

**Throwing Out the History Textbook:  
Changing Social Studies Texts and the Impact on Students**

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### **Abstract**

*This practitioner research study examined students at an ethnically and economically diverse high school and the impact of replacing the corporate-produced textbook with teacher-created reading packets and questions that asked students to take a critical stance on historical events in United States history. Using critical theories of education as a lens, this study analyzed survey and interview data. The results show this new text increased students' interest in reading about history, improved students ability to recall information and complete homework, developed students ability to see history as interpreted perspectives, and helped non-White students better identify with the people in history.*

### **Purpose**

A vast majority of high school history students in the United States learn from textbooks (Cuban, 1991; Paxton, 1999), which are mass-produced by an elite group of corporate educational publishers. The narratives that are embedded within these textbooks convince students that they represent the omniscient voice of history and speak with an authority convincing most students they are simply the facts. Yet, these textbooks portray the dominant narrative of those who hold power in society (Anyon, 1979), serve the purpose of political indoctrination (FitzGerald, 1980; Loewen, 1995), and marginalize non-Whites, women, the poor and working classes, among others (Anyon, 1979; Avery & Simmons, 2001; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Loewen, 1995).

As a high school history teacher, I<sup>1</sup> responded to these problems of the textbook by completely abandoning the textbook. I substituted the corporate-produced textbooks supplied by my school district with teacher-created reading packets that I assembled from primarily primary sources, oral histories, and writings from historians and journalists. I intentionally incorporated multiple competing perspectives of historical events and I chose to integrate multicultural accounts, including those of non-White peoples, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants/migrants, and the poor and working classes.

During this process of changing texts in my history classroom, I engaged in practitioner inquiry to find out how this change in texts could have an impact on my students' learning. I examined the following research questions: *What are students' perceptions of the reading packets in comparison to their textbook use in previous history courses? Did the reading packets have a positive impact on the students learning and understanding of history? Did the reading packets enable students to question the dominant narrative of history and see history as multiple competing perspectives?*

### **Theoretical Framework and Review of Relevant Research**

This study is informed by critical theories of education. Using the work of Freire (1970), Giroux (1988, 1990), Anyon (1980) and Apple (1979, 1980), this study challenges the traditional texts in history courses, which are embedded with discourses of power and privilege. Banks (1998) has argued that history textbooks have long been a tool of oppression. This study is also guided by Segall's (1999) use of critical history education, where students are not the receivers of information, but its producers, and one

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<sup>1</sup> The authors of this paper use "I" to represent the voice of Christopher as classroom teacher and "we" to represent the voice of Christopher and Erin as the researchers and authors of this article.

where history education provides students with not *what* to think, but encourages them *to* think. Critical history education is rooted in the view that history is socially constructed and teachers should help students analyze the politics and ideologies of power embedded in the production of history, including historical texts.

Furthermore, we take a critical inquiry as stance. This term represents the overlap of critical theories of education and inquiry as stance. Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1998, 1999, 2009) term inquiry as stance positions practitioner inquiry as a way of knowing education, a world view, that is a sharp contrast to traditional depictions of inquiry in education. Teacher research speaks against traditional hierarchies that assume formal knowledge as the realm of a small group of elite researchers, thus "disempower teachers and produce irrational practices" (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 22). Here, practitioners challenge the educational status quo, examine the role that power has on their classrooms, and in turn, speak back to those outside the classroom who hold power. The purpose of a critical inquiry stance is to continuously engage in critical examinations of a teacher's classroom practices and issues through a critical cycle of action research located in the classroom (Carr & Kremmis, 1986). Hence, I take on the dual role of teacher and researcher of my own practice and challenge those structures that perpetuate and maintain inequity.

Over the last four decades there has been a robust criticism of the narratives that are embedded in history textbooks and the impact those narratives may have on students and citizens in a democracy. Anyon (1979) analyzed from a critical perspective the narratives in U.S. history textbooks, arguing they were designed to maintain social control and serve the interest of the wealthy over the poor and working classes, as well as the interests of White males over non-Whites and women. Furthermore, two popular

books about history textbooks, Fitzgerald's (1980) *America Revised* and Loewen's (1995) *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, have raised awareness among history teachers of the problems with textbooks and the messages those textbooks teach students. However, these books appear to have had little impact on the textbook industry and the texts they produce.

The research on history textbooks has primarily examined the discourses embedded in those texts. Paxton's (1999) review of research on history textbooks is a starting place for situating this research study within similar work on history textbooks. In this review, Paxton found that 1. The authoritarian voice embedded in history textbooks is different than the voice of modern history books written for adults, which does not conceal the agency of the author or authors. 2. Textbooks, due to this authoritarian voice, create serious pedagogical problems for history teachers, as textbooks do not portray the same type of history in K-12 history classrooms and among professional historians. Paxton concluded that textbooks might actually inhibit students' learning of history, but he also noted that little is known about how and what students learn from history textbooks. Furthermore, little is known about how these books are used by teachers, as most of the research has been done by university-based researchers through either narrative analysis of the textbooks or clinical studies using K-12 students.

The research on history textbooks over the last decade since Paxton's (1999) review has been relatively thin and uneven. When looking across this research, I excluded historical studies of history textbooks, comparison studies of textbooks across countries, and studies of the textbooks of other disciplines within social studies. I found three studies that were analyses of the content found in history textbooks. Hess and

Stoddard (2007) examined textbooks as part of their examination of September 11<sup>th</sup> related curriculum materials. They found that the majority of texts presented terrorism as uncontested and gave the impression that terrorism is a larger problem for the U.S. and its allies than for other nations. Related, Romanowski (2009) also analyzed textbooks' treatment of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the so-called War on Terrorism. From his examination of nine secondary school history texts, he found that the textbooks omit important information and disregard the moral and ethical aspects of history, especially this more recent history. Furthermore, the textbooks limited the perspectives that the students would be asked to consider and lacked any alternative explanations. Lastly, Chappell (2010) examined one elementary history textbook used at different grade levels and found that the textbook trained students to perform a normative U.S. citizenship through the embedded narratives of American exceptionalism, that oppression could be persevered through hard work, and framed economics in individualistic terms.

Two studies examined the impact of interventions with alternative texts across multiple classes. In their study of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in four separate classrooms, Crawford and Carnine (2000) compared the effects of using a pilot version of a conceptually organized U.S. history textbook and a traditional topically organized U.S. history textbooks. Posttest essays showed no difference between control and treatment groups, although student interviews indicated generally favorable attitudes toward the pilot version of the conceptually organized text, centering on ease of comprehension. Nokes, Dole, and Hacker (2007) examined 128 male and 118 female high school students in two schools located in the western United States. Eight history classrooms were randomly assigned four possible 3-week interventions involving a combination of traditional textbooks and

content instruction, traditional textbooks and heuristic instruction, multiple texts and content instruction, or multiple texts and heuristic instruction. The heuristic instruction explicitly taught sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization. Students were administered pretests and posttests on their content knowledge and their use of heuristics. A mixed-model analysis of covariance indicated that across all conditions, students who read multiple texts scored higher on history content and used sourcing and corroboration more often than students who read traditional textbook material.

Finally, McCormick (2008) conducted action research in her fifth grade classroom to examine her students' reactions to the incorporation of historical inquiry in her classroom, which focused on having the students reach historical conclusions based on historical evidence. Although this study was not of her students' textbook use per se, McCormick did explore the use of classroom techniques that challenged the textbook. Her results suggest that the historical inquiry-based unit positively influenced students' motivation and interest to study history both inside and outside the classroom.

There is an important gap in the research on history textbooks, as these studies do not investigate students' perceptions of textbooks and how they learn (or do not learn) from textbooks. The existence of this gap is corroborated by Levstik's (2008) review of research on K-12 social studies practices, which makes no mention of research on textbook use within social studies classrooms or from the perspective of social studies teacher research. Although the existing research does offer an important and insightful examination of the discourses embedded in texts and the impact of using alternative texts, the research lacks an important connection to the classroom and K-12 learning environment. This study attempts to expand our understanding of how students use

textbooks and the impact on students of an alternative text attempting to address the problems caused by textbooks.

