

The Discovery of America? Representations of Columbus and Indigenous Peoples in Spanish Textbooks

¿El descubrimiento de América? Representaciones de Colón y los indígenas en los libros de texto españoles

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how five Spanish textbooks used in 2° ESO teach Columbus and his interaction with the indigenous peoples of America. Previous research has tended to focus on the diachronic evolution of textbook discourse or has compared the textbooks used in different countries. Furthermore, researchers have often assumed—or at least implied—that the “official” discourse found in a nation’s corpus of textbooks is more or less homogenous and hence can be boiled down to a set of standard traits. This paper, in contrast, highlights the meaningful differences between various Spanish textbooks’ treatment of the so-called “Discovery of America.” Despite this diversity of approach, none of books examined will satisfy recent calls for minimizing Eurocentric perspectives in teaching students about the Americas.

Keywords: Discovery of America; Columbus; indigenous peoples; Eurocentrism; textbook; 2° ESO.

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza cómo cinco libros de texto españoles usados en 2° de la ESO tratan el tema de Colón y su interacción con las poblaciones indígenas de América. Hasta ahora, las investigaciones realizadas se centraban en la evolución diacrónica del discurso seguido en los libros de texto o comparaban los ejemplares usados en diferentes países. Con frecuencia, los investigadores han dado por hecho (a veces implícitamente) que el discurso “oficial” que rige el conjunto de libros de texto de una nación es más o menos homogéneo y, por tanto, puede ser sintetizado en una serie de trazos. Por el contrario, este trabajo subraya la existencia de diferencias significativas en el tratamiento que los textos españoles hacen del llamado “descubrimiento de América”. Así, y pese a los distintos acercamientos al tema, ninguno de los libros examinados satisface la necesaria minimización de la perspectiva eurocéntrica a la hora de explicar la historia de las Américas.

Palabras Clave: El descubrimiento de América; Colón; poblaciones indígenas; eurocentrismo; libro de texto; 2° de la ESO.

“En la escuela, la maestra nos enseñó que Balboa, el conquistador español... había sido... el primer hombre que había visto esos dos mares [el Pacífico y el Atlántico] a la vez. Yo levanté la mano:...
—Los indios, ¿eran ciegos?”
—Eduardo Galeano

1. Introduction

Often hailed as the start of the Modern Age, Christopher Columbus’ journeys to America have long played a pivotal role in Spanish national identity (Carretero 2002; Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera 2017). As is often the case with key historical events, there have been equal parts of remembering and forgetting

involved in the telling of his voyages. This is especially the case within the corpus of textbooks, which Raymond Williams (1989) has aptly dubbed “the machinery of selective tradition.” As Atienza Cerezo and Van Dijk have further argued:

La mayoría de los libros de texto suprimirán o mitigarán, por tanto, la historia propia de explotación colonial, racismo, agresión y tortura, y, en su lugar, enfatizará las acciones heroicas, victorias y obras maestras culturales del *Nosotros*. (74)

Unsurprisingly, the so-called “discovery of America” has been no exception to this process. Many unsavory details have often been left out of the “official” story so that the book’s narrative can present the nation and its past in a more positive, uncritical light.¹ This way of doing school history is in line with a “romantic” understanding of the past (Lopez *et al.* 2015) and seeks to reinforce what Benedict Anderson (2006) famously dubbed “imagined communities.”

Developments in social science pedagogy, however, have begun to question the value of this mode of history teaching, arguing that critical thinking or citizenship-based skills ought to take center stage rather than seeking to foster nationalism (Barton and Levstik 2004). As postcolonialist thinking wins wider acceptance and has chipped away at long-held narratives, educators have called for new and more critical engagements with Columbus’ journeys that move away from the type of Eurocentric paradigm that Eduardo Galeano handily mocks in this paper’s epigraph. Indeed, these Eurocentric narratives that glorify Columbus as a heroic discoverer have already lost their stranglehold in Latin America (Bellatti and Gámez 2013). Such long-held official stories, however, have endured in Spain.

