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THE IMPACT OF REVISIONIST HISTORY ON PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHER WORLDVIEWS

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Students sometimes find the study of history to be boring and irrelevant. Many question the accuracy of accounts given. The introduction of revisionist history to a convenience sample of students ($N = 164$) from a college of education program located at a Midwestern university made a positive difference in historical learner perspective. Students gained a greater appreciation for the study of the past, as well as a better understanding of how the melodramatic hyping of events and heroes discourages the formulation of a balanced and accurate view of history and its leaders. Pretest-to-posttest changes in mean scores were found to be highly significant. Results were independent of 8 selected demographic variables. Despite inherent differences, classical and revisionist versions of past events and its heroes do not have to be adversaries. Creative contrasting of the two approaches has the potential of increasing student appreciation for the study of history.

Keywords: Revisionist History, Non-traditional History, Politics of Collective Memory

Introduction

The study of history usually takes one of two paths: a classical (i.e., traditional) or a revisionist (i.e., non-traditional) approach of explaining past events. Both camps relate history with a certain purpose. For classical historians, that purpose tends to have a conservative political agenda driving the account of the event or an historical figure under review. Cordle (2002) writes, "It is critical to present revisionist history in our books and our classrooms to counterbalance 'classical' history," (p.10). Revisionist history can be seen as one consequence of the "minority rights revolution" that began after World War II and has achieved considerable success (Schuman, Schwartz, D'Arcy, 2005). Although revisionist history is often

advanced by thinkers who are more liberal in their political perspective, final judgment about the validity of true revisionism is ultimately left to the reader regardless of their political persuasion.

James McPherson (2003), former president of the American Historical Association, stated that there is no single, eternal, and immutable truth about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past—that is revisionism—is what makes history vital and meaningful. Viewed in this light, revisionism is not an attack on classical interpretations of history, but rather a natural evolution of constantly unfolding interpretations of our past. For purposes of this paper, revisionism is defined as a process that attempts to (1)

bring history in accord with as broad an array of facts as possible, (2) discuss the past on the basis of new and multiple interpretations of existing evidence, and (3) consciously include greater historical voice to the experiences of marginalized groups.

The Politics of Collective Memory

On June 6, 2003, President George W. Bush used the following opening words of a speech to defend his decision to invade the country of Iraq with the purpose of ousting the Saddam Hussein regime: "Now there are some who would like to rewrite history – revisionist historians is what I like to call them." On June 6, 2006, Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed into law a state educational provision that, "American history shall be viewed as factual, *not as constructed*, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of independence," (Florida Education Omnibus Bill – H.B. 7087e3). More than likely, the new law was a small yet important way in which the governor could provide cover for his brother, the president, to justify using force against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq (McLaren & Jaramillo, 2006).

Not long after that speech, Governor Bush signed House Bill 7087 which legislated that social studies learning in Florida would be mediated through assimilationist historical content, didactic teaching, memorization, and high-stakes testing. While not legislated in other states, conservative minded social studies teachers across the nation began to adopt the

belief that traditional, non-diverse historical accounts was the best way to teach students (Gitlin 1996; Labaree, 1992; McKnight, 2004; Robinson 2007).

One of the first post-imperial attempts to question the validity of high school textbooks was advanced by Frances Fitzgerald (1979) in a book entitled *America Revised*. Fitzgerald concludes that (1) history books change over time reflecting the views of the community [i.e., power elite] that produce them, (2) the goal of the public education establishment has always been to keep the children of laborers in their place, (3) textbook reformers – whether they be progressive or fundamentalist – are typically "ahistorical" as witnessed by their desire to utilize history mostly as a tool to further the goals of social change or behavior modification, and (4) most history textbooks are written by committee with a design that offends as few people as possible – a result that produces boring, passionless, and meaningless education. Reviewers gave Fitzgerald high marks for bringing new awareness to a real and legitimate critique on one hand, yet lower marks on the other hand for a perceived failure to make the sum of her parts a balanced and workable paradigm for classroom teachers to adopt.