### **Methodology**

Working from an inquiry stance, I act simultaneously as a teacher and a researcher, where “inquiry and practice are understood to have a reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationship, and it is assumed that it is not only possible, but indeed beneficial, to take on simultaneously the roles of both researcher and practitioner” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 95). In particular, in taking a critical inquiry stance, I continuously seek to question issues of power, equity and social justice as they play out in my classroom practices through “an intersubjective process that is intentional, sustained, and attentive to the dialectical relationship between the students’ and the teacher’s own experiences and resources” (Campano, 2007, p. 105). Cognizant of the diverse student backgrounds present in my classroom and the lack of diverse perspectives offered by corporate textbooks, this paper presents the findings of a study when I explored my students’ perceptions and use of reading packets that I had designed as a replacement for the corporate-produced history textbook.

This practitioner study employed a mixed methods design. Using what Creswell and Plano Clark (2006) called an embedded mixed methods design, we used a quantitative analysis to look at the survey data and a qualitative analysis to examine the interview data, where both data sets had complimentary roles. For the survey data, descriptive statistics were generated for all items and independent samples t-tests for two

items of particular interest. For the interviews, the data were coded thematically and using Erickson (1986) for guidance, assertions were generated from the data and tested.

### **Context**

The context of this study was my U.S. history classes at an urban high school of approximately 2,200 students, located in a New England factory town that has experienced economic decline. It has also been traditionally an immigrant community and recently home to a very diverse group of immigrants/migrants from Brazil, Puerto Rico, Russia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, among many other places. As a result, the high school's student body is economically, racially, and linguistically diverse. The school's racial/ethnic demographics are 68% White (of which approximately 20% are Brazilian), 18% Latino, 8% African American, 6% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian. About 30% of students have a language other than English as their first language and about 23% of students are considered low-income. The school district is a Title I district, but the high school is not a Title I school, in part a result of a higher percentage of low-income students choosing the vocational high school in town. Furthermore, the high school has received numerous awards from the state and private industry for its dramatic school turnaround, going from only 58% of students passing the state math and literacy graduation test in 2000 to 92% in 2006.

The participants of this study were the 94 students enrolled in two honors-level U.S. History I for sophomore and two regular-level U.S. History II classes for juniors. The U.S. History I course covered subject matter from the first interaction of Columbus and the indigenous peoples to post-Civil War reconstruction. The U.S. History II course

covered subject matter from post-Civil War interactions between Whites and American Indians to the election of Barack Obama. The ethnic/racial make up of my students were 52% White, 19% Latino, 9% Brazilian, 9% Asian, 4% Black, 6% other/multiracial, and 1% American Indian. Thirty percent of my students identified themselves as having a language other than English as their first language and 40% were immigrants or children of immigrants.

Frustrated with the omniscient and authoritarian voice of textbooks, inadequate representation of the diverse population of the United States, and their hindrance in fostering democratic citizenship, I created reading packets that set out to address these core values.<sup>2</sup> The main goal of these reading packets was to show students that history is not one story, but composed of many competing perspectives and interpretations. As a result, I created packets for 10 units of U.S. History I and 12 units of U.S. History II. These units aligned with the topics studied in the course. For example, there was a packet aligned with the unit on immigration and industrialization around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The readings for these packets were collections of primary sources, oral histories, and writings from historians and journalists organized into 5-8 separate homework assignments for the students. Each homework assignment included either an overview of the unit, 2-4 competing document, or 2-3 competing articles written by historians or journalists about the period being studied. At the end of each of these homework assignments there were questions that asked students to critically respond to the reading or take a stand on a historical question, using evidence from the readings to

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<sup>2</sup> These reading packets are available on my course website: [http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/fhs\\_ss\\_martell.cfm](http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/fhs_ss_martell.cfm)

support their view. An example of one homework assignment from these reading packets is included in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

**Survey.** Students (N=94) were given a survey that included ten Likert-style closed questions and three open response items inquiring about their perceptions of the reading packets as compared with their past experiences using history textbooks. The closed survey questions asked students about the degree in which the change in texts affected their interest in reading and completion of homework, their ability to see perspectives, identify with people from the past, understand history, and recall information. We created these closed questions and then pilot tested them with a colleague's students before using it in my own classroom. The survey also collected basic demographic information, so we could compare my students to the larger school context. There were three open response questions, which asked: What did you think about the reading packets compared to textbooks you have used in the past? Can you elaborate on any of the multiple-choice questions by providing examples? Would you recommend using the reading packets or a textbook for the teaching of this class? Why or why not? The complete survey is included in Appendix B.

Descriptive statistics show general patterns in student responses to survey items, and independent samples t-tests were conducted on two items of particular interest. The paper's second author, who is also a classroom teacher, provided the statistical analysis of the survey data and also offered another perspective in interpreting the qualitative data as a form of triangulation.

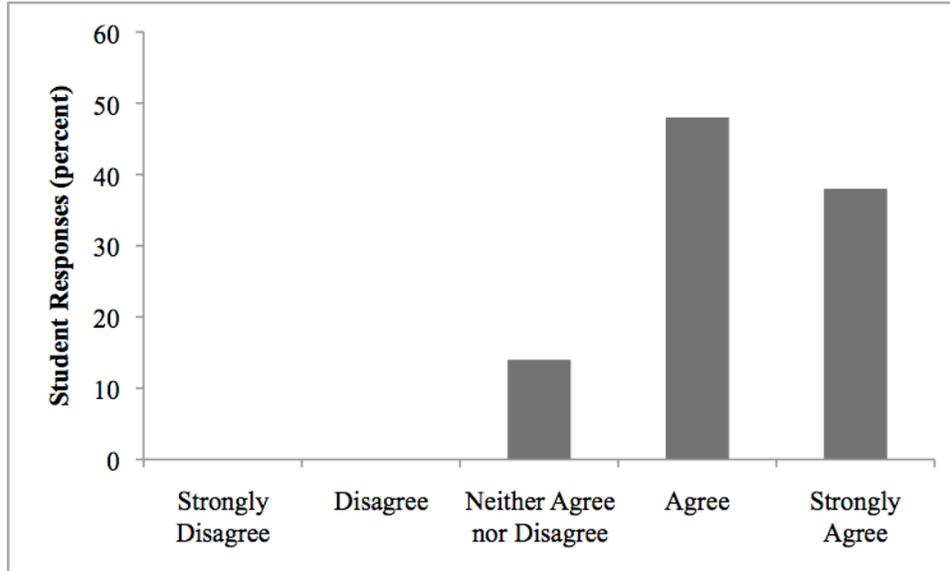
**Interviews.** A purposive sample of 10 students was selected to provide a deeper understanding of their experience across demographics. Students were chosen based on three factors: their expressed like or dislike of the reading packets, their representation of the racial/ethnic and gender diversity of my students, and their willingness to be interviewed. A semi-structured interview protocol consisting of 12 questions was used, with questions grouped around three themes related to student learning, perspectives and trustworthiness, and connections to the students' backgrounds. The interview protocol is located in Appendix C. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

In the first stage of our qualitative analysis, we took multiple passes through raw data. This involved three thorough readings through all of my interview and open-ended survey data, while taking extensive notes through each reading. After a rough coding of the data using a coding scheme we created based on our research questions, we then reexamined and coded the data. We used an iterative coding process, where our codes remained flexible, working through cycles of induction and deduction to power the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 61). Furthermore, as two researchers working together through the qualitative data, this helped ensure a level of intercoder reliability. These codes were organized into three main categories: student learning, narrative, and perception. This is used as the organization for the coding dictionary we created, which is available in Appendix D. Finally, we used the work of Erickson (1986) for guidance in the generation of assertions and then preliminary testing of those assertions. Those assertions that had evidentiary warrant are displayed in our qualitative findings.

