EDITOR'S FORUM

SACRED TEXTS AND INTRODUCTORY TEXTS: THE CASE OF MEAD'S SAMOA

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A survey of 118 introductory anthropology textbooks published in the period 1929–1990 examines the ways in which Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* has been presented to college undergraduates. In contrast to Derek Freeman's claim that her conclusions about Samoan sexuality and adolescence have been reiterated (approvingly) in an "unbroken succession of anthropological textbooks," it appears that this work has been ignored almost as often as it has been cited. Criticisms of Mead, although relatively few and almost entirely methodological, have also been incorporated into textbooks, both before and following Freeman's 1983 book, *Margaret Mead and Samoa.* Whether or not Mead has been a "holy woman" in American cultural anthropology, *Coming of Age in Samoa* does not appear to have been a "sacred text."

Since the publication of Derek Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (1983b), anthropologists and others have been wrestling with the issue of how Samoa is to be represented to the world—whether in terms of Mead's ethnography, that of Freeman, or some others' accounts. The "Mead-Freeman Controversy" soon extended to broader questions, of course, and the number of interlocutors is by now legion. But clearly we are not finished with the debate. While Paul Shankman has declared that by "1984 almost everything had been said," he had to confess that as of 1987, "almost nothing had been resolved" (1987: 498). As if to demonstrate that in fact not everything *had* been said, in 1988

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a film appeared promising that the "controversy . . . [would] be resolved by startling new evidence presented in [the] program" (Heimans 1988), and much more recently Orans (1996) has gone to Mead's field notes for edification, just as Shankman (1996) has examined critically Freeman's Samoan data.

I should make it clear at the outset that I do not here attempt to resolve the controversy: I am not concerned (at least in this essay) with whose representation of Samoa is "correct." If neither Samoans nor Samoanists can fully agree, it is unlikely that I have any answers.

Instead, I consider here one of the many issues about which contrary views have been expressed during the debate, namely, the degree to which Margaret Mead's representation of Samoan society and culture, especially as it was set forth in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead 1928; hereafter, *COAS*), has in fact been uncritically received and canonized by anthropologists. According to Freeman, for more than sixty years Mead's "conclusions" (and particularly those regarding adolescence and premarital sexual behavior) had never been seriously challenged but were simply repeated endlessly, thus perpetuating the "myth" he has come forth to "unmake." On the other hand, numerous anthropologists have claimed that the flaws in her earlier work have long been recognized and that *COAS* has never been accorded much credibility. About this matter, at least, can we say who is right?

The Making of a Classic

In expressing his distress over the uncritical acceptance of Mead's portrait of Samoa, Freeman attributes the acquiescence initially to "the climate of the times," but subsequently to ignorance or the suppression of contrary evidence, and finally to the sheer weight of Mead's reputation and influence. Thus, "when Mead depicted the Samoans as a people without jealousy, for whom free lovemaking was the pastime par excellence, and who, having developed their emotional lives free from any warping factors, were so amiable as to never hate enough to want to kill anybody, *no anthropological or other critic,* in the fervid intellectual climate of the late 1920s, seriously questioned these extravagant assertions" (Freeman 1983b:95–96; emphasis added). The consequence was that by 1939 "the example of Samoa had become duly incorporated into the literature of the social sciences" (ibid.:101).

In Freeman's view, Samoan fieldwork conducted by others did not result in "corrective" accounts, as he clearly thinks it should have. Rather, during "the 1950s . . . Mead's conclusion about adolescence in Samoa came to be regarded as a proven fact"; such an "uncritical acceptance of Mead's conclusions in centers of higher learning in both Europe and America could occur because none of the anthropologists who had published the results of research

undertaken in Samoa subsequent to Mead's expedition of 1925–1926 had in any way questioned her findings" (ibid.:103).

Continuing with Freeman's scenario, things should have changed after the mid-1950s, but new ethnographic reports only served to support Mead. Lowell Holmes, in 1954, went to Samoa specifically to do a "restudy" of Ta'u, the site of Mead's earlier fieldwork. Holmes's resulting doctoral thesis (1957) and monograph (1958) included "numerous facts widely at variance with the picture Mead had given" and provided "substantial grounds for seriously questioning the validity of Mead's picture of Samoa" (Freeman 1983b: 104). However, again Freeman cites the prevailing *Zeitgeist* as a deciding factor: "given the intellectual climate of the mid 1950s in the department [at Northwestern University]," Holmes did not challenge Mead's "central conclusion" in *COAS*, as Freeman seems to think he should have been obliged to do on the basis of his own evidence, but "gave it as his opinion that the reliability of Mead's account of Samoa was 'remarkably high' " (ibid.:105). Thus, "with Holmes's apparent confirmation of its findings, *Coming of Age in Samoa* came to be regarded more widely than ever before as a classic of American cultural anthropology, and by the 1960s it had become the most widely read of all anthropological books" (ibid.).

