

THE POWERS THAT BE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS'
IMPRESSIONS OF THE BIAS IN RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES
IN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

by

Sarah Irene Herrero

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perception of bias of college students at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. The theory that guided this study was reader response theory, as it identified the tendency of readers to bring their experiences and backgrounds to the literature they read. The study accomplished this by answering (a) how do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks; (b) how do college students describe bias; (c) how do college students construct perceptions of a topic from the content of religious narratives in history textbooks; (d) how does a college student's, religion, political orientation, psychology, empathetic worldview, or family influences influence perception of bias in the text?; and (e) how do students verbalize factors that they perceive as minimizing bias. To achieve this, 10 college students, from a college in South Florida were recruited for the study. Data collection included interviews, focus groups, and journaling; the data analysis was completed using the constant comparative method. The findings revealed that all participants who described a perception of bias exemplified an empathetic worldview, including both empathy and perspective taking toward different groups. Suggestions for future research include how to foster such empathy and perspective taking in the student body at large.

Keywords: religion, history, textbooks, stereotyping, bias

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Bias in history textbooks is an area that has come under question for years and, at the same time, is still an area that needs further research. Various aspects of history textbooks have been explored, but religion in history textbooks is one that has not been adequately investigated. There are implications of the perceptions of bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks for the college population, which should receive further examination. This investigation was necessary because college students have the most at stake regarding bias, and their perceptions must be understood to ensure their best education. Therefore, it was important to explore the problem of bias in textbooks and the significance of pursuing further research in this area.

Background

Many sources have discussed the central role textbooks play in pedagogy (Allen, 2009; Ogle & Damhorst, 2010; Sherman, 2010; Stambaugh & Trank, 2010); Sherman (2010) refers to textbooks as the “backbone” of students’ course work (p. 27). The centrality of the textbook is perceived by teachers, administrators, and even by college students, who feel that up to 55% of what they learn is based on the textbook (Stambaugh & Trank, 2010). This demonstrates that students are reading their textbooks and constructing meaning from those books. Since these textbooks are instrumental to student learning, they should be studied. After all, textbooks have the power to influence the next generation (Marino, 2011). Many of the studies on history textbooks have been conducted with the premise that these textbooks are influencing students in a negative way. This influence has been called propaganda (Saleem & Thomas, 2011) and ideology or bias (Neumann, 2014). Researchers perceived this bias as early as the 1940s (Caldwell, 1946), 1970s and 1980s (Gaustad & Schmidt, 2004), and also today (Allen, 2009).

If negative bias is present in history textbooks, it may prevent students from learning the information that was meant to be conveyed by the text (Neumann, 2014). Different aspects of history textbooks have been analyzed for bias, including the religious narratives included in these books (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). Douglass (2003) stated that as recently as “twenty-five years ago, it was quite possible for a citizen of the United States to grow up. . . without knowing anything about Islam” (p. 52). For this reason, history textbooks have been researched to ensure fair treatment of this religion. Bromley (2013) researched history textbooks to determine whether they treated the Holocaust from a historical perspective or from that of human rights. Pictures have also been used to determine if persons of various religious backgrounds were portrayed with bias (Eisenstein, 2013). These are only a few examples of how religious narratives in history textbooks have been examined.

Bias can be presented in an unnoticeable way and may or may not be perceived by students (Wade, 1993). Researchers have presented some reasons why college students may perceive bias. This study included five reasons why students who do perceive bias may have this perception. Each of these types of bias related to a challenge to their worldview: Students feel bias when their worldview is challenged (Tollini, 2010). This is also known as foreclosure, “[a] rigidity that causes individuals to perceive ideological bias” (Linvill & Mazer, 2012, p. 52). First, students’ religions may cause them to perceive bias in history textbooks. Saleem and Thomas (2011) demonstrated in their study that student religious identification gives that student a perception of bias in religious-historical narratives that may not be intentionally implied.

Political dispositions are another cause of students’ perceptions of bias (Tollini, 2010). Linvill and Havice (2011b) observed that students who identified as conservative were more likely to perceive bias in the classroom. A third reason why college students may perceive bias

in textbooks is that they are experiencing the psychological stage of Intimacy versus Isolation (Erikson, 1950). This stage of life is one where young adults pull certain people and things closer, while at the same time pushing others away. This pushing away is called distantiation, which is a separation from any force that causes a threat to what is held dear (Erikson, 1950). Since the developmental stage of Intimacy versus Isolation occurs just after adolescence, beginning around 18 years old, this may be another reason that college-age students experience bias in their textbooks.

Fourth, certain students may be concerned about bias against groups of which they are not a part because of empathy (Abbott & Cameron, 2014). Both the messages sent in the curriculum in textbooks and the methods of teaching in religion classes can affect whether students are empathetic to outside groups (Kallioniemi & Matilainen, 2011; Ogle & Damhorst, 2010). However, it has not been determined whether empathy can impact how students interpret religious narratives. Finally, a student's family influences can have a great impact on their behavior in school. Students whose parents were more religious were more likely to be religious and more likely to behave well in school (Bert. 2011). Since family influence affects student spirituality and school behaviors, it may affect how they perceive events in the classroom.

Fish (1980), a founder of reader response theory, affirms that students bring different experiences to any texts as they read them. For this reason, some have questioned whether there is a true way to understand a text (Totten, 1998). Reader response theory has been touted by its proponents as a way to help understand a text in a deeper way (Totten, 1998). At the same time, this theory explains why some people can read a piece of literature without negative reaction, while at the same time others read a piece of literature and call it indecent (Schrader, 1997). The different reactions people have are the result of reader response theory, the idea that each reader

will take something different from the text being read. This study used reader response theory as a framework to help understand how students describe their perceptions of bias based on the different experiences and backgrounds they might bring to their readings of religious narratives in history textbooks.

History textbooks have been examined for different kinds of bias for decades (Allen, 2009; Caldwell, 1946; Gaustad & Schmidt, 2004). Biases in history textbooks may include racial, gender-based, or religious bias. Few studies have been done examining student reactions to bias in religious narratives in these books, and none have focused on college students or students with both religious and non-religious worldviews. With a better understanding of student experiences of bias, faculty, administrators, and students themselves will be able to interact more effectively (Tollini, 2010). More effective understanding, better pedagogy, and more thoughtful empathy are some of the benefits this study sought to facilitate. Though there are many different interest groups attempting to dictate how a textbook ought to be written, this study sought to advance an understanding of the students themselves, instead of dictating a particular model for textbook inclusion and phraseology.

Situation to Self

As a Christian, I was especially interested in this study. I was interested in examining my own perceptions of history texts as well as those of religious and non-religious groups. I believe that equity, especially in the area of religion and freedom of conscience, is incredibly important to allow student comfort in the classroom. Though complete neutrality is impossible, understanding how students experience these texts can open a conversation that may lead to empathy and a concern for these students' points of view.

My epistemology has a direct connection to my theoretical framework, methods, and methodology. I believe that there is actual truth that can be known. This Truth is universal, knowable, and incontrovertible. This Truth exists beyond any human and is above and superior to it. However, if this is true, why are there disagreements between persons? Is there any person who holds truth to the exclusion of others? Though different persons have different amounts of Truth, no person is infallible. Instead, every person can only perceive this truth through general and special revelation. However, since it is the nature of humanity to make mistakes, we can never understand truth perfectly. This is much like Plato's theory of forms: The theory that we can only perceive things because there is a real truth beyond us, but at the same time we do not perceive the perfect object itself (Rogers, 1936). Therefore, my epistemology is first of all positivistic. I believe that truth exists and can be known. At the same time, I understand that part of epistemology is constructivist, no one can understand truth perfectly; instead, each of us must construct meaning from our experience with greater and lesser truths.

This was important to my study because there may really be bias in textbooks. This is a truth that would be hard to ascertain, because it would rely on asking the motivations of the authors. Though textbook authors are under immense pressure to cater to every demographic and interest group, they still have their own points of view and have been criticized for being both too liberal (Ansary, 2014) and too conservative (Marino, 2011). The purpose of this work, however, was not to question the motives of the textbook authors. Instead, the purpose of this project was purely constructivist. Textbooks can cause discomfort for the students who read them when these books challenge the most fundamental views the students have: religious, political, and moral (Abbott & Cameron, 2014; Saleem & Thomas, 2011; Tollini, 2010). Therefore, the opinions students have about whether the textbooks are perceived as biased are

valuable to understand (Tollini, 2010). One of my premises was that the students' opinions are true, in that they are truly stated feelings. In my estimation, textbook companies should be more concerned about these opinions than about special interest groups.

Problem Statement

The content of history textbooks has often been the object of study, but the impact that those textbooks might have on college students has been virtually untouched. Though Bromley (2013) examined history textbooks for their content on the Holocaust, the impact this content may have on students went unexamined. At the same time, Allen (2009), who studied religious narratives in high school history textbooks, identified words that he believed would have a negative connotation, but did not justify why they were positive or negative. At times a tool may be used to identify biased words, but it has been a decade since students have been asked to evaluate which words they perceived as biased (Nagel, 2004; Shadowwalker, 2012).

Though researchers have often given their perceptions of bias, college students have not been asked to define it (Tollini, 2010). Studies have been conducted with the goal of determining whether students perceive bias. Though there have been varying results in such studies, other studies have determined that students perceive bias in their classrooms and textbooks. Linvill and Havice (2011a) determined that "42% [of students] faulted reading assignments for presenting only one side of a controversial issue" (p. 74). Saleem and Thomas (2011) specifically found that some students felt there was bias in the religious narratives in their history textbooks, calling the narratives in textbooks "insulting" (p. 29). The problem is, while there has been much research on whether bias is in history textbooks, including religious bias, not much research has been done on why college students may experience bias in textbooks.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perception of bias of college students, specifically those who claim to perceive it at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. During this research, I defined bias as “observable ideological positions [that] are espoused by the authors” of the textbook (Morgan & Henning, 2013, para. 30), whether included intentionally or unintentionally (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). The theory guiding this study was reader response theory (Fish, 1980), as it identified the tendency of readers to bring their experiences and backgrounds to the literature they read.

Significance of the Study

There were three areas of significance that this study addressed. The first was that this study uniquely gave an opportunity for college students to express their perceptions of bias. There have been studies of how teachers perceive the material in textbooks (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014), or on how teachers’ perceptions of a textbook or curriculum motivate their teaching styles (Hintz, 2014). However, there had not been a study of the perceptions of students of various religious and racial demographics or of college students’ perceptions of this bias. There are studies that have mentioned this as a needed area of future research (Linville & Havice, 2011a; Tollini, 2010).

It is important to note that the focus of this study was the perception of bias, not the bias itself. Constructivism is a subject method for understanding experience. Fish (1980) explained that reality changes with each person because of different perceptions. Furthermore, Kant, a philosopher whose theories were a precursor to phenomenology, stated that experiences can only come through perception (Moustakas, 1994). It is this lived experience that phenomenology seeks to capture (Van Manen, 2014). This study sought to determine the quality of the

experience of perception, not the bias itself. If students perceive bias, the reality of bias is unimportant: The perception alone can affect their educational experience (Tollini, 2010). Therefore, student perceptions are important and should be studied.

Second, the research addressed the need to understand college students' perceptions of bias in textbooks. Allen (2009) argued that there are too few critical thinking questions in history textbooks. This may create an environment of indoctrination instead of one of critical thinking. This brings up the question of how the textbooks are impacting students. There are studies that call for further research into the area of the impact textbooks have on students in general and college students in particular (Bromley, 2013; Wade, 1993). The Sherman (2010) study demonstrated that further research is needed not only on the impact of textbooks on students, but also how textbooks impact students in the classroom.

Finally, this study sought to provide a unique facet on the study of religious bias in history textbooks. A previous study investigated how grade school Sunni Muslim students perceived the bias in a particular history textbook (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). However, most of the studies into religious bias in history textbooks are content analyses and do not deal with the phenomenon of bias. Bromley's (2013) research showed how a particular account within religious history affects student beliefs. This should reflect an understanding of students from many demographics, and not one particular faith.

Stakeholders for this study include college students, college professors, and textbook writers. This study sought to create an atmosphere of understanding between these groups. Since bias can be written into textbooks unintentionally (Saleem & Thomas, 2011), this could be an opportunity for textbook writers and college professors to better understand one aspect of the curriculum that may be causing students to feel uncomfortable in the classroom. This was also an

opportunity for college students to express their feelings and possibly understand their feelings on the subject and the stimuli that cause them.

Research Questions

In order to describe the full range of student perceptions, five questions were developed: One central question and four framing questions. The central question was: How do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks? This was the first question, because lived experience is the goal of phenomenology (Van Manen, 2014). Perception is essential to phenomenology because perception has the power to reveal lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, believed that perception has a direct impact on experience (Moustakas, 1994). The lived experience was discovered based on listening to and examining student perceptions. Tollini (2010) researched what professors might do in the classroom that students would perceive as biased. However, at the end of the research, Tollini (2010) mentioned that one area where future research would be beneficial would be to discover why students perceive certain actions as biased. The central question sought to accomplish this by understanding the college students' experiences of their perceptions. This question assumed that students first perceived bias, and then that perception lead to certain experiences that I would want to study.

To answer the central question, the following four questions helped guide the research:

1. How do college students describe bias?

Though Tollini (2010) suggested that further research be done on why college students perceive bias, there is some precedent on allowing participants to be able to verbalize their opinions of bias. In the study by MacPhee and Kaufman (2014), teachers commented on their

perceptions of bias in a particular textbook. The purpose of this question was to allow a definition of bias to arise from their descriptions. This was the most logical way for students to define bias, because bias is usually defined through narrative (Tollini, 2010).

2. How do college students construct perceptions of a topic from the content of religious narratives in history textbooks?

There is precedent for the content of history textbooks to be used to determine teacher perceptions of bias (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014) and middle and high school students' perceptions of religious bias (Saleem & Thomas, 2011), but not college students. Bromley (2013) suggests that further research be done into how the religious content of textbooks impacts students.

3. How does a college student's, religion, political orientation, psychology, empathetic worldview, or family influences influence perception of bias in the text?

There are many reasons why a student might experience bias about a certain text. Saleem and Thomas (2011) asked middle and high school students of the Sunni faith how they perceived bias in two social studies textbooks. Religion is certainly one reason why students may perceive bias, but the study by Saleem and Thomas (2011) does not take other possibilities into account. The article by Tollini (2010) focused on bias that comes from professors, but the focus of that study was political. Therefore, students may perceive bias in history textbooks because of a political disposition. Students also assert concerns about bias because of empathy (Abbott & Cameron, 2014). In the study by Abbott and Cameron (2014), name-calling is used to determine what causes students to behave assertively and stand up for their peers. One of the factors that caused students to stand up for biased actions against their peers was empathy. The psychological predispositions that college students may have can also impact bias. Distantiation

is the idea that students at the stage of Intimacy versus Isolation will reject ideas that are not part of their worldview (Erikson, 1950). Linvill and Havice (2011a) demonstrated that students are more likely to perceive bias if they feel an idea challenges their worldview. This demonstrates that a psychological event may be taking place that causes a student to perceive bias in the text. Finally, a student's family influences may impact their perceptions of bias, since family influence can impact both religious values and in-school behavior (Bert, 2011).

4. How do students verbalize factors that they perceive as minimizing bias?

Two factors were discovered that may help minimize a perception of bias among students. First, Tollini (2010) posited that students may perceive bias if they do not fully understand the material. This may mean that more information in the textbooks might lead to less bias. Harper (2012) specifically points to the introduction as an area in the textbook where authors can guide the reader through the text. Authors can use the introduction to share what they believe (Harper, 2012). Hopefully, sharing these beliefs will help minimize bias.

Definitions

A few of the terms in this study are often debated. Due to the variegated interpretations of certain words, some definitions are needed here. Where there is a question about any terms, they will be defined as follows:

1. *Bias* - "Observable ideological positions [that] are espoused by the authors" of the textbook (Morgan & Henning, 2013, para. 30), whether included intentionally or unintentionally (Saleem & Thomas, 2011).
2. *Religion* - "Transcendent reality and what humans are in relation to it" (Ellwood, 1993, p. 225).

3. *Narrative* - Narratives put together chronological or logical sequences of events from history (Silverstein, 2012).
4. *Worldview* - “The basic assumptions, presuppositions and values, in short the conceptualizations of a culture” (Wiher, 2010, p. 308).
5. *ECO* - The Evaluation Coefficient Analysis (ECO) is meant to “determine the overall favorable or unfavorable percentage of textbook material on a given subject” (Nagel, 2004, p. 195).

Summary

This study sought to fill an important gap in the literature. Though there have been studies done on the content of history textbooks, there was little research into the perception students have of the bias in history textbooks. Tollini (2010) especially mentions college students as those who have not had the opportunity to voice their perceptions of bias. The problem is that more research must be done to describe college students’ experiences of bias in textbooks. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe that perception. Since reader response theory (Fish, 1980) demonstrates that there is a constructivist aspect to reading textbooks in the classroom, college students bring a new perspective to the current body of research.

Through this study, college students had a unique opportunity to share their own descriptions of bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks, rather than having scholars and researchers give their opinions for them. This is not only an opportunity for them, but also a benefit for us, giving us a deeper and more profound understanding of student experience. A more detailed analysis of this topic will help students, professors, and textbook writers to better understand what is perceived as bias in religious narratives and why. This will hopefully help communication and the effectiveness of history education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Bias can be unnoticeable (Wade, 1993), yet can influence students whether they notice it or not (Linville & Havice, 2011). There are many kinds of media that vie to provide that influence, but the classroom is meant to be a safe haven from those influences. The history classroom is one of the greatest examples of the concern of bias in the classroom, and issues of the history classroom's influence are still hotly debated. Researchers have spent decades trying to determine if there is bias in the classroom, even possibly religious bias (Allen, 2009; Bromley, 2013; Eisenstein & Clark, 2013; Romanowski, 2009; Saleem & Thomas, 2011). Therefore, it is important to determine if there is potential bias in history textbooks regarding religion and whether students are experiencing perceived bias in these books. By exploring the different areas of research into bias in religious narrative in history textbooks, I revealed both a gap in the literature and a need for future study in how college students describe their experiences of perceiving bias in religious narratives in history textbooks.

Three major factors that affect the topic of this study that were reviewed. First, much has been written about the political and potentially biased nature of history textbooks. Writers such as Ansary (2014) have alleged that history textbooks are too political and are controlled by special interest groups. Furthermore, this control has been said to prevent students from understanding historical events: Since these texts do not use primary source information, they do not present students with first-hand information about events (Bain, 2006). Tools, such as the ECO, have been developed to measure the bias created by this politicized information (Pratt, 1972).

Second, authors Gaustad and Schmidt (2004) have documented concerns about whether there is religious bias in textbooks coming from as early as the 1970s. There have also been a few important researchers who have demonstrated that this is a significant area of research (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Douglass, 2000). Content analysis is often used to determine whether there is religious bias in history textbooks (Allen, 2009; Bromley, 2013; Eisenstein & Clark, 2013), though little research has sought to understand the student experience of religious bias in history textbooks (Saleem & Thomas, 2011).

The first two factors stem from what is written in history textbooks. However, in order to properly study this phenomenon, researchers must determine whether students experience any perception of bias. Influences on student construction of the text are the third factor that must be evaluated in this review. It is this piece that differentiated this research from the rest, filling a gap in the literature. Understanding this construction using reader response theory helped explain why students experience a perception of bias (Fish, 1980). Political, religious, family, psychological, and empathetic factors may impact perceptions of bias (Abbott & Cameron, 2014; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Linvill & Havice, 2011). It is also important to understand how students use critical thinking to understand the intent of a text and how that text may impact spiritual literacy (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014; Skerrett, 2014). These major categories and their subheadings placed this research within a broader context. The experience students have with bias, due to varying factors that impact thinking about the text, can be described through experience with history textbooks in general and with the religious narratives in those books in particular. However, this area needed further research, and it is this area that I explored through this study.

The organization of this review began with the theoretical framework and how it stemmed from my epistemology, and extended to the different categories that may impact the construction of a text. The review also examined different studies of bias in history, religion, and western civilization texts. Finally, critical thinking about the text was examined and presented as a possible minimizing factor for bias.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how college students perceive bias in religious narratives in history textbooks, it becomes necessary to understand how these students construct meaning. The theoretical framework of this study is reader response theory because there are many researchers who have discovered that meaning is constructed by our experiences and that meaning is transferred to how we perceive what we read in a text. Once the significance of reader response theory to this study is examined, it must be ascertained through which kinds of experiences a student may approach the text.

Reader Response Theory

A theoretical framework for this study must make sense of the variegated viewpoints students will have regarding whether a textbook contains bias. As stated earlier, each student brings a different understanding to whatever text is used. This difference is due to constructivism: The theory that people will have different understandings of events based on experience. Vygotsky, a leading theorist of constructivism, saw “knowledge as being socially constructed” (Gómez & Fernando, 2012, p. 53), in other words, constructed based on social relationships and influences. If knowledge, a central goal of pedagogy, can be created by social factors, such as political or religious affiliation, then these factors can also influence whether that knowledge is received in a way that causes a perception of bias.

Reader response theory looks at the reader of a text as the main agent in determining meaning (Carson & Moo, 2009). C. S. Lewis (1992), in the work *An Experiment in Criticism*, argues that the quality of the reader determines how the text is read and interpreted. Various students read differently, based on their reading skills and their goals in reading. This reading can also be influenced. Fish (1980), a founder of reader response theory, further clarifies how a reader might determine meaning, including social factors into the equation. Fish (1980) states, “Disagreements cannot be resolved by reference to the facts, because the facts emerge only in the context of some point of view,” or, alternately, “agreement, rather than being a proof of the stability of objects, is a testimony to the power of an interpretive community to constitute the objects upon which its members can then agree” (p. 338). This is an example of truth being constructed: Here, the construction is accomplished because of peer influence.

Saleem and Thomas (2011) agree that meaning is constructed by the reader. In their study, in which Sunni Muslim students were questioned regarding their perceptions on bias in religious narratives in history textbooks, they state, “Constructivist grounded theory was used to centralize the participant’s perspective in the readings of social studies textbooks. . . readers engage with the text and. . . the text engages with the reader in the construction of knowledge” (Saleem & Thomas, 2011, p. 15). There are many sociological factors that can influence how students determine the meaning of a text, specifically how students might understand the religious narratives in history textbooks.

Factors that Create Reader Perceptions of Bias

Five factors may contribute to students’ experiencing bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks they read. Of course, if a student identifies with a particular religion, they also may feel there is bias if the religion is not portrayed the way that student prefers (Saleem &

Thomas, 2011). Another factor may be a political bias. Whether students are specifically religious or not, they can be influenced to see bias in textbooks because of their political persuasion (Linvill & Havice, 2011). This is one example of the psychological impact of distantiation, or the experience students may have when what they are taught in school does not line up with the information they hold as true (Erikson, 1950). Therefore, psychology can be a third factor that impacts an experience of bias.

Furthermore, a student's level of empathy can influence a perception of bias. If one student is empathetic to the needs of a minority group, that student may be sensitive to what could be understood as bias against that group, whether the student is part of the group or not (Abbott & Cameron, 2014). Finally, a student's family influences may impact the way students interact in the classroom (Bert, 2011). This section explores each of these facets as reasons that may explain student perception of bias.

Religious. For decades, people have advocated for religious equality in textbooks from one religious perspective or another. Christians and Muslims have this concern more often than other groups (Allen, 2009; Saleem & Thomas, 2011). Byrne (2012) found that students who attended schools with Christian Religious Instruction curricula would create in-groups in which other students who did not worship God, particularly Buddhists and Atheists, were excluded, due to the perception that a dominant religion being taught (Byrne, 2012). Byrne's (2012) solution was to introduce General Religious Education into the schools in question. In the college setting where I conducted my study, General Religious Education is the method used in religion classes and, therefore, the history textbooks have no stated preference for any religion. However, there can still be hidden bias where some religions are treated more favorably than others or where atheism is promoted in the context of the textbook (Allen, 2009).

Muslim students in the United States can also feel that there are aspects of their culture that cannot be understood by students who have not learned about Islam (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). One way Muslims may cope with this is to create different identities. Some students choose to stay closer to their Muslim heritage while others embrace American social mores; either way, students feel that their culture is misunderstood (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). One student in the Stubbs (2013) study suggested that a way to create more understanding would be to add an Islamic Studies degree at the university. This student's idea represents a feeling that there are misunderstandings between the university and the students that could be corrected if there were more accurate information about Muslim students' religion (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). This may be solved if students were taught all religions in a way that different religions would perceive as equitable.

When a particular religion is stigmatized in a society's education, that religion may experience discrimination in other areas of society. One example of this is the study by Grubbs and Webb (2013) in which they argue that Australian society's negative stereotype of Islam prevents Muslims from free religious exercise of implementing government-funded Islamic schools (a right which is given to Christians in that country). This example is important because, just as this impacts one religion, it may impact other religions if a people's religious practices are not taught properly.

Political. Furthermore, if students feel that their professor is sharing views that go against their political views, they may experience distantiation, which can prevent these students from learning subject matter (Tollini, 2010). There have been studies into how many students feel that professors are overstepping their bounds by teaching in a way that is biased. According to Linvill and Havice (2011), 13% of students felt that professors are communicating their

political views with students in the classroom, when sharing those views is not related to the class material or is prejudicial. Another 23% of students felt that the professor would grade them based on their agreeing with the professor's opinions (Linvill & Havice, 2011).

According to Linvill and Havice (2011b), conservative and female students were among those groups that were more likely to feel political bias in the classroom, while African American students were less likely to perceive such bias. "Individuals more committed in the domains of. . . religion and politics are more likely to perceive their instructors as having an ideological bias" (Linvill & Mazer, 2013, p. 51). Though there were more students who did not perceive this bias (Linvill & Havice, 2011a), these statistics may explain why some students experience conflict with their professors' ideologies (Tollini, 2010).

At the same time, students were more likely to categorize behaviors, such as a professor's sharing political opinions unnecessarily, as definitely biased, whereas, even though professors often agreed they were more likely to say they were unsure as to whether such behavior was biased (Tollini, 2010). Tollini (2010) argued that this response from professors may be because they foresee other reasons for professor behaviors that students cannot foresee. Though there might be innocuous reasons why professors would share tangential political information with their students, students still experienced discomfort with some of the political communications in the classroom. Tollini (2010) recommended further study to determine why students and professors disagree about what is politically biased.

