

Online Answers Dealing with the Internment of Japanese Americans During World War II

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Abstract: The internment of Americans of Japanese descent during World War II lies at the heart of ongoing discussions in American social studies. We analyzed inputs of members of the Yahoo! Answers Q&A online community following students' questions dealing with differential treatment of Japanese and German and Italian American citizens during World War II, and whether the internment of Japanese Americans was justified. The questions were submitted to the community by students struggling with their coursework. The majority of responses to the first question justified the differential treatment, citing national security and presenting Japanese Americans as a threat. The dominant position in the case of the second question negates internment legitimacy and views it as a gross violation of justice and as a racially motivated act. These stances, likely to make their way into submitted assignments by students, necessitate the familiarization of teachers with such discussions as they take place within Q&A communities.

Key words: computers; education; Japanese American, online communities; students; homework.

Introduction

The internment of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent during World War II, of which two-thirds were native born citizens, adults and children, is an issue which concerns not only those incarcerated and their offspring (Nagata, Kim, & Nguyen, 2015), but also social studies classes in

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American schools (Gallavan & Roberts, 2005; Hawkins & Buckendorf, 2010). Current discussions of the internment highlight the racial aspects and the inherent unfairness of the policy of the illegal seizure of property and treatment of citizens (Miksch & Ghere, 2004, p. 213). In addition, it is recognized that internment meant placing Americans of Japanese descent outside the realms of morality and jurisdiction, no longer an integral part of the national body, as they were deemed to pose a threat to it (Verinakis, 2007). The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 acknowledged the wrongdoing endured by those incarcerated, offered a formal apology and \$20,000 in compensation, and referred to “the incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans as a shameful and tragic chapter in our nation’s history and one of the most unconscionable violations of our Government of the civil rights of any people...making the internment as the limit case of US racial violence” (Kozen, 2012, p. 106 and p. 109).

Historical background of the differential treatment of Americans of Japanese, German, and Italian descent

Nearly 11,000 suspected German and Italian aliens were incarcerated on individual bases by December, 1941 (Fox, 2000). Such a policy was not an exceptional one, as “the internment of enemy aliens during wartime has been considered a normal practice in the United States, Canada, Australia, and most European countries, where it has been used frequently during the last two centuries” (Miksch & Ghere, 2004, p. 212). The attack by the Japanese army on Pearl Harbor evoked xenophobia and fear, targeting mainly Americans of Japanese descent as potential and actual supporters of the Japanese government (McCormick, 2008). Early in 1942, officials from local, state, and federal authorities demanded internment of all enemy aliens and their families. This led to the relocation of nearly 10,000 German and Italian aliens from their homes along the West Coast, while Japanese Americans living in the area were incarcerated *en masse* (Fox, 1986), “based on the rationale that their proximity to Japan made them potentially disloyal and capable of espionage or sabotage” (Nagata et al., 2015, pp. 356-366). Most Americans at the time treated the decision to confine these citizens to internment camps to be humane, necessary, and appropriate in a time of war (Miksch & Ghere, 2004).

It is important to note that not all Americans of Japanese descent were interned. According to Smith (1986), the sheer size of the Japanese-American population living in Hawaii, comprising nearly a third of the island's population, made their internment unfeasible. In comparison, the number of Japanese Americans who were living on the West Coast was much smaller. Furthermore, prejudice against Asian immigrants had a long history in California, and internment helped to soothe fears among West Coast residents following Pearl Harbor (Smith, 1986). In

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contrast to American citizens of Japanese descent living on the West Coast, residents of German and Italian descent were not interned for several reasons. First, their large numbers, political influence, and economic power in California (Fox, 1986; Smith, 1986) made internment impractical, and it was feared that the internment of tens of thousands of German and Italian aliens would compromise the loyalty of their relatives who were American citizens (Fox, 1986). Second, memories of the persecution of German Americans during World War I were still fresh, and information about individual suspects of German and Italian ancestry was more readily available in comparison to the Japanese (Fox, 1986). Third, government officials held the belief that while German or Italian immigrants were quick to assimilate, Asian immigrants had greater difficulties in assimilation (DeConde, 1992). Fourth, while Germans were considered white and thus hard to discern from their Anglo-Americans counterparts, Japanese were distinguishable by their skin color, and their culture was considered to be unapproachable and incomprehensible by Westerners (Dower, 1996).

