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Perspectives of AP U.S. History Teachers in Title I Schools

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Perspectives of Advanced Placement U.S. History Teachers in Title I Schools

by

Mark Lance Rowland

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Dr. Shelley Ochs, who inspired me to start this journey and encouraged me throughout the process; and to my mother, Elizabeth “Betty” Rowland, who instilled in me the values of hard work and higher education.

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Abstract

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program continues to expand annually with increased numbers of high school students nationwide enrolling in AP courses and taking end-of-course AP exams, in hopes of earning college credit and strengthening high school transcripts. As the College Board promotes increased minority student participation (specifically African-American and Hispanic students) in AP courses, AP teachers face new challenges as potential first-generation college students enter their classrooms with below-level reading scores and a lack of essential critical-thinking skills needed for college-level assessment.

The participants in this study are five AP U.S. History Teachers from urban, suburban, and rural Title I high schools. In this inquiry, I explore how their backgrounds and experiences shape their approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in their respective environments. I conducted two separate interviews with each teacher: the first addressed their formative years and educational experiences, while the second focused on their teaching philosophies and how they deliver course content. The data revealed similar instructional practices among the participants, all of whom choose student-centered teaching models to varying degrees to enhance student engagement.

This discourse highlights the need for further inquiry into the perspectives of AP teachers in Title I schools to inform future policymaking decisions within schools and school districts to enhance historically marginalized student populations' college and career opportunities.

Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale

Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) has risen to great prominence as a choice for high school juniors to fulfill their social studies requirement for American history. The course's popularity is rooted in students' goals of strengthening their transcripts, taking a college-level course to better prepare them for the demands and rigor beyond high school, and earning college credit toward freshman history courses thus allowing them to save money on escalating tuition costs. APUSH, along with the entire Advanced Placement (AP) course menu, took on new meaning over the past two decades as one of the latest models for education reform providing pathways to college for students who are often labeled as disadvantaged socially and economically, and in many cases the first in their immediate families to potentially attend college.

The rationale for this study revolves around the premise of education as a vehicle for upward economic and social mobility for students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. Access to higher education remains a challenge for low-SES students as they are underrepresented in universities and often lack the academic tools needed to succeed in college and beyond. AP courses provide students with essential analytical skills that increase their chances of attending college and earning a degree (College Board, 2015a). While the numbers of low-SES students taking AP courses (including APUSH) continue to rise, their AP exam pass rates consistently lag behind those of their peers. In this study, I will explore the backgrounds,

experiences, and perspectives of five APUSH teachers who work in Title I schools and serve low-SES populations.

While discussions continue regarding low-SES students and vocational training versus a college degree (Billet, 2011; Klein & Green, 2012, statistics still indicate those with traditional post-secondary degrees fare better than those without. The following chart from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) reinforces the argument for higher education as better wages continue to correlate with college degrees. The chart also reveals that those with college degrees represent the minority of Americans unemployed in 2015.

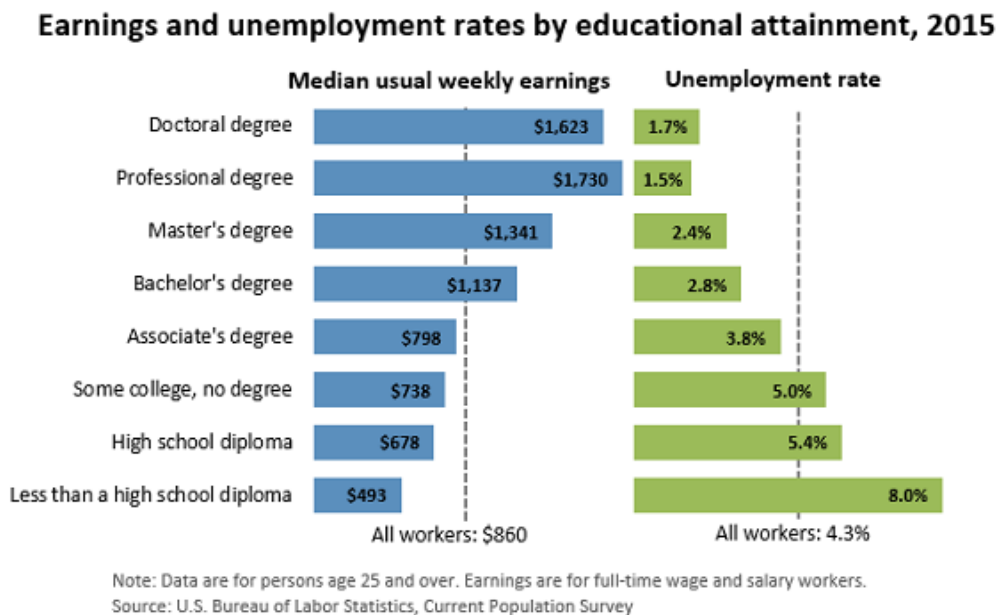


Figure 1: Earning and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

Former College Board President Gaston Caperton emphasized the link between higher education and higher income earnings when he helped launch the College Board’s Advocacy and Policy Center in 2010 stating, “Education is the foundation for achieving a better quality of life, economic prosperity, and greater opportunity” (Caperton, 2010). While this is not a groundbreaking observation, the College Board can be credited for its efforts put forth to

increase minority participation in AP courses and college. Key to this effort is the APUSH course. The APUSH course requires students to take on a rigorous curriculum with extensive reading lists, analysis of primary sources, and honing writing skills. These academic requirements prepare students for the demands associated with college-level work. The College Board envisions the APUSH course as providing empowerment for underrepresented students who otherwise would not consider college or discover their untapped potential as students and leaders.

In addition to job security and earning potential, attaining a college degree has also been correlated with living a happier and healthier life. A recent University of Maine study examines both tangible and intangible benefits for individuals holding at least a Bachelor's degree including: safer work environments, longer life expectancies, lower divorce rates, and they are less likely to require access to government welfare programs or find themselves incarcerated (Trostle, 2016). The same study also emphasized college graduates' greater social capital capacity than high school graduates, referring to stronger neighborhood networks, community connections, and civic engagement.

Advanced Placement History & Overview

The post-WWII era ushered in significant transitions across the familiar social, economic, and political paradigms including shifts in educational aims and goals. New emphases focused on the importance of education and how teaching and learning reinforced social mores, Gross Domestic Product, and nationalism. As politicians grappled with the challenges of the atomic age, education reformers set their sights on retooling previous models and methods while attempting to shore up a weakening educational infrastructure.

The origins of the modern Advanced Placement Program and curriculum dates back to the Korean War and the launch of the Soviet Satellite Sputnik in 1957 as catalysts for strengthening math and science deficiencies in American public education (Rothschild, 1999), though the College Board itself emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as a mission-driven not for profit organization (College Board, 2003; Stone, 2014). The Cold War, and more specifically the space race, gave birth to a new federal initiative in education to close the technology gap between the United States and the Soviet Union (Rothchild, 1999). This initiative became the genesis for what eventually evolved into the Advanced Placement program.

The Ford Foundation became the key benefactor in creating the Fund for the Advancement of Education, which financed pilot programs for male high school students who enrolled early at the University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, Columbia University and Yale University to ensure them two years of higher education before they turned eighteen and became draft eligible (College Board, 2003). The programs encountered obstacles from the beginning, as high school principals complained of losing their best students to these scholarships, forcing policymakers to rethink their plan for challenging high school students with college-level curriculum (Rothchild, 1999). The resistance from public school principals gave cause for further reassessment of the program.

In 1951, a committee of Ivy League administrators and professors produced a report entitled, “General Education in School and College: A Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale” (Blackmer et al., 1953). This report used the terminology “advanced placement” to describe recommendations of increased independent study for “superior students” (p.177). The concern over gifted and

motivated students wasting time with “repetition in college work” (p. 9) underscored the need for some type of program to allow students to take a faster and more challenging path in high school.

A second study by the Committee on Admission with Advanced Standing (U.S. Department of Education, 1961) produced a plan for developing college-level curricula for high school students. The Committee on Admission appointed collegiate experts representing assorted disciplines to develop rigorous courses and assessments with the intent of giving students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Eleven subjects were introduced in 1952 as part of a pilot program and by 1955 the College Board stepped in to handle administrative duties officially and labeled the new curricula as the College Board Advanced Placement Program (College Board, 2003).

The program’s early years brought both praise and critiques from education leaders and scholars. Jack Arbolino (1961), who served as Director of the Advanced Placement Program, noted early support for AP from higher education, quoting then Brown University President Barnaby Keeney lauding the program as “... the most promising thing that has happened in American education in years” (p. 29). However, Arbolino also addressed concerns being raised by educators and the public at large, which included the following:

- A. It is an undemocratic, money-making scheme of the College Board.
- B. It is used by schools and colleges to *look* good rather than *be* good.
- C. It accents credit and overemphasizes testmanship.
- D. It limits the growth of the curriculum.
- E. Identification of the superior student is difficult at best.

Arbolino quickly dismissed point A, but did acknowledge some degree of validity to the other claims and warned of closing doors to students who possess a strong work ethic, what he termed

as a “Gumption Quotient” (p. 31) as equally important as intellectual prowess in academic achievement.

The AP Program limped through the social and political shocks of the 1960s only fourteen percent of the nation’s secondary schools administered AP exams in the spring of 1969 (Hochman, 1970), and over half of those schools had fewer than 10 students participate; however, the College Board notes the 1960s a pivotal time for expanding AP opportunities to include schools and students within low-income communities. This expansion represented a shift in the education landscape as premier education in America was traditionally elitist (Rothchild, 1999; Arbolino, 1961), while the cultural trends of the 1960s called for a broader scope of high quality education for populations historically excluded from accelerated learning opportunities.

The 1970s continued to usher in a new emphasis on students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and minority students. One longtime AP reader and grader felt the addition of document-based essay questions (DBQs) to the U.S. History and European History exams marked a significant step in leveling the field for underrepresented student populations as the DBQs included political cartoons, pictures, and graphs, providing a more interdisciplinary approach to assessing students’ historical knowledge (Rothchild, 1999).

The Advanced Placement Program grew significantly between 1975 and 1985 as the program expanded nationally. In 1976, 3,937 schools participated in AP; by 1985, there were 6,720. In 1976, 75,651 students took 98,898 examinations; in 1985, a total of 205,650 students took exams (Advanced Placement Statistics Tables, 1993-94 p. 1; Rothschild, 1999, p. 189). These statistics emphasize the program’s development despite growing disdain for public education in the wake of the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 report entitled *A Nation at Risk*.

The subtitle for the *A Nation at Risk* report declared the document as *The Imperative for Educational Reform*, a clarion call that if not heeded would lead to dire consequences for the United States. In step with other proposed education reforms of the twentieth century, *A Nation at Risk* proclaimed, “Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” (p.1). The Commission viewed 1980s America as a distant relative of the prosperous post World War II-era United States that many policymakers referred to as better times, or “Happy Days,” but concern regarding U.S. “competitors” fueled a Sputnik moment revival.

The report identified specific need areas regarding credits every high school student should earn according to disciplines and recommended, “schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and conduct” (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 4). Of course, the AP Program fit nicely within this reform, even though it was affiliated with the Department of Education.

Just as the dawn of the Cold War became the catalyst for the AP Program, the standoff between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. gave birth to growing cynicism towards government-run programs in favor of increased deregulation and privatization of social services. While President Jimmy Carter found difficulty in reassuring the American psyche amid the nation’s “crisis of confidence” and “malaise,” (Carter, 1979), Ronald Reagan rode the wave of a prevailing public distrust of politicians into the White House, blaming government for the nation’s lagging economy and going as far as to declare that the Department of Education should be dismantled in his 1983 State of the Union Address (Reagan, 1983).

The Department of Education and the College Board's Advanced Placement program both survived the Reagan era as the 1990s saw greater participation in AP classes. In 1986, 7,201 schools participated in the program; in 1997, the number was 11,500. In, 1986, 231,000 candidates took 319,224 exams. In 1994, these numbers were 458,945 and 701,000 (College Entrance Examination Board, 1993). Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton both put forth their own versions of similar education overhauls. Bush aimed at establishing a "world class" education system by the year 2000 that would rely heavily on testing fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders (Klein, 2014). Clinton supported the "Goals 2000" initiative and called for national standards (Rothchild, 1999). Regardless of who occupied the Oval Office during the 1990s, the AP program remained intact amidst political trends to the right and left. In 1993, Donald Stewart, then President of the College Board, declared the AP Program as a "superb model" for the nation to emulate, citing the U.S. Department of Education's use of AP data as an indicator in its annual "Condition of Education" report (p.1). While the AP Program gained steam into the twenty-first century, the expanding achievement gap casted a long shadow over many attempted reforms.

Statement of the Problem

The College Board (2011) reports that students who participate in AP courses stand a better chance of attending and graduating from college than those who do not; however, while AP course enrollments have climbed substantially, pass rates on the AP course exams for low-socioeconomic and minority students have shown little or no improvement. These low pass rates indicate an AP achievement gap, much like the general achievement gap first identified by the Johnson Administration's Coleman Report in 1966 that revealed significant academic achievement disparities between specific groups of students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in constructivism (Crotty, 1998; Gergen and Gergen, 2003; Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002) and employs a descriptive exploratory case study (Yin, 1984 & Stake, 1995) methodology to collect and analyze data. This paradigm posits that all knowledge is dependent on human behavior and practices, becoming a construct of how humans interact with the world around them. “All knowledge ... is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings... Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Lincoln (2005) states, “Constructivism is defined in its simplest terms as an interpretive stance, which attends to the meaning-making activities of active agents and cognizing human beings” (p. 60). That is, the process of analyzing research and arriving at a conclusion results from assembling a paradigm through the perceived realities of research participants. In this study, I explored and described the behaviors and practices of five teachers as they react and adapt to the demands of teaching a college-level course to low-SES high school students in order to prepare them for the AP U.S. History Exam and equip them with analytical skills that will serve them throughout their college years, as well as their careers.

To collect the data, I used a descriptive exploratory case study approach to record and assess teachers’ beliefs regarding their formative years, including their educational experiences, and their experiences teaching APUSH in Title I school settings. The participants’ accounts, when analyzed, provided collective view of their perceptions and practices as individuals and as a group. In this study I attempt to, “identify, understand, describe, and maintain the subjective experiences of the respondents” (Crotty, 1998, p. 83). I maintained integrity in the reporting of the teachers’ interview responses through the member-checking process (Yin, 2011).

The emphasis on instructors who teach in Title I schools presented a need to employ a concurrent framework for this study that explored how teachers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds worked within a critical theory paradigm. These teachers work to empower their students within the AP U.S. History course by focusing instruction on improving higher-order thinking and writing skills. This pedagogy becomes advocacy (Freire, 1970), both directly and indirectly, to equip students and enhance their likelihood of college and career success.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

1. In what ways do five teachers' backgrounds and experiences influence their perspectives regarding teaching the APUSH course in Title I schools?
2. In what ways do these APUSH teachers in Title I schools describe the environment and culture of the high school where they currently teach?
3. In what ways do personal beliefs influence these teachers' pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high schools?
4. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' planning in Title I schools influenced by teaching a diverse student population?
5. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' pedagogy in Title I schools influenced by the College Board's redesign of the APUSH course?
6. In what ways do these APUSH teachers adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?

7. What are the perceptions of these APUSH teachers in Title I schools about the course and the AP Program as a pathway to students' higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

By obtaining answers these questions, I connected the five APUSH teachers' backgrounds and experiences, who teach in Title I schools, with their respective teaching philosophies and how these philosophies affect their curriculum planning, lesson delivery, and assessments within the APUSH course framework. My overall intent for the study is to add to the limited body of research that currently exists on the topic of teaching APUSH in Title I schools to publish and present my findings to colleagues at the secondary and university levels, along with the College Board to improve APUSH teachers' effectiveness.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations relating to this study are that the data reflect one academic year and do not reveal cumulative teacher or student performance. I relied solely on the perceptions and interpretations of the teachers regarding their experiences teaching the APUSH course in Title I high schools.

General limitations associated with qualitative research include the following: participants' anxiety level, emotional state at the time of the interview, and recall errors (Patton, 2002). I recognize how any degree of participants' anxiety levels and emotional states may have influenced teachers' responses to the interview questions. I understand if a teacher in the study became susceptible to either state or trait anxiety (Spielberger & Rickman, 1991; Yow, 2005) and enacted anxiety defense mechanisms (Holloway and Jefferson, 2008), he or she may have modified perspectives and experiences relating to teaching APUSH. The anxiety levels of the teachers possibly varied from teacher to teacher, as I had previous collaborative teaching and

professional development experiences with four of the participants, while the fifth participant was a new acquaintance.

Recall errors are possible as a result of anxiety levels, manifesting themselves in a multitude of ways including: omission errors (Osth & Dennis, 2015), sources errors (Hollins, Lange, Berry, & Dennis, 2016), and sequential errors (Fischer-Baum & McCloskey, 2015). These and other selective memory processes posed unique challenges and limitations to the qualitative research process that required me, the researcher, to remain alert to possible inaccuracies as participants constructed their own accuracy within their given contexts (Neisser, 1994) and school cultures. The member-checking process described in the data analysis section addressed these limitations.

Hermeneutic considerations are also a point of concern in qualitative research (Crotty, 1998). Hermeneutic considerations explain how others may interpret the data differently than I because of dissimilarities in experiences, culture, and worldview. As I reviewed the data, I maintained an awareness of how the research revealed insights into my own perspective, as well as, the participating teachers.

In addition, my own biases might have affected my interpretations of the data due to my own perspectives and how I interpreted the testimonies and transcripts from the study participants. Although I have taught APUSH for ten years, my experiences teaching the course derive solely from a suburban high school context with a predominantly white middle-class student population. My students tend to be self-motivated and benefit from having strong support systems at home and in school with an administration and faculty who promote high academic expectations and are quick to intervene when a student appears to slip academically or struggle with general adolescent challenges. My students speak often about future goals of graduating

from college and establishing white-collar careers among a wide spectrum of professions. The school is a public school in that there is no “prep school entitlement” culture present where students embrace the concept of a successful career as the product of equal parts knowledge and perseverance. Certainly, there is a degree of teenage apathy and lack of motivation, but this is the exception not the norm that defines my high school’s academic culture.

I recognize how the culture of school context and framework can shape teachers’ testimonies and how their statements may be interpreted (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). I understand the importance of objectivity throughout the process of elucidation; however, my study required some points of self-awareness in recognizing my own biases and how they shaped what I derived from the interviews (Schwandt, 2003). My own preconceptions of the APUSH teachers’ lived experiences in Title I schools shaped, to a certain extent, my analysis and what I chose to emphasize in my study.