But if Holmes was reluctant to draw what to Freeman was an inevitable conclusion, others' work led Mead herself, in an appendix to a new edition of *Social Organization of Manu'a* (1969), "to admit the 'serious problem' of reconciling the contradiction between her own account of Samoa and other records of historical and contemporary Samoan behavior" (Freeman 1983b: 107). Nevertheless, according to Freeman, by the 1970s "such was [Mead's] prodigious reputation that . . . *Coming of Age in Samoa* continued to be accepted by the vast majority of anthropologists as presenting an accurate picture of the Samoan ethos as it had been in the 1920s" (ibid.).

Thus, for Freeman, right up to the time of his "unmaking" of the "myth," *COAS* seemed immune to doubts or criticisms, which were too few and far between and "not substantial enough . . . to affect significantly the general acceptance of Mead's conclusion of 1928" (Freeman 1983a:169 n. 2). Instead, the book "has come to be accepted as a scientific classic, and its conclusions continue to be regarded by anthropologists and others as though they were eternal verities" (Freeman 1983b:108).

But Who Reads Classics?

According to its publishers and numerous journalists, *COAS* has sold millions of copies since its publication in 1928, the book reportedly has been translated into "16 languages, including Urdu and Serbo-Croatian" (McDowell

1983:C21), and it has become a cliché to refer to the "countless" undergraduates to whom the book has been assigned. Citations and quotations from *COAS* are abundant in the general scholarly literature, as Freeman illustrates for works of social criticism and philosophy (1983b:97–102), and its influence is also evident in books dealing with adolescent psychology (e.g., Bandura 1964:8; Conger 1973:14–15; Crow and Crow 1965:41; Fitch 1985:258–259; Muus 1968:68–87), where Samoa is often used as a type case of the purported cultural basis of adolescent turmoil. And in anthropology, the following quote surely makes the book sound like a classic: "Once in a great while, a study of one society profoundly challenges existing conceptions of human development and forces a reevaluation of basic assumptions concerning the range of normality for all humans. One thinks of Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* . . . as [an example] of research conducted in a single cultural setting that compelled revision of generalizations about adolescence and sexual development for the species as a whole" (LeVine 1981:ix).

And yet, when reports of Freeman's book first appeared in the mass media, journalists had no difficulty in finding anthropologists to quote who gave a very different view of Mead's work, and especially of *COAS* (see Begley, Carey, and Robinson 1983; Fields 1983; Leo 1983; Wilford 1983a). Ward Goodenough spoke for many in saying that the "lay public is now learning what professional anthropologists have long known about the quality of her early ethnographic fieldwork, done in her youth" (1983:906–907). Those trained in British traditions have been said to have long denigrated her Samoan fieldwork as an example of how not to conduct proper research and considered *COAS* as "the rustling-of-the-wind-in-the-palm-trees kind of anthropological writing" (Evans-Pritchard 1962:96; see also Douglas 1983: 760; Hsu 1980:349; Jarvie 1983:84; Langness 1985:17; Leach 1983:477). But even American cultural anthropologists, whom Freeman continually accuses of being uncritical of Mead, have casually noted the deficiencies of her early work and Mead's penchant for overstatement and simplification, claiming as well that these flaws have been recognized "for decades" (Bock 1983:336; see also Basham, quoted in Wilford 1983b; Clifford 1983; Glick 1983a:13; Harris, quoted in Wilford 1983b; Kuper 1989:453; Langness 1985:17–18; Rappaport 1986:329; Romanucci-Ross 1983:90–91; Schneider 1983:4; Shore 1983:936–937).

Faced with such statements, Joy Pratt, director of publicity at Harvard University Press (publishers of Freeman's book), responded: "People say it's been known in the field for years that Mead made mistakes in interpreting Samoa, but the general public hasn't known that" (quoted in Fields 1983: 28)—a claim to which one anthropologist replied: "That it is news to the *New York Times, Time, Newsweek,* and *Science* only indicates that these publications do not always report all the news" (Schneider 1983:4).

Had there in fact been such "news" for them to report prior to Freeman's book? Shankman has claimed that "criticism had been circulating since the first academic reviews of *Coming of Age in Samoa* appeared in 1929" (1983: 40). This, too, is not widely known, since upon its publication *COAS* did receive "rave" reviews in the popular press (e.g., Brooks 1928; Kirchwey 1928; *New York Times* 1928) as well as some extremely favorable notices from anthropologists (Benedict 1928; Driberg 1929). In an advertising blurb, none other than Malinowski called it an "absolutely first-rate piece of descriptive anthropology, an excellent sociological comparison . . . an outstanding achievement" (1928).