Discussion of internment within social studies curricula and textbooks

Teachers may use the case of internment to bring their students closer to issues of justice, freedom, and fairness, and to understand the views of those who lived through the period (Gallavan & Roberts, 2005), while the end results “typically generate various levels of sympathy for the victims, outrage against government officials, and collective national guilt” (Miksch & Ghere, 2004, p. 213). Davis (2007) alternatively suggested that as part of “making a difference” and affecting racial acceptance within American society, teachers may use the case of the Japanese-American internment to bring their students to explore “what racial relationships and power dynamics existed among whites, Asian Americans, and other minority groups that permitted internment to occur” (p. 213).

Ogawa (2004) stated that “[i]n the United States, people place great faith in United States history textbooks to supply their children with an understanding of American history” (p. 35). However, according to Suh, An, & Forest (2015), “[t]he inclusion and explanation of events related to the history of Asians in the U.S. is done in a way that aligns with the U.S. national story of progress and equality, [and] the textbooks do not provide a more complete and coherent outline of the Asian experience” (p. 49). Ogawa's (2004) analysis of six history textbooks serving Idaho schools found that while all “concede that internment was harsh and unfair treatment for Japanese-American citizens” (p. 40), only some provided a historical background of the experience of Japanese immigrants to the U.S. during the first decades of the 20th century. In addition, according to Ogawa, these texts have nearly ignored the motivations for U.S. government

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decisions leading to the internment of Japanese Americans, mainly stressing the issues of fear and the need for national security, and they have rarely discussed camp living conditions. Journell (2009) found that, in the standard American history texts used in nine states, the internment of the Japanese was not mentioned at all. An analysis by Hawkins and Buckendorf (2010) of 10 history textbooks published between 2005 and 2008 revealed, as in previous works (Ogawa, 2004; Romanowski, 1995), that Japanese Americans were still depicted as passive victims, and no mention was made of the economic and social losses endured as a result of internment. However, a richer and more complex picture of the treatment of Japanese Americans and the government motivations were included in these textbooks. Camicia (2008) documented the controversies which marked the attempts to incorporate the study of the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II in the social studies curriculum in one locality. Two opposing stances were noted. Those who demanded a change to the original curriculum did so by returning to “an ideology that favors national security over civil liberties, even if the cost is ethnic profiling” (Camicia, 2008, p. 311). On the other hand, there were those who supported the original version of the curriculum, suggesting that it served to present students with questions related to justice, the rule of law, reparation, and civil liberties.

The studies mentioned earlier (i.e., Hawkins & Buckendorf, 2010; Ogawa, 2004) found that the textbooks surveyed did not discuss the question of why people of German and Italian descent were not put in internment camps. Journell (2009) found that the internment of German and Italian Americans was discussed in only one textbook, and Hawkins and Buckendorf (2010) reported that only one textbook noted in passing “the often overlooked fact that thousands of Italian and German immigrants were forced to carry identification cards, a clear differentiation in treatment from that of the Japanese Americans” (p. 37).

Teachers may use an assortment of resources such as books, moot courts, a visit by an internment detainee, and various online resources when teaching about internment (Gallavan & Roberts, 2005; McCormick, 2008; Miksch & Ghery, 2004). Yet, as suggested by Lazar and Litvak Hirsch (2015), during class hours, students adhere to their teachers' chosen learning material, but in the privacy of their own homes, students might resort to looking for help with their homework assignments by seeking aid on online platforms, most notably online social Question and Answer (Q&A) communities.

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Homework help exchanges in online Q&A communities

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the study of online Q&A communities within the context of education. These communities were noted to provide their users opportunities for informal learning opportunities (Gurevych, Bernhard, Ignatova, & Toprak, 2009; Salmerón, Macedo-Rouet, & Rouet, 2015), as they offer interactions conducted with many different individuals (Jeon & Rieh, 2015) and expose them to divergent views. Studies have looked into the types of askers and how these communities react to them (Gazan, 2007), the resources offered in answers (Oh, Oh, & Shah, 2009), and the context of social education. Findings have pointed out that the answers provided in most cases have reflected common notions, without explicating any sources upon which these were based (Lazar & Litvak Hirsch, 2015).

The aim here is to investigate online exchanges taking place between students and members of the Yahoo! Answers (Y!A) community, a highly popular Q&A community, for help in their homework assignments dealing with the internment of Japanese Americans. A search of the Y!A open archive reveals an abundance of questions posted by students seeking community members' input on this topic. Attention here is directed to two issues which appear again and again: the differential treatment of Japanese and German and Italian American citizens during World War II, and the question of whether the internment of Japanese Americans was justified.