## Results

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses, five major findings emerged from the data. First, students expressed higher levels of interest in reading about history as a result of the reading packets. Second, students reported completing more homework and subsequently recalling more historical information when using the reading packets. Third, the survey results indicated that the reading packets helped the students better understand different views of historical events. Fourth, students could better identify with the historical people depicted in the reading packet, and this was expressed by many of my students of color. Finally, a small group of students struggled with the reading packets, because they desired a return to a more simple and one-sided narrative that told them the facts and did not push them to question the past or form their own perspectives of history.

**Increased Interest.** From the survey, the students expressed higher levels of interest in reading about history as a result of the reading packets. Figure 1 shows how a majority of the students (86%) responded to finding the reading packets more interesting than textbooks, and none of the students (0%) responded with disagree or strongly disagree.

**Figure 1. Reading Packets Were More Interesting than Textbooks**

María, a Latina student, expressed in the interview a common theme among the students that the readings increased her interest by digging deeper into an analysis of the historical characters and by going beyond text simply laden with facts. She said,

I prefer the packet, because it is a little more interesting to read than the textbook. And it is like the questions, they usually only give you two or three questions and you have to write like a paragraph about each, but it really makes it. I feel when they ask you what do you think about it, it makes it more important to you then if you read it and oh, it is history and whatever. Like you actually think about it, I go home and say mom, ‘what about this?’ Now I do that all the time with my mom.

She added,

I just felt like I thought about [the reading packets] more than I did about the textbook, about the event more or what happened in history. I guess [the

textbook] was more like, I just want to get it over with and I never really thought about it again.

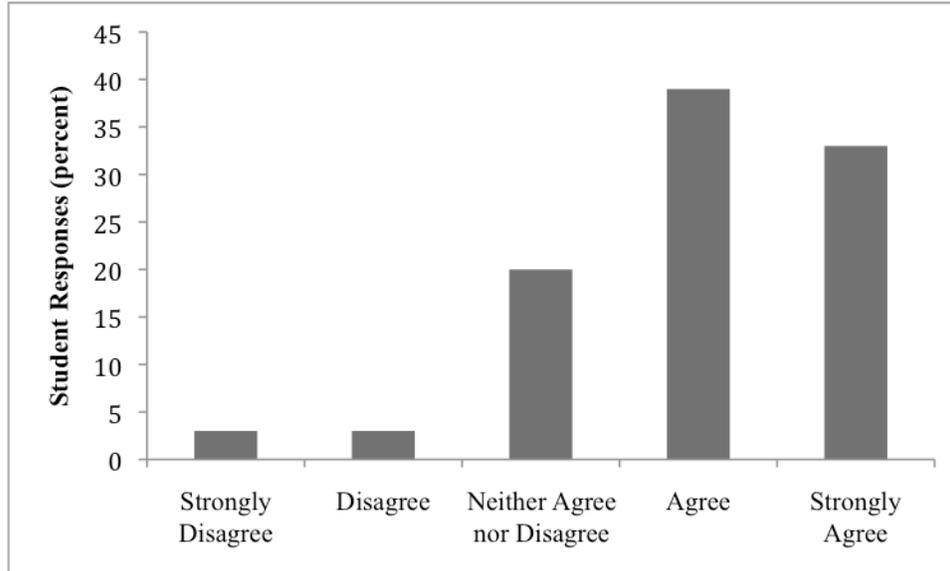
Eight of the ten students that I interviewed used the word “interesting” specifically to describe the readings in the packets or related homework assignments, with one student referring to the textbooks as interesting due to its colorful pictures.

Contrastingly, 5 of the 10 students interviewed used the word “boring” to describe the textbooks they have used in the past. Miguel, a recent immigrant from Brazil, described this when he said,

Like the textbooks are so boring ‘cause it is like so long, and you just think about it and oh my God I have to read like 10 pages in one day, in one night probably and you have so many others homeworks and you like oh my God I am just going to read it and do it really fast. So when you read it, you think you do not want to, you’ll be like so lazy.

The reading packets increased students’ interest in reading history, which the next section will show directly related to their increased homework completion.

**Homework Completion.** The students in my class reported completing more homework as a result of the reading packets. Figure 2 shows that Students reported higher homework completion when using the reading packets, where 72% agreed or strongly agreed, and 6% disagreed.

**Figure 2. Completed More Homework From Reading Packets**

During our interview, Thiago, a male immigrant from Brazil, said he did about 85% of his homework now, compared to about 20% in past years at the school mainly as a result of the readings being generally shorter in length, more interesting, and an unexpected finding expressed by many students, that, “I can carry the packet like all the time since it is not as heavy [as a textbook].” This was a common theme across the interviews, with 8 of the 10 students reporting doing the same or more homework than they did last year with the textbook. In fact, one student, Miguel admitted that in past years he did not actually read the textbook, but instead looked up the answers to the review questions on the Internet. He said, “But from the textbook, I use to look [up answers] on Wikipedia, yes. Sometimes I wouldn’t even read the book and go onto Wikipedia.”

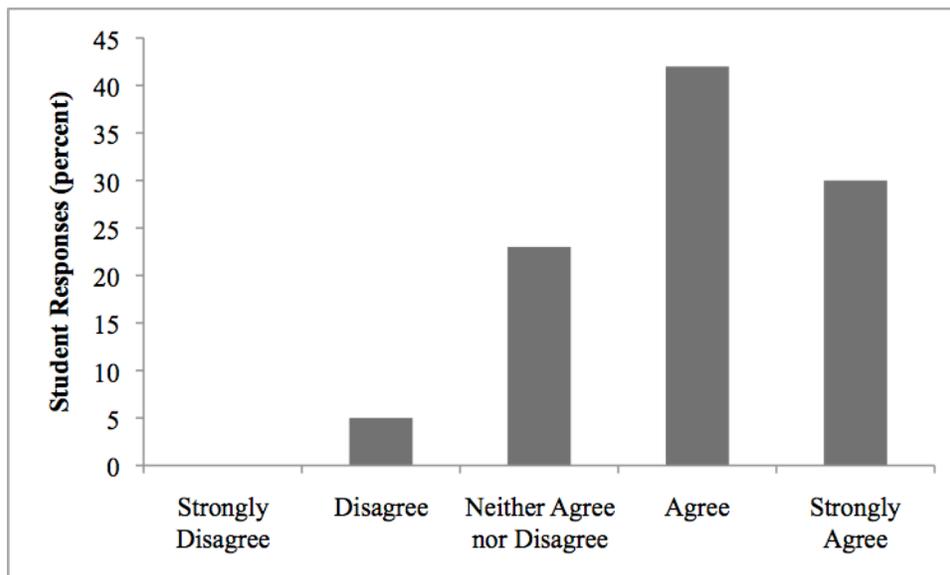
Furthermore, an unexpected finding from the interviews was that the mobility of the packets, the fact that they were 20-40 page photocopied packets instead of a heavy

textbook, allowed the students to carry them everywhere and thus increased their ability to do homework. Abby, a White female, said,

I always do my homework in history, but I liked doing history homework better this year, because it was just like a hassle. This huge thing, you know, and such a tiny little font, and while the packets its like a perfect size, you can carry it around with you wherever.

Thiago said, “It is because I can carry the packet like all the times, since it is not heavy” and Fady, a Middle Eastern male, said, “I don’t like textbooks. Well, they are heavy and you don’t get to keep them, you have to carry them back.” The mobility of the packet leading to an increase in homework was a common theme across all of the interviews, as well as many of the survey open responses.

**Recall More Information.** A related impact of the students increase in homework completion was their ability to recall more information about history. Figure 3 shows that 72% of the students felt that they could recall information they had learned from the reading packets better than what they have read from their textbooks, with 5% who disagreed.