¹ This trend also extends to Anglophone books; see Bickford 2013 for a good discussion of the problem in general. Due to space restrictions, this paper cannot fully delve into the problem of systematic omissions in textbooks’ treatment of Columbus. In fact, only one important omission will be analyzed in the following pages.

In a study of textbooks from 1994, Carretero *et al.* (2002) observed a strong pattern of Eurocentricism in Spanish textbooks, which starkly contrasted with the stories found in their Mexican counterparts: instead of a story of heroism and benevolent conquest, Mexican textbooks focalized their narratives through the eyes and experiences of native peoples and downplayed the importance of Columbus as the event’s protagonist. In a call to action, Bellatti and Gámez (2013) lament that current curriculum requirements have helped Eurocentricism endure in the Spanish educational system. Most recently, Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera (2017) have continued to denounce romantic and nationalistic uses of the Columbus story:

La enseñanza de la historia debe huir del simple objetivo de transmitir las historias “oficiales”, y buscar que al alumno se exponga a esas narrativas ya hechas y las cuestione, explore fuentes contradictorias, y pueda explicar y comprender un acontecimiento, sus antecedentes y sus consecuencias sobre el devenir de una sociedad. (p. 460)

Breaking away from such narratives is often associated with the so-called New Social Studies or New History.² One fruitful approach, suggested by Bellatti and Gámez (2013), is replacing old narratives with intercultural ones. Such an approach encourages “un diálogo intercultural y transnacional, basado en el análisis crítico de los contenidos históricos que se imparten en las aulas” (pp. 43-4).³

This paper seeks to analyze the state of the Columbus narrative in contemporary textbooks and answer the following question: are these new approaches for which educators have advocated reflected in the current generation of textbooks?

² See Foster 2012 and Mycock 2017 for good discussions.

³ For a history of cosmopolitan approaches to teaching history, see Hansen 2012. For the lack of intercultural approaches in the Spanish educational system, see Tuts 2007.

2. Metodology

This study consists of a qualitative analysis of 2^o-ESO textbooks used in Aragón in the 2017-18 academic year. I present a descriptive analysis of the chapters in which students learn about Columbus' voyages to America, including each chapter's overall narrative structure. I have paid particular attention to the following aspects of the textbooks:

1. The idea of "discovery."
2. The treatment of Columbus' interaction with Native American peoples.

By examining these aspects of Spanish textbooks, this study analyzes if and to what extent textbooks have moved away from an uncritical Eurocentric narrative towards a more critical and interculturally-oriented one championed by many researchers.

Unlike several previous studies that have presented a snapshot of trends within a larger corpus or have analyzed the differences between books from various countries, this paper focuses on the synchronic variations within Spanish textbook discourse. Previous studies have minimized the competition between authors and publishers to define and propel the "official" narrative. To return to Raymond Williams (1989), when constructing any given ideology, scholars and historians tend to simplify, boil down and condense. Any body of discourse, however, is always more varied and heterogenous, painted in different shades and hues. Accordingly, we will see that there are meaningful differences between various textbooks, even if we are inclined to find the general treatment of Columbus' journeys unsatisfactory.

3. Textbooks

3.1 General Observations and Overview

I have studied five textbooks from five different publishers.⁴ To give a quick glimpse of each chapter, I provide the following charts, which show the number of pages that deal with Columbus, Native Americans, and other topics:

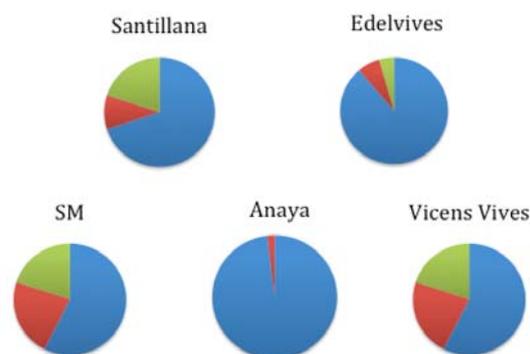


Figure 1. Relative space dedicated to Columbus (red), indigenous peoples (green), and other topics (blue)

