

Pedagogy of oppression: Reconstruction narratives in Mississippi history textbooks 1887-1976

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ABSTRACT: The goal of this study was to identify and analyze Reconstruction narratives in Mississippi History textbooks from 1887-1981 and identify themes that helped maintain the existing social structure/ hierarchy. The Reconstruction narratives in these texts created a myth of corrupt Reconstruction that was run by others who were characterized as evil, dishonest, ignorant, outsiders, and greedy. This narrative helped to support the maintenance of the existing social order from post Reconstruction through the 1960s and 1970s. It also provided, or reinforced, intellectual arguments used to resist desegregation during the Civil Rights Era.

KEYWORDS: History textbooks, reconstruction narratives, History education, Mississippi.

Introduction: Myths of the Lost Cause

Living in Mississippi, I grew up with Lost Cause myths and heard people try to separate the Civil War and other aspects of American history from slavery and race. For several years, I taught U.S. history for a large university with a very diverse student body. Like Loewen (2010), but forty years later, my students readily embraced Lost Cause myths. When I shared the Mississippi Declaration of Secession with students, they were usually surprised that slavery was mentioned in the first sentence as the principle cause for secession. The Mississippians who pushed for secession understood they were seceding over slavery, why don't we today? Of course, the slavery versus state rights argument is just one aspect of the Lost Cause that has managed to become a part of our greater historical narrative. This leads to the question: what can explain the persistence of Lost Cause myths?

Charles Reagan Wilson (1980) described the Lost Cause as, 'the dream of a cohesive Southern People with a separate cultural identity' that replaced the dream of a 'political nation' (p. 1). Wilson explained that the Lost Cause predated the Civil War and was used to justify and defend slavery. After the Civil War myths of the Lost Cause served to help develop a distinctive southern identity and to maintain the racially segregated social order.

During Reconstruction, public education systems were established in the South (Boyer, et al., 2011), however, education was used to maintain the existing social order. This included textbooks that promoted the Lost Cause (Wilson, 1980). The advent of public education and the prominent role of textbooks in schools provided a venue for passing the Lost Cause and the dominant southern Reconstruction narrative from generation to generation. As Howard Zinn

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(1995) explained, ‘A great propaganda campaign was undertaken North and South (one which lasted well into the twentieth century) in the history textbooks of American schools to show that blacks were inept, lazy, corrupt, and ruinous to the governments of the South when they were in office’ (p. 195).

A brief history of Reconstruction

In order to prepare the reader with appropriate background information, I will briefly describe the period of Reconstruction. From 1861-1865 the United States was in a state of Civil War. The cause of the war was primarily over the issue of slavery, more specifically the fear of the Southern states that the expansion of slavery into the Western territories would be ended with the election of President Lincoln. They feared this would lead to the eventual abolition of slavery. Eleven states seceded from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America. The war was then essentially over the right of the states to secede with the United States going to war to prevent secession. The war was won by the Union (states that did not secede from the United States). Prior to his assassination, President Lincoln proposed a very easy plan for states, which had seceded to rejoin the United States. He was assassinated in April 1865 and therefore his vision of Reconstruction was not realized. What followed was a period of time from 1865 until 1877 called Reconstruction. During this time period, the Federal government worked to readmit the Southern states that had seceded under various plans including one by the new President Johnson. The Federal government also worked to integrate freedmen into American society. The Republicans in Congress became frustrated with Johnson’s plan because he pardoned many ex-Confederates allowing them to regain American citizenship as well as participate in the political process. Many states, including Mississippi, quickly formed new governments, applied for readmission, and sent Congressional delegations to the United States Congress. At the same time these state governments created laws called Black Codes to restrict the political, economic, and social freedoms of free blacks. These actions led to conflict between Congress and the President. Congress refused to allow Congressional delegations to take their seats in Congress. They also passed a series of laws that enacted what became known as Congressional or Radical Reconstruction. This is the Reconstruction that led to the participation of blacks in the local and state governments in Mississippi and other states. The South was divided into military districts and soldiers were used to enforce Federal Reconstruction laws including the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments of the United States Constitution. Reconstruction ended with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes to the Presidency in 1877. For those interested in a more comprehensive description of Reconstruction, I recommend *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (Boyer, et al., 2011)

The role of textbooks in shaping identity

Margaret Mead (1967) argued that an individual’s culture ‘shapes and limits our imaginations’ in ways that make it difficult for the individual to think or feel outside the bounds of those limits. Wilson (1980) described how religion was used as an institutional force to maintain the social order by keeping blacks subordinate to whites through segregation. Like religion, education was used and the venue was textbooks. Southern history textbooks were used as institutional forces to set limits on how people thought about Reconstruction, race, and segregation. These textbooks helped to create and sustain a mythology of Reconstruction that justified segregation and the maintenance of the existing social structure.

I chose to study Mississippi History textbooks because they provide insight into what was taught in Mississippi schools about Reconstruction over time. According to Issit (2004),

textbook analysis can ‘illuminate the history of ideas and the evolution of dominant ideologies’ (p. 696). Often textbooks allow the authorities to create an image of the other that helps to protect the existing social structure and define the desired cultural identity (Issit, 2004). Dongbae-Lee (2010) conducted a textbook analysis of North Korean textbooks concluding that in the textbooks, ‘North Korean identity is defined through the portrayal of non-North Koreans, mostly enemy others.’ This identity served to encourage North Koreans to be loyal and unquestioning servants to the regime by trusting their political leadership and placing the goals and needs of the nation ahead of their personal goals and needs. Korostelina (2011) studied Ukrainian history textbooks and concluded that the texts were used to emphasize cultural and historical differences with Russia in an effort to strengthen Ukrainian national identity. In effect, the texts made an enemy out of Russia and Russians through describing them in negative ways. This was used to ‘justify its own past policies and actions.’ (p. 14). Just as North Korean and Ukrainian texts were used to define the ‘others’ in an effort to build a national identity and maintain the existing social and political structure, these Mississippi textbooks served a similar purpose.

