A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA U.S. HISTORY END OF COURSE EXAM ON HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF AUTONOMY AND SELF-EFFICACY

by

Debra Ann Whitmore

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History End of Course Exam (EOCE) on teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy for high school U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina. The theory guiding this study was Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy as it explained the relationship between self-efficacy and effectiveness. There were 12 participants in this study who shared the lived experience of the U.S. History EOCE and related policies. Data were collected through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and relevant documents. The data were analyzed through categorical aggregation and the coding of data into general themes and patterns. Themes were identified that demonstrated participants’ perceptions of the impact of the EOCE and related policies on their autonomy and self-efficacy. Eleven of the participants shared concerns about the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process. An unanticipated theme was that of the additional burden of data teams. The most notable finding of the study was that participants realigned their understandings and perceptions of self-efficacy in order to feel efficacious in meeting objectives and goals set by the state and the district rather than themselves. Recommendations for future research include teachers’ changing understanding and application of self-efficacy and the actual effects of data teams on student learning and development.

Keywords: standardized tests, teacher evaluation, autonomy, self-efficacy, mandates, data teams, standards
Dedication

It was through God’s leading that I undertook the often-overwhelming journey of enrolling in a doctoral program. However, God’s strength and encouragement kept me focused on the course work and the end goal. God’s encouragement came through both His word and His spirit as well as through the people He placed in my life to support and encourage me. Most notable of all those friends, colleagues, and family members was my sister, Jill Dominick. Therefore, with deep love and appreciation in my heart for all her love and support throughout the program and my dissertation, I dedicate this dissertation to her.
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List of Abbreviations

Advanced Placement (AP)
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
American College Testing (ACT)
Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA)
College Prep (CP)
Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
End of Course (EOC)
End of Course Exam (EOCE)
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Honors (HN)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
International Baccalaureate (IB)
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS)
Performance Management (PM)
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
Student Learning Objectives (SLO)
Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)
United States (U.S.)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teachers are under increasing expectations and accountability for student performance as measured by standardized tests. Although states and districts have used varying forms of standardized testing for years, standardized testing of students became an integral part of federally mandated requirements for school accountability as identified through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and its successor Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (U.S. Senate, 2016). The intentions of NCLB were to provide equity in education for all students and to raise student learning and achievement as measured by mandated standardized testing as the means through which schools and districts evaluate student achievement and meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. With the implementation of ESSA in 2016, standardized tests are still required as the means through which student progress is measured, but states now have the option of calculating AYP for schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

As schools and districts attempt to meet the performance standards, whether set by AYP or other measurements, various programs have been implemented that guide and direct tested curricula (Mueller & Colley, 2015). Marchant, David, Rodgers, and German (2015) found that 63% of states connect teacher evaluations to evidence of student learning which is most commonly accomplished through student performance on standardized tests. State and district educational policy makers have attempted to strengthen student performance on standardized tests through mandated curricular and pedagogical processes as well as holding teachers directly accountable for student performance to maintain their employment. The establishment of
rigorous tests to measure student performance has led to a prioritization of standardized testing over other curricular concerns (Nelson, 2013).

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine and understand the impact of course-specific standardized tests on teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. Studying the effects of standardized testing on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy provided a deeper understanding of the factors that affect teacher autonomy and self-efficacy, as well as the professional decisions and behaviors of teachers related to the testing culture. Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenological study seeks to understand the essence of the phenomenon “through careful, comprehensive descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experience” (p. 105). Creswell (2013) further delineated the focus of a phenomenological study in that it “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon” (p. 76). Therefore, a phenomenological study was utilized to understand the experiences of teachers who have all experienced the phenomenon of standardized testing in the form of the South Carolina United States (U.S.) History End of Course Exam (EOCE).

This chapter introduces and discusses concepts and information related to the research study. The problem statement, research questions, and research plan of the study are also described in this chapter. Additionally, the subsections of background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and research questions are developed in this chapter.
Background

In an era of educational reform, President George W. Bush led Congress in an effort to ensure that all students received a quality education as identified through the passage of NCLB in 2001 (U.S. Government, 2015). Through NCLB, and its successor ESSA, schools and districts were to measure student learning growth through student performance on standardized tests. States, districts, schools, and teachers are held accountable for meeting annual growth targets as represented by state determined measurements which may include AYP (U.S. Government, 2015). Although the federal government had little constitutional authority over education, the use of federal funding directed to education allowed the federal government to create policies such as NCLB and ESSA that state legislatures had to enact to receive the connected federal funds (Findlaw, 2016). State legislatures then enacted educational policies that public school districts were legally required to follow and implement such as types and frequency of mandated testing and teacher evaluation processes (Marchant et al., 2015).

The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (2016) explained that under the guidelines of ESSA, which replaced NCLB in 2016, states could determine which standardized tests are used in order to measure student performance. Although there was greater flexibility in the use of standardized tests to measure student performance in the determination of school accountability under ESSA, standardized tests were nevertheless still incorporated into the federal government’s mandate.

In response to testing requirements, state legislators in South Carolina mandated that, in addition to other required standardized tests, course-specific EOCEs would be implemented as part of the measurement and accountability process. Additionally, students’ EOCE scores
comprised 20% of each student’s yearly grade for the tested course (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). Recently, legislators in South Carolina mandated that student test scores be incorporated into the teacher evaluation process for teachers of tested curricula, while teachers of non-tested curricula had different standards by which they are evaluated (Adcox, 2014).

