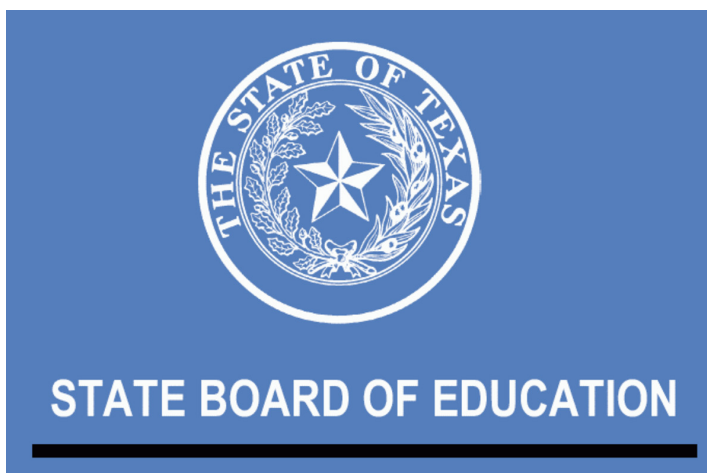


TEXTBOOKS AS COMMON GROUND

The Alignment of Conservative Activists Against the Texas State Board of Education, 1960s

While elsewhere in 1960s America, textbooks typically came under scrutiny by liberals for the limited or poor representation of minorities and women, Texas saw numerous highly organized protests by conservative anti-Communists against the content of schoolbooks. These conservative activists, led by J. Evetts Haley of the John Birch Society-associated Texans for America, developed new tactics designed to censor texts in a political climate that by the 1960s was less willing to entertain the outlandish claims of subversion and Communist infiltration that had been tolerated during the Second Red Scare. These tactics would inform the operations of more mainstream grassroots conservative activists who were otherwise turned off by the harsh rhetoric of radical anti-Communists—such as antievolutionist protesters—later in the decade, as American conservatives began to align ideologically and politically.

By Ashton Dubey
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Texas State Board of Education (SBOE)

Source: *Historeo.com*

As most natives will tell you—probably unprompted—everything is bigger in Texas. This includes their textbook controversies. As recently as 2015, the *New York Times*, among other outlets, reported on a Texan parent chastising the state and publisher McGraw-Hill for distributing a geography textbook that referred to slaves kidnapped from Africa for forced labor in America as “workers.”¹ The year before, the *Times* reported on a battle at the state level over whether a collection of social studies and history texts up for review “overstated the importance of Moses to America’s founding fathers,” “trumpeted the free-market system too much,” and “negatively portrayed Muslims.”² That the state’s textbooks are afforded a sizable share of attention among activists, journalists, and publishers *nationally* is, in part, due to Texas’s large population. As the second most populous state in the nation, Texas consumes hundreds of thousands of textbooks. Purchasing a greater share of textbooks than most other states, Texas is able to influence publishers who aim to produce as few versions of textbooks as possible while appeasing large buyers. However, Texas was a center

of textbook controversy before reaching its present population. Unlike many other large states, Texas’s textbook adoption process is carried out at the state level initially, with one body determining educational material for millions of public school students. A large state may not have the same sort of sway over publishers if decisions over textbooks are decentralized and left up entirely to counties or school districts.

In 1949, the state established the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Among the TEA’s duties was appointing a twenty-one member school board, the State Board of Education (SBOE). The SBOE in turn was responsible for appointing a fifteen member textbook review committee. Members were all Texan educators, limited to a tenure of only one year on the committee.³ They were tasked with reviewing texts and assembling a list of schoolbooks acceptable for use throughout the state, with between two and five texts per subject at each grade level. District-level school boards could narrow the list, but could not expand upon it.⁴

By the 1960s, Texan activists and parents concerned over the content of schoolbooks began to direct their attention to the SBOE. According to historians Jonathan Zimmerman and Joseph Moreau, in *Whose America?* and *Schoolbook Nation*, respectively, the sixties saw the introduction of multiculturalism and more liberal ideals into high school history textbooks, following the stark conservatism that marked textbooks of the Red Scare the decade before.⁵ However, the parents and activists targeting the SBOE were not liberals, who elsewhere in the country were calling for, according to Moreau, the “[integration of] Blacks into largely all-White textbooks.”⁶ Rather, in the early 1960s, the activists were conservative anti-Communists. Fearing Communist sympathies, or at least the negligence of publishers, teachers, and board members, activists associated with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the John Birch Society, and Texans for America (TFA) ran editorials in conservative papers, sent letters to the SBOE, and even forced the SBOE to

hold hearings so that protesters could appeal the board's decisions. To anti-Communists, the enemy was essentially everyone else, with liberal authors and commentators lumped in with moderates, textbook publishers, and the bureaucrats at the SBOE who did their best to remain neutral or non-confrontational.

Moreau and Zimmerman published their studies on history textbook controversies just as the field began to argue that the sixties were a period of great evolution not just for liberals but conservatives as well. Historians David Farber and Jeff Roche acknowledge that, in the popular imagination, "The conservative sixties does, at first glance, have the look of an oxymoronic phrase. The 'sixties,' as conventionally portrayed, is the era of protests, social change movements, rebellion, and, even revolution. It was the heyday of national liberalism."⁷ However, the sixties were also a period of activity among disparate conservative groups, as they began to negotiate a coherent ideology—or at least a successful political coalition.