Mississippi was slow to adopt statewide free textbooks. Prior to 1940, Mississippi did not have a statewide policy for textbook adoption or approval. Before 1940, school districts could adopt textbooks (Binford, 2014), but as Davis (2010) reports there were no “inclusive texts” (p. 7) on Mississippi history available until 1974. In 1940, a law was passed providing free textbooks to public school students. The law created a Textbook Rating and Purchasing Board that was chaired by the governor. This legislation gave the governor the power to significantly influence which textbooks were used in Mississippi public schools (Binford, 2014). This power was exercised to help maintain control over “what and how students learned” Mississippi history including the Civil War and Reconstruction (Davis, 2010, p. 7).

Two examples illustrate the active role the state government played in controlling textbook purchases and adoption in attempts to control what was taught. In 1962, Governor Barnett, as a result of a 1960 law giving him “full control over selecting textbooks,” selected a Mississippi history textbook authored by Betterworth “as the only state-approved choice for the required Mississippi history course.” A version of this book would be the only approved text until 1980 in Mississippi schools. In 1974, the recently created History Textbook Review Committee rejected a Mississippi history textbook that dealt with the Civil War, Reconstruction, and race more objectively and honestly, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* by Loewen and Sallis. It was not until 1980 that this book was adopted as a result of a federal court ruling (Davis, 2010).

The historical record shows that for many years, textbooks nationwide were used by authorities to reinforce negative stereotypes about blacks including their role in Reconstruction (Wilson, 1980; Zinn, 1995). Early on the Mississippi textbooks “merely echoed” the prevailing historiography on the subjects, but when historians nationwide began to shift their narratives to more honest representations of the past, southern histories did not change (Davis, 2010, p. 6). As Wilson (1980) pointed out, it was important to Southerners to maintain a “correct interpretation of Southern history” and the use of textbooks “suitable for use by Southern children...” (p. 139). Prior to the statewide adoption there were no texts that dealt honestly about Mississippi history available and after the policy of statewide adoption was initiated, the policy served to guarantee that the history read in schools would help maintain the existing social structure/ hierarchy.

Analysis

The goal of this study was to identify and analyze Lost Cause myths in Reconstruction narratives and identify themes that helped maintain the existing social structure/ hierarchy. This

was done through analyzing the Reconstruction accounts in Mississippi history textbooks. The texts were the Mississippi history textbooks available in a large university library. The 1887 text was the earliest text I could find and the latest text was 2013. The texts were primarily published by companies in the South. Only two texts that are described in this analysis were published in the North: Lowry and McCardle (1892) in New York and Sansing (1981) in Minnesota. Additional information about where the others were published is available in the citations for each of the texts located in the reference list at the end of the paper.

I employed content analysis to analyze the texts. My initial analysis used an inductive approach to identify the themes that emerged from an initial text (Berg, 2007). An initial review of one text (Riley, 1915) identified a base set of themes from the Reconstruction narrative to be used as a starting point for analysis of the other texts. The initial set of themes was derived from the texts, because the goal was to identify themes that emerged from the texts and then see how these themes were presented overtime. I then shifted to a combination of deductive and inductive approaches with the remaining texts. I used the initial set of themes to guide my analysis, but was open to the introduction of new themes that emerged in the other texts. The initial themes identified are listed in Table 1. I next analyzed and reduced the number of themes. Finally I grouped them according to their function. The two functions identified were to justify reactions to Reconstruction or to define others (see Table 2). The label ‘justify’ was later renamed ‘Righteous Response to Reconstruction.’ Of the textbooks analyzed, the 1981 Sansing text broke the dominant Reconstruction narrative and began a new phase in Mississippi history texts in which Reconstruction is addressed in more historically objective terms. I analyzed the textbooks from 1981- present, but these texts were either authored or co-authored by Sansing and maintained a similar description of Reconstruction as the 1981 text; therefore, they are not included in this description of the findings.

Table 1: Initial base themes and expanded themes from content analysis

Base themes used for initial content analysis	Expanded themes
a. Redemption/ Redeemers taking back legitimate control from Republican carpetbaggers, scalawags, and ignorant blacks.	a. Corruption of reconstruction governments
b. Revolution of 1876 and the return of good government	b. Redemption/ Redeemers and the Revolution of 1876 and the return of good government
c. Honest white Democratic government vs. corrupt Republican government	c. Honest white Democratic government vs. corrupt Republican government
d. KKK its initial purpose vs. its transformed purpose and methods	d. Legitimate purposes of KKK in Redemption
e. Race problems as a result of outside agitation	e. Race problems as a result of outside agitation
f. Freeman’s bureau as corrupt and misguiding blacks	f. Freeman’s bureau and other outsiders as corrupt and misguiding blacks
h. Blacks misled and guided into corruption (lack of black agency)	g. Blacks misled and guided into corruption (lack of black agency)
i. White response to Reconstruction- not hatred, but concern about corruption	h. White response to Reconstruction- not hatred, but concern about corruption and taxes
j. Overwhelming impact of freedom on freed slaves- more than they could handle	i. Overwhelming impact of freedom on freed slaves- more than they could handle- not ready for freedom
k. Benevolence of former slave owners and slavery system as beneficial to slaves	j. Benevolence of former slave owners and slavery system as beneficial to slaves
l. The Loyal Negro	k. The Loyal Negro
	l. The others- Scalawags, carpetbaggers, greedy negroes
	m. MS response to reconstruction misunderstood
	n. Disenfranchised whites
	o. Opposition to 1868 Constitution
	p. Good negroes