Significance of the Study

In this study, I addressed a topic of concern in education and specifically the issue of providing pathways to higher education for underrepresented populations. This research will inform APUSH teachers in Title I schools about the experiences and perspectives of a small sample of their peers and how they view themselves and their students’ progress. I hope to inform other APUSH teachers and administrators in Title I schools of the perceived hurdles and effectiveness of pedagogical practices found among the participating teachers.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

There remains limited scholarship regarding effective teaching methods relating to the APUSH course; therefore, a broader scope of analysis is provided here to offer a foundation of previously published inquiry addressing low-SES student performance and teaching methods. This literature review begins with a summation of research addressing the achievement gap and the existing achievement gap in the AP program and more specifically APUSH. The review then examines scholarship on proposed solutions for closing the achievement gap and how providing equity and access within the AP program assists with this process. An analysis of literature addressing effective methodology for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds follows with further discussion regarding the importance of the role of the teacher as the most significant factor in student achievement.

Achievement Gap

While the first official federal government recognition of the achievement gap dates back to the 1966 Coleman Report, the topic remains popular among education scholars. This review highlights scholarship published over the past decade. Shannon and Bylsma (2002) associate the achievement gap with test performance among specific groups in relation to each other or how a specific group's performance compares with preconceived expectations. Williams (2003) discusses how the achievement gap reveals itself in a range of academic achievement indicators including: grades, test scores, graduation rates, and college entrance/completion rates. The achievement gap label refers to the differences in academic achievement between white and

Asian students and minority students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Symonds, 2004). Joseph Murphy (2010), associate dean at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education, emphasizes how these differences exist as part of a pattern and provides a useful overview of the academic inequity existing throughout public education in *The Educator's Handbook for Understanding and Closing Achievement Gaps*. Murphy places this issue in relevant social context while highlighting the urgency of the achievement gap problem, along with the individual and societal costs incurred from these gaps. He argues that closing the achievement gaps would result in reduced crime rates, cultivating cultural bridges between diverse groups of people, and reducing the inequity found in black-white test score analysis (Murphy, 2010).

Arbuthnot (2011) references NAEP assessment data to highlight the standard deviations between African American and white students. The data reveal in U.S. History alone a 1.0 difference in fourth grade, 1.03 in eighth, and 0.95 for seniors in high school while the scores for geography indicate a wider gap. Arbuthnot identifies any difference at 0.7 or above as a considerable disparity and combines the NAEP findings with ETS scores for the SAT, ACT, MCAT, GMAT, GRE, and LSAT to conclude that African American students consistently underperform when compared to white students across the board. Murphy references gaps in reading scores as significant indicators of achievement disparities, not only between African American and white students, but notes a greater gap when comparing students from low-income families to those from more affluent families. Singham (2005) adds graduation rates to the mix, observing the much higher percentage of white students who receive diplomas (78%) to the 56% of African Americans and the just 54% for Latinos.

Murphy identifies indelible racism and discrimination, as key contributors to the achievement gap along racial divides. Discrimination in its many forms has resulted in an inferior learning environment for African American students. Altenbaugh (2003) provides significant evidence of continuous educational deficits with limited learning opportunities for black students from the genesis of the American public education through the modern era. His work not only examines the discrimination suffered by black students but of Native Americans, Asian Americans, multiple immigrant groups, and female students. Murphy highlights systemic problems relating to limited opportunity structures for African American students.

A closer review of the literature regarding defining and addressing the achievement gap reveals a chorus of warnings against researchers placing too much emphasis on race while ignoring the broader impact of students' socioeconomic status. Murphy concurs that race remains an important consideration in addressing the achievement gap but also highlights class status as a significant issue. Singham (2005) echoes this point exposing the shortsightedness of only researching the racial implications of the achievement gap as it ignores the reality of the large numbers of white students who also fall under the "underachieving" label, and in need of attention as well. Singham (2005) states, "An exclusive focus on black-student achievement alone may obscure the fact that the achievement gap may be due to the problematic way we approach the teaching of all children of *all* ethnicities (including whites), not just minority ones" (p. 342).

Singham (2005) also addresses the cultural divide between the black and white community while pointing out how presumptuous it appears for reformers to use white students' academic performance as a litmus for students of all ethnicities that leads to the general assumption that, "...if only black students would perform like white students, then there would

be no achievement gap” (p.31). He argues this line of thinking is misguided. Singham reminds researchers that many black people remain unimpressed with supposed white virtue, as the plight of poverty experienced by many African Americans has resulted from centuries of oppression at the hands of a white power structure.

Tutwiler (2007) reaffirms the educational plight associated with African American male students noting lower grades, lower standardized test scores, lower college enrollment and higher dropout rates compared to males from other ethnic groups. African American male students also have a higher likelihood of incarceration than their peers of other ethnicities.

Advanced Placement Achievement Gap

Tracking the Advanced Placement (AP) program over the first decade of the new millennium reaffirms its place in the American secondary and university education systems. The number of students participating in the program increased exponentially from 2000 to 2016. In 2000, 768,586 students sat for 1,272,317 AP exams; in 2016, 2,611,172 students, taking 4,704,980 exams (College Board, 2016). The number of high schools involved increased as well, with 13,253 participating in 2000 and 21,953 in 2016 (College Board, 2016). Participating colleges were also on the rise as 3,070 took part in 2000 and 4,199 in 2016 (College Board, 2016). Although these numbers are significant, a closer look at the data provides a clearer view of exactly which student populations have taken AP courses and exams during the past decade.

When analyzing participation by gender, girls continued to represent the majority of test-takers. More females took AP exams than males at the turn of the 21st century as evidenced in the 2000 AP Report Summary stating 683,312 female students participated compared to 589,005 males. This trend continued through 2010 as the gap widened between women and men; 1,757,015 to 1,456,210. While the numbers for men and women increased, the percentages

remained steady with women representing 53% to 54% of all AP participants (College Board, 2010). Dissecting the data further reveals more noticeable imbalances among other student groups.

Participation and performance of minority students remains a key concern for the College Board as statistics continue to reflect an imbalance between minority students and their white peers. The organization appears committed to providing higher education opportunities for students from families without previous college experience and seeks to increase minority enrollment in AP courses. The College Board (2010) acknowledges, “True equity is not achieved until the demographics of AP participation and performance reflect the demographics of the nation.” While this statement may sound a bit too optimistic, there appears some progress indicated by modest enrollment gains and increased pass rates among non-white students while emphasizing the continuing, significant achievement gap still in place.

College Board data (2009) reveal Hispanic and Latino students represent 15.9% of the public school graduating class of 2009, and 15.5 % of the AP examinee population. These numbers reflect an increase from the class of 2008, which graduated 15.4% and saw 14.8% examinee representation, but also indicate some degree of regression when examining data from the class of 2000 when the gap was a mere .2%. Gewertz (2009) points out that more students from low-income families are taking and passing AP tests, but non-Asian minority students, particularly African Americans, are still underrepresented. African American students represent 14.5% of the 2009 public school graduating class, and 8.2% of the AP examinee population; an improvement from 2008 when the percentages were 14.4% and 7.8%. The class of 2000 represented a lesser differentiation of 4.8% (College Board, 2009).

The following chart summarizes data from the College Board (2015a) website and illustrates the APUSH achievement gap using data from 2001 to 2015 by ethnicity:

Table 1: APUSH Exam Participation and Pass Rates by Race (College Board, 2001 & 2015)

AP Data	2001 Hisp/ Latino	2001 African- American	2001 Total Test Takers	2015 Hisp/ Latino	2015 African American	2015 Total Test Takers
# of Students	13,021	3,720	204,840	79,611	36,880	469,689
Exam Score of 3 or Higher	3567/ 27%	1,069/ 29%	101,265 49%	24,663 31%	10,112 27%	240,408 51.2%
Mean	2.35	2.15	2.75	2.11	1.94	2.64

While these statistics make the case for race as an indicator for APUSH exam performance, the College Board emphasizes how equity issues extend beyond race and overlap to students who come from low-income families (Wyatt, J., & Mattern, K. 2011). Low-income participation and exam success appears on the rise. Seventeen percent of AP examinees from the class of 2008 were low-income students, up from 16.2 percent in the class of 2007 and 11.6 percent from the class of 2003 (College Board, 2009). Low-income students also made gains in pass rates in recent years with 13.4 percent of students experiencing success in AP from the graduating class of 2008, compared to 13.1 percent from the class of 2007 and 9.8 percent from the class of 2003 (College Board, 2009).

Although these statistics point towards progress, they indicate significant room for improvement as noted by Gene Glass (2008) in *Fertilizers, Pills, and Magnetic Strips: The Fate of Public Education in America*. Glass highlights the statistical gap between whites and minority students, but also questions the College Board's mixed message regarding race writing, "In spite of their low representation among students passing AP exams, minority students and their

teachers, make up about half of the photographs on the College Board website” (Glass, 2008, p. 181). A California study identified free and reduced lunch status as a definitive variable in predicting AP scores across the board as students from low socioeconomic backgrounds most often scored a 1 or 2 on AP exams while their better-off peers were more likely to score a 3 or above (Taggart, 2011). There remain few APUSH teachers who teach significant numbers of low-income students whose students score a 3 or above on the APUSH exam (Walker, 2007).

Achievement Gap Solutions

Kosters and Mast (2003) note the historic implications of Lyndon Johnson’s signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 and the legislation’s key provision in allocating federal funding --- over a billion dollars annually --- to improve the quality of education for students from low-income households. Title I of the act contained two key significant components including the distribution of funds and the designation of recipients of the services financed by the act. The goal of this Great Society Program was to target and raise the achievement level of economically disadvantaged children. The authors, reviewing over forty years of Title I data, conclude: “The preponderance of evidence indicates Title I is not significantly improving student performance on state NAEP tests” (Kosters & Mast, 2003, p. 79). Kosters and Mast do not completely decry the use of federal funds to close the achievement gap; however, they do recommend the distribution of monies to educational entities beyond the scope of traditional public schools, such as charter schools and alternative schools.

Flanagan and Grissmer (2002) also highlight the importance of specific programs to the effectiveness of federal funding. These researchers make the case for stepped up federal funding nationwide to address spending inequities that exist by state to alleviate unequal student funding. They also argue for more detailed research to address unique challenges by state and increasing

the supply of quality teachers. Their work reveals a growing teacher shortage among inner-city school districts and recommends government programs to provide college loan forgiveness for teachers that could resemble the G.I. Bill.

Equity and Access

While test scores and past academic performance provide valuable clues in identifying students who should seriously consider taking AP classes, guidance counselors and administrators should not discourage any student who desires to take an AP course. As discussed previously, the College Board strives to allow open access to AP courses and promotes participation from minority students and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Critics and scholars have noted the racial disparities associated with the AP Program throughout the nation to the extent of employing Critical Race Theory to address structural barriers that hinder minority student participation (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002). Scholarship on race and the AP Program includes commentary on Arizona's AP opportunity gap, including an analysis of AP participation and exam scores (Cisneros, Holloway-Libell, Gomez, Corley, & Powers, 2014), and an examination of national patterns of AP participation by ethnicity (Handwerk, Tognatta, Coley, Gitomer, & Drew, 2008). Davis, Slate, Moore, and Barnes (2012) examine African American students' AP exam performance from 1997 to 2012 in three of the nation's largest states including Florida, New York, and Texas. They found African American students in New York scored higher than those in Florida and Texas and put these findings within the national context Black students' scores were considerably lower compared to white students. Jara (2013) also provides a national and longitudinal study, from 2003 to 2013, of lower Hispanic students' performance on AP exams compared to white students, while Moore (2010) examines Native American student AP exam performance. These studies repeatedly reveal that while minority

participation in AP courses increased significantly over the past decade, AP exam scores of 3 and above show much slower progress. The College Board (2001) has recognized the reality that minority students remain underrepresented in the AP courses and declared at the turn of the 21st century, “All students should have access to AP courses and have the chance to succeed in them” (p. 4). School administrators should actively pursue these students and attempt to create a proportional AP student population.

Maintaining open enrollment presents a challenge for teachers to produce pass rates comparable to national AP test averages (Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016), therefore administrative support is imperative. Large states like California have struggled to increase AP enrollments even though courses remain open to all students, challenges remain as many families are unaware of the program while some schools do not offer any AP courses (Zarate & Pachon, 2006). This has prompted increased funding to allow for more resources and pay for AP exams, a dilemma addressed by Robert Stevens (2013) who poses the question should AP course participation become a focus of national educational equity or serve a continuing meritocracy due to tightening budgets? Other states including West Virginia and Arkansas passed legislation requiring all public high schools to offer a minimum of nine AP courses (Schneider, 2009).

A research report published by the College Board in 2011 examined college outcomes for students from low-income households. The report detailed the AP fee-waiver program, explaining how the recent initiative increased exam participation of students of low-socioeconomic backgrounds by waiving exam fees for this specific student population (College Board, 2011). The College Board found that low-SES students who took AP courses from 2004 to 2009 had higher four-year college enrollment and greater retention rates than their peers who did not participate in AP courses. These findings reinforce similar results found from a 2008

College Board report authored by Hargrove, Godin, and Dodd that followed four Texas high school cohorts into college from 1998 to 2002 and noted significant differences in college completion from students who participated in AP courses and those who did not.

Effective Methodology for Low Socioeconomic Status Students in APUSH

The literature regarding unique teaching methods, specifically aimed at low-SES APUSH students, represents a narrow field of study. Three informative sources provide some clues as to the types of effective pedagogy that has resulted in learning gains for student groups who have historically struggled with college-level work. The following summaries represent a mixture of both traditional and non-traditional methodologies.

DiLorenzo (1999) discusses the practice of ranking students according to academic ability in order to recruit for the APUSH course. This method aligns with New York's Dewitt Clinton High School's structural approach to creating a system focused on student success in AP courses and not simply loading up rosters with large numbers, but taking an active role in identifying candidates who may benefit from taking a college course while in high school. DiLorenzo identifies specific teaching strategies involving instruction beyond the old lecture and test methodology. He points to a variety of lesson types including: small group document "shuffles", large group document lessons, "walking" debates, "milkbox harangues", "tombstone" lessons, and presidential "ranking" lessons (DiLorenzo, 1999). He also references using the acronym "PEDLIGS" (Person, Event, Document, Law, Idea, Group, or Supreme Court Case) for analyzing document-based questions and note taking. These activities represent student-centered teaching strategies aimed at keeping students actively involved in learning and the processing of course materials instead of someone simply relaying information to them. This approach to teaching indicates that DiLorenzo is willing to incorporate non-traditional methods to help his

students overcome their academic challenges and to optimize their learning experience. Walker (2007) identifies ten teaching methods that enable low-income students to pass the AP U.S.

History Exam including:

1. Utilizing multiple sources;
2. Engaging in analysis by interpreting, investigating, and questioning historical facts, events and actors;
3. Coaching students to write thesis-driven, evidenced-supported essays;
4. Integrating students' background knowledge and pre-conceived notions about history into instruction;
5. Requiring comprehensive content knowledge;
6. Utilizing student-centered activities, including group work;
7. Encouraging student engagement;
8. Incorporating students' cultural background into instruction;
9. Addressing the non-academic needs of students; and,
10. Utilizing practice tests.

Walker's qualitative study examined two teachers whose classes consisted of at least 25% low-income students and saw at least 60% of those students scored a three or above on the APUSH Exam from 2004- 2006 (Walker, 2007). Walker's study focused primarily on the teachers and their pedagogy and did not address students' attitudes and perceptions towards the course.

Poole (2014) examined the decision-making process relating to pedagogy and lesson delivery amidst several variables representing competing demands. This study was done in the context of a large school district in Florida where both local and state policymakers, via the Florida-College Board Partnership (2007), pushed to expand AP participation overall, especially

among minority student populations. The College Board (2010) highlighted this initiative as a model of state-level education reform to increase educational opportunities for historically marginalized student populations as Florida's AP course and exam participation increased dramatically over the past decade (College Board, 2014).

Poole's study focuses on how teachers make instruction and curriculum decisions in the classroom, while adapting to increased student participation in APUSH as students' exam performance significantly impacts measurement of teacher effectiveness. This qualitative study focuses on four highly effective APUSH teachers that share an intense commitment to student success and take deliberate steps to enhance student success. Poole also arrives at rational choice theory as a paradigm for discussion regarding teachers' curriculum and practice.

Although their study did not focus on Title I schools, Paek, Braun, Trapani, Ponte, & Powers (2007) also made the case for APUSH teacher practices having an impact on student performance specifically noting the incorporation of analyzing primary sources in preparation for answering document-based questions (DBQs) on the APUSH exam. This study highlighted teachers emphasizing higher order thinking and required students to venture beyond rote memorization of historical facts and dates. School context was also deemed a significant variable in the Paek study.

Other studies resemble the above research in that scholars tied teacher practice to student APUSH exam outcomes including a quantitative study of Georgia APUSH teachers (Glenn, 2012) that found teacher experience, and APUSH exam reader experience, coupled with direct involvement by administration and guidance counselors in the registration process, resulted in improved APUSH exam scores. Andrea Libresco (2013) also discovered a hands-on approach to the APUSH course effective, as well as, varied assignments, cross-curriculum collaboration with

English teachers, and assisting students in developing note-taking skills. Gritter, Beers, and Knauss (2013) reported the positive outcomes from APUSH teachers emphasizing note-taking and writing using academic language via continuous scaffolding processes during class time.

The newly revamped AP U.S. History exam format tests students at the upper tier of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy with a new emphasis on higher order thinking, assessing, "... the kinds of skills of thinking skills used by historians" (College Board, 2014, p. 6). The revised course and exam stresses the importance of analyzing both primary and secondary sources, not only for document-based essay questions, but for multiple-choice items and newly added short-response questions. The College Board recommends teachers focus on course concepts and themes while guiding them through text analyses that highlight the author's point of view, intended audience, and historical context. These changes pose additional challenges to teachers as they work to balance both breadth and depth within a U.S. history survey course and train students of mixed reading and writing levels to become burgeoning historians.

The Role of the Teacher

The notion of the teacher as the key component to affecting students' knowledge retention and overall academic performance remains quite prevalent as school districts around the country have begun to reassess how teacher effectiveness is evaluated. The teacher's contribution overrides all other factors including class size, funding, and access to technology (Danielson, 2012). Significant research has emerged to support this claim (Strong, Ward, & Grant 2011; Fong-Yee & Normore, 2004; Sanders & Horn 1998), fueling the prominence of value-added teacher evaluation models (VAM) produced by Charlotte Danielson and Robert Marzano alongside active learning methodologies (Duplass, 2006) so prevalent in American school districts.

Danielson (2007) and Marzano (2007) produced similar frameworks for teacher evaluation with each addressing common instructional components including professional development, collegiality, classroom environment, and most importantly instructional practices. Both emphasize student-centered teaching as opposed to traditional lecturing, a common instructional practice in AP U.S. History classes. Bulger, Mohr, and Walls (2002) also specify similar strategies via four key components of effective teaching including: identifying desired outcomes, emphasizing clarity during instruction, planning learning activities that engage students in the process, and delivering instruction with a high level of enthusiasm.

There is a growing body of research focusing on teaching strategies specifically for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. These studies emphasize several components of effective pedagogy including: emphasis on reading and vocabulary, helping students make relevant connections to their lives, dialogue, using graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based learning (Lineberg & Gearheart, 2013; Cole, 2008; Pete & Fogarty 2005; Perkins & Growe, 1999). This scholarship also stresses the importance of making connections with students and their families while cultivating working relationships and creating open lines of communication. Additionally, the importance of extracurricular activities including athletics, service clubs, and the arts are noted as effective means of immersing low-SES students to the school community.