A follow-up revisionist account written by James W. Loewen (1995) entitled *Lies My Teacher Told Me* improved upon the Fitzgerald themes by (a) reporting on what goes on in the classroom, and (b) including so much history that it ends up functioning not just as a critique, but also as a kind of counter-textbook that retells the story of the American past (Wiener,

1995). The text corrected many misconceptions we had about history; examples include (1) Betsy Ross most likely did not create the American flag, (2) Helen Keller was an outspoken communist, (3) the American government sent troops on two occasions to squash the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and (4) President Woodrow Wilson, a democrat, went out of his way to undo early affirmative action appointments in the federal government instituted by republican presidents before him. Like Fitzgerald, Loewen believes that history textbooks are information-driven and typically devoid of real-life conflict and suspense, and that they encourage students to believe history is comprised of facts only to be learned and memorized. He also states that students enter college less knowledgeable about American history than any other academic subject, due in part because history is the often viewed as least liked and most forgotten subject in American curricula.

The purpose of revisionist history is to provide a much needed academic checks-and-balance system. Unfortunately, revisionist historians became synonymous with unpatriotic liberals who wanted to undermine traditional American values and goals. One writer (Chabot, 2004) even went as far as stating that today's colleges are filled with intimidating "left-wing professors" (p. 7) who promote uncritical thinking skills by offering top grades to students who simply parrot back a certain monocultural ideology. A popular book that argued against the revisionist critique was published by Robert Lerner, Althea Nagai, and Stanley Rothman (1995) enti-

tled *Molding the Good Citizen*. The authors are not proponents of the multicultural movement as it is currently defined, and conclude that high school textbooks have become increasingly biased with "filler feminism and ethnic/racial quotas" that lead students to becoming disinterested in history due a feeling that the texts of today are more propaganda than fact. The good citizen is defined in the critique as one who accepts what has been traditionally viewed as worthy and true.

According to Mortimer (2004), there appears to be three fundamental reasons why revisionists have a low reputation. First and foremost is the fact that some revisionist assertions are based on evidence which is flimsy at best. Some of it even becomes sensationalism that ends up as popular best-seller literature. Secondly, a double standard sometimes exists: the rule that says it is wrong to accept romanticized anecdotes and stories without question is not, in turn, applied to dismissal of such information without evidence. A writer who proposes the acceptance of a previously rejected narrative is often labeled an amateur even though the evidence to dismiss certain historical narratives (i.e., contemporary evidence) is sorely lacking. Perceptions of professionalism can sometimes give a false sense of academic security.

Thirdly, there are some "accepted" stories and anecdotes from history that need to be challenged, and yet to do so brings with it a fear that the universality of our heritage itself is being challenged. For example, once an inventor (e.g., the Wright

Brothers) has been assigned a culturally significant role, they are rarely removed or supplanted in the popular imagination even when a plethora of analytical evidence can prove that other inventors were equally or more responsible. A similar critique was echoed 45 years earlier by Richard Rorty, a young philosopher who doubted whether a capitalist society would allow an honest and critical analysis of itself to show up in the history books of our public and private schools (Zimmerman, 2000). Even among race minority learners who have the least reason to respect him – Christopher Columbus's reputation continues to endure (Schuman, Schwartz, D'Arcy, 2005).

*Content Literacy and Interest
in History Education*

Over the last two decades, low scores in national testing demonstrate that there was a need to improve history education. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a national debate ensued. What was the cause of this poor performance—lack of student interest or the method of instruction? A 1987 Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn study of 8,000 eleventh-grade students revealed that students correctly answered only fifty-four percent of history questions asked of them. If a national report card were to be given based on the achievement of 11th grade students in American history and literature, the nation would earn failing grades (Yarema, 2002).

In 1988, the Bradley Commission on History in Schools was created in response to the widespread concern over the inadequacy, both in quantity and in quality, of

history taught in elementary and secondary classrooms. The commission reported that fifteen percent of students did not take American history at all in high school, and that more than fifty percent of them took neither western civilization nor world history (Yarema, 2002). The National Assessment of Educational Progress Foundation reported that only ten percent of 22,000 high school seniors in public and private schools were considered history-proficient. Amazingly, fifty-seven percent of the seniors did not demonstrate a basic understanding of American history (*History a Mystery*, 1995).