Table 2: Final themes resulting from content analysis

Themes	Duval, 1887	Duval, 1892	Lowry & McCardle, 1892	Riley, 1915	Lowrey, Kincannon, & Lowrey, 1937	Sydner & Bennett, 1939	Guyton, 1952	Buttersworth, 1964	Riley, 1976	Sansing, 1981
Righteous Response to Reconstruction										
Corruption and lawlessness during Reconstruction	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Redemption/ Redeemers and the Revolution of 1876 and the return of good government	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Legitimate purposes of KKK in Redemption	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
MS response to reconstruction misunderstood	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
Others										
Race problems as a result of outside agitation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y
The others- Scalawags, carpetbaggers, greedy negroes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y
Negroes not ready for freedom	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	Y
Good negroes	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	O	X	O

Defining the Righteous Response to Reconstruction and ‘the Others’

Analysis of the ten textbooks identified two major functions of the Reconstruction narratives: (a) to justify southern white actions as a Righteous Response to Reconstruction and (b) to define others. The Righteous Response to Reconstruction function is defined as those narratives that characterize Reconstruction as a period of lawlessness and corruption that was endured for a time, until the white, Southern, Democrats were able to regain control, thus restoring legitimacy and good governance. This process of ‘redemption’ or ‘revolution’ was completed with the election of 1875 and the intimidation, impeachment and removal, or forced resignation of black and white Republican elected officials including the Governor Alderbert Ames in 1876. This ended Reconstruction government in Mississippi, resulting in a time of ‘renewal.’ The Ku Klux Klan and other groups used a variety of methods to suppress the black vote and discourage Republican political activity. These activities included terror and violence to support this

Righteous Response to Reconstruction. These efforts are characterized as legitimate and necessary because of the corruption and lawlessness of Reconstruction governments. Finally, Mississippi's response to Reconstruction was misunderstood by the North. The white people of Mississippi were not motivated by race and hatred, but rather were motivated to restore legitimate, efficient, and fair government.

The function of defining 'the others' justified the Righteous Response to Reconstruction. Many of the actions in response to Reconstruction were anti-democratic, illegal, violent, or otherwise illegitimate. In order to justify these actions it was necessary to define 'the others' as outsiders, political adventurers, greedy or ignorant 'negroes', dupes, traitors, and agitators. In doing so the actions taken by white Democrats that would normally be seen as illegitimate were characterized as heroic. In defining 'the others' the textbook authors created a contrast between the legitimate leaders (the heroic white Southern gentlemen) and the corrupt and lawless leaders who had usurped power at the end of the Civil War (the ignorant negroes, unscrupulous scalawags, and corrupt carpetbaggers).

Both the Righteous Response to Reconstruction and the definition of 'the others' served a further purpose to create a horrific picture of Reconstruction that no sane white person would ever want to experience. In creating this vision of the past, the textbook authors helped to solidify generational support for the existing segregated social order in which blacks could not vote or exercise political power and a social order in which outsiders were not trusted and their motives suspect because of their actions during Reconstruction. Both of these functions that I have identified as the dominant narrative contain elements of the Dunning school's "traditional interpretation" of Reconstruction (Foner, 1982).

Examples of the Righteous Response to Reconstruction

In the Mississippi history textbooks analyzed in this study, Reconstruction was portrayed as a period of corruption and lawlessness. In response to the corruption and lawlessness, southern white men had to conduct a revolution in order to redeem Mississippi from the control of the illegitimate, corrupt, outsiders (blacks, scalawags, carpetbaggers, and Republicans). Four themes support the idea of the Righteous Response to Reconstruction: (a) Corruption and lawlessness during Reconstruction, (b) Redemption/ Redeemers and the Revolution of 1876 and the return of good government, (c) Legitimate purposes of the KKK in Redemption, and (d) The Mississippi response to Reconstruction was misunderstood by the North.

Corruption and Lawlessness during Reconstruction

In order to justify the need for Redemption or Revolution, textbook authors described the Reconstruction government in Mississippi as corrupt. An example of corruption in the Reconstruction government is the Constitutional Convention in 1868. It was called the 'Black and Tan Convention' because there were 'seventeen Negroes among its one hundred members' (Betterworth, 1964, p. 228). The authors bemoan that the primary concern of the members of the convention was their own compensation: 'Before adjourning, the members of this Convention voted to themselves the most extravagant compensation for their service during the session' (Duval, 1892 p. 210).

In the narratives, corruption was often the result of ignorance, illiteracy, and dishonesty on the part of the Reconstruction officials. Riley (1976) wrote:

Justices of the peace were for the most part ignorant colored politicians, who knew little of the law or of judicial procedures. It was asserted that in Madison County in 1873 there was not a justice of the peace who could read or write. (p. 304)

According to the Reconstruction narratives in the texts, corruption in government was further compounded when ‘a number of the most intelligent white citizens in the State were excluded from participation in the elections...’ (Lowery & McCardle, 1892, p. 191). ‘This meant that black voters far outnumbered the white’ (Guyton, 1952, p. 212). Because of this ‘the entire political power of the State was thrown into the hands of a few adventurers from Northern States and a host of ignorant negroes’ (Duval, 1887, p. 175).