The above-mentioned works provide useful guidance to maximizing the chances for low-SES within the broad scope of education. This study, however, provides a micro-analysis of one course, AP U.S. History, within varied contexts including urban, suburban, and rural public schools. While practice and pedagogy anchor this study, other factors such as classroom layout,

block and traditional class scheduling, teachers' education and years of experience, and the extent of each school's AP program, along with other variables, also direct the research.

Chapter Three

Research Design & Approach

Method

In this study, I utilized a Descriptive Exploratory Case study qualitative approach to collect data and analyze the data. The decision to interview participants stems from my belief that considering human emotions and the perception of their structural and physical environments are critical in understanding practice; these variables are not accounted for using a digital or pencil-and-paper survey. Further, I subscribe to Yin's (2011) conception of qualitative research, which consists of five distinct features:

1. Research the meaning of peoples' lives, under real-world conditions;
2. Represent the views and perspectives of the people in a study;
3. Cover the contextual conditions within which people live;
4. Contribute insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior; and,
5. Strive to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source. (Yin, 2011, pp. 7-8).

These qualitative research attributes enrich the data collection process and reveal crucial information that tells the story beyond statistical averages (Yin, 2011). The importance of understanding how people interpret their own experiences and what meaning they draw from these experiences becomes an essential part of the qualitative research process (Merriam, 2009).

The goal of this study was to capture the belief systems of participating teachers in order to identify the intrinsic values(s) they bring to the classroom each day, how they perceive putting those values into instructional practice, and how they feel their students benefit as a result.

Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter One, the following research questions guided the research:

1. In what ways do five teachers' backgrounds and experiences influence their perspectives regarding teaching the APUSH course in Title I schools?
2. In what ways do these APUSH teachers in Title I schools describe the environment and culture of the high school where they currently teach?
3. In what ways do personal beliefs influence these teachers' pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high schools?
4. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' planning in Title I schools influenced by teaching a diverse student population?
5. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' pedagogy in Title I schools influenced by the College Board's redesign of the APUSH course?
6. In what ways do these APUSH teachers adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?
7. What are the perceptions of these APUSH teachers in Title I schools about the course and the AP Program as a pathway to students' higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

Descriptive Exploratory Case Study Methodology

The aim of this study was to record and analyze the opinions and ideas of APUSH teachers' lived experiences within Title I school environments. I employed Descriptive Exploratory Case Study framework to guide the research and identify patterns among the teachers' responses to interview questions (Yin, 1984, 2011). This research approach lends itself to educational-related research and I believe this case study method (Stake, 1995 & 2005) encompassed the overall goals of the study. This methodology proved most useful given that the intended outcome was to fully understand the mindsets and perspectives of the participating teachers. The recorded lived experiences of the participating teachers represent their perceived realities, thus providing a frontline view of what they have determined as their own truths (Patton, 2002).

The investigative process followed steps outlined by Gall and colleagues (2007) and applied to this research study.

1. *Identify a topic of personal and social significance.* I chose to interview APUSH teachers because I have taught APUSH for ten years and thus have an interest in the processes and perceptions of other APUSH teachers, particularly those whose teach low-SES populations. The topic is one of great social significance given the College Board's continued push to expand the AP program to historically underrepresented student populations.

2. *Select appropriate participants.* As highlighted in the following section, I took great care to choose participants who met the selection criteria, including years of experience teaching APUSH and only interviewing teachers in Title I schools.
3. *Interview each participant.* I conducted two one-hour long interviews using a digital audio recording format. The first one-hour long interview addressed the participants' background including questions about demographics, education, specialized training, and previous vocations. An hour-long second interview addressed core questions from my study with each participant to capture a comprehensive understanding of how each interviewee experiences the phenomenon of teaching the APUSH course in a Title I school.
4. *Analyze the data.* The following steps guided the data analyses. (1) I used reflective analysis via constant comparative methods (Gall et al., 2007) and axial coding rooted in grounded theory analysis to provide an empirical framework to my study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Patton, 2007). (2) I developed codes associated with interview questions and field notes to break interview transcriptions into segments to identify recurring references and themes across the data. (3) I synthesized the findings and conducted member-checks with the participants to verify participants' responses using printed transcriptions. (4) I aligned recurring themes from the data with my research questions and categorized the themes accordingly. (5) I detailed these findings in Chapter Five of this study.

Participants

I collected and analyzed data obtained from interviews of five APUSH teachers who work in Title I schools. A qualitative measure of teachers' backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions related to teaching APUSH, as well as, what practices they view as significant contributors to student success, remained the focal points of this research. I sought teachers from the greater west-central Florida region and made every effort to achieve optimum variation among participants regarding teaching experience, age, gender, and race/ethnicity using the following criteria:

1. *Experience*: The participant taught the APUSH course for at least two years.
2. *Title I Designation*: The participant taught the APUSH course at a Title I school at least two years.
3. *High School Location*: I chose teachers from west-central Florida school districts representing urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods.

Recruitment

I recruited teachers for this study via email as detailed in Appendix A. The pool of participants resulted from convenience sampling (Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin 2011) via school district social studies chairpersons, contact through professional development workshops, former college classmates, and referrals from colleagues. The email (see Appendix A) referenced my degree program along with the details and aims of the study. In addition, I explained that the study required an initial one-hour interview and a follow-up interview to verify previous statements and my interpretations of their responses to questions asked during the initial interview. It also explained how participants were compensated after the follow-up interview. I

explained to teachers during the recruitment process they would be compensated with two \$25.00 Target gift cards, one awarded after each interview, if they chose to participate as mentioned in the compensation segment of this proposal.

Informed Consent

Once my proposal was approved by the dissertation committee, I initiated the Institutional Review Board application process at the University of South Florida. I submitted a study summary and a copy of the participants' informed consent form for approval, after which I commenced the interviewing and data collection process. Because I conducted the interviews off-school campuses and not during school hours, approval by the school districts was not required.

After the teachers agreed to participate in the study, I gave them the informed consent documents found in Appendices B and C. Form B reiterated the details of the study as disclosed in the recruitment email and specified their role in the study, their rights as a participant, and my responsibilities as the sole researcher. Participants signed Form C, indicating they understood and agreed to the terms of the study as described in the email communication and the Informed Consent forms.

I took great strides to ensure the integrity of this study and the safety of its participants. Participants signed the consent form that indicated they were contributing to this study of their own free will with the understanding their reflections were a part of a qualitative research study of APUSH teachers who teach in Title I schools. Each participant chose, or agreed to an alias suggested by me, so their responses remain anonymous. Their identities will be kept confidential with the use of pseudonyms for each participant.

Compensation

Once the interview process was completed, I gave the participating teachers a \$25.00 gift card to Target after each interview. These funds were made available through a research grant from the University of South Florida's Social Science Education Program.

Data Collection

I conducted data collection during fall of 2016 and winter of 2017. These interviews informed my research about the personal experiences and challenges associated with teaching the APUSH course and specific teaching practices they believe benefit students most. I recorded the interviews on a digital audio recording device which remains in my possession, stored in said device's memory. I will keep the device locked in a file cabinet and I will erase the audio recordings. I will destroy the transcripts in five years. I also made field notes during the course of the interviews to make note of environmental surroundings and any unforeseen interruptions, although every measure was taken to ensure interviews were conducted free of interruption. After each recorded interview, I transcribed the data by manual typing into a Word document.

Because I concluded the interviews during the fall months of 2016 and winter months of 2017, the actual sites of the interviews varied; interviews were conducted in a variety of cafes, USF library quiet rooms, and public libraries.

Research Interview Protocols

The interview process consisted of two one-hour-long, semi-structured interviews and a follow-up meeting to allow participants to review copies of transcripts and validate their responses to interview questions and my own perceptions of their responses. The first interview focused on participants' demographics, personal backgrounds, and education while the second interview focused on the key components of the study. I have listed the questions for the first

interview in Appendix C followed by the key interview questions that informed my research for the study in Appendix D. These were the key background questions for the first interviews:

1. Where were you born and where did you spend your formative years?
2. Describe the socioeconomic status of your family's household.
3. What was the socioeconomic status of your friends while growing up?
4. Do you have siblings? If so, what types of work do they do?
5. What were your educational experiences like in elementary, middle school, and high school?
6. What were your educational experiences like in college?
7. How did you find your way into the teaching profession?
8. What were your teaching experiences prior to your current position?
9. How did you become an APUSH teacher?

These are the key questions for the second interview and the overall study:

1. In what ways did your background and experiences influence your perspectives regarding teaching the APUSH course in a Title I school?
2. Describe the environment and culture of the high school where you currently teach.
3. What personal beliefs influence your pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high school?
4. How is your planning in Title I schools influenced by teaching a diverse student population?
5. How is your pedagogy in Title I schools influenced by the College Board's redesign of the APUSH course?

6. In what ways do you adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?
7. What are your perceptions about the course and the AP Program as a pathway to students' higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

I carried out the member checking process by sending interview transcripts after both interviews were completed via email, with all participants responding and concurring with the accuracy of my reporting.

Data Analysis

To draw analysis from sources other than the interviews, I relied on information from different vantage points. Utilizing distinct and unique sources to “corroborate” the investigation strengthened the validity of the study (Yin, 2011). Along with interview transcripts, I recorded field notes, and kept a research journal in the reflection and writing process (Richards & Miller, 2005). I drew from interview responses, field notes, and journal entries to triangulate the data from the research using constant comparative analysis (Stake, 1995).

Chapter Four

Discoveries

Introduction

The study took place from October 2016 to March 2017. Two separate interviews were conducted with each participating teacher. The first interview focused on the teachers' formative years and early careers; including a concise family history and a summation of educational experiences. The second interview asked teachers to reflect on their planning and pedagogy relating to teaching APUSH in Title I schools. The anxiety levels of the teachers possibly varied from teacher to teacher, as I had previous collaborative teaching and professional development experiences with four of the participants, while the fifth participant was a new acquaintance. Themes in common appeared throughout the data collection and analyses, although each teacher offered a unique account, resulting from their personal teaching philosophies, student enrollments, and school contexts and environments. As discussed in Chapter One, the following research questions guided the interview process:

1. In what ways do five teachers' backgrounds and experiences influence their perspectives regarding teaching the APUSH course in Title I schools?
2. In what ways do these APUSH teachers in Title I schools describe the environment and culture of the high school where they currently teach?
3. In what ways do personal beliefs influence these teachers' pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high schools?

4. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' planning in Title I schools influenced by teaching a diverse student population?
5. In what ways are these APUSH teachers' pedagogy in Title I schools influenced by the College Board's redesign of the APUSH course?
6. In what ways do APUSH teachers adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?
7. What are the perceptions of APUSH teachers in Title I schools about the course and the AP Program as a pathway to students' higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

Participants

The participants in this study represent a range of APUSH teachers from various backgrounds, age, years of teaching experience, race, gender, and school settings. I used purposeful sampling to select the teachers who taught APUSH in Title I high schools in Central Florida for at least two years. I sought out teachers from the greater west-central Florida region and made every effort to achieve optimum variation among participants regarding teaching experience, age, gender, and race/ethnicity. As stated in Ch. 3, I deliberately recruited a mix of teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools to compare perspectives and experiences in different school settings. The pool of participants was formed by convenience sampling (Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin 2011) via school district social studies chairpersons, contact through professional development workshops, former college classmates, and referrals from colleagues. I offered all the participants the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms; however, Sasha was the only one who made their own choice while I suggested the aliases for the others and they

agreed with my suggestions. I calculated the participants' age ranges based on the chronologies of their childhoods and careers and I also determined their ethnicities myself. Table 1 illustrates the profiles of participating teachers.

Table 2: Participants' Profiles

Participant	Age Range	Ethnicity	Years of Teaching Experience	Years of APUSH Teaching Experience
Jane	Early 40s	White/ Jewish	20	10
Tim	Early 50s	White	7	5
Charles	Late 30s	Hispanic	17	5
Robert	Early 30s	White	7	4
Sasha	Late 20s	African-American	6	4

Jane

1st Interview

I first met Jane when I was hired at the high school I currently teach at, in 2005. We were neighbors in the community of portable classrooms and often shared teaching strategies, student success stories, and occasional frustrations with the growing bureaucratic demands of modern education. We crossed paths at various workshops and she would update on where and what she was teaching. When I began to plan my study, I immediately thought of her as an ideal participant because of her teaching experience and her latest appointment at an urban, Title I school teaching APUSH.

Jane is a gregarious, energetic woman who personifies the profile of a nurturing teacher. She spoke openly about her teaching experiences during interviews; the first of which took place at a noisy eatery. After reviewing the first interview recording, I reserved a study room at the University of South Florida to conduct the second interview, which proved a much better conversation and recording atmosphere.

Jane spent her childhood years in several different states due to her father serving in the Air Force. Although she was born in Long Island, New York, she lived in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, New Mexico, and Virginia (where she spent all four years of high school). She mostly lived in middle-and working-class neighborhoods and attended schools with other middle-class children. Jane noted that her experiences in the Virginia suburbs (Fairfax County), just outside of Washington, D.C., were a bit different than her previous locales on several levels. She emphasized the difficulties of living near and attending schools in the South because her family is Jewish and most of her peers were Protestants. She explained that being Jewish in the South brought unwanted scrutiny and her parents had to appeal to the school board so she would not be required to pray the daily Christian prayer. Her high school years were easier regarding her faith and family, however, she worked part-time jobs in high school to pay for her own car insurance and gas, while most of her classmates only worked for “fun money”, as they came from upper-class backgrounds. She attended “one of the top high schools in the country” that boasted a 99% graduation rate. Jane highlighted several teachers that made a lasting impression on her:

I would say several different characteristics of them, not one teacher. I had a fantastic language arts teacher. It was actually historically based, so I liked history. She also taught with art. We learned a to about art in language arts. I had another English

teacher when I had just moved, in 9th grade, didn't know anybody. She called on me to do the ice-breakers. She made me feel included even though I didn't know anybody else. So, I took that from her. I also had a good math teacher who gave me consistent feedback, even during a test saying, "That's not it. Go back and try it again." So, I take a lot of those techniques from different teachers and use them today.

She explained she was an average student, but made Honor Roll. She did not take APUSH in high school, however, she did take AP Biology, along with other Honors courses. She noted the school enforced strict criteria regarding who enrolled in AP classes and she did not meet the GPA and standardized test score(s) requirements.

Jane spent her college years in southern California at the University of Southern California at Santa Barbara where she majored in political science and history. She mentioned taking a few education courses there but said she, "hated them." Her father had done some teaching and it began to appeal to her more than law school at the time. She also mentioned she worked while going to school in various jobs to help pay for expenses.

Her teaching career began in California as a substitute teacher and after one year of teaching she relocated to central Florida teaching four years at a Title I middle school, where she saw her share of struggling students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. She initially taught math and dropout prevention. She recounted one horrific story during the interview:

I called the (abuse) hotline more in that job than any other job. The most horrible story ever. The girl at 12 years old, her father threw her down the stairs because she was pregnant, it was his. It was horrific. She ended up, they took her out of school, they put her in a program. I don't know what happened to her, but she was gone. They took her out of the home. That was my most horrific memory of those kids. It was so bad. There

was a boy who killed his grandmother recently and it turns out I had him in my sixth-grade class. So, these were really rough kids.

Jane left the middle school and taught at two separate suburban high schools before landing at her present appointment at an urban Title I high school where she teaches AP Human Geography and APUSH. The school demographics are comprised of 43.88% Hispanic, 28.81% Black, 18.80% White, 5.18% Multiracial, .88% Asian, and .46% Indian. The Multiracial category, prior to 2009, was defined by students whose parents identified as Multiracial, after 2009 the distinction was determined by students choosing more than one ethnicity on school registration paperwork (Florida Department of Education, 2014-15). The total school enrollment is 1,739 students. When discussing her methodology, she points to how important her college history classes continue to aid her teaching and in the same breath how little she thinks an education degree would be useful. She also revealed the AP Program at her school may not continue:

My school may not offer it much longer. We have open-access in the AP courses, but by the time they become Juniors there aren't many left willing to do the work and with the new state grading system, we are graded on how many students pass the test. They can take a dual enrollment [DE] class instead and a dual enrollment class is easier. They are looking at the possibility of dropping the amount of AP courses for more DE classes. DE doesn't have to take a standardized test.

Although the job has its challenges, she will likely finish out her career in the classroom.

2nd Interview

It appears that Jane's transient childhood serves her well in teaching diverse student populations. She subscribes to the philosophy that every student has the ability and potential to learn and actively seeks out her students' interests in history while making the most of those teachable moments. She believes her own love of history, dating back to the fourth grade while living in Virginia the first time, is something her students sense. Given the diverse student population at her school and the free and reduced lunch population inching towards 90%, she looks at her job as more of a calling to reach a marginalized population.

Jane says she feels safe at her school, despite the campus being fairly-open and accessible to any passersby, but did mention that many students do not feel safe and they often take AP classes to avoid the general population and unruly classroom environments. She did admit to one incident last year when the school went into lockdown due to weapons on campus, which turned out to be unloaded handguns and brought to school by a student wanting to sell, not shoot. She spoke calmly about the incident, while noting many colleagues became fearful of future occurrences.

According to Jane, her classroom appears to revolve around a mix of structured and student-centered instruction where she sees her role as more of a facilitator rather than a direct instructor:

I create a monthly calendar which has their reading, homework requirements for the entire month along with a brief outline of what we will cover each day. Because we have truancy issues, I make it so there's no excuse that they don't know what their homework is. If they play sports, they know what their homework is. It's posted online and they get a hard copy. The new structure for evaluation, I had to change my teaching

the last five years. I used to do more lecture type teaching, I don't know if that was good or bad, but I prefer what I'm doing now, which is a lot more student-driven. So, most of their reading and notetaking is done at home and then they bring that back and its activity and discussion. I don't do a whole lot of talking. I clarify things, I've given plenty of online resources for lecture. I don't lecture for the most part. Student- driven, almost student-led. I facilitate, I answer questions, but a lot of times I won't answer a question and let them hash it out.

Her students sit in heterogeneous groups of four with a box of office supplies for whatever the day's lesson calls for. She focuses on APUSH course themes, but does not use the recommended College Board framework and incorporates daily doses of graphic organizers and references to the APUSH writing rubrics. She found the College Board Summer Institutes helpful, mostly due to talking to other veteran APUSH teachers regarding best practices and exam preparation. She noted the school district trainings are often on the far side of the county making attendance inconvenient.

When discussing the process of AP enrollment at her school, Jane explained that an open-door policy is in place allowing any student to sign up for AP classes regardless of test scores, GPA, or teacher recommendation. Students and parents may appeal if a teacher recommends a student not take an AP class; however, she recalled one student transferring out of her APUSH class at the end of the semester due to failing grades. She also emphasized how schedule changes can present a challenge because of differences in the APUSH curriculum and the Honors curriculum as the latter begins the year with the U.S. Civil War and APUSH starts with Pre-Columbus indigenous cultures.