To support and enhance student performance on mandated standardized tests, many states and districts implemented policies intended to improve student test scores. Antush (2014) explained that these policies limited teachers to teaching skills and content that were integrated into the standardized tests. Many of these policies, such as pacing guides and curriculum guides, limited the opportunities for teachers to make curricular and pedagogical decisions related to the learning objectives of their students (Mueller & Colley, 2015). Additionally, in an attempt to make teachers directly accountable for student performance on standardized tests, Hull (2013) explained that many states and school districts incorporated student test scores into the teacher evaluation process.

Mandated standardized testing has resulted in several unintended consequences affecting educators, including teacher deprofessionalism, test cheating scandals, and high rates of teacher attrition (Ohemeng & McCall-Thomas, 2013). For example, in 2014 over 12% of teachers employed in South Carolina left the profession, with less experienced teachers leaving in higher numbers than veteran teachers (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2015). Other unintended academic consequences of standardized tests identified by Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) included the de-emphasis of non-tested curriculum, especially that of higher-order thinking skills. In terms of the students themselves, the standardized tests were designed and computed to measure performance not progression (La Ferrara, 2013).
An important consideration about the emerging test culture is to understand how standardized tests have impacted the teachers of tested curricula. Teachers of tested curricula find themselves under greater scrutiny than teachers of non-tested curricula. Teachers of tested curricula were also given curriculum and pedagogical mandates and targets that they had to incorporate into their practice and classrooms. In addition to the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process for teachers of tested curricula (Hull, 2013), state and district policies limited the decision-making opportunities of teachers related to student learning objectives. Furthermore, many districts and states mandated that failing schools implement curriculum scripts that were produced by educational publishing companies in lieu of any curriculum development by teachers (Crowder & Konle, 2015). These factors may have directly impacted teacher autonomy which “refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach students and how they teach it” (Rahimi & Riasati, 2015, p. 618). Potential limitations to autonomy may have led teachers to perceive themselves to be less effective in meeting their objectives for student learning thereby impacting their sense of self-efficacy (Mojoudi & Tabatabaei, 2014).

Standardized testing did not affect every teacher in the same way. In fact, teachers of non-tested curricula may not have experienced any personal or professional effects of standardized testing although they may have observed test effects on their colleagues who taught tested curricula. Antush (2014) explained that teachers of tested curricula experienced limitations on their professional autonomy in terms of curricular and pedagogical decision-making as well as stressors related to the teacher evaluation process that their colleagues who
teach non-tested curricula did not experience. Additionally, teachers of tested curriculum may have perceived lower self-efficacy in terms of meeting their professional goals and objectives.

The impact on teacher perception of self-efficacy directly connected to Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy which is one’s personal belief about one’s level of motivation and effectiveness in achieving results and goals related to performance, behaviors, and outcomes. Bandura stated, “after people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks” (p. 72). Thus, teachers in difficult circumstances and situations were able to work through the issues they faced if they perceived that they would be effective. However, many teachers who taught tested curriculum experienced increasing micromanagement of these courses from administrators. Additionally, they experienced changing evaluation standards that hold teachers accountable and responsible for student performance in spite of mitigating circumstances such as language acquisition, learning disabilities, and unstable home environments (Farber, 2015). Therefore, many teachers perceived that they had limited influence in curricular and professional decision making.

The limiting of teacher input and practices by state legislation and district policy were in direct opposition to Bandura’s (1994) identification of effective persons based upon their sense of self-efficacy. Those who perceived themselves to have high levels of self-esteem believe they would be effective in their endeavors. “In sum, the successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the nonanxious, the nondepressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 77). Therefore, the impact of the prioritization of standardized tests may have lessened a teacher’s sense of autonomy as well as self-efficacy.
One’s sense of self-efficacy and autonomy directly related to Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory in which he connected human agency with one’s ability to exercise control over personal, social, and occupational lives. The social cognitive theory emphasized the role of other behavioral theories, including the role of personal efficacy. Bandura (2001) stated:

Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people’s beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning and over environmental events. Efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency. (p. 4)

This provided the essential relationship between autonomy and self-efficacy in that the amount of control one had over one’s environment supported the perception of effectiveness and ability to meet challenges. The relationship between autonomy and self-efficacy was like the tenets of the expectancy-value theory which emphasized the connection among an individuals’ choice, persistence, and performance in that “expectancies and values are assumed to be influenced by task-specific beliefs such as ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of different tasks, and individuals’ goals, self-schema, and affective memories” (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 69).

Course-specific standardized tests, such as the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, may, in and of themselves, not have had an impact on teachers’ sense of autonomy and self-efficacy; however, when states and districts limited teacher autonomy through prescribed curriculums and the teacher evaluation process, teachers may have believed themselves to have little to no autonomy in determining curriculum and pedagogical practices that best supported student learning. As a result, teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy, or ability to meet their
instructional goals for students, may have been lowered which may have reduced teacher effectiveness and success in supporting student learning.