Mississippi’s Response to Reconstruction Misunderstood

In the narrative, Mississippi bears some blame for Radical Reconstruction because of actions taken immediately after the war that were misunderstood by the North. The problem is that the people of the North did not realize the gravity of the situation in Mississippi and the rest of the South as described by Lowery, Kincannon, and Lowery (1937):

Did any people ever face a task more gigantic? If mistakes were made by the masses or by governmental powers, local, and national, these mistakes were only what might have been expect of fallible humanity. The great slave population liberated- a complete wreckage of the labor system; the 25,000 slave holders who had been the financial, civic and social power of the state suddenly came to poverty and ruin; eight thousand ignorant Negroes suddenly enfranchised with less than half the number of legal white voters- all these conditions faced Mississippi’s leadership and all cried for immediate adjustment (p. 184).

In response to these difficulties the state took a number of steps that were misinterpreted by the North as efforts to maintain or reinstate slavery. Most notably was the failure of the state of Mississippi to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution and the adoption of the ‘Black Code.’ Bettersworth (1964) provided a succinct statement of justification:

The new legislature refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment on the grounds that the state convention’s action in abolishing slavery made it unnecessary. To make matters worse, insofar as Northern critics were concerned, the assembly passed a series of laws, generally spoke of as a ‘Black Code.’ These laws were designed to stop vagrancy and to force the freedmen to go to work. Although the laws were patterned after similar ones in the North, there were excited charges that Mississippians were attempting to revive slavery. (p. 223)

According to the narrative, the results of these misunderstandings were a shift in Reconstruction policy from the softer policies of President Andrew Johnson to the harsh, punitive policies of the Radical Republicans.

Redemption, Redeemers and the Revolution of 1876

In response to the overwhelming corruption and lawlessness of the Reconstruction period, white Democratic leaders arose to challenge the illegitimate rule of blacks, their agitators, and the Republican Party. The response initially was organized around Tax-payers’ Leagues who protested excessive spending and taxes by the local and state government. According to Lowry and McCardle (1892):

The taxpayers, under these circumstances, had grown desperate, and in almost every county in the State held conventions with a firm determination to correct the existing abuses, and prevent their repetition in the future. Ministers of the gospel, lawyers, doctors, farmers, and mechanics, all took part.... (p. 229)

Bettersworth (1964) described the goals of the Taxpayer’s Leagues: ‘White resistance in Vicksburg took the form of the organization of a Taxpayers’ League early in 1874. Its objective was the defeat of the Negro city government in the fall elections.’ (p. 235). When the corrupt state government did not respond, ‘the Democratic party made a determined effort to break the yoke of misrule and oppression under which the State had so long been laboring’ (Duval, 1887,

p. 189). Betterworth (1964) characterized the response by the Democratic Party in 1875 as 'The White Man Fights Back' in a chapter subheading (p. 232).

In order to guarantee Democratic victory in the 1875 election, extraordinary measures were taken. When Governor Ames attempted to restore order after a violent political campaign, he was challenged by the Ku Klux Klan and other white political leaders. Ames' actions are characterized as attempting to suppress the white vote and political activity using a Negro militia. Sydnor and Bennett (1939) explained that in 1875,

The chief difficulty lay in the fact that the voting booths were controlled by Negroes. Governor Ames had created a Negro militia, and these armed Negroes kept the white citizens from voting. It was therefore necessary to force Ames to stop giving this aid to the Negroes....The Ku Klux Klan, under the leadership of Captain W. A. Montgomery, influenced Ames to disband the Negro militia. (pp. 197-199)

These texts highlight the important and 'heroic' role the Ku Klux Klan played in redemption. Rather than criticize the role of the Ku Klux Klan in the Righteous Response to Reconstruction, most of the texts describe their actions as legitimate and necessary in light of the corruption of the Reconstruction government in Mississippi.

Legitimate purposes of the KKK in Redemption

Guyton (1952) described the role of the Ku Klux Klan in this way:

In 1866, a secret organization, the Ku Klux Klan, was founded in Tennessee.... The purpose of the Klan was protection of weak, innocent, and defenseless people, especially the widows and orphans of the Confederate soldiers. Besides this worthy aim, the Klan had another purpose—that of restoring the political power in the South to the educated and responsible white men who formerly had held it. (p. 218)

And according to Guyton the Ku Klux Klan was successful: 'The Ku Klux Klan did its work effectively and well. One after another, unfit and corrupt people were removed from office...' (p. 218). Because it was difficult to overlook the violence and terror committed by the Ku Klux Klan it was necessary to justify and make apologies for their actions. Sydnor and Bennett (1939) wrote:

The government of the state gave the citizens almost no protection. The white people therefore had to protect themselves without help of sheriff or police....Usually the Ku Klux Klan was able to frighten the Negroes into better behavior. If they continued to act in a disorderly way, on the next visit the whip was used. Some Negroes and some of their white leaders were hanged or shot. This was of course illegal, but the 'legal' officers did not truly represent the people of the state and were not enforcing the laws. Most of the acts of the Klan can therefore be justified on the grounds of grim necessity. (p. 195)

These sentiments are echoed in the textbooks from 1915- 1976. The Ku Klux Klan was necessary, often went to excesses, but it was understandable given the gravity of the situation. In all accounts from 1915- 1976 it was vital to restoring legitimate white rule in Mississippi.