Psychological. Erikson (1950), a psychologist in the mid-1900s, worked to create a functional model to explain when an individual goes through various stages of development. Erikson (1950) introduced the eight stages of development to provide an explanation of this developmental order, and this framework is widely applied today. It can be demonstrated that,

throughout Erikson's model, influence can mold and shape the beliefs of an individual. Capps (2011a) explained how children are influenced by their mothers since a mother alone can satisfy a child's need for nutrition. The mother presents the child with the hope of food, which can be given or withheld. The mother's feeding or weaning of the child is critical to how the child develops, according to Capps (2011a).

This inter-personal influence begins in childhood, but extends through adolescence and young adulthood. Whitley (2009) demonstrated that older persons have influence over adolescents. In the classroom, the worldview a teacher holds impacts the student, even subtextually. Whitley (2009) claimed that the framework a teacher applies in the classroom can direct a student toward or away from God. Whitley's view is supported by Erikson's (1958) previous finding in the work *Young man Luther*, which demonstrated that outside influences can lead one toward religion. This explains how effective peer pressure can be in adolescence, but this can change when the student enters into young adulthood. The developmental stage that young adults go through is called Intimacy vs. Isolation (Erikson, 1950). During this stage, young adults solidify their beliefs, accepting or rejecting information based on their previous training. The rejection of information that goes against a person's worldview is called distantiation (Erikson, 1950). This rejection of influence can cause students to perceive bias in what they are receiving in the classroom. Since outside influences have been found to affect a student's perception of religion, research must examine why this occurs in the reception (or rejection) of history textbooks.

According to Tollini (2010), at the college level students are known to reject teachings that conflict with their established worldviews. This could be because of the effects of distantiation, as documented by Erikson (1950). Tollini (2010) considered that, though this trend

should imply that students and teachers will have different interpretations of what is biased, on a yes and no scale it seems that these two groups have largely the same conceptions on this topic. I believe that, though college students have the same abstract ideas of bias as professors, they are experiencing bias at greater rates because of their vantage points: They have a different perception of their experiences than a professor might (Tollini, 2010).

Empathetic. Not only can there be distantiation if students feel that their political views are challenged, but also if they feel that their religion is minimized (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). One method of reducing prejudice is by increasing empathy. Poteat, DiGiovanni, and Scheer (2013) demonstrated in one study that higher levels of empathy and perspective taking could lower prejudice. At the same time, a student with high levels of association with an in-group will have a higher likelihood of being prejudiced towards other students (Poteat et al., 2013). The students who have higher empathy may be more likely to not only react to social situations with sensitivity, but also to bias in textbooks. Students can change the environments of their schools by standing against biased attitudes. Abbott and Cameron (2014) also found that higher levels of empathy can lower prejudice, yet they also demonstrated that higher levels of empathy could raise an in-group student's potential to stand up to injustices against minority students. If students become more likely to show this resolve when they have heightened empathy levels, they may also stand against bias found in textbooks.

Increased levels of empathy both decrease prejudice and increase assertiveness against prejudice, yet there is research that empathy can be influenced by the curriculum presented. Ogle and Damhorst (2010) discovered that health curricula that emphasized the genetic impact of weight loss could reduce prejudice toward overweight students. The study was geared toward increasing empathy by viewing a lesson to cause students to express empathetic views toward

students who would be considered overweight. This principle can be applied to other situations in which teachers want students to sympathize with each other's varied ethnic and religious backgrounds; in these situations, teachers may be able to emphasize aspects of the curriculum that will increase empathetic attitudes within the student body.

On the other hand, bias often leads to discrimination. When students perceive their ethnic groups as better or more desirable than groups that are not part of their ethnic backgrounds, they are more likely to discriminate against those groups (Thijs, Verkuyten, & Grundel, 2014). This was more truthful of students in the majority culture studied than those in the minority. Some studies have determined that this victimization is more likely when there are more majority students than minority students, but the Thijs et al. (2014) study did not find this to be true. Even if this discrimination occurs, it is usually not based on the ethnicity of the minority student, because this is considered immoral (Thijs et al., 2014). Ruck (2014) also found that when students have more concern about morality, they are less likely to discriminate against students of other religious persuasions. Therefore, further exploring ways to improve morality and empathy in students may help raise awareness about possible bias in history textbooks.

Interestingly, Kallioniemi and Matilainen (2011) found that if religious education is given as religious instruction (to teach the student his or her own faith), empathy for other students' religions might be increased. According to this study, religious tolerance is increased because educational leaders consider students' religious needs. This also improves human rights because it gives minority students the unique opportunity to have a part of their culture represented as they believe it. Minority religious communities have spent much money to maintain this representation. This is important for future studies, as it provides another avenue of study for increasing empathy in students. For the purposes of this study, the need for religious education

to represent persons of faith in a manner they see as legitimate will reduce religious students' perceptions of bias in history textbooks.

At the same time, there may be evidence that the college atmosphere itself fosters empathy towards different religions. In the study "Spiritual Changes in Students during the Undergraduate Years," students demonstrated an increase in learning and caring about different races and cultures (UCLA, 2007). The students in the study stated that, though they have increased in what the study calls "the Ethic of Caring" (UCLA, 2007, p. 2), they did not necessarily do so because of an active effort on the part of professors. According to this study, professors never presented a forum for students to discuss spiritual issues. Therefore, there must be something in the college setting other than professors that is influencing students. For the purpose of the study at hand, this demonstrated that college students are concerned about treating students of all religions fairly because the college atmosphere increases empathy.

Family influences. Spiritual family relationships are one of the greatest predictors of spirituality or religiosity in children (Gutierrez, Goodwin, Kirkinis, & Mattis, 2014), and, in turn, this spirituality can impact the way these young people behave in school and their scholastic achievements (Bert, 2011). Studies demonstrate that parents of different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic standings can impact the way their children develop psychologically and scholastically based on the personal religious beliefs of those parents.

African Americans are greatly influenced in their spirituality based on the religiosity and spirituality of their parents. In the study by Gutierrez et al. (2014), African American adults were questioned to determine how their parents influenced their current spirituality. The researchers determined that both religion and spirituality were influenced by the religion or spirituality of the parents. The mother exerted the greatest influence on this dimension of life.

Parents' religions affect the spiritual choices of children, but it also affects their actions. The study by Jegatheesan (2014) examined Muslim families that had children with autism to see if the parents' religious affiliation would impact the way siblings would treat the autistic child in the family. Jegatheesan (2014) showed that, since the mother believed that having an autistic son was "part of Allah's plan" (p. 8), she used this situation to teach Muslim principles to her son. In turn, the Muslim young man became more empathetic in the face of a trial. These two examples show that spirituality is important both to empathy and good citizenship. These principles can also be used in the classroom and may affect perceptions of bias in classroom materials.

Adolescent mothers are another demographic that has been shown to be able to help their children through their religiosity. According to a study by Bert (2011), a mother's religiosity can help children avoid negative behavior by helping them grow spiritually. The mother's spirituality was not effective, but religiosity was. This study once again demonstrated that when parents pass their faith on to their children, the children demonstrate positive psychological benefits. This was especially necessary for the children in this study, as children of adolescent mothers are more prone to these negative behaviors.

Kim-Spoon, Longo, and McCullough (2012) stated that, although the effects are significant for boys and girls, the benefits of parents' religious dissemination are more pronounced for boys. Though teachers have not begun to fully utilize the opportunity to help children grow in this area (Yocum, 2010), the influence parents have does translate into the classroom. Therefore, spiritual literacy is integral to a student's behavior in the classroom and understanding of classroom material.

Related Literature

Major factors that influence my research, including different kinds of bias in history textbooks and the influence of classroom factors on student psychology, were examined as part of the literature review. Examining past research further demonstrated the gap in the literature and the need for this study.

Bias in History Textbooks

Concerns about bias in history textbooks go back at least to the early 1900s. As the desire to include non-Western perspectives became widespread, educators began to question the content of such books. One early criticism of these textbooks is Caldwell's (1946); in this article, Caldwell (1946) said that textbooks of that day faced the problems of both "arrangement of materials [and] selection of materials" (p. 40). Today is no different. There are simply too many geographic regions to include in a world history textbook for all aspects of this history to be treated equally. For this reason, political factors have become a large influence over what is and is not included. At the same time, these textbooks continue to be touted as authorities in historic events. This section will examine both the political forces at play in the selection of material for history textbooks and the tendency to rely on history textbooks as the authority.

Political concerns. Apple (1991) commented that different players in the creation of a textbook have different perspectives. Some of these players see school as a vehicle for democratic participation, others, as a vehicle for moral character. Each of these perspectives is touted by a political group and at least one of these will shape the atmosphere of both the classroom and the textbook. Ansary (2014) demonstrated this perfectly in the article, "The Muddle Machine," which provides a picture of conservative and liberal forces taking unwanted material out of a textbook. This demonstrates that either one group or the other will ultimately

control the dissemination of information about history. Apple (1991) agreed, saying that information in a textbook cannot be neutral. According to Apple (1991), knowledge is constructed.

Marino (2011) explained that there are several ways this partisanship in textbook writing has been studied. One method is to study how teachers and students react to the material in textbooks. Researchers have also studied students' experiences of history as mediated by the textbook. Either way, Marino (2011) demonstrated that there is precedent for studying the experiences and reactions students have as it relates to their history textbooks. These experiences can be studied through phenomenology (Van Manen, 2014). Marino (2011) pointed out that this variegated research should help examine these texts and evaluate the concerns many scholars have that the texts are politically charged. Morgan (2010) echoed these concerns, saying that history textbooks sometimes have "extra-pedagogical interests" (p. 754). However, there has been no concentrated effort on the part of textbook writers to create a non-ideological textbook (Morgan, 2010).

Some examples of these extra-pedagogical interests may affect the way groups such as African Americans and Native Americans are treated in history textbooks. A study by Brown and Brown (2010) demonstrated that the representation of African Americans in history textbooks is nebulous: The violence perpetuated by Whites is characterized as isolated instead of institutional. For example, history textbooks often depict the horrors of slavery as dependent on the individual slave master, whether he be bad or "good." However, according to Brown and Brown (2010), the history of slavery should be incorporated into the bigger picture of American culture, which enabled it. This is an example of how history can be sanitized to protect the wider culture by making society's evils into individual acts.

Daniels's (2004) content analysis, however, painted a different picture of the politics of how minorities are treated in scholarly writings. According to this study, the Dictionary of American Biography and the American National Biography portrayed African Americans in a favorable light, noting their "gender[s], family heritage[s], education, and careers" (Daniels, 2004, pp.139-140) in similar terms as White Americans. However, even according to Daniels, disparities remain. One of the greatest differences between accounts of African Americans and White Americans were the number of biographies included from each group. There were 68 biographies about African Americans in these two sources that, combined, contain 15,000 biographies. This should be considered bias by exclusion.

African American history can be glossed over and romanticized, but so can Native American history. In the study by Sanchez (2007), twelve textbooks were studied to determine whether there is bias in the way Native Americans are treated. According to Sanchez (2007), history textbooks "gloss over controversial issues" (p. 311): This keeps students both unaware of the true unfolding of events and bored by the textbook's telling of those events. Furthermore, teachers are said to know only as much about Native American history as the textbook contains, preventing them from being able to help their students learn more. After reviewing the textbooks, it becomes apparent that even the most detailed textbook does not contain a thorough treatment of the ancient and variegated Native American culture. There are researchers who might attribute this to concerns for perpetuating a Eurocentric narrative.

Calderon (2008), one who has viewed textbooks as Eurocentric and politically changed, began a content analysis by talking about the "Colonial Model of Education" (p. 12) that "promotes the white settler state" (p. 45). The study used content analysis to study the history textbooks used in the Los Angeles Unified School District. One of the findings is that history

textbooks used scientific explanations for how the Native Americans arrived in the Americas (i.e. the Bering Strait). However, Calderon (2008) explained that this is not the way Native Americans would traditionally describe their appearance in their land. The implication is that they would give a religious explanation to describe their existence. This is an interesting example of the intersection of political and religious narratives in history textbooks. Calderon (2008) believed that white dominance is perpetuated when a Eurocentric way of seeing the world is laid over the Native American creation narrative. The same concerns may also be true of the religious narratives in the current study.

It is interesting that there should be such variegated conclusions when studying the same topic. This may be attributed to the inherent flaws of content analyses. Wade (1993) believed that the very content analyses in this area are flawed. For example, there is often no explanation for how the analysis is grounded in previous research and literature. If this is true, it brings into question the findings made by Morgan (2010) and Marino (2011) that there is bias in history textbooks. After observing the conviction and passion with which many authors speak regarding whether these history books convey biased information, it became even more important to continue research and determine whether these concerns are grounded.

Concerns regarding authority. If there are such concerns regarding the authority textbooks have in the classroom, there must also be suggestions as to how to create a historical curriculum that is not ideological. According to Bain (2006), primary source information is one method that can help prevent the political nature of textbooks from affecting students. Bain (2006) demonstrated that textbooks are both asserting authority over students and doing so without students' knowledge. Students and parents rely on textbooks to contain only fact, but this may be part of the problem. If knowledge is constructed, the product of political interests,

then textbooks cannot be trusted and should be mediated in some way. Instead of focusing on the textbook materials, Bain (2006) had students analyze primary sources from around the world to better understand the different perspectives that can impact history.

Aldridge (2006) agreed, using the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. to demonstrate how history textbooks can portray historic persons and events in one-dimensional terms that keep students from properly understanding history. According to Aldridge (2006), Martin Luther King, Jr. is pictured as a “messiah” (p. 665) and the “embodiment for the Civil Rights movement” (p. 670), and as a political “moderate” (p. 673). Aldridge (2006) suggested that history teachers move away from textbooks as the focus of the curriculum because of the demagoguery often found in these books. Instead of a static interpretation of history, Aldridge (2006) mentioned including dissonant information, such as the records the FBI kept on King. This information can be found using outside sources and makes the real people of history more relatable.

While Bain (2006) and Aldridge (2006) used primary source information, researchers such as Morgan (2013) attempted to solve the problem of static textbook narratives by creating tools that enabled critical thought about the curricula within textbooks. By asking specific questions about the text, researchers can determine the agenda of the textbook writers and whether the text is communicating bias. The five major questions Morgan (2013) suggested include: (a) Are the students being treated as manufacturers of curricular information, or merely users; (b) what “emotional responses” (para. 27) are evoked by the history material; (c) does the text “present [events] in a biased fashion” (para. 30); (d) how does the text use narrative to explain historic events; and (e) what is the organization and composition of the text? These questions are meant to help determine the perspective that is used in conveying historical

information to the student. By asking these questions, a teacher or researcher may be able to detect bias in the text. Morgan (2013) suggested that there be some consequence for the purposeful insertion of bias. In the end, whether it be through adding primary source information or creating a framework for critical thinking, many researchers believe that the textbook must be supplemented. Alone it is a politically constructed and one-sided model.

The concerns of static historical accounts that are biased are not unique to American history textbooks. Firer (1998) examined the way various ethnic groups are treated in Israeli history textbooks. According to Firer (1998), Israeli textbooks are marked by distrust of immigrants. This distrust is communicated using words that imply “stagnation. . . poverty. . . disease. . . [and] inferiority” (Firer, 1998, p. 202). This is a different kind of bias than the one about Martin Luther King, Jr., as one is positive, the other negative. However, the fact that this concern about bias is universal makes the solutions to correct it even more important. Though this research is focused on one history textbook used in America, it may provide insight that will help textbook writers change biased phraseology, here and abroad.

Tools to measure bias. At this point, it became clear that there is some controversy about whether political bias exists in history textbooks. The ECO is a tool that has been used in several dissertations to determine whether there is bias in various textbook subject matters (Pratt, 1972). This tool works by using a list of words and determining whether those words contain bias or not. Bias can be in the words themselves, or in whether or not students of specific demographics will relate to those words. For example, a study by Delgado (2009) attempted to determine if words in science textbooks were biased toward a certain culture’s way of understanding the world. Phrases and narratives were considered biased if they contained methods that are historically linked to a specific culture. If a particular plant was mentioned in

relation to its use by a “Navaho medicine man” (Delgado, 2009, p. 89), that would be an example of “indigenous knowledge” (p. 6), which is biased. This example demonstrates that the ECO (Pratt, 1972) can be used to examine many different kinds of bias that can be found in words.

However, there are researchers who found that Pratt’s (1972) list lacked comprehensiveness. These researchers added terms, at times supplementing the list with lists from other tools such as Herbst’s dictionary of biased terms (Nagel, 2003). Pratt’s (1972) tool has been used to study textbooks in several different disciplines, and has proven effective at times and, at others, has dissatisfied the researcher using the tool. The belief that the ECO (Pratt, 1972) is ineffective is not due to a lack of reliability or validity on the part of the tool, but in the bias of the researchers, who felt that bias must exist where there is none. This reflects Wade’s (1993) assertions that content analyses produce erroneous results due to researcher bias.

For example, Harper (2012) used both words and pictures from a series of humanities textbooks to determine the presence of bias against African civilizations. The rationale of the textbook was included in the dissertation, and the research identified the textbook’s focus as Western civilization. Harper (2012) used Pratt’s (1972) tool, and the researcher added words to it in order to better evaluate nuanced terms. Ultimately, Harper (2012) found the textbook to be biased against African civilizations. The terms used to describe Egyptian and other African civilizations were positive, but they were not included with enough frequency, even though it was a Western civilization textbook.

Lynsky (2013) also used the ECO (Pratt, 1972) to evaluate terms in several books found in the Christian bookstores of two Ohio churches. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the Christian sub-culture encourages congregants to participate in social justice. Lynsky (2013) reported that the ECO (Pratt, 1972) was not able to fully identify biased words because of

an inability to distinguish shades of meaning. However, it was found that the messages contained in the books researched were not in line with the ideals of social justice. Lynsky (2013) ultimately feared that this would create distantiation in the readers, preventing them from learning a mindset of social justice when taught in the classroom setting.

Nagel (2003) used the ECO (Pratt, 1972) to evaluate geography textbooks to determine if they contained bias against Mexicans. Nagel (2003) also used Herbst's dictionary of biased terms and Duchastel's theory of illustrations to determine whether there was bias in the text. The vocabulary was mixed and not definitive as to whether there was bias, but Nagel (2003) felt the pictures were particularly prejudicial because they mainly portrayed poor Mexicans. Ultimately, Nagel (2003) concluded that the textbooks reviewed were biased, but evidence to the contrary seemed to be glossed over.

Another study used the ECO (Pratt, 1972) in conjunction with other content analysis tools, such as the Garcia-Armstrong Matrix System, to determine whether middle school history textbooks were biased. Prewitt (2008) shared many examples of the passive voices the Garcia-Armstrong Matrix System is meant to measure. According to this study, passive sentences demonstrate that African Americans are portrayed "as followers rather than as leaders" (Prewitt, 2008, p. 124). Prewitt (2008) mentioned that the Garcia-Armstrong Matrix System does not have a strong reliability, but can be made stronger when used with other tools; however, though Prewitt's (2008) use of the ECO (Pratt, 1972) also resulted in a rating that showed the books to be biased, the words that demonstrated this bias were not listed.

To this point, it seems that though the ECO (Pratt, 1972) may determine if there are biased words, the researchers own prejudices about whether or not a work is biased seem to creep into their final analysis. However, when Pratt (1972) first created the tool, students were

used to ensure that the list of words would be categorized as positive or negative outside of Pratt's own feelings. It is important to acknowledge that determining bias in textbooks can be a highly prejudicial exercise, and there are other authors who have observed that those who study bias in textbooks have often determined what the research should say before they have completed their studies (Wade, 1993). I believe that using students once again to determine whether the meanings of a textbook are truly biased can help to prevent researcher bias.

Religious Bias in History Textbooks

Bias in history textbooks has been demonstrated to raise concerns about political bias that is exacerbated by the authority these books exercise. On the other hand, there have been questions as to whether or not this bias exists and to what extent it affects students. The best way to determine whether there is truly bias is to rely on how students interpret terms; in fact, when Pratt created the ECO he tested its reliability by testing it first on "four graduate students" (Nagel, 2004, p. 9) and then "40 eleventh and twelfth grade students [and another] 40 graduate students" (Nagel, 2004, p. 10). Knowing this about the study of bias in history textbooks in general, this literature review can zero in on examining whether there is bias in world history textbooks in the area of religion.

The question of bias in the religious narratives of history textbooks has a long history, stemming back at least fifty years, and has been asked by persons of every religion that is represented in these texts (Allen, 2009; Gaustad & Schmidt, 2004). After examining the history of this question, it became clear that the issue has moved back and forth from a concern of the political left to a concern of the political right, without resolution for either side. Instead, these factions have attempted to voice their concerns through research. This research mainly examines the textbooks themselves. In order to better understand bias, it is important to examine the

students who may be impacted. Below I examined the history of bias regarding religion in history textbooks, the research that has been done in this area, and the gap in the literature.

History of research. There is a long history of criticism regarding the perceived bias toward religions as portrayed in world history textbooks. According to Allen (2009), this debate dates back to the 1970s. At that time, voices on the left began to raise concerns about textbooks' focus on Christianity. These critics felt that the attention paid Christianity was to the detriment of the other monotheistic religions: Islam and Judaism. However, beginning in the 1980s, this criticism became not only limited to minority religions, but also included criticism of the treatment of Christianity in these same books (Allen, 2009).

In the 1980s, conservative movements arose as reactions to a perceived move away from the religious foundation of America. These concerns reached up the ladder as far as President Ronald Reagan, who wanted to allow religious liberty to reenter the classroom (Gaustad & Schmidt, 2004). Religion in textbooks, with other issues, motivated this conservative movement, eventually evolving into the Moral Majority in the 1980s and 1990s. At that time, textbook writers were so concerned about the controversy over religion in textbooks that they attempted to remove all religious material from the textbooks. This led to the new problem that religious motivations of historical figures were wrongly reinterpreted as mainly political (Bellitto, 1996).

In the 2000s, the percentage of representation of minority religions was on the rise in world history textbooks, but there were those who still felt the minority religions were not being fairly represented (Allen, 2009). One such voice, Douglass (2003) stated that as recently as “twenty-five years ago, it was quite possible for a citizen of the United States to grow up. . . without knowing anything about Islam” (p. 52).

Currently, both Christians and members of minority monotheistic religions, such as Islam, feel that their religions have not been properly portrayed. Furthermore, both of these groups write works contending that the methods used to write modern textbooks produce phraseology that is biased against their religions. Apple (1991) considered these contentions to be primarily from the right, but both the left and the right struggle to ensure religion is properly portrayed in textbooks. In order to better understand this concern, it is important to study what has been done to answer the question of whether bias exists in these textbooks and determine if there is anything that can provide further understanding in this area.

Research methods used. Religious bias in world history textbooks is a pervasive theme and many works can be found that state opinions either one way or the other; however, not many articles have been written that have a methodology behind their research. However, some articles do attempt to answer this question through quantitative or qualitative means, with varied results. Allen (2009) used content analysis to determine if there was bias in textbooks. In this study, two textbooks were coded based on descriptive words (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc.) and results based on the connotations of those words. Unfortunately, the Allen (2009) study did not use a research tool such as the ECO (Pratt, 1972) to determine which words were tested for bias.

Bromley (2013) also used content analysis, but attempted to determine if the Holocaust, as presented in current history textbooks, was treated from a historical perspective or from that of human rights. However, there were limited references available to be used in studying the Holocaust curriculum. Bromley (2013) determined that Holocaust curricula have become more focused on human rights, but did not comment on whether this impacted bias toward Jewish people. Morgan (2012) also used coding to determine if history textbooks in South Africa

portrayed the Holocaust historically or based on human rights. Morgan (2012) also concluded that the Holocaust was used to teach larger messages about human rights, even taking events out of context in order to do so. This demonstrates that Judaism is not always portrayed fairly, just as research on Christian and Muslim treatment in history textbooks also has discovered potential bias.

Witschonke (2013) was even more specific about how a broad stroke treatment of religious subjects like the Holocaust can impact student understanding of history. In the case of the Holocaust, the treatment of the event as a human rights violation removed from the broader context of the ‘Jewish question’ has caused textbook writers to overlook historic events, removing some entirely. The Wannsee Conference of 1942, for example, was a turning point in the Holocaust that few students learn about, yet this event would explain much about why Hitler targeted the Jews (Witschonke, 2013). Foster and Burgess (2013) further stated that current textbooks emphasize the “perpetrator narrative” (p. 20) of the Holocaust instead of examining Jewish life before, during, and after this genocide. This is mainly the result of the kinds of words used to narrate the events, which demonstrates that words can bias students and prevent them from understanding religious history.

There were also a few studies that were specifically meant to examine the treatment of Muslims in history textbooks. Romanowski (2009), who stated that textbooks are “weapons” (p. 290) used to create consensus, did a study to determine if the events of September 11th were portrayed properly. Romanowski (2009) concluded that the textbooks do not contain enough information about the context of the attacks for students to think critically about the events. This demonstrates that there may be some bias against Muslims in history textbooks.

Douglass (2000), having researched this question using content analysis, reported that neither Islam nor other religions are represented in accordance with standards on religious teaching in social studies curricula. According to this study, even Christianity is only mentioned until the 18th century in social studies textbooks. Certainly, when comparing the studies on the treatment of Jewish events, such as the Holocaust and the treatment of Islamic history, it becomes apparent that there is a consensus that the accounts of these religious events must be examined afresh.

On the other hand, though many researchers have found that there is bias in textbooks, there are those that have found no biased treatment in history books at all. Bellitto (1996) used case studies involving textbooks, examining political and social persons and forces that acted for religious purposes to determine if those religious motivations were ascribed in the text. Bellitto (1996) found authors reticent to ascribe such religious motivations in history texts, instead changing religious motivations to political. Each of these studies has its weaknesses, but each concludes that there is still concern about the religious bias in history textbooks that needs to be addressed.

Eisenstein and Clark (2013) used coding, just as Bromley (2013) did, but instead of evaluating text, they sought to evaluate pictures to determine if persons of religious background were portrayed with bias. However, Eisenstein and Clark (2013) found that the same religious groups were pictured as both “tolerant and intolerant” (p. 101); therefore, the textbook was not found to have bias. On the other hand, Muslims were overrepresented in the pictures. These research articles examined information within the textbook, attempting to determine whether there is bias; however, there seems to be results both in favor of and in conflict with their

hypotheses. This may be because bias is a phenomenon that does not manifest itself until it interacts with a person's mind and heart.

