were supposed to learn in a given chapter. The other part of the review is dedicated to the reinforcement of vocabulary which is obviously essential in language learning. The only notable difference is the order in which these two areas are presented.

Overall, it is difficult not to note how similar each of the textbooks are. Structurally, the books are very much alike. By examining these three books, it appears that textbook production is a standard procedure where publishers follow almost a set format. This format is based upon a particular view of language-learning, being the communicative approach that was discussed in Chapter One. Even though, this is the accepted approach to language learning today, the structure of three different textbooks needs not be the same. In terms of creativity toward language learning these three textbooks are quite similar and rather vanilla in their approach.

By the appearances three distinct textbooks, all published by different companies still maintain a strong resemblance to one another. The structure has not changed in ten years or more. The primary formula for creating a textbook is the same in 1995 as it is in 2005. Furthermore, as a student in the early 1980s, even the textbook that I originally used to learn Spanish followed much the same format, although it was markedly less colorful. While the textbooks have become more colorful and appealing to the eye, the way that each textbook is presented is strikingly similar. When foreign language teaching

methods are explored, one finds that the actual methodology has indeed changed very little throughout the years.

Differences between the textbooks

Paso a Paso

The differences among the three textbooks are minimal and are much more concerned with location in the presentation of certain cultural features. For example, the cultural essays found in *Paso a Paso* are located before the grammar sections. These essays are presented in English and are related to the topic of a given chapter. Another difference found in *Paso a Paso* is a section entitled Gramatica en Contexto (Grammar in Context). This section is located just prior to the introduction of grammar points and usually features an advertisement in the Spanish language. Students are evaluated on reading comprehension from questions following the reading selection. One interesting aspect is how the questions emphasize grammar constructions instead of information retention.

Aside from color photographs appearing sporadically through *Paso a Paso*, the cultural essay written in English along with the advertisements are the only overt examples of cultural presentations found within the *Paso a Paso* student edition. One more difference which appears within *Paso a Paso* and in none of the other textbooks is the cultural essay appearing in the teachers' edition. This essay is similar to the one presented to the students with the exception that no questions follow up the essay. The Spanish teacher if he or she chooses to use the essay is required to create his or her own questions to go along with the essay.

Another difference between *Paso a Paso* compared to the other two books is due to the time period of the publication. The publishers of *Paso a Paso* use a considerable number of drawings compared to that of *Buen Viaje* and *Realidades*. Drawings are used more frequently to present vocabulary. In fact, all of the vocabulary in *Paso a Paso* is presented in the form of drawings instead of actual photographs.

Another notable difference in the *Paso a Paso* textbook is the cultural essay that each chapter contains. These cultural essays are written in English and provide some insight to the culture. Each essay provides the Spanish I students with a particular point of view which leads to cultural understanding. In these sections, the students learn about culture which in some cases may be misleading. These essays are different from the other two textbooks, primarily because they are written to explore Latino culture as a whole instead of looking at particular nations.

From the cultural essay the authors move into their primary concern which is grammar-based knowledge. The authors present the grammar lesson in terms of a real-life language situation which may be in the form of a poem or a piece of realia taking the form of an authentic brochure found in the Spanish-speaking world. The students then answer questions based upon their reading and comprehension. Following the Grammar in Context section, the students are then presented with the grammar lessons for the particular chapter. In these sections, some photographs are available for the students to examine. It is in this part of the chapter where the most colorful photographs are shown to the students. As noted previously, because of the earlier publication date, *Paso a Paso* is less colorful in this section compared to the other two textbooks.

After the exercises, there is an activity section where the authors desire that the students pull every thing from vocabulary to the grammar lessons together to promote total understanding. These activities include components of language learning and are based upon reading and writing. This section also provides the students with a few alternative words that add to their vocabulary knowledge base. The authors recycle language information learned previously to help the students retain important information.

Realidades

Of the three textbooks being analyzed, *Paso a Paso* and *Realidades* will obviously share more of the same characteristics due to the fact that Prentiss-Hall purchased ScottForesman, and the author Myriam Met is the same for both textbooks. Having mentioned this tie that both textbooks have, the differences are quite notable and *Realidades* is not simply a rehash of *Paso a Paso*.

The first most notable difference is the manner in which the textbook is divided. *Realidades* contains a total of nine themes but is divided into A and B sections. Instead of having two vocabulary sections per chapter, each chapter is somewhat smaller and contains only one vocabulary section in what would be considered a chapter, especially when compared to the other two textbooks.

The next difference is seen in the presentation of vocabulary. The major difference is the use of actual photographs from time to time instead of relying upon drawings. Because *Buen Viaje* is also a more recent textbook, it shares some of the same characteristics as *Realidades*, especially in terms of using photographs to present

vocabulary words. The use of photographs, while providing more authentic representation than drawings can be misleading as well. For example, in all three textbooks the authors present photographs of shopping malls which could lead the students in the United States to suppose that the majority of Latin Americans shop in these commercial centers. In fact, the vast majority of individuals shop in open-air markets of which there are few photographs in any of the three textbooks.

A new addition to the world of Spanish textbooks is seen in both *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje*. This new addition is the page which corresponds to the video material included in the textbook package. Both of the newer textbooks rely upon video productions to present some of the material. *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje* contain pages which give the students another resource with the video tapes. This difference between the textbooks has much more to do with advancement in textbook production and not about actual authorship of the textbooks.

Another major difference in *Realidades* and the other two textbooks is the way cultural information is presented. *Realidades* has cultural features in short sections throughout the chapter. It still has some cultural essays, but they are different when we compare them to *Paso a Paso*. The authors of *Realidades* show cultural representations on virtually every single page whether they be in the form of photographs or very short cultural essays. The authors do include longer cultural essays, but they are based upon regions in Latin America, Spain, and the United States.

Another difference is the manner in which vocabulary and grammar are presented in *Realidades*. Although the vocabulary is presented at the beginning of the chapter like

the other two textbooks, a major difference exists with *Realidades*. This difference is the combination of both vocabulary and grammar activities instead of separating the vocabulary and grammar sections as the other two textbooks do.

Before the traditional review section of vocabulary and grammar which all three textbooks contain, the authors of *Realidades* present a cultural essay based upon a specific geographic region within the Spanish-speaking world. Photographs are included along with written information. The specificity of the essays is more revealing than the other textbooks' more general method of presenting the culture of the Spanish-speaking world.

Buen Viaje

The textbook *Buen Viaje* contains what can be termed a combination of characteristics shared between the other two textbooks. It has some newer features that *Realidades* contains while at the same time retaining many features which *Paso a Paso* has. One must remember, though, that the publisher of *Buen Viaje* represents a completely different company than that of both *Realidades* and its predecessor, *Paso a Paso*.

Buen Viaje has two sets of vocabulary words like *Paso a Paso*, but uses a combination of drawings and real-life photographs to present the vocabulary. In this manner *Buen Viaje* maintains this combination of old and new. Unlike *Realidades*, the authors of *Buen Viaje* use larger photographic scenes to display vocabulary words. For example, vocabulary dealing with train travel will have a large photograph of a train station in Madrid. Vocabulary words will be interspersed with the particular photograph

since it is large enough to show various words that students might encounter in a large metropolitan train station.

Like *Paso a Paso*, *Buen Viaje* has reinforcement pages so that students may be able to acquire necessary vocabulary skill with the new words. Since the textbook has two distinct vocabulary sections, the reinforcement pages are seen in two different places in each chapter the way it is done in *Paso a Paso*. In addition, following the vocabulary sections, the grammar section explains the grammatical structure meant to be learned in the given chapter.

One of the most notable differences that *Buen Viaje* has as compared to the other two textbooks is a conversation page. The conversation page is a typical dialog that one could hear in a conversation in Spanish. It is accompanied by a photograph as well. Following the conversation, the authors present the students with a series of questions based upon the conversation, and then follow the conversation page with an opportunity to practice speaking more. Neither of the other two textbooks has a section like this which causes *Buen Viaje* to be unique in this regard.

Buen Viaje also has another section which is completely different from the other two textbooks. The authors present three reading sections along with comprehension questions which help the students understand the key points of the readings. The first reading is not listed as optional while the other two reading sections are. One of the most interesting aspects of the three reading sections is how all are in Spanish from the very first chapter. This is not true in both *Paso a Paso* and *Realidades*. In fact, the cultural essays in the first year book, *Paso a Paso* are always presented in English while the small

cultural paragraphs seen throughout *Realidades* are also written in the English language. From a language learning perspective the authors of *Buen Viaje* do more to facilitate the acquisition of Spanish for the first year Spanish students than the authors of the other two textbooks.

Another aspect of *Buen Viaje* is a section entitled “Connections”. Unlike the other two textbooks, the authors of this textbook, attempt to bring an understanding across the curriculum by tying in other disciplines to the Spanish language. For example, in the first chapter the emphasis in the “Connections” section deals with social studies and the geography of Latin America is discussed. In this section, there are essays in both English and Spanish.

Each chapter concludes with a section called Technotur which is a video segment that is included with the *Buen Viaje* textbook. Like its counterpart, *Realidades*, the authors of the final textbook do include video segments to accompany the textbook series. Again, this is more due to advancement in technology and the demand that is given by teachers. *Realidades* has the same type of video segments because of its recent publication like *Buen Viaje*. *Paso a Paso* is older and there was less emphasis upon tying video scenes to the textbook when it was published in the mid 1990s.

The three textbooks are much more similar in layout than they are different. Although differences exist, they are minor when one looks at the complete structure of the textbooks. The importance of presented vocabulary, along with the illustrations whether they be designs or photographs will demonstrate how the authors of the three textbooks choose to portray the culture of the Spanish-speaking world. Included is also

the realia that is seen throughout the textbooks which will reinforce certain cultural representations. The methods of the textual analysis for cultural content are clear. The study will now move to the actual analysis of cultural representation in the textbooks themselves.

CHAPTER 4
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

Before beginning the actual analysis of the given textbooks it is necessary to describe the way the three selected textbooks are designed. Although each textbook has variations in content, the similarity in structure remains strong. The process for language learning is complex and certain linguistic elements have to be taught, therefore a variety of methodology does not truly exist in foreign language textbooks. Vocabulary is the first step in learning a new language and all four textbooks begin a chapter with vocabulary, either with pictures and words or dialogues. Following the vocabulary sections, exercises are presented to reinforce the new vocabulary or in some instances, to present the grammar structure to be taught in the given chapter. Within in the chapter cultural information is presented directly to the students. This cultural information may be in the form of essays concerning a particular theme relevant to the chapter or written information presented alongside pictures which give the student a glimpse of the culture of Spanish-speaking people.

Before commencing with the categories of analysis, it will be helpful to describe the subjects that the textbooks cover in terms of language acquisition. In comparison, the three textbooks have many more commonalties than variance. From the very beginning of each textbook, the similarities are apparent. As mentioned earlier in the study, all of the textbooks contain a preliminary section featuring common phrases used to become acquainted with the language learning setting. Also, it is essential to note that the within

the sections repetition will occur. All three textbooks are colorful and contain drawings or photographs to help reinforce the vocabulary. Therefore, the vocabulary section and the drawings and photograph sections overlap somewhat.

Each of the textbooks has the following themes somewhere in the first-year book. These themes include: personal descriptions, school classes and materials, hobbies and sports, food, family, shopping, travel, body parts and cursory medical terminology, and phrases commonly used in a restaurant. Two separate chapters are used to present the food items and vocabulary used in a restaurant setting. Given the information that has been discussed earlier in the study, it is essential to be aware of the fact that restaurants are used as thematic ideas along with shopping as major themes in all three of the textbooks. From a Marxist perspective, it is believable that the authors of the three textbooks are spreading the notion of consumer capitalism which is so prevalent in United States society today even if it is done on a subconscious level.

The differences among the three textbooks are more difficult to distinguish. Since *Realidades* is an updated version of *Paso a Paso*, the thematic sections are likely to be extremely similar. The authors of both *Paso a Paso* and *Realidades* attempt to create real life situations for the students to acquire their ability to communicate in the Spanish language. The overall theme for *Buen Viaje* is taking a trip, so the authors endeavor to create some chapters around this motif. One glaring difference between *Buen Viaje* and the other two textbooks is the chapter on culture. Some of the vocabulary is similar in its use of movie theatre, but overall, the theme of art and history museums is lacking in both of the other two textbooks.

Another difference is found in chapter 12 of *Buen Viaje* where the theme is a backpacking trip, and included in the chapter is information on daily grooming terms which will not be found in the *Paso a Paso* nor *Realidades* textbooks until the second year. The only other pronounced difference between the three textbooks is that the authors of *Buen Viaje* use two chapters to discuss travel by train and another to discuss travel by airplane. The authors of *Buen Viaje* tend to place a little more emphasis upon Iberian culture, especially in the chapters on transportation. The only major difference in themes among the other two textbooks is found at the end of *Realidades* where almost an entire short chapter is dedicated to technology, specifically the use of the computer and the Internet.

Essays and cultural paragraphs

Paso a Paso

The first area is the actual cultural presentations given to the students in the form of paragraphs or in some cases, cultural essays. The second area is the vocabulary used to present to the students in order to help them learn the language. The third area and final area of analysis is the examination of the photographs which are intended to show the students realistic portraits of the target culture. Each of these areas is distinct, but all are interrelated because of the language themes the authors of the each textbooks use to present the information.

In the first-year textbook *Paso a Paso*, the teacher's addition has an introductory essay that the teacher has the option of using or not using in his or her cultural introduction of the theme in a given chapter. The reality is that every cultural theme is

optional to the teacher and may or may not be used in the teaching of Latin culture. The second essay included in each of the chapters is located within the students' textbook and whether or not, the teacher presents it or does any activity at all related to culture matters not because the essay is there for the students, and the zealous student is likely to read over the material out of sheer curiosity.

The essays are informative to a degree from a teacher's perspective if rather short most of the time. In chapter 3 of *Paso a Paso*, there is a presentation of places to go and activities in which the students can participate. In the essay of the third chapter is a description of the most famous parks in certain Spanish cities such as Chapultepec Park in Mexico City and Retiro Park in Madrid.(p. 102-103) The emphasis in this essay is upon the activities that are done in these parks as well as the plazas which are the cultural heart of nearly all the towns in Spanish-speaking nations.

In the second paragraph of the essay, the authors describe the attractions at Chapultepec Park, mentioning how the large recreational area includes an amusement park. The authors also give the names of certain rides like montaña rusa (roller coaster) and la rueda de feria (ferris wheel). (102) While at first glance this may be appealing to students (and teachers) who like amusement parks, there are other items to be considered. Two of the most popular theme parks in the world are Disney World and Disney Land which provide a great deal of revenue for both the owners and the communities where they are located.. In a cultural representation it is possible that these images of Mexico City reinforce what people in the United States think about the rest of the world. It may also reinforce the subconscious idea that people around the world live much as we do

here in the United States.

Another element strikes the critical educator as well. Met, Sayers, and Wargin (1996) write, "Like the park the plaza is where people meet to exchange news and local gossip and where vendors sell paletas (popsicles or ice cream bars) or globos (balloons). In many cities the plaza is truly the heart of the town. (102) The preceding quote typifies the idea of commercialism within a capitalist economy. The last sentence does indeed give a rather accurate description of life in a Hispanic town or city. The preceding information simply reinforces to students who would largely be ignorant of what actually occurs in Spanish society and would tend to believe that life in Spanish-speaking nations is a smaller version of Disney World. In *Paso a Paso*, the third chapter is a mere warm-up for promoting the capitalist consumerism. In chapter three the essays focus upon leisure activities such as amusement parks. Chapter six gives much more information to the student regarding consumer capitalist activities within the Spanish-speaking world.

The preliminary essay for chapter six is entitled Shopping. (179B) The focus of this essay emphasizes shopping for clothing. It provides the students with information regarding the purchasing of clothes in Spanish-speaking nations. The first paragraph is a brief history of how purchases were made in the past from neighborhood haberdasher establishments. The second paragraph brings the student up to date on the latest places to find stylish clothes. The authors write, "Popular department stores include Colombia=s San Andresito and Spain's El Corte Ingles, Galerias Preciadas, Galerias Primero. Shopping malls such as Mexico City's Perisur are also becoming more commonplace. Perisur, like malls in the U.S. features a variety of chain store branches (sucursales).

Among them are Liverpool, a fashionable clothing store, and Sanborn=s, a department store and favorite lunch spot. Perisur has become a central place for friends to meet and spend time together as well as to shop. Puntos de fabrica (factory outlet stores) are becoming increasingly popular places to buy clothing. (179B)

Upon examining this brief paragraph several items come to the forefront of analysis. First, even though the names are different from Abercrombie and Fitch and Belk's, the concepts are strikingly similar. The authors mention how Perisur contains retail shops and department stores where teenagers can buy goods and shop for the latest fashion trends. From reading this material presented, students would possibly view the activities of teenagers in Spanish-speaking nations to be largely aligned with their own activities. One of the most notable traits of Latin culture is the relative lack of importance placed upon purchases as compared to the United States.

Second, the last bit of information within the quotation is interesting because factory outlet stores are a relatively new concept here in the United States and now are appearing to become influential within Spanish-speaking nations as well. It is interesting to note, however, that Americans most closely associate the use of outlet stores to be in conjunction with the well-developed interstate system that the United States maintains.

Unfortunately for most Latin American nations there is no great interstate system as we know it here in the United States. The vast majority of people living in Latin America travel by bus or micros (small buses like mini-vans) and do not travel like Americans do in order to go shopping. Open-air markets still remain commonplace throughout Latin American cities. However, from reading this account of cultural information, it would make

one believe that the ubiquitous mall and chain of outlet stores are as wide-spread throughout Latin America as they are here in the United States.

The final interesting point about this quotation relates to information that the textbook provided earlier. In Chapter 3 the authors told how the plaza is the heart of the community and is a place where people meet. (102) However, in this chapter they describe the malls as the place that people get together. Perhaps, this is merely a contradiction. Perhaps, the Americanization of the Latin America and Spain is already taking place on such a large scale that the plazas are becoming obsolete in the face of the all-encompassing malls where people can gather and make purchases and participate in a consumer-capitalist environment. The reason which causes pause in the consideration of such a change is one of the most important aspects of education is to be able to recognize and appreciate differences along with similarities.

Obviously, certain elements of Latin and Spanish society are changing, as are elements in North American society. The unfortunate by-product of the description within certain Spanish textbooks is the perception that most people in Latin America live exactly as we Americans live, and therein shows the difficulty of presenting an accurate portrayal of life in Latin American nations, along with Spain.

The student essay within chapter six is quite short compared to the essay presented in the teacher's edition. The photographs accompanying this brief essay are interesting as I will discuss later when examining the photographs shown throughout the textbooks. The most interesting quotations of the essay occur towards the end of the essay where the authors state, "Teenagers in Spanish-speaking countries like to window-

shop at malls and clothing stores, just as they do here. Teens in Spanish-speaking countries tend to be fashion-conscious and stylish in the way they dress, and many like to wear custom-made formal clothes on special occasions”.(198) Like other quotations throughout this textbook, it is not the whole story of what occurs within Latin American society.