The Return of Good Government and the Revolution Preserved

The Righteous Response to Reconstruction did not end with the election of 1875 and the overthrow of the Republican Governor Aldebert Ames in 1876. Sydnor and Bennett (1937) explained: 'When in 1875 the white people of Mississippi regained control of the government, they had to begin at the very bottom to build up the state, which had suffered in many ways while under the control of corrupt officials' (p. 199). Betterworth (1964) best described the feelings in Mississippi:

After 1875 the old bitterness began to fade. Mississippi was back under the control of the native whites, the Redeemers. . . . But it was Mississippi for the Mississippians at last. . . . Negroes continued to vote until the 1890s, but in ever-decreasing numbers. A few were given minor offices by the Democrats, since some of the Negro leaders joined the Democratic Party in 1875. As long as Negroes were voting, it was the practice of the planters and the Democratic leaders in the towns to take charge of the situation and use the Negro vote for the Democratic Party. (p. 239-240)

In order to protect Mississippi from a resurgence of outsider or ‘negro’ rule, it was necessary to limit the political power of blacks through suppressing or controlling votes. Again, this is justified in light of Reconstruction corruption and lawlessness. These narratives helped to justify a segregated societal order that limited black freedom and agency for the good of all.

Discussion of the Righteous Response to Reconstruction

The narrative of a Righteous Response to Reconstruction is one that was present in all of the texts from 1887- 1976. Several themes support this narrative including the idea that Reconstruction government in Mississippi was corrupt and in need of redemption. The concept of redemption is important because it carries a religious overtone. The idea of redemption implies that there is a great evil that must be overcome by a greater good. In the Righteous Response to Reconstruction, the great evil is ‘negro’, Republican, Reconstruction government. The greater good that overcomes this evil is the heroic Democratic white man.

Redemption was accomplished through a revolution that included an election, suppression of black votes, and the forcible removal of corrupt, inefficient, illiterate Reconstruction officials. The revolution was solidified by the continued suppression of black political power in Mississippi and the maintenance of a segregated society. This preserved Mississippi for the white man. Because the danger of Reconstruction government and black rule was so great, extraordinary measures were taken by the organizations including the Ku Klux Klan. The persistence of the legitimacy of the Ku Klux Klan in the twentieth century texts could help to justify their continued presence and activity in the state. Finally, in this narrative the idea that white Mississippians were not motivated by race, but they were only doing what was necessary to maintain good government is important. It helped to legitimize actions taken to preserve a segregated society. After the evils of Reconstruction were overcome, Mississippi would do almost anything to prevent a return of ‘negro’ or outsider rule.

What is the impact of these themes on the collective consciousness of nearly a century of school children? Interestingly, many people currently in places of influence in government, business, and society in Mississippi were educated using these textbooks. They would be 50-70 years old. Many of their thoughts about Reconstruction and race were shaped and limited by these narratives that were presented to them as official knowledge. When we ask why Lost Cause myths persist, it may be because for nearly 100 years the myths were passed along as truth in textbooks. For almost a century Reconstruction was described in a way that created fear of the ‘negro’ and outsider rule. Is it any wonder that in November 1961 Hodding Carter could write in the *New York Times Magazine*:

Perhaps the hardest point to grasp is that the Citizens Councils in Mississippi – no matter how dubious its aims, repugnant its philosophy—is not made up of hooded figures meeting furtively in back alleys. Its leadership is drawn not from the pool hall but from the country club. Its membership generally exhibits the attitudes of the middle and upper classes rather than of the poor white. And its aims are not couched in violent language but in the careful embroidery of states’ rights and constitutionalism. (Carter, 1961, p.23)

The members of the Citizen Councils were living life within the limits placed on them by their education in Mississippi schools. Their education including what they had read in Mississippi history textbooks had shown them the folly of integration and ‘negro’ rule, and they were

willing to fight to prevent outsiders who did not understand the situation in Mississippi from interfering with segregation.

On June 21, 1962, a memorandum from the Association of Citizens' Councils of Mississippi highlights that the resistance to desegregation was seen as a struggle against outsiders pushing for integration as aggressors who use intimidation. The movement to resist forced integration is deemed as 'dedicated to the maintenance of peace, good order and domestic tranquility in our Community and in our State and to the preservation of our State's Rights' (Patterson, 1962). The struggle is also characterized as a struggle against a pending era of disorder that would result should segregation end. Again, from their study of history in Mississippi history textbooks, these groups learned their lesson well.

Defining Others

All of the textbooks from 1887- 1976 defined others in negative terms in stark contrast to the portrayals of white Democratic Mississippians. The others in the text included 'negroes', carpetbaggers, and scalawags. In discussing 'negroes' several themes were addressed: (a) the idea that race problems or 'negro' misbehavior were a result of outside agitation, (b) that 'negroes' were not prepared for freedom, and (c) the idea of the good 'negro' who resisted outside agitation and who cooperated and supported the ideas of white, Democratic men. Carpetbaggers and scalawags were the agitators who manipulated 'negroes' through the Freedman's Bureau, loyalty leagues, and the Republican Party. In the Righteous Response to Reconstruction narrative, the others represent the evil that must be overcome by the heroic, white, Democratic Mississippi man.