This paper will examine conservative protests and appeals over the SBOE's textbook decisions in order to argue that the activism of conservative anti-Communists in Texas served as a model for later, more mainstream conservative textbook activists; these later activists not only employed and expanded upon those tactics but did so while following the national trend toward the alignment and eventual unification of disparate conservative groups and interests. Texas was not the only state to see grassroots conservative textbook activism after its supposed demise in the 1950s. Considered extremists by most who did not fall into their camp, the Texan activists associated with these anti-Communist organizations alienated many, including other conservative groups and figures. Yet, Texas's network of activists, subject to substantial media coverage throughout the sixties, stand out for their size, successes, scope, and organization.

This paper, specifically, will follow that alignment not by looking at the outrage conservative anti-Communists elicited in their most fervent critics but to their reception by other conservative groups, particularly antievolutionist activists. Anti-Communists had established networks and tactics that later conservative groups in the state emulated. Other conservatives seized on these networks and tactics, and thus Texas stood out for its antievolutionist activism as well. Though distinct groups throughout much of the sixties, the activists would converge by the seventies, following trends toward conservative unification.

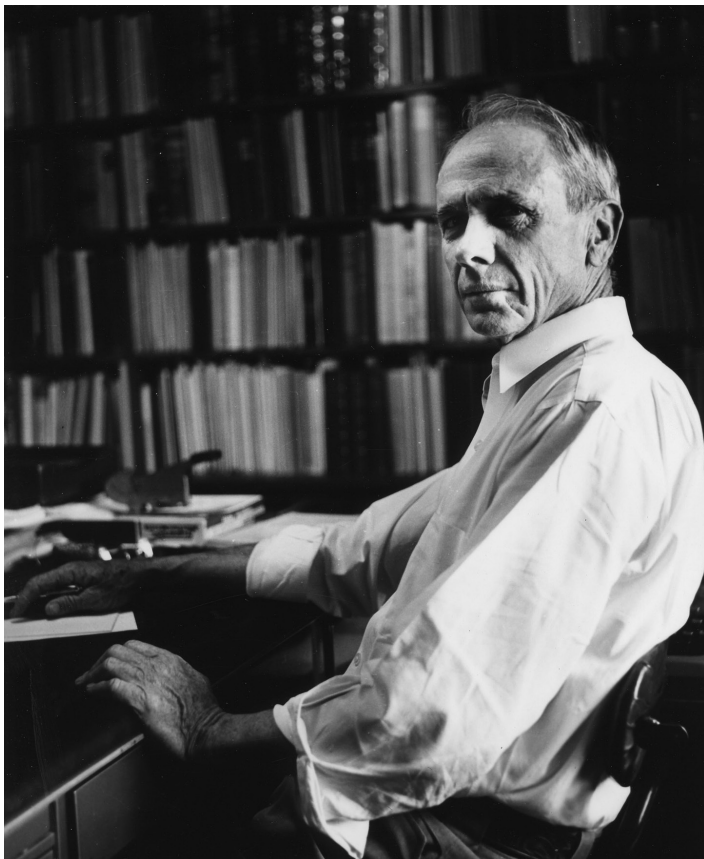
TWO STRAINS OF CONSERVATIVE TEXTBOOK ACTIVISM

In the early and mid 1960s, the anti-Communist protests of Texans for America and the Daughters of the American Revolution as well as the antievolutionist protests led by Texan evangelicals saw widespread attention within and without

the state. Within the state, Austin's *Texas Observer* covered the extremism of such activists through a liberal lens while the widely-read conservative *Dallas Morning News* provided even more extensive coverage, sympathetic to the protesters. Though anti-Communist and antievolutionist protests shared some overlap, with the Parents' Committee of Tarrant County (Tarrant County belonging to the conservative Dallas-Fort Worth area) and the Citizen's Committee for the Investigation of State Textbooks backing both at textbook hearings, a 1964 article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* was off when it conflated antievolutionist activists with the "conservative groups [who] protested several books in 1961 on grounds they were critical of capitalism and stressed excessively the idea of equality."⁸ Though linked, the two campaigns were led by separate conservative groups. These groups were not known for their cooperation in the early sixties, as the John Birch Society—with which Texans for America happily associated itself—had alienated more moderate conservatives throughout Texas and the nation.

The John Birch Society's penchant for antagonism and extremist anti-Communist language may explain the particularly strong organization of anti-Communist textbook campaigns in Texas. After all, as historian Edward H. Miller writes in *Nut Country*, "Dallas was a national epicenter for the John Birch Society."⁹ But antievolutionism was mainstream; countless other states saw controversies over the teaching of evolution, particularly in its inclusion in biology textbooks, with Arkansas even defending an antievolutionist statute before the US Supreme Court before decade's end.¹⁰ So why were Texan evangelicals able to garner more attention and participation than other states' when such evolution-related controversies were relatively commonplace? Despite different leadership and even different "liberal" targets, evangelicals were able to reach the SBOE and receive such attention because they borrowed from Texans for America, laying the groundwork for their later convergence. Not only did they utilize Texas's conservative textbook monitoring organizations, they borrowed from the arguments and tactics of TFA and the DAR's successful campaigns. If not a complete alliance, the work of evangelical antievolutionists in their 1964 protest suggests an early alignment with anti-Communist interests and groups.