It may be true that some teenagers like to window shop, however, the authors tend to make generalizations and do not address certain realities. Students here in the United States who read the above quotation are likely to be impressed with their Latin American counterparts and encounter common ground with them. Stating that teenagers in Latin America like to window shop is akin to saying that everyone in the United States eats at McDonalds. That statement is simply not true. Many people choose not to eat at McDonalds here in the U.S. for various reasons. Some teenagers may window-shop and many teenagers are most likely fashion-conscious, but the generalizations made throughout the *Paso a Paso* first year Spanish textbook only describe part of the story.

The other reality in most Latin American nations is that a large majority of the population lives in great poverty and does not have time to window-shop and wear fashionable clothes because they are either working or attempting to find adequate food to eat. American students reading these essays are likely not to think of poverty, but rather they would most likely picture a smaller version of the United States where people merely speak Spanish instead of English.

Another example of an essay which promotes the idea of Spanish-speakers being extremely similar to Americans is found in chapter seven which has the overall theme of

vacations and holidays. Within the essay is a quotation from a Chilean teen who says “I like to go to Viña del Mar with my family. In the daytime we swim in the ocean or in a pool, and we sunbathe. We rest in the afternoon, and in the evening we can play tennis, go to a movie, or go dancing. There are a lot of people my age there” (230). Several striking notions come to the forefront in this quotation which many may find unobtrusive..

First, the quotation presents the location as a famous resort town within the nation of Chile. Unfortunately, the idea of Viña del Mar being a resort town is implicit at best. This omission produces a lack of cultural dissonance. In order for students to understand the social class structure, the teacher would have to have knowledge enough of the Spanish-speaking world to counter what the textbook is describing. It is more a reflection of American values and conditioning, instead of Latin. Wealthy Chileans and well-to-do foreigners come to Viña del Mar, so it is not the place for the middle and lower classes of that South American nation.

Another element related to the quotation is the activities that are available. Swimming done in the ocean or pool is a common activity here in the United States when Americans are on vacation with their families as well. Within this context there is no mention that the vast majority of the people in Latin America have no opportunity to go on vacation because they are forced to work virtually every day providing food for their families. The idea of going to the ocean or a pool for relaxation and rejuvenation is a concept largely foreign to most inhabitants of Latin America.

In the United States it is quite common to encounter swimming pools in a number

of places. It is different in Latin America. Students would relate to swimming pools and the beach because many families go to the beach for vacations. Another factor that should be considered is that Americans tend to drive a great deal and many motels in the United States have excellent facilities. The more upscale hotels in Latin American cities have swimming pools, but these hotels are geared more toward businessmen from the United States and Europe. A person of the lower and middle socioeconomic groups in a Latin American nation would be unlikely to use such facilities.

Realidades

Realidades presents the written cultural information in very short doses. Lengthy essays are presented by the authors towards the end of each subsection of every theme. . In addition, the authors of *Realidades* include numerous small colorful boxes which contain cultural paragraphs are used to present cultural material. These boxes are entitled "Fondos Culturales" which is translated as cultural foundations. In some places there are more lengthy essays but unlike *Buen Viaje* they are not seen in abundance.

The first example to be discussed is found on pages 28-29. Essentially this is not a cultural vignette. Instead, it is a dialogue between students written in Spanish introducing the characters of a video series which the first year students are likely to view on a regular basis. In fact, it is one of the primary selling points that school systems use in the selection process. The most difficult aspect of the video episodes is that the students attend high school in San Antonio, Texas. Therefore what the authors send a clear message to the students concerning the superiority of the United States. Most of the settings for the video occur in San Antonio.

The next example of the video story happens on page 52-53. The episode stresses the use of the Internet by the student stars of the video. While the Internet is almost a daily necessity in the United States, it does not share the same popularity in many parts of Latin America. Instead of having Internet access throughout schools in Latin America, public schools do not possess the funds to spend on computers and Internet access as do schools here in the United States. Students are likely to encounter this information because of the videos available to the teachers. It would be simple to make the assumption that schools in Latin America are the same as schools here in the United States. The students might even overlook the fact that the setting is San Antonio, Texas. Again, it is an example of a Texas locale being the center of an important textbook teaching tool.

Page 65 contains the first cultural vignette which will be analyzed. The description would appear to be a legitimate expression of cultural information because the short paragraph discusses the colorful weaving done in Guatemala by the descendants of the Maya. The information about the blouses describes how each is unique. What is not mentioned is how poor these Guatemalan women are who do the actual weaving. Also, these blouses are quite popular among tourists who visit Guatemala. An implicit message is being sent regarding the consumer capitalist nature of the tourist industry.

Page 80 has a cultural vignette, which focuses upon the learning of English in Spanish speaking nations. The authors by using this description appear to be giving the English language a certain superiority. The authors describe how students in Spanish-speaking countries study English in the same manner as students in the United States

study Spanish. No mention is made of the public school system being different from private institutions in Latin America and Spain. English language classes may be adequate in private schools, but public schools in Latin America have little resources to hire a qualified teacher of English. Those who teach English do not necessarily speak it well.

The last part of the paragraph states, “When visiting a Spanish speaking country, you might easily find someone who is eager to practice his or her English skills with you...” (80) This statement may or may not be true. In more developed nations where the literacy rate is high, it is possible. However, in the majority of the Latin American nations where many people cannot even read their own language, students visiting would be hard pressed to encounter someone who spoke English. The cultural vignette completely misleads a first-year Spanish student regarding quality of English language instruction in schools and the wide availability of English speakers in Latin America.

On page 106, a “fondo cultural” is presented which describes uniforms. The authors state, “Many schools in Spanish speaking countries require their students to wear uniforms.” (106) Nowhere in the paragraph is it mentioned that these schools are private and that fees are charged to attend these schools. A student reading this information could easily believe that a major difference in schooling here and in Latin America is the requirement that students wear uniforms. However, public schools do not require uniforms in Latin America. Students attending private institutions are wealthier and have more in common with the first year Spanish students.

One of the most powerful examples of cultural misinformation occurs on page 143. “Venezuela is one of the most important of oil consumed in the United States. Other

important Latin American oil producers include Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, with new deposits being found every year. Latin America and Canada account for approximately 48 percent of oil imports to the United States. In contrast, the Middle East accounts for approximately 30 percent.”(143) The preceding statement has little to do with Latin American culture and much more to do with the economic superiority of the United States. The long history of colonialism has been well documented.

What cultural content is there when the authors describe oil production in Latin America? It appears from reading this particular paragraph that a major purpose for the very existence of Latin America is to supply the United States with petroleum products. Also, it seems as if the authors are struggling to find cultural information when they describe economic interests of the United States. At first glance it appears fine that the authors discuss the oil production. No mention is made of the manner in which oil companies, many based in the United States, exploit the natural resources of nations throughout Latin America. Instead the authors attempt to throw a positive spin on economic domination of the United States.

The authors present the only example of the major shopping feature of Latin America in their textbook on page 160. In one extremely short cultural vignette, the authors mention that “Los mercados or open air markets are common throughout Latin America”. (160) This description is considerably brief when one considers how important these open-markets are in Latin America. The markets supply food and supplies to the majority of the people in Latin America. While supermarkets are becoming more common in Latin America, the markets are not disappearing. In Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a city of about one million people there are no less than four major markets scattered

throughout the city, along with an abundance of much smaller markets. It appears as if markets are the equivalent of shopping malls here in the United States when comparing numbers. Virtually every small town has a market area during one or two days of the week. Yet, this important fact is mentioned in *Realidades* in minutia compared to other topics which the authors discuss.

It is interesting to compare what little information was provided on markets in the cultural vignette to the cultural vignette on movies written on page 185. While it is a short description, the information about movies is more lengthy than the discussion of markets. The question arises then, which is more culturally relevant for Latin America and Spain, markets or movies? Based on the information provided by the authors of *Realidades*, first year Spanish students are likely to see movies as more important.

On pages 212-213 a reading section is presented focusing on the important sport of golf. Culturally speaking, the only benefit from this particular essay is that it is written in Spanish so it provides some reading comprehension practice. As far as cultural relevancy is concerned, the information is extremely limited. The essay describes two golfers, Sergio Garcia and Lorena Ochoa Reyes. Golf is a popular sport around the world as far as businessmen are concerned. Some players are from Spain and Latin America, but the sport is played by the wealthy class of Latin America and Spain. The middle and lower class are not even familiar with the sport. Again the authors show their willingness to promote sports as cultural information when very few Latin Americans and Spaniards actually participate in such sports. It is a clear example of how the culture of the United States is promoted over that of Latin America and Spain.

Also, on page 213 is perhaps the single worst example of cultural presentation

which has been seen in this study.

Una jugadora profesional Rebecca Lobo is a professional basketball player. After winning a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics, she became one of the WNBA's original players. Rebecca wrote a book called *The Home Team* which tells about her life and her mother's struggle against breast cancer. In 2001 she established a college scholarship fund to assist minority students who plan to pursue careers in the healthcare field.(p. 213)

The entire cultural paragraph is included in this study to show how patently absurd the authors become. Rebecca Lobo played college basketball at the University of Connecticut. She played for the United States Olympic team. The only aspect about her is that her last name is "lobo" which means "wolf" in English. It is tragic that the authors of *Realidades* have chosen to use a paragraph about Rebecca Lobo as an example of Latin culture. They do not even mention that the word lobo is of Spanish origin. The WNBA is part of the culture of the United States. It does not have great appeal here, let alone in Latin America. Rebecca Lobo is not a spokesperson for Latin America. Yet, the manner in which she is portrayed could possibly lead students to misunderstand the cultural information the authors are presumably attempting to convey. It almost appears that the authors are simply choosing anything that is remotely connected with the Spanish language to promote "Latin culture". This practice is detrimental to the students' cultural understanding of Latin America and Spain.

The authors of *Realidades* show on page 262 the tendency which appears often in

Buen Viaje concerning an emphasis upon locales in the United States where there is Latin culture. In this case it is Santa Fe, New Mexico. The information is written in Spanish. However, the consistent promotion of places in the United States implicitly takes away from the Latin American and Spanish culture that the authors of the Spanish textbooks presumably desire to promote. Instead the emphasis is more on the United States. So many places are available to promote throughout Latin America and Spain, and these places are virtually ignored.

On page 272 a youth from either Latin America or Spain (or even the United States) describes his room in Spanish. He emphasizes how it is his own room and he does not share it with anyone else. He also talks about his guitar and computer. He finally mentions that his room is above the garage. This description is of a room commonly found in the United States. It is most likely that students would be able to relate to this description. Every element of the description is related to the situation commonly occurring in the United States. The authors include no information about where the youth resides. This information could have been created as an example by the authors. As far as cultural relevancy, it applies more to the United States than anywhere in Latin America or Spain.

In the cultural section of 7B the phenomenon of shopping is explored. Four different locations are discussed and along with those places, the authors show students four photographs. (364-365) These four locales are New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and San Antonio. All are, of course, major cities within the contiguous United States. Of all the places in the Spanish-speaking world, why do the authors choose to show Latin locales in the United States? Is it to show students that Latins live, work, and shop in the

United States?

Within the essays, which were written in Spanish, students are given information about typical products sold. In New York, one can buy a t-shirt with a Puerto Rican flag on it. In Miami, much native Cuban food is sold to Cubans (many who live in exile). In Los Angeles, artisans sell many items including silver jewelry. In San Antonio, a central market has been built to serve patrons food in restaurants and sell them Mexican handicrafts. All of these essays do provide information for the students. It allows students who may never have known that large Hispanic communities exist inside the United States. The information is presented in Spanish, so students can improve their reading abilities.

The subsequent page entitled, (366) “Perspectivas del mundo hispano” asks the students using Realidades a critical question. “Por qué vas al centro comercial?” (Why do you go to the mall?) On this page two items appear important. The first is a bar graph comparing shoppers in Chile to shoppers in the United States. Below the bar graph is a photo of yet another mall-like building in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The bar graph compares attitudes of shoppers in Chile compared to that of people in the United States. Four categories in the graph exist. 1) to look, 2) to buy something specific, 3) to eat, and 4) miscellaneous. The last paragraph in the description of the bar graph states, “Although their motivation for going to the mall is different, 80% of both Chilean and United States consumers make a purchase once they are in the stores” (p. 366). This statement indicates to students a commonality among Chileans and people from the United States. The manner in which this paragraph is worded, students from the United States would tend to imagine that few students hold part-time jobs. In some ways

the authors are accurate. Students in Latin America usually do not spend a lot of time working outside of school paying for cars, insurance, and other necessities of teenagers. Instead those who do work, must work in order that their families may eat.

In some Latin American nations, such as Bolivia, local schools may have different hours of instruction. For example, some students may choose to go to school in the morning, while others prefer to attend classes in the afternoon. While this may seem advantageous to students, Bolivian pupils only attend about four hours of instruction per day in the public school system. The public school system in that nation is designed for the lower socioeconomic classes because the students who have parents can afford it, will invariably send their children to private school with longer hours and much stricter standards.

In the United States today, the shopping mall plays an important role. The authors create a topic which is relevant to today's students, but may not be that important to Chilean students and may cause a misrepresentation of cultural similarities. From the above bar graph we can see that Chileans do not go to the mall to be with friends necessarily. Other places are more important to be with friends such as plazas and parks which the authors fail to mention.

Four more cultural vignettes are left for analysis. All four are found in the chapter topic of the environment. The first fondo cultural provides information on the Peace Corps. (p. 398) While the Peace Corps is one of the best organizations in the United States, it has little to do with Latin American culture. The fact that the Peace Corps operates in Latin America is tacit proof that poverty exists in Latin America. Unfortunately, the topic is not directly addressed. Instead, the authors implicitly say that

the United States provides help to Latin America, and if the United States did not do it, then Latin American nations would suffer greatly. Once again, the authors take an opportunity to promote the culture and resources of the United States.

An interesting cultural vignette is written on page 405. The description concerns how in Spain much recycling is done and how popular it is. What the authors fail to mention is how the nations of Europe have been recycling for years, and nations in Europe have been far ahead of the rest of the world in terms of environmental concerns. The authors imply that recycling is practiced in many Spanish speaking nations. Waste disposal is a major concern in Latin America because governments lack the financial strength to promote such programs. It is slowly changing in Latin America through the efforts of various groups. However, the groups are small and recycling has not become very popular.

A follow-up cultural paragraph shows another environmental concern. This cultural paragraph describes efforts in Costa Rica to preserve a cloud forest for future generations. In two paragraphs in three pages the authors present the idea of wide-spread environmental concern in Latin America and Spain. They have chosen two Spanish speaking nations with extremely high literacy rates. For example, Costa Rica's literacy rate hovers around 97 percent. The Costa Ricans are the exception, not the rule in Latin America. Costa Rica does not even maintain an army and has not done so since 1947. However, the authors attempt to promote conservation and environmental awareness through cultural information which is inaccurate when looking at the entire picture of Latin America. Spain and Costa Rica are nations whose people are concerned with the environment. They are also two of the most financially stable nations in the Spanish

speaking world.

The final cultural vignette to be discussed discusses the organization of Americorps. This information is similar to the vignette describing Rebecca Lobo. The only information the authors provide is how Americorps helps poorer people in urban areas of the United States. (p. 417) The authors do not even make an effort to tie the paragraph in with Latin culture. The only reference to Latin culture is the manner in which the authors introduce the topic by providing the words, “El trabajo voluntario” (volunteer work). Nothing else is mentioned concerning Latin America. It appears the authors are less concerned about Latin culture and more interested in what occurs in the United States. The paragraph would be better suited in a social studies textbook. It may be that in order to save money the publishers decided to include a paragraph about the United States.

Buen Viaje

Buen Viaje is the one textbook which has notable differences because the publisher has no ties to the other two textbooks. *Buen Viaje* treats the essay section somewhat differently than either *Paso a Paso* or *Realidades*. The major difference is that even from the beginning chapters, the cultural essays are in Spanish. This is both advantageous and disadvantageous to the first year Spanish student.

Linguistically the advantage is that the students are forced to read about cultural information in the target language from the beginning. By doing this, Schmidt and Woodford do not implicitly make the Spanish language subjugated to the English language. The importance of the target language is noticed by the first-year Spanish students. The disadvantage of using this method is that the essays utilize simple language

to express cultural ideas.

The first example of a cultural essay is found on page 32. The topic of the short essay concerns a Venezuelan student who attends the Simon Bolivar School. The only description of the school is the final sentence which describes the school as “good”. The school is indeed good because one can find its website on the Internet. It is a private school that has been in existence since 1972. It is a bilingual school and since it is private its enrollment is limited. This brief example shows the bias that the authors have in choosing a school that mirrors the type of schools attended by first year Spanish students.

The second essay in *Buen Viaje* which describes schooling in Spain discusses the daily school life of Julio Torres. Julio attends a school in Madrid and as the authors describe, he must wear a uniform to school. This uniform consists of black pants and a white shirt. Schmidt and Woodford continue to describe the dress of students saying that some schools require the students to wear coats and ties. Without explicitly stating it, the authors are again describing students who attend private schools. Unlike public school in the United States, public schools are where the children of the impoverished attend classes.

The tendency to choose the schools of the wealthy is seen in another more detailed cultural essay presented on page 122. The authors write state that the two students they are writing about attend a private academy and a private school. They also mention that some private schools are limited to the enrollment of either girls or boys. They also mention that the public schools are mixed schools. Private schools in Latin America bear a strong similarity to private schools here in the United States in that parents or guardians must pay for their children to attend. Unlike the United States where

private schools are somewhat affordable, Latin American private schools can be quite expensive when one considers the cost of living in Latin America and the average wages earned. In all three examples concerning schools in the cultural essays in *Buen Viaje* the authors have chosen to describe the private schools. The reason is that the private schools are much more like the public schools in the United States.

On page 64 Schmidt and Woodford, choose a curious essay for a cultural essay. They describe the city of San Antonio, Texas. This essay is found in chapter two. Instead of bringing information regarding the rich culture of Latin America the authors have decided to focus upon a city located in the United States. By choosing this topic the authors undo the strong presentation of the importance of the Spanish language that they have used in their cultural essays. While it is an interesting city with lots of activities and a rather large Latin population, choosing San Antonio as the focus of a cultural essay creates doubt in the mind of the critical educator.

In Chapter One of this study, it was noted how Texas and California are the largest states and have a great deal of influence on the selection of textbooks. Glencoe may be attempting to boost revenue by including examples of cities in Texas and California in the Spanish textbooks. Since an entire cultural essay is dedicated to the city of San Antonio so early in the textbook, it is possible that the interests of the corporation are superior to the cultural education of the students.

On page 94 the authors use a discussion of designer clothing to promote both the Spanish language and consumer capitalism. Clothing design is something that the very rich in the less industrialized nations are interested in, along with many middle class Americans. Again, the question arises as to why the authors choose such topics. The fact

that the designer, Oscar de la Renta is a Latin American in origin has little to do with Latin culture in general. The choice of a clothing designer is suspect as to why he is described. Latins excel in many professions from acting to artist. This choice really does nothing to enhance Latin culture for the students.

A fascinating cultural essay is presented on page 159. Within the essay a cultural dichotomy exists. The title of the essay is Market or Supermarket? In the essay the authors describe how people in Latin America shop at open air markets for groceries. This part is very accurate. However, Schmidt and Woodford then proceed to describe how there are numerous supermarkets in the larger cities and the outlying areas of major cities. It appears in this essay the authors are torn between promoting an accurate picture of Latin American grocery shopping and promoting the culture in the United States of shopping at grocery stores. The authors cannot be accused of inaccurately portraying the Latin American culture, however, they are bringing our culture into the picture as well. Compared to the other two textbooks, *Buen Viaje* does mention the markets and implies the wide spread use of them.