Study 1: Why were Japanese Americans, but not Americans of German and Italian descent, Interned?

Method

Askers phrased their questions in the following manner: "Why did we put Japanese, and not Germans or Italians into internment camps during WWII?" or "Why were the Japanese forced to live in internment camps, while Germans and Italians were not?" Considering the large number of these questions, only inquiries which gained at least eight answers are included in the following analysis.

Results

The responses to the 10 questions analyzed here appeared mainly in the history forum (n=9), and one was asked in the homework help forum. These questions were posted during 2006 (n=3), 2007 (n=2), 2008 (n=2), 2009 (n=1), 2011 (n=1), and 2013 (n=1), and were answered by 8 to 22 Y!A members (M=11.50; SD=4.67), totaling 109 answers. A content analysis of these answers

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revealed that the answers provided by Y!A fall within several superordinate categories. Table 1 presents these along with their percentages.

Table 1

Discussing the internment of Japanese Americans, and not German and Italian Americans, by Y!A members and their percentages.

Answers	Percent of answers (n=109)
Discussing the reaction towards Japanese Americans	
Retribution for Pearl harbor	39.8
Japanese Americans could be recognized	24.1
Racist fear	21.5
Japanese Americans' loyalty to Japan	13.9
Japanese Americans were fifth columnists	9.9
Poor assimilation by Japanese Americans	8.4
Japanese Americans were concentrated in California	6.5
Racial profiling at its worst	6.5
Japanese Americans in Hawaii were not compounded	4.6
American soldiers of Japanese descent served honorably	4.6
Not all were American citizens	3.7
Internment was an easy way out for the American government	3.7
The economic benefit of internment	2.8
Internment safeguarded the lives of Japanese Americans	1.9
Those interned lost all their life's work	1.9

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No evidence of collaboration	1.9
Japanese Americans lacked political power	1.9
Discussing the reaction towards German and Italian Americans	
German and Italian Americans were interned	13
Large number of Germans and Italians made it impossible to relocate them	11.1
Presence of Nazi spies and sympathizers	8.3
Differential treatment towards Italian Americans	2.8
General remarks regarding internment	
Shameful chapter in American history	7.4
Internment was a commonplace policy	5.6
Internment was a violation of basic rights	3.7
Other	8.3

The first superordinate category of answers combines the responses dealing with Japanese Americans. One dominant explanation for their internment, offered by nearly 40% of all answerers, stands out: This act was retribution for Pearl Harbor. An exemplary statement among those who provided this explanation was “[b]ecause Germans and Italians didn't bomb Pearl Harbor and Japanese were the ones who brought the war to our soil.” Other popular suggestions included: “Japanese could be recognized immediately and made people nervous, and Germans and Italians could blend in,” “racist fear,” and “loyalty to Japan,” exemplified by the suggestion that “[t]heir [Japanese] fidelity is with their country of origin” (24.1%, 21.5%, and 13.9% of answerers, respectively). The remaining responses referring to the Japanese were mentioned by 2% to 8.4% of answerers. These answerers suggested contrasting attitudes. On the one hand, some answerers expressed negative attitudes towards the confined Japanese Americans. These answerers pointed to “Japanese fifth columnists,” noting that “[t]here was some intelligence about secret cells in the US (which turned out to be true) and the feds could not as easily infiltrate

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US Japanese society as they could with such groups as the Nazi Bund and other Axis loyal groups in the US. Action needed to be taken to satisfy the public,” or that Japanese Americans had poorly assimilated in comparison to Germans or Italians. In parallel, these answerers noted that “Japanese were concentrated in California,” suggesting that “California is located on the Pacific Coast, and the loyalty of Japanese people was put into question.” Additionally, there were those who suggested that “internment safeguarded the lives of Japanese-Americans” from attack by haters or that “[n]ot all were American citizens.”

Others voiced their criticism towards the conduct of the American government by raising the following arguments: “Japanese in Hawaii were not compounded,” internment reflected “[r]acial profiling at its worst,” it was an easy solution for the American government, suggesting that “[i]nstead of trying to pick up the spy rings in the islands they decided to intern most of them,” and suggesting that internment served to promote economic benefits following the confiscation of resources of those who were interned. In addition, some expressed their sympathy for interned Japanese Americans by pointing out that “[s]oldiers of Japanese descent served honorably,” that many of those interned lost their life’s work, that there was no evidence of collaboration by Japanese Americans, or that, in comparison to citizens of German descent, the Japanese-American population lacked the political might to counter internment.