Few existing histories provide an adequate model for explaining the shared tactics and resources of radical anti-Communists and evangelicals. Roche firmly places anti-Communists such as J. Evetts Haley, his group Texans for America, and their friends at the John Birch Society in the "cowboy" brand of conservatism, one that was particularly strong among conservatives in 1960s Texas. Cowboy conservatism, Roche writes, emerged "full-blown in the 1960s, this type of politics, characterized by an intertwined set of ideas that celebrate individual freedom and community responsibility, entrepreneurial capitalism and traditional family, Protestantism and patriotism."¹¹ Conservative author and



J. Evetts Haley Sr., political activist and historian
Source: West Texas A&M University

candy manufacturer Robert Welch founded the John Birch Society in 1958. The Society became known—and ridiculed—nationally, as they distributed McCarthy-esque literature to “those fearful about communists secretly taking over the American state” and lobbied against civil rights legislation, historian D. J. Mulloy summarizes.¹² The group, along with Haley and other anti-Communist groups, vocally supported US Senator from Arizona and GOP nominee Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign.¹³ On its face, the philosophy of cowboy conservatism—with its explicitly Christian currents—does not appear to be in conflict with the overtly moral and Christian arguments protesters made against the biology textbooks. However, anti-Communism, Roche describes, was the “basis for [this] conservative political philosophy,” and “demanded of its adherents a steadfast belief in the abstract threat of an eventual communist takeover of the United States.”¹⁴ The unwavering focus of Haley and his fellow Birchers on Communism, as well as their repeated attacks on the credibility of moderate and conservative officials, alienated post-Red Scare conservatives throughout the nation.

Antievolutionist activists avoided the outlandish and conspiratorial claims, as well as the narrow anti-Communist focus, that riled the conservative anti-Communist base but alienated most others. Miller, referring specifically to Chris-

tian fundamentalists and conservative anti-Communists, compares their conspiratorial nature. “The biblical literalism of the ultraconservatives went hand in hand with conspiracies since, in their minds, the greatest conspiracy of all was Satan’s ongoing battle with Christianity.”¹⁵ However, the Christian activists protesting the pro-evolution textbooks in ‘64 *avoided* readily available talking points about the deliberate efforts of the government and scientists to fool the public into accepting an ungodly scientific theory. The Creation Research Society was founded in the 1950s, with the intent of using scientific research against evolution to prove a literalist and young earth account of creation.¹⁶ However, in the mainstream press, in protest letters, and at the SBOE hearing, few protesters made the argument that the content of the biology texts were in scientific error or even a hoax, as many other antievolutionists—throughout American history—have argued. Moral and religious arguments dominated the hearing, with one man proclaiming that “I just want to bring out, point out here at first, it’s anti-Bible, it’s anti-Christian and therefore it’s anti-God.”¹⁷ Another protester argued that “It becomes virtually impossible either for the clergy or parents to teach Creation,” appealing to the faith of the board’s members, rather than engaging with the expert biologists testifying on behalf of the publishers.¹⁸

Antievolutionist protesters simply were not as far to the right as TFA, their ideology more mainstream. Before acceptance of evolution became a regular polling question, a 1962 nationwide study suggested that only a third of *high school* students—those with the some of greatest exposure—accepted the theory.¹⁹ Furthermore, the protesters were simply more palatable figures. At the 1964 hearing over the biology textbooks, Vernon Harley, the leader of a group of conservative Texans and a Lutheran minister from Corpus Christi, told the SBOE that “We do not impugn the motives or the intent of those who selected the title.” One might expect a protester to maintain a more respectful tone when attempting to convince the SBOE directly to side with them; and Harley’s rhetoric on the matter was much more charged outside of the hearing, telling a writer for the Associated Press that “Either the Bible is a hoax and we who preach it are deceivers or the people who describe our beginning without God are wrong.”²⁰ Anti-Communist leader Haley and his allies at the DAR and John Birch Society, however, comfortably attacked the allegiances and integrity of authors and state actors in print and in hearings. Birchers, after all, had famously declared President Eisenhower an enemy, calling the popular president too liberal.²¹

The John Birch Society even alienated many of Texas’s conservative religious communities. Goldwater, whose 1964 presidential campaign was often associated with the radicalism of the John Birch Society, was unable to sway “even [the] poorly organized portions of [the state’s] religious community.”²² Historian Sean P. Cunningham writes that, despite the religious language of Goldwater and his allies, “Goldwater’s

campaign not only failed to rally [Christian conservative] support, but was actually rejected and denounced.”²³ Therefore, the alignment between anti-Communist forces in Texas with evangelicals—in the early sixties—was unique.

Antievolutionists appear, at least in part, to have aligned with anti-Communists for practical reasons, borrowing from their earlier successful campaigns. As Roche summarizes, the hearings called for by Haley and Texans for America “provided a public, state-sanctioned forum to broadcast their views on the crucial contest between centralized power and local tradition.”²⁴ Blocking texts at the state level, rather than leaving it to local school boards to block certain texts within their jurisdictions, may seem paradoxical to preserving local interests. After all, while local boards could not add to the list of suitable texts provided by the states, they could narrow it.²⁵ Nonetheless, an investigation by the Texas House of Representative reveals that the SBOE, following a 1961 hearing and protests by TFA, the DAR, and the American Legion, had requested publishers amend texts to conform with many of the conservatives’ protests; both conservatives and liberals associated their rhetoric and tactics with success, even if protests failed more often than not to alter content.²⁶ The 1964 antievolutionist protests too used the localist arguments that appeared to be successful a few years before. In