An early survey (Fernandez, Massey & Dornbush, 1975) found that students in grades 9 through 12 ranked social studies last in importance when compared to other core subjects. Schug, Todd & Beery (1982) indicated that youngsters were not positive about social studies because they found it irrelevant to their future careers. High school students generally describe social studies as confusing and having little relationship to their future (Chiodo & Byford, 2004).

The American Historical Association (1990) called for history education to be reformed at the postsecondary level. Jackson (1989) posits that teacher preparation programs are partially to blame for weaknesses in secondary history education. High school history teachers are often not trained and challenged in college to be engaging with their students and thought-provoking in their delivery of the curriculum (Burson, 1989). Ratcliffe (1987) states that bold restructuring of curriculum is a more effective response to the

critical problems posed to undergraduate history than stoic resignation and minor tinkering with course requirements; typical reactions of most college preparation programs.

In 2002, the *Journal of American History* examined efforts to expand the teaching of college-level history courses beyond the traditional classroom formats and boundaries. A review of that literature by Kornblith and Lasser (2002) discovered faculty members who left behind the traditional lecture/discussion format to create new collaborations and learning communities. Some educators physically moved their teaching beyond the four walls of their institutions. Others found unique ways to empower students to create and "authorize" new "texts" from oral histories to material culture. Some of the efforts were described as activist in nature, making explicit connections between academically based community service, social change, and the study of history. Other efforts stressed the importance of engaging students in writing history for, and sometimes with, new audiences. In the end, what was shared was a commitment to participatory education and to the cultivation of a passion for "doing," not just reading history.

Alazzi and Chiodo (2004) found that students valued social studies, although they did not rate it as their favorite subject. They discovered that there was too much reliance on textbooks and lecture as the main tools for instruction. Teacher enthusiasm and interactive learning, however, made a difference in students' desire to learn. Chiodo and Byford (2002) also

found that teacher enthusiasm and active student involvement made a positive difference. In addition, student interest level was impacted by how students perceived history's utilitarian value.

The need for teachers to rely on textbooks has been a focal point of the debate. Because of the demands of comprehensive coverage, history texts are often found to be deficient in theme and depth. Simmonds (1989) concluded that many textbooks included only generalized conclusions, reflecting consensus rather than debating important historical points of difference. Gaddis (1990) argues that textbook writers yield to pressures from publishers to avoid offending powerful interest groups. This leads to products that omit a critical and meaningful analysis of history. One Bradley Commission Study official commented that teachers needed freedom from mandates that require predetermined textbooks (Goode, 1989). Consequently, educators began requesting more flexibility in choosing methods and materials that enhance the interest of their students.

One might wonder how much good is derived from complaining about textbooks that promote only one view of history, yet it is incumbent upon classroom teachers to find ways to help students enjoy the complete study of history. This is best accomplished when the instructor's attitude toward the subject matter is enthusiastic and when he/she interacts well with students. Encouraging students to read the daily newspaper, adopting teaching strategies that "hook" students, and requiring assignments that demand more from students are seen as viable ways to

get them inspired about the study of history (Shapiro, 1991).

Research Questions

This study addresses the following two research questions: How aware are college students of history that is written from differing historical perspectives? What impact does revisionist history have on the amount of change in the historical perspective of college education students?

Hypotheses

Going into this research, we expected to find that:

1. Because greater exposure to revisionist history is a by-product of the post-secondary education experience, younger college students would not be as aware of it as much as older students;
2. Significant differences in mean scores would be shown across political affiliation, race, and socioeconomic categories, and;
3. There would be some concern that revisionist interpretations of history might have a negative impact on patriotism and the national pride of students.

The remainder of the analysis was exploratory in nature.