While most chapters, as we shall see, are structured around the idea of the beginning of the "Modern Age," the amount of space dedicated to Columbus' journeys varies considerably. While most books give Columbus and native peoples roughly the same amount of attention, there is one that dedicates more space to Columbus (Anaya) and another that dedicates more to the indigenous population of America (Santillana). Figure two enhances this snapshot by showing the number of questions or activities dedicated to Columbus and indigenous peoples.

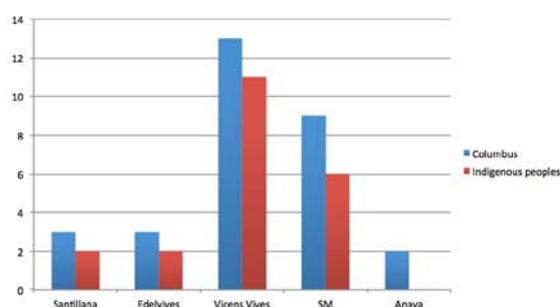


Figure 2. Number of exercises dedicated to Columbus and indigenous peoples

⁴ Anaya has been briefly discussed in Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera 2017, but here I hope to provide a fuller picture.

In all books, there are more questions and activities dedicated to Columbus, even if native peoples receive either an equal or greater number of pages and paragraphs. This is significant, since questions and activities can be taken as a rough indicator of what authors and publishers deem most important.

In short, Table 1 how Columbus plays a more central role in the roots of Modernity in some books, whereas in others his journeys comprise a small fraction of a much larger mosaic about the coming of a new era. On average, Columbus receives more space and focus than native peoples do. Tables 1 and 2 clearly mark the book published by Anaya as an outlier since is no space given to indigenous cultures in the chapter on the beginning of Modernity. As we shall see, indigenous peoples and cultures are sometimes subtly contrasted with the central theme of Modernity. Though usually fleeting and minimal, such tropes of primitivism do continue in a well established vein of Eurocentric thinking.

That said, only a close analysis of each book can give an accurate picture of the treatment of these two topics. Santillana, for instance, only dedicates half a page to Columbus in its main sections. He most prominently features in a less conspicuous section of the book: round-up activities. These sorts of activities are supplemental and can easily be skipped, for instance, by teachers who are in a rush to hurry through.⁵

In addition to the amount of attention a topic receives, the type of attention is equally important. Information about Columbus is largely *historical*, whereas information about American peoples and cultures could be better described as overwhelmingly *anthropological*. This plays into a general tendency to place American cultures in what Bellati y Gámez 2013 describe as “un tiempo histórico atemporal” (47-8) or what Edward Said (1978) has famously called “essentialism.” That is to say, American societies are presented as relatively static and unaffected by the passage of time. The implication is that

these people only enter into the ebb and flow of history in 1492. The ubiquitous use of the term “precolombino” in the textbooks further reinforces this concept.⁶

Another relevant statistic is the number of times a book uses the word *descubrimiento* or the verb *descubrir* (I have also given a count for the words *explorar* and *exploración* as a point of comparison).⁷ As scholars and even several textbooks openly discuss, the idea of “discovery” is loaded and quite controversial (Carretero 2002; Lázaro Arbués 2016), since it minimizes the perspective of native peoples, for whom America did not need to be discovered. Figure 3 counts the use of these words throughout the each chapter.