“Communist technique.”²⁸ To others, it was merely a failure, with the social studies focus leading to a neglect of science education. At the same time that Texans called for better science education in the wake of the Sputnik launches, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram wrote, an SBOE member “denounced the school methods known as ‘Progressive Education.’ He laid to its door the blame for the lack of students of science in the public schools today.”²⁹ While progressive education, particularly with its associations with racial progress, was never fully embraced throughout Texas after the Red Scare, it ceased to be a dirty word among many. Dewey and other Progressives returned to history texts and SBOE members felt comfortable discussing progressive education favorably—albeit with reservations. By 1964, one SBOE member even unfavorably conflated fervent attacks on progressive education with Birchers. The Dallas Morning News wrote, “State Board Member W. C. Graves of Dallas said he had received one complaint that the ‘modern math’ is ‘John Dewey progressive’ education. Graves said he considered the criticism ‘John Birch.’”³⁰ As Texans like those involved with Texans for America saw texts moving away from highlighting only conservative heroes, they were stoked into action. “Liberal” and “progressive” became relative terms, used to attack even those who remained opposed—albeit to a lesser degree than under the Red Scare—to progressive education.

“Texas’s network of activists, subject to substantial media coverage throughout the sixties, stand out for their size, successes, scope, and organization.”

addition to challenging the theory of evolution on religious grounds, protesters appealed to the Board by invoking the right of families and communities to perpetuate their own values. Reverend George Golden spoke to the SBOE on the impossibility of simultaneously “[letting] our religion teach creation and [letting] our schools teach evolution.” While he did not propose teaching overtly Christian doctrine in public schools, Rev. Golden did argue that contradictory information taught in schools undermines the intentions of parents and communities to raise their children with Christian values.²⁷

Despite their shared rhetoric, overlap between the groups’ political opponents was limited; conservative antievolutionists and anti-Communists viewed themselves as in a battle against different forces and developments. Texans for America and their sympathizers in the *Dallas Morning News* repeatedly wrote against progressive education throughout the late fifties and early sixties. To many Texans, progressive education was Communism incarnate, as the use of social studies to shape society represented the abolishment of traditional values. Haley himself called progressive education a

Texas’s sects of protesters, however, were railing against different “liberals”; on the other hand, antievolutionists were protesting a federal policy that—at least in the public imagination—was far removed from the practice and principles of progressive education. Evolution made its way back into the Texan biology class via a collection of texts approved by the National Science Foundation’s Biological Science Curriculum Study (BSCS). Such texts, John L. Rudolph writes, were part of a science education that was itself co-opted to modify society in the context of the Cold War, in particular reference to the national embarrassment that followed the Russian’s successful Sputnik launches.³¹ Rudolph writes, “The topic of cultural evolution received a good deal of play throughout the BSCS program. Social problems, human progress, and broader notions of culture were intermingled in the biological treatment of humans.”³² Though BSCS textbooks included analyses of urgent social issues, including the perils of radiation and overpopulation, BSCS hardliners were cautious not to allow comparisons to progressive education.³³ Indeed, in the Texas press’ many editorials against progressive education, none discussed the perils of BSCS and its ambition to alter American society. With little controversial content—

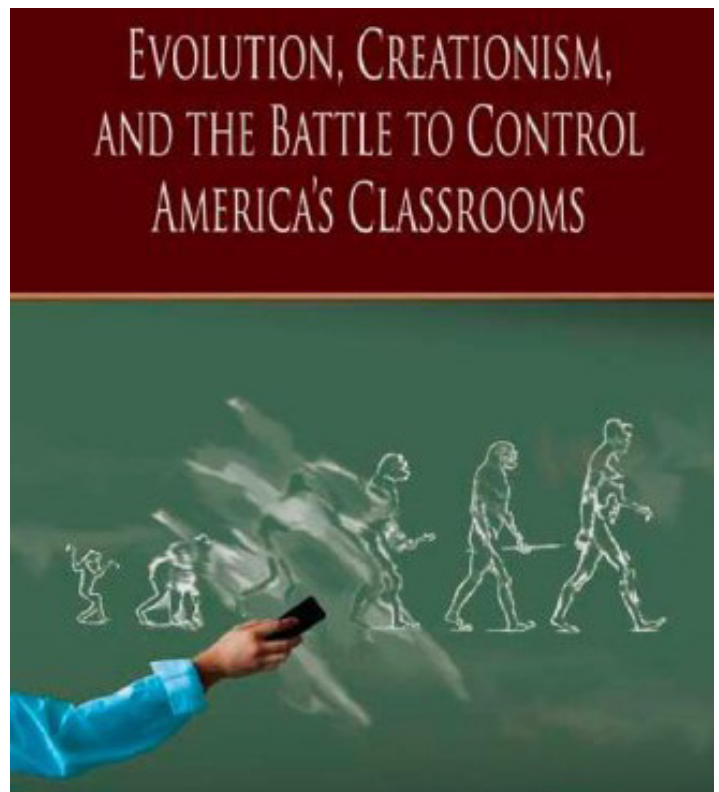
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beyond evolution—and the urgency of the Cold War, most of the new science curriculum ran into little trouble. However, Adam Laats writes, BSCS-sponsored texts, and those meant to compete with them, increasingly included evolutionary theory and human evolution “thoroughly and explicitly,” and “many evangelical parents reacted with alarm.”³⁴