Method

Participants

Respondents who comprised the convenience sample (N=164) for this study were drawn from the College of Education of a Midwest university located in a metropolitan area of 800,000 people. The age distribution was 18-51 years (n=136,

M=22.1) for undergraduate, and 22-54 years (n=24, M=33.1) for graduate students. Forty of the 164 students (25%) were male and 120 (75%) were female. One hundred thirty nine (87%) were Caucasian students and 21 (13%) were members of a race minority group. Four students refused to provide a rare designation.

Forty percent (n=52) of respondents were elementary school majors, 32.5% (n=52) were secondary education majors, 23% (n=37) were studying to be counselors, and 7.5% (n=12) were non-education majors. Politically speaking, 21.5% (n=32) of the respondents said they were conservative, 28.9% (n=43) moderate, 13.4% (n=20) liberal, and 32.9% said they were an eclectic mixture of the three. Fifteen people (9.1%) refused to answer this question.

Economically speaking, 11% of respondents (n=17) identified themselves as lower class, 79% (n=127) as middle class, and 10% (n=16) as upper class. Nineteen percent (n=31) had earned a bachelors degree or higher, 8% (n=12) had an associates degree, and the remaining 73% (n=117) possessed only a high school diploma. The majority of students (65%) were freshman, sophomores, and juniors. Twenty six percent (n=42) of respondents spent the majority of their K-12 education years at a school located in a town with a population less than 25,000 people, while 15% (n=23) and 59% (n=95) came from 25,000 to 300,000 and greater than 300,000 towns respectively.

Table 1
Descriptive results of student views on quality of history learning prior to college instruction.

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Events we read about in high school textbooks are reliably reported.	160	4.49	2.03
2. High school textbooks portray our American heroes accurately.	160	3.76	1.86
3. Textbook authors selectively omit blemishes in order to make historical figures sympathetic to as many people as possible.	160	5.84	1.88
4. Textbook authors often sanitize parts of history in order to shield students from academic disharmony & classroom conflict.	160	5.84	1.92
5. The American textbook "herofication" process has stolen from us important historical facts leaving behind only melodramatic minutia.	159	5.28	1.83
6. Teachers that introduce intellectual controversy into the curriculum wrongly violate the American standard for patriotic socialization.	160	1.65	1.80
1. After analyzing the info taken from the James Loewen reading, I feel my high school cheated me out of a balanced history education.	155	4.00	2.07
2. Books such as <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> by James Loewen give students a greater appreciation of why it's important to study history.	155	5.72	1.81
3. Readings such as <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> by James Loewen help me to better see that in order to gain a truer and healthier view of history, I cannot rely solely on accounts according to the perspectives of the group who holds power (i.e., Whites, males, upper class, etc.).	155	7.12	1.40
4. Grade school students (K-6) can handle revisionist history and not be psychologically harmed or encouraged to become unpatriotic.	101	4.42	1.80
5. Secondary school students (7-12) can handle revisionist history and not be psychologically harmed or encouraged to become unpatriotic.	101	6.49	1.50

The Survey

Information taken from the first two chapters of the book entitled *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen (1995) was used to formulate survey items that had a high probability of not being covered in most traditional high school history programs. The pretest consisted of 6 questions that dealt with curriculum issues. The posttest consisted of those same curriculum questions, plus 5 additional ones that sought to measure student resistance to or acceptance of revisionist history (see Table

1). Students responded to the items by providing perceptions of their historical views using a nine point response scale ranging from "0" (strongly disagree) to "8" (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Utilizing an SPSS computer program, we conducted the following statistical analyses:

1. A descriptive summary of respondents' perceptions of their views on history;
2. A paired-samples t-test to measure pretest-to-posttest means score differences for the designated set of

- curriculum items;
3. A Two-Way ANOVA model to estimate any added influence that selected demographic factors (i.e., race, gender, social class, age, level of education, college major, political affiliation, and hometown population) might have had on pre-to-post test mean score differences. Because the built in Bonferroni test adjusts for Type I errors resulting from multiple comparisons, alpha was set at .05 (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2000);
 4. A One-Way ANOVA model to estimate potential relationships between interval demographic data and the additional set of curriculum responses provided only during the posttest phase. Because analysis of the data included more than 5 tests, alpha was set at .01 to control for type I errors (Crocker & Algina, 1986), and;
 5. A Chi-square analysis to estimate potential relationships between the nominal demographic data and the remaining set of curriculum items.