The second superordinate category reflects discussions of the treatment of Americans of German and Italian lineage. Two responses stood out: 13% of the answerers noted that some of them were also interned, stating that “[t]here were approximately 11,000 people of German descent and 10,000 of Italian descent put into camps.” In contrast, 11.1% of answerers noted that “[a]t the time, Germans and Italians made up close to 10-15% of the general population in the U.S. It would have been impossible to remove that large a population and relocate them to another location. One solution was internment camps. The fact that there were only 110,000 Japanese certainly made it easier.” An additional 8.3% of answerers noted that Nazi Germany had attempted to land its agents on American soil, and that it had gained the sympathy of many members of the German American community. Nearly 3% of the replies pointed to “[d]ifferential treatment towards Italian Americans,” suggesting that “600,000 Italian Americans were required to carry ID cards and about 10,000 were forced to move inland, away from the coastal cities they were from.” The third superordinate category provides a more general historical outlook of internment. Here, 7.4% of answerers referred to internment as a “[s]hameful chapter in American history,” 5.6% noted that internment was a commonplace policy in other countries, suggesting that “the USA wasn't the only country, that Canada interned Japanese Canadians after

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Pearl Harbor” or that “[i]n Australia [there] was internment only for the Italians and Germans.” Finally, 3.7% of answerers referred to “[i]nternment as a violation of basic rights.” The “Other” category included highly idiosyncratic answers that fit none of the abovementioned categories, like “[b]ecause from 1924 the USA funded Hitler and supported the Italians - they were almost allies of the USA” or “[r]ather than complain about it, most [German and Italian American] put it behind them, unlike the Japanese.”

Discussion

Inspection of the answers given to students asking members of the Y!A community to clarify why American citizens of Japanese descent were treated more harshly than their German and Italian counterparts reveals an underlying dominant view which is echoed in most of the themes identified. This position suggests, either overtly or, more commonly, covertly, that the internment was the result of collaboration by Japanese Americans with the actions of the Japanese army. Covertly, this is represented in the most dominant theme, that internment served as retribution for Pearl Harbor, and to a lesser extent by the themes of “loyalty to Japan,” “Japanese fifth columnists,” “poor assimilation by Japanese,” and “Japanese were concentrated in California.” For these answerers, Japanese Americans were rightfully interned, as they were, and are still, automatically identified as belonging to Japanese society rather than to American society. In that respect, this attitude echoes the historical placement of Americans of Japanese descent as neither an integral part of the national body nor part of the moral community, but rather a threat (Verinakis, 2007). Moreover, a small number of these answerers pointed out that not all Japanese under American rule were interned, that not all were American citizens, or suggested that internment was a positive action as it safeguarded the lives of Japanese Americans. In conclusion, for these Y!A members, the view held by most Americans regarding U.S. policy in World War II was that rounding up these citizens in internment camps was a humane, necessary, and appropriate step in times of war (Miksch & Ghery, 2004), and it still seems to have been a valid action.

Other answerers have taken a different stance altogether by suggesting that the internment of the Japanese was racially motivated, expressing themes like “Japanese could be recognized,” “racist fear,” “racial profiling at its worst,” and by expressing their sympathy for those interned by pointing out that “soldiers of Japanese descent served honorably” and that “internment was an easy way out for the American government.” These responses indicated “the economic benefit of internment,” the fact that “those interned lost their life’s work,” that there was “no evidence of collaboration,” and that “Japanese lacked political power.” Thus, these answerers,

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who are in the minority, echo present day notions regarding “the racial aspects and the inherent unfairness of the policy, the illegal seizure of property and treatment of citizens” (Miksch & Ghere, 2004, p. 213). While most of the discussion revolved around the interned Japanese, far less direct attention was given by Y!A answerers to the treatment of German and Italian Americans. Here, answerers aimed to educate the student askers by noting that “German and Italian Americans were interned,” yet the responses failed to note that those interned were not American citizens but rather aliens, and that relocation was the action most often taken by the American government in their case (Fox, 1988).

These answerers correctly pointed out that the large numbers of Germans and Italians made large-scale relocation or internment impractical (Smith, 1986). Finally, there were those who made more general remarks on the issue, echoing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, recognizing the internment of Japanese as a shameful chapter in American history, and stating that internment was a commonplace policy and that it represented a violation of basic rights. They expressed “sympathy for the victims, outrage against government officials, and collective national guilt” (Miksch & Ghere, 2004, p. 213).