Jane attributes increased minority participation in her APUSH class to school population and policy, not so much because of the College Board's efforts in recent years to bolster enrollments. She made some interesting points on school diversity:

I don't think there are challenges, I think you have to approach things a little differently. It can be challenging when talking about minority topics. Sometimes there are issues and sometimes it's great. I don't see it as negative, unless they are not able to understand the material.

I like the diversity. I think you see more open access in a Title I school than a regular school. I've worked in other schools and thinking back; those classes were nearly all white. I think minorities have more opportunities in Title I schools.

Although she admits the student-centered model works well for Title I and non-Title I populations, Jane points to the district's use of the Charlotte Danielson (2007) model or evaluation the real reason she uses a non-traditional, non-lecture approach. She explains that this model works best because, "The learning is in the kids' hands."

Janes follows the College Board's nine historical periods, chronological format for the course and "loves" the new emphasis placed on primary and secondary source analysis as opposed to the old format that required students to employ more rote memorization skills. Document analysis remains the key component of the document-based essay prompt. Jane breaks down the process of the analysis and writing over several days with actual timed writing assessments occurring at the end of a unit. Other assessments also mirror the new College Board exam format with source-based multiple-choice and short-answer questions. She agrees that the new format is more student-friendly, although she admits her students grow weary with the extensive writing assignments and assessments.

Although Jane’s efforts focus on student growth and preparing for the APUSH exam, she declares she has little concern regarding her students’ performance and how it impacts her annual evaluation. She is not completely sure to what degree student performance factors in her grade, although she thinks it accounts for 49% of her grade. She stated:

No. I don’t care anymore. My kids are going to perform, how they’re going to perform. My value-added score has gone down, since teaching AP students. Getting them to move is harder than a low-level kid [regular ed.]. When I taught regular world and American history, I could get every kid to show a gain, but in AP not so much.

While her methods aim to increase student performance on the APUSH exam, she describes her pedagogy as, “teaching to the rubric” as opposed to the cliché of “teaching to the test.” Ideally, Jane would like her students’ scores to align with the national average of students who scored a 3 or a above, which hovered just above the fiftieth percentile mark the past two years at precisely 51.2% in 2015 and 52.4% in 2016 (College Board, 2015, 2016). The following table shows Jane’s students’ exam performance for 2015 and 2016:

Table 3: Jane’s Students’ Exam Performance

Score	5	4	3	2	1	Total Students Scoring 3 or Above	Percentage of Students Scoring 3 or Above	Average Score
2015	0	5	11	23	8	16	34%	2.277
2016	0	2	13	26	27	15	22%	1.853
Two-Year Totals	0	7	24	49	35	31	27%	2.026

She asserts that the APUSH course is a good college prep course, but does not subscribe to the notion that college is good for everyone. When asked if she thought a college degree would benefit all her students she replied:

Not to all of them. I think some kids are in the classes to stay away from bad kids. Some of the kids are in there to be in a class where there are no fights. It's quiet. There's learning happening. But some of those kids are not going to an Ivy League school or state university. They may go to a community college. For some of them, I think a trade would be just as beneficial and earn them as much money. My district doesn't even give a differential for a Master's degree.

They should all have the opportunity, but not everyone needs the opportunity. Everyone should have the opportunity, if they want to go to college. However, if there should be money out there for trade schools. A lot of these kids can't because they don't have the money. There isn't a lot of government money available if you want to be an apprentice, for plumbers and mechanics.

I've been teaching for 19 years; my salary is \$50,000. As a plumber or electrician, they could make \$100,000 and college is not required. There are plenty of people that make more money than I do. I understand that college is important and it's been pushed for many years, but I don't think that's still true today.

She pointed out that her course teaches life skills including: organization, communication, and cultivating positive, professional relationships. She also assumes the role of college guidance counselor as she assists students with scholarship applications, FAFSA forms, and college registration. She noted how her school's counselors are overwhelmed and fills in where needed along with her teaching duties. These actions give evidence of a committed and caring educator

who also views her students as she would her own children, becoming a surrogate parent when needed. The latter was evident in a reflection from my research journal recorded after my second interview with Jane:

Jane possesses a definitive maternal quality as a teacher. I think part of this is attributed to her teaching many of the same students in AP Human Geography when they were freshmen, as well as, her taking an active role in students' lives beyond AP U.S. History. The fact she has two children of her own may also impact how she relates to, and guides her students as her maternal persona influences her demeanor as a teacher and a mentor. She appears to care about her students' welfare outside the classroom and the quality of their lives after high school (Research Journal, 9/17/16).

Tim

Tim and I met in a graduate course eight years ago and shared a common bond, being the senior students in the class by approximately fifteen years. We also shared the experience of pursuing education as a second career, although I began teaching ten years prior to our meeting. Similar to my collegial relationships with Jane and Charles, I have attended workshops alongside Tim and offered pedagogical advice as he began teaching APUSH at a newly-constructed Title I school, in only his second year of teaching. He became a quick study and saw significant student success rates after a challenging first year. Both interviews were conducted in a public library quiet-room where Tim shared how his Midwestern background and military training have served him well in the classroom as he seeks to instill a strong work ethic in his students while empowering them with self-confidence and self-reliance.

First Interview

Tim grew up in north-central Indiana in a small town of less than 25,000 about an hour from South Bend. He describes his neighborhood and schools he attended as white, lower middle-class and working-class with many people employed in factories or the railroad industry. His mother had him at seventeen when she was a junior in high school. She did mostly factory work where they manufactured electronics parts and received some government assistance. He has a younger brother and sister and notes he and his siblings were raised by a cooperative effort from his mother and her parents, as well as other extended family. He describes his family as blue-collar. His brother and sister did not go to college, choosing to become small-business owners, operating a hair salon.

Tim attended public schools with largely white student populations with a few African Americans and Hispanics. His peers came from mostly middle to lower middle-class families. He describes his high school teachers as highly qualified and mentioned taking German all four years of high school. He describes high school classes and teachers as content-centered:

I would say classes were more content ran, there was not a lot of the extraneous things you have to deal with now with classroom management, attendance, the extra things you have to do. Kids were pretty well behaved. Accommodations was not a term, I recall when I was going school. Either you did know it or you didn't know it.

He describes himself as a good student, however, his high school did offer AP classes. There were either advanced or regular and he took mostly "advanced" classes, but not the College Board courses. While he found his teachers proficient, Tim did not feel compelled to become a teacher while in high school.

Although accepted into the Purdue University's Pre-Veterinarian program, he opted for the Coast Guard as the cost of college at that time narrowed his options. The Coast Guard provided higher education opportunities allowing Tim to earn a Bachelor's degree in history, partly through night courses at Excelsior College and upper-level courses at Indiana University. The latter years were towards the end of his Coast Guard career when he started thinking about life after military service and considering a path towards teaching history. He graduated Magna Cum Laude and then pursued a Master's in Social Science Education at a state university in Florida. He elaborated on his journey to the classroom:

I taught two places in the Coast Guard, I taught in Yorktown, Virginia, and I liked teaching. Then I taught in Aqua Sciences at the Coast Guard Academy, so I was, thinking about careers after I retire. There are actually a couple careers, I just wanted to get myself set up with a couple different things. So, I have a Masters Towing License which is still current. So, one was, do I continue to do that, and be on the water and do that? The problem with that was the schedule is very inconsistent, so it's not a Monday through Friday job. It's whenever. And I really wanted after 31 years of instability with my schedule, to look at options that provide more stability, I knew I liked teaching. Science, probably would have been my major but, I couldn't really get a Major into Sciences unless I had the time, I would of have to finished that after I retired, cause of the Lab nature of things. You know, I always loved History. So, when I started doing the research, History was a major that I could do while I was in the Coast Guard, through Indiana University. So, I pursued that and enjoyed it. And so, I probably started, probably the second, the last third of my time in the Coast Guard, when teaching was the direction I

wanted to go. Of course, I was involved with my kids in school and things like that.

Probably the last third of my career is when I started thinking about it.

Tim's teaching career began in 2010 at a newly-opened, rural Title I school where he taught sophomores, juniors, and seniors and an array of social studies courses including: world history, American history, economics, government, AP Macroeconomics, AP Government, and APUSH. His APUSH appointment came about partly due to the request of the administration and his own interest in teaching the course. He credits his college history courses as a key part of helping him prepare to teach APUSH, but also drawing upon his Coast Guard experiences to shape his approach. He emphasized social skills, leadership skills, collaboration, and work ethic as helpful in his methodology. He also noted that regardless of the history degree, without the strong leadership skills, students do not respond, observing, "They are really not with you."

Tim reports that he feels at home in the classroom and very comfortable with the APUSH course and plans on continuing to do so up until retiring.

Second Interview

Citing his background as someone who came from some degree of humble means, Tim subscribes to the "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps" philosophy. This remains a central part of his approach to teaching in that he believes every student has the potential to succeed, given they believe in themselves and have some sort of a support system, including a caring teacher and asserting that some students need help putting on those proverbial boots. He asserts those who have the most to overcome often achieve the greatest successes, as opposed to students from affluent backgrounds. He relates this back to his own childhood experiences, coming from a single-parent home in a blue-collar town. He emphasizes building upon small

successes while fostering a sense of self-worth so students cultivate a sense of pride in what they do and who they are becoming.

Tim maintains high expectations in the classroom but also provides numerous opportunities for success including making up missing assignments. He takes into account the fact students in a Title I school can face a myriad of challenges at school and home; therefore, extending deadlines may provide the accommodation some students need to bring up grades and “turn things around.” He further elaborated regarding taking on the role of mentor in the context of student success in a Title I school:

Well, I think, I think people choose their own mentors. I have never been a fan of this, these programs we have where you assign someone a mentor, I think you choose your mentors. But, I try to take on an approach, where you’re giving them more than just History, because History they are not going take with them. But there is a lot of things you can do within the classroom, with History, they can develop social skills to build confidence which translate back to their success in History, but they can also take with them and maybe they enjoy the class more, one in particular is structure. And I am a big believer if you provide structure and diversity to the classroom they are more likely to have success. I use the story of the kid with the backpack with all his work in it, right? When he goes to study, you can give them everything in the world, you know, so there needs to be some organization, there needs to be some structure. That is not just Title One student, but that is all students. And I think the social skills we might say is more geared toward a Title One student, but that’s all students as well you know working with different types of people with different backgrounds as well.

While giving credence to providing structure in his course, Tim credits his graduate coursework that influenced his approach to a student-centered pedagogy. He named several professors as being instrumental to shaping his approach and delivery of APUSH curriculum. He feels this approach is more engaging and students become more “embedded in the course.” He also points to his relative inexperience in teaching as a reason why he uses the student-centered approach, stating he did not have to undo an old method of continuous lecturing like many of his peers who are veteran teachers and have resisted the Marzano (2007) and Danielson (2007) protocols.

Tim’s believes his Coast Guard career also influences his teaching philosophy as he taught a Nautical Science course during his service. He cited this as a very positive association with helping cultivate young people and expanding their learning and making an impact on their lives. He revels in the exchange of ideas with his students and emphasizes the open dialogue and resulting feedback from students is something he likes most about teaching, although many teachers become restless and frustrated with students and the profession Tim’s experience is the opposite as he appears quite content to take on the challenges of the job, while focusing more on the rewards of seeing students succeed.

Tim’s high school’s demographics differ significantly from the other teachers in this study with a student population comprised of 75% white students, 20% Hispanic, and only 5% African American. The socioeconomic makeup of the student population is mixed as he noted someone visiting the campus may not pick up on the fact 70% of the students are on free or reduced lunch. He noted there were normal tensions on campus the first year as students came from competing schools, but said the campus remains a safe and stable environment.

Tim's APUSH course is designed to spend one to two weeks on each unit. He breaks down the large College Board time periods into smaller concepts. He plans the entire course calendar at the beginning of the school year, accounting for vacation days and other forecasted days of non-instruction, working backwards four weeks prior to the APUSH exam date to allow time for reviewing and an additional three weeks for "thematic learning activities." He elaborated on this process:

So, I approach the course in chunks because they have to have the background knowledge. But then periodically through the year, I have these periods of two or three days, we do a thematic learning activity, where we might look at slavery. Which covers multiple periods. We might look at Native Americans or African Americans, or Labor Unions, or immigration. All those individually or a foreign policy. So those are all thematic learning objectives. They cover multiple periods. If I took the actual instructional days I had, and did it with a chunk then I'd get through all the material. I might have the review at the end. But I don't have a placeholder for bridging material together. I don't do that at the end for the four weeks. Cause I tend to focus that as more of a review.

This hybrid of chronological and thematic approach complements the varied approach Tim uses in facilitating the course. Although he champions the student-centered model, he is not anti-lecture. He chooses to use lecture and collaborative learning frequently to impart course content. He may lead with the lecture and follow with small group instruction for the application part of instruction. He also uses the media center weekly to allow students to do research and primary and secondary source analysis. He reports being a "gradual release" practitioner particularly with essay writing. By "gradual release" Tim is referring to the "I do, we do, you do" process as

detailed in the Marzano (2007) protocols He chooses to focus on essay components, often devoting an entire day on just thesis writing.

Tim creates assignments that are part of a “period packet” as he begins a new unit of study which includes: key vocabulary, notes from assigned reading, unit essential questions, and essay prompts. He noted the use of technology relating to this overarching resource:

They have a period packet they work on outside of class that’s due at the end (of the unit). Then, I use Google Docs for individual assignments. So, basically at the end of the year, we’ll have this curriculum framework of 9 periods. At the end of the year, every student will have a Google Doc that they’ve only done. They’ll have a Google Doc that has a detailed overview of each individual thematic learning objective.

Tim uses this approach to enhance the College Board’s course framework and time periods for students. Tim has used some of his strategies from AP workshops and noted a DBQ Project workshop at the school district as helpful in course planning.

At Tim’s school, enrollment in the APUSH course usually starts with a teacher recommendation from a world history teacher. He clarified though that there is no real criteria or screening process and that the school maintains an open enrollment policy. He noted there is some attrition the first four to nine weeks whether students will remain in the course. He gave an example of a student with a 2.0 GPA who scored a “four” on the exam. He reinforces that the student’s commitment to the course is the crucial criteria for success regardless of past academic performance, good or bad.

Tim stated he has not noticed increased numbers of minority students in AP courses at his school amidst the push from the College Board, although he did take issue with the lack of administrative support to do so:

To diversity specifically, I don't think we do a good enough job identifying minorities that can have success. I'll give you an example. I got this email from the College Board or someone --- I can't remember who it was from --- that says: We've identified 10 or 12 kids, you know at your school, but when you try to find out those 10 or 12 kids from administration, they don't know who those kids are. In order to get a kid to take an AP class, you have to recruit. At the same time, you're limited as a teacher in getting out around school and recruiting students. At a Title I school, in particular, as a matter of fact, at any school, in particular, I think you need to identify those minority kids that have the potential to be successful. And feed that information to the teachers in the recruiting process, so you can have the one-on-one. Listen. If you have a one-on-one conversation with a student, you might get them to buy in to taking that step and challenging themselves. One of the biggest reasons that the numbers grew in AP subjects at this Title I school was through active recruiting through building relationships with the students. Oftentimes, kids will take an AP class because they've built a relationship of respect and mutual trust, whatever with that particular teacher. We just don't identify.

Tim's testimony points to systemic problems with AP course recruitment and a lack of using test data from assessments like the PSAT (Vaughn, 2010) to identify AP potential and the continued reliance on teachers to become active agents on behalf of students and their futures.

Tim recounts examples of several former students from the array of AP classes he has taught over the years of how his course helped prepare them for higher education and not just because of increased course rigor, but because of his insistence on student participation, specifically in refining public speaking skills. He mentioned one shy female student specifically who cried the first time she spoke in front of the class and later conquered her fear of public speaking and is now doing quite well at a state university.

When asked about modifying his methods for minority students he once again recalled his graduate studies and a reference to the often-referenced Rosenthal- Jacobson (1968) study in teacher education circles regarding high expectations:

I don't modify. I think if you always set expectations high, then kids who commit themselves are going to reach those expectations. When I was in the Social Science Education program, I remember to this day, and I don't remember which class it was in, but they talked about in this study where they took two schools, one from an affluent area, and one from a Title I area. They taught the affluent area to high expectations, and the kids had met those high expectations. They taught the other school to low expectations, and they met the low expectations. They changed the approach at the same schools and saw that the lower socioeconomic students actually rose in their scores, they actually achieved more. When kids from the affluent area were taught with lower expectations, they saw a drop in their scores. So, I think if you have high expectations for every one of them, they might not have drastic improvements, but they're going to improve. They might pass the course, but not pass the exam. They might get a '2' on the exam, where otherwise, they may have gotten a '1'.

Part of Tim's high expectations approach includes consistently simulating the APUSH exam by assessing students with a mix of questions resembling what students see at the end of the year on exam day. This includes timed tests aimed at reducing test anxiety through continual exposure to College Board-type questions. He admits to using a mix of old and new format multiple-choice questions because of a limited number of new format questions with excerpts from primary and secondary sources available and to encourage memorization of key events and people. He requires students to access prior knowledge from previous units to address short-answer questions and essay prompts, while using the same approach for DBQ's and requiring students to formulate thesis statements before they begin analyzing sources. He gives document-based formative assessments two to three times a week and chapter quizzes once a week that also include document references. Students also write two to three essays for each unit.

As far as the course and exam redesign, Tim doesn't feel the new format is necessarily more student-friendly due to the need for content knowledge for the short-answer questions and the long essay. He emphasized that even though the multiple-choice questions require source analyses, "You still have to know the content."

Tim doesn't appear the least bit threatened or concerned that his students' performance factor in his overall teacher evaluation score noting he continues to score the maximum of 4 on his annual summative score. While many colleagues, particularly in his district, are calling for less emphasis on student performance as a variable in the evaluation process, he favors more scrutiny:

I actually think, and most probably would not agree with me, I think we need more scrutiny and more accountability because I think still 4 years into this new format. Again, here's background though, I've been evaluated my whole life. So, I see the value

in having other people evaluate you. If you have open mind and you have constructive feedback, and the person approaches it in a way that is constructive and not negative. If you're not getting feedback from anyone, how are you improving? If you're not getting feedback from students and if you're not getting feedback from colleagues, if you're not getting feedback from administration, then how are you improving? If administration has a purpose, direction, and a goal, or the district has a purpose, direction, and a goal, the only way you're going to reach that is to try to get everybody to buy in. And we haven't. There's still teachers that stand up and only lecture the whole period. There's still teachers that don't know what formative and summative is. They haven't bought in.

Tim's confidence and resolve regarding his teaching methods caught my attention as recorded in my research journal:

Tim couples his quiet, soft-spoken demeanor with a calm self-assuredness when discussing his methodology and the current climate of scrutiny facing teachers. I was surprised by his confident manner as he mentioned that he welcomed more scrutiny in the evaluation process. His military career undoubtedly conditioned him to constantly be prepared for critique and evaluation from administrators, unlike myself and many of my social studies peers at my school where evaluations are met with great apprehension and anxiety. The trepidation is compounded with not knowing when we will be observed by an administrator. Tim conveys a very composed outlook on how his teaching effectiveness is measured (Research Journal, 10/17/16)

Regarding the notion of teaching to the test, Tim prefers to describe what he does as teaching to the standards, but admits this may appear as a test-focused approach and to him it remains a matter of semantics. He states, "You teach to the standards, because if you want the

kids to have an opportunity to be successful, you have to make sure they're good with the standards." He believes his methods transcend Title I schools and are applicable to any demographic and any group of students.