Results

Descriptive Results

A summary of descriptive results are listed in Table 1. Pretest results show that respondents (1) provided a wide range of responses—from little to much surprise—regarding various historical revelations highlighted by the James Loewen reading, (2) believed that there was more to historical events and American heroes than what they had previously learned in high school, and (3) were comfortable with the idea of classroom teachers introducing controversy into the curriculum.

In addition, respondents (1) viewed the Loewen reading as generally helpful towards gaining a better appreciation for the study of history (2) felt it was important not to solely define history through the eyes of the dominant ruling group, and (3) believed that although grade school aged students would not be damaged by exposure to revisionist history, the greatest benefit would be accrued to high school students. These findings eased some of our fears about learner resistance to revisionist history.

Paired Sample t-Test Results

The following are results of the paired-sample t-test analysis (see Table 3):

1. The mean score for respondents' rating of the accuracy of high school history textbooks during the pretest ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 2.00$) was significantly higher than the posttest mean score ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.65$), $t(150) = 12.60$, $p < .0005$. Effect size was large ($d = 1.03$);
2. The mean score for respondents' views on the portrayal of American heroes during the pretest phase ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.88$) was significantly higher than the posttest mean score ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(150) = 10.53$, $p < .0005$. Effect size was moderately large ($d = .85$, and;
3. The mean score for respondents' views on the question of whether or not history textbooks pander to melodramatic themes that have the potential to sidetrack students from a full view of history was significantly lower during the pretest ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.83$) compared to the posttest stage ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.87$), $t(149) = -2.39$, $p = .018$. Effect

Table 2
Paired-Sample t-Test Results: Pretest-to-Posttest Change in Curriculum Mean Scores

Survey Item	Pretest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Posttest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t-score</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
1. The info about events presented in history textbooks is reliable	4.56	2.00	2.33	1.65	150	12.60	< .0005	1.03
2. Famous historical personalities are portrayed accurately in history textbooks	3.81	1.88	1.95	1.56	150	10.58	< .0005	.85
3. There is too much melodramatic minutia in history textbooks	5.29	1.83	5.77	1.87	149	-2.39	.018	.19
4. Blemishes of important historic figures are removed to make them more likeable	5.83	1.91	6.15	1.91	150	-1.52	.131	N/A
5. Authors sanitize history textbooks in an attempt to shield students from controversy	5.84	1.94	6.08	1.80	150	-1.25	.214	N/A
6. Teachers shouldn't introduce historical controversy to students	1.63	1.81	1.95	2.08	150	-1.73	.086	N/A

Alpha = .05

size was small ($d = .19$).

There were no significant pre-to-post-test findings found for the remaining 3 curriculum survey items.

Two-Way ANOVA Results

Regarding the 3 significant survey items, a Two-Way ANOVA showed that pretest-to-posttest changes in mean scores happened independent of the influence of the demographic variables when analyzing survey item 5 (too much melodramatic minutia). Three of the eight demograph-

ic variables—age, level of education and college major—did show a significant interaction with survey items 1 (textbooks are reliable) and 2 (portrayal of heroes). Main and multiple comparison coefficients are provided in Table 3. For the sake of economy, only a brief description of that interaction is provided here.

At the pretest level, the older the age group the less likely they were willing to believe high school textbooks reliably reported historical events. This finding supported our initial hypothesis that older college students are more aware of alter-

Table 3
Two-Way ANOVA Analysis: Significant Interactions Between Age and Selected Test Items

I. ANOVA interaction: Survey item 1—textbooks are RELIABLE and AGE

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> -score	<i>p</i>
	2, 148	5.77	.004

Simple main effects for relationship between RELIABLE and AGE:

Results of pretest age mean differences	2, 148	19.52	< .0005
Results of posttest age mean differences	2, 148	3.80	.0250
Pretest-to-posttest results			
18-19 year olds	1, 148	110.07	< .0005
20-24 year olds	1, 148	52.62	< .0005
25 years & older	1, 148	17.71	< .0005