Despite their only indirect connection to conservative anti-Communist protests, antievolutionist protesters in Texas were nonetheless able to raise a similar level of hell. Whereas progressive education insulted conservatives’ anti-Communist sensibilities, the teaching of evolution was solely an insult to evangelicals’ *Christian faith*. In his history of American legal battles over evolution, evolution education advocate Randy Moore describes the Texas attack on BSCS textbooks as the “harshes” of the sixties, “where the books were denounced in newspapers, in church sermons, and at hearings of the Texas Textbook Commission.”³⁵ In the 1964 debate, protesters barraged the SBOE with form letters protesting the adoption of three evolutionist high school biology textbooks.³⁶ The form letters came largely from members of the Church of Christ, “[contending] that teaching of the theory of evolution conflicts with the religious doctrines of the resurrection of the soul and the creation of the world by God,” the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* summarized. Outside of the organized form letters, protests were sent to the SBOE throughout the year, with the most representative and legible reading “[while] I have not seen or read any of the textbooks, I do know that the presentation of Evolution in an atheistic manner can be very influential, but shouldn’t be, for it cannot stand up against Christian faith in any way!”³⁷

Newspapers throughout Texas and the country covered the controversy, suggesting to many pro-evolutionists not to underestimate the antievolutionists. Nationwide, evolutionists already cautious not to offend the religious convictions of students and parents, expressed their anxiety to the SBOE. Biologists and pro-evolution educators saw the protests as an actual and significant threat, with public skepticism of them teaching the theory already high. Science educators and writers wrote to the SBOE, accompanying their letters with pro-science literature, hoping evidence and reason would keep evolution in Texas’s texts.³⁸ Self-identified pro-evolution Christians wrote to the SBOE as well, condemning the efforts of their literalist neighbors. Furthermore, biologists and science educators attended and spoke at the Texas hearing, on behalf of the publishers, hoping to explain and defend evolution before the board and protesters.

Whereas the strength and noise of the DAR and TFA can be explained by the particularly large presence of the John Birch Society in Texas, the organization of and national attention received by Texan antievolutionists and their critics cannot be similarly explained by a disproportionately large number of antievolutionists. Public misgivings about the teaching of evolution flourished nationally, despite their relative lack of



Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms, by Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer (2010)
Source: Amazon

activity between the 1925 Scopes trial and the 1960s; after all, antievolutionists had little to fear, as the only two biologists who had authored high school textbooks that discussed evolution by 1960 saw low sales nationally.³⁹ Three states (Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas) even had statutes banning the teaching of evolution.⁴⁰ While such laws were rarely ever enforced, Arkansans refused to repeal the antievolution statute as evolution made its way back into the classroom and some textbooks, with many in the state calling for its enforcement and some even using antievolutionism as a campaign platform.⁴¹ Controversies similar to Texas’s erupted in Kentucky, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Arizona, and Florida, all against the inclusion of evolution in biology texts throughout the early and mid sixties.⁴² As anti-Communist textbook activism lost steam beyond Texas, antievolutionist activism boomed *nationally*.

No other antievolutionist protest, however, reached the scale or coverage of Texas’s antievolutionist protest, in part due to the attention to textbooks already established in the state.⁴³ The *Dallas Morning News* contributed greatly to the antievolutionists’ coverage, itself an embodiment of the gradual alignment of conservative interests in Texas. One of the two major papers in the state’s second largest city, the *Morning News* was overwhelmingly sympathetic to anti-Communists on the far right.⁴⁴ With close ties to Haley, the paper was consistent in its coverage of the state’s textbook controversies.

Editorials were uniformly approving of TFA and DAR activities. Not only was Dallas a de facto headquarter for conservative anti-Communism, it was also a hotspot for local textbook activism. The Parents' Committee of Tarrant County was nearby, and many debates before the Dallas school board mirrored those at the state level, though the local board had no authority to request revisions.⁴⁵ However, though the Parents' Committee supported the antievolutionist protest of 1964, they did not lead it. The protest was led by evangelicals well outside of the Dallas area. Nonetheless, the protest received particularly detailed coverage by the anti-Communist *Morning News*, with editorials calling evolutionary theory blasphemy.⁴⁶ Unrelated to the *Morning News*' typical anti-Communist focus and initially beyond typical loci of textbook activism (Dallas and the capital), the familiarity of the antievolutionist tactics sparked the interest of the conservative *Morning News*, providing antievolutionists with a sizable and sympathetic print outlet.

What distinguished Texas in '64 from other states also debating the placement of evolution in textbooks was the presence of loud, organized, and successful conservative textbook activism earlier that decade and the network that developed. The network and tactics would continue on in Texas, even after the SBOE ultimately decided against the antievolutionists. As multiculturalism, according to Moreau and Zimmerman, came to dominate the discussion of textbooks nationally, conservatives continued to challenge Texan textbook adoptions in official hearings. As conservative forces in general coalesced behind the Republican party by the end of the decade, so did the efforts of textbook activists. Veteran activists Mel and Norma Gabler and "Mrs. Charles Baker" had been active with the DAR and TFA's campaigns over history textbooks in the sixties, with Norma Gabler serving as the "textbook chairman" of the Jane Douglas DAR chapter.⁴⁷ The two brought to the attention of the SBOE thirty-eight textbooks with supposedly suspect content in 1970. The protests contended that there was "a serious omission of the strict constitutionalist, pro-American, conservative view held by a vast number of Americans" in history texts—expended for the sake of expressing "the liberal-leftist viewpoint" in history texts. However, they also argued that biology texts presented evolution as fact at the expense of a religious model and that texts in general contained "offensive" passages promoting contraceptive use.⁴⁸ "We are well acquainted by now—maybe we ought to give [Gabler] a 10-year pin," one SBOE member joked in 1970 (Baker was also present at the hearing).⁴⁹ The long serving activists had in fact mirrored broader developments in American conservatism. The bombardment of official protests was not in vain either. With continuing coverage from the *Dallas Morning News*, Gabler and the Bakers succeeded in blocking the adoption of an English text with supposedly offensive language.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The activists' focus on textbooks was—at its surface—unpro-