But there were detractors. Writing for general audiences, Anderson was "undecided whether it has been a contribution to science or art. . . . If it is science, the book is somewhat of a disappointment. It lacks documental base" (1929:514). Another reviewer challenged Mead's credentials and conclusions regarding the reputedly low rates of neuroses among Samoans (Johnson 1929). As for anthropologists, Lowie offered a mixed review, praising "her solid contributions to ethnographic fact and method" but also expressing some "skepticism," finding it "hard to understand how certain conclusions could have been arrived at" (1929:533, 534). And Redfield subtly suggested criticism through rhetorical questions (1929:729), finishing his review with what surely is an unusual complaint, that "Miss Mead is interested, one feels, in problems and cases, not in human nature. There is no warmth in her account" (ibid.:730).

Nor have criticisms been limited to a handful of book reviews. Over the ensuing decades, some of these appeared in the scholarly literature (e.g., Ausubel 1954:254, 403–404; Barnouw 1985:94–100 [and earlier editions]; Campbell 1961:340; Harris 1968:409–412; Raum 1940:42–43, 293–294; Winston 1934), but these were unlikely to have been noticed by the general public. Surely, if anthropologists "have known for decades" that Mead's Samoan work, or at least *COAS*, was "problematic," they seem to have done little to counter publicly her growing popularity and respect in the wider community. One is tempted to agree with Langness that "Whether Mead was right or wrong, . . . the whole world was in collusion with her in one way or another. . . . Margaret Mead did not become famous in a vacuum. She did not become famous merely by her own efforts. She had a lot of help. . . . Everyone was in it together" (1985:17).

And so we have what Langness calls "a most curious situation" (ibid.). Freeman has complained that *COAS*, with its "distorted" representations of Samoa, has been incorporated uncritically for decades into American cultural anthropology, yet numerous of its practitioners claim that during those same decades it was widely discredited, or at least ignored. Thus George Marcus has opined "that outside of introductory courses, her work has not

generally been read in recent years" (quoted in Fields 1983:28), bringing to mind Mark Twain's definition of a classic as a book that everybody wants to have read, but nobody wants to read. Is *COAS* such a "classic"—"the most widely read of all anthropological books" (Freeman 1983c), but not by anthropologists?

Students Read Classics—Don't They?

Perhaps, when considering how peoples and their societies and cultures have been represented, it is more important in any case to focus on non-anthropologists' perceptions—they are, after all, in the demographic majority. To get some sense of what these perceptions are likely to have been, we must first acknowledge that the general public, the presumed purchasers (and readers) of those "millions of copies" of *COAS,* has been heavily exposed to Mead's view of Samoa thanks to aggressive marketing by publishers and, perhaps more significantly, by college professors. Many have noted that the book has been "assigned to countless undergraduates" (e.g., Glick 1983b: 758). Unfortunately, I know of no way to determine the degree to which this has in fact been the case.

However, there is another major way in which representations of other peoples are transmitted, and that is through book excerpts, summaries, or discussions incorporated into introductory textbooks. Indeed, in recounting the "damage" that has been done, Freeman has complained that the "conclusions" of *COAS* "have been given very general credence . . . within the anthropological profession (having been repeated in numerous textbooks)" (1983c). By examining such sources we may gain a new perspective on the contrary claims about anthropologists' acceptance of Mead's Samoan work. No matter what anthropologists may privately believe, or what a few academics might publish in scattered, obscure critiques, such demurrals might count for little or nothing if Freeman is correct in saying that Mead's "unqualified dogma, which gets a fundamental matter fundamentally wrong, was repeated [not only] in millions of copies of *Coming of Age in Samoa* [but] as well . . . in an unbroken succession of anthropological textbooks, and [thus] given very widespread professional and popular credence" (1987:392).

Thus we come to the main concern of this article: How has Mead's representation of Samoa been treated in introductory anthropology textbooks since the publication of *COAS?* To what extent has it been cited at all, and has it been uncritically canonized through such citations? Can changes be seen over time as other Samoanists have published their reports or as critiques have appeared? And, finally, how has the "Mead-Freeman Controversy" itself been remarked on in textbooks?

A Survey of Introductory Textbooks

A total of 118 introductory textbooks in anthropology (readily available to me from colleagues and libraries) with publication dates spanning the time period 1929–1990 were surveyed.[1] Although this opportunistic sample does not represent all such textbooks published during that period, I believe it is both large enough and representative enough to draw meaningful conclusions. Primarily using the textbooks' bibliographies and indexes, but in many cases by skimming the entire book, all passages referring to Margaret Mead, Samoa, or both were located and extracted. The following represents an analysis of those extracts.

As can be seen in Table 1, with respect to overall citations, Margaret Mead's Samoan work is *not mentioned* in 54 (45.8%) of the texts (in 10 of these, Samoa is used in some way for illustrative purposes but Mead's work there is not cited). Thus, Mead's publications on Samoa (which in virtually every case means *COAS*) are cited to some degree in 64 (54.2%) of the texts.[2] In five of these, references are made to her findings regarding the political system or allocation of child-minding tasks, but not to Samoan adolescence or sexuality. Only 60 (50.8%) of the sample texts, then, have cited Mead on the two most-controversial topics—far from the "unbroken succession of anthropological textbooks" that has so exercised Freeman. Nor have all of these citations been mere reiterations of Mead's "unqualified dogma." Of the 60 texts in which her views on Samoan adolescence or sexuality are cited, in 50 this has been done in an uncritical or unqualified manner.[3] While these represent a clear majority (83.3%) of all citing texts, they constitute less than half (42.4%) of the 118 sample textbooks published over a sixty-two-year period.