Saleem (2011) crossed the bridge between written bias in textbooks and felt bias of students; this was the only study uncovered that used participants in addition to textbooks to determine the presence of bias. This study provided an important conclusion about student perceptions of bias. Saleem (2011) examined whether Muslim students felt that the portrayal of the events of September 11th is biased against their faith and determined they do: Muslim students do at times feel that their religion or their religious compatriots are not portrayed fairly in history textbooks. Yet, a major limitation of this study is that it only examines students of the Muslim faith and does not extend to those in the general population. More research must be done in the area of whether students are impacted by bias as the current research is mainly on the content of textbooks. Data should be collected from all students impacted, not from one particular religious group.

Bias in Western Civilization Textbooks

Western Civilization textbooks contain the history of the west, but also include histories of the near east as they impact Western thought (McKay, Hill, Buckler, Crowston, & Wiesner-Hanks, 2010). The near east is the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three religious narratives that will be examined in this study. Therefore, a Western Civilization textbook will be the specific kind of history textbook that will be utilized. Western Civilization classes have been removed from some colleges because of a curriculum that might be considered too Eurocentric or Christocentric (Stark, 2014). This removal of classes was meant to produce a more global perspective of history in college classes, but this removal has also been seen as bias against the Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian perspective (Stark, 2014).

For those colleges and universities that still have Western Civilization classes, this bias has impacted the way Western Civilization textbooks are written. Western Civilization textbooks include histories of the near east, specifically Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. Yet, some suggest that these texts are biased when writing a religious perspective of history. Cargill (2001) observes that Western Civilization textbooks legitimize Biblical events by giving accounts of events such as the Hebrew people moving to Egypt. This is in stark contrast to the concerns of other authors cited above who believe that religious narratives in history textbooks portray religions negatively (Allen, 2009; Saleem & Thomas, 2011). This demonstrates that the same questions of bias and whether some perceive bias in history textbooks generally can be asked of Western Civilization textbooks specifically.

Critical Thinking and Social Studies Texts

As stated earlier, bias means nothing unless it impacts a person. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss methods that can be used to determine if, in fact, the potential bias in textbooks is impacting students. The first step in doing this is to see if there are any factors that might prevent bias within a written text from affecting the reader of that text. The second is to determine if there are any other factors that impact students' critical thinking about the text. Finally, it is important to examine whether teaching spiritual and religious literacy can impact a student's psyche.

Critical thinking about the text. In a study by Fyock (2008), students were tested to determine whether they would change their worldviews to correspond with that of teachers over a period of two years. Using the *PEERS* survey (Smithwick, 2003), it was determined that students' worldviews did demonstrate a potential relationship with those of their professors. Generally, the professors in Christian schools seek to lead their students to deeper religious

devotion unapologetically. In a secular school, professors are not supposed to actively seek to change students' worldviews. However, this study demonstrates both that the worldviews of professors can influence students and that this influence can impact the way students view religious subjects. This is important because teachers often determine the material used in a college class, and if this material is meant to influence students it may create a perception of bias.

Teachers are able to influence students, as is the material used by teachers in the classroom. In a study of how social studies teachers felt about the history curriculum, MacPhee (2014) found that teachers often find history curricula to be biased in favor of a pro-American view. Lovorn and Summers (2013) explored methods teachers can use to make their classrooms more comfortable for students of different cultures. One way to promote multiculturalism is for teachers to include writings from other cultures in the coursework. The MacPhee (2014) study agreed, demonstrating that curricula should be written from a universal, multi-faceted perspective. This will help students better appreciate other cultures, thereby minimizing bias.

Bain (2006) agreed that this is an excellent way to improve the material in the classroom but notes how history classrooms seldom use this practice. Instead, modern teachers use textbooks that, unfortunately, can only represent one facet of history. Classrooms that rely on these seemingly pansophical texts may insinuate that history is already decided on, an idea that would prevent students from thinking critically (Bain, 2006). This may be why textbooks have influence over students: Students have no other point of reference for history.

In addition to the need for teachers to provide a multi-faceted view of history through textbooks, it is also important to examine the power that teachers exert over their students when they choose certain materials. Lovorn, Sunal, Christensen, Sunal, and Shwery (2012) did a study

in which they determined the way teachers use their power in the learning environment can stunt student growth. Teachers exert power in the classroom because they disseminate the materials, taking the lessons from the texts as they choose and explaining them to students. This may be benign, such as teaching values or teaching students to appreciate their heritage, but it can also be negative by preventing students from learning new perspectives (Lovorn et al., 2012).

One set of materials that can be used to broaden students' perspectives is the historic novel. Knight (2005) conducted a study to determine whether African Americans are treated fairly in history textbooks, but added several works from the novelist Mildred Taylor as well. Knight (2005) used these two different kinds of sources to demonstrate that the historic novel may be a unique way to get students to critically think about periods of time that cannot be thoroughly covered in history textbooks. This study concludes that the novels by Mildred Taylor contain information that textbooks do not contain; though the textbooks may not be intentionally biased, they are missing a large period of information, from the period of the Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement. Other than using primary source information, Knight (2005) suggested using novels that can help students relate to that period of time.

Jennings's (2010) study also demonstrated that different media could be used to help students think critically about historic events. The teacher in this study used allegory, Venn Diagrams, and student drawings to help students think about and relate to the events of the Holocaust. According to Jennings (2010), "The question becomes not whether we should teach the Holocaust to young people but how we should teach it" (p. 40). This shows that students can be stimulated to deeper learning even in mandatory courses.

The study by Gross (2013) further demonstrated that the material the teacher presents makes the subject the most memorable. When Gross (2013) interviewed students to determine

why Holocaust education in Israel is so successful, students mentioned teachers and the materials they present as some of the most important aspects of Holocaust education. Unique materials used in these teachers' lessons included videos the students would interact with, personal narratives, paintings, and poems. When these innovative learning strategies are examined, it becomes clear that students can think critically if they are given several different methods for understanding. This would help students understand historic events using their own learning styles.

Since students are not presented with alternatives and since they may be influenced by teacher power over the learning environment, these students may have trouble critically thinking about textbooks and therefore may not perceive bias. However, comprehension may also affect this outcome. Korin (2008) argued that students might not be influenced by their textbooks because they are not given the tools they need to think critically about the material presented in the text. According to this study, critical thinking strategies are not widely integrated in social studies textbooks (Korin, 2008). This may impact the findings of the study at hand because students may not fully understand the connotations of what they read, which would impact their perceptions.

Linvill and Mazer's (2012) study aligns with Korin's (2008) by demonstrating that students who use less critical thinking are more likely to perceive political bias. According to this study, the lack of critical thinking may be due to the modern method of teaching whereby the instructor prepackages the lesson and explains a single view of a subject that students must memorize. This simplistic presentation prevents students from understanding different viewpoints and can create distantiation (Erikson, 1950). Therefore, in addition to presenting a

multi-faceted view of history and making sure not to misuse power, teachers must also guide students toward critical thinking in order for them to properly digest alternate viewpoints.

At the same time, when students do demonstrate critical thinking through verbal argumentation in the classroom, they are less likely to experience bias in the classroom (Linville & Mazer, 2013). Here argumentation is distinguished from aggression in the classroom: Argumentation is a “constructive trait” (Linville & Mazer, 2013, p. 56) that seeks to challenge ideas, whereas aggression targets the person with whom one disagrees. Linville and Mazer (2013) attribute aggression to “identity foreclosure” (p. 51) or “rigidity in personality” (p. 51). This foreclosure prevents students from being able to accept and process other points of view. Argumentation demonstrates both critical thought and a desire to engage with new ideas.

The teachers in the Hintz (2014) study saw another solution to help students think critically about historical events. There are different philosophies as to how history should inform the history student. According to the Hintz (2014) study, some teachers see stronger global citizenship as an important reason to study history. Putting history in the context of how to become a better citizen may help students be able to better understand the grander events of history in the context of their lives, which may in turn help critical thinking.

Putting events in the context of global history may help students with critical thinking; however, it could also have the negative impact of removing events from their contexts, as mentioned earlier in this review. Foster (2013) pointed out that teachers need to have specific understanding of the topic they are teaching, observing that sometimes textbooks are relied upon for Holocaust education because the teachers themselves have no training in the subject. Furthermore, history textbooks may sacrifice perspectives in order to present a global narrative (Foster & Burgess, 2013). When teachers are uninformed about what methods have been used to

globalize history, they are unable to help students think critically. In these circumstances it is easy for students to feel that they are being taught a biased version of history (Tollini, 2010).

Spiritual and religious literacy effects on critical thought. Spiritual literacy influences the emotional, psychological, and empathic development of students, all of which can impact the way events in the classroom and classroom materials are seen. Spiritual literacy can be transmitted through the classroom but can also come from outside sources. The religious and spiritual choices a student's parents make can also inform a student's feelings about classroom curricula, whether they feel distasteful or understanding.

Recently, spiritual and religious literacy has been promoted in the secular classroom (McVittie & Smalley, 2013). There are a few benefits in teaching this subject. The first is the emotional and psychological benefits of students understanding themselves. Yocum (2010) stated that students often incorporate questions about spirituality into conversations with teachers, even if the subject is not pertinent to the subject being studied. These spiritual questions are raised because they are a necessary part of a student's psychological development and are as integral to this development as "food or air" (Yocum, 2010, p. 2). According to this study, the correlation between "'Expressions of Spiritual Volition' and 'Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation' is significant, but not strong" (Yocum, 2010, p. 74), whereas "Personal Influences" (p. 79) is more prevalent. This may be because of a stronger influence from other sectors of life, or may be because teachers are hesitant to speak to spiritual issues. Therefore, even though the classroom atmosphere is important, other factors that contribute to spiritual literacy (such as family influence) may need to be considered.

Another benefit to teaching spiritual literacy may be empathy. According to Bosacki, Elliott, Akseer, and Bajovic (2010), spiritual literacy can increase empathy in students if they are

presented with religious material that will broaden their spiritual awareness. Bosacki et al. (2010) also showed that spiritual literacy is beneficial for a student's psychological development, saying that this development is an "asset" and can help students "make wise decisions" (p. 50). These two points align with the need for empathy to prevent the perception of bias in religious narratives in the classroom.

McVittie and Smalley (2013) promoted generic forms of spiritual literacy that they believe are compatible with any religion. The main form contained in the study is that of visualization. Visualization is supposed to have emotional and physical benefits (McVittie & Smalley, 2013). However, it is not only generic spiritual literacy that has its benefits, but also spiritual literacy that affirms students' individual religious beliefs. Skerrett (2014) studied a group of students who were learning religious literacy in their religion: Christianity. There were conflicts in understanding, even between students who agreed on general Christian beliefs, but these conflicts were opportunities for students to find areas they had in common (Skerrett, 2014). Furthermore, including multiple religious literacies that validate multiple traditions can help students understand each other (Bosacki et al., 2010). This understanding may help students feel more included than a generic spiritual literacy class would (Gulson & Webb, 2013).

Critical thinking and other factors that minimize bias. Since Tollini (2010) demonstrated that students perceive bias when professors teach what contradicts students' previously held beliefs, it becomes important to see if there is anything that can be done in the textbooks or in the student perception of textbooks that can minimize bias. Linvill and Mazer (2013) determined that argumentativeness can indicate a person who is less likely to perceive bias because an argumentative person is one who is thinking critically about the material being presented. As stated in that study, "Argument involves presenting and defending positions on

controversial issues” (Linville & Mazer, 2013, p. 53). Helping students to think critically and examine different perspectives on issues may lessen a perception of bias.

Furthermore, though Harper (2012) says, “the authors [of Western Civilization textbooks] use the preface to direct the text rather than to inform,” in Harper’s (2012) study only four out of the nine textbooks studied covered topics such as, “Informing the authors’ intention when writing the book,” or “Giving a reason as to why certain civilizations are included or excluded” (p. 43). Argumentativeness can only occur if students are given as much information as possible. Tollini (2010) also posed the idea that students are more likely to perceive bias if they do not comprehend the information presented in the class. The more information students can get on a textbook’s purpose, the more likely they will be to understanding the textbooks’ arguments that they might formulate their own. Therefore, students may perceive bias less frequently if the textbooks divulge more information about their suppositions.

Summary

After examining the literature, it becomes clear that there are many researchers who have explored the content of history textbooks to determine whether there is bias. Many who have done this research have said that these textbooks are biased along demographic lines (Allen, 2009; Harper, 2012; Lynsky, 2013). However, there have been questions about the accuracy of the research, either because the content analyses were not grounded in a tool, or because the tool proved one conclusion, but the author determined another (Wade, 1993). Pratt (1972) tried to minimize these problems when making the ECO by relying on whether students perceived terms as biased. Other researchers have also tested to see if students perceive bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks. Even these studies have focused on students of one religious background instead of examining many demographics present at the university level. However,

it becomes apparent after examining the research that perception of bias is subjective. Not all research determined there is bias (Eisenstein & Clark, 2013). Fish (1980) stated that this is because different readers will bring different experiences to their reading of the text. Therefore, it is important to understand the different backgrounds students bring to the text that may create a perception of bias.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perception of bias of college students, specifically those who claim to perceive it at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. This chapter explains the rationale for the design, procedures, data collection, and data analysis of this study. Phenomenology was the best way to study student perceptions of bias, because this design helps the participants express their narratives. Each of the data collection methods was designed to help students tell their narratives in ways that the research said would best help to answer the questions posed. Data analysis further enabled the themes to emerge by continually referencing the narratives against each other to produce the deepest understanding.

Design

A qualitative phenomenological design was selected for this study. Phenomenology is the rejection of pure empiricism for an experiential description of life's events. This is reflective of a constructionist theoretical framework, which defines reader response theory. Phenomenology is multi-faceted, and a definition beyond this simplistic understanding is dependent on the type of phenomenology being studied (Schwandt, 2015). In order to understand this research design, it was first important to understand the history of philosophy that contributed to it. Kant was one of the first philosophers to influence Husserl's conception of phenomenology. Kant believed that knowledge cannot extend beyond one's perception of things. According to Kant, a person can only know through experience and can never know the actual object being experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

Hegel was another philosopher who contributed to the idea of phenomenology through his dialectic, the idea that what is real and true is continually in flux to produce new meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Thus far, Kant postulates that knowledge can only come through perception, while Hegel argues that knowledge is continually in transition between thesis and antithesis. However, Descartes, a philosopher central to Husserl's thought, simplified all knowledge to the knowledge of the self. It is this idea of *I think; therefore, I am* that centers knowledge within the self (Moustakas, 1994). Nietzsche went further and argued that there is no true knowledge and all attempts at creating knowledge are merely a cocoon to protect humanity from the disheartening idea of nihilism (Van Manen, 2014). These philosophers contributed to Husserl's conception of phenomenology.

Husserl called the relationship between thought and reality, ideation. Ideation occurs when an object is perceived and meaning is created. In transcendental phenomenology, the idea of the object exists intentionally (Moustakas, 1994). Other thinkers have built on Husserl's thought, including Schutz, Moustakas, and Van Manen. Schutz, a sociologist, introduced phenomenology to America. Schutz believed in multiple realities within existence and developed Husserl's idea of the lifeworld (Van Manen, 2014). Moustakas was part of the school of hermeneutic phenomenology and believed that phenomenology should not simply be a recounting of facts, but the telling of a story (Van Manen, 2014). Van Manen developed this idea, stating that phenomenology should be dynamic and open to the experiences and understandings of the participants experiencing the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014).

All of this history points to one theme of phenomenology: The social construction of reality. This construction of reality that lead me to use phenomenology as my research design. Linvill and Havice (2011) concluded that bias is subjective in nature, and Tollini (2010) added

that this makes bias hard to define. Furthermore, this subject, the nature of bias, lends itself to reader response theory. The most common way researchers attempt to define bias is through personal examples (Tollini, 2011). Van Manen (1990) said an anecdote can help us understand a phenomenon that would otherwise elude us, which thus far bias has. Central to this method is the lifeworld of natural and phenomenological attitudes. The natural world is how we behave, while the phenomenological attitude is when we remove ourselves from the lifeworld to reflect (Schwandt, 2015).

Participants completed a tool that evaluated their constructions of bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks. Those who perceived such bias provided artifacts such as interviews, focus groups, and journal entries to describe their perceptions. I sought to understand the initiating and experiencing of phenomena through my research questions and data collection. Interviews and focus groups were central to my understanding, as the social sciences use language to create meaning. In the writing and transcribing of the data, the experience becomes abstract, or separate, and at the same time tangible (Van Manen, 1990). All of this needed to be filtered through epoche, but epoche need not mean bracketing out certain information. Instead, epoche can be a “bracketing [of] all interpretation and explicating reflectively whatever assumptions seem to need attention” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Location 5585). This meant that assumptions needed to be addressed but could be forgotten. The researcher was open to the themes that emerged from the participants’ experiences by extensive self-reflection (Van Manen, 2014).

Research Questions

This research will seek to answer one central research question. However, within that one research question I developed four sub questions to better describe the phenomena I sought to study. Therefore, my research questions are as follows:

1. How do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks?

The sub questions were:

1. How do college students describe bias?
2. How do college students construct perceptions of a topic from the content of religious narratives in history textbooks?
3. How does a college student's, religion, political orientation, psychology, empathetic worldview, or family influences influence perception of bias in the text?
4. How do students verbalize factors that they perceive as minimizing bias?

Setting

This study took place at a local college in South Florida. In order for the study to best determine how students perceived the bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks, I took the sample from students who were currently enrolled, have been enrolled, or actively participated in the Social Sciences Department of the college that participated in the study. Furthermore, South Florida is an excellent location for this study because of the diversity of ethnicity and religion that can be found there.

I contacted three different chairs at three different campuses at a local college to help me find participants. Then a professor at a second college said she would allow me to use her class

time to gain participants, so I applied for and received approval from the IRB of this second college. I conducted my research at this second college. At this college, the dean of the department reports to the dean of the campus, who reports to the president of the college. I chose this setting because of the diverse demographics of the population, which provided maximum variation in the participants selected. Demographics at the college where the study took place were as follows: Male students 41%, female students 59%, Hispanic 34%, African American 35%, Caucasian 21%, Native American 0%, Asian 3% (Undisclosed College, 2015).

Participants

I selected participants for this study due to their meeting the criteria, and 10 participants joined, at which the point of saturation was reached. The point of saturation is “the point at which no additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category” (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 64). I used purposive sampling, which Creswell (2013) described as the use of a criterion for how the participants would be selected. The sampling procedures included criterion sampling: I did the research through two classes and used the ECO (Pratt, 1972) tool to determine which would be the most data rich participants. I used the criterion to choose participants until maximum variation was reached. Maximum variation is, “an approach [where] some criteria differentiates. . . participants... [who] are different based on that criteria” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 156-157). From among those who met the criteria I chose the most diverse population for the final sample. The ECO was used to evaluate “value judgments” a textbook writer may have toward a subject. In the book *How to find and measure bias in textbooks*, Pratt (1972) states, “[these value judgments represent] a gratuitous evaluation... The writer of a history textbook... may feel a responsibility to accurately record that all the Americans fighting at the Alamo were *killed* by the Mexicans; but he has no

obligation... to say that the Mexicans *slaughtered*... the Americans” (Pratt, 1972, p. 9). Here, Pratt (1972) is observing that some words carry value judgments, and these are what he is trying to study through his tool.

The ECO was developed partially when Pratt had high school and college students rate evaluative terms and classify them as favorable, unfavorable, or natural. Students were chosen because they are the usual readership of these textbooks. According to Pratt (1972), “The face validity of ECO Analysis may be inferred from its design.” This means that the very design of the tool is to measure a perception, so it self-evidently does just that. At the same time, “the test retest reliability was tested by having the four analysts rescore one of the passages from the first test one week later... yielding a reliability of .755” (Pratt, 1972). This means that the four graduate level analysts used for the creation of the tool had some variation within their first and second scorings of a particular passage, but the tool still had a strong reliability.

Table 1

Information Regarding Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Religious Belief	ECO Score*
Alice	30	Hispanic	None	31
Bruce	22	Hispanic	None	70
Carmen	19	African-American	None	83
Darla		Hispanic	None	72
Emily	27	Caucasian	None	14 Christianity**
Frank	38	Caucasian	None	72 Islam***
				27 Judaism***
				17 Christianity***
Greg	22	African-American	Christian	25
Hailey	19	Caucasian	Christian	28
Irene	22	Hispanic	None	67
Jackie	19	Caucasian	Christian	68

* Pratt (1972) says, “The formula (of the ECO) will always be between 0.0 (totally unfavorable) and 100.0 (totally favorable) with 50.0 representing the point of neutrality or ambivalence.”

Therefore, the ECO measures whether a participant finds the text totally unfavorable, totally favorable, or somewhere in between. Only participants who found the text highly favorable or highly unfavorable were utilized for this study.

** Score shows bias only in Christian narratives.

*** Score shows bias in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim narratives.

Procedures

Before any data were collected I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. After receiving approval from the IRB, I contacted the college where I was interested in collecting research. After I received permission from the college, I solicited participants for the study. I began by sending out emails and speaking in History and Poly Sci classrooms targeting students in the Social Sciences department. A prescreening tool, the ECO (Pratt, 1972), was used to determine who would participate in the study. In order to use the prescreening tool, I sought sixty students to prescreen. Sixty students were chosen because my criterion was to choose from the final ten candidates from those who scored in the margins of the ECO (Pratt, 1972) test. I only used a certain percentage of the students who participated in the participant screening tool.

The Evaluation Coefficient Analysis (ECO) is an instrument used to determine whether there is biased language in a textbook (Pratt, 1972). It was initially tested by eleventh and twelfth graders to determine if particular words were positive or negative (Nagel, 2004). This demonstrates that students can use this tool to determine bias. The source used in this study was *Western Civilizations: Their history and their culture* (J. Cole & Symes, C., 2014). The words are evaluated according to the following guidelines:

(a) Define the sources to be analyzed. (b) Define the subject of interest completely enough so as to leave no doubt. (c) The analysts should practice scoring to become familiar with the procedure, scoring, and how to resolve inconsistencies. (d) Peruse the source for references to the subject. Each time a favorable or unfavorable word is used; record it on the score sheet. This analysis should be slow and careful. Problems with analysis occur when words are omitted. (e) Words that are merely descriptive should not be included. (f) Evaluative terms can be applied in a positive or negative way and should not be overlooked. (g) Terms should be listed as adjectives, nouns, and participles. (h) A cardinal rule in analysis is never to violate the original meaning of the word. (i) Be careful of the use of irony. (j) Statements directly and indirectly quoted should also be counted. (k) A total of the favorable and unfavorable terms will be compiled. (l) Calculate the coefficient of the evaluation: Multiply positive terms by 100, add the total positive and negative terms, divide the two scores, score will range from 1 to 100 with 50 being neutral, a minimum of ten terms is needed to determine any biases. (m) Count the terms most frequently used to describe the subject. (n) In the final analysis, count the number of words and lines devoted to the subject. (Nagel, 2003, p. 45)

As the researcher, I completed the first two steps: I determined which history textbook and which sections about Christianity, Judaism, and Islam would be used. The textbook selections are included in Appendix A. I taught the students to use the tool, as the third through fourteenth terms suggest. Students did not all get the same score on the tool, as there are subjective steps in the process, such as step five. Sixteen students were chosen to be part of my study, however, four students asked to terminate their participation after they were asked to come

in for focus groups and two other students did not complete the interviews that came after the focus groups. Ten students who scored toward the extremes of the bias scale of the ECO (Pratt, 1972) (0 being totally unfavorable and 100 being totally favorable) were part of my study. The reason I selected these students was that the goal of this study is to understand the perceptions of those who do perceive bias. Participants were chosen until maximum variation was reached. Since bias is so subjective, not all students will perceive it (Linville & Havice, 2011).

All students who participated in the prescreening tool were asked to be available for further interviews, focus groups, and journaling in case they were chosen to be one of the ten final participants. However, only those whose scores indicated a higher percentage of perception of bias were asked to participate in the study. Each of the final ten participants took part in: One interview that took 10-30 minutes, focus groups of randomly chosen participants (there were four groups of two or three participants each) that took 10-30 minutes, and one journaling response per participant about their perceptions of the group discussion on bias and how they would make the history textbook less biased.

Half of the students did interviews first and focus groups second, and the other half of the students did the focus group first, followed by the interview. Each participant was only in one focus group and participated in the focus group of his or her choosing based on his or her own schedule. I recorded the data on a voice recorder, backed-up by my computer microphone. I then transcribed the tape-recorded interviews and focus groups, and collected the journal responses, which were hand-written and then typed into my computer.

The Researcher's Role

The subject under study has interested me for most of my life. I come from a mixed religious background and am interested in a variety of religions and worldviews. My mother is

Jewish and, when I was growing up, my father was an Anglican. After my parents divorced, my mother spent some time with the Mormon Church and was eventually baptized by them. However, she left that faith and she later married a Muslim. My father also remarried to a Jehovah's Witness. I became a Christian in 2006 and believe very deeply in my faith. I received my Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Liberty University. I have served at the same church for about seven years, working in youth ministry, and leading Sunday school and small groups. I also have served in Jewish missions. After I received my Master's in Divinity in 2012, I taught World Religion and Introduction to Religion at a community college in South Florida, although not where this study took place. Due to my training in missions and apologetics, I have begun to write Christian curricula on apologetics for youth groups and Christian schools.

My extensive background in religion does influence how I see this study, because I am concerned about those students who feel that bias in the classroom impacts their faith or worldview. This is not only limited to Christians, but it is relevant to students of different faiths and political orientations. In light of my background, I bracketed myself out by not judging other people's beliefs or responses in order to understand the perspectives of the students in this study. In order to bracket myself out, I did not insert my own ideas or interpretations into the students' comments in interviews and focus groups. I did not correct students or share my own views on subjects under discussion in the study. I also bracketed student comments by observing when students had similar opinions on topics or themes related to the research questions. Since this was a phenomenological study, I removed myself through bracketing in order to best hear the voices of the participants and to allow their themes to emerge.

Data Collection

The purpose of phenomenological research was to collect lived experiences for the purposes of reflection (Van Manen, 2014). This study used triangulation to examine the research questions; Schwandt (2015) defines triangulation as a tool that looks at a claim from at least three different vantages. The three different research strategies for the purpose of collecting these pre-reflective experiences are interviews, focus groups, and journaling. The interviews were conducted to determine if there were any shared themes among the participants as they shared their experiences. Focus groups were used to deepen and further study (Moustakas, 1994). Journaling helped participants describe their experience in a more private way and process the different experiences they brought to the surface during the interview and focus groups phases. Each of these methods documented the anecdotes in a unique way that ensures the data collection is rich and thick.

Participant recruitment began when IRB approval was received. Eligible participants were asked to review the informed consent form prior to providing any data. I reviewed the informed consent form with participants and requested that participants ask any questions or voice any concerns. When participants indicated that they fully understood and agreed to the terms of informed consent, I requested that each participant provide his or her signature on the informed consent form. When I had collected the signed form, data collection began.