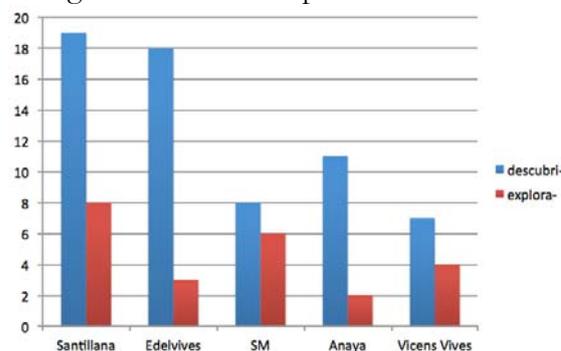


Figura 3. Frequency of the two different roots in the textbooks

Here we also find considerable variation with Santillana using the root nearly three times as often as Vicens Vives. Interestingly, books that do not dedicate much space to Columbus can still heavily rely on the lexicon of discovery, whereas as other books that deal with Columbus at length can use the word with a much lower frequency.

⁵ For a similar observation, see Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera 2017: 463.

⁶ This term is used liberally in all textbooks. It is clearly Eurocentric and could be replaced with a series of other phrases.

⁷ There are indeed other lexemes that could be analyzed, such as *llegada* or *encuentro*. I have focused on only these two to give a brief snapshot.

3.2: Santillana: “La Edad Moderna, una nueva era”

Santillana embeds Columbus’ journey in a fairly distinctive narrative framework. Though the title of the chapter is typical, the book focuses almost exclusively on exploration and indigenous America. Only in the chapter’s final section, the focus shifts to the larger political and societal changes that most books have chosen to treat in greater detail. This focus may be surprising if we remember that only half a page is dedicated directly to Columbus’ journeys. Instead, other topics receive extended treatment. Magallanes and Elcano, for instance, are the subject of the chapter’s opening two pages; the next two pages deal with the world known to Europeans, trade with the east, and advances in navigation, all of which is followed by a giant two-page diagram of a caravela.⁸ The beginning of this section is important: the book claims that Marco Polo’s thirteenth-century journey to the Orient infatuated Europe with the idea of long distance travel and trade (p.166). If Marco Polo whetted the European appetite, it was the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the resulting geopolitical shifts that forced Castilla and Portugal to look towards the Atlantic. These are the adduced causes for the Age of Explorations.

The following spread deals exclusively with Portuguese explorers. Here Santillana gives much more detail than its competitors and puts Portuguese and Castilian exploration on a relatively equal footing. Santillana is the only book to acknowledge that the sea was a dangerous place (p. 170).

The chapter’s third section deals with Castilian explorations. Surprisingly, there is no mention of different theories about the shape of the earth; the book simply states that Columbus “estaba convencido de que la Tierra era esférica y de que era posible llegar a Asia navegando hacia el oeste” (p.172). Many other things go unmentioned in this section, including the *Capitulaciones de Santa Fe*. Most notably, there is no mention of contact between the explorers and native peoples of the Caribbean.

⁸ As my colleague Sergio Sánchez Martínez cleverly put it, the picture is a “giant Playmobile boat.”

Section 4 introduces indigenous America. After stating that the majority of peoples in America led “formas de vida primitivas,” Santillana claims that there were three large civilizations. The Maya, Aztecs, and Inca all receive a paragraph and some sort of visual representation. Various activities in the book seek to help students differentiate between the three cultures. No mention is made of the native peoples with whom Columbus himself came into contact. Needless to say, the use of the adjective “primitivo” creates a contrast between native peoples and the chapter’s central concept of Modernity.

The final section of the chapter deals with social and economic transformations. The “geographic discoveries” are credited with increasing prosperity and trade. This positive evaluation is passing, but noteworthy. The book refuses to take on the legacy of these explorations head-on, instead opting for more a subtle and positive evaluation at the end of the chapter.

3.3 Edelvives: “Los inicios de la Edad Moderna”

Edelvives couches Columbus’ journeys in a different narrative structure that is more politically focused. The chapter begins with changes in European monarchies, society and the economy. While “geographic discoveries” are mentioned in the section on the economy, England—rather than Castilla or Portugal—is adduced as an example.

