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THE POWER OF THE PROVOCATIVE: EXPLORING WORLD HISTORY  
CONTENT (237 pp.)

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This study addresses how my freshman world history students come to understand controversial issues as provocative within the secondary social studies classroom, and in what ways does their engagement with provocative issues influence their understanding of the content and the world around them. In addition, this research study seeks to discover in what ways does the teaching of these provocative materials inform and influence my curricular decisions, my pedagogy, and my relationship with my students. The three research questions were established to guide this study.

1. How do my world history freshman students come to understand provocative materials in regards to the historical content?
2. How does my students' engagement with these provocative materials influence their understanding of historical events and the world around them?
3. In what ways does the teaching of these provocative materials inform and influence my curricular decisions, my pedagogy, and my relationship with my students?

Self-Study methodology was selected as a way to personally explore and examine my students understanding of provocative issues as well as my instruction. Grounded theory was utilized exclusively as a coding and analyzing device. To address these

questions, thirteen student participants were selected for this study based on the criteria assumed by the questions. Data was collected from individual interviews, group interviews, student blog posts, and my own journal.

As the data was analyzed and coded, nuanced constructs of the students' thinking began to coalesce on three distinct perceptions of provocative issues which evolved into the findings of this study. The first finding involved students who advocated for the inclusion of provocative issues. Their rationales for this inclusion were; *Real World Phenomenon*, *Provocative for Grade Sake*, *Provocative for Interest Sake*. A second finding involved a student who opposed the inclusion of provocative issues. This student's rationales were labeled *Oppositional*. The first two findings were partnered with the six students' rationales. The third finding involved the other seven students who had a varying range of nuanced articulation, varied their opinion across time, or lacked a clear robust rationale. This finding was labeled developing rationales. These students' perspectives were labeled *other voices*.

In addition to the student data, journaling was utilized to explore my own rationale for using provocative issues within my world history classroom. These journals provided a space for reflection on my practice in regards to the teaching of provocative issues, thus addressing my third research question. The journals, like the other data sources, were coded using grounded theory as the main analytical device. Upon completion of the data analysis of my journals, themes began to emerge that progressed into findings. The self-study findings were categorized as; *The Closed Space of Sexuality*,

*The Banality of Violence, and Anti-Americanism Linked to Racism to Foster Critical Thinking.*