Interviews

Interviews are the heart of phenomenology (Van Manen, 2014). Through them, researchers can reflect on the lifeworld and can use the individual anecdotes of participants to capture meanings of the world that are evasive (Van Manen, 1990). Semi-structured interviews, interviews meant to allow participants to detail their experiences, were conducted in this study to

understand how the meaning of bias is constructed by the interviewee (Schwandt, 2015). These interviews are “verbal portraits,” which are the main way Erikson (1950) constructed meaning and identity, including religious identity, in the individuals he used in his studies (Capps, 2011b, p. 880). Through them, I was able to answer questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, because the interviews helped me tap into their experiences of perception of bias in history textbooks in general, understand whether religion is a theme that contributes to their experiences, and determine how perceived bias can be minimized. I interviewed the 10 college students during the fall 2017 semester at a location on campus. There was one interview per participant that will take 10-30 minutes. I recorded these interviews with primary and secondary voice-recording devices, and took limited notes during the interview. The questions for the semi-structured interviews are as follows:

1. Tell me about yourself; Please state your gender, ethnicity, and political affiliation.
 - a “Tell me about your faith. Church/religious experiences and activities” (Sites, 2008, p. 137).
 - b “Family, family background” (Sites, 2008, p. 137).
2. “What do you think [you should] learn or be able to do” after reading religious narratives in a history textbook? (Hintz, 2014, p. 124).
3. How did your experience of religion change as a result of the passages in this history textbook (Hintz, 2014)?
4. “Have you ever been discriminated against? How did it make you feel?” (Ogle & Damhorst, 2010, p. 606).

- a Could you “relate” to how persons of these religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) might feel when reading these passages? “Which ones/how”? (Ogle & Damhorts, 2010, p. 606).
- 5. Describe a time that you felt that a textbook did not address all sides of an event (Tollini, 2010).
- 6. Describe when you read a textbook that made “positive statements about social institutions, like marriage, education or religion” (Tollini, 2010, p. 80).
- 7. Describe when you read a text book that made “negative statements about social institutions, like marriage, education or religion” (Tollini, 2010, p. 80).
- 8. Have you experienced a time when a “professor limited class textbook [readings or] discussions to the professor’s own political beliefs”? (Linvill & Havice, 2011b, p. 491).
- 9. Do you think the textbooks are intentionally biased, or do you think there are other reasons for the way the content is presented and why (Linvill & Mazer, 2013)?
- 10. Is there anything else you would like to add or that you feel I have missed regarding this subject?

These questions were posed about this textbook, but if participants wanted to include experiences about other textbooks, they were encouraged, as long as it added to the dialogue and helped answer the questions. They were asked in a semi-structured format, using minimal paraphrasing. Questions two and three were modified from the Hintz (2014) article. The Hintz (2014) article explores the link between a teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and their choice of textbook curriculum. The questions reflect student beliefs and how both history and the religious narratives within history change their outlooks. Question four comes from Ogle and Damhorst’s

study on empathy. This question helps determine whether students have any empathetic experiences that inform their readings of the text. Questions five through seven are modified from Tollini's (2010) survey. Tollini's questions were for college students, but they were yes-or-no questions. I modified them to capture student lived experiences. Questions eight and nine reflect Linvill's studies on argumentativeness and political bias (Linvill & Havice, 2011b; Linvill & Mazer, 2013). According to the study on argumentativeness, a student in foreclosure believes that the reason curricula conflicts with that student's worldview must be because of bias. These questions help to determine the role critical thinking plays in students who perceive bias.

I conducted the interviews one-on-one and face-to-face in a public location on campus in which privacy was available, such as a reading room at the library. A public location was selected to ensure the safety of me and the participant, and a private location within that public setting was used to allow me to ensure confidentiality. I scheduled the interviews at dates and times selected by the participant to ensure that he or she would have adequate time to give detailed responses to the interview questions.

When the participant and I had both arrived at the interview location, I greeted the participant, invited the participant to sit at a table across from me, and briefly reviewed the purpose and nature of the study. I then provided the participant with a paper copy of the informed consent, and I reviewed its terms with the participant. I invited the participant to ask any questions or voice any concerns about the terms of informed consent or about the study as a whole. When all questions were answered and concerns addressed to the participant's satisfaction, I asked him or her to sign the consent form, if he or she had not already signed it prior to participation in a focus group. I collected the signed consent form, and then I requested permission to turn on the audio-recorder.

I asked each participant the interview questions as they appear in the protocol. When I judged from a participant's response that additional detail would enhance the results of the study, I formulated and asked probing follow-up questions. In keeping with the format of open-ended questions, I ensured that follow-up questions were open-ended whenever appropriate, using wording such as, "Could you tell me more about that?" After all scripted questions had been asked and answered, I asked the participant if he or she had any questions, or if there was anything additional that he or she would like to add. After the participant had replied, I turned off the audio-recorder. I then confirmed that I had the participant's correct contact information and that he or she had mine, in case any questions or concerns about the study arose. Lastly, I thanked the participant for his or her time.

Focus Groups

A focus group allows a group of people to collectively speak about a specific theme (Schwandt, 2015). Moustakas (1994) cited Alpern (1984), a researcher who recommended focus groups as a method for further study. The stated reason for this is because it would add to the perspectives in the analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, focus groups were conducted to examine the social aspect of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). MacPhee and Kaufman (2014) used focus groups to specifically talk about the content within textbooks and allowed participants to express their opinions about a history textbook and its biases. For this reason, this aspect will best answer research question three (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014), although it will also provide another facet of perception for questions one and two, as well (Moustakas, 1994). The focus groups also involved the 10 college students who were interviewed and took place during the fall semester at a location on campus. The focus groups were made of randomly chosen participants from the pool of 10 participants, and there were five such groups of at least two participants each

that took 10-30 minutes. I recorded these interviews with both a primary and secondary voice-recording device and took limited notes during the groups. Then the groups discussed the following questions:

1. What do you believe to be the purpose of studying history (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?
2. Please describe an experience you have had in a college history class that is most memorable to you (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
3. Describe a time that something in this textbook made you think critically about something you believe (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?
4. Describe a section of this history passage you agreed with and why (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
5. Describe a section of this history passage you disagreed with and why (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
6. Describe a time that you so disagreed with something in your history textbook that you felt offended (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
7. How do you maintain your beliefs when you disagree with something you read in a textbook (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?

These questions were posed about this textbook, but if participants wanted to include experiences about other textbooks, they were encouraged, as long as it added to the dialogue and helped answer the research questions. The questions were asked in a semi-structured format. These seven questions, modified from the MacPhee and Kaufman (2014) article, were asked with slight paraphrasing. They were used to create discussion about shared experiences with history textbooks. Since the clips that were read are religious narratives about Christianity,

Judaism, and Islam as portrayed in the history book they used the tool to code, the discussion was about those passages and naturally included experiences of religious bias.

Like the individual interviews, the focus groups were conducted in a public location where privacy was available, such as a reading room at the library. When all participants had arrived, I briefly reviewed the purpose and nature of the study, and then reviewed the terms of informed consent. I then invited participants to ask questions or express concerns. If participants had not already signed the informed consent form prior to an individual interview, I asked them to sign now. I then asked participants' permission to turn on the audio-recorder.

I asked the focus groups the interview questions as listed above. When one participant answered, I attempted to get the other participant(s) to provide his or her own response, as well. To encourage all participants to provide detailed responses rather than merely subscribing to another participant's previous answer, I asked probing, open-ended questions such as, "What do you think of this?" I also formulated and asked follow-up questions when I judged that additional detail would be beneficial to the study. When all scripted questions had been asked, I asked participants if there was anything they wanted to add or ask me or one another. After participants had made any last remarks, I turned off the recorder. I thanked the participants for their time, and verified that I had their correct contact information and that they had mine.

Journaling

Journals are a method of document analysis that can help depict the experience of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Participants at times behave differently with the researcher than they would individually (Patton, 2015). Tollini (2010) believed it is important to understand why college students perceive certain events as biased. Having the students journal what they believe should be written in the textbooks provided more information about bias by

counterexample. This method of collection helped answer questions one, two, three, and five. All of the participants completed this directly after the focus group. The participants were given paper on which to journal. There was one journal entry per participant to answer the following questions:

1. Describe a positive experience with something you read in this history textbook.
 “Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735).
2. What were your “feelings, mood and emotions” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735)?
3. Describe a negative experience with something you read in this history textbook.
 “Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735).
4. What were your “feelings, mood and emotions” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735)?
5. Is there further information (less vague, more neutral, need for multiple perspectives) the author could provide to help minimize the bias you perceive as presented in this textbook (Tollini, 2010)?

These questions were posed about this textbook, but if participants wanted to include experiences about other textbooks, they were encouraged, as long as it added to the dialogue and helped answer the questions. Van Manen (2014) talks about getting a “lived experience description” (Kindle Locations 7717). These journal questions reflect his questions for how to get students to write about their lived experiences. Questions one through four are from Van Manen’s (2014) text but modified to reflect the kind of phenomenon I studied. Question five

aligns with Tollini's (2010) finding that students perceive bias because of "incomplete" understandings of the material (p. 77). The suggestions for what further information may be helpful were taken from MacPhee and Kaufman's study (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014). These questions were designed to determine whether Tollini's (2010) or Linvill and Mazer's (2013) hypotheses about ways to decrease perceptions of bias are accurate. The journal questions were typed and given to each of the participants, who wrote out and returned their responses, except for two participants who returned their answers via email.

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) argued that horizontalization, the process of listening to all of the data to hear the lived experiences of the participants, is the first step in analyzing the data. The interviews bear experience, not opinion or beliefs about a subject (Van Manen, 2014). Examining lived experiences helps identify abstract themes that must be compared to see if they have similar themes emerging from their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). For this reason, I used the constant comparative method as my form of data analysis for all of my data collection points. Constant comparison is an approach that uses an inductive method to code the interviews and other data received in order to compare one or more pieces of data to discover themes (Schwandt, 2015). The purpose of analysis, according to Moustakas (1994), is to determine what was experienced and how it was experienced. In order to understand this what and how from the perspectives of the participants, I used the constant comparison using bracketing, coding, and memoing. I first coded all of the interviews, focus groups, and journal entries by hand and then double checked the themes by using the ATLAS.ti software.

The point of phenomenology is that we as researchers remove ourselves, at least for a time, from the phenomenon in the lifeworld for the purpose of being able to reflect upon that

phenomenon and thereby gain new understanding. The lifeworld is the everyday world of collected experiences (Schwandt, 2015). Bracketing, the removal of personal assumptions in order to explore how a phenomenon is experienced (Schwandt, 2015), is the first step in this process, as it allows the researcher to remove and acknowledge pre-reflective experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Moustakas (1994) even recommended using the phenomenological approach on oneself for the purpose of bracketing one's lived experience. I believe I have largely done that in the situation to self and researcher's role sections. However, bracketing is not a one-time occurrence, as a researcher must continually be aware of the experiences and assumptions of the self. This has to be removed through bracketing throughout the process (Van Manen, 2014). Therefore, in addition to the disclosure that I included in previous sections, I kept a journal where I wrote my experiences with the phenomenon at hand.

The purpose of phenomenology is to collect narratives for the purpose of recounting them to better understand the lifeworld. I accomplished this through coding. I coded all three forms of data I collected: interviews, focus group discussions, and journals. Coding is breaking down and comparing the data for the sake of assigning them themes (Schwandt, 2015). As already stated, Moustakas (1994) says this can be accomplished by horizontalization and comparison within and between the participants. Finally, memoing, taking personal notes that comment on the research process and note developing themes, must be used to reflect on the data (Schwandt, 2015). Van Manen (2014) explained that, in order to truly reflect on the phenomenon, a researcher must conduct continuous reduction. Part of this reduction is accomplished by reflecting on what each anecdote says about the phenomenon. I achieved this by memoing about the categories that I saw developing regarding the phenomenon.

I began coding using the constant comparative method as described by Schwandt (2015) by horizontalizing the data. In horizontalizing the data, I attempted to regard all the data as equally significant, rather than allowing data that corresponded to my preconceived assumptions to assume a prominence that might be inappropriate. I then broke the data down into the smallest parts that conveyed a characteristic of participants' lived experiences. This process involved coding phrases or groups of phrases that expressed an idea or theme in ATLAS.ti and labeling those meaning units with words or phrases that were intended to summarize their meanings. As I categorized and labeled meaning units within the data, I compared meaning units to one another to gain additional insight into meanings and refine the labels I had assigned to them. I also began to gather similar meaning units into themes, by assigning them to a parent category in ATLAS.ti. Again, as I grouped meaning units into themes, I continued to compare meaning units to one another, themes to one another, and meaning units to the themes into which they were grouped, to further refine categories, bring out latent meanings, and recategorize data when appropriate.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness criteria are the methods used to test the quality of qualitative research (Schwandt, 2015). A well-researched qualitative study demonstrates four key criteria: Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. When research demonstrates these properties, it becomes a reliable source of information.

Credibility

Credibility demonstrates internal validity. It proves that what the participants meant to say is what the researcher presented in the results (Schwandt, 2015). Triangulation is one way to make sure that what the researcher presents is what the participants meant, as it allows the

participants to express themselves in several different ways. I used this method to demonstrate the credibility of my study.

Dependability

Dependability shows that a study is reliable. This means that the methods used to reach the conclusion would be documented so that they can be traced (Schwandt, 2015).

Dependability can be established by having a reviewer examine the audit trail of the study, otherwise known as auditing (Schwandt, 2015). Through auditing, I could demonstrate that my study was credible and repeatable.

Transferability

Transferability means that the study has enough detail that a reader can speculate that its results can be extrapolated to other cases that share similarities with the study at hand. This is a form of external validity (Schwandt, 2015). Collecting thick, rich data can help the reader make those connections, thus filling themes with thick, rich data (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability means that the researcher is coming to conclusions that are based in the data (Schwandt, 2015). One method for ensuring confirmability is through member checking, a process that allows the participants to check the transcripts and findings to ensure they will be properly quoted (Schwandt, 2015). Member checking is how I ensured confirmability in this study.

Ethical Considerations

The IRB reviewed the research plan before any data were collected. The college consented to the research before data were collected on site, and every participant was given a consent form, which Patton (2015) affirmed as mandatory to ensure students understood their

participation was voluntary. Every participant was told both that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. This information was included in the consent form that the participants signed. Every participant was given a pseudonym, as was the site where the research was conducted, which are both necessary for confidentiality as recommended by Patton (2015). Further, any confidential electronic data that were collected were kept secure and protected on a password-protected laptop. Physical data were secured in a lock box until scanned onto the password-protected laptop.

Summary

Understanding how and why college students experience a perception of bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks is an important aspect of a student's lifeworld. A phenomenological design was determined to be the best method for capturing students' perceptions in this study. The design, methods for data collection, and data analysis were guided by the literature; furthermore, the trustworthiness and ethicality of the study were considered. If perception of bias in textbooks hinders learning, as some research has shown it does, then understanding this experience may better help professors and textbook writers create a more comfortable environment for student learning (Tollini, 2010).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results uncovered after analyzing the data of the methods of data collection used in this study: interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. In order to present those findings, the demographic information, summarization, and portrait of the participants are presented. The portraits demonstrated the ten participants' life experiences and how they relate to their perceptions of bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks. Only after this information was presented could the themes, which ensued from the data, be discussed. These were then related to the central research question and sub questions.

Participants

The first step in the procedures for the ECO was to choose a source for analysis. The source used in this study was *Western Civilizations: Their history and their culture* (Cole & Symes, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the second step was to locate participants to utilize the tool. I began searching for participants by contacting three different chairs at a local college to help me find participants. At first, I had little response. It took an entire semester, but by January 2017 I finally received approval from one chair and IRB of that college.

By the middle of May three chairs at the first college had sent out emails to the students in their departments. Unfortunately, there was very little response and I only garnered six participants from that first college. Then a professor at a second college said she would allow me to use her class time to gain participants, so I applied for and received approval from the IRB of this second college. After this, I also received permission from another professor at this second college to use his class time to gain participants, and I received permission from the

Social Science Department to give the ECO to its interns. It was from these three sources at this second college that I found my participants.

In total, sixty students were given the ECO (Pratt, 1972) to determine whether they perceived bias. The demographics of the students in the study were not representative of the demographics of the one college where the study finally took place. The demographics of the study were: Male students 30%, Female students 70%, Hispanic 40%, African American 20%, Caucasian 40%. This is opposed to the demographics of the college at large: Male students 41%, female students 59%, Hispanic 34%, African American 35%, Caucasian 21%, Native American 0%, Asian 3% (Undisclosed College, 2015).

The participants chosen were told that the subject in question was specifically biased language used when describing Jewish, Christian, and Muslim groups in the text in question. The participants were given an example for practice before they began scoring. This researcher chose the words in the text that were to be scored and the participants used the text to give context to the words. Favorable and unfavorable words on the subject were scored by each of the participants: Favorable words were scored with a +1, unfavorable words with a -1, and neutral words with a 0. Favorable and unfavorable words compiled by the participants were tallied by the researcher. The coefficient of evaluation was totaled as follows: “Multiply positive terms by 100, add the total positive and negative terms, divide the two scores, score will range from 1 to 100 with 50 being neutral, a minimum of ten terms is needed to determine any biases” (Nagel, 2003, p. 45).

Sixty students were given the ECO (Pratt, 1972) to determine whether they perceived bias. From these sixty students, ten students who perceived bias were chosen for interviews,

focus groups, and journaling. Table 2 shows a breakdown of which students perceived bias and which did not.

Table 2

Count of Students Perceiving Bias

ECO Score	Perceived Bias				
	Strongly	Slightly	Neutral	Slightly	Strongly
	Negative	Negative		Positive	Positive
	0-30	31-40	41-60	61-70	71-100
Number of Students Reporting	4	6	28	12	11

The coefficient of the ECO was found the following way: first, the total number of favorable terms are added together and multiplied by 100; then, that sum is divided by the sum of favorable plus unfavorable terms. All students chosen for this study perceived bias across all religious groups, except for Emily and Frank, who perceived bias among individual religious such as Christianity or Islam, but not across all groups. The following (Table 3) is a profile of each student chosen for the study, including his or her scores on the ECO (Pratt, 1972).

Table 3

Profiles of Students Included in the Sample

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Religious Belief	ECO Score*
Alice	30	Hispanic	None	31
Bruce	22	Hispanic	None	70
Carmen	19	African-American	None	83
Darla		Hispanic	None	72
Emily	27	Caucasian	None	14 Christianity
Frank	38	Caucasian	None	72 Islam 27 Judaism 17 Christianity
Greg	22	African-American	Christian	25
Hailey	19	Caucasian	Christian	28
Irene	22	Hispanic	None	67
Jackie	19	Caucasian	Christian	68

* Pratt (1972) says, “The formula (of the ECO) will always be between 0.0 (totally unfavorable) and 100.0 (totally favorable) with 50.0 representing the point of neutrality or ambivalence.”

Therefore, the ECO measures whether a participant finds the text totally unfavorable, totally favorable, or somewhere in between. Only participants who found the text highly favorable or highly unfavorable were utilized for this study.

All of the participants perceived at least a slight amount of bias on the ECO (Pratt, 1972). Only three of the participants named a specific religion, although others claimed to be spiritual.

All but two participants had parents they claimed to be religious. Only one claimed to belong to a particular political party. Only one student expressed some opinions that demonstrated distantiation. However, all of the participants described their perceptions of bias using empathetic language. Empathetic language includes, “the ability to experience the same feelings as those of another person in response to a particular situation,” “pro-social or helping behaviors,” or “defending victims” (Abbott & Cameron, 2014). These themes are explored in this chapter as well as chapter five.

Frank

Background. Frank spent his early years with his mom, dad, and younger sister. However, when he was young, his father abandoned them, leaving him, his mother and his sister at a local flea market. From that point on, life was a struggle for the small family: they were no longer able to afford even groceries, and Frank was in and out of foster care. Fortunately, his mother remarried and the family was able to stay together.

As an adult, Frank joined the military where he toured nine countries. While in the military, he did experience a few episodes of prejudice, both from Americans and people in foreign countries. Frank described instances of being kicked out of foreign restaurants for being American and being denied service in American restaurants because he identified as a serviceman. He also mentioned being labeled epithets such as “honkey,” “cracker,” and “spic,” even though he is Caucasian (not Hispanic). After ending his tour, Frank joined the police to serve as an officer in a gang unit: This was a field he would serve in for 11 years. As part of the gang unit, Frank encountered racism from the population he was serving: He would overhear kids in the community call him “racist cracker.”

When asked how these incidents made him feel, Frank said he felt badly for people who would think and act that way. He said, “It’s sad for them, to be honest with you because it’s one of those things where it’s taught and they don’t know any better... [but] it’s one of those things where you’re never going to get rid of it, so you’re going to have to expect it, in a way. It doesn’t mean it’s right, but you just have to expect and let it roll off your shoulder.”

Politically speaking, Frank is non-political, saying, “I haven’t voted in forever.” However, he is concerned when his classes are overly politicized. As far as religion is concerned, Frank is spiritual, but not committed to any particular faith. In his interview, he specifically mentioned enjoying learning about and dabbling in Buddhism.

Classroom experiences. Frank often described his perception of bias in different media used in the classroom. As early as middle school, Frank reported being impressed with a teacher he perceived as fair, because the teacher was willing to share both sides of the topics being covered. This willingness to share both sides is a rare trait that Frank values in his professors, and he was able to recall instances both of professors trying to present both sides of an issue and professors trying to indoctrinate students to their way of thinking.

Specifically, Frank mentioned a writing class he took at the college where the professor pointedly tried to voice and advocate for his or her own position. He described it the following way, “But they were, uh, everything that was directed was, they taught was pro-Democrat, pro-Hillary, pro-this, pro-that... I felt like it was being dumped down my throat and it got to the point where it was like forget it.” One of the reasons Frank gave for disliking this class was that the political agenda was “dumped down [his] throat”: It was presented as matter of fact, not an opinion that can have two sides. This feeling was not due to Frank’s political party, because he stated in a previous conversation, he doesn’t have a party affiliation.

On the other hand, Frank also spoke of his current history professor along these lines, “He’s very... he’ll tell you how it is and he’ll explain both sides and he’ll give both opinions for both sides. So there was like he’s kind of in the middle, he plays devil’s advocate kind of.” In this instance, Frank was comfortable because the teacher was even handed in the way he outlined events: The professor made sure to address both sides of the issues.

At the same time, Frank was well aware of and mentioned several times his perceptions of bias in textbooks. There were several instances when Frank spoke about American history and American history textbooks; he said he was especially interested in military history. When speaking about the way textbooks treat the Revolutionary War, Frank stated, “I love history, but... it’s not like we have the media today where we have a news crew that can follow you around like they did in Afghanistan with us and stuff like that. So how can you know, this is actually what happened?” Furthermore, when asked his impressions of *Western Civilizations*, the textbook used in this study, Frank replied, “When you’re dealing with any religion they give you a book to read, or they give you a pamphlet, they want you to say, ‘Oh my goodness, this is the way to go, this is the truth, this is the...’ That’s how I feel when I read that kind of stuff... I think if they put it in a textbook, I think they’re going to probably glorify religion and stuff.” These examples demonstrate that Frank has thought about the topic of bias before and deems social science textbooks in general to be biased.

This concern about bias is not only related to Frank’s personal experiences, but he demonstrated through several examples that he is also concerned about how other groups are treated in textbooks. This empathy for accurate treatment of others is a hallmark of my interactions with participants in this study. As already stated, Frank feels sympathy for others, even when those others have directed bigoted slurs at him. We have also explored how Frank is

interested in the British perspective of the Revolutionary War. Yet Frank also expressed interest in the perspectives articulated in other countries, even those with which Americans might currently be at enmity.

One such country is North Korea. In spite of the current political climate with North Korea, Frank is interested in the North Korean perspective. When speaking about the country, Frank detailed, “Like my argument is say North Korea. Everyone is saying North Korea is so bad, but North Korea I’ve never been, so how do I know it’s not a haven? How do I know it’s not a great place to live and we’re being fed the lies?” This consideration of the other continued to mark Frank’s comments. During our focus group, Frank described a new fact he learned about the National Anthem: “Recently I think it was the National Anthem. There was part that was cut out that deals with slavery that you should own slaves and owning slaves is correct and everything. So, I didn’t know about that until a couple of weeks ago, so that kind of made me question how much other things were cut out.” Certainly, most students would agree that any pro-slavery statement is immoral; however, this is one part of a pattern in Frank’s thought process to consider other perspectives.

When asked how he might rectify the issue of bias in textbooks, Frank mentioned both having persons from two different perspectives write on a topic and including textbooks from other countries. He said, “It would a great to have two sides of the story written. So if you’re dealing with, in Afghanistan, let’s say you have the American way of reporting the history, then you get someone from Afghanistan... if you’re dealing with religion... have the positive stuff, but then have someone people who say, ‘This is why I think it could be bad.’” Once again, Frank was interested in both perspectives of the story and including all voices.

Alice

Background. Alice comes from a Cuban background. Both of her parents are Cuban and, during her childhood, nominally Catholic. As she described it, “we grew up with an air of Catholicism over the home.” However, that eventually changed. Alice’s mother became serious about religion after faith helped her overcome drug addiction. At that point, Alice’s mother became a devoted Catholic. Catholicism is not the only religion Alice has been exposed to. Alice’s husband is Jewish and, according to Alice, several of his family members are practicing. At the same time, Alice considers herself agnostic. During her focus group, Alice explained that, until recently, she was not interested in religious discussions, seeing herself more as a scientist.

Like Frank, Alice is a non-traditional college student, as she has returned to the classroom after working as a manager at a grocery store; she enjoys environmental science and hopes to work for the EPA. Politically, Alice says she’s “borderline moderate, you know lots of Millennials are doing it these days where we’re, like, fiscally conservative, but liberal everywhere else.” When asked if she’s ever been discriminated against, she said no, but that did not prevent her from seeing the perspectives of those who were through our interview and focus group.

Classroom experiences. Alice also offered many anecdotes that provided insight into her perceptions of bias both in classroom discussions and textbooks in general. Alice is primarily concerned with all points of view and all aspects of a topic receiving coverage. When giving examples of experiences in the classroom that she found fair, she mentioned her Roman and Medieval History class. Referring to the class, Alice said, “I took like a late Roman and Medieval humanities course and... I just enjoyed really diving into what happened to the Roman Empire, because you got to see how all of the pieces connected. Religion... political and

military aspects of it as well.” There are a couple of aspects of this class that Alice remembers enjoying. First, she uses phrases like “how all the pieces connected” and “well-rounded.” These phrases demonstrate that Alice is concerned about all aspects of a topic being covered. One of the ways she remembers receiving all the information is that the class offered both a textbook and “supplementary” readings. This helped Alice to get a complete picture of the Roman Empire, which she stated makes her feel “satisfied.”