After painting a pan-European picture, Edelvives turns to the marriage of Fernando and Isabel, which was “el germen de la España moderna” (p.160). Special emphasis is placed on the role that religion played in political choices. The growing administration and resulting stability, it is said, allowed for expansion in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This is the stated reason for exploration and expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries (p.163).

Though the book’s next section is called “el descubrimiento de América”, the first page of the section deals with Portuguese expeditions. The implication is that these voyages were Little more than a prelude to Columbus’. This

structuring device would presumably not be found in Portuguese textbooks and reduces the importance of these explorations. The fall of Constantinople is alluded to passingly, but not stressed. The economic importance of Africa for Portugal is highlighted, though Castilla's financial motivations for exploring the Atlantic are not explicitly laid out.

After Portugal and before Castilla, Edelvives does something utterly unique: American civilizations are introduced to students before Columbus is even mentioned. In fact, this is the only book in which “pre-Columbian” peoples actually come before Columbus!⁹ Edelvives, however, does not include detailed information about these civilizations (only a single page with scant text). Additionally, the book states that besides the big three civilizations there were other tribes whose “desarrollo jerárquico y cultural era menos que el de los grandes imperios” (p. 166). While this phrase is less troublesome than “primitivo,” the same implications are at play here. By looking at the map of America, students could deduce that the peoples Columbus encountered were among the “lesser” ones. The latent concept of primitivism is further developed in the section's final sentence: “[...] a la llegada de los europeos ninguna cultura americana conocía avances como la rueda o la metalurgia” (p.167). While the book eschews controversial vocabulary, the inclusion of this somewhat gratuitous fact upholds old ideas that these native peoples were unsophisticated and that it was the Europeans who brought real culture and technology to the continent. As with the previous book, this portrait of indigenous America contrasts with the overarching theme of Modernity.

Edelvives next presents three subsections on the Castilian expeditions, including the conquest of the Canary Islands, which is described as “un ensayo para la conquista y colonización de América” (p. 168). Next, the book turns to

Columbus. He is portrayed as “un experimentado navegante,” familiar with the theories of Toscanelli. His pitch to and rejection by Portugal are narrated as well as his long negotiations with the Catholic Monarchs. The four voyages are introduced with dates, names of ships, and places. The section ends with the Treaty of Tordesillas and hence reintroduces the central role of politics into the narrative.

Like Santillana, there is absolutely no mention of Columbus' interaction with native peoples. In a quotation from Columbus' diary, students simply read that “el almirante salió a tierra y tomó posesión de la isla por el rey y la reina” (p. 169). It's almost as if no one was there.

3.4 Vicens Vives: “La época de los grandes descubrimientos geográficos”

Despite the chapter's name, Vicens Vives' narrative arc is structured around the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, whose “reinado [...] marcó el paso de la Edad Media a la Edad Moderna en la Península Ibérica” (p. 205). And indeed, these figures permeate the chapter to a much greater extent than they do in other textbooks.

The chapter begins with a two sections on the new monarchy, which unlike other books, is not placed in a larger European framework. A striking aspect of the chapter is the repeated emphasis on the principle of each kingdom's “autonomía e independencia,” a topic which undoubtedly continues to be relevant in Spanish society today. Despite this degree of independence, the book stresses that the two kingdoms were joined by religion and foreign policy. Given the prominence of religion in this narrative, the treatment of the Inquisition is also noteworthy. Though the possibility of being burnt at the stake is mentioned, the brutality of the institution is largely minimized.

Section three turns to the economy in Castilla and Aragón, stressing that things slowly but surely improved for everyone. The stress on the economy ties into the introduction to section four, “la llegada a un nuevo continente.” The fall of Constantinople is given as the cause for European exploration of the Atlantic.

⁹ That said, these civilizations are still treated under the heading of the “Discovery.” As Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera 2017: 460 have argued, this general tendency in textbooks clearly suggests that these people do not have any value in and of themselves, but only in relation to Europe.