ductive, as textbooks became increasingly less important as teaching tools throughout this period. In *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms*, Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer determine that on the controversial matter of evolution, textbook content, state educational standards, and even federal policy matter little in terms of what a teacher actually teaches.⁵¹ Though Berkman and Plutzer published their study in 2008, and the content and strategies of debates over the teaching of evolution and its alternatives in the public classroom have evolved substantially between the sixties and now, there are numerous examples of biology educators teaching evolution despite its absence from textbooks in the fifties and sixties. In the late fifties and early sixties, *The American Biology Teacher* increasingly wrote on how to substantively introduce evolution into the classroom without inciting protests. Speaking at a National Association of Biology Teachers symposium in 1957, a teacher from Edwardsville, Illinois advised her fellow educators to be cautious with regard to teaching evolution, as "most students have been brought up in a church with indoctrination into the idea of a single act of creation," so as not to appear to "try to refute the religious beliefs of our students."⁵² In early 1966, the Associated Press (AP) noted that in Arkansas and Mississippi, which had outright banned the teaching of evolutionary theory, "most schools teach evolution anyway." The potential fine and threat of dismissal, under the Arkansas statute, fenced in educators only "somewhat," with many openly flouting the law.⁵³

However, the AP reporter wrote in hyperbole, echoing the frustration of antievolutionists as the scientific theory worked its way gradually into the classroom and textbook. Proactive evolutionist educators were by no means the norm, as one 1962 study, reported on in *The American Biology Teacher*, suggested to readers tremendous religious opposition to evolution by biology teachers themselves.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, many educators taught evolution to their students. Cautious but determined, these teachers taught evolution on their own initiative, often without supportive materials provided by their states.

This independence of educators was not confined to the teaching of evolution; at least in Texas, the state placed greater educational requirements on new teachers during the fifties and sixties. The newly established Texas Education Agency set up various certificates for teachers, covering not just special education but education in general. These carried bachelor's degree and credit hour requirements.⁵⁵ Most of these requirements were for degrees and hours in pedagogy, but toward the end of the fifties the Agency began to place greater emphasis on having educators more deeply understand the subjects that they taught. At a 1957 hearing, the Board addressed concerns that new educators did not receive adequate training in the subjects they were going to teach. Commissioner of Education J. W. Edgar stated that "I do not feel that we are overloading on education and neglecting the

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subject fields,” noting that the state had already introduced high standards for educators in science, history, and English. Though the state’s requirements placed greater emphasis on teaching methodology than science or history, they nonetheless required familiarity and pre-existing knowledge in the educator’s field, notwithstanding *additional* requirements that individual colleges might place on teachers in training.⁵⁶ These developments did not make textbooks entirely useless; even though the state would place greater emphasis on the expertise of the teacher in their subjects, such requirements were placed on new—not existing—teachers.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, state standards for educators reflect the diminishing importance of texts as a teaching tool, in favor of the teachers themselves.

What Texan textbook activists did accomplish was an early alignment between economics and history-focused anti-Communists and biology-focused Christian fundamentalists. Mary C. Brennan, speaking on the United States at large, argues that, though largely out of the public spotlight, the sixties saw disparate conservative identities coalesce behind the Republican Party first epitomized in Barry Goldwater’s 1960 and ‘64 presidential campaigns.⁵⁸ Many of Texas’s activists were certainly part of this movement; the most prominent, Haley—once a fervent conservative Democrat—ran independent in his 1962 campaign for Commission of Agriculture, and denounced fellow Texan Democrat President Johnson. He also wrote in favor of Goldwater’s ‘64 campaign as the GOP nominee for President.⁵⁹ While in the early sixties, evangelicals may not have fully backed radical anti-Communists, their use of TFA’s successful rhetoric, tactics, and resources suggests the beginning of an alignment that would mirror that of broader developments in American conservatism, those that manifested most noticeably in the “culture war” of the 1990s.