The comparison of these two opposing positions echoes the controversy discussed by Camicia (2008) between those who speak of “an ideology that favors national security over civil liberties, even if the cost is ethnic profiling” (p. 311), and those who contextualize the internment of Japanese Americans within the discussion of justice, the rule of law, reparation, and civil liberties. Taken together, these results reflect a rather gloomy picture of the ways many present-day Americans make use of online Q&A forums to reply to students asking for help in determining the reasons for the differential treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. This leads to the second question directing the current research: What types of opinions are noted when questions target whether this internment was justified?

Study 2: Was internment of Japanese Americans justified or not?

Method

The topic posted to the Y!A members was phrased: “Was it justified/wrong to put Japanese-Americans in internment camps?” As in Study 1, questions which gained at least eight answers were investigated.

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Results

Seven questions which asked for Y!A members' input as to whether the internment of Japanese Americans was justified or not were analyzed. These questions appeared in the following Y!A forums: Politics (n=3), history (n=2), military, and immigration and current events (n=1 for each), during the years 2006 (n=1), 2008 (n=1), 2009 (n=3), 2010 (n=1), and 2011 (n=2). They were answered by 8 to 16 Y!A members (M=12.38; SD=2.97), totaling 108 such answers. Here, too, the content analysis of these answers revealed that they were distinguished by a number of superordinate categories. Table 2 presents these alongside their percentages.

Table 2

Justifying or refuting the internment of Japanese Americans- Y!A members and their percentages

Answers	Percent of answers (n=108)
Justifying the internment of Japanese Americans	
It was justified as we were under attack by another country	11.9
Understandable for the time and the right thing to do	9.7
Fifth columnists	5.8
Internment safeguarded the lives of Japanese Americans	3.9
It was justified	2.9
Condemning the internment of Japanese Americans	
This was a shameful period in American history	12.6
It was blatantly racist	11.7
The people who were interned were American citizens	10.7
Citizens of German and Italian descent weren't rounded up and interned	8.7
FDR was a racist	7.8

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Not justified	7.8
Internment led to seizing of Japanese Americans' property	6.8
Japanese Americans were loyal citizens and heroic soldiers	6.2
Internment was unconstitutional	5.8
It was panic control action	3.9
Those justifying internment should be ashamed	3.9
Tension between freedom and individual rights and protecting national security	1.9
Just another form of slavery	1.3
Other	12.6

Answerers who justified the internment of Japanese Americans employed the following arguments: Nearly 12% of them suggested that within the context of the war with Japan, internment was reasonable and that answerers who said otherwise do not understand the situation faced by the American government at the time. In addition, nearly 10% of these answerers, while not mentioning the war with Japan, claimed internment was understandable at the time and was the right thing to do.

To a lesser degree, those justifying internment averred that Japanese Americans were loyal to the Japanese emperor and aided the Japanese army's intentions of invading American soil in various ways, suggesting, for example, that "Japanese submarines landed many teams of commandos on our shores in WWII, and all were met by armed U.S. citizens. With shelter, aid, recon and safe harbor offered by their own people within our shores, we could have faced a very serious clandestine incursion." Others claimed that internment was implemented for the good of Japanese Americans as it safeguarded them from any racial attacks, suggesting that "by putting them in camps, they saved some of the lives of the Japanese and soldiers that would have had to be pulled from the war effort to protect the Japanese in their homes." Finally, 2.9% did not explain why they considered internment justified and simply stated "yes."

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Y!A members who questioned the legitimacy of the internment of Japanese Americans provided the following responses: Nearly 13% of these answerers declared that the internment of Japanese Americans represents a shameful period in American history, almost 12% referred to it as a bluntly racist act, and nearly 11% pointed out that the people who were interned were American citizens.

Nearly 9% of these answerers either mentioned that citizens of German and Italian descent were not rounded up and interned, and nearly 8% claimed that President Roosevelt was a racist who emulated Hitler and Stalin or that internment was wrong without explaining why they think so. Nearly 7% of these answerers referred to the internment as wrong because it led to seizing of Japanese Americans' property, and roughly 6% of them declared either that Japanese Americans were loyal citizens and that some "served with courage and honor in the European theatre of WWII," or that internment violated the fifth, sixth, and seventh amendments and was unconstitutional. About 4% of these answerers either referred to internment as "panic control" or claimed that those Y!A members justifying internment should be ashamed of themselves. Nearly 2% stated that for them, internment should remind people that "[t]here is a fine line between protecting the values of freedom and individual rights and protecting national security," and 1.3% declared internment to be "just another form of slavery." The "Other" category, which comprised 12.6% of the answers, included idiosyncratic responses which fell outside the previously mentioned reactions, including, for example, claims such as "[s]ounds like a great assignment. Good luck, I'm sure you'll learn a lot!" or "I don't think America tortured them at least physically or deprived them of fundamental necessities."