Examples of defining others

Negroes not prepared for freedom

In all of the texts from 1887- 1976 the theme that the freed 'negro' slaves were not prepared for freedom and government is present. This theme was used to justify many of the excesses of Reconstruction. According to the narrative, because 'negroes' were not prepared for freedom, action was necessary to outline their role in society. Sydnor and Bennett (1939) wrote:

One of the most important things to decide was the status of the Negro. When the Negroes had been slaves, they had not been allowed to vote, to witness against white men in the courts, or to own property. Now that the slaves were free, the legislature had to decide what rights and privileges the Negro would have in the future. (p. 185)

According to the narrative, the Black Codes were necessary because the freedmen could not handle their freedom without externally imposed laws.

Race problems a result of outside agitation

Because they were not prepared for their sudden emancipation, 'negroes' were susceptible to manipulation and agitation by 'political adventurers' (Bettersworth, 1964, p. 227; Riley, 1915, p. 295) Political adventurer was used to describe carpetbaggers, scalawags, and officers of the Freedman's Bureau. In order to fully understand the nature of the race problems resulting from outside agitation, the textbook authors had to define the normal relationship between the races. Lowery, Kincannon, and Lowery (1937) described this relationship: "One of the best traditions of the South is the life-time loyalty of these former slaves to their former masters and the faithful way in which many of the old slave-holding aristocrats befriended these former slaves to the

end” (p. 180-181). According to the narrative, it was the actions of unscrupulous whites from the North and white traitors from Mississippi who upset this relationship. Duval (1892) explained, ‘The most vindictive feelings of the lower class of negroes was aroused against the whites by the inflammatory speeches and incendiary teachings of their political leaders, and the peace and safety of the whites were constantly menaced by the presence of armed bodies of infuriated negroes’ (p. 221).

The Good Negro

The theme of the good ‘negro’ is primarily present in the early texts (from 1892-1915). This theme emphasizes that good ‘negroes’ cooperate with white people. It also highlights ‘negro’ officials who were not educated and not corrupt. Lowry and McCardle (1892) gave ‘negroes’ credit for helping to bring about the return of Democratic rule in the state. The same text and Riley (1915/1976) also credited them for voting against the 1868 Constitution which would have disenfranchised most whites in the state. The theme of the good ‘negro’ also helps to highlight the depravity of the carpetbaggers, scalawags and Reconstruction governments. Sydnor and Bennett (1939) wrote of black political officials during Reconstruction: ‘not all of these Negroes were rascals... it has been said that the Negroes were on the whole more honest than the white men who held office during this time’ (p. 194).

The image of blacks in these texts portrays a group of people ill-prepared for freedom and participation in the political process. When acting on their own they are too ignorant to effectively fulfill their duties, and often they are manipulated by outsiders to work against their best interests. They are capable of good, but that is only when guided by white Mississippians. Their ignorance and greed make them susceptible to control by unscrupulous outsiders and therefore they and the larger society should be protected from their exercise of political power.

Carpetbaggers and Scalawags

If the white Democratic man represented the redeemer who would rescue Mississippi from the evils of Reconstruction government, the carpetbaggers and scalawags personified the evils of Reconstruction. Carpetbaggers and scalawags were white men who supported Reconstruction and were most likely Republicans. The difference between a carpetbagger and scalawag was geographic origin. According to the narrative, carpetbaggers were white Northern men who came South during Reconstruction to profit from the hard times after the Civil War. Scalawags were native southerners who supported Reconstruction. Both groups were characterized as corrupt:

Most of the carpetbaggers and scalawags were corrupt. They did not love the state, and were looking out only for their own selfish interests. They held office because of the salary and the chance to rob the state. They gave Negroes only enough power to keep their votes (Sydnor and Bennett, 1939, p. 193).

Carpetbaggers and scalawags were able to gain political power because most white men had been disqualified from participating in the Reconstruction government. Guyton (1952) explained:

Since there were so few white men in the Southern States who could hold office, many unscrupulous Northerners swarmed to Mississippi and other Southern States in the hope of gaining power and wealth... Even worse were the ‘scalawags,’ Southerners who placed their own gain above the good of their state and its citizens. Together, the carpetbaggers and the scalawags were able to gain much power by influencing the ignorant Negro vote. (p. 217-218)

Both scalawags and carpetbaggers were seen as ‘political adventurers’ who were out to profit from Reconstruction government. They were also credited with manipulating and controlling the ‘negro’ vote. It was these two groups who were criticized for voting themselves large compensation during the 1868 Mississippi Constitutional Convention.

The overwhelmingly negative descriptions of the scalawags and carpetbaggers provided a contrast to the honorable men who saw the evils of Reconstruction and developed the Righteous Response to Reconstruction in order to redeem Mississippi. Carpetbaggers and scalawags were motivated out of greed and power; the white Democratic Redeemers were motivated out of selflessness and love of state. This theme in the narrative exists in all texts from 1887- 1976. This theme helped to solidify the idea that outsiders came to the south and Mississippi out of selfish ambition resulting in corruption and manipulation of ‘negroes.’ It also helped to justify the Revolution of 1875 and the actions of the Ku Klux Klan in helping to redeem Mississippi. The only way to prevent the return of corrupt Reconstruction government and ‘negro’ rule was to resist outside intervention in Mississippi and support the white Democratic Party.