Although research has been conducted on various aspects of standardized testing and teaching, including its effect on curriculum and practice, limited research has been conducted on teachers’ perceptions of the impact of course-specific standardized tests on their autonomy and self-efficacy. In a study focused specifically on mathematics teachers and students, Baumert, Tsai, Kunter, and Blum (2010) found that the overall expertise of teachers combined with the implementation of research-based instruction had the greatest impact in supporting student achievement; therefore, experience, content knowledge, and pedagogical practices had a positive impact on student learning. If teachers perceived that they did not have curricular autonomy, their levels of self-efficacy may have waivered which, in turn, may have impacted their effectiveness in terms of supporting student learning objectives. By understanding how policies related to course-specific standardized tests impact teacher perceptions, educational policy makers may be able to create professional development opportunities and other programs to support teachers of tested curriculum. Additionally, educational policy makers may be able to create more equitable professional processes for all educators.

**Situation to Self**

As a public and private school educator for over 30 years, I have had a great deal of experience with the changing role, importance, and use of standardized tests. My interest in the research on the impact of standardized testing on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy comes not only from my own experiences, but also from the experiences of teachers with whom I have
worked. The preeminence and prioritization of standardized testing led many policy makers to implement increasingly punitive programs into the instructional environment of teachers who teach tested curricula. Therefore, my philosophical epistemological assumption was evident throughout this research study as I sought to understand the perceptions of the participants; however, the views of individual U. S. History teachers regarding their perceptions of classroom autonomy and self-efficacy were the foci of this study. My research was based on interviews and quotes from participants for use as the primary data for this study. I became an insider as I sought to understand their experiences. Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of interviews for “the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions of the co-researcher’s experience of the phenomenon” (p. 116). Additionally, Creswell (2013) stated that “subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views. This is how knowledge is known – through the subjective experiences of people” (p. 20).

The framework for this study was social constructivist. Through this research study, I was able to “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). It was my objective to understand how high school U.S. History teachers perceive the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their practices. By integrating an epistemological assumption within a social constructivist framework, I focused on the experiences of others while separating my biases from their responses. The social constructivist interpretive framework of this study allowed me to develop patterns of meaning from participants’ responses. According to Creswell (2013), the intent of my usage of social constructivism was to interpret the experiences of others related to the phenomenon of the U.S. History EOCE.
The emphasis placed on meeting AYP targets and accountability as mandated by NCLB, while optional under ESSA, ignored the statistical practice of following student progression in longitudinal studies. Rather, the current year’s students were measured against previous students who may have had differing content, skill, and cognitive development levels. Therefore, the tests measured students against the performance levels of previous students rather than their own academic progression. Additionally, teachers who taught higher achieving students, such as Advanced Placement (AP) students, were compared against teachers whose students consistently demonstrated lower English, skill-levels, and cognitive development levels or were identified as being learning disadvantaged. I observed the frustration and stress levels of my colleagues based on non-content related factors that impacted their students’ learning and performance which were integrated into the teacher evaluation process.

Educational accountability is important, but should be measured in a way that reflects the learning of each individual student while accounting for student environmental and learning contexts. Since the 1990s, I have taught various AP courses, participated in the national readings for AP European History, AP U.S. History, and AP U.S. Government and Politics, and recommended these courses to many students. However, these courses and tests were optional for students who self-selected into AP courses; students understood that the cumulative assessment for these courses was a national exam for which most colleges and universities granted college credit for a passing score of three, four, or five. When I first began teaching in South Carolina seven years ago, I was introduced to the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. A significant factor of the EOCE, which was not found in the AP courses I taught or the standardized tests in California where I taught for most of my career, was that student EOCE
scores were legislatively mandated to comprise 20% of a student’s yearly grade (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). Therefore, not only were South Carolina teachers who taught EOCE courses held accountable for student performance in the evaluation process and limited in the instructional decisions they were able to make, all levels of U.S. History students were directly impacted by their test scores.

Some of my colleagues mentioned leaving education due to the stressors and impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their professional and personal lives. Many teachers believed that extenuating circumstances affecting students were neglected as part of the testing accountability process such as students’ learning disabilities, limited English language abilities, or environmental factors such as their home environments. Additionally, I observed collegial discontent and frustration as teachers of non-tested curricula were not under as much supervision and policy mandates as were teachers of tested curricula. To better understand the experiences of my colleagues, as well as other teachers in South Carolina, I wanted to study the impact of standardized testing on their perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy.

**Problem Statement**

The problem of this study was the impact of course-specific standardized tests on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy. The preeminence of standardized testing has led many states and school districts to direct curricula and pedagogical practices and to incorporate student test results into teacher evaluations equating teacher effectiveness with student performance (Antush, 2014; Hull, 2013). Although not all teachers responded in the same ways to the prescribed curricula and legislative micromanagement associated with testing,
in extreme situations and environments testing has led to teacher deprofessionalism, high teacher attrition rates, and even test cheating scandals (Strauss, 2015). Negative behaviors of teachers related to standardized tests were evident not only in the United States, but also in other countries that had implemented standardized tests (Ohemeng & McCall-Thomas, 2013). There appeared to be a discrepancy between the intent and purpose of standardized testing and teachers’ perception of the impact of standardized testing on their professional lives.

Although teachers of non-tested curricula were not evaluated against student performance, they had identified test related effects on their teaching. The prioritization of standardized tests, and the emphasis on preparation for the tests, was superseding other curricular foci and redirected funding and resources away from non-tested curricula (Steele, 2014). Teachers of both tested and non-tested curricula, left the profession as they believed that their love for students and student learning had been undermined by the focus on standardized testing (La Ferrara, 2013).