	Pretest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
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Multiple comparisons tests: Pretest RELIABLE by AGE results

Age 25 & Older (contrasted with)	3.13	1.94		
(a) AGE 20-24 at pretest level	4.69	1.99	<.0005	.79
(b) AGE 18-19 at pretest level	5.40	1.49	<.0005	.58

Multiple comparisons tests: Posttest RELIABLE by AGE results

Age 25 & Older (contrasted with)	1.73	1.75		
(a) AGE 18-19 at posttest level	2.55	1.57	.041	.50

	Pretest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Posttest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
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Multiple comparisons tests: Pre-to-Posttest RELIABLE by AGE results

Item means by age 18-19:	5.40	1.49	2.55	1.57	<.0005	1.86
Item means by age 20-24:	4.69	1.99	2.55	1.58	<.0005	1.27
Item means by age 25 & up:	3.56	1.94	1.73	1.75	<.0005	0.76

II. ANOVA interaction: Survey item 2—HEROES and AGE

	<i>df</i>	<i>F- score</i>	<i>p</i>
	2, 148	8.71	< .0005

Simple main effects for relationship between HERO and AGE:

Results of pretest age mean differences	2, 148	15.66	< .0005
Results of posttest age mean differences	2, 148	.44	.644
Pretest-to-posttest results			
18-19 year olds	1, 148	100.93	< .0005
20-24 year olds	1, 148	29.32	< .0005
25 years & older	1, 148	9.35	< .003

	Pretest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
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Multiple comparisons tests: Pretest HERO by AGE results

Age 18-19 (contrasted with)	4.68	1.55		
(a) AGE 20-24 at pretest level	3.61	1.95	.004	.61
(b) AGE 25 & Older at test level	2.75	1.66	<.0005	1.20

Multiple comparisons tests: Posttest HERO by AGE results

* No significant posttest findings	-----	-----	-----	-----		
	Pretest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Posttest <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>

Multiple comparisons tests: Pre-to-Posttest HERO by AGE results

Item means by age 18-19:	4.67	1.55	2.00	1.34	<.0005	1.86
Item means by age 20-24:	3.61	1.95	2.04	1.48	<.0005	0.91
Item means by age 25 & up:	2.75	1.66	1.75	1.93	<.0005	0.56

Note: Alpha = .05.

Table 4
One-Way ANOVA: Significant Interactions Between a Posttest Curriculum Response and Age

Survey Item	Demographic Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	F	p	d
1. My high school cheated me out of a balanced history education								
	Age:			151	2, 148	5.92	.003	N/A
	20-24 year olds	3.22	1.64	51	(contrasted with)			
	a. 18-19 year old	4.47	2.13	60	-----	-----	.004	.66
	b. 25 and older	3.99	2.21	40	-----	-----	.035	.40

Note: Alpha = .01

native perspectives because of greater exposure to multiple interpretations of history, a mainstay of most college programs. The pretest-to-posttest changes in mean scores showed a similar pattern: all age groups displayed significant growth in appreciation for revisionist history, with the younger groups showing the greatest amount. Some of the observed age difference began to fade during the posttest-only phase, however, demonstrating a possibility that education played a key role in explaining post-treatment homogenization of thought. Both the pretest and pretest-to-posttest age findings for survey item 2 (heroes) mirrored those of the item 1 (reliable texts) findings mentioned above. The posttest-only analysis for item 2, however, showed no significant findings at all; after receiving the treatment, there was no difference in how the age groups viewed the portrayal of heroes. Again, education appears to have had the impact of closing the gap in acceptance of

a revisionist perspective. Effect sizes were moderate to large for the various analyses. It is important to mention that the three demographic variables roughly measured a similar trait: increased opportunity at the higher end to be exposed to greater levels of multiple historical perspectives. Correlation analysis confirmed the interconnectedness of the variables.