The following table illustrates how Tim's performed on the APUSH exam the past two years:

Table 4: Tim's Students' Exam Performance

Score	5	4	3	2	1	Total Students Scoring 3 or Above	Percentage of Students Scoring 3 or Above	Average Score
2015	2	4	14	13	9	20	48%	2.452
2016	3	4	10	13	19	21	35%	2.163
Two-Year Totals	5	8	24	26	28	41	45%	2.297

Standards-based teaching is a concept high on Tim's list of priorities, not only for his APUSH class but for any course. He believes rigor is the key and for any level of course, whether regular, honors, or AP, the teacher must commit to lesson plans and instruction aimed at challenging students to reach their full potential. He explained that just because students are in an AP class, does not guarantee them will be required to apply themselves and reach beyond previous accomplishments. He also admits that these types of lessons call for a great degree of teacher planning on the front end and working extra hours long after the school day has ended.

Tim is not an advocate of the "college for all" campaign, emphasizing vocational career paths and local companies like Publix who historically promote from within and do not require a degree for entry-level jobs. He adds, "I don't think every student needs to go to college. I don't

think we want in society every student to go to college. We're short in a lot of professions." Tim does believe every student should have access to higher education but asserts government programs that target one part of the population creates more imbalance and wind up doing students a disservice. Tim placed heavy emphasis on individual choice and clearly communicated that high school is not the "end all, be all" of a student's life or career. He makes the case for community college as a place for high school underachievers to find themselves and perhaps discover a vocation or subject they have a passion for and how that revelation can help point them to productive lives. He feels strongly his APUSH course can help students in their pursuit of college, but more importantly Tim is equipping them for the realities of adulthood and the work required for life's rewards, be they simple or grand.

Charles

Charles and I met in the Social Science Education program as undergraduates during the late 1990s. My initial impression of Charles was that of quiet, reserved person who did not dominate class discussions. He often chose to err on the side of caution and made less-frequent, yet unique and informed observations on historians' perspectives. We, along with several other cohort members, decided to pursue a double-major in History, which required taking four additional history courses. As we pursued our History degrees, we experienced shared epiphanies regarding the complexity of historical analyses and multiple theories crowding modern historical research. Although we have only spoken a few times since graduation, Charles recently caught my attention with his APUSH success stories at workshops and meetings. Although his school recently adopted the Cambridge Program and he no longer offers APUSH, I feel his perspective provides important information regarding teaching philosophy and pedagogy, given his students' exemplary APUSH exam performance. He provided interesting insights during both interviews,

conducted in a local public library, into how his background and college education formed his philosophy and approach to teaching APUSH in a rural Title I high school, resulting in students' impressive exam scores.

First Interview

Charles was born in a mid-size Michigan city of 20,000 people and recalls it as very "townie" in that people were friendly and everything was in walking distance; a contrast to the rural Florida town he moved to in eighth grade. He recounts moving back and forth every year due to a family member's illness until his junior year in high school when his family moved to Florida permanently to the same rural town. He recalls the Michigan culture as somewhat homogenized where his peers followed the same fashion and music trends as opposed to his Florida experience where he experienced cliques and definite social divisions at school. He also recalled clear neighborhood boundaries that ran along racial lines in Florida, different from the semi-integration in Michigan.

Charles describes his parents as hardworking and persevering people. His mother went to nursing school and became a school nurse while his father did not attend college, but has worked many years for the Waste Management Department where he earns a higher salary than his teacher son. Charles' father suffers from Harada Syndrome, rare eye disease. His father's disability forced the family to move back and forth from Michigan to Florida as his father's family lived in Florida and his mother's in Florida, as well. He mentioned his father received disability benefits because of his condition, while his mother worked where she could prior to becoming a nurse. The eye disease impaired the father's vision enough so he could pass an eye test, but finally landed the job "throwing trash," even though coworkers assisted him on the job

when needed. He noted his father worked with the daily fear of not being paired up with someone who would guide him through the day.

Charles admits to being a loner in school and the few friends he had, as well as classmates, came from working class families, remembering one of his friend's father as a mechanic who could "make or fix anything." He does not recall classmates in Michigan receiving free or reduced lunch, although in his Florida high school, "it seemed like half the school was on free and reduced lunch." The few high school friends he had did not work after school as they were all busy with sports.

Charles has two younger sisters; the oldest sister earned a nursing degree and works with their mother at a middle school. His younger sister pursued nursing, as well as social work, but she faces struggles in her family life as her husband was deported back to Mexico due to a checkered past. He speaks out of brotherly concern when discussing his younger sister's "topsy-turvy" life. He thinks assuming the big brother role prepared him in some ways for becoming a teacher and a mentor.

Like most of the participants in this study, Charles attended public schools while in Michigan and Florida and observed that the schools in Florida were more diverse. He describes the socioeconomic makeup of the schools as students from working class families with a few from wealthy backgrounds, as well as some students from poor families. He emphasized the rural culture of his neighborhood and schools in Florida including the Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter at his high school, something he had not heard of Michigan. He recalls seeing long country roads without sidewalks for the first time when he initially moved to Florida.

Charles regarded some of his teachers as overall effective, and others he felt did not teach him a lot, and a few that were "dynamite." Although he claims none made an overtly strong

impact on him becoming a teacher, however, he feels there was a subconscious effect as his teachers were the only people he encountered who went to college. He feels his teachers became good role models for him to emulate. Charles did not take any AP classes offered at his high school.

Charles attended a state university majoring in history and social science education. He lived on campus for his freshman year and lived off campus the remainder of the time. He did not get involved with extracurricular activities other than working at the YMCA. He remained somewhat isolated in college, something he attributes to his DNA, describing both parents as introverted, although he enjoyed weightlifting and made acquaintances in the gym.

Charles' journey to teaching first detoured through business school where he only took two classes before changing his major. He associated a business degree with financial security, something that was important to him because as far back as eighth grade when he asked his mother how he could avoid becoming dependent on welfare she replied, "go to college, you have to go to college and get a job and all that. He saw Business School as the best path to ensure the greatest earning potential.

After taking macroeconomics and an accounting course, Charles began to reassess his major. He cites two things that drew him towards a teaching degree. The first was a realization that he had very positive experiences with teachers and the second was after attending a symposium on education and social mobility:

I went to a presentation, they were Ph.Ds. and they were talking about connecting with kids that are poor. And she said, very interesting statistic, that I didn't even know about until she mentioned it, she said most people will come from working class families,

who end up making social mobility, and moving to the middle class will have to give up relationships in their life. They usually give up at least one major relationship. And when she said it, I was listening and I thought, oh that's me. And I know I have given up some relationships early on and she said in many cases their first job is with the government. And she said it's across the board statistic. Their first job is with the Government. And I thought to myself there I am in the Government. Part of me wonders how much of these decisions I made, really in my life, from a kid up till now, almost feels sort of faded. It's just the way I was being pushed. You know. So, I thought back about it and those were the positive experiences I had. Education felt warm to me. Education I thought warmed me. It felt like a choice I'd be very happy doing. So, I chose business almost to just make money in the world. It wasn't in terms of values. Education seemed to be more close to my values.

Charles also credits stories his father shared with him about social studies teachers that impacted his life and how his father had a very high regard for teachers.

After completing his teaching internship at a local middle school, Charles landed a job at his high school alma mater teaching American history and world history. The APUSH torch was passed to him soon after, with the endorsement of the retiring APUSH teacher and at the request of the principal. He stated that having been both a student who excelled and struggled as well, he has empathy for the spectrum of students he encounters each year.

He recently started a graduate program in Educational Leadership, but appears to be doing so more out of professional growth instead professional aspirations, stating, "I want to broaden my perspective of my school."

Second Interview

Charles reports continuing to carry empathy and initiative into the classroom, drawing from his formative years when his parents knew little about the college application process; he sought out guidance and took ownership of mapping out his future. He aims to “look for brilliance in his students” and encourage them to work to their potential, noting that a single compliment can significantly impact a student’s confidence level. Charles’ uneven high school academic performance gives him insights into many of his students’ perspectives and experiences, while finding substantial satisfaction when they have their own “renaissance moment,” something that didn’t happen for him until he took his college history classes.

Living in a home where open dialogue was encouraged, Charles often spouted his viewpoints and opinions to his parents, who expected equal measures of respect and discipline from their children. These experiences continue to serve him well in the APUSH classroom. He feels compelled to earn the respect of his students and values their input and them as people, something he learned from his high school Algebra teacher who instilled in Charles, a struggling math student, a degree of confidence that go him through many challenging days.

According to Charles, the strong personas that guided him through high school did not practice the student-centered model and instead employed a very structured, “formulaic” methodology. Charles couples the strong, “sage on the stage” approach with modern, interactive methodology to create an optimum atmosphere for learning. He viewed his teachers as mentors and feels strongly that role is synonymous with becoming an effective educator.

Charles’ college professors also continue to influence his teaching. He referenced two specifically, the first was his medieval history professor and the other was a theory of history professor who challenged students to think outside the standard paradigm of history and critique what some may label as revisionist history. The latter course featured a book Charles still vividly

recalls as impactful, James Loewen's (1995) *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. Although the book remains more of a critique of American history textbooks leading up to the 1990s, Charles feels the degree of Loewen's analysis is something he tries to replicate in his classroom.

The student teaching and internship at a middle school significantly shaped Charles' philosophy and pedagogy in his current job. He elaborated:

Who I learned to teach from more so than anything else, I had a good intern [cooperating] teacher from the middle school. This structure for these classes is definitely hers. I never left it. I went in, I remember in my internship, she walked in, and it was testing day, and she had the desks in rows, and she goes, "Oh rows," and she shuddered. I didn't understand what she meant at that time. I was an intern in her class. She made that little gesture and I didn't entirely get what it was about rows that she didn't like so much, but now over the years ... you're the giver of knowledge, there's something very intimidating and something I think, sort of I don't want to say wrongheaded but it just flies in the face of all the teaching methods that we know that are working. When you're standing in front of the class with the rows it says that I'm the giver and that's what she was meaning to say. We have different set-ups in class, but I would say as far as methodology is concerned, she really, honestly, laid the groundwork down.

He also credited teaching APUSH as a key part of his professional development and contributed to his self-discovery as a teacher.

The student population at Charles' high school consists of 50% white, 30% Hispanic, 10% African American, and 10% other ethnicities. He estimates that around 70% receive free or reduced lunch benefits. He describes the socioeconomic makeup as middle- and working-class, but points out that compared to other district high schools, his falls in the middle economically,

taking issue with the perception that his school ranks far below the school district socioeconomic norm. He categorizes the campus as safe, largely due to administrative measures taken to make safety a priority.

When asked about the structure of his APUSH course, Charles responded with some unique insights explaining how each year he comes up with a course slogan or theme. He recalled one year the theme was “Magic”. He said this group of students “defined his career,” and achieved an 84% pass rate. This was accomplished with high-order questions in a Socratic discussion format with debates and competitions accenting the learning process. He explained students were divided into heterogeneous small groups where the discussions take place among the students. He used a creative reward system including ringing a miniature Liberty Bell for good comments and responses amidst discussions. Winning groups receive recognition on a bulletin board with each student’s face in the shape of a star where they earn actual gold stars for excellence and complimentary sub sandwiches after accumulating points. This year’s theme is “Rockstar” featuring students’ “life-defining songs” that are played when reaching goals and displaying excellence. The following is an excerpt from my reflection on this part of the dialogue with Charles:

Charles’ impressed me with his reflections on his teaching practices and the emphasis he places on student-engagement. I must admit, having known him as someone who struck me as more of a thinker/ introvert, I did not expect to hear references to themes, pop music, and awarding gold stars. Charles’ testimony and his students’ exam scores give evidence that teacher effectiveness and student-engagement is not exclusively for extroverts and how any teacher can improve class participation by celebrating success (Research Journal 1/22/17).

These extra measures all contribute towards students' "self-actualization," according to Charles, and getting them to buy into the process. He explained his motives behind his delivery:

You're going to get lucky and have those students that are interested in history.

But by and far, I think the primary motivating factor for a student is the opportunity to be recognized and to attain some level of actualization. So, when that opportunity is before them and they get a chance, especially in our social media world, and they get a chance to shine in the eyes of their classmates, that's what's going to make them go home and do the reading.

The last statement is an important one, because keeping up with class readings remains an essential part of student success in the course. Since the redesign of the course, teachers must devote more time to skill-building and less time delivering information. In conversations with dozens of APUSH teachers at trainings and meetings, one complaint often emerges: the difficulty of getting students to do the readings. Charles believes he offers a viable strategy in celebrating students as individuals and making them feel valued, so they in turn respond to his directions.

In Charles' APUSH course, the content is taught chronologically with emphasis on key themes and topics. Along with his student-centered model, Charles' teaching philosophy puts equal emphasis on preparing for class himself, as much as or more so than the students. His approach goes beyond the normal lesson-planning process of mapping out standards and activities, although that plays a pivotal part. In addition, he commits himself to studying and rereading course texts which include staples such as Richard Hofstadter's (1948) *The American Political Tradition*, Doris Kearns Goodwin's (2008) *Team of Rivals*, and Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. He feels if he holds students accountable for readings, then he must demand the same of himself.

Charles thinks the redesigned course is a positive change, noting he felt the old format emphasized facts too much. He works to make the College Board's historical thinking skills a focal point of instruction. The new stimulus-based multiple-choice questions require students to apply higher order thinking skills, something Charles feels is key to studying history:

So, the thematic questions really gauge that level of thinking. Now the new questions with the stimulus within them. That still plays here again on more of that higher-order thinking. I used those in the very first re-designed year as much as possible. And I would ask the textbook questions with a greater frequency, but they're small and short in a quiz like fashion. Those are the ones that I save up for like semester exams and things of that sort.

Most of Charles' course preparation results from his own research, although he did attend one week-long AP summer workshop. The school district in which Charles teaches rarely offers AP trainings.

The school maintains an open-door policy for AP course enrollment, however, Charles recruits students with a reading level of 3 or above on the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading [FAIR] test. He stated he does not work as much with guidance counselors in the registration process as he does with administration. He meets with the principal and presents a list of candidates for the course and those students are enrolled for the next year. Students and their parents may also petition for AP course enrollment. The school's AVID program also provides pathways into APUSH as it prepares students for higher-level work and helps place students on an AP track.

Although his class rolls represent a diverse group of students, he admits his focus is reading and comprehension, no matter what a student's ethnicity. He notes students respond to

grades, as well as his reward system. He does give zeros for missing homework, but does not allow a grade lower than 40% for a test grade, no matter how low the score is. He does accept late work and explains this is all part of becoming empathetic and trying to win the student over. Each student is an individual and requires varying degrees of negotiation and care. Charles also places great emphasis on end-of-quarter and semester exams. He feels cumulative assessments provide the best measure of student progress, although he gives individual chapter tests along the way. Essay writing takes even greater importance in the course. AP writing rubrics are referenced frequently and College Board example essay prompts offer authentic test prep scenarios, although Charles noted a need for more sample prompts and questions from the College Board. Overall, he is in favor of the redesign format and how students benefit from it:

I think so. I think that the redesign is more of a qualitative approach. It focuses more on connections. I think that those connections allow for more student ownership of American History. I think a strong content. I think we have to be guarded against very strong content approaches because the content is very important don't get me wrong, but here again, there's so much to be said of interpretation of that content. I think the redesign if not directly, indirectly facilitates a more global perspective that could appeal to a larger variety of students.

This gives evidence that Charles sees broader goals than merely students' exam scores.

When asked the degree to which students' scores affect his annual evaluation, he was not completely clear how student performance factored into his aggregate score. He said he chooses not to focus on the VAM score, even though he wants every student to do well and it appears student performance has not adversely affected his evaluation as he has scored "highly effective"

every year under the Marzano (2007) protocols, although he does not put a lot of credence into the process.

Charles describes his methods are the result of remaining “conscious of the test” and not so much teaching to the test. He feels the student-centered model is the most effective with his students and believes it to be applicable in any classroom because the human connections going on. He added:

I think there is something universal about human qualities of belonging, wanting your teacher to like you, and wanting to be proud of what you’ve done, and wanting recognition from your peers. And I find, at the end of the day, I find more similarities with students in those basic human qualities. I think a classroom is an equalizer. It really is. You stress those universal qualities more than anything else. You come in with different dispositions, different ideologies, but the driving factors, they have in common with all of the students. You can’t walk into a classroom and know dispositions, aptitudes, you can’t look at people’s eyes and see that. You just have to watch the year progress.

Charles’ universal approach has yielded extraordinary results as his students scored well above the national average on both the old and new formatted exams. The following table highlights how Charles students scored on the APUSH exam.

Table 5: Charles' Students' Exam Performance

Score	5	4	3	2	1	Total Students Scoring 3 or Above	Pass Rate	Average Score
2014 (Prior to Redesign)	4	9	9	3	1	22	84%	3.462
2015	4	9	8	5	0	21	80%	3.462
Two- Year Totals	8	18	17	8	1	43	83%	3.0

Charles believes his course to be a significant benefit to his students that go on to college, but stops short of endorsing college for everyone while noting the importance of vocational education and various trades. He feels all his students leave his class better prepared for the future as he emphasizes life skills, beyond the academic focus of APUSH. He wants students to feel valued as citizens and in turn value the role they play in protecting democracy. His APUSH course allows students to work out what citizenship is and what it means to them to be an American. He referred back to the theme of self-actualization during this part of the interview. While he does not endorse college for everyone, he remains a firm advocate in every student pursuing education --- academically, vocationally, and artistically.

Robert

Robert was introduced to me by a mutual colleague, only to realize we had met ten years ago when we taught at the same high school briefly, as he was appointed a long-term substitute teaching assignment before moving on to his current school where he has taught various social studies courses and coached sports. The latter title is important to note as Robert communicates a

coach-like, tough optimism when discussing his approach to teaching APUSH, an approach he learned in his formative years and continues to frame his pedagogy. I accessed a nearby public library for the interviews with Robert as the atmosphere was conducive for recording in the previous interviews with other participants.

First Interview

Robert hails from a “very rural” part of north-central Indiana, outside of Fort Wayne. His neighborhood was predominantly working-class, primarily white with a few Hispanic residents. His father earned an associate of arts degree and became a policeman for thirty years while his mother was a bookkeeper and secretary for different companies. He noted his aunts and uncles were college educated, some with Ph.D.’s.

Robert attended a private Catholic school up to eighth grade and then continued on to public school. He recalls some friends on free or reduced lunch in public school, and recalls all of his friends working part time jobs, even if they were involved in sports. He said, “If you’re not playing or doing something in school, you’re working. That’s just the way it was.” He remembers many of his peers applying for college scholarships and at least half attending Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne University (IPWU), a combined satellite campus for both universities.