It should be noted that these figures represent numbers and percentages of textbooks that, given the time span considered, include multiple editions

TABLE 1. **Citations of Mead in Introductory Textbooks, 1929–1990**

	Texts (N = 118)	Authors (N = 77)
No mention of Mead's Samoa work	54 (45.8%)	38 (49.4%)
Citation of Mead on Samoa but not on sexuality or adolescence	4 (3.4%)	3 (3.9%)
Mead cited on Samoan sexuality and/or adolescence	60 (50.8%)	36 (46.8%)
Uncritically	50	30
Critically	10	6

by given authors. When only distinct (senior) authors are counted, we find that the overall statistics do not differ greatly from those for the texts. As is shown in Table 1, 36 (46.8%) of the 77 different textbook (senior) authors cited Mead's Samoan work on adolescence or sexuality, with 30 (83.3%) of those authors doing so uncritically.

Thus, during the decades since the publication of *COAS,* Mead's representation of Samoan adolescence and sexuality has been incorporated into about half (50.8%) of the textbooks published by slightly less than half (46.8%) of textbook authors. It has been presented to students uncritically or in an unqualified way in 50 (42.4%) of the 118 textbooks, by 30 (39.0%) of their 77 (senior) authors. In summary, when *COAS* has been cited, it has been presented more often than not as authoritative, but mentions of it have been absent in virtually as many texts as they have been present, and a slight majority (53.2%) of textbook authors have chosen not to cite it at all.

These figures, however, do not necessarily represent the numbers or percentages of students who have been presented with Mead's view of Samoa, since not all texts have equal readerships. Absent sales figures or other comparative data, we might assume that those texts that have appeared in multiple editions have done so because they were "successful," that is, adopted widely and purchased by large numbers of students. In the sample, multiple-edition (or "successful") textbooks constitute 66 of the total of 118 and represent the work of 25 (senior) authors.

As can be seen in Table 2, the "successful" textbooks have tended to include citations of *COAS* slightly more often than is true for the sample as a whole (56.1% versus 50.8%), and once again the majority of citations (28 of 37, or 75.7%) are uncritical or unqualified. But many of the "successful" texts do not mention Mead's Samoa work at all, and some of the citations are critical or qualified. Thus, so far as the subsample of "successful" texts is con-

TABLE 2. **Citations of Mead in "Successful" Introductory Textbooks**

	Texts (n = 66)	Authors (n = 25)[a]
No mention of Mead's Samoa work	25 (37.9%)	12 (48.0%)
Citation of Mead on Samoa but not on sexuality or adolescence	4 (6.1%)	2 (8.0%)
Mead cited on Samoan sexuality and/or adolescence	37 (56.1%)	14 (56.0%)
Uncritically	28	10
Critically	9	4

[a] Subtotals exceed 25 due to authors' changes over editions.

cerned, the frequency of uncritical or unqualified citations is in fact identical, at 42.4% (28 of 66), to that for the total sample (50 of 118, also 42.4%).

Similarly, while the situation is complicated slightly by the fact that three of the "successful" authors changed their treatment of Mead in subsequent editions,[4] it can also be seen in Table 2 that "successful" authors cited Mead on Samoan sexuality or adolescence in at least one edition of their texts somewhat more than did the sample authors as a whole (56.1% versus 50.8%), but those citing her uncritically on at least one occasion represent only 40.0% (10 of 25) of the "successful" authors, which compares with 39.0% (30 of 77) of all authors.

Just as multiple-edition texts presumably are used by more students than are those that go out of print after a first edition, there are texts that can be considered especially "successful," that is, they have appeared in three or more editions (up to six for the current sample). These texts warrant special attention since, regarding potential impact on students' views of Samoa, these have probably been the most influential. Among the 25 "successful" authors (with their 66 texts in the sample), 12 may be identified thus as "best-selling" authors (accounting for 40 of the 66 multiple-edition texts). The relevant figures are provided in Table 3.