To understand teacher perception of the impact of course specific standardized tests on their autonomy, practice, and effectiveness, it was essential to study teacher perceptions related to the current mandated South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and attendant policies on the impact on teacher effectiveness. This involved studying teacher perception on whether the impact of the laws and policies increased their sense of self-efficacy or decreased their self-efficacy. Previous researchers identified behavioral and professional reactions from teachers but without a clear corresponding analysis of teacher autonomy and self-efficacy (Rahimi & Riasati, 2015). There has been limited research regarding the impact of course specific standardized testing on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy; research that had been conducted had
most often been of quantitative design and inquiry which focused on participants’ responses to pre-determined factors without explanation or elaboration. This phenomenological qualitative study allowed the voice of teacher participants in the Midlands region of South Carolina related to their perceptions of the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy share the essence of their experiences. The problem of this phenomenological qualitative study was the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on high school teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the impact of course specific standardized testing on U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy in the Midlands region of South Carolina. At this stage of the research, the course specific standardized test was defined as the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE; teacher perception of autonomy and self-efficacy was defined as a teacher’s ability to make curricular and pedagogical decisions related to student learning objectives and a teacher’s effectiveness in achieving those objectives. The theory guiding this study was Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy as it explained the relationship between self-efficacy and effectiveness for high school U.S. History teachers who had experienced the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy. According to Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy, those who perceived themselves to have high levels of self-efficacy believed they would be effective in their endeavors. Therefore, the prioritization of standardized testing and attendant policies may have had an impact on teacher sense of autonomy as well as self-efficacy.
Significance of the Study

This research study contributed to the body of literature regarding how teachers perceived the impact of course specific standardized testing on their autonomy and self-efficacy. This study provided insight to the impact of the EOCE on teacher practice, perceptions related to the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process, and other affects as identified by the participants. Much of the existing literature related to teacher autonomy and self-efficacy was quantitative design and inquiry such as the study conducted by Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) which focused on the experiences of science teachers related to standardized testing and measured teacher responses against pre-set limitations and options. Other studies have examined specific variables such as the research conducted by Bhattacharyya, Junot, and Clark (2013) who examined the variable of novice teachers in relationship to their views on standardized testing. Quantitative research led participants to respond to a pre-determined set of factors that may or may not have accurately reflected participants’ experiences. Therefore, there was a gap in the literature related to the voices of teachers who had experienced the phenomenon of course-specific standardized testing.

The majority of existing literature examined various factors and dependent variables that indirectly impacted teacher autonomy or self-efficacy. The impact of course specific standardized tests had not been fully researched. Cho and Eberhard (2013) studied the impact of the Wyoming U.S. History EOCE related to educators’ everyday practices, but without a focus on autonomy and self-efficacy. Therefore, this research study filled in some of the gaps in literature using qualitative design and inquiry to understand how teachers perceived the impact of standardized testing on their autonomy and self-efficacy.
This research study provided data and insights that should be valuable to various educational stakeholders. This study was important as standardized testing is driving curriculum and has a direct impact on teachers and the learning process (Antush, 2014). Many studies examined the impact of prioritization of standardized testing on students and their learning; however, it was important to examine how standardized testing impacted teachers, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Crowder and Konle (2015) studied the effects of prescribed curriculum that many states required districts and schools to adopt when AYP targets were not met; private educational publishing companies created and sold the prescribed curriculum to districts and schools leading teachers to believe that their expertise and voices related to curriculum and pedagogy were being replaced by governmental support of corporate interests. Studying the topic of the impact of course specific standardized tests on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy helped reveal how teachers perceive the effectiveness of their own practices.

Insights gained on teachers and their perceptions on the EOCE may influence policy makers at the state level, district offices, and school sites to create policies and make decisions that better support teacher autonomy and effectiveness related to student learning and the EOCE. At the district and site levels, administrators may provide professional development opportunities that allow teachers to collaboratively focus on curriculum and instruction (Harter, 2014). Public policy makers and educators may use the findings of this study in developing future legislation that supports teachers in adopting pedagogy that more aligns with the EOCE and its attendant policies while supporting student learning objectives. Additionally, policy makers may reform the teacher evaluation process so that teachers of course-specific standardized tests do not feel
that they are operating under greater scrutiny and facing more punitive consequences than their colleagues who teach non-tested curricula.

This study may also further the understanding of self-efficacy as understood by teachers who experience grade-level or course specific standardized tests. Bandura (1994) established a correlation between a strong sense of self-efficacy and one’s ability to be efficacious. However, if teachers perceive limitations to their autonomy, they may adjust their sense of self-efficacy or may feel less efficacious.

The findings of this study may benefit U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina through increased district and site support, including professional development offerings directly related to essential curricular and pedagogical concepts and practices. Additionally, the state and district evaluation process may become more balanced and equitable in evaluating teachers of tested curricula with their colleagues who teach non-tested curricula. The study may also have an impact on all U.S. History teachers in South Carolina in that the assessment itself may be re-evaluated considering its impact on teachers. The findings of this study may also be transferable to other regions in other states.