On pages 262 and 263, the authors use what is most likely a fictional account of a girl who is visiting the doctor because of an illness she has. The reason this essay is judged to be fictitious is for because in two distinct areas the authors ignore cultural realities in Spanish-speaking nations. First, the teenage girl goes to the doctor to be examined. While it is standard practice in the United States to follow this procedure, a different route may be taken in Latin America. In Latin America it is not necessary to go to a doctor in order to obtain a prescription. Instead one may go to the nearest pharmacy and simply purchase the medicine there.

Second, the girl is upset because she has to play soccer the next day. While it is not explicitly stated, the implication is that she plays for a soccer team. For the most part in Latin America girls do not play team soccer. This trend is changing so that in the future girls may play soccer, but currently few girl soccer teams exist. Proof of this can be found in the poor showing of women's World Cup soccer competition. In this particular case the authors are placing cultural values found in the United States onto the cultural mores found throughout Latin America.

Pages 264-265 contain information which represents the impression of the United States culture upon the Latin American cultural values. As we have seen from the textbook analysis, this trend occurs quite often. In this example, one can see the description of various nutritional facts written in Spanish. The issue with the information is how the authors use information which is popular now in the United States with a Spanish twist. Impoverished persons in Latin America are concerned with having food to eat not nutritional information. First year Spanish students live in a nation where there is an abundance of all types of food. In many parts of Latin America, people are forced to rely upon staples such as potatoes and rice in order to survive.

On page 265 the authors state, "It is necessary to control the consumption of lipids or fat because in many individuals this elevates cholesterol" (Schmidt and Woodford, p. 265). While this is important information about healthy eating, it does not reflect the economic situation in Latin America. Those individuals who would be concerned with such information have sufficient funds with which to buy any amount of food. Also, even the very rich in Latin America do not concern themselves with what nutritional value certain foods have. In the United States however, this is a preoccupation

that much of the population has.

A similar example is found on page 295. The topic of this essay is snowboarding. As has been mentioned previously, sports such as skiing and snowboarding are done by a relatively small percentage of the Latin American population. It is probable that the sport of snowboarding is seen more in Spain than other Spanish-speaking nations. Only four countries have the facilities to perform snowboarding. In addition, snowboarding is done primarily by young people in their teens and twenties. This fact further limits the percentage of participation by the population of Latin Americans and Spaniards. Snowboarding is popular in certain parts of the United States, but in the state of Georgia opportunities for this sport are extremely limited. The description of snowboarding has very little to do with Latin American and Spanish culture and much more to do with using the Spanish language to discuss sports done in the United States.

Another example is found on page 354. In this case the discussion of the cultural essay centers upon time and distance of flights. The essay is divided into two distinct sections. The first describes the distance and flying time from New York to Madrid. The description is of a teenage girl named Susana Rogers and how long it will take her to arrive in Madrid to begin her trip. In the second part of the essay, the authors describe a young man by the name of Jose Davila who is flying from Caracas in Venezuela to Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is almost as if the authors desire to create a juxtaposition of examples, both from the United States and Latin America. Susana has a Spanish given name yet her surname is of English origin. The young man mentioned appears to be of Latin origin, but the idea of both young people taking a trip by airplane indicates a certain amount of wealth. Each is taking a vacation which is something that most of the

population in Latin America would not normally do. The combining of cultures in such an implicit way retards the ability of the students to make accurate cultural distinctions.

Buen Viaje as a Spanish textbook has much more cultural information than does *Paso a Paso*. Its use of the target language is to be praised. The amount of cultural information competes with the new textbook, *Realidades*. In many ways though, *Buen Viaje* repeats what all the textbooks have done in all three divisions of cultural content. Without explaining discrepancies, the authors present only one perspective of cultural information. The cultural essays are available for student use, and it depends upon the teacher whether these essays will be used in class. However, one of the major problems occurring in *Buen Viaje* is the manner in which cultural information is contradictory, such as the example concerning the pharmacies.

Photographs and drawings

Paso a Paso

Of the three textbooks, *Paso a Paso* is the oldest and does not contain nearly the quantity of colorful photographs that *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje* have. Instead the authors primarily rely upon drawings to present vocabulary. Photographs are present at the beginning of each chapter and a few are scattered about through each chapter, but as a whole *Paso a Paso* does not compare favorably in terms of sheer numbers of photographs that dot the other two textbooks. However, one can learn much from drawings, and one can make cultural assumptions by viewing drawings.

One of the first photographs found in *Paso a Paso* is on page 6. It is a photograph of a dentist, telling where he is from. He is from Miami, Florida.. It is interesting that the authors would select this photograph with a caption from someone living in the United

States. It is early in the textbook and the authors are already talking about the United States. One of the next actual photographs appears on page 19 and shows a woman and man dressed in traditional garb found in Mexico. The woman is wearing a colorful dress, while the man is wearing a big, black sombrero. So, the authors have moved from Miami, Florida to traditional Mexican clothing. These are the first impressions with which Spanish I students are being bombarded. The second photograph relates to the quotation earlier in this study of how Americans have preconceived notions of Spanish culture.

On page 29 a picture of a movie theater appears. This movie theater is located in Mexico. A similar drawing also appears on the following page. On page 28 a very realistic photograph appears of a group enjoying sodas at a café. Cafes are one of the meeting places of young and old alike in Latin America and Spain. The picture of the movie theater is somewhat misleading because of the lack of popularity of movies in Latin America when compared to the United States. Therefore on succeeding pages the authors choose a photograph that is culturally relevant and one which is not. Movie theaters exist in Latin America, but the interest is not the same as it is in the United States.

Two of the illustrations on page 30 are suspect in terms of cultural relevancy. The drawing of the young lady rollerblading is an example of Americanizing the Latin culture as well as the illustration of the young man using a vacuum cleaner. Rollerblading is practically unheard of in many Latin American nations. The roads are not conducive to rollerblading. While there are parks available, the popularity of rollerblading is not the same as it is in the United States. The difficulty with showing someone with a vacuum cleaner is that most Latin American and Spanish homes are not made with carpet, so the

necessity for a vacuum cleaner is negligible at best. Another aspect is the use of “empleadas” or maids. A person who would use a vacuum cleaner in his or her house would more likely have a maid to scrub and mop the floors.

On page 41 a young man appears playing a guitar along with a friend. Both young men are well-dressed with dress shirts and ties. It is somewhat stereotypical for the authors to use a picture of a young man with an acoustic guitar. Many associate those types of guitars with Latin Americans. The second issue with the photograph is the dress of the young men. By their appearance these young men are of the higher socioeconomic class. Poverty-stricken persons in Latin America could not afford a guitar along with such nice clothes.

An accurate picture of conditions in Latin America appears on page 56. This is a shot of two soccer teams playing a heated match. Several aspects reveal that this picture is accurate. Among the players no women are present. Soccer among organized teams in Latin America is for the most part strictly for men. Second, the soccer field appears to be located in a municipal park with several interested onlookers. Finally, even though the teams are in uniform, the soccer field itself is of poor quality. The field is composed of dirt rather than grass fields we are accustomed to seeing in the larger stadiums.

The following page, 57, reverts back to the demonstrated class bias that all three textbooks maintain. The photograph is of several girls in uniform. These girls are attending school and are in their teens. It is interesting to note the pattern that is beginning to emerge in *Paso a Paso*. Unlike the other two textbooks, *Paso a Paso* seems to have some rather accurate photographs demonstrating the cultural aspects of Latin America and Spain. However, the authors appear not to be able to make up their minds

from which angle they want to show Latin America and Spain.

On page 69 a large picture of high school girls in uniforms. A uniform in Latin American nations generally indicates that the family has some wealth. The poorest students attend public schools where rarely uniforms are worn. The fact that the publishers have chosen this particular photograph shows some bias in the socioeconomic status of those in the photographs. Uniforms are worn by students who attend private schools. Private schools are numerous throughout Latin America, but the students who attend these schools are considered middle to upper class.

In the first part of the textbook, two pictures of swimming pools appear. The first is on page 77. This photograph shows two people playing the sport of water polo. Like in other instances, no caption compliments the photo. Water polo is not an every day sport in the United States nor in Latin America. The average person knows little about the sport, so it is safe to assume that only a select few play the sport. Since it requires the availability of a swimming pool, few would be able to afford to participate in the sport.

The second photograph is of a nicely appointed swimming pool where some individuals are swimming and others are sunbathing. The location of the pool seems to be overlooking Taxco, Mexico. From the photograph, the pool appears to be privately owned or could possibly be an athletic club where only invited members are able to attend. The problem with this kind of photograph is that students might tend to think that opportunities for swimming are available to everyone as it is here in the United States. The students would not be able to distinguish between American and Latin culture in this instance.

On page 89 a picture is shown of a roller coaster. As has been noted earlier,

comparatively few roller coasters are present in Latin America when one looks the number to that of the United States. On the following pages (90-91) several drawings are shown in conjunction with the vocabulary. The drawings that more accurately represent cultural tendencies in the United States are those of a car driving through the countryside, an amusement park, a person relaxing on a beach, a shopping mall, a swimming pool, and a gymnasium. The fact that the authors choose to use an illustration of a car in the countryside is much more of an American tradition. A lower income family may or may not have a car. Trips to the countryside would be rare.

The use of a shopping mall goes along quite well with the Americanization hypothesis. The authors choose an image that is taken directly from an American concept of shopping. We see a similar drawing on page 94 with two women going shopping. The fact that the authors blatantly use such themes reinforces the idea that consumer capitalism is alive and well in the United States and Latin America. A more accurate portrait would be one where Latins were shopping in an open-air market.

On page 109 a photo appears which is culturally relevant. The picture is of a baseball game occurring in the Dominican Republic. Several major league baseball players have come from the Dominican Republic and the sport is quite popular in several places in the Caribbean. Baseball is one example of a connection between cultures which developed over a great number of years

On page 120, a photograph appears which shows the great influence of American culture upon the entire world. It is a photograph of a fast food restaurant located in Mexico City, Mexico. Most likely the authors chose this particular shot because of the similarities between this fast food restaurant and the myriads of clones in the United

States. While Latin America does have its share of fast food restaurants either being actual franchises of the restaurants in the United States or Latin American versions of similar restaurants, the popularity of fast food restaurants is not the same in Latin America. It has been stated that a foreign city must have approximately one million inhabitants in order to obtain a McDonald's franchise. Therefore, fast food restaurants are only constructed in the larger metropolitan areas of Latin America. However, when one looks at the photograph it would be easy to imagine that fast food restaurants are on every corner much like they are here in the United States.

On the following pages, page 122 and 123 the authors introduce vocabulary with drawings. Breakfast items are toast, cereal, eggs and ham. It is interesting to note that a photograph appears on page 120 of a teenage girl eating a typical breakfast of hard rolls and coffee. That picture is an accurate portrayal of Latin American and Spanish breakfasts. However, the vocabulary for breakfast items shows a different culture entirely. Other drawings on page 122 include a hamburger, French fries, ham and cheese sandwich for lunch. On page 123 the amount of food shown for the supper vocabulary is enormous. Three types of soup are shown, along with fish, chicken, and beef. Of the items portrayed in the drawings only four really reflect an accurate cultural view. Those four are rice (which is eaten throughout Latin America as a staple), chicken (which is an inexpensive meat), hard rolls, and soup (often served as an appetizer, especially for lunch). The rest of the items are much more like what we are accustomed to eating here in the United States.

A curious photograph of Carl Herrera who at one time played for the Houston Rockets professional basketball team is shown on page 138. The intention of the

photograph is most likely to show students that there are some professional athletes who are of Latino origin. The difficulty arises when one analyzes what the photo is implying. An underlying implication is that one has to work or play professional sports in the United States in order to be successful. Or that the United States is the only place for opportunity. It also incites a feeling of renewed scorn against a consumer capitalist nation. Finally, perhaps as in other instances, the publishers while looking for cultural photographs chose the least expensive and least culturally relevant photos to show the students.

On page 182 to introduce the chapter on shopping, a large photograph is shown of the Galerías Pacíficas, a shopping mall located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. A similar photograph appears in the other two textbooks as well of the same mall. It makes one wonder how important this mall is. Another shot taken of the same mall is located on page 214 as well. Buenos Aires is a modern city, and if malls are as popular in Latin America as they are in the United States, it would seem reasonable to expect that the same mall would not be shown in three different textbooks. Perhaps the costs of producing the textbooks are kept to a minimum if the same mall is used in three different textbooks.

Latin American malls are also shown on pages 194 and 199. Each of these malls could be located within the United States. By showing these malls the publishers and authors are doing a great disservice to the students being exposed to the Latin and Spanish culture. Instead of variations of shopping practices, they have decided to reinforce the commercialism on which the United States economy is based. The photographs are strikingly similar to those found in the United States. The photographs

show clean, orderly places in which to shop. No distinction is given to the prices of malls, and how the poorer members of Latin American society would never visit such establishments. The malls shown on these two pages are located in Mexico City, Zaragoza, Spain, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Two of the malls are located in large capital cities. One noted difference in the malls is seen in the photograph of the mall in Zaragoza. Malls in Latin America are housed in smaller buildings and have several floors unlike the spreading nature of U.S. malls. From the photograph, it is clear that the mall has at least three floors which is uncommon in the United States.

Two interesting photographs showing the sport of skiing appear on pages 189 and 231. The former is a shot taken in Spain, while the other is a picture taken at a ski resort in Chile. The shot taken in Chile is present in the *Realidades* textbook as well. It is fascinating how the publishers and authors want to include skiing in the Spanish I textbooks. It is worth noting that the vast majority of Latin America is located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Except for the higher elevations (which is dominated primarily by the rugged Andes Mountains where skiing for the most part cannot be done) most of the land never sees any snow. Those who are able to go to the few places where there are ski slopes need a great deal of money to do so.

On pages 252 and 253 the authors introduce the terms for housing and furniture and appliances to the students. On these pages are illustrations of a lawn mower, a vacuum cleaner, and washer and dryer. None of these three common household appliances or tools is common to Latin America. However, they are quite common in the United States. Proof of this statement can be found on page 261 where a man is photographed using an old-fashioned non-motorized lawn mower in Mexico City. If lawn

mowers were as prevalent in Latin America, it would be easy to find photographs of such tools. Manual labor is done primarily by the servants of the wealthiest members of society. While appliances of this nature would be appreciated by those who perform the chores, the owners of large houses and estates do not normally purchase appliances commonly found in the United States.

On the same pages as the appliances the authors choose to show drawings very large houses which would only be owned by members of the highest socioeconomic class in Latin America. The illustrations in the second section of vocabulary in this chapter show luxury items such as stereo equipment, fine furniture, a spacious kitchen, and living room. Again the authors are showing the living conditions of the tiny minority in Latin America who own the industries and banks. The authors miss the opportunity to show how the majority of people in Latin America live. People living in the United States have the opportunity to buy luxury items at lower prices. The wages in the United States are much higher also. Unfortunately, it is the students who do not get the chance to see the other side of Latin America.

On pages 278 and 279 other examples are shown of this trend. Three photographs show rather large houses. Two of the houses are located in Los Angeles, California (perhaps the publishing company is in close proximity). The fact that the publishers choose to show houses in Los Angeles, California shows a deep lack of respect for the rich Latin culture. All of the houses on these two pages represent the exception rather than the norm. It is well-known that housing prices in California are exorbitant. Along with this knowledge is the problem that the publishers choose to show houses in the United States instead of actual Latin American nations.

One can see the trend continue in the latter part of the textbook. On page 328 and 329 a photograph encompassing both pages shows a store selling products from Latin America. The impasse that the publishers and authors reach is the denial of cultural actualization of the subject of which their textbook is presenting. One of the regional offices is located in New Jersey. It would be a simple matter for a photographer to drive into a neighborhood in the same state and take what the publisher would consider a cultural photograph.

Another set of examples can be found in the latter part of *Paso a Paso*. On page 339, the authors show photographs of three different locations in Santa Fe, New Mexico. All three of the photographs are colorful and interesting. However, by showing a location in the United States, the authors are overtly subverting cultural knowledge of Latin America and Spain. Other photos introducing Chapter 12 show restaurants in Albuquerque, New Mexico and San Diego, California. The number of photographs showing locations within the United States is fascinating. The cost of textbook production is perhaps an issue when so many photographs are taken here in the United States.

On the one hand it is important that the authors show how influential the Latin culture is here in the United States. Unfortunately, to be culturally accurate, the publishers of *Paso a Paso* decided to show specific examples of what they considered Latin culture from an American perspective. By showing a great number of photographs taken here in the U.S., the publishers are reducing the perspective of the students. *Paso a Paso* has been used for many years in high schools across Georgia. Today the brightly colored textbook *Realidades* has replaced *Paso a Paso* as a leading Spanish textbook.

Realidades

Since *Realidades* is published by essentially the same company that created *Paso a Paso*, it is likely that similarities will exist between the two books. *Realidades* has many more photographs as compared to its predecessor. The authors of *Realidades* do provide the readers a balance between photographs and drawings, much more so than do the authors of *Buen Viaje*. Also, many similarities exist in both the vocabulary used and the photographs and illustrations used to reinforce that vocabulary.

The book shows three pictures on page one; a group of young people at a park, school girls outside of their high school, and finally three girls chatting outside as well. Each of these photographs shows various young people, but each has one strong common characteristic: all of the young people are well-dressed which indicates that they are from the upper-middle to upper class in terms of socioeconomic status. Students who wear uniforms are likely to attend private high schools. The majority of students who are placed in the lower socioeconomic range do not wear nice clothes. Unlike U.S. students whose clothing does not necessarily demonstrate what their socioeconomic status is, impoverished Latin American students do not have the luxury of nice clothing.

Later on pages 48-49 again the authors have a large photograph of young people in school uniforms. These individuals are members of the middle to upper class of Latin American nations. An interesting corollary is that two of the girls in the photograph are wearing braces. Poverty-stricken individuals from around the world do not wear braces to correct crooked teeth. These young people are from wealthy families if they are even from Latin America. Many individuals of this socioeconomic class have traveled overseas to the United States. Some of their parents may own large estancias (ranches).

On page 25 the authors show a picture of the rock star Carlos Santana presumably in an effort to show the influence of Latinos on popular culture here in the United States. It is certainly true that Carlos Santana has had a profound influence upon rock music in the U.S. However, today many other rock and pop stars are on the scene. Also, Carlos Santana has been playing music since the late sixties. He did not appear recently, so his influence has developed over a long period of time here in the United States.

Drawings on pages 26-27 indicate the important words that the students are to learn in the first chapter. Drawings of swimming, running, and skiing show sports that are likely to be done by the upper class in Latin America. Other drawings on these pages include skateboarding an activity primarily done in the United States. Two other drawings show someone using a computer and playing video games. These activities are not done by the majority of the population in Latin America.

The photograph on page 59 of the female skier is a smaller version of a large photograph which appears in *Paso a Paso*. The fact that the same picture is used in two different textbooks indicates either poor cultural photographs for the textbook *Realidades*, or that skiing is not nearly as popular in Latin America with the vast majority of people. If skiing is truly representative of a sport performed by large numbers of individuals, then it stands to reason that many more photographs of various individuals would be available.