Another example Alice gave of wanting to examine all sides of an issue is welfare. Alice experienced two classes where welfare was discussed: a sociology class and her current political science class. Here is her discussion of the two different classes, “[The sociology class] dived into welfare and it was a very liberal view of welfare... the first time I had ever heard a non-liberal view of welfare...was sitting with [my political science professor] and reading through our textbook...” Here, Alice contrasted the sociology class that only offered one side of the issue of welfare to the more balanced view of welfare presented in her political science class.

Alice is concerned about even-handedness on this topic, even though it caused her to confront her own beliefs. She continued, “It brought me to a point where I was like ok well is there a logical fallacy here. Can I have a discussion with myself if not anyone else about what I think or believe regarding these social programs?” Alice demonstrated that she is willing to change her own opinions in this situation, even confronting her own biases, to consider other people’s political perspectives.

This is not the only experience Alice recounted of changing her opinions based on compelling information provided in a class or textbook. In a humanities course, Alice recalls reading *Confessions* by Saint Augustine, “Being like an openly agnostic person... reading the writings of Saint Augustine... the Confessions of Saint Augustine... I had to stop and say ok

there's legitimacy here and that's worth taking a second look... I started reading more religious texts after that." In this sketch, Alice explains that she has become more open to a point of view that she says she would normally "shut down." This demonstrates that Alice was truly open minded, aware of her own bias, and ready to evaluate her beliefs if they do not align with the information.

Like Frank, Alice was concerned with the representation of groups other than hers, demonstrating that she also operates out of a prism of empathy. When speaking in the interview of the textbook used in this study, Alice said, "Specifically with regards to Judaism, I felt they were really using a lot of negative sounding words that may not have been necessarily negative in context, but there were a lot more of those like tart words used during in the passage about Judaism." Alice made similar statements about her perceptions of this textbook in the focus group. These statements demonstrate that even though she is not a participant in Judaism, she is concerned that this group be treated fairly in textbooks.

Another example of wanting all groups to be represented in textbooks is demonstrated in the exchange below: "For a long time I did think that at least some of the American history textbooks were biased, because if you go to China they're going to have a different story about how the Americans played into WWII... But, you know, it's American history." Here, Alice explains that she desires as many different perspectives as possible to be represented in her history textbooks. However, even within that desire, Alice was aware of the natural bias of writing a history textbook from an American perspective.

When asked how Alice would correct the bias that she at times perceives in textbooks, her answer was very pragmatic: "Well at that point you're talking about bias of you know biases in an organization. They're going to pick and choose whether they teach you're book or not.

And it's up to the authors to decide if they're going to cater to the audience or not...Cause right now textbook writers are meeting the demand." Alice mentions that she would like for the bias to be resolved by including minority voices in the textbooks. However, even within that desire, Alice recognizes that the reality is more complicated. She does not feel the textbook writers are directly responsible for the bias they present. This is another demonstration of empathy and an ability to take alternate points of view.

Jackie

Background. Jackie is a nineteen-year-old nursing major. She began attending the college as a dual enrollment student, but stayed to continue her education as a full time college student. Jackie's father is a firefighter and her mother was a schoolteacher, but the mother left the workforce to homeschool Jackie. Jackie was raised Christian and was homeschooled using a Christian curriculum.

In homeschool, Jackie says she learned about subjects like history, science, and religion in a particular way. This is how she described it: "Growing up I realized that a lot of stuff I was being taught it's um it was kind of like biased... They taught a very twisted version of Darwin's Evolution Theory... here's like Creationism, here's what we believe in, which is like smart and look this is so like stupid, stuff like that." The information Jackie learned in homeschool was confirmed by her pastor and youth pastor but, when Jackie got to college, she discovered a completely different way of thinking. She says, "When I got here at [college name] I was like, I was like, 'Oh, hey, guys,' I was like, 'Yeah I totally know about this subject, here's what it is,' and people would look at me and they would say, 'What are you talking about, that's completely false, how you were raised.'"

Jackie is still a Christian who attends church twice a week but considers herself to be more open-minded than her parents. At the same time, Jackie described experiencing discrimination from other classmates at the college both for her faith and for her Caucasian ethnicity. When speaking about comments that she has heard, she said, “I mean I guess it’s just like subtle things like, ‘Oh, there’s the Christian girl’... very subtle comments and stuff like that. Or like, I don’t know. People would say like, ‘White girl,’ and things like that. Other things, you know, and regarding like faith and my like yeah, friends of, you know who have stuff against that.”

Jackie also mentioned a more recent incident that involved her and a friend, “The only time that like I ever experienced like a conflicting, you know, mindset was actually with one of my friends in my anatomy class like two weeks ago. They were talking about spiritual stuff and this girl in the back started yelling, saying are you really that stupid to believe that. And that was like the only time.” Like Frank, Jackie responded to these comments with pity for a person who would make such statements, saying, “I figure that person is going through something.” Jackie has no political affiliation.

Classroom experience. Jackie was mainly critical of religious textbooks and textbooks written from a religious perspective. When asked if textbooks are intentionally biased, she replied, “I think that the religious ones that I was talking about... They’re all like pretty biased and... Like there could be like... a group of people like they were raised to believe something and then they just put it in their textbook, so that wouldn’t really be intentional... Maybe it’s not intentional, maybe like half and half?”

Jackie attributes some of this bias to keeping one’s understanding of a subject merely to how you were raised. Even though Jackie has an opinion about the bias in textbooks, she seems

in this quote to be expressing this opinion for the first time. She also raises a concern that in some countries, textbooks are altered to conceal information. She says, “I was doing like some research and I found out that like uh, I think it was like North Korea, Japan, you know, different countries, they have, they actually have altered their textbooks.” In this example, Jackie shows concern not only for the bias she is exposed to, but also biases that affect others.

On the other hand, Jackie clearly demonstrates that she is able to consider other viewpoints, even changing her own if necessary. For example, when Jackie first came to the college she recalls reading textbooks about other religions, “After reading like other religious textbooks I realized that from what I grew up reading other things I was like, ‘Wow, this isn’t what I learned about it’... but when you actually go and look at other religious texts and stuff like that you realize that, ‘Oh hey this is not what I thought it was.’” Jackie allowed the new material she received in college to inform her perspective and change it, much like Alice did when exposed to different religious views. There was a trend among the participants to be open to new information. For Jackie, it was this lack of open-mindedness that led her to being dissatisfied with her childhood education.

Jackie was also concerned about other people groups. She specifically voiced concern for Muslims and how other people might misunderstand them. At one point, she voiced indignation, saying, “And like, growing up you’re like sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes you’re like taught things by the pastor or the youth preacher or whatever and then what they’re saying, that’s like, that’s very like closed minded, like how could you talk about someone else like that?” When Jackie said, ‘how could you,’ she expressed more indignation than she did when she herself was discriminated against.

Another way Jackie demonstrated an awareness of others' perspectives was by expressing how views of gender roles have changed over time. At one point in the focus group, Jackie recounted recently learning about a particular interpretation of a holiday classic, "Do you know the song 'Baby It's Cold Outside'?... A lot of people are upset over that song and it relates to history, but um a lot of people are upset over the song because it sounds like rape basically... But... it was about the oppression of women and how they couldn't express themselves and stuff, they wouldn't go out." Here, Jackie is concerned about making sure that perspectives from several decades ago be represented properly in interpretations of this song.

When asked how biases in textbooks can be improved, Jackie repeated her concern about biases against other groups: "Read other things. Read everything. Like, read other textbooks and stuff like that. Because what you were raised believing, it could probably not be true. Like what I was raised believing regarding like Muslims." This is the advice Jackie gave to textbook writers, remembering that before she exposed herself to other viewpoints, she had no other option but to be biased. She is saying that if textbook writers read other perspectives they might be more likely to include other perspectives.

Irene

Background. Irene is a 22-year-old immigrant from Argentina. She emigrated from Argentina when she was 18 years old and is now married, living with her husband, and attending school. Irene first describes her family as one that is politically active. In Argentina, Irene's family was strongly capitalistic and raised her with these beliefs. However, Irene found that her strong beliefs cost her friends, so when she moved to America she chose to become less political. When speaking about her political beliefs, she describes them as, "I'm more like capitalist like in the United States and your money's your money, you work for it, and that's what I believe in."

At the same time, Irene describes not wanting to make her beliefs too public: “Since I moved here I haven’t been so into politics, cause my country is so like divided...” Here, Irene says she no longer wants “to get into it” because she wants to avoid division in her new country; therefore, Irene currently describes herself as having no political affiliation. In fact, she no longer wants for her parents to voice such strong political opinions to her, “I’m like oh my God mom, stop posting I’m going to block you, cause they’re like oh my God all day posting stuff about politics and I’m like ok ok.”

Irene describes her parents’ faith as evangelical. Despite this, Irene chose to convert to Judaism (or attempt to do so) in high school. Even though she empathized with the Jewish people and their faith, she experienced prejudice from the very group she tried to embrace, “When I tried to convert to Judaism, the Jewish people didn’t want me there because there were like, they were saying that they were the Chosen Ones and they would say like my soul wasn’t enough... stuff like that.” Irene does not hold animus toward the Jewish people and their religion, however, as she phrases it, “So I’m like really open minded I believe like every religion have their own thoughts and the reasons, I’m not like... I don’t have one religion cause I am open minded, I like to have something of every religion.” Here, Irene shows that she is still open to all religious faiths, though she now is more syncretistic.

Classroom experiences. Irene first learns about Judaism in high school. Until that time, Irene has not heard about any other religion except Christianity, but the experience about learning about another religion for the first time helps her widen her perspective, “Argentinian’s more like Christian, although there’s a lot of Jewish people... But, when I got high school and started learning about them and that’s when I really understood and really understood why. And that’s when I started being like open minded about the different religions. I believe like they’re

all equal.” Irene demonstrates she, like others in this study, is able to change core beliefs when challenged with new information. In fact, this new information caused her to want to become Jewish herself.

When asked what one should be able to get out of learning about religions, Irene once again turned to Judaism as an example. She says that the most important things to learn are why a group practices certain rituals. She also recommends learning everything possible about a group, “Yeah why, that’s what I like to learn. When I study about Judaism I used to be like, ‘Why are they dressing like that? Why do they wear wigs?’ But then when I got into it then I really started learning about it: Everything had a reason.” Here, she says that it’s important to understand instead of judging. Irene is interested in and open to learning about other’s perspectives.

Regarding textbooks, Irene generally believes they are fair and unbiased. When asked whether textbooks are biased, Irene replied, “Because they have sources and they’re supposed to be... they know what they’re talking about.” This demonstrates that Irene has never explicitly thought about the subject of bias in textbooks before. However, like some of the other participants, when the subject was posed another way, Irene discovered that, yes, in fact she had encountered bias in textbooks in at least one circumstance.

This theme surfaced only once Irene was asked whether she had ever encountered a professor who used the classroom for his own political ends. When recounting the experience, she said:

Yeah, my high school used to be like too like socialist. My textbooks in political science they were like, “Oh, communism is great and capitalism is bad. United States, no, it’s really bad”... It was a huge textbook, that it was like a photocopies, it wasn’t even a real

textbook... but I remember I was studying in the kitchen and my dad was like, “What are you reading?” So I showed him and he was so mad, he was so mad because he loves the United States...

Once Irene started describing this story, it became apparent that she, like the other participants, was concerned that all sides of a subject in a textbook be explored. Irene described this ideal kind of textbook as “neutral.” On the other hand, Irene expressed comfort in an environment where everyone can express his or her own opinion without reprisal, saying, “You can actually share what you think and they don’t look at you like wrong.”

When asked what could help change the tone of biased textbooks, Irene focuses on the idea of sharing all sides of a topic, “Be neutral... Get everything together and then share what you believe is right, but not just say, ‘This is right. This is wrong. And that’s it.’ You have to have different kinds of people to gather information.” Irene specifically mentions finding someone who feels the point of view is right and another who believes the point of view is wrong. Having “different kinds of people” involved in writing the textbook is also mentioned as a way to create a neutral textbook.

Hailey

Background. Hailey is one of four girls. She describes her family as very close. Her parents, sisters, and she live in Florida, but her extended family lives scattered throughout the Southeast. She describes herself as a Christian, saying, “I believe in one God and everything, so. I read the Bible, so, that’s my view on that.” She attributes her spirituality to that of her family, saying that her father is a preacher by trade. She does not describe herself in political terms, but she is the only participant to describe experiencing some form of distantiation. As described by

Erikson (1950), distantiation is a stage in development when a person begins to separate what is “like me” from what is “not like me.”

When talking about how she reads and interprets textbooks she describes one of her techniques as follows: “I think if you can put yourself in, like, if you go into the mindset of, ‘this is what I believe,’ and, ‘they’re going to be talking about me.’ I think you can understand how someone from that religion would be able to feel about what’s being said. That’s how I went about it. I was like, ‘This is mine, this is not mine.’” Here, Hailey describes seeing herself in terms of what she believes versus what others believe. According to Linvill and Mazer (2013), this kind of separation can create a rigidity against the other; however, as we will see, Hailey is not averse to other’s viewpoints, and does in fact care about the narratives of groups outside of her own faith. When asked, Hailey stated that she has not experienced any discrimination of which she is aware.

Classroom experiences. Hailey demonstrates several times that, even though she is a person of faith who is strongly confirmed in her beliefs, she also is able to display empathy and concern towards others’ perspectives. When speaking about the textbook used for this study, Hailey said, “It seemed like every religion they kind of put negative... so I think that could have been a way for them not to sway anybody from their beliefs... I think if it would have been like specifically negative toward one thing and specifically positive for another thing, than that would be... you would think they have a bias.” Hailey is concerned, not only with the representation of her own faith, but also with that of others. Like Giovanna, Hailey is even concerned about the perspectives of the textbook writers. Though the textbook writers portrayed her religion in a negative light, Hailey is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt that this portrayal is due to a desire to treat each faith in the textbook equally.

Furthermore, when speaking about textbooks in general, Hailey states concern about all sides being presented. She says “I feel like, I have taken history, so usually you only get the side that you’re studying, so like, when you took American History, which is what I took, I took like WWI on, and so, like you really only get like the American side of it, you don’t really get anything else.” Hailey observes that understanding different perspectives keeps us from being too judgmental toward other groups. Even in an example such as WWII where people are usually convinced of right and wrong sides, Hailey is able to see that even those who fought on the other side of the war have a viewpoint worth examining. She makes a similar statement about the Greco-Roman wars, where she states, “Or like, if you’re trying to learn about any of the wars, like if it’s Greek, you need to have both sides of it, so like, Greek versus Romans, you know. Learn both sides of the issue.”

Hailey did not just begin thinking about issues of bias when being interviewed, but instead she demonstrates that she has been contemplating issues of bias for some time. When asked about whether she has ever read a textbook that portrayed some social institution in a negative light, she recalled some narratives she has read about the history of the American education system in her textbooks, “I’ve had some history books that I’ve had to read where it does paint education in a kind of weird light to where, um, in the beginning in the country it was all the wealthy people... And then, those who did receive education didn’t want to hand it out to anybody else, so that’s always an interesting viewpoint to look at.” As an education major, Hailey has been exposed to a narrative about education where it used to only be available to wealthy people and disenfranchised the poor. An observation she makes is that this narrative can have a negative impact on a person’s perception of the history of education in this country. The most interesting component to this exchange is that she recognized the impact of such

statements; this demonstrates that Hailey has thought about the issue of bias before and has formed opinions about it.

However, Hailey is open to reading events in American history that are not favorable towards Americans, even allowing these perspectives to change her point of view. Hailey recounts, “I remember reading about the CIA and Colombia, all the drugs and stuff. And you know, when you grow up you think, ‘America is amazing and everything we do is amazing,’ and then you get exposed to things like that and you’re like, ‘That’s not amazing?’” When confronted with examples of America’s not being “amazing,” Hailey is able to change her beliefs. In fact, she says it’s always important to learn more about different subjects.

When asked how textbooks could be less biased Hailey, like several other participants, mentions getting contribution on both sides of a given issue, “I feel if you’re going to write a textbook and have a textbook you need to get every side to every story and be open even if it’s something you don’t agree with because other people can agree with it.” Hailey stated that textbooks should “get every side” and be “well-rounded”: Each are themes that have been identified by others as key to writing less biased textbooks.

Carmen

Background. Carmen is a 19-year-old, first generation Jamaican American. Born in Florida, Carmen is part of a larger black Jamaican family: She has a 24-year-old brother who has autism, and a much older half-sister who has children who are Carmen’s age. Carmen describes much of her family as still living in Jamaica. Carmen was raised Roman Catholic, and attended a Catholic high school. However, Carmen says that she herself is not Roman Catholic, though she is spiritual on occasion. She describes herself as having no political affiliation and has not experienced any discrimination according to her recollection.

Classroom experiences. When asked, Carmen says textbooks do not contain bias; however, this does not mean Carmen has not experienced bias in textbooks. As the interview, focus group and discussion revealed, Carmen did notice when other groups were treated positively or negatively. This demonstrates that though Carmen has not thought about bias in textbooks, she still operates according to the same principles of equity the other participants use when reading textbooks.

For example, when asked in her journal entry what she has read in history textbooks that is negative, Carmen answered, “When the Africans were forced out of the country, and became slaves in an unfair manner. I felt like it was unnecessary to do that. Not in a way to give disliking towards the British and others, but for better ideas to come in mind instead of harming others and forcing them unnecessarily.” Carmen mentions a topic that most would consider negative: The enslaving of thousands of African Americans. Here, Carmen shows concern for the Africans, but she is unwilling to be negative toward the British. Like the other participants, Carmen is eager to try and see all sides of an issue rather than lay blame with one group or another.

When asked what Carmen has read that is positive, she responded by speaking about the founder of Pennsylvania, saying, “He made this idea of trying to make an agreement with the Indians, like, trying to get along with them. It kind of gives me the idea of how people are, even though they’re different, they’re still the same, so like the idea of races and gender and religion, like, come together as one family.” Carmen felt affinity with the story of the founding of Pennsylvania, because, as she states, we’re all the same. In other words, she feels the things that unite us are greater than those that divide us and this is what she wants to be portrayed in textbooks.

Another example of the empathy that Carmen has for other groups of people is when she speaks about discrimination toward the LGBT community. She states, “I support the LGBT community so I’m like I’m happy for them and then I see this comment when I’m about to come, I see this comment and it’s like, ‘It’s disgusting’ ... Ok this person doesn’t like it, ok, that’s not my problem... There’s more people that are above you so your words really don’t mean nothing to them.” Carmen is able to see the humanity in a group of people that are different than her. She speaks about the need for the next generation to be freer to make their own individual choices. She is surprised by others who would try to prevent anyone from living the way that person chooses.

When asked how she would fix bias in textbooks in the future, Carmen talks about seeing all sides of the issues, “Focus on what you think first, and then she said, like, look it up, see what other people are thinking and like maybe get an understanding of both views on the topic. I just think more positive and then see whatever you’re more comfortable, you’re more attached to with, and you’ll be fine.” Carmen thinks that each person’s individual perspective is important. This is her starting point for how she reads textbooks and she recommends it to other people who feel their beliefs are challenged by these textbooks. She uses the phrase, “if they don’t agree with you,” essentially saying that your personal perspective is the most important aspect in deciding what you think about a textbook.

Emily

Background. Emily is a first-year student at the college, but she is also a non-traditional student. She started school seven years ago but took a break when she had her son. Emily is now resuming her education, and trying to balance school, career, and home. Emily’s family is Jewish, and Emily described her upbringing as “tough.” In spite of her family’s adherence to

Judaism, Emily is spiritual, but not religious. She describes her feelings on faith as “open-minded.” Emily described herself as having no political affiliation and does not feel that she has ever experienced discrimination.

Classroom experiences. When asked what she thought about the textbook used in this study, Emily said, “It gave me more insight into maybe how dramatic some of the, I want to kind of say, rules were... to gain access to a heaven or to be condemned you had to abide by certain stereotypes and rules and regulations. And some of them were... were very surprising.” Emily did not question whether these rules were outlined using language that was biased; in fact, at first Emily stated that she does not know whether textbooks are fair or unfair in their portrayal of different topics. However, Emily is not only concerned about her own perspective, but also the perspectives of others and how they are portrayed in textbooks.

When asked if she could resonate with how a person of faith, from the textbook I shared, might feel, Emily stated, “I could, especially coming from the past and the history, the lifestyle that they lived. And you know maybe coming from a tough upbringing, being spiritual and being a part of something made their life more... what’s the word I’m looking for... Gave them something to look forward to, something to live for.” Emily demonstrates that her family’s faith background does help her to see the points of view of persons of faith.

Furthermore, in the focus group Emily participated in, it was mentioned that the Christians in the history textbook used in the study were portrayed as naïve followers. Emily responded by saying, “Along similar lines, you know, they’re portrayed in a negative way, but your mind can think, ok these people want better, they want a better life. They are willing to follow these figures for happiness, for a better lifestyle, you know, for, to better their families.” Even when talking about the possibly negative qualities of these religious practitioners, Emily is

able to observe that they are choosing a religious path for the noble reason of wanting a better life. She can even see the perspectives of Christians because of her background in another faith.

This is not the only example of Emily's ability to see other's perspectives. During the focus group, Emily spoke about her most memorable experience in a history class. She spoke about learning about the Revolutionary War and described it as, "[making] me feel proud of where I came from, where I grew up." However, when Greg, another participant, spoke about most enjoying a less violent but just as successful movement for change, Emily said, "That kind of makes me feel bad. Cause everything that I was feeling was thinking about, unfortunately, a lot of the things that were going on at that time—I'm taking an American History class—were not so 'peaceful'...But to see it could have been done that way, definitely makes me reflect on my feelings..." Emily is able to see Greg's perspective and apply it to her own experience.

Emily also engaged in perspective taking when talking about Christopher Columbus, saying, "Columbus Day, and stuff like that, I really wasn't aware of what was going on that people protested, people celebrated, to me it was just another day, but now I'm learning about it and... actually changed my, also changed my open-minded thought process to: He also murdered thousands of people..." Emily is concerned about the minority people groups she encounters in her textbooks and is willing to change her perspective as she confronts new information.

In another example, Emily shared how a textbook she read in Catholic school specifically stated that Jews killed Jesus. Even when Emily is confronted with biased information against Judaism, she is willing to consider the perspective of the textbook writers and wonder, "That's very interesting, yeah, that would upset me too. But I would want to know, well I would want to know are you preaching this to me, like is this something you're trying to force me to believe?"

Or is this an argumentative statement, or just an informative statement that you're going to back up?" Her interest in others' perspectives even extends to people whose opinions are in direct opposition to her own.

When asked how she would improve the bias in textbooks, Emily said, "Do the research. Look further into it. Ask questions. Cause if you just sit there and believe everything you hear, like, that's not going to do you any good. You're not thinking for yourself... That's why I say I'm very open-minded, especially to religion." Here, Emily talks about thinking for herself in different aspects of life, including the religious. She incorporated ideas of open-mindedness, concern for other people, and perspective taking that marked the other respondents.

Bruce

Background. Bruce is an Hispanic male. His father is from Venezuela, and his mother is from Chile. Bruce describes his family as Catholic but does not ascribe to any spirituality himself. He is the only participant to identify himself with a political party—he describes himself as a Democrat. Bruce feels that he has been discriminated against at some point in time, but he was unable to recount a specific example.

Classroom experiences. When asked whether he thinks textbooks are biased, Bruce says yes, but not deliberately. Like other participants, Bruce is willing to see the points of view of the textbook authors. When asked the reasons textbook authors may have for including bias in textbooks, Bruce said, "Maybe it was to give an idea of how it was back then. Like if what we've learned or what we've read about is not exactly true and that like the... like whoever wins gets to determine what the majority of how like things turn out." Bruce felt that the reason for textbook bias is that textbooks are always written with the winners in mind.

When asked how reading religious textbooks has changed his perspective, Bruce said it made him more tolerant. Bruce does demonstrate empathy toward different religious groups in his reading of different textbooks. For example, when asked a time that he read a textbook that did not address all sides of an event, Bruce says, “During 9/11 it was new, new in the textbooks, and it wasn’t really talking about like all the things that were happening like in Iraq also and like what kind of led up to it or the aftermath of it... Like, whether the US having its influence, or like trying to put its influence... into other countries.” According to Bruce, this is an example of textbooks being Amero-centric. When he says, “our ideas and values,” Bruce is demonstrating that he sees democracy as something we are imposing on other minority cultures.

Bruce, like many participants, also brought up Columbus and how the history of his discoveries downplay the stories of other groups, “Like, I would say Columbus is seen more as like the winner like cause he came and he founded a new land, but then on... it’s like Columbus Day so like it’s for him, but they don’t really mention anything about the Native Americans... but like now it’s coming back up.” Here, Bruce again talks about the bias in textbooks in terms of winners and losers. Bruce feels there is not as much mention of the Native American perspective as he would like.

When asked how textbooks can be made less biased, Bruce also focused on including multiple perspectives, “I would say maybe have multiple like groups of people read it, if they don’t do that already. Like different religions... I guess that’s really the main thing I can think of just having like the ‘losers’ side or the one that’s not in power have like their perspective on things shown more.”

Darla

Background. Darla is an Hispanic female; her parents are both Peruvian. Darla is the only participant to describe her upbringing as completely free of spirituality; she also describes herself as not being spiritual. When asked if she has been discriminated against, Darla points to interactions with her classmates in school, saying, “Because of like how I dress and how I talk, but like not necessarily in like a really negative way, just like in like people look at me differently.” When asked how such attention makes her feel, Darla said she did not care about how others perceive her.

Classroom experiences. When asked about the different religious narratives in textbooks, Darla pointed out the different perspective that each religion has, “And also the words they’re using because people have different standards of ethics and honor and such things and morality so the way that they’re portraying what those words mean in this sense could be different from what other people believe those words are... biased.” Darla felt that the biased word choices in the textbooks are meant to portray different religions correctly and would not appear biased within their own culture. This demonstrates that she is both willing to take the textbook writers’ intentions into consideration and also the perspectives of minority groups.