**Figure 3. Recalled More Information From Reading Packets**

This finding is particularly interesting, as it can be argued that students need to know the basics before they can develop critical thinking. However, these readings that focus on critical thinking appear to increase students' knowledge of facts, because they needed to understand the facts to craft their arguments. Fady said of remembering information from the textbooks he used in the past,

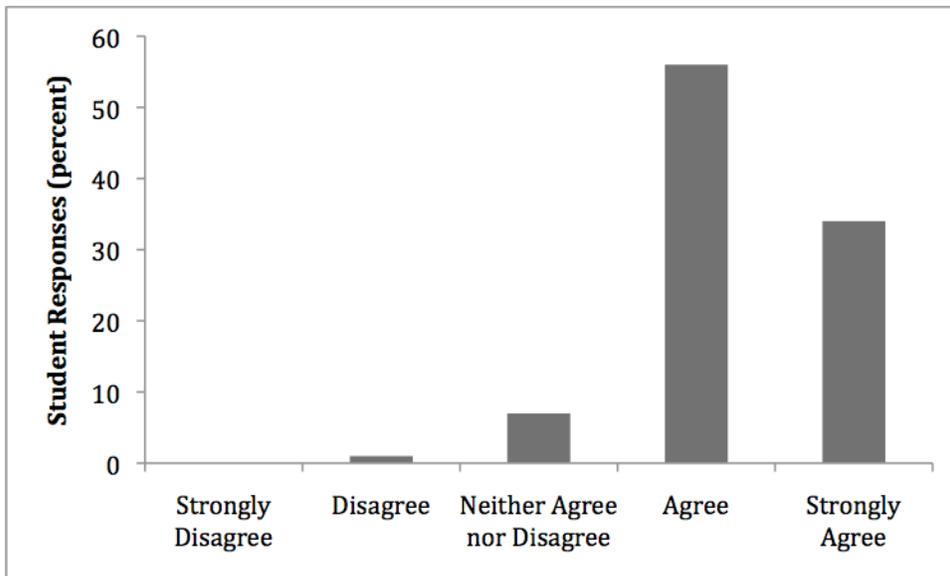
You wouldn't remember the textbooks. You would have to go back in class and take the same notes over. Like last year, [my teacher] would tell us if we took the notes at home, don't take them in class. You wouldn't learn anything.

Where he rarely did homework from his past history textbooks, Thiago said that the reading packet's questions "[made] you go back and look up stuff," because they required you to link your opinions to evidence from the reading. Natalie said of remembering information from the reading packets, "I think maybe just a little more the packet helped because of the perspectives and that it would just be a little blurb. It allowed me to focus

more on one subject than the textbook did.” This was also a theme across the open response section of the survey. The students reported learning more facts from the reading packets, because the readings in the packets were more interesting and easier to remember.

**Increased Understanding.** The survey results indicated that the reading packets helped the students better understand different views of historical events. Figure 4 shows overwhelmingly students (90%) agreed/strongly agreed that the reading packets helped them to understand different views of historical events more than their past textbooks.

**Figure 4. Understood Different Views of Historical Events**



Perhaps one of the most important findings from this study was that many students expressed a newfound ability see history as interpreted and composed of competing perspectives as a result of the reading packets, and ultimately this led to an increased understanding of history. Fady expressed this in his interview with me:

Christopher: So before you took this class. Do you think you would have seen the textbook as having an author or having one perspective?

Fady: No. I never thought about it before. I never thought about perspectives before you gave us the reading packet.

Christopher: So when you read your textbook, what did you think it was?

Fady: I thought it was the thing that happened.

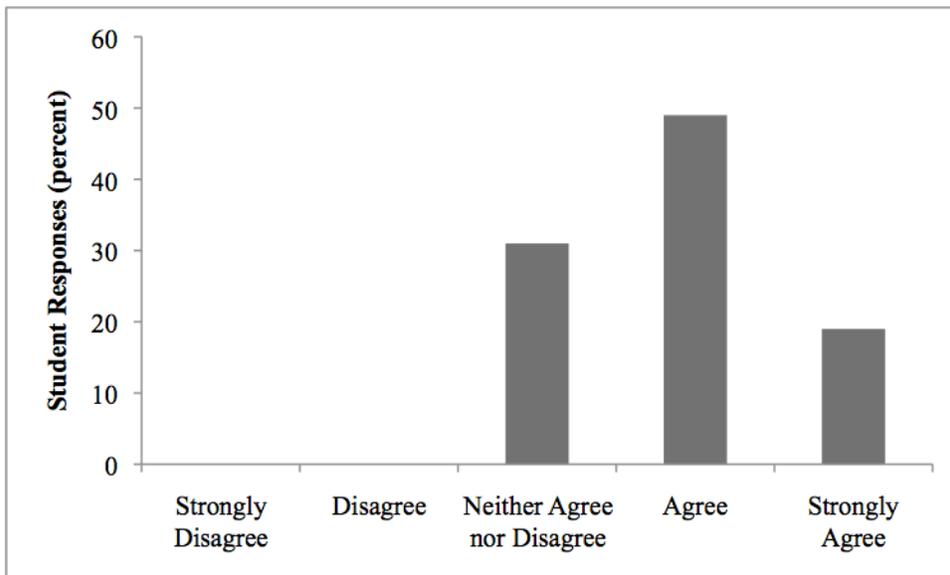
Along those same lines, Mike, an Asian male, expressed that, “I think the reading packets help better understand the time period, because they usually have perspectives from the time period... They would talk about certain dialogues from the people then.” Like many students, he connected learning about different perspectives as helping him understand history better. Students often connected this to the many primary sources found in the reading packets.

One problem that arose from the reading packets was that they indirectly contributed to the students finding the textbook more trustworthy and unbiased as a result of its omniscient narrative. Abby said, “I would trust textbooks more ‘cause it gets right down to the facts. While [the reading packet] was more of a debate, this was good, this was bad. So, but yeah I would trust the textbook more.” María said, “Maybe the textbook was a little more trustworthy, ‘cause I felt it was a lot of facts. I felt like, okay, it is fact and I don’t really doubt what the book was saying.” Almost all of the students we interviewed, like Abby and María, described the textbook as more trustworthy because it was the facts and the reading packet was composed of perspectives. The continuation of this naïve view of textbooks is very problematic. While the reading packets were explicit in its use of perspectives, the reading packets also further affirmed that the textbooks

must be simply the facts of history, because it does not make the narratives overt and speaks in such an authoritarian tone. In a way, by not using the omniscient voice, the reading packets convinced the students that the textbooks were probably more truthful.

**Increased Identification with People in the Past.** The survey results indicated that the reading packets helped the students better identify with people in the past. Figure 5 shows that 68% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the reading packets helped them identify with the people of the past more than the textbooks, with 31% neither agreed nor disagreed, but none (0%) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 5. Read About People They Could Identify With More**



When asked specifically if their own race or ethnicity was reflected in the reading packets more than the textbooks, 32% of the students agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 55% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed. We also

wanted to determine if there was a significant difference between how non-White students and White students responded to these survey questions that explicitly asked about identification and representation of race/ethnicity in the packets, since the packets were designed to show more multicultural perspectives than traditional textbooks. We analyzed these two items using independent-samples t-tests to compare the responses of non-White students (n=45) to White students (n=49). Table 1 shows that non-White students had significantly higher agreement responses to being able to identify with the people in the reading packets more than the textbooks ( $p < 0.05$ ) with an effect size of 0.54.

**Table 1: Difference in perceptions for Non-White (n = 45), and White (n = 49) students**

	Non-White Students <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	White Students <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> -Value <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
Could identify with people in reading packets more <sup>a</sup>	4.07 (.661)	3.71 (.707)	2.485*	0.54
Own race/ethnicity reflected in reading packets more	3.42 (1.055)	3.08 (.607)	1.897	0.32

<sup>a</sup> Maximum score = 5 (Strongly Agree)

<sup>b</sup> Two-tailed independent *t*-test

<sup>c</sup> Effect Size: Calculated by dividing the difference between Non-White and White student mean scores by the Non-White student standard deviation.