With these "best-sellers," significant differences do appear. A substantially higher percentage of "best-selling" textbooks cited Mead on Samoan sexuality or adolescence (70.0%) than is true for either the "successful" textbooks (56.1%) or the sample as a whole (50.8%). This is also true so far as the distinct authors are concerned: 75.0% of the "best-selling" authors cited her in at least one edition, compared with 56.0% of the "successful" authors and 46.8% of all authors. Moreover, Mead's Samoan work was cited uncritically or in an unqualified way in at least one edition of 55.0% (22 of 40) of the "best-selling" textbooks by 58.3% (7 of 12) of the "best-selling" authors; these

TABLE 3. **Citations of Mead in "Best-Selling" Introductory Textbooks**

	Texts (n = 40)	Authors (n = 12)[a]
No mention of Mead's Samoa work	12 (30.0%)	4 (33.3%)
Citation of Mead on Samoa but not on sexuality or adolescence	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Mead cited on Samoan sexuality and/or adolescence	28 (70.0%)	9 (75.0%)
Uncritically	22	7
Critically	6	2

[a] Subtotals exceed 12 due to authors' changes over editions.

figures contrast with 42.4% of the "successful" textbooks by 40.0% of the "successful" authors, and 42.4% of the textbooks by 39.0% of the authors in the sample as a whole.

If these crude indicators of "best-selling" and "successful" authors and textbooks can be considered to correspond to likely proportions of introductory-course student readers, it seems a reasonable inference that over a sixty-two-year period, a majority of introductory anthropology students *have* been presented—at least in their texts—with uncritical or unqualified reiterations of Mead's representation of Samoan adolescence or sexuality. But it is not a large majority and, of course, there is no way to determine what other sources or views such students were exposed to in other reading assignments or class lectures.

The Fate of a "Classic" over Time

The above analysis indicates that Freeman has exaggerated the degree to which *COAS* has been incorporated uncritically into "an unbroken succession of anthropological textbooks" (1987:392), if only because that succession has been broken by Mead's Samoa work having received no attention of any kind in 54 (45.8%) of the 118 texts surveyed, including 25 (37.9%) of the "successful" (multiple-edition) ones and 12 (30.0%) of the "best-sellers" (appearing in three or more editions). Moreover, *COAS* and its conclusions have been presented with qualifications or acknowledging criticisms in 10 (16.7%) of the texts that have cited them at all, including 9 (24.3%) of the 37 citing "successful" textbooks and 6 (21.4%) of the 28 citing "best-sellers." Thus, if my sample is representative, large numbers of introductory students have learned from their textbooks that Mead's representations of Samoa are not necessarily considered accurate, and even larger numbers have not learned of her views at all.

However, when we refine the analysis by examining the fate of *COAS* in textbooks over time, Freeman's complaint (1983a:169 n. 2) that criticisms of it have been few and far between and "not substantial enough . . . to affect significantly the general acceptance of Mead's conclusion of 1928" may be more accurate, whether ultimately justified or not.

The analysis so far has considered the textbook sample in the aggregate, covering a considerable time span of more than sixty years. If, as Freeman contends (1983b:104), Lowell Holmes's doctoral thesis and monograph on Ta'u indeed included "numerous facts widely at variance with the picture Mead had given" and provided "substantial grounds for seriously questioning the validity of Mead's picture of Samoa," then we might expect—if textbooks reflect to any significant degree rethinking that occurs in the profes-

sion, as well as "new findings"—that Holmes's work would have had a significant impact on the treatment received by *COAS* in subsequent years. If that were not enough (for whatever reasons), then surely Freeman's own book, which escaped the notice of hardly anyone within or outside of the profession, must have had a measurable impact in more recent years.

To address these questions, I have broken down the sample of 118 textbooks by publication date into four subsamples: 1928–1957 (the date of Holmes's thesis), 1958–1974 (1958 being the publication date of his more widely available *Samoan Village*), 1975–1983 (the publication date of Freeman's book), and 1984–1990 (following Freeman's book). The results, shown in Table 4, indicate that neither Holmes's nor Freeman's work has had a significant impact on the treatment of Mead and *COAS* in textbooks.

During the period 1928–1957, only 3 of 13 textbooks (23.1%) cited Mead on Samoan sexuality or adolescence, and none did so critically. The next period saw a substantial increase in the publication of textbooks, with 46 (in my sample) during a seventeen-year period; in these, citations of Mead doubled in frequency (22 texts, or 47.8%) and the first critical remarks appeared, but in only 3 texts (6.5% of the total). None of these texts made use of Holmes's work, but criticized Mead with reference to her "subjective" portrayal of Samoa (F. Keesing 1958:163; repeated in R. M. and F. Keesing 1971:395–396) and her heavy reliance "on her own impressions" (Kottak 1974:416). These same criticisms were made during the next period, 1975–1983, with a slight increase in citations of *COAS* (to 23, or 53.5%, of 43 texts) and a slight numerical increase in critical remarks, in 5 texts (11.6% of the total). Three of these cases, however, are repetitions in new editions of previously made points, (Kottak 1978:214–215, 1982:372; R. M. Keesing 1976), although Roger Keesing, now as a sole author, went somewhat further, saying that Mead "can be seen in retrospect to have greatly overemphasized human plasticity and cultural variability" (1976:519). As authority, he cites a paper by Freeman, but nothing of Holmes's work. The other two texts criticize Mead's methods as being "impressionistic" (Benderly, Gallagher, and Young 1977:223) and "highly impressionistic" (Friedl and Pfeiffer 1977:303).