One-Way ANOVA Analysis

The ANOVA analysis confirmed that mean score results were generally not mediated by the interval demographic variables when looking at posttest curriculum questions. The one exception was the impact age had on survey item 7 (I feel cheated) ($F(2,148) = 5.92, p = .003$ (see Table 4). Students from the 20-24 year old group had a significantly lower score ($M = 3.22, SD = 1.64$) as compared to students who were 18-19 years old ($M = 4.47, SD = 2.13$), and students who were 25 years and older ($M = 3.99, SD = 2.21$). This iso-

lated finding could very well be a function of differences in the high school attended and instructional delivery.

In general, we concluded from the descriptive analysis that all students felt they were cheated out of a balanced high school education, but only moderately so.

Chi-square Analysis

The typical guideline for accepting the findings of a Chi-square analysis is that no cells can have less than an expected count of 5 cases (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2000). For this study, a less stringent rule that allows for 20% (Siegel & Castellan, 1988) was applied. Although there were significant relationships shown between race and gender in relation to several of the posttest curriculum questions, none of those findings could be trusted because we didn't meet the 20% rule.

Discussion

The introduction of revisionist history, as described in James Loewe's book entitled *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, to a convenience sample of 164 college of education students seems to have made a positive difference in their overall historical perspective. While confidence in the accuracy of historical events and the reputation of American heroes diminished with the introduction of revisionist history, there didn't appear to be a defeatist attitude that accompanied that change. Rather, there was an increase in support for the importance of studying multiple interpretations of history, as well as support for a belief that revisionist history does not negatively affect patriotism. The Loewen reading had the effect of slightly

enhancing Pro-Revisionist sentiment among students who already thought that accounts of history were theatrically embellished. Overall, respondents gained a greater appreciation for the study of history, as well as a better understanding of how the melodramatic hyping of events and people discourages the formulation of a balanced and accurate view of history and its leaders.

The results of the various analyses were independent of the demographic variables selected for this study. Of special interest was the impact political affiliation might have on student views. The null hypothesis of no impact had to be accepted: Students of all political persuasions showed equivalent gains. Conservatives were not more resistant. Likewise, socioeconomic status did not prove to be a significant delineator. Because of low numbers, we were unable to properly assess the impact of race and gender.

Age and prior opportunity to be exposed to non-traditional history did show a significant interaction; however that relationship was expected, because greater academic exposure and more life experience should bring about a view that is more balanced. In future studies, it would be interesting to see if this age pattern will hold true for older persons who don't have a college degree. By and large, most of the change in students' attitude about history appears to have been impacted simply by exposing them to new information taken from selected chapters of the Loewen reading.

A very encouraging finding was the fact that students did not fear classroom teachers who infuse controversy into their

teaching style. Of course, the success of using such a strategy lies in its delivery—one teacher's magic wand can easily become another's lighting rod. But the message seems to be loud and clear: Today's education majors aren't fragile. They want the whole truth. They don't want education delivered with kid's gloves.

An important byproduct of this study was the realization that classical and revisionist history texts do not necessarily have to be adversaries. Rather, finding ways to creatively contrast the two versions of how we interpret past events and heroes has the potential of increasing overall student appreciation for the study of history. In this case, the process made historical investigation come alive for students. Of course, this study did not concentrate on teacher characteristics or actual teaching strategies, the most important school correlates of student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage, 2005). Still, it shows that content and quality of curriculum can make a positive impact on young adult student learning.

In light of the support respondents in this study gave, it is recommended that secondary schools and college preparatory programs adopt a practice of infusing increased levels of revisionist history into the curriculum. Few educators relish the idea of requiring more than one text, and yet the practice could offer opportunities to do some unique contrasting and comparing. Perhaps history teachers can find creative ways to make traditional and non-traditional curriculum perspectives compliment each other. Today's students seem to be saying, "Allow us the opportunity to think for ourselves. Provide us with

a wide academic and social perspective, and then relax and trust our ability to sort out what is factual and what is not." If, in fact, this is an accurate portrayal of the contemporary student mindset, we may have succeeded in achieving one of the main educational goals championed during the last three decades—recruiting students to become active partners in orchestrating their own educational experience.

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