Darla was especially concerned about how minority groups are treated in American history textbooks, including the events of the discovery of America. She spoke about Christopher Columbus in the following way: “It kind of got me mad that they didn’t really emphasize the exploitation of which the Native Americans underwent. When Christopher Columbus came they kind of just like briefly said that they slowly started dying, but they didn’t really emphasize how they were murdered and raped and killed and set on fire.” Darla wanted minority viewpoints to be expressed more thoroughly than they currently are.

Her views of the way groups are portrayed either positively or negatively in textbooks is also interesting: “A positive experience with something I read in a history textbook was when in my AP US History class, the book talked negatively of slave owners. [On the other hand a] negative experience I read in a textbook was the interpretation that Christopher Columbus founded America when in reality the natives did so.” This is telling, as Darla does not like when antagonists are portrayed positively or when a protagonist is portrayed negatively.

Since she has such strong opinions, one might think that Darla would not be able to tolerate the opinions of others, but that proved not to be the case. One of the episodes that stood out to Darla about her schooling was an episode last year when she was in high school:

I took debate... Yeah, they basically had a mock campaign... acting like the candidates in the election and we were in the theater and everything and it was just interesting to me how everyone was so different on how they felt about the different aspects and how they portrayed the presidents or the candidates at that time... and like everyone had an opposing opinion.

Here, Darla is demonstrating that she is open to different political perspectives, even ones that oppose her own. She stated that she’s interested in learning about different perspectives and hearing different views.

When Darla was asked whether she thinks textbooks are biased, she said, “I feel like they focus on certain things that they want people to know and they limit you on things that they don’t really want to have people aware of.” In other words, Darla stated that she believes there is an intentional limiting of information that prevents students from understanding all they need to know about a topic. However, when Darla was asked whether this would qualify as bias, she said she would instead label it as “control.”

When asked how Darla thinks we can improve textbooks and limit bias, she suggested, “Put groups of kids in a room and asking them different questions about things in history and seeing what they know, what they don’t know... I feel like... they wouldn’t really know the exploitation that Native Americans have went through like other than the Trail of Tears and things like that that happened later in centuries.” Darla is concerned that textbook writers are not taking student perspectives, specifically areas where students are not knowledgeable, into account. She stated here that she thinks if textbook writers knew where student knowledge gaps were, they could improve the bias in their textbooks.

Greg

Background. Greg is a 22-year-old African-American Jamaican of Irish decent. Greg was born in Jamaica and was brought up a non-denominational Christian. Greg described being discriminated against since moving to the United States:

I used to live in, you would say, a pretty family oriented neighborhood... As a way to work out I would just jog around my neighborhood and things of that nature and... I was approached by a white police officer and he sat me down and he questioned me. He asked, “What are you doing around here? Why are you running, why are you jogging?” ... And I was like, “If I was of a different race, would you have stopped me?”

However, when asked how this incident made Greg feel, he gave a surprising answer, “In a sense it did make me feel kind of bad, that that type of mentality is still rooted in our society in some shape or form. But on the flip side, I couldn’t say that it isn’t warranted... I work as a sales rep and when I’ve had signs that say, “Watch out for this individual.” And more often times than not the race is ‘me.’” Greg not only was able to recognize the police officer’s perspective in this

instance, but also was able to recognize the perspectives of others in many other instances throughout our interview and focus group.

Like many of the other participants, Greg claims no political affiliation. He does still practice the Christian faith, but he is very open to aspects of other faiths and worldviews that he feels correspond to his own. For example, “Seeing someone who’s a lesbian or somebody that may be transsexual or something like that, but I don’t judge them. Does that make sense? I try to keep the positive of what their doing like be comfortable in your own skin... Or love without condition... Those are things that my belief says that is good.” This is another example of how Greg is open to the perspectives of others.

Classroom experiences. Greg felt that the religious narratives presented in the history textbook used for the study were negative, specifically the Christian narrative: “They seemed to have, I don’t know I may be wrong, they seems to have a more aggressive stance to how, as a Christian, what I usually believe in. In the reverse, so it made it seem like what I believe in, like commandments, things you should live by, they’re good things, they almost made it seem like orders.” Greg feels that his religious experience is one of voluntary compliance, not abject obedience. He states that he felt the textbook writers were implying that Christians are being forced to follow Jesus’ commands under threat.

However, Greg did not feel that the negative treatment of Christianity was necessarily due to bias on the part of the author. Instead, Greg understood that the writer would have his own perceptions. Greg stated, “When two people can read the exact same thing and then would that expression get it different? And I think in that regard, if somebody approached me and said, ‘Ok, this is how I feel about...’ let’s say the author of that text. I would say, ‘Ok, then, how was

it delivered to you?’ And I would want to hear that part before I judge.” Greg was interested in learning the perspective of the author before determining whether the author is biased.

At the same time, Greg was not only concerned about the treatment of Christianity. In a different textbook, Greg recalled reading a narrative that was particularly negative toward Jewish people. He said, “I went to a Catholic high school, so we had a textbook, again we had a religion class, with the class based around Christianity. Now the text itself gave a very dark look at Jews or Judaism when it came to what happened to Christ, does that make sense? So, the teacher... expressed to us, ok we cannot blame these people...” Greg was concerned that the textbook would take such a “hard shot” at the Jewish people, just as he was concerned for the portrayal of his own religion of Christianity.

In fact, Greg felt that the main objective of history textbooks and the religious narratives within them should be to create empathy: “You should be able to empathize with every group... There may be some things that I may say to a person of a different religion that they might not agree with, but I would expect that they would understand the same way that I would have to understand theirs.” Greg felt that people of other perspectives and religions should try to understand his point of view just as he does theirs.

Greg tries to understand not only different religious perspectives, but also different political ones as well. He shared an anecdote of a discussion he had in class about the presidential election of 2016: “This was more around the time of the election between Trump and Hillary... I basically said if, from a perspective of business being in debt and stuff like that, who would be better than a multi-billionaire? And the reactions were very grim... The professor, the professor made some slight jokes and stuff like that.” Although Greg stated that he himself does not agree with the views he shared in class and was merely making argument for

argument's sake, he does state a concern for the animus another student might feel who was actually pro-Trump, "There is maybe some individuals who may have thought that, and that's why they did it...and I'd hate to see what would have happened to them if they expressed that and continued to express that, expressed their beliefs."

Greg also recalled a different class where the political views of him and his classmates were respected: "He wanted us to get the information of previous events and then kind of make our own interpretation of what was moving forward. Now when I say it was positive, I don't think he wanted to sway us either way..." Here, Greg said he felt that the experience of being in a class where you could "make your own decision" was "positive."

Greg is also interested in historic events where multiple perspectives and groups are represented, and thinks that these events are powerful because many different kinds of students can identify with the backgrounds of students who participated in these peaceful protests: "The sitting-ins during the age of racism, where college students of all races sat in separate diners, and other venues to protest peacefully... I find in positive because each person in the room with me, whether black, white, other etc. can share a stance or experience with me. It wasn't just blacks who sat in." Greg values events that unify groups of people and their perspectives instead of dividing them.

When asked what suggestions he would give to help limit the bias portrayed in textbooks, Greg said, "Try to express both sides, I know that's very difficult in one shot but like for example instead of say, um let's say Christ 'ordered' us to do something or like a short excerpt outside of it saying this is what another group believes... Like um Christians say this and this happened and Muslims say this and this happened." Like the other participants, Greg mentioned

expressing “both sides” of an issue. He said this is important to letting students make their own decisions.

Results

The results are broken into the themes that arose from the study and the answers to the research questions that resulted from those themes. The first method used to discover these themes was that I as the researcher personally transcribed the interviews and focus groups. This created a familiarity with the interviews that I would not have otherwise had. However, I also input the data into a program, ATLAS.ti, intended to help reveal themes to ensure that the themes, and the answers derived from those themes, would be accurate. A table indicating how codes were organized to form themes is included in Appendix I.

Theme Development

There are three major themes that arose from the portraits above. The first was that all of the students who perceived bias in the textbook described the bias in three main ways: explicitly, after being asked, or in a numinous way. All of the students described bias as a method of leaving out some group, but not all expressed their perceptions directly. The second was that all of the students spoke of bias in terms of an empathetic worldview—some were even empathetic toward the motives of the textbook writers. Finally, all of the students recommended including more worldviews in the future when writing history textbooks.

Perceptions of explicit bias. Four of the 10 students in this study noticed bias and were able to verbalize the bias they noticed without being asked. These students often spoke directly about the excerpts from the textbook and thought about their implications. Alice, for example, was concerned about the syntax of the textbook used in the study—word choice and how those choices portrayed the groups in the text. Greg and Hailey also mentioned the word choice,

saying that some groups in the text were treated negatively. All three of these students noticed the phrases used and were able to comment on their perceptions of those phrases easily, noticing not only the author's word choice, but the value judgments the words inferred and their own feelings about them.

When asked about the bias in the way religions are portrayed in history textbooks, Frank also had an explicit opinion. Frank believes about those who pen religious information that "each one has a thing about glorifying that specific religion or practice." Here, Frank was saying that he also perceived authors as having a predetermined bias in how they write, just as Alice and other participants observed. All four of these participants already had thought about topics of bias and were able to identify their perceptions without much prompting.

After being asked. Three of the participants in the study were able to speak about their perceptions of bias in the text, but only after being asked specific questions on the topic. Jackie had many experiences with bias in religious textbooks; as a homeschooled child, Jackie recalled different texts that she would eventually consider biased. However, it also seemed as if she had never spoken out about it before. As she said in her interview, "Growing up I realized that a lot of stuff I was being taught it's um it was kind of like biased." When she talks about her realization, she expresses that her perspective regarding what she was taught has changed over time; she decided that what she was taught as a child was biased. Darla also had an opinion that had been formed but never expressed. When she spoke about textbooks trying to "control" their readers, Darla demonstrated that she does see the textbooks as being biased, even though she said that she did not perceive textbooks as biased. Instead of overtly seeing textbooks as biased, she sees them as controlling, which is the equivalent. Bruce is another example of a participant

who only voiced his perception of bias after being asked. Bruce said that this bias is in favor of historical winners, ensuring that the voice of the victor is heard over the victim.

Numinous. Finally, three participants described their perceptions, not as bias directly, but as a more general perception of positive or negative. Irene, for example, did not speak about bias, but she did share more than one story to demonstrate that she perceived bias in textbooks. When she spoke about her education in Argentina, she said that her history textbook was intentionally written to make students believe a particular worldview. She had never verbalized this as an encounter with bias, but she did call it a socialist education, one that is one-sided and partial. Emily also intuited bias in narratives in history textbooks. During the focus group, Emily was sympathetic to religious narratives of peoples of different faiths than her own. She was critical of negative portrayals of both Jewish and Christian groups that were discussed during her focus group. Though Carmen did not define bias as such, she was easily able to answer questions about when she read positive or negative portrayals in history textbooks. For example, Carmen's responses about positive and negative narratives in textbooks demonstrate that Carmen values narratives where multiple viewpoints are respected, such as the story of the founding of Pennsylvania. Carmen pointed out that the founding of Pennsylvania allowed for minorities to be treated more fairly.

These three different ways of expressing perceived bias uncovered the answers to my first and second research questions. Research question one states, "How do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks?" The students perceived bias differently: some elucidated it clearly while others more opaquely. However, all of the participants perceived bias in terms of fair, representing all sides, or unfair, not representing those voices. When the data were analyzed, the

constructions of this bias were often wrapped in words of “fairness,” such as “positive” or “negative,” or “bias,” or “open-minded.” The concern for fairness went beyond the students’ individual ethnicities: They were concerned about fairness for all peoples portrayed in textbooks.

Empathy

Research sub-question two mentions five influences that may impact the perception of bias in the participants: family influences, faith, political orientation, empathetic worldview, or psychology. The one impetus that all of the participants described was empathy, be it empathy toward different religious groups, persons with different political affiliations, or different groups. The participants even engaged in empathy and perspective-taking with the textbook authors in the study.

Empathetic worldview. All of the participants described empathy toward a group different from themselves in one of the following categories: religious, political, or group-based categories. Eight of the participants described empathy toward different religious groups than their own. Emily recognized that people of other faiths may be motivated to follow a religion because “they want a better life.” Bruce felt that the way Muslims are presented in textbooks, especially in light of 9/11, was unfair. He said that other factors that might have provoked a reaction, such the occupation of the Middle East by the United States, should be included in the narrative. Irene spoke about her experiences learning about Judaism in high school and how it made her more empathetic toward that people group. Hailey thought that the textbook portrayed all religions negatively and expressed concern that religions should be treated equally and fairly. Even though Frank seemed generally skeptical about organized religion, he was interested in

Buddhism and claimed to practice it occasionally. Greg was concerned that a Catholic textbook he read in high school stated that the Jewish people killed Christ.

Alice, an agnostic, “started reading more religious texts” as a result of her ability to empathize with practitioners of other religions. Jackie, a Christian, said of students who degrade religious faith: “If someone like lashes out like that honestly my belief is that if someone is upset or angry or like just like barking out at someone especially if it’s at me I try to ignore it because I figure that person is going through something.” This shows Jackie was empathic toward non-religious students. All of these students were open to looking at other perspectives, even those with which they did not agree.

Three of the participants cited feeling empathy toward political groups other than their own. Darla demonstrated that she is open to other political perspectives when she spoke about her interest in other’s perspectives during the 2016 campaign season. Greg was interested in representing Trump supporters’ perspectives, even though he is not a Trump supporter. Alice spoke about how she was willing to look at different political perspectives about welfare. She says that she was always exposed to the liberal talking points about welfare until recently, but she was open to a more conservative point of view. Even though Alice feels compassionate toward welfare recipients, she understands the conservative viewpoint that the current programs may not be cost effective. In each of these examples, the participants were able to look at and value political perspective other than theirs.

Finally, three participants demonstrated empathy toward people in different group-based categories. Carmen spoke in the focus group about her concern for the LGBT community, saying that people who use social media to criticize members of the LGBT community have a problem. Greg demonstrates this empathy in his story about an interaction with a police officer

who may have profiled him. Greg said about this interaction, “I couldn’t say that it isn’t warranted.” Greg tries to understand why it might be logical for the officer to profile him, which demonstrates Greg’s strength in perspective-taking. Frank was even able to feel empathy to those who would label him as racist. When he worked as a police officer, gangsters would call him “racist cracker,” but Frank was willing to see that they may have said those things because they didn’t know better. All of these experiences—religious, political, and group-based—exemplify the empathy and perspective taking that each participant shared.

Empathy toward textbook writers. These strong themes of perspective taking, even applied to the textbook writers used in this study. Six of the participants assigned positive motivations to the writers of the textbook used in this study in spite of the fact that they described the textbook as biased. Alice stated she perceives bias in history textbooks, but at the same time she does not see the bias as the sole responsibility of the textbook writers. She talked about “biases in an organization” that perpetuates the biases in textbooks. Alice explained that the cultures of the colleges must change by examining the biases that cause demand for biased textbooks in order to truly remedy the problem of biased textbooks.

Hailey also sees the textbook in the study as biased but does not think the authors are trying to do something deleterious to the religions described. Instead, she gives alternate reasons for the bias other than the author’s point of view. Greg also thought that the textbook in the study treated Christianity negatively, but this did not prevent Greg from trying to understand the author’s point of view. Instead, Greg said he would talk to the textbook writer before deciding if there was deliberate bias in the text. Emily spoke about a textbook—one that was not used in the study—that depicted the Jews as Christ-killers. Instead of Emily judging this writer as anti-Semitic out of hand, she was willing to question his motivation, giving him the opportunity to

clarify the purpose of this representation in the text.

Bruce and Darla believed that the textbooks only appeared biased, but instead the apparent biases were meant to make the books more accurate. Bruce said that the textbooks were written to reflect the point of views of the victors of history. Darla said she believes that the biased language used in the history textbooks is meant to describe the groups mentioned in a more accurate way and that though the readers may feel that the word choice was biased, the people groups spoken about might feel the language accurately described them. Empathy is the one theme that all of these participants expressed, and they expressed them in several different contexts. Even when participants, such as Hailey and Emily, disagreed with the textbook writers, they were often still willing to consider the points of view of those writers. Of all the factors expressed in research sub-question four, empathy best described the focus of these participants' perceptions of bias.

Factors that Minimize Bias

When participants were asked how bias in textbooks could be minimized, they all suggested adding perspectives to the content of the texts. Participants in this study were overwhelmingly concerned about “fairness” in textbooks that they thought would give readers a better understanding of history. When I discussed critical thinking in the second chapter, I mentioned the research that students presented with multiple sources think more critically. The participants in the study wanted to see the same additions that researchers claim will increase critical thinking: they called for textbooks with multiple sources and viewpoints for the narratives they study in class.

One example of the desire for multiple sources is the belief shared by a few of the participants that there is more than one way of viewing a topic. Three of the participants used

phrases that demonstrated there are two (or more) sides to any issue. For example, Carmen, Greg, and Frank talked about points of view as being bilateral, using the phrases “both views” and “two sides.” However, Bruce mentioned “multiple” perspectives, demonstrating that there might be more than two sides to the narratives in history textbooks. In addition, three participants mention, not the perspectives, but the people with the perspectives and how they would be helpful in reviewing the material in textbooks before the finished product. Irene mentioned having “different kinds of people” review the material, Hailey talked about looking at “every side,” and Darla referenced having “groups of kids” talk about what they know about a topic to help textbook writers know what needs to be addressed. Emily speaks about this same need, but in a more negative way, saying that we should examine more than “one person’s narrative” of the historical accounts.

The participants stated that they believed the text needs more points of view from more people groups to be expressed. The previous seven participants speak in general terms about this desire, but Alice is more specific. Alice speaks specifically about including “minority groups” perspectives in the content of textbooks. Jackie opts for a more panoramic approach, saying “read everything.” This demonstrates an all-inclusive approach to understanding the subjects covered in the text.

Research Question Responses

Central Question

After hearing all of the participants speak about bias, the answer to the central research question becomes clearer. The central research question states, “How do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks?” There was a spectrum of answers to this question, but all had one thing in

common: the students all perceived bias, and it impacted the way they interacted with textbooks in the classroom. The ECO (Pratt, 1972) did test for this perception of bias, but it was further revealed through the data I collected from each participant. Seven of the participants perceived bias directly and were able to point it out through the interviews, focus groups, and journal entries.

Four of the 10 students in this study noticed bias and were able to verbalize the bias they noticed without being asked. For example, when Frank talked about his perceptions of the western civilization textbook used in this study, his perceptions of how religions are portrayed in textbooks was already well formed. When he talked about religions in textbooks, he used the phrase “when I read that kind of stuff” as if he had spent considerable time thinking about it. In the focus group, Alice demonstrated that she was engaged in critical thinking even as she was reading the textbook for the study. She talked about the syntax and word choice as if she remembered reading the textbook very clearly.

Hailey spoke about “every religion” in the study being treated negatively. Once again, like the other participants mentioned above, Hailey seemed to have given her opinion of bias some thought both when she was reading the text and afterwards. Greg also demonstrated that he was concerned about bias and had thought about it even before the study. When asked how he felt about the bias in textbooks, Greg said he felt Christianity was portrayed negatively, saying the textbook writer “made [following Christianity] seem like orders.” Like Alice and some of the other participants, Greg seemed sensitive to and cognizant of word choice and bias. As each of these students spoke about his or her experience, it seemed clear that they thought about bias on a conscious level and were ready to talk about it.

There were three participants who seemed to have not thought much about bias before the

beginning of the interviews and focus groups, but once asked they had more than enough insight and anecdotes to demonstrate that bias impacted their perceptions in a meaningful way. Jackie, when speaking about religious bias in textbooks, first addressed her experience as a homeschool student. She stated her belief that those textbooks were biased but then hesitated and said she thinks the bias may be half-intentional. In spite of this, at both the beginning and end of her interview, Jackie made clear statements that she has dealt with the effects of bias in textbooks, even ending her interview by saying, “what you were raised believing, it could probably not be true. Like what I was raised believing regarding like Muslims...” Jackie clearly demonstrated that what she perceived as bias in her homeschool textbooks affected her view on the world in a negative way. It also seemed as if she had never spoken out about it before.

Darla’s interview had a similar impression of not having thought about textbooks as a whole as being biased before. At the end of her interview, Darla said she believes that textbooks intentionally “limit” the information, but instead of perceiving that as biased, she labeled such intentional editing as “control.” This is an interesting choice of words as it points out that, though she does not know it, she does perceive bias. At the same time, it demonstrates that she has not thought out the implications of the kind of control she thinks is being imposed on students and readers. Though Bruce did acknowledge that there is bias in history textbooks, he feels both that the bias is not deliberate and that it might even be a method used by textbook writers to help us understand the past. However, Bruce said that this bias is always in favor of historical winners—in other words focused on one viewpoint over another.

The other three participants also perceived bias in textbooks but did so using terms such as positive and negative or in terms of interactions with a professor or a specific textbook reading. Irene, for example, stated that she believes textbooks are not biased, are fair, and that

textbook writers “know what they’re talking about,” meaning that they share everything that is important and true. In spite of this, Irene is able to share some very detailed anecdotes about her experiences in Argentina with a professor who introduced an intentionally biased text for the students to read. She had never verbalized this as an encounter with bias, but she does call it a socialist education, one that is one-sided and partial.

Emily describes bias as “not being blinded by one person’s feelings.” She, like the other participants, want for textbooks to be multi-faceted, and she demonstrated that she understands this is a problem in textbooks when she speaks about Christopher Columbus and how the indigenous peoples of his time are not portrayed equally in modern history textbooks. Though Carmen does not define bias as such, she is easily able to answer questions about when she has read positive or negative portrayals in history textbooks. For example, when asked about a positive anecdote she has about a narrative in a history textbook, Carmen speaks about the founding of Pennsylvania. This is important to her because multiple viewpoints could be presented in Pennsylvania, even though they were not in other places.

Linville and Havice (2011) determined that students can be impacted by bias, whether they perceive it or not. Three of the ten participants scored as having perceived bias on the ECO (Pratt, 1972), but did not perceive bias directly. Instead making direct statements about bias, such as speaking about syntax or mentioning the control that a narrative can exert on a reader, the latter group of participants presented their perceptions as a more general desire for textbooks to contain more diversity of argument. For example, Carmen spoke about wanting to look at “both views” on a subject within a textbook, and this comes out in her understanding of Pennsylvania’s history. Instead of directly speaking about the treatment of American history, she perceives when historic narratives contain diverse voices intuitively. Though some of the

students perceived bias in a more clear and direct way while others perceived bias in a more numinous way, all of the participants perceived bias on what was fair or unfair: representing all sides, or not representing enough perspectives.

Sub-Question 1

In answer to sub-question one, “how do college students describe bias,” the student descriptions of bias were often wrapped in words that demonstrated this desire for fairness: whether it was phrases such as “positive” or “negative,” or “bias,” or “open-minded,” all of the students were not so mainly concerned about bias against their own ethnic or religious group as they were concerned about fairness for all peoples portrayed in textbooks.

Toward the end of the focus groups, the participants were asked, “How do you maintain your beliefs when you disagree with something you read in a textbook?” (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014). All of the suggestions for better understanding and engaging with the text included adding more perspectives to current textbooks. According to the participants, this would help textbooks to be fair and give students a better understanding of history. Three of the participants specifically mentioned that there might be two ways of looking at any topic. Carmen spoke about including “both views” of any subject matter, Frank said there are “two sides,” and Greg referred to there being “two sides” to every issue. This polarization demonstrates that these participants feel that there are at least two ways to look at any situation, but Bruce mentions that there might be “multiple” perspectives when he refers to how many different groups he feels should review the material that goes into textbooks. Irene mentioned having “different kinds of people” review the material, Hailey talked about looking at “every side,” and Darla referenced having “groups of kids” talk about what they know about a topic to help textbook writers know what needs to be addressed.

Each of these descriptions demonstrates that the participants want more material to be included that address more views and people groups. Emily and Alice expressed this same desire, but in a more negative way. Emily spoke about not only considering “one person’s narrative” on any particular topic, while Alice spoke specifically about including “minority groups” perspectives in the content of textbooks. Both of these views express the same desire for there to be more views in textbooks, just in negative terms. Jackie said, “Read everything.” This is a holistic expression of the desire to include as many views as possible when trying to understand a subject.

Sub-Question 2

Furthermore, the answer to sub-question two, “how do college students construct perceptions of a topic from the content of religious narratives in history textbooks,” was very similar. Their descriptions of bias through phrases such as “positive” or “negative,” or “bias,” or “open-minded,” demonstrated that the participants are constructing a framework to determine bias based on what they perceive as fair.

Other researchers have noted the relationship between constructivism and understanding student perceptions of bias: Saleem and Thomas (2011) noted that the student and the textbook interact together, one against the other, to create a prism of knowledge. Participants in this study frequently noted how textbook readings or other class materials would evoke a reaction based on the student’s own pre-constructed understandings of what is equitable. Greg, for instance, spoke about how he “always” likes to learn about the sit-ins and non-violent protests during the Civil Rights era. For Greg, this era of history provides a meta-narrative of diversity and equity: it is a period that all readers can relate to because many different groups were part of the protests, and it brought about change using a peaceful approach.

Alice spoke about how she constructs meaning from a course and what tools she uses to determine whether the materials in a course are balanced or not. She stated that one of the main aspects she looks for is whether the material is “well rounded,” or providing information on multiple facets of a topic. When she spoke about learning Roman history, she talked about the religion, political, and military aspects of the Roman Empire. For Alice, equity is providing every dimension of a topic.

Sub-Question 3

Out of all of the possible factors named in research sub-question three that could explain bias, empathy toward others was the one factor that marked all of the participants. Three of the ten participants were currently practicing a particular religion: Hailey, Greg, and Jackie. All three were Christian. Eight out of the ten had a family background in some religion: three were raised Catholic, one Jewish, four Christian. Only two participants did not have a family background in some religion. Only one participant self-identified as politically affiliated: Bruce stated that he is a Democrat. Only one participant made any statements that demonstrated distantiation. However, all ten participants made statements that demonstrated an empathetic worldview.

All of the participants described empathy toward a group different from themselves in one of the following categories: religious, political, or group-based categories. Eight of the participants described empathy toward different religious groups than their own. Emily spoke about empathy toward Christians when she said, “[Christians are] portrayed in a negative way, but your mind can think, ok these people want better, they want a better life.” Bruce was concerned about the way Muslims are presented in textbooks. He said, “[The narratives about 9/11 weren’t] really talking about like all the things that were happening like in Iraq, whether the

US having its influence, or like trying to put its influence like its own government our ideas and values into other countries.”