**Research Questions**

According to Moustakas (1994), researchers should not have preconceived suppositions related to the phenomenon being study. Rather, a researcher “constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection” (p. 47). Creswell (2013) stated that “qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional” (p. 138). Questions should be worded in such a way that they
restate the purpose of the study and allow participants to respond according to their perceptions of the lived experience. In this phenomenological qualitative study, I asked participants questions that were clearly worded and constructed to incorporate the characteristics that were identified by Moustakas (1994) as key to a phenomenological study. The central question and subquestions of this study centered on the phenomenon of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and teachers’ perceptions of its impact on their autonomy and self-efficacy. Therefore, the research questions focused on how teachers view the EOCE and related policies and practices.

Central Question

How does the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE impact U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy in the Midlands regions of South Carolina?

Bandura (1994) wrote that “perceived self-efficacy is defined as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 71). Thus, a teacher’s ability to effectively help students meet their learning objectives was an essential component of teaching. However, teachers’ perceptions of the U.S. History EOCE and related policies may have affected their self-beliefs about their abilities to meet their performance expectations. Additionally, Jiafang, Jiang, Huen, and Dongyu (2015) found that there was a direct connection between teacher sense of autonomy and sense of self-efficacy which further focused on the perceptions of teachers regarding EOCEs. The central question focused on teachers’ perceptions as to the impact of the EOCE on themselves.
Subquestions

1. How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy?

Rahimi and Riasati (2015) found that when teachers did not believe that they had autonomy within the classroom, they may have been overall less effective in supporting student learning. The loss of the sense of professionalism and autonomy impacted teacher beliefs and perceptions related to their practice. This question focused on teachers’ perceptions as to how much authority and decision making they are allowed to have related to preparing students for the EOCE.

2. How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their sense of self-efficacy?

In addition to Bandura’s (1994) definition of self-efficacy, he explained the impact of a high level of self-efficacy is that “after people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks” (p. 72). This aspect of a high sense of self-efficacy was a foundational aspect of teachers who believed that they would be able to help their students succeed despite difficulties and educational obstacles. High levels of self-efficacy also resulted in higher rates of teacher job satisfaction which supported their efforts in the classroom, including their willingness to be innovative, establish effective classroom management, and the inclusion of students in decision making (Bordelon, Phillips, Parkison, Thomas, & Howell, 2012).
3. How do the perceptions and experiences U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina related to the U.S. History EOCE impact their practice?

Effective teacher practice has been found to be reliant upon high levels of autonomy (Parker, 2015) as well as upon high levels of self-efficacy (Sousa, Coelho, & Guillamon-Saorin, 2012). Mausethagen (2013) found that there was a direct relationship between the policies and expectations related to standardized testing and teacher pedagogy. This impact may be related to teacher sense of self-efficacy in that teachers’ may perceive that the EOCE either supports teacher practices or limits teacher practices.

4. How do the experiences and perceived impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy influence teachers’ views of remaining in the profession by U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina?

Strongly connected to teacher perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy were their views related to remaining in the profession or leaving for another career opportunity according to Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015). Additionally, many teachers felt that the reasons for which they entered the profession had been mitigated by the standardized testing culture that has appeared in many schools and districts (Farber, 2015). In South Carolina, over 12% of employed teachers left the profession after the 2013-2014 school year; most of those leaving were younger teachers (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2015). Although there were other factors involved in the decisions made by these teachers, Bandura’s (1994) theory of sense of self-efficacy as well as the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation which was explained by Wigfield and Eccles (2000) as an “individual’s choice, persistence, and
performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity” (p. 68) may help explain the decision to leave the profession made by many of these teachers.

Definitions

1. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – AYP was the measure through which schools and districts would be evaluated against in terms of meeting their target growth rates for student performance (U.S. Government, 2015).

2. Autonomy – The ability to make decisions and take actions directly related to one’s life (Prichard & Moore, 2016).

3. Curriculum Guides – State and district prescribed guides that specifically identified curriculum to be taught in preparation for standardized testing (Antush, 2014).

4. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – The federal government replaced NCLB with ESSA; the Act eliminated the mandate for AYP although state legislatures may still use it for state measurements. The other components of NCLB were still in place albeit with minor changes (U.S. Senate, 2015).

5. Mandates – Federal and state requirements that must be met by lower levels of government; many mandates, such as NCLB and ESSA were incentivized through allocated funding (U.S. Government, 2015).

6. Narrowing of Curriculum – States and districts restricted the full coverage of tested curricula to focus only on the tested content components (Slomp, 2008).
7. **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)** – Federal legislation passed in 2001 and renewed in 2012 that mandated districts, schools, and teachers be held accountable for student learning as measured by standardized testing (U.S. Government, 2015).

8. **Performance Management (PM)** – A way to measure employees, including teachers, for effectiveness and professionalism (Ohemeng & McCall-Thomas, 2013).

9. **Private Educational Corporations** – The organizations that both write and assess the various types of standardized testing used to measure student performance. Additionally, these corporations write the curriculum that failing schools and districts are mandated to implement when they consistently do not meet required student performance levels (Crowder & Konle, 2015; Mueller & Colley, 2015).

10. **Self-Efficacy** – One’s personal belief about one’s level of motivation and effectiveness in achieving results and goals (Bandura, 1994).