\*  $p < .05$

In the interviews, the students of color also said they identified strongly with the historical people in the reading packet. Miguel said,

I would say that the textbook gives you an idea of just one main ethnic group, which is like the most of the times the Whites and I think the reading packets give you an idea of like from different groups.

Moreover, immigrant students also saw themselves more in the textbook. Thiago said,

Actually, I don't think [the textbook] ever mention like, how can I say this, I don't think they ever mentioned like immigration in the books. I mean they do but its like during the colonization of the U.S. and stuff like that, because people were coming from England and then after that, I don't think they even talk about that...

Christopher: And what about the reading packet? Did it talk about immigration?

Thiago: Yeah, it does. We even had a unit talking about the Zoot Suit Riots and like stuff like that.

María had a similar comment,

I think it was mostly with the Gold Rush and the immigrants coming over. Since my family is kinda like that too... I could definitely go home and talk to them about it and ask them what do you think about this.

This increased identification was not exclusive to students of color or immigrant students.

White students also saw their race more in the reading packets compared to the textbooks, as there was no significant difference between the racial/ethnic subgroups in their response to seeing their own ethnicity or race reflected in the reading packets more than the textbooks ( $p=.062$ ). This is an interesting finding that not only non-White, but White students also saw their race/ethnicity more in the reading packets over textbooks. These results indicate that these reading packets achieved an unintended goal of helping

White students take a first step toward acknowledging their own racial identity, privilege, and what some have labeled their “Whiteness” (Sleeter, 1994, 2001; Tatum, 1994, 1997).

**Student Resistance.** During the interviews, two students struggled to accept the reading packets as an alternative to the textbook, because they wanted a return to a narrative that supposedly told them the facts and did not push them to question the past or form their own perspectives of history. Both students expressed that textbooks were a more trustworthy source and more importantly that the textbooks were created by a group of authors and editors, which meant they were more truthful about the past than the reading packets that were created by myself and composed of articles usually written by one person. For example, Mark said,

I mean I trust that the reading packets were like reliable, but if I were like just given a textbook and a reading packet, I think I would rely on the textbook more.

Because textbooks usually go through a long process to like validate them. Furthermore, Mike expressed his belief that the textbooks had more facts and thus a better tool to help him learn about history. He said, “I think I learned more from the textbooks, just because they have more information, more facts.” When I asked him which text he preferred to use. He said, “Well it is kinda difficult to decide because like the textbooks a lot of information was given. If you want to understand the chapter more you could always just go over and read everything. General information. It was really like something secure and reliable with the textbook.”

The second student who resisted the reading packets was Tina. She longed for the physical structure of the textbook and she admitted that she had an affinity for their format and authority. She said,

I like the, I don't know, I like the [textbooks], I like having the books 'cause that way I can look at other chapters if I need to. Like I can do that with the reading packets to, because I have all of them.

She later added,

I like doing homework with the textbook... I like textbooks, 'cause I don't know, it's weird but I just feel like textbooks are my thing. I don't know. I like using my textbook for math, textbook for science, so I just like using textbooks.

Both Mike and Tina struggled to move beyond the view that textbooks were the facts and learning history is remembering and retelling those facts. When the reading packets required the students to take a stance on historical events, they reacted with resistance and expressed a wish to return to the textbook. Mike said,

Sometimes the different views [in the reading packets] seem just unnecessary.

Sometimes the views seem unnecessary to know... I would rather just have the facts of what he did and let us decide. That is what the textbooks did. They were unbiased.

Tina said,

I feel like the textbook is kinda like a ton of information and it is not like one person writing it, but like some of the perspectives, who was it, Howard Zinn, yeah, he put in his side of the story kind of. The textbook a ton of people write them, so it is kinda multiple people writing their ideas into one... I don't know that is why I think I like the textbooks more, because I like to know random facts.

The authoritarian and omniscient narrative embedded in the textbooks was so strong that it convinced these two students that the reading packets with its overt perspectives were less helpful in learning about the past.

### **Implications**

Emerging from this study is the highly problematic nature of textbooks, which are written with an authoritarian and omniscient language, portraying history as one narrative. Furthermore, students are likely to believe that the textbook is more trustworthy and simply telling the facts of the past. Through this study we were found that by creating texts that portray history as multiple competing perspectives, students were better able to see history as debate and argument. Yet, these alternate reading packets were not powerful enough to break the students' view that the textbook was more trustworthy and unbiased. Currently, we are collecting data for our next study that will dig deeper into this problem, probing my students to find new ways to have them question the authorship of historical texts. This study will not look at their homework, but rather activities we do in class that may foster this type of critical appraisal of texts.

Moreover, the single narrative depicted in the history textbook is more often than not the narrative of those in power. This study illuminates that when students of color, female students, working class and poor students, gay and lesbian students see themselves in the text, they are more likely to identify with the people of the past and more importantly gain a deeper understanding of history. In my classroom, I brought in the voices of those who have long been silent and it had a liberating effect on my students.

This study informs us that texts, which present history as both interpreted and multicultural, can have a positive influence on students' learning of and engagement with history. By using critical theory to examine my students' interactions with readings in my history class, I found evidence that the omniscient voice and dominant narrative included in textbooks limit their understanding of history and reduce their ability to see themselves as part of United States history. The results of this study suggest that including the counter narratives of history and creating questions that ask students to take a stance in their social studies classes can lay the foundations for democratic citizenship.

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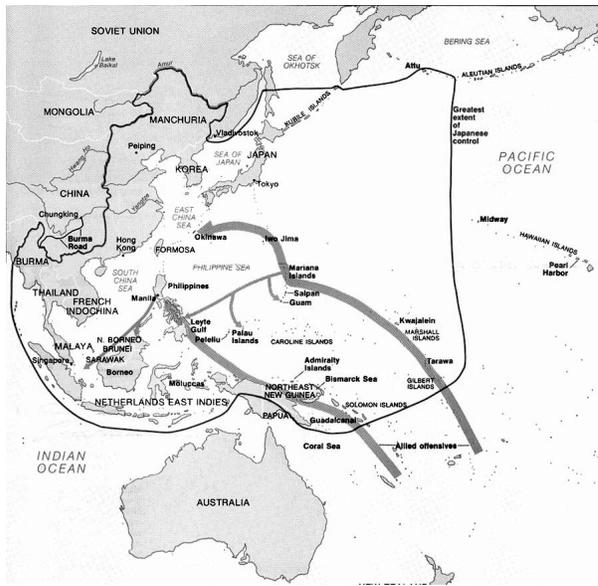
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## Appendix A

### Reading 6-7:

#### The War's End

On May 8, 1945, the war in Europe officially ended with **V-E Day** (or Victory in Europe Day). Meanwhile, the war in Asia against Japan continued and by this point the U.S. had clearly gained the upper hand. As more American soldiers were moved from Europe to Asia, the United States gained success in their **Island Hopping Strategy**, where the U.S. attempted to take one island after another in the Pacific, eventually getting incredibly close to the island of mainland Japan. The taking of **Iwo Jima** and **Okinawa** in 1945, both part of the island chain off of Japan, was a signal that U.S. victory was close at hand.



Above: (Left) A map showing the “Island Hopping” done by the U.S. at the end of World War II. (Right) People reading the paper on V-E Day in 1945.

Towards the end of the war, the role of aerial bombing became more important. The United States employed the technique of firebombing, usually done in urban areas, this method used massive bombing to cause widespread fire and evoking maximum damage. One bombing raid alone on Tokyo killed 100,000 Japanese civilians in a sixteen square mile area. Thousands of other civilians were killed in the firebombing of other cities. By late 1945, nearly half of Japan’s major cities were destroyed by American firebombing raids, including many of their factories and the Japanese war industry was essentially destroyed.