Like Edelvives, Vicens Vives treats Portuguese explorations as a prelude to Columbus'. While Portuguese commercial interests in Africa as well as Días and de Gama are touched upon, The book fails to mention Columbus' botched negotiations with Portugal. It is worth noting that Vicens Vives is the only book that does not use a map to visually represent the journeys of Días and de Gama. This minimizes the significance of these figures and allots more prominence to Columbus. Vicens Vives is also the only book to give certain details, such as the role of the Pinzón brothers or the size of Columbus' crew.

Vicens Vives almost completely avoids the words *descubrir* or *descubrimiento* in its initial section on Portuguese and Castilian voyages. Instead, the editors have opted for more neutral vocabulary, such as *explorar*, *expedición* and *llegada*. This is hardly by chance. In fact, the word “descubrimiento” is singled out in a subsequent activity as problematic:

Cuando hablamos de descubrimiento no debemos olvidar que en América vivían diversas civilizaciones antes de la llegada de los europeos. Además, es probable que Colón no fuera el primer europeo en llegar. (p. 214)

The authors have shown hesitation about the concept of discovery and have implicitly teased out its Eurocentric nature. That said, by speaking of the arrival to a “new” continent in the section's heading, the book falls into the same problematic way of thinking: the continent is only “new” if we focalize our narrative and analysis exclusively through a European lens. Furthermore, the lexicon of discovery crops later in the chapter (e.g. p. 215 and 223). Though the book has sought to police its usage, it cannot totally avoid the concept of discovery.

Vicens Vives dedicates an entire page to Columbus' so-called “error” and grounds his beliefs and miscalculations about the earth in both Greek and contemporary scientific thought. The theme is later followed up in a series of activities about changing representation of the earth from Antiquity to the Modern Age. Another page is dedicated to the question ¿Cuándo comprendieron que se trataba de un

nuevo continente?, in which students read about Núñez de Balboa and Amerigo Vespucci. An interesting question posed by the book is whether or not it is “justo” that America is called America (i.e. instead of something like Colombia).

The book next turns to native peoples. Though the three main civilizations are mentioned, the book only discusses the Aztecs in any detail. We are told about the life of a farmer, explained how the game *tlachtli* was played and shown a half-page image of what a city might have looked like. Several activities—which are not unlike others scattered throughout Vicens Vives—invite students to identify and empathize with the indigenous peoples. The next two pages discuss religion, social hierarchy and pyramids. Like Edelvives, Vicens Vives makes sure to highlight (literally) that no indigenous people used the wheel or iron. Students are not asked to marvel at the accomplishments of the Incas without the wheel, but simply to note its absence.

Though regulated to a series of activities at the end of the chapter, Vicens Vives does acknowledge that Columbus came into contact with native peoples. There are a series of questions based around the well-known engraving by Theodor de Bry showing Columbus' first encounter with native peoples. The book attempts to call attention to the Eurocentric nature of the etching with the following question: “Este grabado fue elaborado por un europeo. ¿Crees que representa la escena de forma realista o idealizada?” By beginning to deconstruct the term “discovery,” asking students to empathize with Aztecs, and raising suspicions about the accuracy of European sources, Vicens Vives has gone some ways toward reflect growing concerns among researchers. That said, problematic assumptions can still be found lingering in the book's pages.

3.5 SM: “Los orígenes de la Edad Moderna”

SM begins with a two-page illustration in the vein of de Bry that places contact between Columbus and the indigenous population front and center. The illustration is accompanied by an extract from Columbus' diary, in which he

discusses trade with the natives and his desire to see whether he can get any gold from their king. The passage and picture are accompanied by activities that ask students to reflect on this interaction. Students, for example, imagine this meeting from the perspective of the natives, while another paragraph directly addresses the loaded nature of the phrase “descubrimiento de América.” Students are asked to research the “polémica” swirling around this phrase and come up with their own opinion. Last but not least, students are asked “¿Cómo era América antes de la llegada de los europeos y cómo se transformó la vida de sus habitantes tras la conquista de sus territorios?” (p. 7). Most books choose to ignore or downplay Columbus’ interaction with the natives of the Caribbean and do not reflect on any of the consequences; SM, however, has made it impossible to ignore these crucial questions. In fact, the book is unique in acknowledging Columbus’ greed and the negative effects of his arrival on the native population. While other books have skirted around controversial issues, SM has welcomed them to a certain degree.