11. **Standardized Tests** – The assessment instruments that state legislatures mandated schools and districts to use to measure student performance. They are standardized in that all students of a specific grade level or a specific content area take the same test on a specified date (Cho & Eberhard, 2013).

12. **Teacher Evaluations** – The processes and systems through which states and districts determine the competency and effectiveness of teachers. An increasing number of states are incorporating student test scores into the teacher evaluation process (Hull, 2013).

13. **Teacher Retention** – The rate at which teachers remain in the profession; attrition is the rate at which teachers leave the profession (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012).
14. Tested Curriculum – Course specific curriculum that is tested as part of the standardized testing measurement of student performance (Cho & Eberhard, 2013).

Summary

To understand teacher perception of the impact of course specific standardized tests on their autonomy, practice, and effectiveness, it was essential to study teacher perceptions related to issues surrounding standardized tests. Previous researchers identified behavioral and professional reactions from teachers but without a clear corresponding analysis of teacher autonomy and self-efficacy (Rahimi & Riasati, 2015). Also, most research conducted on teachers and standardized testing was quantitative in design and inquiry and therefore relied on participants responding to pre-determined factors. Additionally, there was limited research regarding the impact of course specific standardized testing on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy. Therefore, this phenomenological qualitative study gave a voice to teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina related to their perceptions of the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher perception of autonomy and self-efficacy as experienced by U.S. History teachers in the Midlands Region of South Carolina. The theory guiding this study was Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy as it explained the relationship between self-efficacy and effectiveness for high school U.S. History teachers who had experienced the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy.
The foci of the first chapter of this research study included the introduction to the background of the study, the situation to self, the problem at the center of the study, the significance of the study, and the research questions. An overview of previous literature illustrated the use of standardized tests to measure student performance in attempts to hold states, districts, and schools accountable for student learning. Relevant literature also identified that many states and districts have implemented policies and procedures to improve student performance on standardized tests. These policies and practices affected curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher evaluations; all of which may have had an impact on teachers’ perceptions regarding their autonomy and self-efficacy. However, there was an existing gap in the literature in that there had been limited qualitative research on the impact of course specific EOCEs on teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. Also included in this chapter was my motivation for conducting research on this issue and the research questions that drove my study.

Chapter Two includes an examination of the theoretical framework of the research study as well as a synthesis of the existing literature underpinning the study. The methodology of the research study including the research design, data collection process, and procedures for data analysis, is described in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter examines the theoretical framework and relevant literature review for this research study of how U.S. History teachers perceive the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy. With the passage of NCLB, and its successor ESSA, states are required to use standardized testing as a component of their evaluations on educational accountability. Several states incorporate course specific EOCEs as a part of this process. However, many states have also instituted teacher evaluation processes in which student test scores are included in teacher evaluations and hold teachers directly accountable for student test performance (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2011). Additionally, many states and districts are mandating the use of pacing and curriculum guides in efforts to improve student test scores. Considered together, these educational policies and practices may have an undetermined impact on teachers of tested curricula.

The foundational theory of the study is Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy which emphasizes the importance of one’s belief in one's ability to be successful in achieving one’s goals in that one's sense of self-efficacy may influence how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges. Self-efficacy is integrated into Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory and the three modes of human agency which have direct effects on one’s sense of efficacy. Self-efficacy and social cognitive theory both examine one’s ability to exercise control over one’s life on personal, social, and occupational levels which connect back to teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Related to the theories of self-efficacy and social cognition is the theory of social exchange
which explains the importance of the work environment and relationships in terms of effective work behaviors and positive employer-employee attitudes (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This relationship diminishes when employees perceive that their contributions and opinions are not considered or appreciated by their employers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The relevant literature examines the impact of standardized testing on various aspects related to teaching and instruction. Much of the related research focuses on the impact of standardized tests on curriculum development and pedagogical practices, not on the impact of the tests on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy. Researchers have also studied changes in the teacher evaluation process because of the emphasis on standardized testing; connected to this issue is that teachers of tested curriculum are being evaluated against different standards than teachers of non-tested curriculum. In addition to research on the impact of standardized tests on curriculum, pedagogy, and the evaluation process, other studies have focused on teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention rates. Foundationally related to the aforementioned topics are studies on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theory centering this study was Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy with supporting elements from Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory. Both theories reflected elements of the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) regarding achievement and persistence on tasks.

Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory emphasized three modes of agency for humans including how each individual has direct effect on one’s own sense of agency, how humans have
agency through indirect means, and the role of collective agency. These three elements comprise one’s ability to exercise control over one’s life on personal, social, and occupational levels. Bandura (2001) wrote “a functional consciousness involves purposive accessing and deliberative processing of information for selecting, constructing, regulating, and evaluating courses of action” (p. 1). To have agency over one’s life involves the ability to analyze situations and environments to effectively act and achieve desired objectives, goals, and outcomes. A key component of the social cognitive theory was that one has “the ability to bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities promotes foresightful behavior. It enables people to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and to shape and regulate the present to fit a desired future” (Bandura, 2001, p. 3). The importance of the social cognitive theory for educators is the foundational aspect of educators’ use of curriculum and pedagogy to support student learning to achieve student learning objectives. Related to this is Bandura’s (2001) statement that “people are not only agents of action but self-examiners of their own functioning. The metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions is another distinctly core human feature of agency” (p. 3). Therefore, self-reflection about one’s decisions and actions allowed one to make changes based upon environmental and social factors. Adaptability and adjustments are ongoing activities for humans to be able to effectively and successfully function in personal, social, and occupational spheres of life.