Irene was empathetic toward Jewish people even though they rejected her as a convert: “Yeah why, that’s what I like to learn. When I study about Judaism I used to be like, ‘Why are they dressing like that?’ ‘Why do they wear wigs?’ But then when I got into it then I really started learning about it: Everything had a reason.” Hailey felt that all of the religions in the textbook were portrayed negatively. Frank spoke about wanting to learn more about Buddhism and studying it as a pastime. Greg spoke about his experience with a Catholic textbook, saying that it did not portray the Jewish people fairly.

Alice, an agnostic, felt empathy toward religious perspectives. She said, “Yeah, I mean I’m definitely more tolerable or tolerant to a lot of things, I’m not so quick to shut down that discussion. I started reading more religious texts after that.” Jackie, a Christian, felt empathy toward students who would make fun of religious perspectives. All of these students were open to looking at other perspectives, even those with which they did not agree.

Three of the participants specifically mentioned feeling empathy toward those in different political groups than their own. Darla and Greg both spoke about being interested in the perspectives of students who supported Donald Trump in the 2016 election. Darla said, “Everyone was so different on how they felt about the different aspects and how they portrayed the presidents or the candidates at that time... I’ve always preferred taking AP classes because... it was like a good setting to like for everyone to be able to say different things.” Darla was open to all political perspectives. Greg said, “There is maybe some individuals who may have thought that, and that’s why they did it...and I’d hate to see what would have happened to them.” Greg

is concerned about how students with different political perspectives might be received by students who disagree.

Alice spoke about how her political perspective on welfare was challenged. She said, “[The discussion on welfare] brought me to a point where I was like ok well is there a logical fallacy here. Can I have a discussion with myself if not anyone else about what I think or believe regarding these social programs? Yes, I’m glad that we have these tools available to people, but how effective are they for the money that we spend on them?” In each of these examples, the participants were able to look at and value political perspective other than theirs.

Finally, three participants demonstrated empathy toward people in different group-based categories. Carmen speaks about her concern for persons in the LGBT movement: “I support the LGBT community so I’m like I’m happy for them and then I see this comment when I’m about to come, I see this comment and it’s like, ‘It’s disgusting.’ And I’m like, ok this person doesn’t like it, ok, that’s not my problem. That’s not their problem.” Greg demonstrates this empathy for other people groups in his interaction with the police officer, when he is stopped on the sidewalk because he looks like someone who was reported to have committed a crime. When Greg was asked about how the interaction made him feel he said, “I couldn’t say that it isn’t warranted, I’ve had. Like I said, I work as a sales rep and when I’ve had signs that say, “Watch out for this individual.” And more often times than not the race is ‘me.’” Greg is actually able to understand the officer’s perspective when the officer profiles him.

Frank was able to feel empathy toward young people he would encounter in his work as a gang unit officer. Even though these young gangsters would call him “racist cracker,” Frank felt empathy toward people who accused him of racism. All of these experiences—religious,

political, and group-based—exemplify the empathy and perspective taking that each participant shared.

Six of the participants ascribed positive motivations to the textbook writers even though they believed textbooks to be biased. Alice, for example, noticed that there is bias in history textbooks, but she saw that simply because writers created the textbooks does not mean they alone are responsible. She described it as a wider issue when she refers to “biases in an organization.” Alice pointed out that the way textbooks are written reflect the cultures of the colleges that buy them just as much as they do the writers who publish them.

Hailey also gave alternate reasons for the bias other than the author’s point of view. Even though she stated that she feels that all of the religions were treated negatively, she said she felt that the textbook author must have done it to protect the religious faiths of the people who would read it. Greg specifically saw Christianity portrayed negatively in the textbook used in this study, but he stated that he would want to sit down and talk to the textbook writer about the writer’s perspective before deciding if the bias was inserted intentionally. Furthermore, when Emily spoke about a textbook she once read that spoke negatively about Jewish people, Emily said that though it was upsetting, she would wonder what the motivation of the authors was: to make other people believe what they are stating or to provide evidence to the contrary. This level of critical thinking is very interesting because Emily is willing to look for alternate motives in authors who specifically mention her ethnic background and defame it.

Bruce and Darla both attributed the bias they find in textbooks to the authors trying to make the books more accurate. Bruce said that the bias may give us a better perspective of how “the ruling class” felt about the people in the accounts in the textbook. Darla said she believes that the bias she sees in religious narratives in history textbooks is due to the authors’ wanting to

use language that would be most accurate to describe a people group. She even insinuated that she believes the people being described might not feel the word choice was biased. These examples demonstrate that the students in this study exemplify an empathy and perspective taking that overflow into many different aspects of their thought processes. Some of the students, such as Hailey and Emily, were even empathetic toward textbook writers who they specifically disagreed with.

Sub-Question 4

When answering research sub-question 4, “how do students verbalize factors that they perceive as minimizing bias,” all of the suggestions for the future revolved around adding more perspectives to current textbooks. According to the participants, this would help textbooks to be fair and give students a better understanding of history. This idea was covered in the literature review, but in a different way.

In the section on critical thinking about the text, I discussed that students are able to think more critically when they are presented with multiple sources of information in their classes. It seems after listening to the students’ suggestions, they sense what the researchers have discovered: they are equally hungry for multiple sources and viewpoints for the narratives they study in class.

Summary

In summary, all of the participants who perceived bias according to the ECO (Pratt, 1972) tool were able to verbalize having perceived bias in different ways and to different degrees. All of the participants, in spite of their differences in how they verbalized bias, wanted the textbooks to be fairer and all of the participants were marked by empathy and perspective taking for people groups other than theirs. All of the participants wanted these alternate perspectives to be

represented in history textbooks, and all described how adding more perspectives would benefit the textbooks and minimize bias.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perception of bias of college students, specifically those who claim to perceive it at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. To that end, I posed and answered one central and four sub questions that uncover the essence of the phenomenon observed. The answers discovered during this study have lasting implications for the field of social sciences. In this chapter, I review the answers to the research questions, their implications, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

The problem was, while there has been much research on whether bias is in history textbooks, including religious bias, not much research has been done on why college students may experience bias in textbooks. Through this study, students from many different backgrounds were able to share their perspectives on bias in the religious narratives in history textbooks. Therefore, this study has uniquely addressed a complicated topic, as no other study has asked students from different backgrounds their perceptions of this topic. The methods used in this research were semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. Data collection started by sending out emails at three different campuses of a local college. Since this only garnered six responses, I also visited several classes to speak to students about my research. I met with professors to see who might be interested in helping me with my research. Two professors at a different local college ended up reaching out to their students for me. It was after this that I received the 60 respondents I needed for my prescreening tool and the 10 I needed for my final research.

Data analysis began with the researcher's personal transcription of all data. From there, the researcher used horizontalization, a method by which all data from participants are listened to. The researcher read these data using constant comparison, reading several narratives more than once and in different orders to discover themes. From there, the data were coded and the major themes arose. Student portraits were used to express results and themes revealed during research. James Zabloski (2010) stated, "Portraits explore in detail the participants significant life events and relationships... as well as their reactions to school constructs and school life" (pp. 76-77). This is important, as research question three seeks to determine how life events may affect student constructs mentioned in research questions one, two, and four. Van Manen (2014) said, "Stories or anecdotes are so powerful, so effective, and so consequential in that they can explain things that resist straightforward explanation or conceptualization" (Kindle Locations 6217-6218). Since bias usually is defined by example, it requires more than a straightforward description: it necessitates being explained by story and experience (Tollini, 2010). The students all perceived bias, but verbalized it differently, and all were best able to capture this perception of bias in textbooks through story.

Three themes arose from this study. First, there are students who perceived bias in textbooks. These students categorized their perceptions according to whether or not the treatment of a group was "fair." Second, this concern about fairness was largely due to the students' empathy and perspective taking. Finally, the students all spoke about adding different resources to the current presentation of textbooks to lessen bias. Each of these themes has prior research behind it.

Research Sub-Question 1

Research sub-question 1 was, “how do college students describe bias?” Students’ descriptions of bias were often wrapped in words that demonstrated this desire for fairness: whether it was phrases such as “positive” or “negative,” or “bias,” or “open-minded,” all of the students were not as concerned about bias against their own ethnic or religious group as they were concerned about fairness for all peoples portrayed in textbooks. As indicated in the discussion of themes above, students’ descriptions of bias cited the perceived exclusion of viewpoints from a narrative both negatively affecting the functionality of the text and, more importantly to the readers, offending their sense of social justice. Abbott and Cameron (2014) speak about the implications of their research and its effect on future research, saying, “Although the current research focuses on intergroup attitudes [including] social exclusion... there is also a moral component. Future research should examine moral reasoning, as the act to intervene assertively is relevant to moral development; in particular, the moral concepts of fairness and concern for another’s welfare” (p. 178). Even when participants reported sympathy for a dominant narrative, they expressed concern at finding the perspectives of marginalized groups excluded from discussions of history. Students’ responses suggested that they perceived their description of *bias as exclusion* as having these two implications, which are further discussed below.

The first implication of bias as exclusion might be described as pragmatic, and it related to the relevance of a biased text to readers. Terms used by participants to indicate the opposite of bias included “well-rounded,” indicating a perception of bias as an overemphasis of one perspective that limited the scope of a narrative’s relevance. Bias was perceived as a limitation of a narrative, while a multifaceted presentation was considered more robust. Although bias

might be used to control and shape the perceptions of the reader, that shaping can impair the student's ability to construct reality due to the limiting of perspectives. Though this researcher understands that this shaping can often occur when creating historic narratives, it is also important to be mindful of the kind of bias such a design can imply, which is why Harper (2012) states the importance of an author's use of the preface to inform the audience of reasons for inclusions and exclusions of certain narratives. Like Harper (2012), the participants also perceived this "direct[ing] rather than informin[ing]" (p. 43) as a weakness that made the continuing validity of a text contingent on the continuing predominance of the worldview it promoted.

The second implication of describing bias as exclusion was ethical in nature. In addition to limiting and weakening a historical narrative, bias was also described as a social injustice perpetrated against the groups whose perspectives were marginalized or excluded. Students' use of terms such as "fairness" to mean the opposite of bias, and their voiced concern for the perceived misrepresentation of marginalized groups, indicated a strong ethical component to their conception of bias.

Research Sub-Question 2

Research sub-question 2 was, "how do college students construct perceptions of a topic from the content of religious narratives in history textbooks?" Students' descriptions of bias through phrases such as "positive" or "negative," or "bias," or "open-minded," demonstrated that the participants are constructing a framework to determine bias based on what they perceive as fair. Although participants' responses indicated that they perceived their description of *bias as exclusion* as having pragmatic and ethical implications, their construction of perceptions of a topic indicated that the ethical implication was their primary concern. Further, participants'

construction of perceptions of a topic indicated that the ethical implication of bias as exclusion had two components.

The first component was participants' concern with social justice, as manifested in their desire for more inclusive, pluralistic historical narratives. Participants indicated their concern with the principled ethical issue of social justice when they described biased texts as "unfair" and expressed their anxiety about the ways in which marginalized and disadvantaged groups were apparently portrayed. However, participants' ethical considerations had a second component, which may be described as personal. Despite their expressions of empathy for textbook authors, participants indicated that they themselves felt wronged and underserved by exclusionary historical narratives, insinuating they were not being given a sufficient range of information to prepare them adequately to navigate a world in which they were certain to encounter different perspectives. Thus, findings indicated that when participants were required (e.g., by the unavailability of alternative sources of information) to construct perceptions of a topic from narratives that were perceived as biased, they qualified those perceptions with an awareness of perceived wrongs against marginalized groups and against themselves as readers.

Research Sub-Question 3

Research sub-question 3 was, "how does a college student's, religion, political orientation, psychology, empathetic worldview, or family influences influence perception of bias in the text?" Out of all of the possible factors named in the sub-question that could explain participants' perceptions of bias, empathy toward others was the only factor indicated by the responses of all 10 participants. This finding was consistent with findings related to previous sub-questions, in that strong feelings of empathy in participants were consistent with the emphasis placed on the ethical, social-justice implications of their description of bias as

exclusion. The finding that participants' empathy determined many of their perceptions of bias was also consistent with the finding that almost all participants expressed empathy with authors of biased textbooks, despite their reported perception that such authors were consciously or unconsciously undermining social justice and stinting readers.

The finding that empathy determined perceptions of bias was also consistent with Fish's (1980) theory that the construction of reality from a text is incompatible with the idea of an objective truth when discussing bias in texts. The participants perceived reality and history much as Fish (1980) does: as a perspective or set of perspectives which were accessible to empathy, rather than as a set of logical inferences from objective evidence. Bias as exclusion was perceived as an artificial (whether conscious or unconscious) and presumptively invalid barrier that inhibited the reader's empathetic connection with excluded perspectives, and which therefore in essence placed an artificial limitation on the reader's perspective. Participants were less concerned with whether a given historical account was objectively correct or incorrect than with empathetically comprehending as many perspectives on events as possible. Texts that did not facilitate empathetic connection with all groups of people engaged in a historical event were perceived as biased, and these texts redirected participants' empathy from direct connection with marginalized groups to an ethical and emotional anxiety about the marginalization itself.

Research Sub-Question 4

Research sub-question 4 was, "how do students verbalize factors that they perceive as minimizing bias?" All of the suggestions for the future revolved around adding more perspectives to current textbooks. According to the participants, this would help textbooks to be fair and give students a better understanding of history. Implicit in participants' responses was a perception that different perspectives on historical events were preferable to any broader,

overarching narrative, and such a reconciliation would be undesirable, because it would reintroduce concerns about bias through uncritical reliance on its own assumptions. As discussed above, participants' interest was in the varied perspectives of people who had been present during historical events, and in the perspectives of contemporary heirs to that history, rather than searching for an historical account shaped by prevailing theories of how a narrative ought to be compiled. A text therefore minimized bias when it facilitated empathetic access to a variety of perspectives.

Central Research Question

The central question was, "how do college students who claim to perceive bias describe their experience of that perception of bias in religious narratives in history textbooks?" The answer to the central question may be derived from the answers to the sub-questions.

Participants experienced bias in religious narratives in history textbooks as a social injustice perpetrated against marginalized groups, as a weakness and a limitation in the narrative, and as a shortfall in the author's performance of the obligation to inform the reader. Participants' experiences of the perception of bias were informed by empathy, in that they experienced a text's bias primarily in terms of their empathetic anxiety for the perceived injustice to groups whose perspectives were marginalized, but balanced their dissatisfaction with an empathetic sense that the authors' intentions were generally honorable. Participants perceived and experienced bias as the exclusion of perspectives, and they perceived the minimization of bias as consisting in the inclusion of as many perspectives as possible, in such a way that facilitated the reader's empathetic connection with those perspectives.

Discussion

The result of this study is that perceptions of students regarding bias found in the

religious narratives in history textbooks were uncovered. Though the essential themes found in the study were backed up by prior research, this study provided completely new information to the field of history textbook writing because college students from all backgrounds were able to speak about the factors that caused them to perceive bias in these narratives. Furthermore, though prior research has determined several different factors that might contribute to a perception of bias, this study found that one factor overwhelmingly contributed to this perception.

Empirical Literature

Why did students experience empathy? All of them perceived bias and all of them had suggestions for the future: they did not perceive lower levels of bias coming from the textbook as it is currently written. Ogle and Damhorst (2010) stated that changing the material in textbooks is one way to increase empathy and lower levels of prejudice. Based on my research, the participants in this study agree. Some of them related anecdotes increasing empathy due to more primary sources, more spiritual literacy, and more exposure to literature from different cultures, though this was not a trend.

Therefore, if this is not currently the variable that is increasing empathy in the majority of the participants, then what is? One answer is that this increased empathy may be coming from the college environment itself. A UCLA study (2007) determined that student caring about different races and cultures increases during the college years. This was specifically true of Alice and Jackie, who both related experiences of reading something new in the college classroom setting that caused them to think differently about their own deeply held beliefs. Both further study into what methods addressed in the recommendations and what current variables are increasing empathy must be discovered.

Ogle and Damhorst (2010) talked about how to qualify empathetic concern: the participants demonstrated they had empathetic concern when they engaged in perspective taking or when they compare themselves to another person, especially of a stigmatized group. The participants in this study did exhibit such concern on numerous occasions, such as Greg, when he put himself in the position of the police officer when thinking about why he was stopped; Emily, when she compared her religious experience to that of Christians, even though she is from a different religious group; Carmen, when she expressed concern about the LGBT community; or Giovanna, when she considered St. Augustine's point of view, even though she is not religious at all.

Poteat et al. (2012) explored empathy and perspective-taking from a more quantitative perspective, for example, wanting to protect people when they are being mistreated or trying to examine everyone's perspective on a situation before making a decision on how they themselves will react. These are some questions from the Inter-personal Reactivity Index, and these phrases and ideas were echoed in the research of this study, such as when Bruce said he is concerned about the way Muslims are portrayed in history textbooks, when Irene was concerned about the mistreatment of Jewish people, or when Darla expressed interest in the perspectives of Trump supporters. Each of these is an example of a participant looking at others' perspectives and points of view.

Abbott and Cameron (2014) defined empathy as "the ability to experience the same feelings as those of another person in response to a particular situation" (p. 169). They also stated that "cultural openness" is key to standing up for disenfranchised groups (p. 170). The participants in this study demonstrated the level of empathy Abbott and Cameron (2014) spoke of when Frank empathized with the gang members who were racist towards him, when Jackie

said she felt badly for people who are prejudiced against Christians, or when Hailey said she was upset that all of the religions in the text seemed to be treated negatively.

Bias can be unnoticeable (Wade, 1993), yet can influence students whether they notice it or not (Linvill & Havice, 2011). There are many kinds of media that contend to provide that influence, but the classroom is meant to be a safe haven from those influences. The history classroom is one of the greatest examples of the concern of bias in the classroom, and issues of the history classroom's influence are still hotly debated. Researchers have spent decades trying to determine if there is bias in the classroom, even possibly religious bias (Allen, 2009; Bromley, 2013; Eisenstein & Clark, 2013; Romanowski, 2009; Saleem & Thomas, 2011). The research demonstrates that the participants in this study gave responses that align with the qualitative and quantitative definitions of empathy, and that they defined bias as a lack of empathy, resulting in the exclusion of valid perspectives from historical narratives. Each of the participants, to one degree or another, engaged in perspective taking, desired to protect the disenfranchised, or attempted to experience the feelings of others. After examining the data and allowing themes to rise from the artifacts, this was the most cohesive explanation for the students' perceptions of bias.

Theoretical Literature

Reader response theory looks at the reader of a text as the main agent in determining meaning (Carson & Moo, 2009). This reading can also be influenced. Fish (1980), a founder of reader response theory, further clarifies how a reader might determine meaning, including social factors into the equation. Fish (1980) stated, "Disagreements cannot be resolved by reference to the facts, because the facts emerge only in the context of some point of view," or, alternately, "agreement, rather than being a proof of the stability of objects, is a testimony to the power of an

interpretive community to constitute the objects upon which its members can then agree” (p. 338). This study was conducted specifically to investigate influences on student construction of texts. This study’s findings were in agreement with reader response theory, indicating that readers’ determinations of texts are socially determined, specifically by empathy for groups that may be excluded from dominant narratives.

Implications

The purpose of this section is to address the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. Each kind of implication is discussed in a separate sub-section.

Theoretical Implications

Prior research confirms both the subjective nature of perceiving bias and the methods of increasing empathy that can lead to lower levels of prejudice. Constructivism states that people will have different understandings of events based on their individual experiences. Reader response theory asserts that readers will bring that experience to the text (Carson & Moo, 2009). All of the students in this study spoke about the experience of empathy that they brought to the text. Therefore, even the agreements the participants had on their interpretations of the text could be due to the shared experience of reading and interacting with the text through a lens of empathy (Fish, 1980).

As discussed above, Fish indicated that “facts emerge only in the context of some point of view” and “agreement . . . is a testimony to the power of an interpretive community to constitute the objects upon which its members can then agree” (p. 338). Notable in Fish’s argument is the implication that readings of a text are determined by a consensus existing in the interpretive community of which the reader is a member. It is an important theoretical implication of this study that empathetic interpretations of bias in texts were reached in

opposition to the prevailing interpretive community of which participants were members. The textbooks indicated dominant narratives, which inform and are informed by interpretive consensus in the community in which participants formed their own interpretations. Perceiving bias in the textbooks based on an empathetic concern for the displacement of marginalized voices constituted an implicit rejection of the consensus of the interpretive community, on the grounds that it perpetuated historical injustices. Participants conducted oppositional readings of the textbooks by empathizing with perspectives that were omitted from them, such that readings were determined by surmises about consensus in interpretive communities of which they were often not members.

Empirical Implications

Interestingly, the quality of the reader is also important (Lewis, 1992). The quality of the reader may determine how much bias and which kinds of bias are perceived. This may explain why different participants verbalized the bias they perceived in different ways. In this way, the participants shared the experience of perceiving bias and the experience of empathy toward different people groups, but their levels of engagement with the text may account for their different verbalizations of this perception.

Poteat et al. (2013) determined that both increasing empathy and the skill of perspective taking could lower prejudice. This study confirms both of these conclusions: students were empathetic toward their own and other's religions. They also demonstrated high levels of perspective taking even toward the textbook writers as well as those with whom they disagreed. These are positive traits that all students should gain from attending college: can we create this kind of empathy in more students?

The most significant empirical implication of this study related to the study's purpose,

which was to describe the perception of bias of college students, specifically those who claim to perceive it at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are five factors indicated in the literature as potential influences on students' perceptions of bias. The first factor is religion; if a student identifies with a particular religion, they also may feel there is bias if the religion is not portrayed the way that student prefers (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). The second factor is political bias. Whether students are specifically religious or not, they can be influenced to see bias in textbooks because of their political persuasion (Linville & Havice, 2011). Psychology can be a third factor that impacts an experience of bias, as when the curriculum students are taught in school does not line up with the information they hold as true (Erikson, 1950). A student's level of empathy can also influence a perception of bias. If one student is empathetic to the needs of a minority group, that student may be sensitive to what could be understood as bias against that group, whether the student is part of the group or not (Abbott & Cameron, 2014). Lastly, a student's family influences may impact the way students interact in the classroom (Bert, 2011).

It was a surprising finding in this study that only one of these five factors emerged as relevant. As previously discussed, participants experienced bias in religious narratives in history textbooks as a social injustice perpetrated against marginalized groups, as a weakness or limitation in the narrative, and as a shortfall in the author's performance of the obligation to inform the reader. Participants' experiences of the perception of bias in this study were informed by empathy, in that they experienced a text's bias primarily in terms of their empathetic anxiety for the perceived injustice to groups whose perspectives were marginalized, but balanced by their dissatisfaction with an empathetic sense that the authors' intentions were generally honorable.

Participants in this study came from a variety of backgrounds and held a variety of

beliefs, such that the potential influence of psychological, family, political, and religious considerations on their reading of texts was likely to vary, potentially resulting in a variety of perceived biases or perceptions of lack of bias. However, the readings of all participants converged on interpretations of bias based primarily on empathy. The predominant influence of empathy in determining students' perceptions of bias in religious textbooks leads to a number of clear, actionable practical implications.

Practical Implications

When I set out to begin this study, I imagined that the research would help textbook writers understand why some students perceive bias in textbooks and what might be done to lessen that bias. The students who participated in this study all suggested that more perspectives could be included in history textbooks in order to minimize bias. Therefore, some recommendations for textbook writers looking to engage students in a more holistic understanding of history might consider the following recommendations for increasing the number of perspectives presented in the text.

Textbook authors may increase the presence of marginalized perspectives by including writings from other cultures, allowing marginalized interpretive communities to communicate to readers in their own voices. In general, an increased use of primary sources is desirable, to limit the layers of interpretive bias (and the resulting marginalization of disempowered groups) from obscuring the textual sources of current knowledge. A further means of including marginalized perspectives in historical education would be to use well-researched historical novels that include conjectural or actual representations of the psychologies of marginalized peoples, as a means of facilitating perspective-taking and fostering empathy.

Bias in textbooks may be inevitable, but students can be taught to detect and think critically about it, such that they are able to confront and scrutinize the authorial biases that unbalance historical narratives. Textbook authors should also be given the opportunity to express their perspectives explicitly, by expressing their own suppositions in the prefaces of history textbooks, including how they chose which material to add to their surveys. Inclusion of material on spiritual literacy in religious textbooks would further contribute to perspective-taking and empathy, which would give students' greater access to the experiential bases of their topic of study.

Delimitations and Limitations

Limitations of a study are weaknesses inherent in the study design that are not subject to the researcher's control. One limitation of this study was its reliance on interviews as a primary data collection procedure. Reliance on participants' self-reports makes the credibility of the study's results dependent on participant honesty, and the dependability of the study's results contingent upon participants' having sufficient insight to provide responses that indicate stable perceptions, rather than ephemeral reactions to circumstances unrelated to the study. To encourage participant honesty, all reasonable precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality. To facilitate the accuracy and dependability of participants' responses, participants reviewed their transcripts for accuracy and were invited to suggest corrections, enabling them to review their answers from the perspective of 'second thoughts.'

Another limitation of the study is the quality of the reader. C.S. Lewis (1992) stated that the quality of the reader will impact comprehension. The researcher tried to minimize the effects of different levels of verbal comprehension by thoroughly explaining how to use the ECO (Pratt, 1972) before students began the prescreening. Furthermore, the researcher was available to

answer vocabulary questions while students applied the ECO to the text.

The delimitations of a study are limits to the study's scope imposed by the researcher's choice. The confinement of data collection to a limited geographic area, and to a sample of students attending similar institutions, may limit the transferability of the findings to other populations and samples. However, textbooks are used primarily by students, so the recruitment of students as study participants was the optimal procedure for gathering relevant data. The confinement of the research to a limited geographic area allowed the researcher greater access to the participants to facilitate collection of a comprehensive dataset. Additionally, only students who were identified by the ECO instrument as perceiving bias in textbooks were included in the sample. However, given that an objective of the study was to examine influences on perceptions of bias, rather than influences on perceptions of whether or not bias is present, this delimitation was justified.

Recommendations for Future Research

One area of future research would be trying to determine how the quality of the reader and the understanding of vocabulary might impact student perceptions of bias. Lewis (1992) explained that the quality of the reader might have an impact on constructivism and Reader Response. Not all of the students taking the ECO (Pratt, 1972) understood all of the vocabulary presented in the history text used in the study. Therefore, one question might be how does the quality of the reader impact perceptions of bias.