Then on Monday August 6, 1945, President Harry Truman (who was FDR’s vice president and who became president when Roosevelt died in office on April 12, 1945) ordered the United States to use an atomic bomb, making the U.S. the first and only nation to use an atomic weapon in war. The city of Hiroshima, Japan, was chosen because it had been relatively undamaged during the war and the U.S. government wanted to see the impact of the bomb on a typical city. Three days later, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, a second bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. In total, 220,000 people died initially from the bombs and many more from residual radiation and disease. To this day, both

cities have unusually high rates of cancer and other radiation-related diseases. Most Americans did not know what an atomic bomb was or that the U.S. had two.



Above: (Left) This picture shows the devastation and killing caused by U.S. firebombing of Tokyo in 1945. One hundred thousand Japanese men, women, and children were incinerated during the raid, almost as many as were killed by the Atomic Bombs. (Right) A map of Japan showing Hiroshima and Nagasaki in relation to Tokyo and Kyoto.

### **Press Release: The Atom Bomb**

By Harry S Truman  
August 6, 1945

*This is the official press release concerning the dropping of the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. It was released 16 hours after the bombing.*

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.

Before 1939, it was the accepted belief of scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But no one knew any practical method for doing it. By 1942, however, we knew that the Germans were working feverishly to find a way to add atomic energy to the other engines of war with which they hoped to enslave the world. But they failed. We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans got the V-1's and V-2's late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic bomb at all.

The battle of the laboratories held fateful risks for us as well as the battles of the air, land and sea, and we have now won the battle of the laboratories as we have won the other battles.

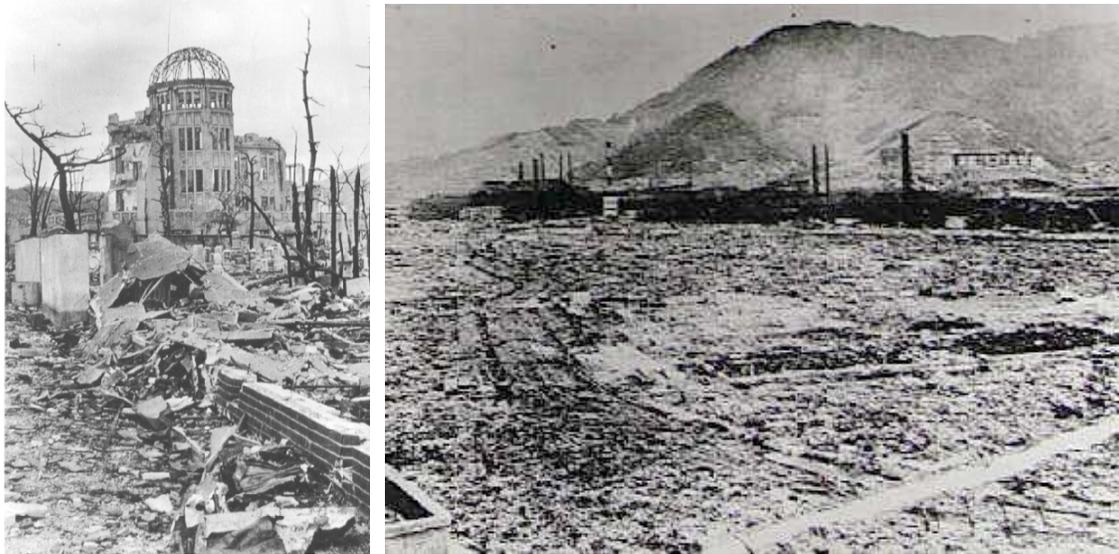


Above: (Left) Harry Truman was president in 1946 and he made the decision to use the atomic bomb on Japan. (Center) A picture from the Enola Gay (the plane that dropped both atomic bombs) of the bomb's explosion over Hiroshima. (Right) A woman who survived the blast is being treated by doctors. This woman was very far from "ground zero," but she was still severely burned. Many people near the bombsite were incinerated.

Beginning in 1940, before Pearl Harbor, scientific knowledge useful in war was pooled between the United States and Great Britain, and many priceless helps to our victories have come from that arrangement. Under that general policy the research on the atomic bomb was begun. With American and British scientists working together we entered the race of discovery against the Germans.

The United States had available the large number of scientists of distinction in the many needed areas of knowledge. It had the tremendous industrial and financial resources necessary for the project and they could be devoted to it without undue impairment of other vital war work. In the United States the laboratory work and the production plants, on which a substantial start had already been made, would be out of reach of enemy bombing, while at that time Britain was exposed to constant air attack and was still threatened with the possibility of invasion. For these reasons Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt agreed that it was wise to carry on the project here. We now have two great plants and many lesser works devoted to the production of atomic power. Employment during peak construction numbered 125,000 and over 65,000 individuals are even now engaged in operating the plants. Many have worked there for two and a half years. Few know what they have been producing. They see great quantities of material going in and they see nothing coming out of these plants, for the physical size of the explosive charge is exceedingly small. We have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history – and won...

We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war.



Above: The city of Hiroshima (Left) and Nagasaki (Right) were completely destroyed by the atomic bombs dropped by the United States.

### **Eyewitness Stories from Hiroshima** **Testimony of Akiko Takakura**

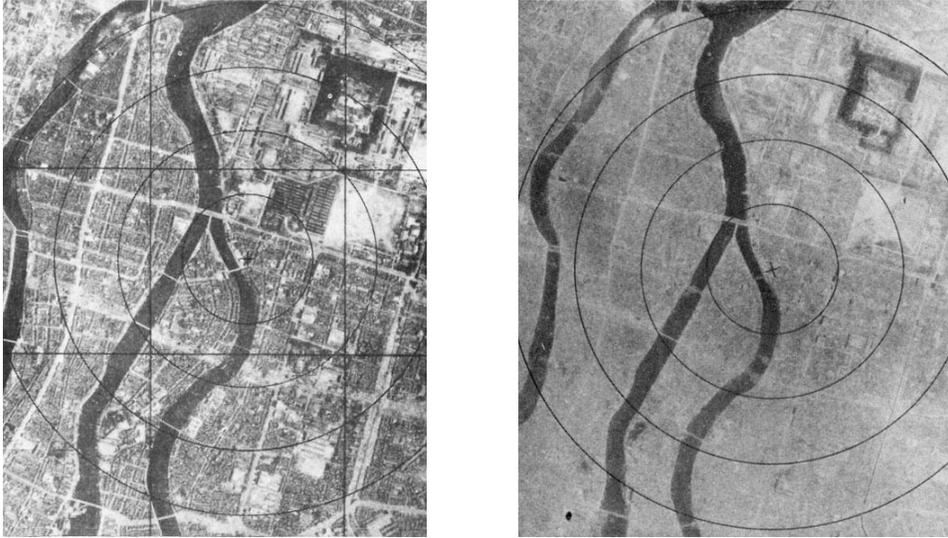
*Ms. Akiko Takakura was 20 years old when the bomb fell. She was in the Bank of Hiroshima, 300 meters (328 yards) away from the hypocenter. Ms. Takakura miraculously escaped death despite over 100 lacerated wounds on her back. She is one of the few survivors who was within 300 meters of the hypocenter. She ran a kindergarten and she related her experience of the atomic bombing to children.*

**TAKAKURA:** After the air-raid the alarm was called off, I walked from Hatchobori to the Bank of Hiroshima in Kamiya-cho. I arrived at the bank some time around 8:15 or so, and signed my name in the attendance book. When I was doing my morning routine, dusting the desks and things like that, the A-bomb was dropped. All I remember was that I saw something flash suddenly.