The book’s first two sections deal with social, economic, and political changes across Europe, before turning to the Catholic Monarchs. The book examines the conquests of Aragón and Castilla, which are explained in both political and economic terms. This motivation for looking outwards is complicated in the next section where the importance of “la unidad religiosa” is underscored. Religion is said to have driven many political policies.

Section five brings us to “las grandes exploraciones.” Like Santillana, SM does not treat Portuguese voyages as the prelude to Columbus’ “discovery.” Three causes for the journeys are given: the need for new commercial routes after the fall of Constantinople, the desire to incorporate more territory and technological advances.

Though the book had raised concerns over the term “el descubrimiento de América,” the section on Columbus is nevertheless called “Castilla descubre un nuevo continente” (p.17). Columbus “knew” (sabía) that the earth was spherical and was able to gain the support of the Catholic Monarchs through the Capitulaciones

de Santa Fe, whose conditions are not laid out. The details of the first journey are given, whose “success” (éxito) led to three subsequent trips. SM also discusses the Treaty of Tordesillas as well as Magallanes and Elcano’s trip around the world.

Section six turns to “pre-Columbian” America, where the diversity of peoples and societies are immediately stressed: though some cultures were rather undeveloped, others proved to be great civilizations. The book differentiates between the Aztecs, Maya, and Inca by giving details about their economies, religions, and cultures. A later activity asks students to differentiate the three cultures from each other. SM is also careful to explain what each group was doing “[a] la llegada de los españoles.” The choice to better contextualize what was happening in 1492 before Columbus’ arrival begins to combat the idea of “un tiempo histórico atemporal” discussed above.

A final two-page section at the end of the chapter called “El descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo” brings the focus back to Columbus and reverts to many old problematic patterns. SM includes a long and dramatic passage from a secondary source about Columbus, which is accompanied by photograph of a monument. Of all the passages examined in this study, this section does the most to turn Columbus into a hero. He is a curious and brave adventurer sailing into the unknown looking for wealth and glory. Columbus’ journey is even compared to Alexander the Great’s eastern march. The other exercises in this section also rely heavily on the vocabulary of discovery.

The very last activity in the chapter delivers on a promise made on its first page. A three-paneled cartoon shows the phases in the relationship between the Spaniards and native peoples. It claims that at first natives thought the Europeans were gods, then men and finally realized they were “demonios” who forced them to work. Students are then told that the arrival of the Europeans led to a demographic catastrophe among indigenous people. Finally, the book reproduces a passage from Fray Antonio Montesinos, who goes unnamed, to demonstrate that some Europeans resisted the treatment of native peoples. While this final

passage does shed light on important philosophical and theological debates, its place at the chapter's conclusion seems to attempt to strike a somewhat exculpatory note.

The beginning and ending of SM's chapter stand out, since they acknowledge the perspectives of native peoples and show the ugly consequences of Columbus' voyages to an unparalleled degree. That said, the much of the chapter reverts to familiar themes and tropes that the book admits are "polemical." The inclusion of a dramatic passage heroizes Columbus to an unusual extent for the current generation of textbooks.

3.6 Anaya: "El inicio de la Edad Moderna. Los siglos XV y XVI"

Compared to other books, Anaya assigns Columbus a very small role in a much larger narrative that covers changes in the economy, politics, religion, art, and culture. The chapter begins with very general considerations about the Modern Age, during which, Anaya explains, the Spanish state emerged as a great power.¹⁰ Anaya then turns to two sections on "los descubrimientos." The book takes pains to stress that there were many factors that led to the explorations (political, economic, technological, religious and ideological). Compared to the other textbooks, Anaya places much more importance on causality.