If Holmes's work—whatever its implications might have been for assessing that of Mead—seems to have been ignored by textbook writers, one could hardly expect the same with Freeman's book, given its notoriety if nothing else. Indeed, in the final period under review here, 1984–1990, while the number of texts published seems to have dropped considerably (to 16, for a seven-year period, compared with 43 in the previous nine years), citations of *COAS* increased substantially, appearing in 12 (75.0%) of the textbooks. Of these, 9 discuss the "Mead-Freeman Controversy," but only 2 do so critically, so far as Mead is concerned. Most of the others simply present the

TABLE 4. **Citations of Mead in Introductory Textbooks by Time Period**

	1928–1957	1958–1974	1975–1983	1984–1990	All
	Texts				
Number	13	46	43	16	118
No mention of Mead's Samoa work	9 (69.2%)	21 (45.7%)	20 (46.5%)	4 (25.0%)	54
Citation of Mead on Samoa but not on sexuality or adolescence	1 (7.7%)	3 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4
Mead cited on Samoan sexuality and/or adolescence	3 (23.1%)	22 (47.8%)	23 (53.5%)	12 (75.0%)	60
Uncritically	3 (23.1%)	19 (41.3%)	18 (41.9%)	10 (62.5%)	50
Critically	0 (0.0%)	3 (6.5%)	5 (11.6%)	2 (12.5%)	10
	Authors				
Number	12	35	38	13	98[a]
No mention of Mead's Samoa work	8 (66.7%)	16 (45.7%)	18 (47.4%)	3 (23.1%)	45
Citation of Mead on Samoa but not on sexuality or adolescence	1 (8.3%)	2 (5.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3
Mead cited on Samoan sexuality and/or adolescence	3 (25.0%)	17 (48.6%)	20 (52.6%)	10 (76.9%)	50
Uncritically	3 (25.0%)	14 (40.0%)	16 (42.1%)	8 (61.5%)	41
Critically	0 (0.0%)	3 (8.6%)	4 (10.5%)	2 (15.4%)	9

[a] The total number of authors is higher than in the aggregate tables because some (senior) authors published text editions in more than one time period.

controversy as an example of how difficult it is to compare accounts of the "same" society from different time periods, seen from different theoretical perspectives, and so on. At least one author is critical of Freeman, dismissing his criticisms of Mead as "more a 'media event' than a scientific discourse; among other things, it misrepresents both her work and anthropology itself" (Haviland 1987:119). Of the two remaining texts, one is critical of both Freeman *and* Mead: "In fact, the Samoans appear to be either

gentle or aggressive, depending on the context, and the writings of both observers seem to reflect their own biases" (Oswalt 1986:101). The other does not explicitly discuss Freeman's points but, with reference to Mead's portrayal of Samoa, suggests that "most anthropologists today would probably contend that both physiological changes and sociocultural factors contribute to problems of adolescence" (Peoples and Bailey 1988:361).

For a final look at the fate of *COAS* and the "Mead-Freeman Controversy" in textbooks, I turn briefly to the three texts that have most recently crossed my desk, one a "successful" text (Robbins 1997, in its second edition) and two "best-sellers" (Ember and Ember 1996, in its eighth edition; and Peoples and Bailey 1997, in its fourth). Put simply, the situation seems to be the same as for the period immediately following the publication of Freeman's book.

In Robbins's text, Samoa does not appear in the index, nor does Freeman. Mead's work is discussed (Robbins 1997:140), but for *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*—referred to as "her classic" (ibid.:157)—rather than for *COAS.* In the eighth edition of their text, as in their fifth (1988), Ember and Ember discuss the "Mead-Freeman Controversy," this time giving it "box treatment" as a "current issue" (1996:60–61) under the title "Fieldwork: How Can We Know What Is True?" They do so to raise methodological issues and do not clearly come down on either "side," presumably leaving students to decide what is "true." Peoples and Bailey repeat their earlier (1988) point that "some researchers attribute the problems that arise during the period [of adolescence] primarily to physiological changes, but others consider cultural factors to be the major causes," but in this edition they make the point with explicit reference to Freeman's critique (1997: 312). Yet, in a note to "Suggested Readings" they say of *COAS:* "one of anthropology's great classics. Few anthropological studies have been more widely read by the general public" (ibid.:320).

Conclusions

Given the previously discussed claims by many anthropologists that the weaknesses of Mead's Samoan work "have long been recognized," it is tempting to interpret the omissions of *COAS* from substantial numbers of textbooks as indicators of authors' rejection of its validity. However, absences are notoriously difficult to account for in any simple way, and these are not exceptions to the rule.