Robert has one older sister who earned a bachelor’s degree from IPWU in business and later went back to school to become a Registered Nurse. He added she currently is a “traveling nurse” who does home health and has lived in Florida, North Carolina, California, and Alaska. Although his sister did not impact his decision to become a teacher, he credits some influential teachers for pointing him towards teaching.

His primary Catholic school days were a bit “hit or miss” with quality teachers as administration struggled to find qualified instructors and sometimes recruiting parents with bachelor’s degrees to fill vacancies. Public middle and high school offered a better mix of teachers and even though some were “run-of-the-mill,” others were “all about the job, overly enthusiastic and wanted to change the world.” Robert acknowledged his seventh-grade social studies teacher for getting him interested in government:

My 7th grade Social Studies teacher really got me hooked. He got me into it and really set me on that path. When I got into high school my World History, and I had him again for Government, really got me interested in making an impact going forward and getting involved, not just in education, but also in like civic duty roles and getting involved in government. Also, getting me nudged into local campaigns and seeing how they work and seeing how the government functions firsthand. He got me helping and volunteering in a couple of different campaigns, both on the Republican and Democratic side. Just to see how they work, what goals, what kind of platform they developed, and why they were pushing for those things. It really helped me kind of think for myself and helped me see both sides of the coin, and then develop my own opinion. So, he really went out of his way to help me out because he saw the interest there and he helped to ignite the fire.

Robert describes himself as “an above average student, but not phenomenal.” His good memory allowed him to do well without a lot of effort. However, he excelled in sports and other extracurricular activities, making the most of his high school experience. There were some “advanced” courses offered at the high school, but no College Board AP courses, something Robert attributes to the remoteness of the campus and its rural, agricultural culture.

Robert received his bachelor's degree in social science education and earned several additional minors in the social sciences including: history, sociology, and political science. He worked for the football program and became active with the College Republicans and served as president of fundraising, raising \$100,000 for a local hospital charity. He was also a member of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity. He remembers college as a good experience and a productive time, "immersing" himself in the college experience.

He says his volunteer work with children at the hospital steered him towards a teaching career, as well as the previously mentioned teachers he reached out to while in college who encouraged him to pursue education. He also cites his father as a police officer and civil servant as another influence, although his father did have a running joke about teaching often saying, "What, you don't like the ability to make money, what's this?" Had he not chosen teaching, Robert probably would have wound up as a social worker or in law enforcement like his father, recalling his days working with children in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program.

Robert began substitute teaching at a rural middle school after college and later wound up in central Florida at a suburban high school as a long-term substitute teacher covering government, world history, and psychology, while coaching football. Coaching led him to a permanent job at his current school teaching ESE social studies and finally Honors American history and APUSH. He emphasized how he actively pursued the APUSH job once there was a vacancy. He seemed both eager to teach American history and move on from ESE.

Feeling unprepared to teach APUSH, Robert relied on a friend who had taught APUSH for course materials including outlines, PowerPoints and rubrics before attending a College Board workshop. He enjoys teaching APUSH, but remains interested in AP European History

and AP Comparative Government although the courses are not currently offered at his school. In addition to teaching, Robert is serving in a part-time administrative role, collecting and analyzing data on social studies courses at his school. Due to his school's "at risk" status, the administration is required to document data as part of the overall school improvement plan (SIP).

Robert does not see himself as an administrator, however, he does not rule out the possibility and given the fact he only has seven years in the classroom, he feels a career outside of education could prove enticing "given uncertainty in public education right now."

Second Interview

Robert's rural background rooted in Midwest notions of hard work and meeting expectations clashed with the real-world realities of teaching in a Title I school where his APUSH students were not accustomed to lengthy reading assignments and annotation. Regular notebook checks proved less than effective and caused him to rethink his strategies and become more "hands-on." He also mentioned he made himself more available to students who needed help during class and after school. He began to assert himself more and ask if students needed help instead of waiting them to take an initiative. He feels his social science courses in college continue to aid in his pedagogy but pointed out he wished he had taken classes on writing skills and teaching strategies.

Robert's high school is 80% Hispanic, 8% African American, 7% Asian, and 5% white, with close to 90% of students on free or reduced lunch. He describes the socioeconomic status of the students as "lower middle-class at best." He added:

We're probably flirting with the poverty line on average. In terms of the AP kids, it's a good mixture. We have some coming from dirt poor households, some coming from more affluent households, their parents are business owners, kind of lower middle to

middle class. Again, we tend to see, at least in the years that I've taught it, the work ethic, in terms of the kids who are successful in the AP classes here tend to be from those poorer families. They are working hard. Their parents know that they're struggling. They are putting pressure on their kids to succeed in school because they want them to have a way out.

According to Robert, parents want their children (Robert's students) to find a way out their zip code where the median income is below \$50,000 and the high school has a checkered past with a history of student safety issues related to gang activity.

Robert feels the campus is safe to a degree, but the campus is open and at one time had a reputation as a "jungle" with a lot of gang violence, which has subsided but not disappeared. He lauds efforts by administration to make the campus safer, although there remains a "sprinkling" of gang activity. The school dates back to the 1950s and maintains a sense of tradition and recent efforts to reclaim the school's rich history amidst its academic and school culture challenges have proven successful to a degree.

He first began teaching APUSH under the old model facts-driven model when he took a chronological approach to teaching the course and then adjusted to the current focus on periodization and historical thinking skills. Robert noted the change presented challenges given his "traditional" methods, but took strides to adapt to the new course and his unique student population. Robert spent several hours a night rethinking his approach and planning lessons, often scrapping plans and starting over saying, "It took some time to really evolve the craft." He mentioned using supplemental sources including Barron's *Five Steps to a Five* (Murphy & Armstrong, 2015) and the "Get a 5" website (Levi, Cohen, & McCabe, 2017) especially as the second semester gets underway.

While materials are plentiful, student motivation remains a hurdle. Robert described how he transitioned from a lecture format to a more student-centered model:

Again, one of the gentlemen when I first took over AP, I got all my resources from, he had taught APUSH for years. He taught at multiple high schools here in the county. He had ridiculously high pass rates. Also, at more affluent schools that had that more traditional approach of lecture, hard individualized instruction with the kids in terms of them doing their own thing, and doing the work they're expected to do. I tried to come into (his high school) with that mentality and I fell on my face. So, I used his stuff at first. Then after year one, I started to adapt it to fit the clientele a little bit better. Again, just building in more hands-on activities in class in terms of breaking down sources and giving them multiple exposures to the same content instead of just hitting it once and moving on, making sure we're reflecting back on it and talking about how it impacts moving forward.

Robert has benefitted from attending College Board workshops, mainly due to incorporating ideas from other teachers and not so much from the material presented by the workshop facilitators. He has borrowed various learning activities from colleagues and notes the multifaceted approach initiates better student response and buy-in. He also reports increased collaboration between himself and the AP English teacher, working together in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and co-teaching in longer block-scheduled class meetings.

The school maintains an open-door policy regarding AP enrollment, "almost to a fault" according to Robert. When students show any interest in taking an AP course, then every effort is made to add them to the class, regardless of reading level. Robert endorses the push for increasing numbers of diverse students in AP, but questions the validity of placing a student in

an AP class unless she or he is somewhat prepared for the rigor and time-consuming reading assignments. He feels in some cases students are done a “disservice” because they are not at an adequate reading level to handle the college-level APUSH material. The district employs an “AP Potential” formula based on PSAT and reading scores. If students show growth on the district scale, then their progress is considered a success, regardless what their score on an AP exam. Students can request admission to an AP class receive a teacher recommendation, or be recommended by their guidance counselor.

The increase in diverse class rosters in APUSH, Robert has noticed an increase in students’ interest in attending college. After the AP exams conclude, he coordinates with the English teacher to discuss college applications and funding, creating individual folders for each student with writing samples for college admissions. He sees more students considering higher education resulting from his efforts.

Robert explains he uses a kind of course-long gradual release model, exhibiting flexibility in the first semester and, “taking off the training wheels” in the second semester. He likened the process to starting out as a “teddy bear and turning into a grizzly bear.” He confesses some students struggle and find difficulty rising above an F average, prompting a meeting with an administrator and an ensuing schedule change.

He sees little logic in allowing a student to fail for a semester or entire year and then be required to attend summer school to make up the history credit.

The new APUSH course outline allows Roberts some flexibility within the nine historical time periods, although he emphasized it remains difficult to cover everything before the exam and allow time for a course review. He echoed a common APUSH teacher refrain declaring, “You still have to kill Lincoln by Christmas” inferring a teacher should plan to get through the

Civil War by the end of the first semester. Given the course's emphasis on social history, Robert will often focus on a topic such as women's history up to a point and then backtrack to address political or economic history during the same time-period making for a hybrid approach of themes and chronology. The Gilder Lehrman Foundation resources became useful in teaching the new format with a vast repository of primary sources, accessible online. Robert noted the importance of allowing students to see historical documents and how it opened new levels of comprehension.

The analysis of primary and secondary sources take new prominence with the multiple-choice component of the exam and maintain their importance with the DBQ essay. Robert dedicates at least one day a week to writing practice with emphasis on specific steps in the process. He begins with essay outlines to coach students through the process of good writing. He will often ask students to focus on just the thesis or ask them to write one or two paragraphs while emphasizing argumentation. The block scheduling allows students extended time for timed writing practice, as the DBQ essay requires 60 minutes to complete. His multiple-choice assessments comprise both new and old format questions due to a shortage of new format questions available.

Robert agrees the new course and exam is more student-friendly, particularly for his student population. He feels although the new course appears to sacrifice some factual knowledge, his students make better connections with course themes via the thinking skills they cultivate throughout the year. His students find more relevance within the new framework.

As far as his students' exam performance and how it factors in to his VAM score, he admits to not fully comprehending its impact on his overall evaluation. He elaborated on the lack of clarity from district officials:

I've asked numerous people in the county what the equation is for our value-added model, no one can give me a straight answer. I've heard seven different things from seven different people. I'm almost come to the "conspiracy theorist" inside me. They don't want us to know what the actual evaluation model is. It does factor in. I don't know to what percentage but I think the county puts more emphasis on our EOC scores than our AP scores. I know there is some sort of bonus points there. I have no idea. I tried to worry about it for about a year or two. After that, I'm not going to understand this. I'm just going to focus on what I can control.

Although the evaluation calculation eludes Robert, as well as other teachers interviewed for this study, he admits the emphasis on student exam performance does weigh on his curriculum and pedagogy planning. He explained the district incorporated a more forgiving measurement in evaluating teacher effectiveness in AP courses where students' AP progress overrides exam scores. If a student makes "progress," the teacher is considered at least somewhat effective.

Robert admits to teaching to the test regarding his emphasis on writing. Along with writing, he places a great deal of importance on key terms, requiring students to cultivate an American history lexicon so they can apply contextual references in essays and provide specific examples of historical people, events, and conflicts. He surrendered to his students' unwillingness to complete readings outside of the class. He realized it was folly to think they would commit to lengthy homework assignments, so he makes the most of each class meeting with heavy doses of reading assigned during class; however, Robert admitted this approach takes time away from document analysis and writing practice. The following table reveals Robert's students' exam performance:

Table 6: Robert's Students' Exam Performance

Score	5	4	3	2	1	Total Students Scoring 3 or Above	Pass Rate	Average Score
2015	0	2	9	9	15	11	31%	1.943
2016	0	1	9	9	12	10	24%	1.968
Two-Year Totals	0	9	18	18	27	21	38%	2.125

While he agrees that all students can benefit from a student-centered format, he made references to his own educational experiences, noting there is no adequate substitution for hard work, commitment, and self-discipline from the student within the learning process. He confirms the teacher must meet the students where they are, but reasserts how crucial students' buy-in is to their success and how they must rise to higher academic challenges. Robert admits without the latter, scores of 4 and 5 on exams will remain elusive. I reflected on his student-engagement challenges in my research journal:

Listening back through some of my second interview with Robert and reviewing his students' scores, I think he is making great strides at his school; although, I understand he struggles with student-engagement and getting students to fully grasp the rewards of committing to completing reading assignments and allowing time for studying for APUSH regularly. Robert's students would likely benefit from more AP infrastructure within the school with increasing enrollments in APUSH prerequisites including: AP Human Geography and AP World History. He also recognized the benefits related to

interdisciplinary study associated with his students taking AP English along with APUSH (Research Journal 3/6/16).

Robert believes the APUSH course is a vital stepping stone to college and places equal importance on the AP English course because the writing demands that course requires. He also emphasized the junior year as a time when his students begin to realize graduation lurks around the corner and students considering college begin to mature and take steps to get there. The AP courses act as an academic wakeup call.

He agrees all students should have access to college, but does not follow the notion that every student should go to college. He offered an example:

I've had some that have come in that they just love history, but they have no desire to go to college. A couple of them again, they come from hardworking families. One of my best students, 3 years ago, his Dad had a wood working business. He had no intention of going to college. He just loved History. He ended up getting a 4 or 5 on my test, but he had no intention of going to college. I said, "Just go to community college and take some part time classes. He said, "No, I'm good!" It's like a missed opportunity. Yeah, I think they definitely could benefit from this AP setting, if they plan to go to college.

If Robert's students do not choose the college path, he thinks they benefit from the course anyway. Robert says the course emphasis on forming arguments and providing evidence in writing are skills that readily work in the world outside of academia. Students leave his class with better organizational skills and a stronger work ethic. He thinks these are universal skills that will serve them well into their professional life whether they choose the culinary arts, mechanical vocations, or become teachers themselves they walk away richer from the experience.

Sasha

The same colleague who introduced me to Robert also referred me to Sasha. Although she is the youngest of the participants, she speaks with the confidence and an experienced tone of someone who has taught on the frontlines in a Title I school. The interviews were done in a local public library where she gave an account of her growing up in a semi-transient military family, her education, and how those experiences guide her teaching process.

First Interview

Sasha grew up in a military family and lived in six different locales while growing up including military bases in Germany, Spain, England, Florida, and California. She recalls some places as more diverse than others, particularly Florida and California. She attended schools on military bases up to her high school years when she enrolled in public schools.

She describes her family as middle-class. Her father took college courses while in the Army and reached the rank of First Sergeant. Her mother received technical training and worked outside the home as a dental assistant and a store clerk. Sasha has an older brother and sister, both of whom attended some college but did not earn degrees.

Most of Sasha's friends growing up were from military families as well and a few belonged to parents who worked for global, Fortune 500 companies. Her peers came from middle- and upper-class homes; she was not aware of anyone receiving government assistance or free or reduced lunch. Some of her high friends worked while going to school.

She describes the public high schools she attended as diverse with a larger Hispanic population at one and a larger white population at the school she graduated from. Her high schools were a mix of students from working class and affluent families. She noted there were

two distinct neighborhoods very close to one another and the school district drew boundaries to include students from both neighborhoods for her high school.

Sasha remembers some of her teachers as highly qualified and effective and spoke fondly of an inspiring social studies teacher she had in 9th grade:

Yes. I had a Government teacher, it was because of her that I wanted to teach Social Studies. She still is teaching to this day and sometimes I see her, like at workshops. Another one was my 11th grade English teacher, because she always asked me like what else is there. She made me look beyond the surface and just continued to make me think.

She was a good student but only took one AP class and that happened to be APUSH.

Sasha attended a public university majoring in sociology and went on to earn a master's degree in social science education. She was not involved in student government but did belong to an organization called Take Back the Night: Necessary Improvements to Transform our Environment. She chose to live off campus throughout college. Her road to the classroom began when she did some volunteer tutoring in high school:

Actually, in high school I volunteered at an elementary school. So, seeing the experiences there and working with the children, put that thought into my head. Then it wasn't until I was transitioning to be done with my undergrad and it's like what am I going to do career wise. Someone in my advisor office said what about teaching? Have you thought about teaching? I met with one of the advisors for the Education Department and they explained to me the whole process.

Tutoring younger students in reading left a lasting impression on Sasha as she enjoyed helping students make noticeable gains and felt as though she made a positive impact on them.

She admits there were some naysayers who discouraged her from getting into teaching and even more so as she began graduate school, hearing the repeated comment, “There are so many things you can do besides teaching.” At this point in her career she is considering other careers. Sasha is currently weighing her options and may pursue an MBA with a concentration in marketing.

Second Interview

Sasha did her teaching internship at an affluent school and then began teaching at her current Title I school. The first courses she taught were reading classes for 9th and 11th graders. She has since taken on a variety of courses including: IR III (Industrial Revolution), Semantics & Logic, Advanced Reading, World History, US History Honors, Sociology & Holocaust. She considered transferring to another school when her principal and social studies department head approached her about taking over the APUSH course as the current teacher took a job at a university. They felt Sasha was a good candidate, given she took the course in high school and passed the exam. She currently teaches Sociology and the Holocaust courses in addition to APUSH. Spending her childhood living broad and her enrollment at various schools played a significant role in preparing to teach APUSH:

Always looking beyond the surface in the questioning. Just going out and doing my own research. I just have a passion for History. That was done before school just living overseas and seeing all the different historical monuments there. But as far as the skills, my English teachers with the writing. Just wanting to get better and I would say I had a college professor that would always say, “Your first draft is just that, it’s a draft, so keep writing and improving.” I take that about rewriting and tell my kids, what else can you add and what else would you change. So, I just take all those skills and try to apply them to my students.

She confesses to being burned out and does not foresee continuing teaching APUSH into the distant future. She mentioned she would like to try teaching some different courses like art history but does not see herself pursuing administrative jobs in education.

Sasha also credits her childhood in preparing her to teach APUSH, referencing her penchant for questioning things and not taking everything at face value, something she tries to get her students to do. She wants them to focus on the “Why?” along with the “Who?” and “What?”. She thinks her transient childhood helps her relate to students who come from unstable backgrounds as she learned at an early age to “just roll with it.” She stated most of her teachers and professors lectured, which as a verbal learner worked well for her, but this strategy does not work well for her students. She explained their test scores are higher when class meetings center around a student-centered model. Her lessons feature hands-on activities to meet their different learning styles. She also has an advantage because she took APUSH in high school, so she can relate to the academic challenges students face and her sociology courses aid her in understanding students’ socioeconomic struggles. Sasha emphasized how her pre-internship experience has helped her with APUSH as she observed an APUSH teacher incorporate a myriad of learning activities into the curriculum.

Sasha’s high school student population consists of 50% African Americans, 20% white, 18% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 6% multi-ethnic with 85% of students receiving free or reduced lunch benefits, including students in the STEM and Robotics magnet program. She feels the campus is safe, although some students do not feel safe due to fights and property theft. The campus appears secure with chain-link fence surrounding the school grounds, however, gates remain open throughout the day.

Each APUSH class meeting begins with a bell-work task, most often in the form of a short-answer question. Sasha incorporates historical thinking skills into daily lessons including: comparison and contrast, causation, periodization, change and continuity over time (CCOT) and synthesis. She exposes students to primary and secondary sources every week for interpretation and analysis. The main textbook for the course is Alan Brinkley's (2011) *Connecting with the Past, 14th Edition*. In addition to the textbook she also uses John Irish's (2015) *Historical Thinking Skills* book and the College Board's APUSH website. Other materials come from AP workshops and her district assigned AP mentor. Sasha follows the College Board's nine chronological periods covering 1 through 5 the first semester and 6 through 9 the second semester.