Most literature on textbook controversies, particularly those published during the nineties “culture war,” overlooks the nuances of the developments in American conservatism in the sixties. Zimmerman’s *Whose America?* and Moreau’s *Schoolbook Nation* were published in 2002 and ‘03, respectively—not long after the culture war typically associated with the previous decade. In describing past controversies in social studies textbooks, dating back to the time of the Civil War, they borrow from the language of James Davison Hunter, who introduced the term “culture war” in the early 1990s in response to cultural debates over moral authority in matters of education, homosexuality, abortion, multiculturalism, and race, with one side “progressive” and the other “orthodox.”⁶⁰ While history and social studies education was not the sole focus of 1990s debates, conservative activists (Hunter’s “orthodox”) devoted much of their efforts toward reshaping the content of textbooks and curriculums to mirror their “traditional” worldview.⁶¹

Zimmerman and Moreau nobly endeavor to correct the perception that culture wars themselves were new, noting similar eruptions through the past century and a half; yet, they overlook the links *between* the various battles they describe, opting for a more episodic narrative. In that respect, the fall into the same trap as their contemporary commentators. Such writers not only described community and political efforts to change textbook contexts as unique to the second half of the twentieth century; they also described conservative action over the content of their era’s texts as entirely reactionary and an even more recent development. Though education researcher Sherry Keith, writing on “External Pressures on the [Textbook] Selection Process,” notes that “Over the past three decades there has been considerable controversy regarding the content of instructional materials,” such new controversies, as she describes, were typically liberal efforts to reform texts and “[to identify] racism and sexism” in texts.⁶² Other studies, such as *Molding the Good Citizen: The Politics of High School History Texts*, engaged with conservatism, but not historically. Instead, they spoke of conservative talking points particular to the culture war of the nineties, such as same-sex marriage.⁶³ Textbooks of the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s were, striking for “the sympathy of the educational establishment to... the rise and flourishing of many diverse liberal social movements.”⁶⁴ Though English professor Joan DelFattore, in *What Johnny Shouldn’t Read: Textbook Censorship in America*, focuses more than other studies on the conservative response to liberal gains in textbook content, she too describes such activism as arising out of 1980s and the conservatism associated with the Reagan Administration.⁶⁵

Reexamining the textbook controversies of the sixties through the activities of *conservatives* allows us to better understand just how the tactics and arguments of 1990s culture war combatants came about; later activists were not merely reacting against the cementing of multiculturalism in the public school but building upon a longer tradition of grassroots activism against various liberal causes. Since the culture war subsided, many historians have begun to pay greater attention to such conservative activists and trends that were previously unnoticed. The sixties was a period of activity among disparate conservative groups, as they attempted to unify politically. While the process of alignment was gradual, it was also broad; George Nash in *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* notes the deliberate efforts of those at conservative publications *National Review* and *Modern Age*, both established in 1956, to create a unified conservative front, drawing traditionalist and libertarian camps to a movement that “desperately needed to discover unity and clarity.”⁶⁶

Such alignment occurred at the grassroots level as well. Of course, such elites and intellectuals represented a small portion of conservatives. Lisa McGirr looks to California’s Orange County in the 1960s, observing the coalescing of conservative grassroots activism with conservative businessmen


and the conservative intellectual sphere.⁶⁷ As Sean P. Cunningham notes in his account of modern conservatism's rise in Texas, such business and intellectual participation was often lacking in grassroots efforts, turned off by the perceived extremism of DAR, TFA, and John Birch Society members.⁶⁸ This is true of Texas's textbook debates as well. Business leaders stayed out of Texas's textbook debates, and the radical anti-Communist that jumpstarted such debates were viewed by intellectuals as an embarrassment.

Other educational protests at the time saw the alignment among grassroots activists, not just between different classes of conservatives (intellectuals, grassroots activists, business leaders); however, those were typically couched entirely in the language of anti-Communism. McGirr and Michelle Nickerson both discuss the battle in California over sex education, where anti-Communists dominated PTAs and argued that the destruction of sexual and gender mores were anti-Christian.⁶⁹ However, the sex education debate, unlike the antievolutionist debate in Texas, was consistently framed by activists as one over Communism. The destruction of such standards did not simply undermine Christian community values but, as Nickerson summarizes, "were threats to the social order that invited revolution."⁷⁰ While anti-Communists maintained a Christian rhetoric, using their religion to further repudiate the godless Soviet Union, the threat of Communism was always at the forefront of discussions. Such anti-Communist rhetoric was entirely absent from the debate over the teaching of evolution in Texas, in both SBOE hearings and Texas newspapers.

Texas's 1960s textbook controversies, relative to the national conversation of the nineties, did not constitute a culture war. Multiculturalism, evolution, and sex ed were not yet established enough to elicit the rage of a national conservative movement. Furthermore, of course, such a movement did not exist in its fullest form in the sixties. However, the organized anti-Communist activism around education and history textbooks, as well as the antievolutionist activism of

the sixties that borrowed greatly from the anti-Communists, provide an early account of what that movement would become.

Texan protesters Baker and the Gablers began as anti-Communist activists with the Daughters of the American Revolution. Though they remained focused on the subjects originally associated with the DAR (social studies), by 1970 they also took up the antievolutionist cause as well. And though McGirr and Nickerson's Californian activists framed their crusade against sex education in terms of anti-Communism, Baker and Gabler dropped the paranoia of Communist infiltration, and merged the anti-progressive education stance of anti-Communists and the anti-BSCS stance of antievolutionists under a unified position against a general "liberal" enemy.⁷¹

This unified front was not contained to a few Texan housewives either. Writing in 1979, Indiana English teacher Edward B. Jenkinson observed that by the early seventies, though "individual parents still protest books," many "do so with the advice of one or more of at least two hundred organizations in this nation that want to change the public schools. The number of parents protesting books has increased markedly during the last decade, and the number of incidents of attempted censorship has nearly tripled."⁷² A teacher since the 1950s, Jenkinson argued that procedural changes caused the spike in censorship attempts. However, protests were more organized and included a wider range of talking points as well. The protesters Jenkinson observed objected not just to novels with profane language or sexual content, but stories, histories, and other textbook content that might offend the broad spectrum of beliefs now under the conservative umbrella, whether they be attacks "on family, home, and adults," "on authority of established law and order," "on Bible and Christianity," or promote a welfare state and revolution.⁷³ The Gablers were responsible for one such organization, the Educational Research Analysts. By the late 1970s, they were protesting before school boards in Indiana.⁷⁴ 