Some authors who have not cited *COAS*—especially in the early period (e.g., Paul Radin 1932; Clark Wissler 1929)[5]—have overwhelmingly preferred to use North American Indian or other material for illustrative pur-

poses, and numerous texts in the sample do not refer to Samoa in any context. Similarly, some texts (e.g., Elman Service 1958, 1971) have been organized around a small number of cases, not including Samoa. Other textbooks bear the clear stamp of the theoretical orientations of their authors that might preclude, or at least underplay, "culture and personality" approaches, the rubric under which many citations of *COAS* appear. For example, Marvin Harris does not cite the book in any edition of his text (1971, 1980, 1983), and only one of the four textbooks authored by British anthropologists mentions (and that very incidentally) Mead's Samoan work (John Beattie 1964).

On the other hand, *COAS* is, by many accounts, a "classic," and regardless of regional or theoretical leanings of authors, it is an extremely rare introductory textbook that does not include at least a mention of Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands and his "classic," *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (see note 2 above). Moreover, in many cases (such as Harris's), Mead's *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) —another often-claimed "classic" of hers—is cited and discussed (usually uncritically, but that is another paper) while *COAS* is ignored.[6]

Of course, Freeman appears to be concerned mainly with the "enshrinement" of *COAS* in the anthropological profession as a whole, and in the present context it is reasonable to ask to what extent textbook treatments of Samoa, or any other case, are representative of the views of professional anthropologists. Certainly some of the textbook authors have been major figures in the discipline and might be regarded as opinion makers, if not reflectors; for earlier decades, one notes Alexander Goldenweiser (1937), Melville Herskovits (1948), Alfred Kroeber (1923, 1948), Ralph Linton (1936), Robert Lowie (1934, 1940), George P. Murdock (1934), Paul Radin (1932), and Clark Wissler (1929). Of these eight authors, only three—Goldenweiser, Herskovits, and Murdock—cited Mead (all uncritically) on Samoan adolescence or sexuality. Even with these authors, though, it should be noted that Herskovits dropped his citation in the second edition of his book (see note 4 above), and Murdock used *COAS* and *Social Organization of Manu'a* as only two of thirty-three sources drawn upon for his summary description of Samoa.

Whatever may have been the case with these early leaders in the field, it seems fair to say that most textbooks have been written by "everyday" sorts of anthropologists or, at any rate, by those who do not see the introductory textbook as a forum for major theoretical statements or iconoclasm. They have probably tried to present material, and present it in such a way, that it resonates rather than grates. And surely textbook publishers would be more interested in manuscripts that do not differ too much from the interests and

views of potential adopters (that is, teaching anthropologists). Thus one might expect a degree of "leveling" to occur in the textbook business, with most textbooks, or at least the "successful" ones, representing "middle of the road" views and interpretations.

But, for those who have lived through the "Mead-Freeman Controversy" this stance may represent the general views within the profession. Certainly the controversy generated much heated discussion, but for many anthropologists it has seemed "much ado about nothing." Considerable attention has focused on extreme positions, but these have in fact been taken by few. What marks many of the discussions instead is ambivalence, with points scored on "both sides." Thus, so far as textbooks are concerned, we might expect a small number of texts to include *COAS* with high praise and some to do so critically; but for most of the potential audience, perhaps the wisest course would be to present Mead's work in much the same way as others'—as "findings," which are neither extolled nor condemned. Or, to be on "the safe side," one could ignore it altogether. This, I suggest, is precisely the pattern I have found in my survey.

Given the prominence of the controversy in recent years, it might seem that the last option—that of omitting discussion completely—has been increasingly difficult to adopt by a textbook author. Yet, as we have seen, in the period just following the publication of Freeman's book (1984–1990), one-fourth of the textbooks surveyed did precisely that, as did one of the three 1996–1997 texts examined. And, for the period 1929–1990 taken as a whole, *COAS* and its "conclusions" have been incorporated uncritically into a substantial number of textbooks (42.4%), but it also has been ignored (at least with respect to Samoan sexuality and adolescence) by even more (49.2%). So, Freeman was correct in saying that Mead's representation of Samoa in *COAS* has "been repeated in numerous textbooks" (1983c), but not in an "unbroken succession" (1987:392). And he also appears to have been correct in complaining that—in textbooks, at least—criticisms have been few and "not substantial enough . . . to affect significantly the general acceptance of Mead's conclusion of 1928" (Freeman 1983a:169 n. 2). It seems that the publication of Holmes's work, which Freeman says included "numerous facts widely at variance with the picture Mead had given" and provided "substantial grounds for seriously questioning the validity of Mead's picture of Samoa" (1983b:104), had no effect on textbook writers. What criticisms have appeared have been addressed primarily to methodological issues, beginning only in the late 1950s when, perhaps, anthropology as a whole was becoming more concerned with its "scientific" status.