Discussion

Among Y!A members, a clear division could be noted with regard to justification of the internment of Americans of Japanese descent during World War II. Those who justify internment mainly cite two reasons: For them, internment was applied correctly, as the U.S. was under attack by another nation, and they present internment as understandable within the historical context (11.9% and 9.7% of answerers, respectively). To a lesser degree, these answerers referred to Japanese Americans as "fifth columnists" and to internment as a positive act aimed at safeguarding lives, or they justified it without explanation. In comparison, the majority of answerers viewed internment as incorrect and provided a more elaborate set of arguments to back their position. These answerers' views could be grouped together into two distinct underlying positions. Most notable is the view suggesting that internment was racially based, as reflected in the themes pointing out that it was a blatantly racist act, that citizens of German and

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Italian descent were not interned, that President Roosevelt was a racist who emulated Hitler and Stalin, and referring to internment as another form of slavery.

A second view anchors internment within the context of civil rights and justice, discussing the seizing of Japanese Americans' property, referring to Japanese Americans as loyal citizens and heroic soldiers, viewing internment as unconstitutional, and suggesting that there is a fine line between protecting the values of freedom and individual rights and protecting national security. Likewise, these answerers also discussed internment as a shameful chapter in American history, echoing the stance expressed in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Kozen, 2012). They also stated that it was unjustified without giving reasons, treated it as a panic control mechanism, and condemned those who supported it. Thus, in comparison to Study 1, a mindset that is more oriented toward civil liberty and justice underlies the majority of responses.

The internment of Americans of Japanese descent during World War II continues to exert its influence upon those who experienced it firsthand and their progeny (Nagata et al., 2015). Within the context of social studies, research has focused upon its representation in American school textbooks, noting that these only partially present the full complexities of the internment (Hawkins & Buckendorf, 2010; Journell, 2009; Ogawa, 2004), and in one case, research has documented the controversy surrounding its inclusion within the curriculum (Camicia, 2008). The current research aimed to present the discussion taking place online in one popular Q&A community, following queries presented by students asking for help with their homework assignments, dealing with the reasons for the internment of Japanese Americans and whether it was justified.

Practical recommendations emerging from the results for classroom teachers

The importance assigned to the case of the internment of Japanese Americans as raising complex questions regarding issues of justice, freedom, fairness (Gallavan & Roberts, 2005), and race relations (Davis, 2007) within American social studies curricula requires the attention of teachers to the views expressed in Q&A communities on the matter.

Comparison of the results across the two studies reveals the following:

First, while in the case of the differential treatment of Japanese Americans, the overall majority of questions appeared in the Y!A history forum, while the question of whether it was justified took place in several Y!A forums but in hardly any of the various education forums, similar to the findings reported by Lazar and Litvak Hirsch (2015). This suggests awareness on the part of

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teachers and scholars involved in dealing with the Japanese-American internment, of the various Y!A forums, and avoidance of centering on one particular forum. Second, comparing the underlying positions emerging from the two studies suggests that responses offered depend upon the type of question presented. In Study 1, which looked into the reasons for internment of Japanese and not German and Italian American citizens, the dominant underlying frame of mind was that of justifying this act in the name of national security and viewing Japanese Americans as dangerous.

In contrast, in Study 2, which assessed whether Y!A members justify internment, those who viewed it as a gross violation of American justice and principles of equality prevailed. This suggests that the framing of the question attracts different Y!A members holding contrasting views. As a result, in a case in which a student bases his or her work on the responses appearing on a Q&A platform, the wording of the question as presented by the teacher, and by the student to potential answerers might considerably influence the final product handed to the teacher.

Finally, teachers should not shy away from the possibility of presenting their student with the inputs provided within Q&A platforms regarding the Japanese-American internment. Such an examination could help students develop awareness of views held by individuals outside their class on the matter, and enable students to critically examine them through the materials they are exposed to in class and through their own research on the issue.

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