Discussion of defining others

The characterization and definition of others in these texts served to put a face to the corruption and lawlessness of the Reconstruction period in Mississippi. In these texts, ‘negroes’, scalawags, and carpetbaggers are characterized as outsiders who lack the legitimate right to govern or exercise political power. The white scalawags and carpetbaggers are credited with manipulating ‘negro’ voters and helping bring about ‘negro’ rule, which was described as corrupt and inefficient. The carpetbaggers especially were described as outsiders who did not understand or love Mississippi and were motivated by selfish gain. Defining the others in such a way helped to justify the Righteous Response to Reconstruction. If Reconstruction was corrupt, these others were the corrupters. Because of their actions during Reconstruction these others could never be trusted to participate in Mississippi politics again. Therefore, it was not difficult to justify a segregated society that limited black political power, which resisted outside influence when it came to civil rights, and that aimed to maintain a one party system.

To highlight the potential impact of decades of defining others as described above consider a document circulated by the Association of White Citizens’ Councils in 1961, ‘A community action plan to counteract negro and white agitators.’ In it, white citizens are encouraged to ‘advise their negro friends and employees not to affiliate with outside agitators. It is a mistake not to give them advice in this critical time when they are accustomed to looking to their white friends and employers for advice.’ The plan goes on to encourage white citizens to explain to ‘negroes’ that the outsiders are only there to stir up trouble that will lead to racial chaos. The plan concludes with a statement about outside agitators as people ‘whose objective is to destroy the goodwill between the races and to create chaos in our community’ (Association of Citizens’ Councils, 1961). This memo from 1961 incorporates the themes that race problems are the result of outsider agitators and must be resisted. It also illustrates the theme that ‘negroes’ need advice from whites in order to not be duped by outside agitators.

Broader analysis

A broader analysis of the themes that exist in these Mississippi history texts indicates a few patterns. Several themes persist across all texts: Corruption and lawlessness during Reconstruction, Redemption/Redeemers and the Revolution of 1876, Race problems as a result of outside agitation, and the others. These themes match those what Foner (1982) called the “traditional interpretation” with origins in the Dunning school that began in the first decade of

the Twentieth Century (Franklin, 1980). Five of the texts: Duval (1892), Lowry and McCardle (1892), Riley (1915), Sydnor and Bennett (1939), and Lowrey, Kincannon, and Lowrey (1937) were published in what Loewen (2010) identified as the Nadir of race relations which he defined as a time resulting in increased separation of races. During that time “historians emphasized tales of corruption and bad behavior” during Reconstruction (p. 75).

Two themes have significant variation across the texts: Legitimate purposes of KKK in Redemption and Good Negroes. The theme Legitimate purposes of KKK in Redemption is present in five of the texts: Riley (1915) and the Riley reprint (1976), Lowrey, Kincannon, and Lowrey (1937), Sydnor (1939), Guyton (1952) and Betterworth (1964). The Riley; Lorey, Kincannon and Lowrey; and Sydnor texts coincide in time with the Second Ku Klux Klan which was founded in 1915 was active in the United States. It might be expected because during the 1920s the Second Ku Klux Klan had between one million and five million members nationwide and was the largest and most powerful KKK in the history of the United States (MacLean, 1994). The Guyton and Betterworth texts were written during the modern civil rights period when Southern states including Mississippi began a process of resistance to efforts to desegregate society. In the South, including Mississippi, the Klan was an instrumental organization in this resistance. As such it would be expected that textbook writers would desire to focus on the legitimate purposes of the KKK in resisting the exercise of black political power through voting or a desegregated society.

Interestingly, the second significant variance across texts is the theme good negroes. Though present in most of the early texts it is notably absent from the Lowrey, Kincannon, and Lowrey (1937), Guyton (1952), and Betterworth (1964). Perhaps the idea of a good negro who knows his place was easy to imagine prior to World War II, but after World War II and the emergence of the modern civil rights movement it was impossible to imagine. The visible efforts of blacks on their own behalf at the state and national levels indicated that they were no longer content cooperating to maintain the status quo and were demanding political and social equality. Regardless, the theme is not present in the two texts from the modern civil rights era.

History is not written in a vacuum. Writers rely on the ideas of others. Of interest is that all of the texts contain elements of the Dunning school’s “traditional interpretation” of Reconstruction (Foner, 1982) even though by 1940, historians, including Beale (1940) were reconsidering this interpretation. Beale called for “further studies and changed points of view necessary to a full understanding of Reconstruction” (p. 810). Beyond calling for a reinterpretation, he identified several young historians who were capable of leading this reinterpretation of Reconstruction history. Among those listed was C. Vann Woodward. It was Woodward who described the historians living twenty to thirty years after Reconstruction as “propagandists” reviving “the legend of Reconstruction” resulting in a “new generation of Southerners... forcibly impressed with the sectional trauma as if they had lived through it themselves” (p. 85-86). He concluded that “it was inevitable that race relations should deteriorated rapidly under such pressure” (p. 86). One can easily lump the writers of the six texts published after 1900 and analyzed in this study as propagandists. Woodward and others would reinterpret the history of Reconstruction and that version would become the national norm, but not in the Deep South and not in Mississippi. This is evident in the fact that the historiography of the Dunning School persists in these texts long after 1940 when Beale called for a reinterpretation. This is also evident from Davis’s (2010) conclusion that until 1980 there was not a Mississippi history text that did not include what Foner (1982) called the “traditional interpretation.”