The second section on "los descubrimientos" quickly covers nearly a century of history. Here, the book emphasizes economic motivations for many journeys: Portugal wanted gold and slaves, while Columbus "se interesó por [las] posibles riquezas" (p. 164). Students read that Columbus had failed to secure the patronage of Portugal before coming to an agreement with the Catholic Monarchs. We next learn that Columbus arrives to Guanahani and his subsequent three journeys are illustrated in a map. The final two paragraphs of the section turn to the Treaty of Tordesilla (described in detail) and then a brief mention of Núñez de Balboa and the voyage Magallanes and Elcano.

¹⁰ Anaya frequently uses the word Spain instead of saying Castilla and/or Aragón.

There is no discussion of Columbus' interaction with native peoples. In fact, there is no discussion of indigenous America anywhere in the chapter. All information about native peoples is put off until the subsequent chapter on the colonization of America. The lack of discussion of indigenous peoples is alarming. Not only does it betray a lack of interest or concern, but it hinders students from appreciating and understanding different cultures. As Bellati and Gámez 2013 have put it, "[l]a invisibilidad [...] imposibilita un juicio crítico al alumnado de secundaria" (p. 48). Anaya does not even attempt to give students the opportunity to learn about native peoples until they have already been subjugated.

Subsequent sections of the chapter turn to social and political changes and then the Reformation and Counter Reformation before one section on Humanism and three on the Renaissance. Compared to all other books, the scope and amount of material is vast. The focus is Eurocentric and tells a clear story of progress and development. The exclusion of native peoples' cultures in the chapter will alarm many educators.

4. Conclusions

This study emphasizes that a broad variety of approaches to Columbus exists in the current generation of Spanish textbooks. The differences between books demonstrate how the story has shifted in the Spanish educational system. Accordingly, several books have begun moving in directions for which researchers have advocated, though this remains an ongoing process. Given the many differences in the amount of space, tone and larger narrative structure, we find various arguments about the importance and relevance of Columbus' "discoveries." While books like Edelvives and Vicens Vives treat Portuguese voyages as a prelude to Columbus' climatic journeys, for instance, Anaya sails right by Columbus without giving him pride of place.

Perhaps the most striking difference is whether or not books discuss Columbus' interaction with native peoples. Vicens Vives and SM address the issue, while only the latter actually focuses on

the subject. In Santillana and Edelvives, there is a rather abrupt juxtaposition between European voyages and native cultures: students must fill in the logical connection between the two topics. This may reflect a sense of discomfort with a given topic or a desire to present a less problematic version of the Columbus story. Anaya, of course, does not mention indigenous peoples and hence provides the most striking version of the Eurocentric idea that America was waiting to be “discovered.”

While no books employ the alarming features found in previous generations of textbooks (Carretero 2002; Martínez Llorca and Moreno Vera 2017), we do not have to dig deep to find vestiges of the Eurocentric narratives that researchers have criticized. Though words like “savage” or “barbaric” are long gone, we still find suggestions of primitivism. While some books betray an interest in combatting these ideas, they nevertheless have not been fully purged from those very books’ pages.

The changes found in the current generation of textbooks undoubtedly constitutes a step in the right direction, but educators ought to continue to advocate for more critically oriented materials that help students understand and empathize with other peoples and cultures. Most books downplay debatable questions, ignore ugly facts, and avoid offering multiple perspectives on “the discovery.”

Ideally, textbooks would go even further and acknowledge the myriad ways in which indigenous peoples affected and improved European life and society. Carretero *et al.* (2002) noted that Mexican textbooks from the 1990s had already built narratives around the concepts of encounter and collaboration, instead of one-sided exchange, in which Europeans brought culture, religion and technology to America. In at least this regard, Mexican textbooks continue to outpace their Spanish counterparts.

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