The theme of skiing reappears once more on page 180. In this photograph more skiers appear, although not a large number that the authors indicate are involved in skiing throughout Latin America. Skiing is primarily a wealthy person's sport or at least a person that is fairly well-off financially. In Latin America this is even more so.

On page 125 of *Realidades* the authors like in *Paso a Paso* show a picture of a teenage girl sitting in a wheelchair. As we have seen in other circumstances, the inclusion of handicapped individuals is noble, however, quite unrealistic in general, in Latin America. One of the things the authors fail to do is bring the context of the photograph into focus. No caption exists for the photograph; rather the young girl is seated with a large smile on her face. The photograph is in the textbook with no explanation.

Further along in the textbook is a similar photograph found on page 413. In this photograph there are two individuals in wheelchairs. The caption is enlightening as it describes a group located in Colorado Springs, Colorado as being involved in a project. The photograph is taken in Mexico, but as the caption describes, the handicapped group is helped in part by an organization located in the United States. By showing this information along with the photograph, the realities of handicapped life in Latin America can be understood implicitly.

A problem that was seen in *Paso a Paso* was how the authors would go back and forth between chapters that had culturally relevant material, and later they would use material that had no real relation to Latin culture. In the chapter on foods one can see this trend in *Realidades* as well. On page 148 the authors show a food pyramid describing the healthy consumption of foods. While the trend of watching one's weight and amount of fat intake is popular here in the United States, people in Latin America do not have the same feelings toward health consciousness.

First, people who can afford to eat the right foods are not overly concerned because the cultural mores do not adhere to the idea of healthful lifestyles. It is rather, an American concept not Latin American in origin. Second, the majority who are

impoverished are happy to actually have food on the table. These individuals are much more concerned with where the next meal is coming from than the healthful aspects of the forthcoming meal. Finally, the food pyramid itself comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and has nothing to do with Latin American or Spanish culture. It is purely an invention of the United States government. It is revealing that the authors would choose this type of information directly from the U.S. government in a Spanish I textbook named "Realities".

On page 233 a photograph appears which is quite unusual for a Spanish I textbook. It is a photograph of a firefighter and his son with a background of an American flag. It is a patriotic scene, but the context is difficult to understand. The intent of the authors may be to reinforce the idea that Latins reside in the United States. A more subtle idea that the picture brings out is an idea of the United States extending its power. This idea is that we can all be accepted as citizens of the world if we adopt the ideals of the United States. This picture transposes the patriotic image of living in the United States upon cultural heritage of Latin America and Spain. Even students may find this photograph a bit unnerving because of the patriotic association brought about by the picture.

On page 248-249 several interesting photographs dot these two introductory pages of vocabulary. The vocabulary theme is two-fold. The intention is to show descriptive adjectives such as hair color, and in a completely unrelated topic, introduce items used for eating such as silverware. These two pages contain two photographs and several drawings. The two photographs show well-people. One family is dressed in coats and ties. The drawings also have characterizations of well-dressed individuals and the waiter

is dressed in fancy clothes. The authors choose these photographs and drawings to illustrate the manner in which Latinos live. The wealthiest of Latin American society does wear fine clothes on occasion. However, it also depends heavily upon geography as well. Dark suits are rarely worn in the Caribbean and along the Atlantic coast because of extreme seasonal heat. The individuals in the photographs are of African origin, and since the vast majority of African-Latinos live in the Caribbean or along the Atlantic coast, it is safe to make this observation. Again as in other photographs, no accompanying caption is present.

Pages 253 and 254 also present photographs of Latin American restaurants in Colombia and Argentina respectively. Again like the other photos in this book and the other two textbooks, they show restaurants where the waiters are dressed in fancy shirts and ties. The students have no indication that other less formal restaurants exist and the impoverished majority could never go out to a restaurant like the ones shown. Other less elegant restaurants do exist in Latin America and are numerous. The general public can and do go to these restaurants. Unfortunately, the authors of *Realidades* do not seem inclined to show these restaurants.

The drawing on page 272 shows a typical teenager's room complete with guitar, computer, and furniture. Much has already been mentioned regarding the opportunity for the lower class to have access to computers. The drawing of an acoustic guitar is somewhat stereotypical of Latin Americans or at least the image people living here in the United States might have. Another problem which arises is the implicit notion that teenagers have their own rooms. It is an American idea that children would have their own rooms. In Latin America among the poorer majority, rooms are more often than not

shared by siblings and sometimes by entire families.

On the opposite page 273, the authors include photographs of stereo equipment in order to present vocabulary words. Colors are presented with compact discs of various hues. The intentional showing of such entertainment equipment aids in the misleading cultural representations. Stereo equipment is available in Latin America and so are compact discs, but these are considered luxury items and not necessary for living. Those families who cannot afford such sound systems do not have them. One of the cultural features of Latin America is that music is often played at high volume levels throughout towns and cities. Therefore music is heard frequently. Individual stereo equipment is unnecessary to achieve the cultural ideas of music being a part of life.

On page 296-297 the authors use a picture of what anyone would consider to be a nice house for their introduction to housing. The title is “Como es tu casa?”(What is your house like?). The architecture of the house is complicated and detailed. It is surrounded by a large gate which in Latin America is a sign of wealth. Plants are growing around the house to add to its decor. The house chosen for the photograph obviously belongs to a person of means living in Latin America.

The authors continue to push the agenda of wealth on page 298. The drawing which is designed to show the students various parts of a house is a house of three stories. Like the other books a separate garage is shown to provide a place for the car. The drawing of the house consists of bathrooms, kitchen, living room, a separate dining room, an office and several bedrooms. Owners of such houses in Latin America would most certainly be wealthy even in terms of U.S. economic thinking. An owner of this particular drawn house would be worth at least a million dollars. Most people in Latin America

could never dream of living in a home such as the one depicted.

On page 314 the students see two photographs of living quarters. One is a shot of an indoor patio. While it may appear rather antiquated from the picture, only homes valued at a great deal of money contain inside patios. The second photograph is of a two-story white stucco house. Like a previous photograph, this house also has a wall which prevents entrance by unwanted people. From the appearance of this photograph the authors have chosen to go down in socioeconomic class. However, the difficulty arises when one sees that all the houses pictured in *Realidades* are either an upper-middle class dwelling or the house of wealthy individuals.

Chapter 7 B in *Realidades* is entitled Que Regalo! (What a gift) and begins on pages 344-345. The photograph shows a mall presumably in Latin America. One of the most interesting aspects of the photograph is how the authors suggest that students be asked to tell whether it is located in the United States or a Spanish-speaking nation. By using a caption like this, the authors are almost revealing their feelings toward Latin American culture in this particular case. Additionally, the fact that a picture of a mall is the centerpiece for the introduction of shopping demonstrates the ideas the authors have regarding culture.

On page 347 illustrations appear which reinforce the notion of class structure in Latin America. Part of the drawings show expensive jewelry and watches. An impoverished person would not be able to afford these luxury items. While inexpensive jewelry is available in the United States and people here in the U.S. wear expensive jewelry, that tradition is different in Latin America. Relatively few individuals possess jewelry, and those that do tend not to wear it except for very special occasions. From

looking at the drawings the authors provide, the tendency to use cultural values from the United States is rather apparent.

To conclude this chapter on shopping, the authors use four photographs in a cultural essay. Every single photograph is of a shop located in one of four U.S. cities; Los Angeles, New York, San Antonio, Texas, and Miami. People do shop in Latin America and Spain so the question arises as to why the authors have chosen the locales in the United States as examples of photographs in a cultural essay in a Spanish I textbook. Certainly, open-air markets, specialty shops, and other places exist in Latin America or Spain. It seems to take away from the cultural features of Latin America and Spain to have many examples of Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in the United States to be the focus of a Spanish I textbook.

Pages 374 and 375 have illustrations of vocabulary words which maintain the idea of upper class superiority. On page 374 two pictures are clearly designed to show upper class leisure activities. The first drawing is one of an amusement park. The second drawing is one of a theater where plays are performed. In both drawings one would have to have a fair amount of money to go to such places. On page 375 there are drawings of a plane, ship, train, and bus. Of these four methods of transportation only a train and bus would be used by a large number of people in Latin America.

On page 415 an interesting photograph appears. It is a shot of the Cayman Islands. Several islands in the Caribbean have strong cultural ties to Latin America and are certainly counted as a part of Latin America. The Cayman Islands may have individuals who speak Spanish residing there. However, the Cayman Islands are certainly not considered part of Latin America. One wonders if the publishers were lacking financial

support to take pictures of a more authentic Latin American nation.

Since the title of *Realidades* in English signifies “realities”, one might believe that the photographs would tend to reflect an attitude of reality. However, like the other textbooks in this study, the authors seem to focus more upon the commonalities between students living in the United States and those who tend to share the same lifestyle in Latin America. Overall, the photographs can cause a misinterpretation by the students because of the Americanization of the photographs.

Buen Viaje

Like the textbook *Realidades* in this study, *Buen Viaje* has a cornucopia of colorful photographs which will bring out the curiosity in the first year Spanish student. The photographs are vivid and clear and show various aspects of life in both Latin America and Spain. Another positive aspect of the pictures is that they appear on virtually every page. However, as the chosen photographs will show, there is an unmistakable trend to show the very best of Latin and Spanish life. The photographs selected by the authors show a way of life which is eerily similar to our own and reinforces the notion of American cultural dominance throughout Latin America and into Spain as well.

On page 1 which begins the *Bienvenidos* or introductory section, the authors use an elegant entranceway to what one supposes is a house. In the photograph there are four dark complexioned young people greeting one another in the entranceway. What is notable about the photograph is how well-designed it is, and how it is similar to houses in well to do neighborhoods in the United States. It also appears that the young people are bringing gifts which would certainly be typical of Latin American customs. The other

feature of the photograph is the dress of the young people. Each person is dressed very well which indicates that the youths are of the upper class. The caption indicates that the photograph is taken in Cadiz, Spain.

Another example of the choice of photographs is a variety found on several pages throughout the first section of the book. On page 9, 21, 23, 25, 27, and 41. Each of these pages shows a picture where skyscrapers are seen. Throughout Latin America and Spain large cities are located in convenient geographic centers. Many of these cities are known as primate cities where poor people come from rural areas in order to find work which is unavailable in the countryside. The photographs selected are famous sights in various large cities in tourist areas. The photographs can be found on post cards and are quite agreeable to the eyes. Obviously, it is desirable to show this aspect of cities in Latin America and Spain, but unfortunately no balance exists in showing the other side of Latin America which is filled with poverty and despair. These photographs are from many different places throughout Latin America and Spain. One is from Mexico City at night. Another two are daytime shots of a famous avenue in Buenos Aires, Argentina and the other is of Santiago, Chile. A comparison in the United States would be showing a picture of Hollywood or Malibu without showing Watts or South Central Los Angeles.

On page 23 there is another picture of Guanajato, Mexico. It is an authentic picture of a street in Mexico. The picture shows the side of a building, possibly a residence. The problem with the photograph is that it is what the students would expect to see in a Latin American city. The authors do two things with the photographs they choose to use in their textbook. First, photographs are chosen to show the very best of Latin American and Spanish life. Most of the photographs reinforce an Americanized point of

view. Those photographs do not typically show the more stereotypical aspects of the culture of Latin America and Spain.

There is an old story about the executives of the Coca-Cola company having so much daily exposure here in the United States that a person can, on average, see something that has to do with Coca-Cola three times every single day. This includes commercials, beverage trucks, drink machines, and signs. On page 36 there is a photograph of young people drinking beverages while sitting at a table. One of the most interesting aspects of this photo is the two cans on the table. While it is impossible to see the brand name of the cola, they certainly resemble the favorite beverage of the American people. While the picture does take place in Puerto Rico, which is a colonial appendage of the United States, it still remains a part of Latin America. While Coca-cola is prevalent in Latin America and Spain, other beverages are popular as well. Coffee is the national beverage of most Latin American nations. Children are encouraged to drink coffee and other locally made drinks are available as well. While familiarity with products may help students find some common ground with images of Latin America or Spain, not giving the students opportunities to see other cultural aspects of Spanish speaking nations.

On pages 44, 45, and 90 there are pictures of high school students. The most notable aspect of these pictures is that each of the students is wearing a uniform. U. S. students might infer from these photographs that all students wear uniforms. Unfortunately, throughout Latin America this is not the case. In public schools, students are not often required to wear uniforms. Uniforms are most commonly worn by students attending private schools. Private schools range in price from what people in the United States would consider very reasonable to tuition which would be thought of as expensive

here in the United States. The fact that the authors select pictures to reflect the higher socioeconomic class reinforces the ideas discussed earlier. Showing students in uniforms does nothing to bring about better cultural understanding of Latin America and Spain.

On page 49 an interesting photograph is presented. It is a picture of a group of students posing with the Golden Gate Bridge in the background. It is notable that the authors chose this particular photograph considering how early it is placed within the textbook. The textbook is well over 500 pages long and to have a picture of students in San Francisco is curious. First, using pictures from the United States perhaps should be the last alternative for photographs. After all, the Spanish-speaking nations of the world number approximately 21 if one includes the United States. In terms of importance other true Spanish speaking nations should take precedence. Another point of the picture is the authors' choice of San Francisco. One of the most famous ethnic landmarks in the city by the bay is Chinatown which has nothing at all to do with Hispanic culture. California is an area in the United States where a large Latin population is located, but San Francisco is not one of the primary areas in the state. It is possible that the authors chose the photograph to give a state heavily influential in the textbook adoption process publicity. Too many other places exist for the authors to justify this particular photograph.

On page 71 there is a juxtaposition of symbols. A man is riding a horse wearing a sombrero (typical head fashion of Mexico) carrying an American flag. This is one of the few photographs in the book without a caption. It does go along with an exercise where students are encouraged to find out about Mexican-Americans and Cuban-Americans. It is an odd combination of Mexican symbolism and American symbolism placed together

to provide a cultural reference.

The next photograph worth noting is a photograph of a mall located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The name of the mall is Galerías Pacificas (Pacific Galleries) and it is a spectacular-looking mall. As has been noted earlier in this chapter, the Buenos Aires mall is present in all three textbooks. It appears from the photograph that it is a modern complex designed in a manner that makes it appear ornate and antiquated. Students looking at the photograph might envision a commonality with various suburban malls with which they are familiar. Although the structure of the study is to examine photographs in the order of each textbook, it is quite notable that a photograph appears in all three textbooks that are being examined.

Why would the same photograph be present in three different textbooks? Since ScottForesman was acquired by Prentiss-Hall it is rational to think that similar photographs might be used in both *Realidades* and *Paso a Paso*. However, the fact that all three textbooks contain a photograph of the same mall located in Argentina is somewhat suspect. For example, one would expect to find multiple textbooks having pictures of well-known landmarks such as Macchu Picchu in Peru or Angel Falls in Venezuela. Students need to be exposed to cultural locations in Latin America and Spain. However, the choice of using a mall in Argentina in three different textbooks is extremely important and curious, in light of other photographic possibilities.

First, the choice of using a mall in Argentina implicitly demonstrates something unique about malls in Latin America. By using the same place for something as generic as a mall, one could ascertain that there are not that many malls in Latin America as compared to the United States. For example, the city of Savannah is not very large

compared to other metropolitan areas. Yet it has two separate malls. Buenos Aires has a much larger population, however in three textbooks written by different individuals chose to include a picture of the same mall. The Galerías Pacificas may be well-known in Buenos Aires, but little is known about it outside of Argentina. The lack of a number of various malls in a city as large as Buenos Aires indicates that malls do not have the same cultural value in Latin America compared to the United States.

Second, the use of the photograph of one mall indicates that the mall in Argentina is one of few compared to the myriad of malls located throughout the United States. What is much more common in Latin America is to purchase clothes in an open-air market or specialty shops located in the city's center. As noted in other places in this dissertation, the idea of traveling in a car to do shopping is not a concept that most Latin Americans are familiar. Instead, it is much more common for inhabitants to travel by bus, taxi, or micro (small vans that travel on specific routes) to the shopping areas and make purchases. The poorer the person is, the more likely he or she is to purchase clothes or other items in an open-air market.

Finally, in this photograph one can see few people shopping. It may merely be a circumstance of choosing an ideal time for photographing the mall. However, one could look at the absence of people from another perspective. If it is true that there are relatively few malls in Latin America, one could surmise that they are not nearly as popular as malls in the United States. In terms of open-air markets, they are generally always crowded, except early in the mornings when the markets are not open. It is quite common to see a great number of people haggling in markets at all hours of the day and even into the night. In the United States malls represent places where many people go

shopping. It is not the same in Latin America. Other places take precedence.

A much more accurate picture of shopping trends in Latin America and Spain is found on page 101 and the caption discusses specialty shops as a place to go in order to discover bargains. Specialty shops are much more common in Latin America and Spain compared to shopping malls or retail outlets. Students looking at pictures would most likely interpret Argentina to be more similar to the United States in terms of shopping as compared to Spain. When in truth, the opposite is true. Spain and Argentina along with the rest of Latin America have common trends in shopping at either specialty stores or open-air markets.

The next photograph concerns the use of computers. Computers, of course, are used throughout the world. The photograph is located on page 94 with an additional photograph on page 95. However, here in the United States, computers are used almost all the time. Many people have at least one computer. The situation is different in Latin America with a great number of poor people. Persons of the middle class and higher in the United States and even many in the lower socioeconomic classes own or have access to a computer. The situation in Latin America is completely different. A person who owns a computer is most likely of the highest economic class because computers are expensive in those nations and only the very wealthy can afford computers. What is much more common in Latin America is the plethora of Internet Cafes where an individual may use a computer for a few cents an hour. It is desirable for students in the United States to learn computer terminology to improve their Spanish fluency, but in terms of cultural relevancy, the idea of a computer literate world in Latin America is largely unheard of except among a select group of people.

A set of drawings to teach the Spanish students about food and drink appears on page 143. The drawings show an interesting combination of items. Lemonade, colas, hot and iced tea is shown along with sandwiches, a hamburger, French fries, cheese, salad, and tortilla. Virtually all of the food and drinks are based upon an American concept of popularity. Obviously, teenagers in the United States consume these products, but they are not consumed to the same degree in Latin America and Spain. The only Spanish representative of food is the ubiquitous tortilla. By using these drawings the authors present a much stronger American point of view compared to Latin American perspective. A similar theme is discovered when examining *Buen Viaje* for its choice of vocabulary.

On page 174 the authors present a set of drawings to introduce the students to terminology associated with houses and parts of houses, such as bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, and garage. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, some of the information as it relates to vocabulary will overlap because this study examines the presentation of vocabulary in a separate part. As noted before, the pictures and drawings show only one side of the socioeconomic class in Latin America and Spain. The choice of house used for the drawing could certainly be found in the finer neighborhoods in the larger cities of Latin America and Spain, however, the difficulty arises when one meditates upon the fact that only one side is represented. The house in the drawing appears to have many rooms and contains a completely separate garage.

One of the features that is entirely accurate is the large wall surrounding the house and garage. Most expensive houses have fortress-like walls built around them. The house in *Buen Viaje* also has two small balconies. The house represented would be considered

expensive even in the United States. The drawing also contains a small garden adjoining the security wall.