She elaborated on diversifying instruction and giving students choices:

I think every kid is different. So, what one student may find interesting another student will not. It's a very fine line with American History. Because I have students who love the military history of it, but we don't focus on that. So, allowing them to explore opportunities. We just had a Socratic seminar about the atomic bomb because that's great for them because they get to talk about those military charges in that case. But for the other students, who like the social aspect, who like the synthesis, when we do that more so throughout the course and even with the Socratic seminar they get a chance to do that. I believe in choice for students and giving them options as well. So, whenever we do something, I always say, well you have the option of doing it this way. So, if do a graphic organizer, it doesn't have to be the one I presented, it could be a different one. We can do synthesis on this topic or we can do it another topic. We can do periodization

or CCOT with these topics. So just giving them more buy in. Because I feel like if they have more buy in, they are more likely to do it.

She believes as students buy in, they are more likely to grasp key concepts, which essentially become the learning objectives throughout the course.

Students wind up in APUSH through various tracks including magnet students, who may or may not want to take the course, students from the AVID program, and other students who trickle in from teacher and guidance counselor recommendations. An open-door policy remains intact allowing course registration to any student expressing interest. Sasha has noticed an increase in diversity in APUSH with more African American students enrolling and feels optimistic about their chances on the exam. While class rolls became more diverse, she notices some students feel intimidated because they are part of an ethnic minority and therefore do not participate as much as other white students. She said, “They just don’t feel comfortable asking questions because they don’t know, they don’t want to appear that way (uninformed) in front of others who they assume do know.”

Sasha is unsure if the course is providing more opportunities for students, because she does not hear from them after the course and others wind up dropping the class if they came in as low-level readers and become frustrated with the extensive reading assignments. She describes modifying lessons to accommodate student diversity on all levels with research projects, student presentations, and Socratic seminars. The latter provide students a chance to come up with their own questions and moderate discussions while Sasha offers feedback during the process. She also asks students to give her verbal feedback throughout the course regarding what methods appear more effective.

Due to the course's new emphasis on thinking skills, Sasha guides students through document analysis using the HIPP (historical context, intended audience, point of view, and purpose) framework. She says the HIPP reference becomes a reflex when she references a document. She will often ask students randomly to discuss the different analysis points when looking at sources together as a class. Students write two essays per unit and several essay outlines for practice. She will often give students an essay prompt ahead of time to allow planning and then follow with a timed writing assessment.

Sasha uses a district-wide database to create multiple-choice questions and uploads students' answer sheets to produce item analyses. She can identify test items that gave students the most difficulty and will often add those questions to the next assessment to check for learning gains on certain topics. If 60% or more of the students missed a question, she will make sure they see it again. She feels the redesigned course and exam are more student-friendly mainly because of the emphasis on social history as they appear less interested in politics and diplomacy.

The degree to which students' APUSH exam performance affect Sasha's VAM score remains unclear. She states students' scores once counted as 50% of her evaluation, however, the equation has recently changed and she is unsure of the revised formula. Regardless of how much exam scores count, Sasha pays close attention to the AP score report for her students, while adjusting to the course delivery according to deficits revealed in the report. She explained:

I change it every year. I more so base it on the College Board score report of how I changed my teaching not necessarily that report. I think that one is more detailed. What areas my students had difficulty with. If they had difficulty with it this year, well there is no guarantee that next year's group will have that same difficulty. There is a chance, so let's try to tackle it from the beginning. The short answer question my kids had trouble

with that. Well let's tackle that from the beginning so that's their bell work. Some of the historical thinking skills, ok well let's work through those so that's more infused on a daily basis.

Sasha does not consider her methodology as teaching to the test so much, rather describing her approach as simply "good teaching." She revisits the Socratic seminar activity as something that works particularly well for her student population. She noted how this breathes life into old, sources. If students are required to analyze the document alone in order to defend an opinion, the class becomes more engaged. She also uses the seminar method to compare historians and schools of thought such as revisionists' and post-revisionists' perspectives. She believes these methods work well with any group of students regardless of ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

The table below details Sasha's students' exam performance for 2015 and 2016:

Table 7: Sasha's Students' Exam Performance

Score	5	4	3	2	1	Total Students Scoring 3 or Above	Pass Rate	Average Score
2015	0	6	11	20	44	17	21%	1.741
2016	1	4	23	26	34	28	32%	2.0
Two-Year Totals	1	10	34	46	78	45	27%	1.876

I noted Sasha's emphasis on the distinct categories from her class AP score reports:

Sasha was the only teacher to mention dissecting the AP score reports to reassess her focus and methodology each year. This is a reflection on her attention to best practices,

something she referenced indirectly in the interviews repeatedly. She conveys a degree of flexibility and adaptability with lesson planning to assist her students in grasping key concepts and skills, but desires to see her students leave her class prepared for the demands of college (Research Journal 3/7/17).

Sasha views her APUSH course as a very relevant college prep class, as she explains to her students that most everyone takes American history in college, so at the very least they are exposed to the rigor of a college level history class in high school. She believes college would benefit most of her students and points out that those in the magnet program already have a specific degree in mind. She returned to the importance of asking “Why?” and how supporting a response with evidence is a skill they can apply to any field. She also highlighted the importance of writing skills:

I focus on that [writing skills] a lot. I haven't done it this year, but I've done it in the past. I would do Writing Workshops with them. So, getting them to know the rubric, what are they being graded on. Looking at student samples, and they would always have a code number, so they would never know who it belonged to. This doesn't have it, well my writing is like that. I might need to change my writing to actually meet the requirements. For them, in the past, it was eye opening and my students would request, hey can we do it again, I learned so much from it. This year because of timing and focusing on other skills, I haven't got to it yet, but I will get to those writing workshops.

Sasha is certain writing and thinking skills will benefit all her students but remains unconvinced that all her students need to go college. She mentioned the importance of trades and how those jobs are important not only to everyday life but, become particularly important in times of international unrest. She remains uncertain how many of the school's graduates choose

to attend the trade school located within walking distance of the school and if there are any cooperative programs with the trade school. Regardless of her students' choice of careers, Sasha's students, she believes, will leave high school with practical skills that will serve them well into adulthood.

Chapter Five

Implications and Recommendations

The teachers' responses to the interview questions personify the essence of the constructivism framework as each participant's testimony reflects how they made meaning of their backgrounds and their perceptions of the planning, teaching, and assessment processes as they relate to facilitating the APUSH course in a Title I high school setting. The participants described how their surroundings during their formative years shaped their value systems regarding self-discipline and work ethic, habits of mind they work to instill in their students. The participants derived meaning from their childhood familial relationships, working-class backgrounds, along with their primary and secondary educational experiences as they reflected on how their childhood environments influenced their philosophies towards teaching and learning.

The teachers also made meaning from their experiences in college and cited a range of reasons: certain professors, courses, and opportunities for community service. As the participants reflected on their years in higher education, they pointed to the continued influence their college years' impact how they present the APUSH curriculum while continuing to incorporate ideas from lessons learned in college, in the classroom and the community.

The teachers' experiences through adolescents and into adulthood continued to influence their pedagogical decisions as they teach the APUSH course in Title I school settings. Reinforcing the constructivism paradigm, the participants connected past experiences with their

current teaching appointments and environments, while making meaning of how their lived experiences prior to becoming teachers and their current APUSH teaching experiences, as they responded to interview questions. Their reflections revealed how they assign measured degrees of value in teaching APUSH in Title I schools.

The teachers portrayed themselves as active agents in the delivery of APUSH curriculum within Title I high school environments, not only for the sole purpose of APUSH exam preparedness, but perceiving lessons and curriculum as vehicles for varying levels of student empowerment with the aim of equipping students with essential academic and life skills. Because the teachers use the course to encourage students to become active agents in shaping their own futures, the critical theory framework provided useful parameters for data collecting and analyzing data.

This chapter provides an overview of the data collection while identifying similar responses and viewpoints voiced by the participating teachers. Although the participants represent a wide range of teachers from contrasting backgrounds, they expressed similar perspectives regarding teaching philosophies and methodologies. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for policy implementation at the district and school levels, and further research suggestions to increase the limited body of knowledge regarding effective AP pedagogy in Title I schools.

I incorporated data from three sources: interview transcripts, journal entries, and field notes. The interview transcripts provided the bulk of information with my journal entries, and field notes presenting points of emphasis through the gathering of data. I completed the member-checking process as participants gave their approval of the transcripts. I analyzed the three sources of information using constant comparative analysis (Stake, 1995) and created a

triangulation of data, highlighting recurring themes emerging from the research. I annotated the interview transcripts and connected repeated phrases from the interviews with journal entries and field notes. I assigned codes to the themes and categorized them according to the corresponding relevant research questions. I arrived at the following conclusions:

Teachers' Backgrounds

In what ways do five teachers' backgrounds and experiences influence their perspectives regarding teaching the APUSH course in Title I schools?

Working-Class Families

Although the participants come from different backgrounds and various geographical regions, they share similar working-class backgrounds with three participants' families associated with military service. Jane's father served in the Air Force and Sasha's father served in the Army, with Tim putting in thirty years with the Coast Guard. Robert's father, a police officer, was also a public servant. Charles' father worked in waste management, a sub-category of public works, so he too shares a commonality with the other participants' family backgrounds. While the teachers' mothers represent a variety of vocations, they fit the description of working mothers who gravitated towards more traditional, gender-specific jobs including nursing and clerical work.

Work Ethic

The working-class and middle-class backgrounds of the participants significantly shaped their perspectives regarding work and rewards. Tim and Robert share a similar individualistic philosophy in that they maintain high expectations and desire to see students become more self-reliant, although Tim's students responded better to this methodology, while Robert chose to modify his approach and lessen homework reading assignments. Jane, Charles, and Sasha apply

their learned work ethics to what they expect students to accomplish in class. All the teachers follow a task-driven class format with continuous focus on APUSH skills and exam practice. Tim mentioned delivering “mini-lectures” as part of his content delivery, but the lecture format does not dominate the pedagogy for any of the teachers. They subscribe to a “practice makes perfect” process, certainly to achieve a desired outcome of high exam scores, but also drawing from parental examples and learned behaviors absorbed in their formative years. They seek to impart to their students that putting in the time and effort required for mastering course content and skills will pay intrinsic and tangible dividends.

Public Schooling

Aside from Robert’s primary years in Catholic school and Sasha’s formative years at military base schools in Europe, not all the participants attended public schools and universities. There was a degree a variance among the teachers’ public high school experiences with Jane and Sasha attending schools in more affluent areas and Tim, Charles, and Robert attending rural schools with either limited or no AP course offerings. They did share a common thread of influential teachers who left lasting impressions of empathy and inspiration regardless of their high school locales.

The teachers also share the common experience of attending public universities and commuting to school most of the time, except for Robert who lived on campus, was active in student organizations, and had an on-campus college experience all four years. Robert and Charles are the only two Social Science Education undergrad majors among the participants, although Charles double-majored in History as well. Jane majored in History and Political Science and later earned an alternative certification for Social Science Education, while Tim majored in History for his undergraduate degree and later received a Master’s degree in Social

Science Education. Sasha earned a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and later pursued Social Science Education in graduate school.

The participants did not begin their higher education with the goal of becoming teachers; Tim was the only participant who envisioned himself as a history teacher as he began his undergraduate program. The others began college keeping their options open (aside from Charles who started as a business major and switched his major during his freshman year) and eventually considered teaching careers. The change in career paths stemmed from a combination of advice from college counselors, recollections of influential teachers, and positive associations with volunteerism in the cases of Robert and Sasha. The shared calling to public service among the participants remains evident within the data collection and highlights their joint belief in working for the greater good.

The teachers' paths to becoming APUSH teachers, although varied, share the experience of stumbling into the role. None of the participants' first teaching assignments included APUSH. Their APUSH assignments came about as previous teachers moved on or retired, administrators hand-picked them for the course, or the teachers petitioned for a change from a previous assignment within the school found in the experiences of Robert and Sasha. The participants found their way to the APUSH course via different circumstances, none of which included an early career goal of teaching APUSH.

This group of teachers see themselves staying in the classroom the remainders of their careers except for Sasha who admitted she is weighing her options and may pursue a degree and career in marketing. Charles is currently working on his Master's degree in Educational Leadership, but stated he is not necessarily looking to leave the classroom and is simply trying to broaden his perspective on education and to better understand how schools are managed. Robert

is also considering reassessing his career, but is making no immediate plans to transition from teaching. Overall, the teachers find fulfillment in their current assignments and enjoy the challenge of teaching the APUSH course in their Title I schools.

School Environments

In what ways do these APUSH teachers in Title I schools describe the environment and culture of the high school where they currently teach?

Open Door Policy and Registration

Open door course registration policies continue in all the participants' schools, although differences emerged regarding concrete procedures for ensuring students with AP potential find their way into APUSH and other AP classes. Collaboration among teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators in the enrollment process also differed with each teacher and his or her high school. Jane benefits from teaching the advanced ninth-graders AP Human Geography; many of the same students register for APUSH their junior year because of their familiarity with her as a teacher. Tim noted a similar tracking process at his school with the same advanced students signing up for a progression of AP social studies courses from 9th through 12th grades, although he does not teach 9th and 10th graders. Charles uses a more assertive approach of seeking out feedback from other teachers regarding good candidates for his class and providing a list to administration of exactly who has potential to do well in APUSH. Robert also eluded to some degree of tracking at his school, as did Sasha; however, the consensus among the teachers was a concern over reading levels as determined by the Florida State Assessment (FSA) reading results and Lexile scores. Each teacher noted the difficulty many students encounter with the reading and comprehension skills required to do well in the APUSH course and exam. While the open-door registration policies allow more students to enroll in AP classes, the teachers concede the

course quickly becomes an insurmountable challenge for students not equipped in previous courses for the rigor that confronts them daily, forcing some to withdraw by the end of the first quarter or semester.

Infrastructure

The teachers mentioned they are seeing some degree of growth in minority students' enrollment due to open-door enrollment policies; however, they all expressed concerns about students' introduction into AP beginning with the 11th grade APUSH course and not AP World History as sophomores or AP Human Geography as freshmen. The participants' schools do not employ logical course sequences to put underclassmen on a social science, university track. I am aware that some schools with IB programs and vibrant AP programs in my district offer AP Human Geography to 9th graders, AP World History to 10th graders, APUSH to 11th graders, and combine AP Government and AP Microeconomics or AP Macroeconomics to 12th graders. The AP Language and Composition course for 11th graders and AP Literature for 12th graders are excellent complementary classes that enhance the critical thinking skills demanded in the social science menu. So, a student who may find AP science and math courses too challenging, may still have the opportunity to graduate high school with six college-level courses on their transcript and potentially, depending on exam scores and what university they attend, eighteen college credit hours.

Along with the absence of AP course tracking, a lack of support systems for these teachers and students became another prevalent theme in the data. Although Jane, Charles, and Sasha mentioned their schools' AVID programs, a lack of continuous professional development opportunities within the schools and districts appeared as another missing link in the analyses.

The teachers rely on College Board workshops, specifically weeklong summer institutes held at local colleges, for curriculum and pedagogy support.

Pedagogy

In what ways do personal beliefs influence these teachers' pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high schools?

Planning and Pacing

The teachers emphasized the importance of following the chronology dictated by the nine time periods outlined by the College Board. A common theme of “reaching the Civil War by the Winter Break” is shared among the participants, which does not allow completion of “Period 5: 1844- 1877” and falls short of finishing Reconstruction. The participants also shared the goal of allotting time before the APUSH exam, traditionally administered the first Friday in May, for a course review. Tim appeared to put the most preparation into mapping out the course and sticking to the schedule, while the other teachers mentioned flexibility as important and wanting the option to spend more time on certain themes within a given time-period if needed. Robert conveyed the most flexibility with his monthly planning strategy, because of past frustrations with unforeseen interruptions throughout the school year.

Planning

In what ways are these APUSH teachers' planning in Title I schools influenced by teaching a diverse student population?

Student-Centered Instruction

The student-centered instruction model became a prominent theme in this study. These participating teachers clearly do not subscribe to the antiquated notion of living and dying by the history lecture. The “sage on the stage” persona gives way to the facilitator who moves about the

room and allows large portions of class-time for student reflection, discussion, and collaboration. Tim and Robert admitted they still devote some time to imparting information via lecturing; however, both teachers aligned with the other participants in describing how their classes revolve around the need for students to develop and practice historical thinking skills. The teachers plan their activities and the classroom layout to encourage student participation so they become active agents in the learning process, and in the case of Sasha's classes, contribute to lesson-planning as she actively seeks out their input week-to-week. Each teacher noted the importance of the student-centered methodology and described some contrast of implementation, although all the participants drew connections between this pedagogy and increased student engagement.

Student Engagement

The teachers described student commitment, or what was often referred to in the interviews as “student buy-in” as a pivotal part of the student engagement process. How they chose to accomplish buy-in was similar in their student-centered pedagogy, while they each added unique approaches to encourage students to identify with the teacher and the curriculum. Each teacher volunteered information regarding how they arrange desks in small groups of three to five students. Tim described aligning rows left to right instead the traditional front to back formation, allowing students to discuss concepts with peers on their left and right. Tim also uses small group arrangements regularly during each unit of study.

Although this group of teachers jointly pointed out the significance of seating arrangements, they each spoke about some similar ways they encourage students to take ownership of the course. Jane, Sasha, and Robert a perpetual task and activity-driven approach to keep the pace lively as students remain on a continuous cycle of primary and secondary source analysis along with scaffolded writing practice. Tim requires students to give oral presentations

in each unit and admitted how shy students display outward discomfort initially, to the point of tears, which fosters class camaraderie as peers come to the aid of those struggling with their reports. Charles arguably goes to the greatest lengths to foster student buy-in, as discussed in Chapter Four, with annual themes such as “Heroes” and “Stars” and creating classroom competitions between small groups.

APUSH Redesign

In what ways are these APUSH teachers’ pedagogy in Title I schools influenced by the College Board’s redesign of the APUSH course?

Assessing Skills and Content Mastery

The teachers placed equal emphasis on the importance of assessments and all feel their assessments should simulate what students will encounter on the APUSH exam in May. The teachers use a hybrid format for multiple-choice test questions with new format items featuring primary and secondary stimuli and old-format questions requiring more factual recall. The resounding complaint conveyed was the shortage of new-format test banks available from the College Board and test-prep materials. Sasha stood apart in the study with her insistence of using only new-format multiple-choice questions, partially because she gained access to additional test banks the other teachers do not possess. The teachers share the same approach when using short-answer, DBQ, and free-response question (FRQ) essay prompts, employing College Board questions to allow students authentic exam practice. The essay prompts are used for instruction and assessment by all the teachers; however, frequency of essay practice and assessment did vary among the group. Timing and frequency of essay and multiple-choice tests also differed from teacher to teacher. Robert and Charles focus on quarterly and semester cumulative exams with

more frequent quizzes as formative assessments while Jane, Tim, and Sasha prefer chapter assessments.

VAM Scores and Teacher Evaluation

In what ways do APUSH teachers adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?