One may ask what happened in 1981 that led to the use of the Sansing text that broke from this “traditional interpretation?” A few things were happening. Mississippi schools finally desegregated in 1970. But the Betterworth text was still used for the next decade. Loewen and

Sallis published the first text that broke with the narrative described in this paper in 1974, but it was not until 1980 that it was allowed to be used in Mississippi schools (Davis, 2010). This event opened the way for a non-Bettersworth text. In 1980 reform minded William Winter was elected governor and began the process of reforming education in Mississippi. He also focused on racial reconciliation and continues to do so to the present day. It was during this time that Sansing (1981) published his text. Since 1981, a text written or co-written by Sansing has been the primary text used in Mississippi history classes.

Conclusion

The Reconstruction narratives in these Mississippi history textbooks were read by generations of school children from 1887 to 1976. As textbooks they represented official knowledge (Issit, 2004) and helped shape the knowledge and opinions held by many Mississippians. In the time period analyzed from 1887 to 1976 there were no positive alternatives to these Reconstruction narratives in any Mississippi history text available. It was not until the publication of Loewen and Sallis published their text in 1974 and it was accepted for use in Mississippi schools in 1980 that an honest interpretation of Reconstruction was available (Davis, 2010). The Reconstruction narratives in these texts created a myth of corrupt Reconstruction that was run by others who are characterized as evil, dishonest, ignorant, and greedy. Because Reconstruction was horrendous, it required a Righteous Response. In contrast to the dishonorable men who ran the Reconstruction government, the men who conducted the Revolution of 1875 and redeemed Mississippi were characterized as honorable. In redeeming Mississippi, they saved Mississippi from the others and helped create a Mississippi for the Mississippians.

Interestingly in these narratives, Mississippi society, which had oppressed others and practiced chattel slavery, used its textbooks to create the myth that Reconstruction was oppressive to the native white Mississippian. By doing this, Mississippi missed the opportunity to be freed from the oppression of a society dominated by racial suppression. As Paulo Freire (1998) wrote, ‘... the former oppressors do not feel liberated. On the contrary, they genuinely consider themselves to be oppressed. Conditioned by the experience of oppressing others, any situation other than their former seems to them like oppression’ (p. 56-57). In order to reverse this perceived oppression, the dominant class created these myths about Reconstruction, which were passed on in textbooks. In doing so, they used the educational system to reestablish oppression of the recently liberated slaves. In effect they created a pedagogy of oppression.

The Reconstruction narratives in these textbooks describe a Reconstruction that was so bad and the others as so different that it was necessary to do everything possible to prevent a return to it. It was paramount that the social order that arose from the Righteous Response to Reconstruction be maintained. The social order was one segregated by race. One in which blacks exercised limited political and social power and one in which outsiders were not trusted, because they did not understand the unique nature of Mississippi and would only bring about problems between the races.

Both the Righteous Response to Reconstruction theme and the others theme helped to support the maintenance of the existing social order from post Reconstruction through the 1960s and 1970s. It also provided, or reinforced, intellectual arguments used to resist desegregation during the Civil Rights Era. The language employed by the Association of Citizens’ Councils, Mississippi politicians, and others who resisted desegregation employed these themes. They saw themselves as a righteous resistance to decadent outsiders who would overthrow the orderly and godly culture in the South. This is seen in their “advice to negroes not to affiliate with outside agitators” (Association of Citizens’ Councils, 1961) and comments that, “If Mississippi finds herself standing alone in carrying on this fight, at least she will stand proud and tall, with

a clear conscience and self-respect intact”(Ethridge, 1960). The good negro was even trotted out by Charles M. Hills in a newspaper editorial to illustrate how happy black Mississippians were in a segregated society, “Angered at the Communist inspired efforts of outside of the state agitators to disrupt the peaceful relationships between the races, he has been utilizing his long experiences in espionage and intelligence... and his far flung contacts... to wage relentless war upon these disruptive and subversive agitators” (Hills, 1961). Much as the Righteous Response to Reconstruction was characterized as a war, so was the effort to resist desegregation.

The analysis and description of the dominant Reconstruction narratives in these textbooks helps us to see the history and development of the Reconstruction myth. It persisted for nearly 100 years in Mississippi history textbooks. It was not until the early 1980s that the narrative was broken. So why was it important to analyze these Reconstruction narratives? One reason is that it illustrates how textbooks were used as instruments of oppression or as a weapon (Loewen, 2010, p. 12) to maintain and justify segregation for many years. It established the record of using Reconstruction narratives in textbooks as a means of social control. The second reason is that it helps us understand the persistence of Lost Cause myths. Finally, it can help us identify latent themes from the Lost Cause myth and Reconstruction narratives that still exist in textbooks. One final benefit of this type of study was best described by Loewen (2010) when he wrote,

There is a reciprocal relationship between justice in the present and honesty about the past. When the United States has achieved justice in the present regarding some past act, the Americans face it and talk about it more openly, because we have made it right. It has become a success story. Conversely, when we find a topic our textbooks hide or distort, probably that signifies a continuing injustice in the present. Telling the truth about the past can help us make it right from here on. (p. 15)

We can't go back and fix the injustices of segregation and racial injustice, but we can identify it for what it was, realize and acknowledge that it was propagated in our public education systems in Mississippi and other parts of the South, and use that knowledge to squarely confront the demons in our collective past and move forward to a more just future. I hope that my students and others in education, many of whom are woefully ignorant of the evils of segregation, will learn from this study how societies can use 'institutional forces' like textbooks to create and sustain false narratives that serve the purpose to maintain unjust and unfair social structures.

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