If one examines the picture on page 176 showing a family spending time together in front of the television, it would be difficult to discover major cultural differences between Latin America and the United States. The only way in which one could tell it is not a picture taken in the United States is that the book's caption reads "Madrid, España". The living room may appear to be somewhat more crowded than some of our more spacious houses. However, for many students who live in smaller houses here in the United States, the living room in Madrid would be almost identical to their own.

On page 185 the authors show another house located in Cotacachi, Ecuador. From the photograph, the house seems to have ample space. It is somewhat smaller than the one depicted in the drawing to introduce vocabulary. Nevertheless, the house obviously does not belong to a poor person with its unique design with columns at the entranceway. Most likely, this house belongs to a middle to upper-middle class family. Cotacachi is not a major city in Ecuador.

Another photograph that is found in the chapter on housing is one of a family enjoying time together, presumably watching television and reading. The difficulty with this photograph is the presence of a young lady in a wheelchair. A picture of a person in a wheelchair appears in virtually all of the current textbooks. The underlying purpose is probably noble. The authors are attempting to present handicapped persons as a part of normal society. Again returning to the theme of cultural awareness, first-year Spanish students perhaps would mistakenly believe that handicapped persons are treated almost as equals in Latin American society. The truth is that handicapped persons are treated much

better in the United States as compared to nations in Latin America. The only possible exception in this trend is that the higher income families would have a greater ability to take care of handicapped family members. Many poorer handicapped persons are forced to beg for money in order to survive. This situation is not presented accurately for first-year Spanish students.

On page 202 the authors present the readers with a drawing of a co-ed soccer team. This drawing has nothing to do with socioeconomic class, but rather presents to the students misleading cultural information. Since it is a drawing, it represents the imagination of the authors. While boys and girls in Latin America may play informally together, the idea of having a co-ed soccer team made up of teenagers borders upon the ridiculous. Even in the United States, girls and boys play in different leagues once they reach a certain age. What the authors do, by using this drawing, is create a piece of cultural information about Latin America and Spain that is blatantly false.

The authors do include a picture of the Chilean national team that competed in a World Cup competition. From the photograph, one can see that the national team is made up exclusively of men. Today various countries around the world have women=s national soccer teams. It is surprising that the authors do not include photos of women=s national teams representing nations in Latin America or Spain. However, the process is time-consuming, and it will be many years before parity exists between women=s and men=s soccer teams.

A picture is shown on page 207 of a girl shooting a basketball along with a young man catching a baseball. The authors also include a picture of a girls' basketball team playing on page 208. The authors use this particular photograph to show girls

participating in a sport that is gaining popularity in Latin America as well as Europe. It is questionable why the authors should choose the location of Puerto Rico to show equity in sports. Of all the Latin American nations Puerto Rico is probably the most-heavily influenced by United States policies. Puerto Rico maintains commonwealth status with the United States, so it is considered an extension of the United States in many ways. For example, when one travels to Puerto Rico it is considered a domestic flight. No travel documents such as passports are needed for U.S. citizens to travel there.

On pages 210 and 211 are photographs of young men playing soccer in Lima, Peru and Buenos Aires, Argentina respectively. These pictures show more accurately what the current situation is in terms of gender equity in Latin America with regards to playing soccer. The photographs are of boys playing what is considered the national sport by most nations around the world. These pictures are commonplace throughout Latin America and Spain. The pictures describe the current cultural emphasis on men's sports throughout Latin America and Spain. By inserting drawings of co-ed or all girls' soccer teams, the authors or the publishers are placing their own cultural bias upon first-year Spanish students.

On pages 278 and 280 the authors use pictures of ski lodges in Latin America. The picture on page 278 lacks an accompanying caption to let the readers know where it is located. The second photograph on page 280 is a ski lodge in Chile. Spain is noted for its excellent skiing facilities. Chile and Argentina are also known for their ski slopes. Skiing is a popular sport in some places of the United States. Californians can go to the beach and the mountains to ski quite easily. It is the same in Spain as well. Except for the areas previously mentioned, Latin America is not generally known for its skiing. The

authors choose these photographs and drawings to go along with chapter 9's theme of Summer and Winter. For this theme, it was far easier for the authors to encounter beaches in Latin America than it was for them to find ski slopes.

On pages 306 and 307 the authors use a picture and a drawing to reinforce vocabulary from the chapter entitled cultural diversions. The emphasis with the picture and the drawing is upon the use of movie theaters (el cine). Movie theaters are found throughout the larger cities of Latin America. However, going to movies is not the same pastime as it is in the United States. The marketing for first run movies is not the same in terms of using movies to sell products or vice versa. By presenting this set of pictures and drawings though, the authors appear to want to Americanize much of the cultural content of their first-year Spanish textbook.

In chapter 11 entitled "A trip by plane" the pictures that accompany the vocabulary deal primarily with airport terminology. The photograph to introduce the chapter is airport in San Salvador, El Salvador. On page 340 the textbook shows photos of a passport control booth and a customs agent inspecting luggage. Students who have traveled overseas could relate to these photographs, but unfortunately only the wealthiest students in Latin America would have the opportunity to go through a passport control booth and customs.

A picture which appears on page 375 shows presumably a Latin girl eating breakfast. In the picture, the girl is eating cereal, along with toast, and drinking a glass of orange juice. While cereal is getting more popular in Latin America, it is by no means the most popular way of consuming breakfast. The traditional Latin American and Spanish breakfasts consist of hard rolls and jelly along with coffee (or hot chocolate for the

younger children). The idea of eating cereal and toast for breakfast is a concept directly from the United States.

The final chapter in *Buen Viaje* is entitled “In the restaurant”. The photograph of the restaurant to introduce the restaurant is beautiful and elegant (432-433). The waiter is dressed in a tuxedo and the women clients are also dressed quite well. The caption that goes along with the photograph merely says that the restaurant is located in Lima, Peru. Nothing is said about the name of the restaurant or where exactly it is located in Lima. Throughout this chapter there are photographs of waiters. Each one is wearing either a tuxedo or a bow tie along with nice clothes with the exception of the waiter on page 436. On that page the waiter wears a button up shirt and seems to be dressed as most waiters would appear in Latin America. All of the other restaurant photographs appear to be exclusive places where the majority of people would not be allowed to enter.

The travesty of presenting only one type of restaurant—the most elegant and expensive—is that the authors are neglecting other places where the food is of excellent quality only the patronage is not limited to the very wealthy. By doing this, the authors are not able to show Latin American restaurants as they are. Elegant restaurants do exist and for the American traveler the food is amazing, along with the comparative low prices to the most elegant restaurants in the United States. For example, the primary fast food restaurant in Santa Cruz, Bolivia consists of roasted chicken, rice, fried plantain, and French fries. A full meal rarely costs over three dollars per person. Unfortunately, photographs of these restaurants do not appear in *Buen Viaje*. In Chile, along the coast, inexpensive seafood is available. Again, this information is left out of *Buen Viaje*.

On a more positive note however, the authors do not include complete

Americanization of restaurants. Over the past three decades the influx of American fast food restaurants such as McDonald=s, Burger King, Pizza Hut, and even Taco Bell has reached epidemic proportions. The authors of all three textbooks do not include any photographs of those American fast food restaurants in the cultural pictures that abound throughout the textbooks.

Vocabulary

The first aspect of vocabulary that will be considered is at the beginning of each textbook ARE words that the students see practically every day. The title of each textbook is a common sight, yet few people consider the important significance of the title. Beginning with the oldest book, *Paso a Paso* and continuing to *Realidades* is the order in which we will proceed.

Paso a Paso literally means “step by step” which is sounds inviting and non-threatening compared to the other titles. It is more in-keeping with the idea of language learning as a process. With the title, *Paso a Paso* there is no inherent message that a cultural divide occurs within the textbook. It is possible to view “step by step” as a message that intends to keep the language at arm’s length and is merely a process of learning a language that will only be useful in study instead of real life. Another possibility is the absence of a cultural connotation. For example, “step by step” as a title seems to indicate that grammar structure is the most important aspect of studying a foreign language. However, the straightforwardness of the title seems to indicate that it is indeed a step-by-step process that will bring the student closer to mastery of a foreign language. The authors probably were thinking in terms of taking each step in the ability to learn a foreign language.

The second textbook in terms of title seems to be more geared toward cultural understanding. *Buen Viaje* literally means good trip with the implicit understanding that learning is a journey to be enjoyed. Another interpretation can be made as well. The idea of going on vacation or taking a trip is reserved for the students who can afford to do so. Many students from the United States do not travel to foreign countries until later on in life. The premise of taking a trip to a foreign nation may be widespread among people from the United States, but among developing nations only a select number of their populations have the opportunity.

In *Paso a Paso* the vocabulary is typical information that one would expect to see within a language textbook. One of the most interesting aspects of this textbook is chapters three and six, as has been mentioned previously. In the first vocabulary section of chapter 3 there are lists of words which include places in which teenagers might go. These words include: el campo(countryside) accompanied by a picture which shows a family going for a drive in the country, la playa(beach), el parque(park), el gimnasio(gym), la piscina(pool), el parque de diversiones(amusement park), and the most interesting in a consumer capitalist system, el centro comercial(shopping mall). The vast majority of these words reflect a North American point of view, and it would be acceptable if the students realized that the textbook is attempting to bring Spanish to real life for them. Unfortunately, the students are not presented with these facts. These words do indeed relate to the life that is theirs, but does not give them an accurate portrait of what life is like in Latin America and Spain.

Throughout Spain and Latin America these places such as malls, amusement parks, and swimming pools exist. However, by presenting the vocabulary as such,

students might believe that the way of life is very similar or exactly the same as it is here in the United States. The drawings representing the vocabulary words within *Paso a Paso* in this chapter are drawings that would tend to represent places in the United States. The drawing above el parque shows a park with large skyscrapers behind it, almost as if it were Central Park in New York, City.

A most enlightening example of vocabulary and the manner in which it can perpetuate a consumer capitalist society is found in the first section of chapter six of *Paso a Paso*. At the same time, the use of vocabulary can diminish the strength of Latin and Spanish culture. One of the words in this section is the word “el dolar” which is a cognate meaning dollar. The subject of the vocabulary section is clothing and colors. Why would the authors of *Paso a Paso* include this particular word?

Three possible reasons exist. First, the authors were concerned about the relativity of the language and decided to use the common currency that all students in the United States would be familiar with. Second, the authors felt that the word dollar would be easier to use than a word such as peso, sucre, or other currency from Latin America or Spain. Finally, the word dollar helps to perpetuate the idea of consumerism within the United States and will implicitly make the students believe that the most important currency is the U.S. dollar. This third option is not necessarily intentional. Much of the presentation of cultural information is chosen not deliberately, but rather as simply a means to present aspects of culture.

Another example from the same vocabulary section is the presentation of clothing. Every item of clothing and within the next section which shows places where people shop are all based upon the American model of shopping. While clothing styles in

Latin America are not that dissimilar to styles here in the United States, the styles seem to be based more upon the European model of clothing instead of the U.S. However, if one were to look at the vocabulary, students might believe that most people in Latin America wear the same type of clothes that they do.

In Chapter 8 of *Paso a Paso*, the theme is “la casa” or the house. It shows various rooms and items associated with the home. In *Paso a Paso*, the vocabulary is divided between naming rooms and listing activities such as lavar los platos(wash the dishes) lavar la ropa(wash the clothes), and other quehaceres (household chores). Each of the drawings that help reinforce the vocabulary is based upon North American specifications. Chapter 8 presents no other viewpoint than that particular way of examining the way of life. North American students could easily come to the conclusion that the people of Latin America live in the same type of houses that people do in the United States. However, in different regions of the United States, people live in various types of houses depending upon the climate. Therefore, by creating “one” type of housing in *Paso a Paso* the authors do not allow for the diversity of housing.

Additionally, the presentation of housing is based upon a North American model. Few houses in Latin America contain garages. While it could be argued that students need to learn this particular word for vocabulary, a typical Spanish-speaker would not think of a garaje as a place to store a car, but rather as a place to have an automobile repaired. The importance of a car as a status symbol does not exist in Latin America as it does here in the United States. The group of people that would see an automobile as a status symbol would be those individuals who are classified as upper class in Latin America and not the vast majority that makes up the lower classes.

In the Bienvenidos section of *Buen Viaje*, the section on housing seems to be accurate in terms of the drawings that represent the home and parts of the house are typical in Latin America and Spain. The authors do not show modern appliances which other texts such as *Realidades* and *Paso a Paso* tend to do. The focus appears to be on the items that would be found in almost any house regardless of socio-economic level. The houses in the drawings appearing in chapter 6 are much different from the other chapter and are comparable to those found in textbooks like *Realidades* and *Paso a Paso*.

In *Realidades* we have a similar situation regarding the presentation of housing. Instead of the housing chapter being in chapter 8 it appears in *Realidades* in the sixth theme which would be the equivalent of chapters 12 and 13 in a traditionally designed textbook. The vocabulary in the first chapter of Tema 6 deals specifically with bedrooms. All of the words presented are words that could be interchanged for words we would use to describe a bedroom in a house found in the United States. Most of the words used could also be found in Latin American nations as well.

One major difference in the presentation of these words occurs on the opposite page where the authors give the vocabulary for such technological items as television, VCR, DVD player, and stereo with CD player. All of these items exist and are used in Latin America. While many families own a television and VCR and DVD players, the major difference is the use of these items in the bedroom. Here in the United States individuality is put at a premium. In Latin America, though, families are more likely to share luxury items such as a television. All the equipment would be more commonly found in a family room or living room where everyone could enjoy the technology.

In the second part of Tema 6 we find similarities to the information found in the

Paso a Paso textbook. The vocabulary is typically based upon a lifestyle set in the United States. The word *garaje* is also used in *Realidades* as in *Paso a Paso*, along with an additional word, *el sotano*(basement). Other words which would be common to *Paso a Paso* are *pasar la aspiradora*(to vacuum), *lavar la ropa*, and *lavar el coche*(to wash the car). All of these words represent a life that may well be unknown in many parts of Latin America.

The technological advances of using a vacuum cleaner are not yet seen on such a wide scale. The use of a vacuum cleaner indicates the floor is covered with a carpet or a rug. Rugs may be common in Latin American houses, but wall-to-wall carpeting is something rarely seen. Another example in this chapter is *cortar la cesped*(to mow the grass). Families that have enough money to be concerned about grass growing are most likely to have gardeners in their households to do the work for them. Gardeners would most likely not have the benefit of power lawn mowers like we have in the United States.

A typical Spanish construct in many houses is *el patio*. Patios are commonly used and a good example of cultural material that students can learn from because patios are different from what we refer to patios in the United States. Other words used in this particular chapter could be considered universal such as *poner la mesa* (to set the table), *quitar la mesa*(to clear the table), *lavar el baño*(to clean the bathroom), and *hacer la cama*(to make the bed). These words would be used in the United States and wherever Spanish is spoken.

Buen Viaje

As mentioned previously in chapter 3 during the overall descriptions of the three textbooks, *Buen Viaje* is much shorter in the preliminary lessons which introduce the

basic elements of the Spanish language to the first-year students. Like its two counterparts, *Buen Viaje* presents greetings and leave-takings in the first two preliminary sections. In the third section, there is vocabulary that is worth analysis for its underlying content. The overall theme of Section C is la cortesía (courtesy phrases), but the vocabulary that is presented in this short section are few common food and drink items. On page 7, the following words are used in an exercise: un sandwich, una cola, una limonada, un café, una pizza, along with three more food items. Those are un taco, una enchilada, and un tamal. The use of these particular words are important in deciding what the authors are attempting to convey to their student readers.

First, all the words are presented with drawings, so that students will more easily recognize the vocabulary words. The words sandwich, soft drink, lemonade, coffee, and pizza are, of course, common food and drink items found in the United States. Students would most likely be able to associate these words with their own everyday lives. However, by presenting these particular words, the authors are reinforcing a belief that the American way of life, in terms of food and drink consumption is practiced in Spanish-speaking nations as well.

The second part of the vocabulary presented is also somewhat culturally narrow in its scope. The terms taco, enchilada, and tamal are all foods that are associated with only one specific Latin American nation, Mexico. The implication, although not stated, is that the most common foods from Mexico are consumed throughout Latin America which is simply not true.

Finally, in this section an interesting distinction is not made, simply because the authors most likely intended to get the students using the target language as quickly as

possible. The term *Acola* may indeed be a common word for soft drink in Spanish-speaking countries, but perhaps it will be a source of some confusion during subsequent studies in Spanish as the students become more advanced. The word “cola” has two other meanings commonly seen in Spanish. A “cola” is an animal’s tale, and the phrase *Ahacer cola* means to stand in line in some Latin American countries.

While the majority of the words and phrases used in the preliminary section of *Buen Viaje* are common everyday expressions, some, as has been pointed out, can cause linguistic confusion. Additionally, the words chosen for food and drinks may lead the students in a first-year Spanish class to develop culturally erroneous conclusions regarding the way of life in Latin America.

In the second vocabulary section of chapter one, there is a troubling description of one of the students. One of the primary features of *Buen Viaje* is the use of dialogs to help students learn vocabulary and grammatical structure in the context of conversations among Spanish speakers, especially young people. These dialogs are accompanied by pictures which lend more authenticity to the cultural setting and are present in all of the chapters in this particular textbook. The questionable aspect of the dialog occurs when the student, Roberto, introduces himself and states that he is from California.

The dialog is located in the second section of Chapter 1 on page 18, and the authors are already discussing the Latin population living in the United States. Obviously, a large Spanish-speaking population resides in the United States and increases more each day that passes, especially in a state such as California. The difficulty arises when students are presented with yet another example of Americanization within the first-year Spanish textbook. Throughout the world, there are 21 different nations whose official

language is Spanish. In the beginning of a language course, it might be more culturally relevant if the authors selected a variety of people from different Spanish-speaking nations and introduce the rich diversity of culture found around the world.

Another example of this trend occurs in Chapter 2 within a conversation dialog apart from the actual vocabulary list (60). Two students representing two groups of young people are conversing for the first time. One is from the United States and the other is from Mexico. The students from the U.S. are from Texas, another state with a large Latin population. The fact that Texas borders Mexico also raises interesting questions. Why did the authors choose this encounter? Could it have been equally as effective to have students from two different Spanish-speaking nations meet one another? Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review of chapter two, the two most influential states for textbook adoption practices are California and Texas. Are the authors pandering to students in these two states because textbook companies make the most money from California and Texas?

In chapter 3 of *Buen Viaje* one sees a trend that is common to all three textbooks. The title of chapter 3 is “Las compras para la escuela” (purchases for school), and the subject theme for this chapter introduces the novice Spanish students to the world of shopping(albeit for school supplies) Latin American style. The chapter is a bit misleading because its title would indicate that the focus would be upon school supplies. The authors do concentrate on this area in the first section of vocabulary. However, like the other two textbooks, the second section of the chapter is extremely similar to chapters in the other two textbooks which also contain a theme of shopping.

The emphasis in this section is clothing and colors which may or may not have

something to do with school supplies. Clothes are important for students, yet very few would consider them school supplies. The only part of the vocabulary that would be called into question (aside from the entire theme of purchases) is the fact that the authors choose to use pesos as a currency designation to show the students how money is used in Latin America. The slight problem with using pesos is the widely known association of Mexico's national currency. The authors are to be commended somewhat for choosing to use the currency of a Latin American nation. Also, Mexico is not the only nation to use pesos as currency.