Student Exam Performance

All the participating teachers receive a \$50.00 bonus for each student who scores a 3 or above on the APUSH exam. This is a statewide practice, although the district where Jane, Robert, and Sasha teach, AP teachers' pass rates can either hurt or help their qualifying for a performance pay bonus up to \$2000.00. Although student exam performance does impact evaluation scores for Tim and Charles, their school district does not award performance pay for as their teachers' union voted down the proposed bonuses on the premise the teacher evaluation measurement and process was flawed.

Charles' students scored much higher on the 2015 APUSH exam with Tim's students scoring closer to the national norm for scores of 3 or higher. Their students fared much better than Jane's, Robert's and Sasha's. The only differentiating variable was school location with Tim and Charles teaching in rural schools; however, without accounting for all students' race, gender, or class, as well as parents' education levels among other considerations, it is difficult to identify determining variables when assessing student performance.

The data do offer some support for a correlation between student engagement and exam performance in Charles' case who makes concerted efforts to cultivate student buy-in with celebratory themes and his emphasis on self-actualization as an integral part of the course.

Teacher Evaluations and VAM Scores

As the teachers provide their students with relevant assessments in preparation for the APUSH exam, the degree to which student exam performance is factored into their annual evaluation within the VAM score remains unclear. When asked to discuss student APUSH exam scores as a teacher evaluation variable, the participants agreed it continues to impact their overall evaluation score, but could not recite the current formula in place. The participants, as a whole, did not seem to be overly concerned with evaluation scores, with Tim being the exception as he supported the notion of teachers' evaluations reflecting student AP exam performance. Sasha mentioned the previous equation weighted students' APUSH exam scores as 50% of the overall evaluation, but confessed to not knowing the current percentage. Her district's website confirms the exam score percentage and is the same for all the teachers in this study, including Tim and Charles who teach in a neighboring district. Robert noted the recent adjustments made for teachers of AP students with low reading scores that credits students for making progress, even though they may not pass the APUSH exam. Tim appeared unconcerned about student exam scores and their impact on his evaluation because of his consecutively high overall evaluation scores since he began teaching APUSH. The other participants did not volunteer their evaluation scores, but all communicated little concern with VAM scores and how they are assessed and more concerned over how they and their students judge their effectiveness. The lack of concern regarding teacher evaluations appeared to be the result of exasperation rather than apathy, as noted in my research journal:

The teachers collectively concerned about VAM scores and evaluations for different reasons. Tim and Charles continue to see good progress with their students' exam performance and have a positive frame of reference regarding their annual evaluations

because they consistently receive high marks. Jane, Robert, and Sasha appear more exasperated with the evaluation process and choose to focus efforts and attention on their students and less on administrators' perceptions of their job performance (Research Journal, 3/14/17).

Pathways to College

What are the perceptions of APUSH teachers in Title I schools about the course and the AP Program as a pathway to students' higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

College Degrees or Vocational Training

The teachers collectively see value in the APUSH course as a means of preparing students for college and life success, but stopped short of confirming APUSH or any other AP course as a necessity for achieving career goals and improving their socioeconomic standing. There was agreement regarding the focus on critical thinking and writing skills as in APUSH as valuable skills for students moving forward to college; however, the teachers also see many of their students attending trade schools and pursuing blue-collar vocations. Jane, Tim, and Robert emphasized the latter viewpoint more than Charles and Sasha, but even they recognized the benefits of their students pursuing careers that do not require college degrees

Implications Summary

The teachers' testimonies shed light on how their surroundings at home and school continue to influence their decision-making in planning and teaching APUSH in their respective Title I high schools. Their working-class and middleclass backgrounds provide reference points for character attributes they seek to develop in their students. Their lived experiences instilled in

them the notion of earning rewards for accomplishing educational goals and persevering through college to pursue meaningful teaching careers.

This research revealed how teachers seek to engage students through active-learning pedagogy based on APUSH course skills and themes identified by the College Board as essential focus points. The research indicated that Charles and Jane appear most comfortable using this format, while Robert and Sasha continue to employ student-centered activities combined with lectures. Tim conveyed a high comfort level with his hybrid approach of lecture and learning activities that often call for students to work in pairs and small groups. None of the participating teachers confessed to remaining anchored at the lectern delivering continuous orations about the past.

As the teachers embrace modern teaching practices they voiced some frustrations with outdated school and district policies they fall short of meeting the needs of AP teachers and students in Title I schools. Charles appears to benefit the most from open lines of communication with school administration; however, the other teachers pointed to lacking support and infrastructure within their schools and at the district level as well. Students' paths to APUSH and other AP classes seem unclear, leaving room for students with AP potential to fall through the cracks. Teachers also expressed concerns over the lack of adequate district-sponsored trainings and funding for College Board workshops. At the time of this writing, the cost of a week-long College Board AP Summer Institute workshop is \$600.00. This in addition to any travel costs the teacher-participant would incur. Despite the challenges facing these teachers, they share a common resolve and commitment to prepare their students for future successes wherever their talents take them.

Recommendations for School Districts

Jane, Robert, and Sasha's school district began building infrastructure to support students in Title I high schools over a decade ago with the implementation of Advancement Via Individual Achievement (AVID) programs (Watt, K., Huerta, J., & Cossio, G. 2004; Watt, K., Yanez, D., & Cossio, G. 2002) and making concerted efforts to increase AP enrollments for African American and Hispanic students. Coinciding with these efforts came a new wave of teacher evaluation and an adoption of the VAM scoring. Considerable funding and attention focused on the evaluation system, while a district-wide AP infrastructure remains a patchwork of policies among the different "areas." Similar issues continue in Tim's and Charles' district. Amidst ever-present budget concerns, these two school districts would do a great service to their students and communities to ramp up existing AP support systems such as AVID and identifying AP Potential via PSAT scores, while putting in place Vertical Teams that build collaborative task forces among Title I high schools and their respective feeder middle schools.

These school districts should consider a more hands-on approach to overseeing AP course sequences and build AP programs from the underclassmen through the upperclassmen years. Granted, AP Human Geography and AP World History pose tremendous challenges for freshmen and sophomores; however, the academic growing pains they endure as underclassmen provide a solid foundation for APUSH in 11th grade and AP Government and AP Macro or Microeconomics their senior year. The latter would require the district where Jane, Robert, and Sasha teach to flip the government and economics requirement from 9th to 12th grade, an overdue adjustment needed to allow students at the height of their high school maturity to better grasp the inner-workings of politics and the national and global economy.

Recommendations for Administrators

Cooperation and leadership from school administrators will prove essential in paving the way for more successful AP programs in Title I high schools. An assistant principal must oversee an AP committee to bring together school faculty including current AP teachers and those who teach honors classes. This committee can address AP infrastructure (Klopfenstein, 2003) within the school and build bridges with feeder schools to implement the Vertical Teams (Arteaga, 2008; Bertrand, Roberts, & Buchanon, 2006; College Board, 2009; Johnson & Scollay, 2001, Robinson, 2000). A student mentoring program (Asmead & Blanchette, 2013) may also prove an effective resource to assist traditionally marginalized student populations. More training regarding teaching diverse student populations will better equip teachers as they develop pedagogy for multicultural class rolls (Ellerbrock, Cruz, Vasquez, & Howes, 2016).

Seniors who scored a 3 or above on the APUSH exam their junior year could offer students their advice and guidance as to how they approached homework and exam preparation. After-school tutoring and help sessions might also offer students a needed boost to maintain pace with the fast-moving curriculum. Administrators should allocate some Title I funds to during and after-school sessions throughout the school year and not only for course review in April and May. But these enrichment programs may require coordinated efforts with the district to provide after-school transportation, space, and personnel. Increased communication with parents becomes essential in helping families understand the demands their children face in AP classes, as well as the benefits of taking more rigorous courses.

Recommendations for Teachers

APUSH teachers in Title I schools must assume the roles as ambassadors for their course and their schools' AP Programs. I suggest teachers apply to become AP Advocates. The AP Advocates (College Board, 2016) program is a new College Board sponsored coalition of AP teachers who advocate for marginalized student populations by working with administrators and guidance counselors to review PSAT scores and communicate with other teachers to identify students with AP potential. The AP Advocates are encouraged to write letters to state and federal legislators regarding pending bills affecting funding for AP Exams and PSAT Tests. Teachers should also actively recruit students for their AP courses, particularly those students who have demonstrated AP potential and are considered first-generation college students.

The teachers in this study offer useful insights into the benefits of student-centered pedagogy and while not everyone will feel comfortable with a day-to-day implementation of this model, breaking students up into small collaborative groups at least one to two days a week will add variety to teaching and learning. Teachers will find students engaged beyond the auditory learning phase and more focused on the application of historical thinking skills. Teachers should provide an ample supply of examples of completed work and continually use the College Board's APUSH essay grading rubrics to remind students exactly how their writing is assessed (Asmead, & Blanchette, 2013). These steps will assist APUSH teachers with getting students to value the time and effort they invest in the course and perhaps view this as an investment in themselves and their futures.

As in the example of Charles, APUSH can provide a launch for students in their journey to enlightenment and self-awareness if the teacher is willing to actively display empathy and compassion. This is the essence of Nel Noddings' (2010 & 2013) maternal- focused care theory

emphasizing the impact teachers can have on students with unabashed demonstrations of kindness and thoughtfulness to students who may not encounter similar interactions at home or in their neighborhoods.

Recommendations for Further Research

Continued research on the topic of APUSH and AP programs in Title I schools should become a top priority for the College Board and education researchers. Research including classroom observations of APUSH teachers in Title I schools whose students consistently score at the national exam score fiftieth percentile average will better inform other practitioners nationally regarding best practices taken from first-hand accounts. Studies focused on classroom observations can reveal the effectiveness of different teaching strategies, correlating pedagogy with higher exam scores from a qualitative in a mixed methods approach. While more qualitative studies of teachers will provide additional significant insights into the challenges unique to teaching AP courses to low-SES populations, studies from the perspectives of students themselves will offer better understandings into challenges they face as they take on college courses and navigate through adolescence. As policy-makers and stakeholders better empathize with students, supportive infrastructure and refined pedagogy can result in greater student success in AP courses and help students parlay that success to college degrees.

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[http://media.collegeboard.com/floridapartnership/pdf/11b_4836_Florida_Bro WEB_120203.pdf](http://media.collegeboard.com/floridapartnership/pdf/11b_4836_Florida_Bro_WEB_120203.pdf)
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Appendices

Appendix A: Email Script for Recruiting Participants

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in Social Science Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am pursuing my doctorate by conducting research on social studies teachers. Your participation is requested in this research, IRB Study # _____, involving investigation into the perceptions and lived experiences of AP U.S. teachers in Title I schools. As compensation for your time and participation in the study you will receive a \$25.00 Target gift card after each completed interview.

Participation in the study will require a one-hour interviews and a follow-up one-hour discussion of verifying transcripts and themes. With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will choose a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. Transcription software and/or a professional transcriptionist may be used to transcribe the audio files. The audio files will be locked at my house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their audio files and a copy of their transcription. The participants and I will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

I will arrange the interview to take place at a location of your convenience during non-school hours at your school or a non-school facility. The interview will be scheduled to occur in a period of approximately 3 weeks. Transcripts will be made available for your review within 30 days of the final interview.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. Please contact me at the email or phone number listed below if you would like to participate in this voluntary research.

Sincerely,

Mark Lance Rowland, M.A.
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EDU 162
Tampa, FL 33620

Appendix B: Informed Consent



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # _____

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called: Perspectives of Advanced Placement U.S. History Teachers in Title I Schools. The person who is in charge of this research study is Mark lance Rowland. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Barbara Cruz, a professor at USF in the College of Education.

The research interview will be conducted at a location of your convenience during non-school hours at an off-school site of your convenience.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

Describe the perspectives and lived experiences of AP U. S. History teachers in Title I high Schools.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student for completion of a doctoral dissertation.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in an hour long semi-structured interview and approximately one hour of verifying transcripts.

With your permission the interviews will be taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. Transcription software and/or a professional transcriptionist may be used to transcribe the audio files.

The audio files will be locked in Mr. Rowland's house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their own audio files and a copy of their own transcription. The participants and principal investigator will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in Mr. Rowland's possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

The interview will be arranged at a location of the participants' convenience. The interview will be scheduled to occur within a three week period. Transcripts for the interview will be made available for participant review within 30 days of the third interview.

Total Number of Participants

Approximately 5 individuals will take part in this study at USF.

Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study.

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will be paid \$50.00 in the form of a Target gift card if you complete the scheduled interviews and verify your transcript. During the study visits, any food or beverage will be paid for by Mr. Rowland.

Cost

There will be no additional costs to you as a result of being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your

records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Florida Department of Health, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

XIII. You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my health information as agreed above, be collected/disclosed in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Appendix C: Background Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The semi-structured interviews will be guided by the questions below. Questions below each background question (BQ) are designed to produce data in support of that research question. The first interview questions are as follows:

BQ1: Where were you born and where did you spend your formative years?

Did you grow up in an urban, suburban, or rural neighborhood?

How would you describe the ethnic makeup of your neighborhood?

How would you describe the socioeconomic makeup of your neighborhood?

BQ2: Describe the socioeconomic status of your family's household growing up.

Did your parents go to college?

What type(s) of vocational training did your parents receive?

Where did your parents work during your childhood?

Would you describe your family's socioeconomic status as lower, middle, or upper class?

BQ3: What was the socioeconomic status of your friends while growing up?

Would you describe your friends' parents as white or blue collar workers?

Do you recall if any of your friends received government assistance?

Do you recall if any of your friends received free or reduced school lunches?

Did your friends work while attending high school?

BQ4: Do you have siblings? If so, what types of work do they do?

What are the ages of your siblings?

Did they attend college?

What were their majors?

What careers have they pursued?

Did their career choices affect your decision to become a teacher?

BQ5: What were your educational experiences like in elementary, middle, and high school?

Did you attend public schools?

How would you describe the ethnic makeup of the schools you attended?

How would you describe the socioeconomic makeup of the schools you attended?

Would you describe your teachers as highly qualified and effective?

Did any of your teachers inspire you to become a teacher?

Would you categorize yourself as a good student in high school?

Did you take AP classes in high school?

Did you take APUSH in high school?

BQ6: What were your educational experiences like in college?

Did you attend a public or private university?

What was your major in college?

What degrees have you earned?

Did you participate in student government or other campus organizations?

Did you live on campus?

BQ7: How did you find your way into the teaching profession?

When did you decide to become a teacher?

What factors influenced your decision to become a teacher?

Did anyone encourage you to become a teacher?

Did anyone discourage you from becoming a teacher?

If you weren't a teacher, what would you choose as a profession?

BQ8: What were your teaching experiences prior to your current position?

When did you first start teaching?

Where was your first teaching assignment?

What grade level and subject(s) did you teach?

What other subjects have you taught other than APUSH?

BQ9: How did you become an APUSH teacher at your school?

Did you consciously seek out an APUSH teaching assignment?

Did you choose to teach the course or were you appointed?

How did your own educational experiences prepare you to teach APUSH?

Are there other AP courses you would like to teach?

Do you plan to continue teaching APUSH through the end of your career?

Do you have other career aspirations in education?

Do you have career aspirations outside of education?

Appendix D: Research Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The semi-structured interviews will be guided by the questions below. The following research questions (RQ) are designed to produce data in support of the corresponding research question.

RQ1: In what ways did your background and experiences influence your perspective regarding teaching the APUSH course in a Title I school?

In what ways do your childhood and adolescent surroundings continue to influence your teaching philosophy regarding the APUSH course?

How have your family experiences, during adolescence, influenced your approach to teaching the APUSH course?

In what ways do your childhood social interactions and experiences continue to influence your approach to teaching the APUSH course?

How have your own primary and secondary educational experiences shaped your perspective regarding optimum approaches to teaching and learning in the APUSH course?

To what degree did your college coursework and major(s) prepare you to teach the APUSH course?

How have previous work environments and experiences affected your teaching philosophy and approach to teaching the APUSH course?

RQ2: Describe the environment and culture of the high school where you currently teach.

What is the ethnic breakdown of the student population?

What percentage of the school's students receive free and reduced lunch?

How would you categorize the socioeconomic status of the students overall?

Would you describe the campus as a safe environment?

RQ3: What personal beliefs influence your pedagogical planning when teaching the APUSH course to students in a Title I high school?

What is the general daily and weekly structure of your course?

How do you divide up the course content over the school year?

How does your personal philosophy on education influence planning for the course?

What materials do you use to prepare and plan for instruction?

To what degree does the College Board affect your decision-making regarding course planning and content delivery?

If you use College Board materials, which specifically do you use?

Have you attended any College Board-sponsored workshops for teachers?

Have you participated in any staff development training sessions from your school district specifically for the APUSH course?

RQ4: How is your planning influenced by teaching a diverse student population?

Does your school have an “open-door policy” regarding AP course enrollment?

Who is involved in the decision-making as to whether a student is enrolled in AP courses?

What criteria are used to determine AP course enrollment eligibility?

Given the College Board’s initiative to increase minority students’ access to AP classes, have you noticed increased diversity in your classes?

What challenges, if any, have you faced with growing student diversity in your classes?

If you have witnessed an increase in student diversity in your classes, what opportunities, if any, has this brought?

Have you modified instruction to accommodate a more diverse student population? If yes, in what way(s)?

RQ5: How is your pedagogy influenced by the College Board’s redesign of the APUSH course?

Do you divide up the course into nine chronological historical periods as suggested by the College Board?

Given the new emphasis on analyses of primary and secondary sources, as opposed to factual recall, how do you structure class meetings to allow for historical analyses practice?

How much time do you allot for essay writing during a unit of study?

To what degree do your unit assessments reflect the format of the redesigned APUSH exam?

Do you perceive the redesigned course as more student-friendly, considering your student population specifically?

RQ6: In what ways do you adapt to the value-added model (VAM) approach to teacher evaluation, given the push for expanding low-SES participation in AP courses?

To what degree do students’ performance on the APUSH exam influence how you are evaluated each year?

Does the continued scrutiny of teacher effectiveness alter or influence your methods and planning?

To what degree would you describe your methods as “teaching to the test”?

What methods do you find most effective when teaching low-SES populations?

Do you feel these same methods are effective for all students?

RQ7: To what degree do you view your course and the AP Program as a pathway to higher education and as a means of socioeconomic upward mobility?

Do you perceive your APUSH class as a vital steppingstone to college for your students?

Do you believe a college degree would prove beneficial to all your students?

Do you feel students leave your class better prepared for college?

Do you feel students leave your class better prepared for life in general?

What skills do students develop as a result of taking your class?

Do you believe college is the right choice for all students willing to persevere and earn a degree?

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

August 1, 2016

Mark Rowland
Educational and Psychological Studies
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00027303

Title: Backgrounds, Experiences, and Perspectives of Advanced Placement U.S. History Teachers in Title I Schools

Study Approval Period: 8/1/2016 to 8/1/2017

Dear Mr. Rowland:

On 8/1/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[USF IRB Protocol Guidelines- M. L. Rowland.docx](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[Adult Consent, Version #1.docx.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board