There are cultural and social barriers to one’s ability to exercise control over one’s life. Bandura (2001) specifically mentioned the influence of complex technologies as well as “social efforts to change lives for the better . . . merging diverse self-interests in support of common core values and goals. Recent years have witnessed growing social fragmentation into separate
interest groups, each flexing its own factional efficacy” (p. 6). Nevertheless, even with external
limitations, humans continually assess situations, feelings, and circumstances to create outcomes
that are in their best interests. The intentional decisions and actions that human make reflects
their ability to have agency over their lives. Bandura (2001) directly connected the social
cognitive theory with self-efficacy as he stated “among the mechanisms of personal agency, none
is more central or pervasive than people’s beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of
control over their own functioning and over environmental events. Efficacy beliefs are the
foundation of human agency” (p. 4). He also stated, “perceived self-efficacy occupies a pivotal
role in the causal structure of social cognitive theory because efficacy beliefs affect adaptation
and change not only in their own right, but through their impact on other determinants”
(Bandura, 2001, p. 5).

Bandura (2001) overtly connected his social cognitive theory with his theory of self-
efficacy. Self-efficacy is a personal belief about one’s level of motivation and effectiveness in
achieving results and goals related to performance, behaviors, and outcomes. Bandura (1994)
stated “such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include
cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes” (p. 71). How one views his or her
ability to function and achieve is foundational to personal attitudes towards challenges and tasks.
People with strong senses of self-efficacy believe that they will be able to successfully meet the
challenges they face and that they will acquire whatever strategies or skills are required to be
successful. As Bandura (1994) stated “after people become convinced they have what it takes to
succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks” (p. 72).
One of the sources of self-efficacy is mastery experiences in which individuals overcome challenges and obstacles through perseverance and adaptation. This process forces individuals to understand that they can be successful through effort. However, those who do not meet challenges or obstacles as they develop may become easily frustrated or even give up when faced with a situation that is not easily rectifiable.

Vicarious experiences of social influencers and models is another source of self-efficacy. Peers, demographically similar individuals, and social influencers can demonstrate ways in which to overcome social and environmental challenges and obstacles. Conversely, when these social subsets demonstrate an unwillingness to challenge themselves and therefore accept the status quo, it may lessen the sense of self-efficacy of others in similar circumstances. A third source of self-efficacy is the social persuasion of others. This source of self-efficacy is exemplified through verbal comments and praise that are intended to boost one’s sense of self-efficacy. However, Bandura (1994) noted that “it is more difficult to instill high beliefs of personal efficacy by social persuasion alone than to undermine it. Unrealistic boosts in efficacy are quickly disconfirmed by disappointing results of one’s efforts (p. 72).

Of the three sources of self-efficacy, Bandura (1994) identified mastery experiences as the most effective way of developing a strong sense of self-efficacy. Mastery experiences are foundational to one’s beliefs in his or her ability to effectively and successfully meet challenges and achieve objectives. “In sum, the successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the nonanxious, the nondepressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 77).
The level of one’s sense of self-efficacy often predetermines one’s ability to effectively meet challenges on a consistent basis. When one can develop a strong sense of self-efficacy in personal or social situations, the realization of effectively meeting goals and objectives is examined by Bandura’s (1997) observation that “the making of choices is aided by reflective thought, through which self-influence is largely exercised” (p. 7).

The extending implication is that when individuals are not allowed the opportunity to reflect and influence their actions, there is a lesser chance of being successful in their endeavors. This is further explained by Bandura (1997) as he stated that “efficacy beliefs operate as a key factor in a generative system of human competence” (p. 37). This, then, may be a foundational consideration for teachers who are mandated to follow pacing and curriculum guides that do not allow for personal professional reflection and adaptation to meet individual students’ learning objectives. Prescribed courses of action and instruction are not guaranteed to be successful when teachers perceive themselves to have limited autonomy and self-efficacy, especially because “even routinized activities are rarely performed in exactly the same way each time” (Bandura, 1997, p. 37).

Building upon the social cognitive theory and the theory of self-efficacy is the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation in which individuals’ choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). The theory examined a direct linkage between perceived benefit and cost to activities and decisions. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) directly connected expectancy-value with self-efficacy when they explained that Bandura differentiated between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations.
When individuals believe that an action will not necessarily lead to an expected or hoped-for outcome, they may not fully apply themselves to, nor support, the designated course of action.

All three of these theories inform teacher perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy in that their abilities to have agency in their professional lives to effectively achieve their objectives for student learning is directly related to their beliefs about their abilities to overcome challenges and obstacles. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) wrote that “when individuals do tasks that are intrinsically valued, there are important psychological consequences for them, most of which are quite positive” (p. 72) which has a direct correlation to Bandura’s (1994) observation of self-efficacy that “the striking characteristic of people who have achieved eminence in their fields is an inextinguishable sense of personal efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing” (p. 77). In synthesizing his social cognitive theory with his theory of self-efficacy, Bandura (2001) explained:

Beliefs influence whether people think pessimistically or optimistically and in ways that are self-enhancing or self-hindering. Efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expand in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivation or demoralizing. (p. 4)

The importance of this study is to provide further insight to teachers’ sense of self-efficacy when much, if not most, of the decisions made regarding student learning objectives are made by policy makers and not the teachers themselves. How teachers view their abilities to be
effective in meeting student learning objectives may be impacted by the decisions and policies made by legislators, district office personnel, and site administrators.