A repetition of the theme of using pesos is found a little later in the chapter. In the dialog used in the section entitled *Conversación* a client purchases a white shirt for 150 pesos (88). Once again the authors are attempting to lend authenticity to a dialog between individuals. The dialog is authentic in that the client does not pay the salesperson, but rather goes to the cash register to pay for the purchase. Many instances in Latin America, this is how the purchases are made. The buyer goes to a separate location within the store to pay for his or her purchase. A problem occurs when one considers the rate of exchange. The Mexican peso is highly inflated, so that the purchase of a shirt for 150 pesos would be the equivalent of buying a shirt for about 50 cents.

Chapter six in *Buen Viaje* is interesting because it combines two subjects important to language acquisition those being the members of the family and descriptions of living quarters. The first section is dedicated to presenting family members and the second vocabulary part shows words that describe the houses (174-175). One of the most misleading terms is the word *el garaje*. *Buen Viaje* includes it as important vocabulary word, and yet as mentioned previously the word in Spanish has a different connotation.

The words used in this section are typical of what homes would commonly have here in the United States.

The authors use words such as la sala (living room), el dormitorio (bedroom), la cocina(kitchen), el comedor(dining room), el cuarto de baño(bathroom), and la recámara (study). All of these words are typically found in houses throughout the United States, but describe a different socioeconomic class in Latin America. A student seeing these vocabulary words would naturally make an assumption that people in Latin America have the same opportunities for luxury that we have in the United States. The vocabulary used in this chapter would most likely be found in houses owned by the wealthier class in most Spanish-speaking nations.

Unfortunately, we see this type of socioeconomic error being presented in all three textbooks. The greatest problem of doing this is not the actual presentation of such vocabulary, but rather the omission of students being exposed to ideas of wide spread poverty throughout Latin America. Students will be much more likely to consider the textbook as authoritative, and unfortunately will not see the other side of life in Latin America.

It is revealing how the authors choose to tie the vocabulary words in together. Again as another example found in the dialog in the section entitled Conversación (186) we see two young men discussing the up-coming party of a mutual friend. Part of the dialog describes how one of the young men has to buy a present. It is okay, though, because he was going shopping anyway to buy a birthday present for his younger brother. The emphasis upon consumer capitalism is interesting even though the chapter does not deal directly with shopping as that topic was discussed in a previous chapter.

Chapter nine truly demonstrates the lack of class consciousness on the authors' part. The title is *El verano y el invierno* (summer and winter) and its proposal is to show the students activities done in summer and winter. The vocabulary for the first section(274-275) places importance upon the following words: *la plancha de vela*(windsurfing), *la tabla hawaiana* (surfboard), *el esquí acuático* (water skiing), *la natación* (swimming), and *el tenis* (tennis). The second vocabulary section appropriately deals with winter vocabulary. The emphasis is upon the winter sport of snow skiing (278-279). Some of the vocabulary words include: *el bastón* (ski poles), *la estación de esquí* (ski lodge), and *el telesquí* (ski lift).

This type of vocabulary throughout the chapter is extremely misleading. First, while there are miles and miles of beaches on the coasts of Spanish-speaking nations, the idea that most young people spend much time at the beach or on the ski slopes. Clearly, this vocabulary is geared primarily for American students who spend time at the beach and skiing in the wintertime. By using this type of vocabulary, the authors are presenting the readers with several problems.

First, the idea that the majority of Latins spend their time at the seashore in summer and the mountains during the winter is very disconcerting. Since all of the activities described in chapter nine are geared for individuals who have plenty of money to travel to the beach and to the mountains, young people without the financial resources would not be able to participate. It is a fact that the majority of the populace live in primate cities throughout Latin America and comparatively speaking few primate cities are built on the coast.

Second, skiing is relatively localized to Chile and Argentina in Latin American

nations and Spain does have some ski slopes as well. Since the authors are using skiing as one of their main themes in this chapter, it would indicate to the casual reader that skiing is extremely popular throughout the Latin American world. A third problem arises with the audience they are addressing with the textbook. Here in southeastern Georgia, little use can be made of ski poles and ski lifts. The areas in which students live rarely see any snow. In order to visit areas where skiing can be done, students must drive several hours. One must ask the question, are the authors aiming their intentions at students who live in California where students may go skiing or go to the beach in a few short hours?

An interesting dialog occurs in the *Conversacion* section of this chapter (290) which may typify the underlying message that the authors of *Buen Viaje* are sending to students. The dialog is humorous describing the plight of a teenage girl who goes to the beach, but unfortunately forgets her bathing suit. Her friend then asks what she did about the situation and the girl replies, “*Querer es poder*”(where there is a will there is a way) and she goes on to say that she swam in her “blue jeans”. The authors use a term in a Spanish dialog which comes from the English (no equivalent exists in the Spanish language for the word jeans, it is merely the same word), and the word is one which is synonymous with American culture.

Chapter 10 focuses upon cultural activities. For the authors one of the primary ideas of portraying cultural activities is to teach vocabulary related to movie theatres. One word located in this first vocabulary section is the word *Ala cola* which means in this case *Aline* as people have to stand in line to see a movie. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the authors also use the word “cola” to designate a soft drink.

The second set of vocabulary words deals with what would be termed “highbrow”

culture, using words such as el museo (museum) and el teatro (theatre). The implication the authors implicitly describe is that in Latin America and Spain, teenagers are likely to visit museums and see theatrical performances on a regular basis. Of course, among the upper class in Latin America and Spain this would certainly be true as it would be true among the upper class members of society in the United States as well. The point the authors do not make by selecting this vocabulary is that the majority of people in Latin America do not have the opportunity to see examples of higher cultural forms because of the lack of disposable income.

In chapter 11 the authors focus upon the primary theme of the book “Good Trip” as they choose for vocabulary, words associated with the airport and traveling by air. These terms would be useful to a traveler, but if they are being used to describe life in Latin America, unfortunately few people have the opportunity to fly on a regular basis. A term that is used in this section is the word “el pasaporte” (passport) which the vast majority of the people living in Latin America do not even possess.

In the second vocabulary section more of the idea of international air travel is reinforced. The term las aduanas(customs) is used along with the word el reclamo de equipaje (baggage carousel). Other words used in this chapter are el piloto, la copiloto (female copilot), el/la asistente de vuelo (flight attendant) and el vuelo (flight). All of these words may be useful to a student in the United States traveling to a Spanish-speaking nation, but in terms of cultural representation, the vocabulary used is not helpful and is in fact, a hindrance to cultural understanding. By using this vocabulary the authors are presenting a picture of Latins that is not accurate in portraying the adverse conditions in which many Latins find themselves.

In Chapter 11 the title is *Una gira* (a tour) which leads one to believe that the authors are attempting to show students that teenagers live a life of leisure taking trips whenever they have the desire. The first vocabulary section is quite appropriate in helping the students increase vocabulary knowledge as it presents words that are used with a daily routine. One portion of the vocabulary section is somewhat aimed too much at American students. This section shows words used to describe breakfast. The words presented to the students are *el cereal*, *el pan tostado*(toast), and *un vaso de jugo de naranja* (glass of orange juice). Readers will recognize this as a typical American breakfast. Many people in Latin America and Spain probably do eat those foods for breakfast, but it is also likely that Latin Americans and Europeans would eat hard rolls with butter or jam along with coffee and milk to drink.

In the second vocabulary section Schmitt and Woodford present the actual words for the theme of their chapter. Two words from this section may be misleading to a student from the United States. Those words are *el saco de dormir* (sleeping bag) and *el agua mineral* (mineral water). Both words reflect items that most persons in Latin America would be unlikely to possess, especially in the pretext the authors present the words. Certainly many people throughout the Latin American world do drink bottled water, few individuals would be likely to have camping gear. The poverty is so high in Latin America that most people would seldom ever go camping on a regular basis. The vocabulary would have much use for students here in the United States as going camping is a favorite pastime of many Americans.

In chapter 13 the authors use a theme which would be difficult for students living in southeastern Georgia to relate to. The title is *Un viaje en tren* (a trip by train). The

Savannah area does have an Amtrak station connecting the Northeast with southern areas of the United States. However, relatively few Americans living in the southern United States use train travel extensively. As far as cultural relevancy is concerned, the theme of train travel is somewhat misleading because of the Spanish-speaking nations of the world, only Spain has an extensive railway system like its European counterparts. In Latin America, train travel is possible, but not used by a majority of people. Vocabulary words from section one include el tablero de llegadas (arrival board), el tablero de salida (departure board), la sala de espera (waiting room), de ida y vuelta(round-trrip), and un billete(ticket).

It is fascinating that the brief conversation contained in the vocabulary section is centered on a train trip to Madrid which would indicate that this dialog occurs within the nation of Spain. In the Conversacion section of the chapter, readers see a repetition of the theme as a young female student is buying a ticket to visit the city of Madrid. Traveling to Madrid is an implicit indication that the idea of train travel is limited to Spain.

The second part of chapter 13 shows vocabulary words used on the inside of a train. Examples are el coche comedor(dining car), el coche cama(sleeping car) and el revisor(conductor). Another problem arising by using this sort of vocabulary is that a student perhaps would get the sense of luxury train travel as the norm. In Spain, train travel is designed to be comfortable with high speed trains arriving at destinations all across Spain and the Continent. In Latin America, train travel is not at all as luxurious or reliable. Train travel in Latin America, where available, is often rudimentary with little distinction made between first and second class travel.

Chapter 14 is the concluding chapter of the textbook *Buen Viaje* and its theme is

En el restaurante(in the restaurant). The first vocabulary section is dedicated to presenting the eating utensils and items found on a table in a restaurant. The second section of vocabulary is more interesting for analysis as it contains a wide array of food items. These items include the following; la carne(meat) la carne de res(steak) la ternera(veal), el cerdo(pork), el cordero(lamb) el pescado(fish), los camarones(shrimp), las almejas(clams), la langosta(lobster), and el arroz(rice). Of the preceding food items, the one item that everyone throughout Latin America would eat on almost a daily basis is rice.

The authors, by choosing this vocabulary are sending a message to the students that people in Latin America enjoy the same variety of food that middle-class Americans are likely to consume. One food item that was deleted from the list was el pollo(chicken) which serves as a staple along with rice. The items presented to the students are foods which they would be familiar with, however, many teenagers their own age living in Latin America would not. The class of Latin American people most familiar with eating this type of food would be the very wealthy who can afford to eat such expensive items as shrimp and clams. Latin Americans living on the coast are likely to eat seafood, but those living farther inland would be less likely to consume such delicacies.

Overall, *Buen Viaje* as a textbook gives the students a firm foundation in the vocabulary presented. However, one can see how the inclusion of certain words may lead students learning Spanish for the first time to erroneous perspectives on the target culture. The other two textbooks present vocabulary in a similar fashion and these two textbooks maintain advantages and disadvantages over *Buen Viaje*.

The title *Realidades* means in Spanish “Realities” and using this word as a title of a textbook connotes the idea of a certain reality that the textbook will present. Judging by the textbook’s title, one would tend to imagine that the textbook would present grammar content along with cultural information in a much more up-to-date format and in a much more accurate manner.

In the introductory section of *Realidades* the authors create usable vocabulary that is culturally relevant. Within the section no words stand out as misleading to a student entering the world of a foreign language. The introductory greetings are well presented and the sequence of information appears logical. The vocabulary is helpful in aiding the student to become accustomed to speaking a foreign language.

In chapter one entitled *Mis amigos y yo* (my friends and I) students encounter words with which they as residents of the United States would certainly be familiar. These vocabulary words include: nadar (to swim), esquiar (to ski), montar en monopatín (to ride a skateboard), usar la computadora (to use a computer), jugar videojuegos (to play videogames), and patinar (to rollerskate). All of the preceding words are easy to relate for today’s students. These words appear in the first section of the first theme or chapter.

We have already seen in the *Buen Viaje* textbook how the words nadar and esquiar are words with which the lower class in Latin America would not be familiar, at least from an actual experiential standpoint. By including these words in a textbook entitled *Realidades*, the authors are misleading the students. Even more confusing, are the other words including usar la computadora, jugar videojuegos, and montar en monopatín. All three of these words are culturally relevant to young people in the United States, but would not be used with frequency throughout the nations of Latin America.

Skateboarding is a sport largely confined to the United States.

Using a computer would be an activity that the very wealthy children in Latin American countries would do, but the middle class and lower class in Latin America would not have the same access to computers, especially within the homes. Finally, the use of jugar videojuegos as a vocabulary word would likewise be misleading because only the children of the highest socioeconomic class would have access to the latest videogames. By using these vocabulary words, the authors are presenting the idea that young people in Latin America live in almost the same manner as students do here in the United States. Furthermore, there is a greater implication at work within textbooks using these vocabulary words. Many students would be under the impression that teenagers in Latin America purchase videogames, computers, and skateboards at the same type of outlet stores where we Americans shop. As the authors will demonstrate later on with other vocabulary used, that image is one that is reinforced throughout the textbook.

In Theme 2, the subject of the vocabulary is la escuela (school). In the first mini-chapter the authors focus upon school subjects. What makes an analysis of this section fascinating is how the authors seem to vacillate between using words with which students here will most likely relate, and the desire to show the differences in school systems found in Latin America and Spain. An example of the trend is found in Theme 2 where the authors show a class schedule designed to appear as they do in Latin America and Spain. The class schedule contains nine periods as opposed to the traditional six period or the modified four period block schedules that are commonly used in southeastern Georgia schools today.

It is in the section second of chapter 2 that we discover words that incorporate

erroneous conclusions to the way of life in Latin America. In this section the following words are presented. They are el teclado (keyboard), el disquete(floppy disc), el raton(computer mouse), and la pantalla (computer monitor). All of these items are commonly found in schools all across the United States. By using these words in the chapter on schools, the authors are implicitly explaining to the students that the same conditions exist in Latin American schools as well. Some schools, such as American schools in various Latin American countries have up-to-date equipment, but unfortunately, public schools that the masses of students attend would be fortunate to even have computers available to them. Even public universities in Latin American nations lack the technological advances which the people in the United States take for granted. By using this particular technological vocabulary, the authors mislead first year students into believing that the technological advances so readily available to them are equally available to students in circumstances surrounded by much greater poverty.

In the first section of Theme 3 (3A) the following words are presented to the students. Las papas fritas (French fries), la pizza, el perrito caliente (hot dog), la sopa de verduras(vegetable soup), la hamburguesa(hamburger), and el cafe(coffee) are shown as important vocabulary words for the students to learn. With the exception of coffee which is a national beverage throughout Latin America, each of the foods is extremely popular fare in the United States. These foods are found with increasing frequency in Latin American nations as fast food restaurants continue to expand into Latin American territories, but from a traditional point of view, Latin students would not necessarily consume large quantities of pizza, French fries, hamburgers, and hot dogs like teenagers from the United States do. The wealthier students in Latin American nations are much

more likely to consume this type of food, whereas teenagers who are impoverished would be much less likely to eat typical American food. The use of this vocabulary reflects a much stronger Americanized view of food consumption.

Some chapters of *Realidades* contain few examples of vocabulary which can be analyzed to show the Americanization of cultural trends in a first-year textbook. However, in chapter 3 numerous examples of this trend of Americanization occur. In the second section of chapter 3 (3B) the authors present a food pyramid showing the proper foods that one should eat for balanced nutrition. Here in the United States, the idea of healthy eating is quite popular, but in reality in Latin America the preoccupation with healthy eating styles does not exist to the extent it does in the U.S.

One vocabulary phrase that would not be used as frequently in Latin American nations is *Apara mantener la salud* (to maintain health). A family struggling to put enough food on the table would be less concerned about having food to eat instead of selecting the healthiest choice of food. Legislation that mandates nutritional facts be placed upon food items sold in supermarkets has not reached the proportion of use in Latin American nations as it has here in the United States. Furthermore, fresh food is most often purchased at open air markets rather than supermarkets, although supermarkets are becoming more common.

Another vocabulary word related to the theme of maintaining good health is *levantar pesas* (to lift weights). The extent of gyms available for lifting weights is not available to the average student in Latin American nations. For example, many high schools here in southeastern Georgia offer weightlifting as a class. This does not occur as often in Latin America and when it does occur it would be limited to high schools

affiliated with the United States in some way, for example one of the private American schools that only allow the wealthiest students to attend. An average high school student in Latin America would be unlikely to have access to these types of exercise facilities..

On page 148 a brief dialog is shown where a teenage girl is complaining about a friend who eats junk food. The girl calls this choice of food “horrible”. This attempt at explaining the concerns of a teenager is almost laughable because even here in the United States, teenagers are not concerned about eating habits of their peers. The fact that the girl complains about her friend Claudia shows misleading cultural representation occurring in *Realidades*. The authors are presenting a cultural value deeply rooted in the United States upon a student living in Latin America who would most likely have an entirely different outlook upon eating.

In the fourth theme (4A) several words appear and are culturally misleading. They are el gimnasio (gym), el trabajo (job), el cine (movie theatre), la piscina(pool), el centro comercial (shopping mall), ver una pelicula (to see a film), and ir de compras(to go shopping). Each of these words reflect a point of view uniquely based upon life in the United States. With the exception of el trabajo each word represents leisure activities done in the U.S. All of the words mirror the consumer capitalist society in which we live. The term el trabajo is focused on a job that students would have after school. The idea is extremely misleading because teenagers working at a job in Latin America do so in order to help maintain their family and not to have their own spending money as is common here in the United States.

These words are common in Spanish and appear in all three of the textbooks. In *Realidades*, the authors by grouping these words together present an idea that is culturally

challenging. All of the preceding words deal with an upper class life experience that would be quite foreign to a common Latin American. The words *el cine*, *el gimnasio*, *el centro comercial*, *ver una película*, and *ir de compras* are all tied into the consumer capitalism and popular culture based upon the United States. The preceding words are considered luxuries for the majority of people in Latin America.

The second part of theme 4 treats the theme of hobbies and sporting activities. Unlike the textbook *Buen Viaje* where the emphasis included only the primary sports practiced in Latin America and Spain, *Realidades* is different in its treatment. On pages 198-199, the following words are presented: *el fútbol* (soccer), *el voleibol* (volleyball), *el beisbol* (baseball), *el golf*, *el fútbol americano* (football), *ir de camping* (to go camping), and *ir de pesca* (to go fishing). The sports that are common to Latin American citizens would include *el fútbol*, *el beisbol* (in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, especially), and *el voleibol*. These sports are practiced quite frequently by large numbers of teenagers throughout Latin America.

The other sports and activities are done by the wealthy minority for the most part with the exception of football which is practiced throughout the United States but is little understood in the Latin American and Spanish world. Fishing when not practiced as a livelihood is done along the coast for wealthy Americans and Europeans who can pay for the expensive boat rental. Latin American nations do have camping facilities, but the widely available infrastructure of camping sites throughout the United States and Europe are not found in Latin America. Spain would have better facilities for camping and less wealthy young people do have the opportunity to participate in camping activities.