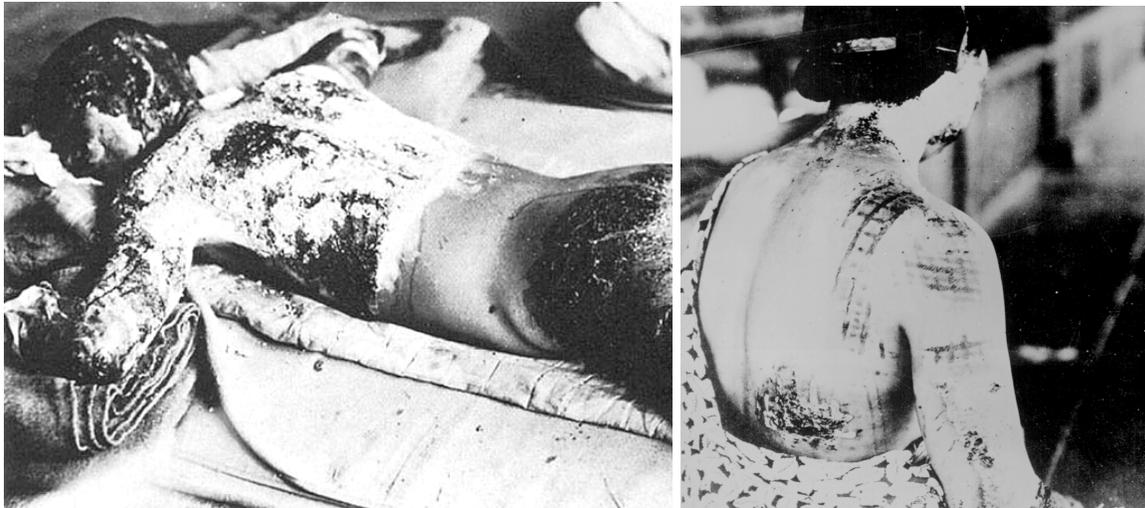
**INTERVIEWER:** Can you explain the flash?

**TAKAKURA:** Well, it was like a white magnesium flash. I lost consciousness right after or almost at the same time I saw the flash. When I regained consciousness, I found myself in the dark. I heard my friends, Ms. Asami, crying for her mother. Soon after, I found out that we actually had been attacked. Afraid of being caught by a fire, I told Ms. Asami to run out of the building. Ms. Asami, however, just told me to leave her and to try to escape by myself because she thought that she couldn't make it anywhere. She said she couldn't move. I said to her that I couldn't leave her, but she said that she couldn't even stand up. While we were talking, the sky started to grow lighter. Then, I heard water running in the lavatory. Apparently the water pipes had exploded. So I drew water with my helmet to pour over Ms. Asami's head again and again. She finally regained consciousness fully and went out of the building with me. We first thought to escape to the parade grounds, but we couldn't because there was a huge sheet of fire in front of us. So instead, we squatted down in the street next to a big water pool for fighting fires, which was about the size of this table. Since Hiroshima was completely enveloped in flames, we felt terribly hot and could not breathe well at all. After a while, a whirlpool of fire approached us from the

south. It was like a big tornado of fire spreading over the full width of the street. Whenever the fire touched, wherever the fire touched, it burned. It burned my ear and leg, I didn't realize that I had burned myself at that moment, but I noticed it later.



Above: (Left) An aerial picture of Hiroshima before the bombing and (Right) after the bombing.



Above: (Left) A victim of the atomic bomb used on Hiroshima. Many people who were within a mile of the bomb were killed. (Right) A woman who was severely burned by the bombing.

INTERVIEWER: So the fire came towards you?

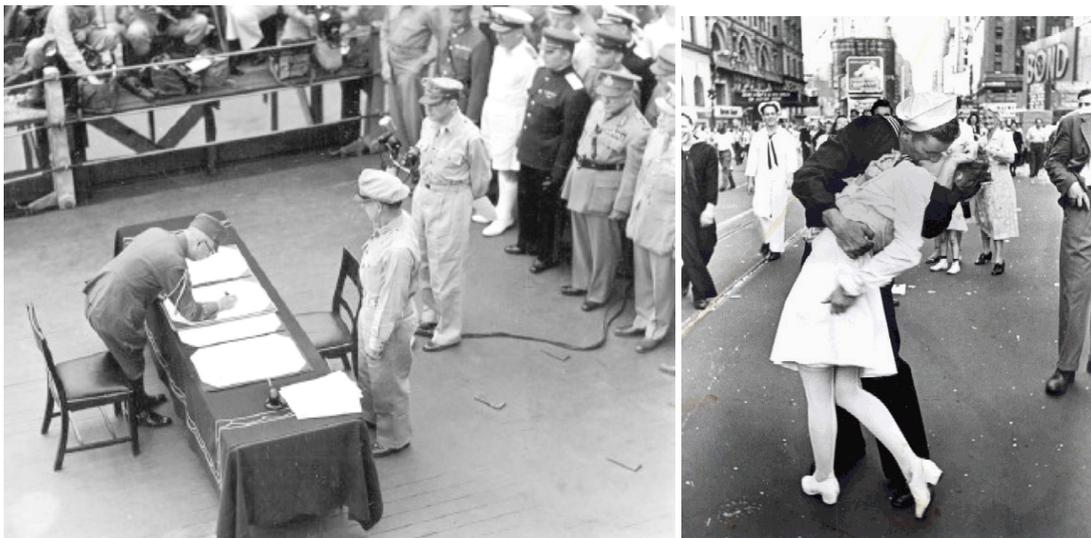
TAKAKURA: Yes, it did. The whirlpool of fire that was covering the entire street approached us from Ote-machi. So, everyone just tried so hard to keep away from the fire. It was just like a living hell. After a while, it began to rain. The fire and the smoke made us so thirsty and there was nothing to drink, no water, and the smoke even disturbed our eyes. As it began to rain, people opened their mouths and turned their faces towards the sky and try to drink the rain, but it wasn't easy to catch the rain drops in our mouths. It was a black rain with big drops.

INTERVIEWER: How big were the rain drops?

TAKAKURA: They were so big that we even felt pain when they dropped onto us. We opened our mouths just like this, as wide as possible in an effort to quench our thirst. Everybody did the same thing. But it just wasn't enough. Someone, someone found an empty can and held it to catch the rain.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Did the black rain actually quench your thirst?

TAKAKURA: No, no it didn't. Maybe I didn't catch enough rain, but I still felt very thirsty and there was nothing I could do about it. What I felt at that moment was that Hiroshima was entirely covered with only three colors. I remember red, black and brown, but, but, nothing else. Many people on the street were killed almost instantly. The fingertips of those dead bodies caught fire and the fire gradually spread over their entire bodies from their fingers. A light gray liquid dripped down their hands, scorching their fingers. I, I was so shocked to know that fingers and bodies could be burned and deformed like that. I just couldn't believe it. It was horrible. And looking at it, it was more than painful for me to think how the fingers were burned, hands and fingers that would hold babies or turn pages, they just, they just burned away. For a few years after the A-bomb was dropped, I was terribly afraid of fire. I wasn't even able to get close to fire because all my senses remembered how fearful and horrible the fire was, how hot the blaze was, and how hard it was to breathe the hot air. It was really hard to breathe. Maybe because the fire burned all the oxygen, I don't know. I could not open my eyes enough because of the smoke, which was everywhere. Not only me but everyone felt the same. And my parts were covered with holes.



Above: (Left) On August 14, 1945 the Japanese surrender to the United States (as pictured here). (Right) A famous picture of a sailor kissing a woman on V-J Day in 1945.

### Questions for Reading 6-7:

1. After reading the documents about the use of the atomic bomb by the U.S. against Japan, please create a chart like the one on the next page with details for each column. Be sure to include their very different beliefs on why the U.S. should have or have not used the atomic bomb.

Reasons supporting use of the atomic bomb against Japan	Reasons against use of the atomic bomb against Japan

2. After weighing the evidence, do you think the U.S. should have used the atomic bomb against Japan? **Explain** why or why not.