Another area of future study might be attempting to determine what about the college atmosphere increases empathy. The UCLA study (2007) determined that empathy toward other religions and worldviews increases during the college years, but the study does not address why. In fact, the study specifically states that professors and in-class interactions were not the factors

that changed student perceptions in this study. Therefore, further research should be conducted into what factors do currently increase empathy toward other religions and worldviews.

Summary

I believe the research presented in this study has special significance against the backdrop of current perceptions of college students and the current political atmosphere. Current news and popular culture have labeled today's college students as "snowflakes": immature complainers in need of safe spaces and unable to open themselves to different points of view. At the beginning of this study, I believed that this was somewhat true and thought that students would only perceive bias when it contrasted with their own worldview. I was mistaken.

What struck me about the data that I gathered through the different methods in this study was the depth of perspective taking in which the participants engaged. They were open to new ideas, willing to think about and explore other perspectives, even when it did not agree with their own ideas or perspectives. In fact, not only were the students able to look at different perspectives, but also hostile ones. Some of these participants went so far as to think about the perspectives of those who were religiously or racially biased against them.

These conclusions are especially pertinent in today's angry political and social environment. At a time when opposing groups tend to assume the worst about each other, there needs to be a way for people of different backgrounds to come together and listen to each other. For this reason, not only textbook writers, but also colleges and universities should examine the methods that could be used to actuate that dialogue. Perspective taking and empathy are so valuable; we must discover what about the college atmosphere still enables it and what textbooks writers can do to further it.

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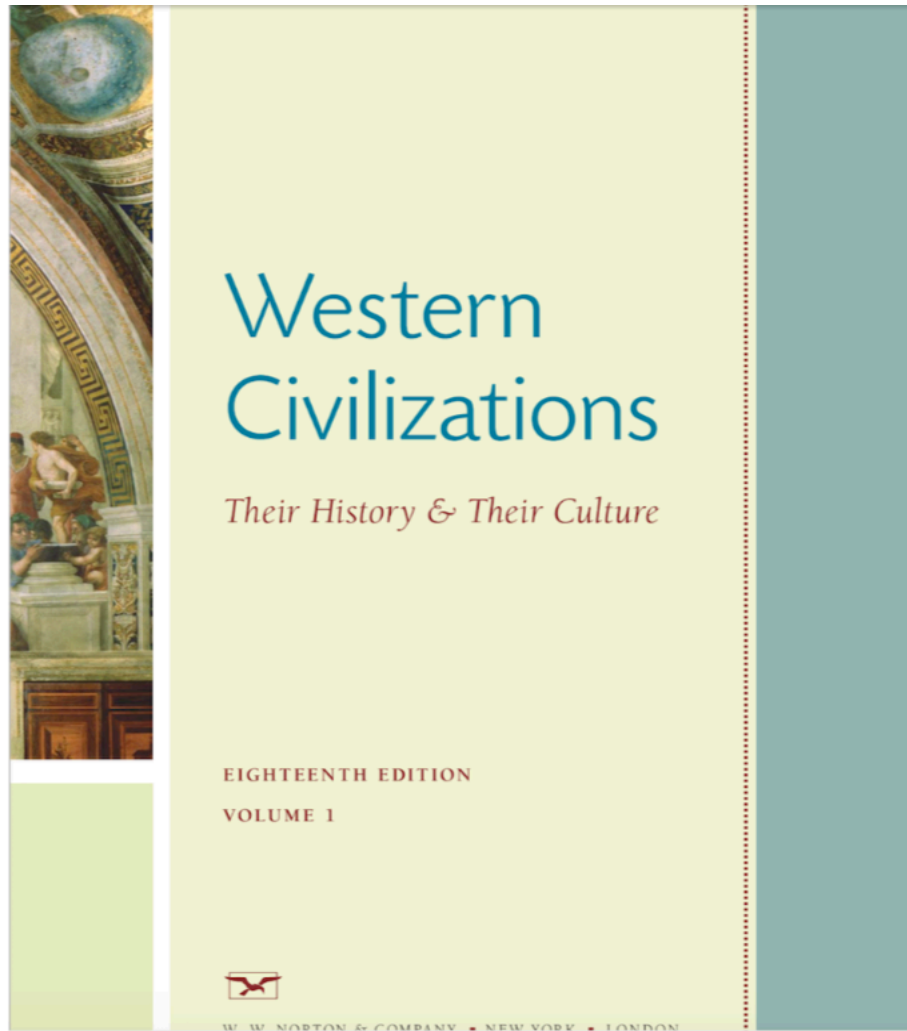
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APPENDICES

Appendix A Textbook Selections

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WESTERN CIVILIZATIONS: THEIR HISTORY AND THEIR CULTURE, EIGHTEENTH EDITION by Joshua Cole and Carol Symes. Copyright © 2014, 2011, 2008, 2005, 2002, 1998, 1993, 1988, 1984, 1980, 1973, 1968, 1963, 1958, 1954, 1949, 1947, 1941 by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.



JUDAISM

to choose good over evil, to be truthful, to love and help one another to the best of their powers, to aid the poor, and to practice generous hospitality. Those who do so will be rewarded in an afterlife, when the dead are resurrected on Judgment Day and consigned either to a realm of joy or to the flames of despair. In the scriptures of the Zoroastrian faith, known as the Avesta (compiled, like the Bible, over the course of many centuries), the rewards for righteousness are great but not immediate. They are spiritual, not material.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEBREW MONOTHEISM

Of all the important developments that we have traced in our study of the Iron Age Near East, perhaps none is of greater significance than monotheism: the belief in a single god, the creator and ruler of all things. This development is traditionally associated with the Hebrews, but even the Hebrews were not always monotheists. Those who argued for the exclusive worship of Yahweh were a minority within

Hebrew society, albeit a vocal and assertive one. How the Hebrews came to regard Yahweh as the only divine being in the universe, and to root their identity in such an exclusive religious outlook, is a phenomenon that can only be understood within its historical context.

From Monolatry to Monotheism

For those who later advocated the exclusive worship of Yahweh, the early history of the Hebrews was full of embarrassments. Even the Hebrew scriptures reveal their propensity for the worship of many gods. Yahweh himself, in commanding that his people “have no other gods before me,” clearly acknowledged the existence of other gods. The older, polytheistic Hebrew religion honored nature spirits such as Azazel and the Canaanite deity El, whose name is an important element in many Hebrew place-names (for example, Bethel) and soon became a synonym for “god.” The temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem had even included altars dedicated to Ba’al and his wife Asherah, a fertility goddess. Later Hebrew kings continued such practices, overriding the protests of religious purists devoted to Yahweh.

By the beginning of the first millennium, however, the Hebrews living under the rule of David began to promote monolatry, meaning that they exalted one god without denying the existence of others. Although the legendary prophet Moses is often credited as the first promoter of Yahweh's cult, sometime around the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., the ascendancy of Yahweh really took place much later, under the influence of the Levites, a tribe who claimed unique priestly authority over Yahweh's worship and sought to enhance their own power and prestige by discrediting other gods.

The success of their campaign rested on the Levites' access to writing. As we have frequently noted, the written word was especially potent in the ancient world because the skills necessary for its mastery were rare. In an age of constant threats to Hebrew religious and political sovereignty, the literacy of the Levites thus helped to preserve and promote Yahweh's worship. So did the political supremacy of David's dynasty, which bolstered its own legitimacy by allying itself with the Levites. The result was a centralized cult situated in the new royal capital of Jerusalem, which attempted to link the political and the religious identity of the Hebrews to the acknowledgment of Yahweh as the supreme god.

Nevertheless, the worship of other Hebrew gods actually increased in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E., perhaps in reaction to the austere morality demanded and imposed by the Yahwists. One of these, Jeremiah (c. 637–587 B.C.E.), railed against "foreign" cults and warned of the disastrous consequences that would arise if Yahweh's people did not remain faithful to him. For the Yahweh of this era was still imagined as a conventional god. He was understood as possessing a physical body and was often portrayed as capricious and irascible. Further, he was not omnipotent; his power was largely confined to the territory occupied by the Hebrews.

Still, some of the Hebrews' most important contributions to subsequent Western religions crystallized during this period. One was a theology of Yahweh's transcendence: the teaching that God is not part of nature but exists outside of it. God can therefore be understood, in purely intellectual or abstract terms, as entirely separate from the operations of the natural world. Complementing this principle was the belief that Yahweh had appointed humans to be the rulers of nature by divine mandate. In the book of Genesis, when Yahweh orders Adam and Eve to "replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over . . . every living thing," his injunction stands in striking contrast to other accounts of creation in which humans are made to serve the gods. Finally, Hebrew religious thought was moving in this period toward the articulation of universal ethics—a universal theory of justice and righteousness. According to the Babylonian flood story, for example, a particularly petulant god destroys humanity because their noise deprives him of sleep.

In Genesis, by contrast, Yahweh sends a flood in punishment for human wickedness but saves Noah and his family because "Noah was a just man."

The Hebrews honored Yahweh during this era by subscribing to certain moral precepts and taboos. The Ten Commandments as they now appear in Exodus 20:3–17 may not yet have existed in that exact form, but they certainly reflect earlier ethical injunctions against murder, adultery, lying, and greed. In addition, the Hebrews observed an array of ritual practices unusual in the ancient world, such as infant circumcision, adherence to strict dietary laws, and refraining from labor on the seventh day of the week.

Yet the moral standards imposed by Yahweh on the Hebrew community were not binding when the Hebrews dealt with outsiders. Lending at interest, for example, was not acceptable among Hebrews but was quite acceptable between a Hebrew and a non-Hebrew. Such distinctions applied also to more serious issues, such as the killing of



THE GODDESS ASHERAH. The Canaanite fertility goddess, Asherah, was the wife of the god Ba'al (or his father, El), but she also figures in some inscriptions as the wife of the Hebrew god Yahweh. One Hebrew king placed an image of her in the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem. ■ *Why would this be viewed as controversial?*

CHRISTIANITY

The Career of Jesus

Yeshua bar Yosef (Joshua, son of Joseph), known to the Greeks as Jesus, is one of the few figures of the ancient world—certainly one of the few commoners—about whose life we know a great deal. The earliest writings that mention Jesus specifically are the letters of his follower Paul of Tarsus, a Hellenized Jew who was active during the 50s and 60s C.E. These epistles are closely followed by many different narratives of Jesus's life and teachings, most written between c. 70 and 100 C.E. Four such accounts were eventually included in the New Testament, a collection of Christian scriptures appended to the Greek text of the Hebrew Bible around the third century C.E. In their original Greek, these accounts were called *evangelia* ("good messages"); we know them as *Gospels*, an Old English word that means the same thing.

Jesus was born around the year 4 B.C.E., a generation or so after Augustus came to power in Rome. (He was not born precisely in the first year of the Common Era as we now reckon it. When the monk Dionysius Exiguus first calculated time "in the year of Our Lord" during the sixth century, he made some mistakes.) When Jesus was around thirty years old, he was endorsed by a Jewish preacher of moral reform, John the Baptist, whom some considered to be a prophet. Thereafter, Jesus traveled widely around the rural areas of Galilee and Judea, preaching and displaying unusual healing powers. He accumulated a number of disciples, some of whom had political ambitions.

Around the year 30 C.E., Jesus staged an entry into Jerusalem during Passover, a major religious holiday that brought large and excitable crowds to the city. This move was interpreted as a bid for political power by both the Roman colonial government and the high-ranking Jews of the Temple. Three of the Gospel accounts say that Jesus also drew attention to himself by attacking merchants and moneychangers associated with the Temple. The city's religious leaders therefore arrested him and turned him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilatus (Pilate), for sentencing.

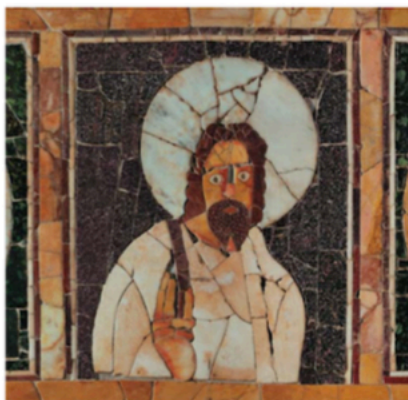
Pilate's main concern was to preserve peace during a volatile religious festival. He knew that his authority depended on maintaining good relations with local Jewish elites and with Herod, a recent convert to Judaism who ruled the province of Galilee in collaboration with Rome, as a client king of the empire. Because Jesus was a resident of Galilee, not a citizen of Roman Judea, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for sentencing. But Herod sent him back to Pilate, politely indicating that dealing with Jesus fell under Roman jurisdiction. So Pilate chose to make an example of

Jesus by condemning him to death by crucifixion, the standard criminal penalty for those judged guilty of sedition. It had been rumored that Jesus planned to lead a rebellion, and something similar had happened in the second century B.C.E., when the Maccabees overthrew Seleucid rule. Indeed, the Roman occupation of the region had only begun in 67 B.C.E. and was still resented by many Jews. Pilate would have been mindful of all this.

That might have been the end of the story. But soon after Jesus's execution, his followers began to assert that he had risen from the dead before being taken up into heaven. Moreover, they said that Jesus had promised to return again at the end of time. Meanwhile, he had promised spiritual support to his followers in their own preaching missions. His entire career now had to be rethought and reinterpreted by his followers: in life, he had been a teacher and healer; in death, he had been revealed as something more. The evidence of this reinterpretation has come down to us in the letters of Paul and in the Gospel narratives.

Jesus and Judaism

In 1947, an extraordinary cache of parchment and papyrus scrolls was discovered in a cave near Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea. Over the course of the next decade, eleven more caves were found to house similar texts dating from the first century C.E. Only since the mid-1980s, however,



JESUS. This depiction of Jesus is from a third-century C.E. stone inlay.

ISLAM

MUHAMMAD AND THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

In many ways, the civilization that formed around the religion of Islam mirrors the Roman Empire in its global reach and longevity; in this, it is truly one of Rome's heirs. Islam (Arabic for "submission") also resembles the early republic of Rome in that it demands from its followers not just adherence to common forms of worship but also to certain social and cultural norms. But whereas the Roman Empire came to undergird Christianity, and elevated it to the status of a major faith by legalizing it, the Islamic faith was itself the engine of imperial expansion. Indeed, Islam is unique among the major religions in the way it has *created* political empires rather than depending on them.

The Revelations of Muhammad

Islam had its beginnings in Arabia, a desert land considered so forbidding that neither the Romans nor the Persians sought to conquer it. Arabian society was tribal and did not revolve around urban settlements. Many Arabs were herdsmen, living off the milk of their camels and the produce



INTERIOR OF HAGIA SOPHIA. The revolutionary structure of the church, shown here, made it appear as if the enormous dome floated on light and air.

of desert oases. But like the Hittites in the second millennium B.C.E. (Chapter 1), their very mobility, ingenuity, and pioneering spirit made them excellent explorers and long-distance traders. In the second half of the sixth century, when protracted wars between Byzantium and Persia made travel dangerous for merchants, the Arabs quickly established themselves as guides, couriers, and guardians of transit routes between Africa and Asia.

As part of this process, towns began to emerge. The most prominent of these was Mecca, an ancient sacred site that lay at the crossroads of major caravan routes. Mecca was home to the Kaaba (*KAH-ah-bah*), a shrine housing the Black Stone worshiped by many Arabian tribes. (It may be a meteorite, and hence of celestial origin.) The tribe that controlled this shrine, the Quraish (*kur-AYSH*), thus came to dominate the economic and religious life of the whole region, forming an aristocracy of traders and entrepreneurs.

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a member of this tribe. He was born in Mecca about 570. Orphaned early in life, he entered the service of a rich widow whom he later married, thereby attaining financial security.

Until middle age he lived as a prosperous trader, little different from his fellow townsmen. But around 610, he experienced a spiritual epiphany. At this time, the Arab tribes worshiped many gods. Yet like the ancient Hebrews, they also acknowledged one god as more powerful. For the Hebrews, God was Yahweh; for the Arabs, Allah. But whereas the Hebrews' embrace of monotheism was a long and gradual process, Muhammad's conversion was sudden, the immediate consequence of revelation. Thereafter, Muhammad received further revelations that became the basis for his teachings, and by which he was persuaded to accept the calling of a prophet and to proclaim the new faith to his tribe.

At first, he was not very successful in gaining converts. In Mecca, tribal leaders probably feared that his teachings would diminish the importance of the Kaaba. The town of Yathrib to the north, however, had no such concerns. Its representatives invited Muhammad to live among them and to serve as judge and arbiter in local rivalries. Muhammad and a few loyal friends accepted this invitation in 622. Because this migration—in Arabic, the *Hijrah* (*HIIJ-ruh*)—marks the beginning of Muhammad's wider influence, Muslims regard it as the beginning of time. Just as Christians date all events according to the birth of Jesus (see Chapter 6), so Muslims begin their dating system with the Hijrah.

Muhammad changed the name of Yathrib to Medina ("City of the Prophet") and established himself as the town's ruler. In so doing, he consciously organized his followers into a political community held together by shared economic ambitions as well as by a shared set of beliefs and rituals. Yet he did not abandon his desire to exercise political and prophetic authority among his own people, the Quraish. Accordingly, he and his followers began raiding Quraish caravans traveling beyond Mecca. The Quraish defended themselves, but they could not continue to operate an extensive commercial enterprise in the face of such violent threats. By 630, Muhammad had worn down the opposition and was invited back to Mecca. His kinsmen submitted themselves to his authority and accepted his teachings. Muhammad, for his part, ensured that the Kaaba's shrine was revered as Islam's holiest place, a status it maintains today. And because Mecca had long been a pilgrimage site and gathering place for tribes throughout Arabia, many people were exposed to Muhammad's teachings. At the time of his death in 632, Islam had become an established faith.

Muhammad and the Qur'an

As its name indicates, the faith of Islam calls for absolute submission to Allah, the same God worshiped by Jews and

Appendix B Approval to Use Excerpts From *Western Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture*

August 1, 2019

Sarah Herrero
8305 Crespi Blvd Apt 3C
Miami Beach, FL 33141

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Appendix C Pre-Screening Tool

All excerpts are reproduced from:

Pratt, D. (1972). *How to find and measure bias in textbooks*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

(a) Define the sources to be analyzed. (b) Define the subject of interest completely enough so as to leave no doubt. (c) The analysts should practice scoring to become familiar with the procedure, scoring, and how to resolve inconsistencies. (d) Peruse the source for references to the subject. Each time a favorable or unfavorable word is used; record it on the score sheet. This analysis should be slow and careful. Problems with analysis occur when words are omitted. (e) Words that are merely descriptive should not be included. (f) Evaluative terms can be applied in a positive or negative way and should not be overlooked. (g) Terms should be listed as adjectives, nouns, and participles. (h) A cardinal rule in analysis is never to violate the original meaning of the word. (i) Be careful of the use of irony. (j) Statements directly and indirectly quoted should also be counted. (k) A total of the favorable and unfavorable terms will be compiled. (l) Calculate the coefficient of the evaluation: Multiply positive terms by 100, add the total positive and negative terms, divide the two scores, score will range from 1 to 100 with 50 being neutral, a minimum of ten terms is needed to determine any biases. (m) Count the terms most frequently used to describe the subject. (n) In the final analysis, count the number of words and lines devoted to the subject.

The Evaluation Coefficient Analysis Score Sheet

Source: _____ Subject: _____ Score: _____

	Page	Term	Direction		Page	Term	Direction
1				26			
2				27			
3				28			
4				29			
5				30			
6				31			
7				32			
8				33			
9				34			
10				35			
11				36			
12				37			
13				38			
14				39			
15				40			
16				41			
17				42			
18				43			
19				44			
20				45			
21				46			
22				47			
23				48			
24				49			
25				50			

$$\Sigma + = \Sigma - =$$

$$(F) \times 100 / (F) + (U) =$$

Appendix D Permission to Use Excerpts From *How to Find and Measure Bias in Textbooks*

edtecpubs@aol.com

Fri 8/2/2019 11:48 AM

Inbox

To: Herrero, Sarah Irene <slaidlaw@liberty.edu>;

Hello Ms. Sarah Herrero:

Thank you for your inquiry.

You have our permission to use the items identified in your email in your doctoral dissertation.

Please cite appropriate citation as a reference.
Thank you

Sincerely,

Howard C. Lipsitz
Vice President
Educational Technology Publications, Inc
650 Palisade Avenue
P.O. Box 1564
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Appendix E Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. “What do you think [you should] learn or to be able to do” after reading religious narratives in a history textbook (Hintz, 2014, p. 124)?
3. How did your experience of religion change as a result of the passages in this history textbook (Hintz, 2014)?
4. How did your experience of history change as a result of the passages in this history textbook (Hintz, 2014)?
5. Describe a time that you felt that a textbook did not address all sides of an event (Tollini, 2010).
6. Describe when you read a textbook that made “positive statements about social institutions, like marriage, education or religion” (Tollini, 2010, p. 80).
7. Describe when you read a textbook that made “negative statements about social institutions, like marriage, education or religion” (Tollini, 2010, p. 80).
8. Do you think the textbooks are intentionally biased, or do you think there are other reasons for the way the content is presented and why (Linvill & Mazer, 2013)?
9. Is there further information the author could provide to help minimize the bias you perceive as presented in this textbook (Tollini, 2010)?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add or that you feel I have missed regarding this subject?

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you believe to be the purpose of studying history (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?
2. Please describe an experience you have had in a college history class that is most memorable to you (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
3. Describe a time that something in this textbook made you think critically about what something you believe (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?
4. Describe a section of this history passage you agreed with and why (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
5. Describe a section of this history passage you disagreed with and why (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
6. Describe a time that you so disagreed with something in your history textbook that you felt offended (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014).
7. How do you maintain your beliefs when you disagree with something you read in a textbook (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014)?

The interviewer will take notes during the interviews and focus groups. The form for taking notes is reproduced below.

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Journaling Prompts

1. Describe a positive experience with something you read in this history textbook.
“Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735).
2. What were your “feelings, mood and emotions” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735)?
3. Describe a negative experience with something you read in this history textbook.
“Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735).
4. What were your “feelings, mood and emotions” (Van Manen, 2014, Kindle Locations 7730-7735)?
5. What could be done to make your experience with the religious narratives in history textbooks more positive (Van Manen, 2014)?

Appendix F Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

The Powers that be: A phenomenological study of college students' impressions of the bias in religious narratives in history textbooks

By Sarah Laidlaw
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of which seeks to describe the perception of bias of college students at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks. The theory guiding this study is Reader Response Theory (Fish, 1980), as it identifies the tendency of readers to bring their experiences and backgrounds to the literature they read. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently taking one or more classes in the social sciences department in your university. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Sarah Laidlaw, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the perception of bias of college students, specifically those who claim to perceive it at a local college regarding the religious narratives in history textbooks.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Each participant will have to fill out a prescreening tool, the ECO (Pratt, 1972), to determine who will participate in the study. This will take 30 minutes to an hour.
2. Participants in the study will be asked to give one interview that will take 20-30 minutes, with possible follow up.
3. Also the participants will be asked to be part of one focus group of randomly chosen participants that will take 30-45 minutes.
4. Finally, each participant will be asked to do one journaling exercise about their perceptions of the group discussion on bias and how they would make the history textbook less biased.
5. Responses will be confidential (i.e., You'll know what data belongs to whom, but you will not disclose identities.)
6. Interviews and focus groups will be subject to audio recording and all journal responses will be collected as data for the study.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. The expected benefit associated with your participation is to develop a better understanding of descriptive language in history textbooks.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. We may share the data we collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if we share the data that we collect about you, we will remove any information that could identify you before we share it.

Every participant will be named using a pseudonym, as will the site where the research is conducted, which are both necessary for confidentiality. Further, any confidential electronic data that are collected will be kept secure and protected on a password-protected laptop. Physical data will be secured in a lock box until scanned onto the password-protected laptop. Audio-recordings will be kept until transcribed and that transcript will be available for the review and possible amendment on the participant's request. The researcher will keep the data on a secure laptop for any follow-up research articles on this study. Participants in the focus groups will be asked to maintain confidentiality, however their confidence cannot be assured.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University (*Insert the names of any other cooperating institutions here.*). If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: *The researcher conducting this study is Sarah Laidlaw. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at slaidlaw@liberty.edu or 954-560-1986. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. James Fyock, at jafyock@liberty.edu.*

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION
WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix G Liberty University IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 14, 2017

Sarah Laidlaw

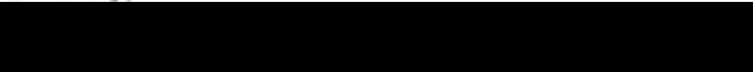
IRB Approval 2596.031417: The Powers That Be: A Phenomenological Study of College Students' Impressions of the Bias in Religious Narratives in History Textbooks

Dear Sarah Laidlaw,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix H Broward College IRB Approval



Cypress Creek Administrative Center
6400 N.W. 6th Way
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
954-201-2275 | irb@broward.edu

October 2, 2018

Sarah Laidlaw
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Re: IRB Protocol #080917-01 "The powers that be: A phenomenological study of college students' impressions of the bias in religious narratives in history textbooks."

Dear Ms. Laidlaw:

The continuing review application for the research protocol referenced above has been reviewed and approved by the IRB under an expedited status. On behalf of the IRB, your research protocol has been re-approved. Your IRB approval has been extended for an additional year and will expire on October 1, 2019.

Please note that if any changes are made to your protocol during the course of the approval period, you must submit an amendment and your revised protocol to the IRB. A Research Closure Form must be submitted to the IRB once the study is complete. If adverse events occur during the course of the approval period, you must report these events immediately to the IRB using the Adverse Event Report Form, which can be found at:
<http://www.broward.edu/community/irb/Documents/BC-IRB-Adverse-Event-Report-Form.pdf>.

If you should have any questions about the contents of this letter you may contact me at 954-201-2275 or tbernhar@broward.edu.

Sincerely,




Todd E. Bernhardt, Ph.D.
Interim IRB Chair

Appendix I Data Analysis Codes and Themes

Table 4 indicates the themes, sub-themes, and codes that emerged during data analysis, and how codes were clustered to form sub-themes.

Table 4

Data Analysis Codes and Themes

Major themes	Sub-themes grouped into theme	In vivo codes grouped into sub-theme
Perceptions of bias	Explicit	biased Christian country discriminated negative offended political portrayed religion religious statements
	After being asked	affiliation feelings generalizations presented reading think
	Numinous	basically describe focus guess right sense
Empathy	Empathetic worldview	agree beliefs

		believe
		experience
		interesting
		perspective
		positive
		relate
		understand
	Empathy for textbook writers	shared
		textbooks
Factors that minimize bias	(No sub-themes)	change
		different
		education
		multiple
		narratives
		people
		perspectives
		question
		respected