Endnotes

- [1] Manny Fernandez and Christine Hauser, "Texas Mother Teaches Textbook Company a Lesson on Accuracy," *New York Times*, October 5, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/1VzmTcY>.
- [2] "Texas Approves Disputed History Texts for Schools," *New York Times*, November 22, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/1Fddudv>.
- [3] Hall, 170.
- [4] A Handbook for Members of the State Textbook Committee, Austin, 1955, 1981/168-2, *Texas State Library and Archives*, Austin, 12; Hall, 29; Texas's system was not uncommon at the time. In the 1950s, about half of the nation's states had a centralized state body for reviewing and approving textbooks, though the structure would soon fall out of fashion in favor of greater local control.
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- [6] Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 265.
- [7] David Farber and Jeff Roche, "Introduction," in *The Conservative Sixties*, eds. David Farber and Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 1.
- [8] "Form Letter' Mail Attacks Proposed Texas Textbook," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 28, 1964.
- [9] Edward H. Miller, *Nut Country: Right Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 90.
- [10] *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 US 97 (1968).
- [11] Jeff Roche, "Cowboy Conservatism," in *The Conservative Sixties*, eds. David Farber and Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 79.
- [12] D. J. Mulloy, *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy, Conservatism, and the Cold War* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 11.
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- [14] Roche, 80.
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- [16] Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 246.
- [17] State Textbook Committee Hearing, October 14, 1964, Textbook Controversies and Matters, 1978/174-43, Texas Education Agency 1923-1978, *Texas State Library and Archives*, 165.
- [18] *Ibid.*, 24.
- [19] Bruce Stewart, "On Teaching Evolution," *The American Biology Teacher* 24, no. 4 (April 1962): 271.
- [20] "Texas Ministers Protest Textbooks," *Seattle Times*, November 10, 1964.
- [21] Miller, 2, 22-23.
- [22] Sean P. Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 61.
- [23] *Ibid.*
- [24] Roche, 80.
- [25] Joseph I. Hall, "A Study of the Development of Legislation Affecting the Selection of Textbooks in the United States," (EdD diss., Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1958), 170.
- [26] Bob Sherrill, "Record Change in Books Aired," *Texas Observer* (Austin, TX), January 13, 1962.
- [27] State Textbook Committee Hearing, 13.
- [28] J. Evetts Haley, "Texans Look at Pearson," *Evansville Courier* (Evansville, IN), October 3, 1964.
- [29] "Education in Science Urged to Schoolmen," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 26, 1958.
- [30] "State Board Fuzzy About Modern Math," *Dallas Morning News*, April 24, 1964.
- [31] John L. Rudolph, *The Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 108.
- [32] *Ibid.*, 157.
- [33] *Ibid.*, 155.
- [34] Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 196.
- [35] Randy Moore, *Evolution in the Courtroom* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 33.
- [36] "'Form Letter' Mail Attacks Proposed Texas Textbook"
- [37] Mary Sims to J. W. Edgar, M-Z, 1978/174-47, Texas Education Agency 1923-1978, *Texas State Library and Archives*.
- [38] Jeffrey J. W. Baker to J. W. Edgar, A-L, 1978/174-44, Texas Education Agency 1923-1978, *Texas State Library and Archives*.
- [39] Edward J. Larson, *Trial and Error: The American Controversy Over Creation and Evolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 88.
- [40] *Ibid.*
- [41] S. Charles Bolton, "The Historian as Expert Witness: Creationism in Arkansas," *Public Historian* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 61-62.
- [42] Addison E. Lee, "Teaching Biology in the 1970s," *American Biology Teacher* 33, no. 2 (1971): 84.
- [43] While *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968) was a much larger controversy, with the debate receiving greater national attention than the '64 debate in Texas even before reaching the US Supreme Court, it was not an antievolution protest but a pro-evolution one; Arkansas biology teacher Susan Epperson and the Arkansas Education Association were challenging an antievolution statute. For more on the Epperson controversy, see *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 US 97 (1968); Larson; Randy Moore, "Creationism in the United States: IV. The Aftermath of *Epperson v. Arkansas*," *American Biology Teacher* 61, no. 1 (January 1999): 10-16; S. Charles Bolton, "The Historian as Expert Witness: Creationism in Arkansas," *Public Historian* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 59-67; and "Reconciling Faith and Evolution in the Classroom: A Conversation with Susan Epperson, 42 Years Later," *ACLU* (last accessed February 28, 2016), <https://www.aclu.org/reconciling-faith-and-evolution-classroom-conversation-susan-epperson-42-years-later>.
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- [47] “DAR Textbook Chairman to Attend Austin Hearings,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1965; Edward B. Jenkinson, *Censors in the Classroom: The Mind Benders* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 87. Both Baker and Norma Gabler were typically referred to as Mrs. Charles Baker and Mrs. Mel Gabler, their husbands’ names, in print.
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- [53] “Arkansas Teachers Battle Ban on Evolution Teaching,” *Rockford Morning Star* (Rockford, IL), January 19, 1966.
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