**Appendix B**

**SECONDARY STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS OF TEXTS IN HISTORY COURSES**  
**SURVEY OF STUDENTS AT COURSE COMPLETION**

Survey Questions

*Please circle the best answer for all of the questions.*

**1. How many history classes have you taken in high school, including this current course.**

0      1      2      3      4      5      6

**2. How many of those history classes required you to read a textbook, including this current course.**

0      1      2      3      4      5      6

**3. How many of those history classes required you to read a reading packet (or similar nightly reading handouts supplied by the teacher), including this current course.**

0      1      2      3      4      5      6

*Please answer the following statements about the reading packets that were used in this course compared to your prior experiences using history textbooks. Please circle the best answer for all of the questions.*

**4. The reading packets were more interesting to read than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree    2-Disagree    3-Neither agree nor disagree    4-Agree    5-Strongly agree

**5. The reading packets showed more perspectives of historical events than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree    2-Disagree    3-Neither agree nor disagree    4-Agree    5-Strongly agree

**Continue to next page please.**

**6. In the reading packets, I read about people I can identify with more than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**7. The reading packets were more challenging to read than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**8. I enjoyed reading from the reading packets more than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**9. The reading packets helped me to understand that there are different views of historical events more than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**10. I can recall more information from the reading packets than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**11. I have talked with people outside my history class (i.e. family, friends, teachers) about information from the reading packets, more than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**12. I completed homework more frequently using the reading packets than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**13. I prefer using the reading packets more than the textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**14. My own race/ethnicity was reflected in the reading packets more than textbooks I have used.**

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neither agree nor disagree 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

**Continue to next page please.**

**Demographic Information**

**15. What is your age?**

14    15    16    17    18    19

**16. What is your grade level?**

9    10    11    12

**17. What course and level are you currently enrolled in?**

1-US History I CP1    2-US History I Honors    3-US History II CP1    4-US History II Honors

**18. What is your gender?**

1-Male    2-Female

**19. What is your race/ethnicity (If you are multiracial, please circle more than one)?**

1-American Indian/Native American    2-Asian    3-Brazilian    4-Black/African American

5-Latino/a or Hispanic    6-White/European American    7-Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Is a language other than English your first language?**

1-Yes    2-No

If you answered “Yes,” please list your first language here: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Do you speak a language other than English fluently?**

1-Yes    2-No

If you answered “Yes,” please list your first language here: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Are you or your parents immigrants to the United States?**

1-Yes (Both I and my parents)    2-Yes (My parents only)    3-No

**Continue to next page please.**

**Please answer the following questions. Try your best to be descriptive as possible. Please use back of sheet if you need more room.**

**23. What did you think about the reading packets compared to textbooks you have used in the past?**

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**24. Can you elaborate on any of the multiple-choice questions by providing examples?**

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**25. Would you recommend using the reading packets or a textbook for the teaching of this class? Why or why not?**

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**End of survey.**

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol (Students)

#### **I. Textbooks and Reading Packets: Student Learning**

1. Had you ever used reading packets like this before in a history class? What did you think of them? Why?
2. Do you think you learn more from reading packets or textbooks? Why?
3. Do you like using a textbook or the reading packets more? Why?
4. Are textbooks or reading packets easier to read? Why do you think this is?
5. Which is more interesting to you, the reading packets or textbooks? Why?

#### **II. Textbooks and Reading Packets: Perspectives and Trustworthiness**

6. Do textbooks or reading packets show you different peoples' views of historical events better? Why?
7. Do you trust or find more trustworthy the reading packets or textbooks?
8. Do you think the reading packet or textbook allowed you to better understand history?
9. Are you more likely to do homework using the reading packets or the textbook? If so, why? If not, why do you usually do or not do your homework?

#### **III. Textbooks and Reading Packets: Student Background**

10. Could you identify with the people and events found in the reading packet or the textbooks? Did one help you envision or imagine what it would be like to be alive during the period you were studying?
11. Do you think the textbook or reading packet better shows the history of people from your racial or ethnic background? Can you give any examples of readings that did this?
12. Do you think the textbook or reading packet better shows the history of your gender? Can you give any examples of readings that did this?

**Appendix D**

**LEVEL ONE CODES (P-)**

***LEVEL TWO CODES (P-TXT-)***

**LEVEL THREE CODES (B-TXT-NEG)**

NOTE: There is no dash (-) if there are no levels below

<b>Nickname</b>	<b>Full Code Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>L-</b>	<b>Student Learning</b>	<b>Related to students' learning</b>
<b><i>L-DEC-</i></b>	<b><i>Decreased Learning</i></b>	<b><i>Related to a decrease in students' learning of history</i></b>
L-DEC-HAR	Harder to Read	Student expressed it was harder to read
L-DEC-HW	Did Less Homework	Student expressed doing less homework
L-DEC-INT	Less Interesting	Student expressed that they were less interested
L-DEC-LRN	Learned Less from Packets	Student expressed learning less
<b><i>L-INC-</i></b>	<b><i>Increased Learning</i></b>	<b><i>Related to an increase in students' learning of history</i></b>

L-INC-EAS	Easier to Read	Student expressed it was easier to read
L-INC-HW	Did More Homework	Student expressed doing more homework
L-INC-INT	More Interesting	Student expressed that they were interested
L-INC-LRN	Learned More	Student expressed learning more
L-INC-MOB	Preferred Mobility	Student expressed a preference for the mobility
N-	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Related to the narratives found in the texts</b>
<i>N-DP-</i>	<i>Dominant Perspective</i>	<i>Related to the dominant perspectives found in the texts</i>
N-DP-MDP	Wanted More Dominant Perspective	Students expressed a desire for the dominant perspectives found in texts

N-DP-QST	Questioned Dominant Perspective	Students expressed questioning the dominant perspectives found in texts
<b><i>N-ETH-</i></b>	<b><i>Race-Ethnicity</i></b>	<b><i>Related to the race/ethnic view found in the texts</i></b>
N-ETH-REP	Represented Race-Ethnicity	Students expressed seeing her/his race/ethnicity represented in texts
N-ETH-UND	Underrepresented Race-Ethnicity	Students expressed not seeing her/his race/ethnicity represented in texts
<b><i>N-GEN-</i></b>	<b><i>Gender</i></b>	<b><i>Related to the gender view found in the texts</i></b>
N-GEN-REP	Represented Gender	Students expressed not seeing her/his gender represented in texts
N-GEN-UND	Underrepresented Gender	Students expressed not seeing her/his gender represented in texts
<b><i>N-MP-</i></b>	<b><i>Multiple Perspectives</i></b>	<b><i>Related to the multiple perspectives found in the texts</i></b>

N-MP-DIC	Dichotomy	Students expressed seeing history as two competing perspectives
N-MP-SMP	Multiple Perspectives	Students expressed seeing history as multiple competing perspectives
N-MP-STR	Struggled	Students expressed seeing history as a single perspective
<b>P-</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>	<b>Related to the students' perceptions of the textbook and reading packet</b>
<i>P-PKT</i>	<i>Perceptions of Reading Packets</i>	<i>Related to the students' perceptions of reading packets</i>
P-PKT-BIAS	Packet Biased	Students expressed reading packets were biased
P-PKT-NEG	Packets-Negative	Students expressed a negative view of reading packets
P-PKT-POS	Packets-Positive	Students expressed a positive view of reading packets

P-PKT-TRST	Packet More Trustworthy	Students expressed reading packets were more trustworthy
P-PKT-UNB	Packet Unbiased	Students expressed reading packets were unbiased
P-PKT-UND	Packet Led to Better Understanding	Students expressed reading packets increased understanding
<i>P-TXT-</i>	<i>Perceptions of Textbooks</i>	<i>Related to the students' perceptions of the textbook</i>
P-TXT-BIAS	Textbook Biased	Students expressed textbooks were biased
P-TXB-NEG	Textbook-Negative	Students expressed a negative view of the textbook
P-TXB-POS	Textbook-Positive	Students expressed a positive view of the textbook
P-TXT-TRST	Textbook More Trustworthy	Students expressed textbooks to be more trustworthy

P-TXT-UNB	Textbook Unbiased	Students expressed textbooks were unbiased
P-TXT-UND	Textbook Led to Better Understanding	Students expressed textbooks increased understanding