The next chapter in *Realidades* which contains vocabulary words which represent

more the American way of life than the life of the typical Latin American. On pages 272 and 273 the authors return to their emphasis on technology. The following words are included in the first section of chapter 6: el televisor(tv), el lector DVD(DVD player), la videocasetera(VCR), el video(video), and el disco compacto(CD). Like the section in Chapter Two of *Realidades*, the authors present a picture of the daily life of Latin Americans that resembles closely that of the citizens of the United States.

While prices of electronic equipment have dropped considerably in the last few years, the very poor of Latin American nations would not be able to afford to have items such as a DVD and a large DVD collection. The proliferation of video stores throughout the United States has not reached Latin America to the same extent. However, another element exists when the authors present these words. The United States is a nation caught up in the grasp of the entertainment industry. In Latin America, neighbors who possess such items in the middle and lower economic classes would be likely to open their houses to friends and relatives so that they may enjoy the benefits of technological advances. Unfortunately the authors of *Realidades* do not deal with this particular issue in using technological words in vocabulary sections.

On pages 298-299, in section 6B of the book the authors use the following words; el sotano(basement), el garaje(garage), lavar el coche(wash the car), cortar el cesped(cut the lawn), pasar the aspiradora(to vacuum), and el despacho(home office). As noted with the similar words appearing in *Buen Viaje*, the treatment of these vocabulary words are a reflection of the common American way of life. The vast majority of houses of middle and lower income inhabitants do not have many of the features the houses here in the United States. The idea of using a vacuum cleaner would be met with puzzled looks.

Furthermore, the very wealthy in Latin American nations do not use nor generally possess vacuum cleaners because they have enough money for maids and servants to do the household chores. Likewise gardeners would be likely to take care of trimming the lawn and would use tools instead of lawnmowers.

Theme 7 discusses shopping habits and on page 347 items such as el collar(necklace), la pulsera(bracelet), los aretes(earrings), and la cadena(chain). These items are quite popular in both Latin America and the United States, but the idea of purchasing a great amount of jewelry would be uncommon among the lower income wage earners.

Additionally, a dialog is included where two teenagers are discussing the purchase of a wristwatch that “only costs” 30 dollars. First, the authors choose to use dolares (dollars) instead of a common currency of a Spanish-speaking nation. This is an indication that the authors are implicitly downgrading other currency besides the U.S. dollar. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, for the average wage earner in Latin America, thirty dollars represents a considerable sum of money. In Bolivia for instance, one may rent a room in which to live monthly for around 30 dollars. The perspective is quite misleading for students in the United States. However, for students living in the United States who have no concept of the poverty levels in other parts of the world, the dialog appears to be reasonable to the point of being commonplace.

Theme 8 contains more examples of activities to which a lower to middle class Latin American would not be able to relate. Vocabulary words in the first section include el parque de diversiones (amusement park), la obra de teatro (theatre play), montar a caballo (to go horseback riding), and bucear (to skin dive). Each of these vocabulary

words reflect a trend of leisure to which Latin Americans in distressed economic conditions would not be able to participate. Those who do have the opportunity to go horseback riding on a daily basis would be those individuals who work on farms. Riding a horse under those conditions would not be pleasurable when there is so much work to do.

In the second part of theme 8 the emphasis is upon conservation, a state in which Latin American nations have not yet arrived. One of the strongest concerns in the Western world is how the South American rainforest is being destroyed at an alarming rate. To present to Spanish I students that governments in Latin American nations implore their citizens to conserve resources, and that governments maintain recycle centers (centro de reciclaje) borders upon the ridiculous. Compared to the United States and other industrialized nations the movement to conserve resources is virtually non-existent. It is obvious that the authors wish to present an agenda of natural resource conservation (of which there is nothing wrong with the practice of conservation) Unfortunately, in terms of cultural presentation, students might tend to think that innovative conservation occurs in Latin America, whereas, in reality, it does not.

In the final theme 9 of *Realidades*, two major ideas are discussed. In part 9A, the vocabulary emphasis is upon types of television shows, along with different kinds of movies. By using this particular vocabulary, the students are inundated with the impact of popular culture. Television programs are widely popular in Latin America, but local programming is different from programming found in the United States. For example, las telenovelas (soap operas) are extremely popular in Latin America even during prime time. Other examples of TV programs are variety shows such as Sabado Gigante, a weekly

three hour extravaganza which has been popular for years throughout Latin America.

In terms of movies, sadly budget constraints limit the popularity of Latin American made films to lower budget films which many times gain critical acclaim but do not have the immense popularity that films here in the United States maintain. One reason for the lack of a quantity of movies in Latin America is the small amounts of capital available for film production. A second reason is the popularity of American made films which are imported. The majority of videos in the few video stores throughout Latin America are those videos made in the United States and imported to Latin American nations. The cultural aspects of consumer capitalism come from films produced in the United States. Finally, while movies are considerably less expensive in Latin American cities, they are not so inexpensive that the majority of residents attend movie showings on a weekly basis.

In the second part of theme 9 the authors use a theme which recycles earlier vocabulary concerning technology available to students in Latin America. The following vocabulary words are used: grabar un disco compacto (to burn a CD), crear documentos (to create documents), and estar en linea (to be on-line). As described earlier, this type of technological vocabulary is available within the United States and other developed nations, but only the very wealthy have access to technology with which students in the United States take advantage.

To have a title of *Realidades* which signifies realities in English, the vocabulary words that are provided make little or no attempt to show a balanced view of life in Latin America. Instead like the other textbooks, a way of life that is largely unavailable to the majority of people living in Latin America especially, but at some points not available to

those individuals residing in Spain either. The vocabulary is most useful to a student living here in the United States who is unlikely to even leave the country.

Paso a Paso

In the introduction to *Paso a Paso*, the authors do a good job of presenting vocabulary that is utilitarian and yet maintains the cultural integrity of the textbook. Like its successor *Realidades*, the introductory section is made up of specific phrases that students will be able to use to begin communication in a foreign language right away. Overall, in the introductory section, nothing appears culturally damaging either explicitly or implicitly.

In the first section of vocabulary for Chapter 1 like the preceding introduction the authors do a good job of presenting vocabulary which can be considered culturally relevant. Of the 32 words in this vocabulary section only three appear to be culturally biased in promoting American culture over Latin culture. These three words are ir al cine(to go to the movies), nadar(to swim) and patinar(to skate). Going to the movies and swimming are minor in terms of opportunities for the typical Latin American. These two activities would be commonly done more by the upper class members of Latin American society. Neither phrase overly encourages an American point of view. Furthermore, to swim and to go to the movies are useful to the first-year Spanish students. The only difficulty arises when one combines these two words with other words presented later in the textbook. The final word to skate, is quite popular with U.S. teenagers and is not practiced in Latin American cultures. Therefore, for the authors to use patinar as an activity word may tend to mislead first-year Spanish students.

In the second chapter of *Paso a Paso*, the primary vocabulary deals with life at

school and school supplies. An issue that frequently arises in *Paso a Paso* is seen in the presentation of the school schedule. On page 58 a student's schedule is shown for the purpose of teaching vocabulary to students. Common subjects such as science, social studies, health, English, and Spanish are included along with art and music. The most fascinating part of this vocabulary is the manner in which the authors present the schedule as an eight-period day. Here in the United States, an eight period day is somewhat uncommon, whereas in Latin America, an eight-period day is much more likely to be used. What occurs in *Paso a Paso* is problematic in the way the authors attempt to use some elements of United States culture, and some elements of Latin culture. Instead of bringing about more cultural understanding by showing differences between the two cultures, the authors, especially in the vocabulary sections, unknowingly confuse the students with their implicit cultural examples. Unlike most chapters in *Paso a Paso*, the second section in chapter two presents the vocabulary used to tell time.

Chapter three has several examples in both vocabulary sections of vocabulary that creates an Americanization of Latin culture. Four words appear in the first section. These words are: el gimnasio (gym), la piscine (pool), el parque de diversiones (amusement park), and el centro comercial (mall). Each of these words are extremely familiar to students in the United States. However, only certain segments of the Latin American society are likely to have personal experience. The most common place for pools in Latin America to be are in private country clubs. These clubs are exclusive in their memberships and relatively few Latins have the opportunity to go to swimming pools on a regular basis. The same is true for gyms. Even in the United States, gyms are somewhat exclusive and in Latin America they are even more so. Attending gyms are the right of

the wealthy and the only manner in which a person of lesser economic means could enter is through employment at the gym.

The final two words in this section are amusement park and shopping mall. Both of these words are today quite synonymous with life today in the United States, and this type of commercial appeal has evolved in this nation over the last two or three decades. The choice of the authors to include these words in the vocabulary list indicates the implicit connection between the first year Spanish textbook and the Americanization of Latin culture.

The problem with the inclusion of these words is that they do not reflect the way of life in Latin America for the most part. It is true that amusement parks exist in Latin America, but not with the same frequency as they do in the United States. The same can be said for shopping malls. Shopping malls can be found in larger Latin American cities, but they are not nearly as ubiquitous as shopping malls here in the United States. In the second section of vocabulary, we can see how the authors join to these four words more that reflect an American way of life.

The second section of chapter three includes a variety of activities in which students participate. Five of these words demonstrate readily how the Americanization of culture is operating in *Paso a Paso*. These five words are: ir de compras (to go shopping), ir de pesca (to go fishing), jugar videojuegos (to play videogames), jugar futbol americano (to play football), and finally jugar beisbol (to play baseball). The final word is the only word in the group which can be applied to Latin American nations with any poipularity, and playing baseball is limited primarily to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, all of which are located in the Caribbean.

To go shopping fits well with the prior vocabulary of shopping mall and reinforces the consumer capitalist nature of present day American culture. To go fishing is a concept that Latins do not think of in terms of a popular recreational activity. Fishing is certainly done in the coastal areas of Latin America, but primarily those that fish for pleasure are American tourists. Latins living along the seashore can earn a fairly reasonable wage helping to insure that North American tourists get their fill of fishing. Otherwise, like in other poverty-stricken parts of the world, fishing is an occupation.

Playing videos is catching on in Latin American nations among teenagers, but not to the extent it occurs here in the United States. Again using this vocabulary word reinforces the upper class notion that the authors of all three textbooks appear to have. Those young people who own video games would be the most affluent, although video games are now being sold in open air markets. Finally, an obvious vocabulary word reflecting the domination of American culture is the phrase to play football. Football is virtually unheard of outside of the United States and its inclusion as a vocabulary word in this section does two things. First, the selection of a word that is patently from the United States in nature shows a lack of regard for the rich culture of Latin sports which most commonly focuses upon soccer. Second, the authors, by including such a word promote a sense of superiority among students in the United States. By including this word, it could lead students to mistakenly believe that football as we know is played in Latin America where it is not.

The theme of Chapter four is food and drinks. Breakfast begins the vocabulary section. The authors select four words to describe breakfast. These words are el pan tostado (toast), el cereal, el huevo (egg), and el jamon (ham). All of these words are

associated with a typical American breakfast. A breakfast in Latin America is completely different. A typical Latin American breakfast consists of hard rolls and perhaps coffee as a beverage.

The authors use words in the section on lunch such as el sandwich, la hamburguesa, (hamburger), las papas fritas(french fries), and el sandwich de jamon y queso (ham and cheese sandwich). All of these words reflect a meal found in the United States, not in Latin America. In addition the choice of hamburgers and French fries truly shows the Americanization of *Paso a Paso* because one of the primary features of 21st century popular culture in the United States is the dominance of the fast food industry. By using this vocabulary, it reinforces the dominance and presses it upon a completely different culture.

The actual layout of the vocabulary in the first section of chapter four is from an American perspective. One of the primary eating customs in Latin America and Spain is the domination of lunch as the primary meal of the day. Businesses shut down and often students leave school to dine with their families at home. Cultural essays found in chapter four of *Paso a Paso* confirm the idea. Yet, instead of presenting the vocabulary in a more descriptive manner of Latin American customs, the authors create an American view of meals. By far, the largest meal shown in Chapter four is la cena (supper). The use of el bistec (steak) and el pescado (fish) as examples of meats also reinforces the upper class mentality of the authors. The availability of steak and fish for the lower income families is not the same as it is for members of the wealthy establishment throughout Latin America.

Two areas of concern stand out in the second vocabulary section of Chapter four.

First is the use of *el te helado* (iced tea) in the vocabulary section. Iced tea is virtually unheard of in Latin America. Iced tea is an American creation. Its use again shows the way the authors choose to place American culture above Latin American culture. The second example is of two curious vocabulary words. They are *bueno* and *malo* (*para la salud*). The translation for these words are good and bad (for your health). Certainly from a language learning perspective the students need to be aware of the words good and bad for a variety of reasons. The fact that the authors choose to use good and bad for your health exhibits another way in which culture in the United States is placed over the Latin American culture. In the U.S. a great emphasis upon health has occurred during the past decade or so. In Latin America that particular emphasis is not as prevalent.

Chapter Six is the shopping chapter for *Paso a Paso*. It is also where colors and clothing are taught. In the first section only one thing stands out much like the phrase *jugar futbol americano* did in Chapter Three. A jacket (*la chaqueta*) is being advertised in the vocabulary section and the words *solo 101 dolares* is placed beside the jacket. The authors are making a strong statement by having this phrase in the vocabulary section. The preference of using U.S. currency over a Latin American or Spanish currency sends a clear message to the students sitting in a first year Spanish class about the superiority of U.S. economic strength. No Spanish-speaking nation uses dollars as their currency.

In the second section of chapter six the authors show a few different stores where people can make purchases. The types of stores are clothing store, department store, and shoe store.. All of these type establishments exist throughout Latin America, but they do not appear in as much quantity as they do here in the United States. By using this vocabulary, the authors continue to promote a more U.S. lifestyle over a rich way of life

that is found in Latin America.

Two other words in the second section of chapter six are also troubling. The first is the use of *la tienda de descuentos* (discount store), and the other word is *la ganga* (bargain). Both terms are used widely in today's consumer capitalism of the United States. The notion of a discount store is practically unheard of in Latin America primarily because the places where bargains can be readily found are the open-air markets of which none of the textbooks treat in any great detail. Instead like the authors of the other textbooks, the emphasis is upon what occurs in the United States and not in Latin America or Spain.

In the first section of chapter seven the authors are intent upon showing leisure and vacation activities. Some of the words that are taught in this section are *esquiar* (to ski), *explorar la selva*, (to explore the tropical rainforest), *tomar el sol* (to sunbathe), *bucear* (to skin dive), and finally *los recuerdos* (souvenirs). The emphasis upon visiting exotic places such as exploring a jungle or skin diving is almost ludicrous when considering that while the average person in the United States takes a trip to go on vacation, the idea of a leisurely trip to an exotic locale is completely foreign to the majority of Latin Americans because those who have jobs must work on a regular basis and the only time a vacation day is possible is during a national holiday. And unlike the Japanese, for example, who have little vacation time, but do travel to foreign countries on occasion, the people in the middle class of Latin America would not have the resources to take that type of vacation.

In Chapter eight the theme is living quarters. In this chapter the terms that could be misleading and reflect a more cultural view of the United States are *el garaje* (garage),

la sala de estar(family room), el lavadero (laundry room). Action phrases include poner la aspiradora (to vacuum), cortar el cesped (to cut the grass) and lavar la ropa (to wash clothes). A house that would have a garage, a family room, and a laundry room would be a rather expensive house in an exclusive neighborhood. A typical house owned or rented by the majority of people in Latin America and Spain do not have those types of rooms. . Garages, as we know them, are used by the wealthiest members of society who own vehicles which are expensive even here in the United States.

As far as the household chores that are presented, the idea of using a vacuum cleaner is almost unheard of. In the homes of the wealthy, housework is done by maids who may actually live in maid quarters apart from the family but still on the premises. Washing is done outside usually in back of the house by hand. Gardeners are hired to keep the grass trim and if any lawn mowers are used they are not motorized. However, when a student acquires the vocabulary from the textbook, it is likely that he or she will mistakenly think that Latin Americans live the same type of lives that they themselves lead.

The beginning vocabulary section of chapter ten mixes much needed vocabulary for those students who may some day travel overseas. Included in this section are useful words such as la biblioteca (library), la libreria (bookstore), and la farmacia(drug store). In addition, though, the authors include other words which strongly reflect the consumer capitalist tendencies of the U.S. society. These words include el banco(bank), depositar dinero(to deposit money), sacar dinero(to withdraw money), el supermercado (supermarket), and finally, ver un partido de beisbol(to watch a baseball game).

It is notable that the authors choose the words bank, deposit and withdraw money

in a vocabulary section with other places to go in a city or town. Using the vocabulary withdraw and deposit money is equally baffling. First, if students are traveling to Latin America or Spain it would be highly unlikely that they would use the services of a bank. Also, some students here in the United States do not even have bank accounts for their own personal use. Therefore, the use of these words reinforce the consumer capitalist society and place the same emphasis upon cultural connotations.

The words supermarket and to watch a baseball game are marginally correct in terms of cultural context. Supermarkets are indeed appearing in many Latin American nations. However, when the textbook was written relatively few supermarkets existed in Latin America, and even today the preferred choice of shopping venue remains the open-air markets where food is often much cheaper and fresher than the new supermarkets. As mentioned previously, baseball is a sport primarily limited to the Caribbean area of Spanish speaking countries. A better choice would have been soccer which is played in all Spanish speaking nations.

Chapter eleven is dedicated to providing students with vocabulary concerning types of television programs and movies. All of the vocabulary is provided to teach the students useful vocabulary dealing with these two topics. Since television programming and movie watching are the topics, the need for specific vocabulary analysis is not necessary. The words provided in *Paso a Paso* are translation equivalents of what students would see in TV and movies here in the United States. In Latin America movies and television do not carry the same magnitude of importance. Also, television viewing tends to be more family-oriented as the family unit is stronger in Latin America than it is here in the United States. Likewise, movies are available, but are not as popular in Latin

America like the United States.

Chapter twelve is entitled A Let's go to a Mexican restaurant. The vocabulary adds to the vocabulary in Chapter four which dealt with food. Vocabulary words such as el tenedor (fork) and la cuchara (spoon) are included and are helpful to the student. What is important about this chapter is how the authors specifically chose a Mexican restaurant to be the theme. In the first section of vocabulary, los tacos and el guacamole are typical vocabulary words. Perhaps the authors chose the theme of Mexican restaurant because of the popularity of such eating establishments in the United States. Again, what is popular here in the United States is the subject of choice for the authors.

Chapter thirteen is near the end of the textbook and its title in English is To Protect the Earth. In the first vocabulary section the authors include such words as conservar (to conserve), reciclar (to recycle), and separar (to separate). These words are associated with the movement concerning the conservation of natural resources. The concept of recycling in Latin American nations is not nearly as advanced as it is here in the United States. One of the major environmental problems for the entire planet Earth is the destruction of the tropical rainforests in Brazil and Southeast Asia. Yet the authors use vocabulary in chapter thirteen that indicates the idea of recycling and conservation is prevalent in Latin America. It is most likely true that conservation efforts are strong in Spain, but the authors do not make that distinction.

Further evidence of this idea is seen in the second vocabulary section where the words el medio ambiente (environment) and el peligro de extincion (danger of extinction) are presented. Environmental concerns are not the same in Latin America as they appear to be in the United States. Laws in Latin American nations are not as stringent when it

comes to the environment, and many businesses based in the United States relocate to Latin American nations due in part to the less restrictive environmental practices. Changes are taking place throughout Latin America, but general the media in Latin America does not share the same concern for the environment. Evidence for such attitudes can be seen in the destruction of the Amazon rainforests for economic survival.

