TREETHEP SRISA-NGA

T.SRISANGA@UFL.EDU

M.A.IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

IMAGINING BOLÍVAR AND BOLIVARIANISM: BUILDING VENEZUELA WITH TEXTBOOKS, 1959-2013

This study presents two main arguments. **First**, the (re)interpretations of Simón Bolívar in school textbooks are always present in Venezuela and not limited to any specific government. The construction of narratives on Bolívar is an integral part of state-buidling projects and nationalism. Evidence from cross-temporal analysis of 21 primary school textbooks published between 1959 and 2013 unveils a general pattern of how each administration, in accordance with its own political and economic stances and goals, distinctively interprets El Libertador, his actions, and "Bolivanrianism."

Second, the decades-long excessive focus on Bolívar's heroism and the lack of critical analysis of him in the textbooks contribute to the strengthening of the cult of personality. This, in turn, provides a "raw material" for a charismatic, populist leader to exploit, connect with the people, and rise to power.

Thesis committee: Dr. Rebecca Hanson (chair), Dr. Carlos de la Torre, and Dr. Margarita López-Maya

1960s

THE GLORIFICATION OF BOLIVAR IS
UBIQUITOUS, ALONG WITH A NARRATIVE
CONSTRUCTING BOLIVAR AS THE
SYMBOL FOR UNITY



1970s

BOLIVAR IS EXTREMELY LIONIZED AS THE MOST IMPECCABLE HERO IN THE WORLD HISTORY. THE LIBERATOR'S DESIRE FOR PAN-AMERICANISM IS FREQUENTLY HIGHLIGHTED

1980s

THE CULT OF BOLIVAR REMAINS
INTENSE; BOLIVAR'S DYING WISHES TO
SEE HIS MOTHERLAND UNITED MAKES A
COMEBACK



"Así está Bolívar en el cielo de América, vigilante y ceñudo, con el inca al lado y el haz de banderas



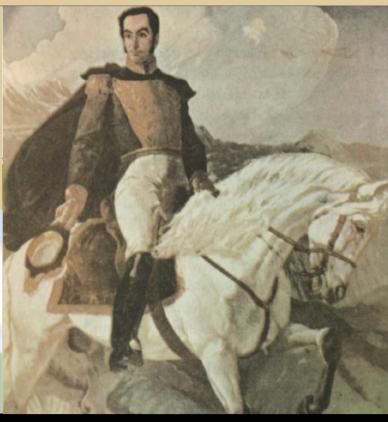
1990s BOLIVAR IS EXALTED NOT ONLY FOR HIS

INNATE EXTRAORDINARINESS BUT FOR
HIS PERSEVERANCE IN HARD TIME

2000s-2010s

THE MAIN GUIDING NARRATIVE OF EVERY LESSON, BOLIVAR IS DEPICTED AS THE DEFENDER OF LIBERTY, EQUITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE





the 1960s: civil unrest between urban leftwing guerrillas and security forces
the 1970s: massive oil revenue, pan-American solidarity/nationalism
the 1980s: deep economic crisis and recession

General political development in Venezuela in each decade:

the 1990s: political instability, neoliberal reforms
the 2000s-2010s: petrodollar-driven growth, increased social spending, leftist populist
leader in power