Freeman surely must be disappointed that the publication of his book has not brought about a sea change in the representation of Samoa in textbooks,

with nearly one-half of the 16 texts published in 1984–1990 including no mention of Mead's Samoa (four) or the controversy (another three), as is also the case for one of the three 1996–1997 texts examined. But this in itself can be seen as a continuation of a long-standing pattern: frequent incorporation of Mead's views, coupled with frequent indifference to them—not the behavior one might expect from a profession in the thrall of a "holy woman" (Rappaport 1986). Whatever the divine status of Mead might be, and the reasons for it, *Coming of Age in Samoa* has not been a sacred text.

NOTES

I am grateful to the three anonymous readers of an earlier version of this article for their criticisms, which have been helpful in improving it.

1. A complete listing of these textbooks is available from the author.

2. It may be of interest to compare this citation frequency with those of certain other "classic" Pacific ethnographies from roughly the same time period. Using a slightly different sample (for other purposes) of 112 textbooks published between 1940 and 1990, I found that Spencer and Gillen's *The Arunta* (1927)—the most often cited Australian Aboriginal ethnography—was used in 48 (42.9%) of those texts, somewhat less than *COAS* in this sample but to the same degree as another of Mead's "classics," *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930), also cited in 48 texts. None of these even approaches, however, the *true* "classic," Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), cited in 109 (97.3%) of the 112 texts!

3. In my analysis, I consider an "uncritical" or "unqualified" citation of Mead's work one that uses laudatory phrasings or refers to *COAS* as a "classic" study, or one that simply paraphrases her conclusions without evaluative language. An example of the former is the text by Swartz and Jordan (1976:24–25):

> In her justly famous 1928 book, *Coming of Age in Samoa,* [Mead] examines the popular notion that it is part of human nature for adolescence to be a time of emotional tension and conflict. . . . She found . . . that adolescence in Samoa does not entail the upheavals that it does in urban American society and that therefore adolescent stress is a culturally determined phase in individual personality development rather than one rooted in the basic nature of humanity.

The second type is illustrated by Hiebert (1976:435):

> But how far can a culture bend and shape a person? To what extent is a child an untouched plastic form on which culture stamps its image, and to what extent is it a product of genetic codes and biologically based learning processes?
>
> . . . One of the first anthropologists to be concerned with this problem was Margaret Mead. . . . She found (1928) that the adolescent years were not particularly difficult for Samoan girls.

"Critical" or "qualified" citations include those that suggest weaknesses in Mead's work due to its "impressionistic" qualities or otherwise refer to criticisms of it, for example, Kottak (1974:416):

> Mead's hypothesis was that the psychological changes associated with puberty here were not inevitable but were culturally conditioned. She found, as anticipated, that Samoan adolescence was a relatively easy period; sexual frustrations imposed in American society were absent. Other studies conducted subsequently in the Pacific, and employing psychological instruments unavailable to Mead in 1925, suggest that sexual freedom does not always guarantee the absence of frustrations and anxieties in adult life.
>
> Like other early culture and personality researchers, Mead relied heavily on her own impressions of the feelings and emotions of Samoan girls. . . . She eschewed use of statistical data, so that the ratio of normal to deviant behavior cannot be established. . . . Different approaches to culture and personality research, including a more "scientific" one, are discussed later.

Or, providing less detail, Keesing (1976:519):

> Margaret Mead's classic studies of adolescent girls in Samoa and of sex roles in New Guinea can be seen in retrospect to have greatly overemphasized human plasticity and cultural variability.

4. Among the "successful authors" are Friedl, Herskovits, and Howard. In his text coauthored with Pfeiffer, Friedl criticized the "impressionistic" and "subjective" nature of Mead's work (Friedl and Pfeiffer 1977:302–303); later, he noted the Mead-Freeman controversy and concluded that "it appears that Mead's work will successfully withstand Freeman's attack" (Friedl and Whiteford 1988:94). Herskovits, in *Man and His Works,* cited *COAS* as demonstrating that "puberty crises" are "culturally, not biologically determined" (1948:44), but in his later abridgement of the book (1964), there is no citation of Mead's Samoa work. And Howard, writing with McKim (1983), discussed the Samoan political system but did not mention Mead's work there; later, writing alone (1986, 1989), he incorporated a discussion of the Mead-Freeman controversy.

5. When not actual quotations, citations refer to the separate bibliography of textbooks.

6. In this context it is interesting to note the results of a smaller comparative survey of 27 introductory sociology textbooks (complete listing available from the author). Of these, 20 (74.1%) cited or quoted the work of Margaret Mead, but in only one case was *COAS* mentioned. It was cited as "the classic study of adolescence in premodern societies" and the conclusion was simply stated that "the Western model is not universal. Samoan adolescents moved fairly smoothly into adult roles and did not suffer the many self-doubts of adolescents in the West" (Popenoe 1986:138–139, 139). Despite the publication date, no mention is made of Freeman's book or the controversy. Compared to this relative neglect of *COAS,* it is striking that 15 (55.6%) of the 27 sociology texts cite Mead's *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* as illustrating the cultural basis of gender roles.

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