In summary, the language elements presented a concerted effort on the part of the textbook publishers to show to students what consumer capitalists would want them to learn. As the reader can determine, certain key elements of language learning are presented in each of the textbooks. The textbooks, even though published by different companies have much in common with one another. The commonalities appear with much more frequency than the distinctions. In the final chapter of this analysis, the conclusions of what has been discovered will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5
RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

As has been noted in the first chapter of this study, it is generally agreed upon by educators in the field of foreign languages that one major area of study of a particular target language is the culture of the given language. Culture is one of the five components of the *National Standards of Foreign Languages*. Culture is an aspect of foreign language that should not and must not be ignored. The textbook is the first vehicle in which a student encounters the Latin and Spanish culture in a Spanish I course. It is part of the curriculum over which the Spanish teacher has little control, except in the selection of the textbook itself and as this study has shown, the choice is limited by both the state of Georgia's approved textbook list and the manner in which the textbooks present cultural material.

The Spanish teacher plays a critical role in conveying information to the students concerning culture of Latin America and Spain. This can be done through descriptions of travel to countries where the people speak Spanish. The teacher can also have the students research various aspects of Spanish and Latin culture. Unfortunately, with the manner in which the publishers of particular textbooks present cultural information through photography, essays, and vocabulary, the students end up having a one-sided view of Latin and Spanish culture.

Today's textbooks present the student with a variety of color images by which they can immerse themselves in a foreign culture. The fact that the current generation of

textbooks have countless pictures to stimulate the interest of the students demonstrates the ability of the publishers to reach the students and help them understand more about the target culture. By having such a capability through modern technological advances it appears that the authors and publishers of the current textbooks can promote true cultural understanding. The publishers of *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje* seem to have put together a myriad of information with the photographs, drawings, and cultural information.

Limits to study

The qualitative research conducted has examined three textbooks currently used in classrooms in the state of Georgia. *Realidades* was adopted by Effingham County while Bulloch County chose *Buen Viaje*. Effingham County had previously used *Paso a Paso*. These textbooks represent a good cross-section of the textbooks available in the state of Georgia. The two most current textbooks are rather popular in various regions in Georgia. *Buen Viaje* and *Realidades* are two of the newest textbooks on the market as well. It is for this reason that schools are likely to continue using these textbooks over the next few years.

One of the most notable limitations of this study is the number of textbooks analyzed. Three were chosen for analysis. Other textbooks may have varying degrees of effectiveness in promoting a more accurate picture of cultural expressions of Latin America and Spain. Other textbooks may place more emphasis on the lower socioeconomic class. Also, other textbooks may put less importance on Spanish speaking regions in the United States and show more places in Latin America and Spain.

Another limitation is the choice of cultural material examined. It was my purpose to examine faulty examples of culture found in first year Spanish textbooks. Throughout

my research, I found numerous examples of the three textbooks providing adequate cultural representation, especially in areas such as art and literature. All three textbooks present cultural information in the areas of art and literature in a well-done manner to expose the first-year Spanish students to subjects they might not otherwise encounter. It was not my intention to create a negative study. I simply saw a great need in the area of cultural presentation of certain areas.

A final limitation is the material which was covered in the study. At times, in order to avoid redundancy I chose not to include examples which would not have added to my research evidence. A person conducting a similar study might in fact, find other examples of what I was researching. Overall, I believe I found enough evidence to support the conclusions described in the summary. While the first year Spanish textbooks are flashy, much substantial information was omitted when the authors discussed cultural features.

Summary

The results of the analysis have shown various trends occurring in the three Spanish textbooks. Even though, the textbooks were published by three separate publishing companies, it was discovered that themes are similar, along with the vocabulary used throughout the texts. From a linguistic perspective, it is understandable that all three textbooks would bear certain similarities. In terms of introducing new vocabulary, it is not surprising that the overlapping of information would occur. Also, within the Latin America and Spanish world, specific places are known for their beauty and historical importance. Considerations have been made concerning these types of location within the study.

From a critical theoretical point of view, seeing how the publishing companies produce a textbook, more to create an acceptable profit rather than a textbook which will give the students a strong resource to provide a quality education for the students is extremely important in understanding how textbook companies operate. As has been noted in this study, numerous examples of how the textbook companies cut costs, and by doing so, create a cultural vacuum in some cases.

Therefore, in the final analysis with the three textbooks, three notable trends occur. First, we have seen that the publishers and authors overwhelmingly emphasize the small group of the wealthiest socioeconomic class in Latin America. They do this by describing cultural phenomena without explaining every aspect. The wealthy elite represents a tiny fraction of the population in Latin America and Spain, but the authors of the three textbooks have an incredible proportion of examples of this particular socioeconomic class.

Second, certain cultural realities of Latin America are virtually ignored. The majority of Latin American citizens live impoverished lives. Very few examples of poverty are shown in any of the textbooks. Other economic realities are ignored or barely discussed. Open-air markets are rarely mentioned if at all, and these are the foundation of shopping in Latin America and Spanish society. Information concerning housing and social problems, such as population growth in Latin America are also ignored.

Third, the publishers and authors subtly attempt to reinforce cultural values found in the United States upon the students by placing them in a Latin American context. Examples of this tendency is to show recycling and environmental projects and pictures

of handicapped young people. Another example is seen in *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje* with the emphasis upon nutritional concerns about food and its content.

Finally, we have seen instances where publishers have included material which has nothing or little to do with Latin culture just to save money and produce a textbook which is colorful, but mere fluff when examining the actual cultural content. Examples include the presentation of photographs taken in Spanish-speaking areas of the United States, other photographs showing areas which are not part of Latin America such as the picture of the youths with the Golden Gate Bridge in the background, a photograph of the Cayman Islands. Another example is how the authors of *Realidades* describe the oil production of Venezuela.

Photography and illustrations

In the analysis of the three textbooks, *Paso a Paso*, *Realidades*, and *Buen Viaje* several conclusions can be made by examining the information shown in the previous chapter. In chapter 4 it has been discovered that while many photographs and illustrations are present, a one-sidedness occurs because of the tendency to focus upon one specific segment of Latin American society. This is done throughout all three textbooks. The discussion of Viña del Mar along Chile's coast is evidence of the manner in which the authors emphasize the most well-to-do group of people in Latin America. One also sees photographs of Punto del Este in Uruguay which is also an exclusive area. It is this one segment which most closely resembles our own culture. Certain issues have been glossed over or ignored to the students' detriment.

The analysis of the three textbooks has shown that the authors and publishers have selected to show the very best parts of Latin America. The wealthier members of society have been photographed. Illustrations have been presented, showing people participating in activities which are rarely done. Apart from activities such as rollerblading and football which are hardly not done in Latin America. Other activities such as skiing are only done in less than a handful of nations due to geographic conditions. Along with these drawings, vocabulary words have been used which reflect a more Americanized view of Latin American and Spanish life.

Another example of cost cutting to aid in increased profits for the publishers are seen in the photography and illustrations. The exact same photographs are shown in both *Paso a Paso* and *Realidades*. On page 31 of *Realidades* and on page 28 of *Paso a Paso* contain the same picture of a café at the Plaza Mayor in Madrid, Spain. It is not simply a question of the same café, but rather the students enjoying beverages are the same people. *Paso a Paso* was published in 1996. This particular café may not even be in business today. Another such example is the photograph of the girl skiing in Chile. In *Paso a Paso* the photograph is found on pages 230 and 231. In the *Realidades* textbook, the same photograph is seen on page 57. These are only two examples of how the publishers attempt to save money. The use of skiing as an example of winter sports is quite difficult to defend as has been mentioned earlier. Skiing is limited to a relatively small percentage of the Latin American population.

In certain cases, the authors have used words such as shopping mall and to go shopping, along with the photographs which accompany such sections promote the consumer capitalism that is ever-present in today=s society. Evidence of this particular

tendency can be found in certain areas of all three of the textbooks. Most notable is where the authors choose to use the word dollars to name the price of a jacket on sale in a drawing in the *Paso a Paso* textbook.

In all three textbooks there is a lessening of importance upon the open-air markets where the majority of people do their shopping. With the exception of tourist markets such as Chichicastenango in Guatemala, the idea of an open-air market is virtually ignored in the photographs in the three textbooks. Instead the authors and publishers prefer to show the one mall, Galerías Pacificas located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Photographs of Galerías Pacificas appear in all three of the first year textbooks analyzed. Photographs of shopping malls are in abundance yet the open-air markets which tend to dominate the economic scene in both Latin America and Spain are few in number in all three of the textbooks.

In other cases tools and appliances used in the United States but not generally in Latin America give the readers of said textbooks a misguided perspective. For example, in *Paso a Paso*, the authors show the use of lawnmowers, washer and dryers, and vacuum cleaners. These appliances and tools are not usually seen when one lives in Latin America or Spain. However, these same appliances and tools are quite common in the United States.

The continuous showing of exclusive areas is another area of concern. Very few photographs exist in any of the three textbooks of restaurants where a member of the middle or lower socioeconomic class would dine. Instead, the authors show restaurants where the wealthier inhabitants of a nation or tourists would go to eat. Many exclusive restaurants are present throughout Latin America. However, many more restaurants

where inexpensive, but quality food can be obtained exist in Latin American nations as well as Spain.

Another example of how the authors attempt to put U.S. cultural values upon Latin America and Spain is seen in the photographs showing handicapped individuals (most commonly seen in wheelchairs). The difficulty in the authors doing this is twofold. First, the accessibility for handicapped individuals is not the same Latin America and Spain as it is in the United States. The family is still the center of social structure in Latin America and Spain. Therefore each family would accommodate a handicapped individual. Second, the photos which are shown in textbooks are of people who are fairly wealthy because they are participating in activities that poorer members of Latin American society would not be able to join.

Vocabulary

In this study we have seen words chosen to be taught for the benefit of the students apparently without regard for the target culture. It is understandable that the authors desire that the students use vocabulary for communicative practice. Speaking Spanish is one of the four basic aspects of language learning. However, the vocabulary chosen reflects the emphasis upon cultural values which the authors choose. Cultural misunderstandings can occur quite easily if the Spanish teacher is not careful. Since *Paso a Paso*, *Realidades*, and *Buen Viaje* include vocabulary words such as football, to vacuum, to cut the grass, and even the word garage (used as a place to store a vehicle) which are words which are quite uncommon in Latin America and Spain. Instead these words represent the lifestyle of persons living in the United States. In addition, some words would be used in Latin America and Spain but implicitly the meaning reflects the

consumer capitalistic nature of the United States. Examples of these words are shopping mall, discount store, cola (taken from Coca-cola), dollars, and to go shopping. These words show the way the people in the United States live rather than how people in Latin America and Spain live. This subtle emphasis upon the features of consumer capitalism which appears throughout the textbooks does nothing to improve the cultural understanding of the students who most likely have little knowledge of Latin American and Spanish cultural. Moreover, in many instances the authors and publishers create a false image of Latin America and Spain. Other words such as market, other specialty shops, and words that describe the way of life for the more impoverished groups living in Latin America are ignored. The relationship between vocabulary and pictures and illustrations is strong in all three books because current thought in language instruction today is focused upon the visual realm in today's textbooks. Instead of emphasizing elements of Latin American cultural realities, the authors of all three textbooks have decided to promote the cultural values of the United States. Evidence of this particular trend can be found in the use of such words as to conserve, to recycle, paper, and plastic. By inserting these cultural values from the United States, the authors destroy possible opportunities for more accurate cultural dissonance.

Essays and cultural paragraphs

When one considers the essays and paragraphs which the Spanish textbooks contain in some form or another in all three of the books, it is important to note that it is here where cultural content is explicitly presented to the first year Spanish students. Even when the teacher does not use the cultural sections, they are available for the students to read. Of the three textbooks, Paso a Paso has the least amount of cultural material in

paragraph form, although the authors present at least one cultural essay in each chapter. These essays are more lengthy than the shorter versions present in *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje*. *Buen Viaje* has numerous amounts of relatively short cultural essays written in Spanish to help improve the reading comprehension of the students. In many ways the simplistic nature of the vocabulary does not deter the opportunity for cultural dissonance. The difficulty with *Buen Viaje* is a problem which occurs in all three textbooks and it is how the authors promote the wealthier socioeconomic class which is a minority group especially in Latin America. Within *Buen Viaje* the cultural essays present accurate material in certain circumstances and then in other situations present contradictory information. An example is seen on page 260 where the authors describe a teenage girl who goes to the doctor in order to get a prescription, and on the following page the authors note how Latin Americans do not need to go to a doctor to buy prescription drugs at pharmacies. In *Realidades*, the authors use lengthy essays as was done in its predecessor, *Paso a Paso*. In addition, they use short cultural paragraphs that are shown throughout the book on virtually every two pages or so. These cultural paragraphs named “Fondos Culturales” are usually accompanied by a photograph. The paragraphs are short but contain a great deal of information because they are so prevalent throughout the textbook. However, the copious amounts of cultural paragraphs tend to lead to a problem because the authors and publishers attempt to have so much information that cultural understanding is damaged. Some of the cultural paragraphs do nothing to enhance the cultural dissonance of the students. Two examples appearing in *Realidades* are the cultural vignette on Rebecca Lobo and another is the one discussing the organization, Americorps. The only related item concerning the woman basketball player is her

surname. The authors do not even explain the meaning of the player's name. The information on Americorps has nothing whatsoever to do with Latin or Spanish culture. Perhaps some volunteers who work for Americorps happen to have relatives who are of Latin descent. The authors never include that bit of information. Both of these examples not only do not add to the cultural understanding for the students, but instead border on the absurd in terms of cultural information.

Recommendations

It would be unfair for me to critique the three textbooks without offering positive alternatives to the current ways that authors of Spanish textbooks relay cultural information to the students. Although culture is part of the five elements of language learning, it is considered a distant fifth as compared to the other components. Overall, the amount of cultural information is probably adequate for textbooks being used today. *Paso a Paso* lacks the volume of cultural photographs and written material compared to the other two textbooks. *Buen Viaje* and *Realidades* have a sufficient amount of cultural information. Since *Paso a Paso* essentially serves as an historical model for the other two textbooks, the weakness of lack of cultural material is not as essential since few schools are currently using *Paso a Paso*. *Realidades* and *Buen Viaje* represent the current crop of Spanish textbooks being used today. As a first step in redressing weaknesses in cultural content the authors and publishers should consider a balance of information. The stark realities of life in Latin America today is that for the vast majority of people it is difficult to make a decent living wage. Evidence is found in the increasing number of immigrants coming to the United States from Latin American nations. If great economic opportunity

exist in the Latin American region, then few people would put themselves in a situation where they do not understand the language or culture of the United States.

Therefore, the authors and publishers need to provide cultural information to show the effects of poverty upon the Latin American population. Instead of focusing upon the very rich, photography showing the economic plight of the Latin American majority. Cultural essays also should address the problems of poverty in Latin America. The culture of Latin America and Spain is rich and interesting, and by not showing aspects of the culture robs the students of great opportunities of enrichment. Any examples of cultural information which is suspect whether it be with photographs or written material needs to be eliminated. This does nothing to enable to the cultural understanding of the students.

Another area which needs to be addressed is the constant showing of Latin areas in the United States. Showing photographs of housing in Los Angeles does nothing to enhance the cultural understanding of the first year Spanish students. While it is important to show cultural expressions present here in the United States, the authors and publishers would be better off by limiting the amount of material related to the United States. Some places in the United States have historical significance regarding Latin American or Spanish culture. However, by having copious amounts of material, or placing some of the material toward the beginning of the book

Finally, the publishers need to examine the purpose of providing textbooks. In today=s consumer capitalist environment in the United States, it is easy to get caught up in creating profitable results. The true profit though, is in aiding students to learn more about the subjects they study in school. By cutting costs, such as using the same

photographs for two different textbooks, and showing Spanish speaking areas in the United States because it saves money on travel expenses, does much damage to the students who have no real say in their subjects they are studying. Large regions of Latin America and beautiful cities in Spain are not even mentioned or shown in photographs because of the space spent promoting areas in the United States. Showing Mexican restaurants located in the United States as both *Buen Viaje* and *Realidades* do, does nothing to improve the cultural dissonance of students studying Spanish for the first time.

Suggestions for textbook improvements

It is at this juncture that I would like to propose particular suggestions upon which textbook publishers may create first-year Spanish textbooks which are much more balanced in how they are able to portray Spanish culture. Possibilities exist which may bring the best of both worlds into the realm of Spanish textbooks. Students need to be able to relate to the kinds of lives their counterparts lead in Spanish-speaking nations. When photographs show certain activities such as skiing, it needs to be pointed out somewhere near the photograph that skiing is a sport limited to very small regions within the Spanish-speaking world. The ideal textbook would include an essay or at least an explanation (in either English or simple-to-understand Spanish). This could be very easily done without a great deal of expense to the publishers.

Another element that would add much more cultural relevance is to show vocabulary words that are much more likely to be used in the United States in a separate place within the textbooks. Each of the textbooks contains a section where supplementary vocabulary is given to the students. Vocabulary words such as *cortar la cesped* or *usar la aspiradora* could easily be placed in a non-essential vocabulary section. Teachers could

incorporate these words if they felt the need to bring more relevance to the students' education in a foreign language.

Some items should be completely left out such as the example of Rebecca Lobo. These instances of what could be termed irrelevant culture are not needed, and in all honesty add nothing at all to the cultural knowledge of the students. An ideal textbook would even leave out the notions of political correctness such as showing people in wheelchairs. Other means exist to instill values and awareness besides planting photographs and images of handicapped people in a cultural setting far different from our own. By attempting to portray our own cultural values in Spanish textbooks, it diminishes the richness of the Latin and Spanish culture.

A further method of creating balance in the texts is to do cultural comparisons. For example, students could be shown photographs of the different socioeconomic groups and the authors could add vignettes or even complete essays describing the variation between the groups of people. By following this suggestion, the authors would help students to take a step toward much greater understanding of what life is truly like in Latin America.

Suggestions for further research

Changes occur rather frequently in the textbook publishing world. Evidence of this fact can be seen when one compares *Paso a Paso* to *Realidades*. *Realidades*, in general is much more colorful. As we move deeper into the 21st century, the trend of producing colorful, vivid textbooks is likely to continue. Therefore, another study would be helpful if it occurred after five years or so. Furthermore, the present study only deals

with three Spanish language textbooks. If the results of this study are any indication, other foreign languages, such as French should be explored as well.

Michael Apple and others have found numerous problems in textbooks of other disciplines. A follow-up study in other fields would produce similar results. More in-depth research could be focused on specific content areas. One of the major problems in both social studies and science is that information continues to increase in quantity. For example, each year that passes increases the amount of time that history textbooks must cover. The Vietnam War occurred began over forty years ago, and yet in history classes that era is rarely covered. With all the scientific breakthroughs, science textbooks are almost impossible to maintain current knowledge.

In a field such as Spanish, one might tend to think that changes do not occur. However, this is not the case. Language evolves quite rapidly due to increase in overall knowledge, cultural shifts, and other phenomena. It is for this reason that the further research into the presentation of culture is necessary. Changes will occur over time, and further research is recommended in order to examine these changes.

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