Related Literature

Rationale of Standardized Testing

The foundational motivation for the passage and renewal of NCLB in 2001 and 2012, and the passage of its successor ESSA in 2016, was to provide a quality education for all students regardless of their socioeconomic status, environment, or at-risk status (U.S. Government, 2015). The intent was to provide educational equity to all students. In order to measure student performance and school accountability, a complex system of testing, progression, and measurement was mandated. States were responsible for carrying out these mandates and created additional mandates to be carried out by school districts (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016).

State legislatures have mandated the types and purposes of standardized tests that are used to measure student performance. The identified tests are “intended to not only make Federal requirements effective and accurate at the state level, but also to support teachers through the provision of test results in a timely manner” (Cho & Eberhard, 2013, p. 1). The basis of measurement for most standardized tests is a standards-reference system in which student performance is measured although students can promote to the next grade level/course level regardless of their performance on the standardized test (Marzano, 2010).

Due to the intent of federal legislation related to standardized testing, there is an expectancy of systematic improvement in student test scores. This expectation is exemplified by
Performance Management (PM) accountability and results. PM is “the development and incorporation of performance measurement into an organization’s management and policy systems, and the subsequent use of the information generated for decision making by managers and the politicians to whom they are accountable (Ohemeng & McCall-Thomas, 2013, p. 457). Thus, the purpose of standardized testing is to promote educational equity for all students through a system that utilizes prescribed measurement targets and subsequent development of additional mandates and policies to ensure student performance growth.

Overview of General Concerns about Standardized Tests and Students

The purpose of standardized testing as a form of educational accountability was intended to ensure a quality education for all students (U.S. Government, 2015), but there are several unintended consequences of testing for students. As teachers, schools, and districts are held accountable for student test scores there is an emphasis on introducing standardized tests to students well before they experience the mandated tests. Feeney and Freeman (2014) found that some districts have instituted standardized testing in kindergarten to prepare students for the performance expectations of the high stake testing they will experience starting in the third grade. Due to the introduction of standardized tests in kindergarten, many students are denied the traditional learning opportunities and cognitive development that is crucial to this age group in lieu of preparation for standardized testing. Additionally, Feeney and Freeman (2014) found that the importance placed on standardized testing beginning in kindergarten and primary grades has led to increased stress levels in young children. Related to their findings, Segool, Carlson, Goforth, Von der Embse, and Barterian (2013) found that not only did elementary students self-report increased levels of anxiety related to standardized testing, but their teachers and parents
reported that they observed increased symptoms of student anxiety related to standardized testing.

Along with an early introduction to standardized testing, Kearns (2011) found that students were being labeled by their test performances and that the labels follow students throughout their educational experience, resulting in student placement into specialized classes and programs with the intent of improving student test performance. However, these courses and programs do not necessarily help student test performance and students view them as a punitive consequence of their test scores and may become disheartened and discouraged resulting in disenfranchisement from their educational experiences. Kearns also identified the issue of standardized tests requiring all students to perform at specific levels, regardless of student ability, preparation, or disability. Students identified as at-risk generally perform at lower percentages than other students. Therefore, standardized tests measure performance, not progress (La Ferrara, 2013) and measure all students equally without consideration for English language fluency, learning disabilities, or environmental issues.

In urban schools with high populations of minority and at-risk students, many students felt anxiety related to what they perceived as the punitive nature of the tests (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Ickovics et al. (2013) studied the effect of environmental concerns, such as health factors, on the impact of student test performance in urban school districts and found a direct connection between environmental issues and test performance. The placement of at-risk students into test preparation programs after the end of the school day further impacted student health and stress levels (Thompson & Allen, 2012). These factors have led students to question the quality of
their educational experience thus directly questioning the impact of standardized tests themselves as a measurement of AYP and Every Student Succeeds Act.

This use of data and student test scores is in direct opposition with the way that other nations use student standardized test scores. As Kamenetz (2015) noted, “the most common type of high stakes standardized test, found throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, is the high school exit/college entrance exam” (p. 78). While other nations test the college preparedness of students, testing in the United States labels student learning and compels students whose performance measurements fall below proficient requiring them to take additional courses that purport to prepare them for the next round of standardized tests.

Issues over student test performance have led to many initiatives intended to improve test scores. In efforts to ensure opportunity for success for all students, Evans and Tanner (2011) studied initiatives related to the use of technology to measure achievement and improve student performance while William (2010) researched and advocated for increased accommodations for special education students, stronger alignment between instruction and assessment, a longer instructional year, and other options. Even with initiatives to compensate for low test scores, and revisions to tests and testing policies, standardized tests remain the standard by which students and schools are measured.

Increased standardized testing has also led to fewer opportunities to develop crucial critical thinking skills, cognitive development, and curricular coverage due to the loss of instructional time and days to not only practice test taking skills but to take multiple standardized tests (Nelson, 2013). Therefore, students are learning less about content concepts and
information and more about standardized testing which reflects teacher perspectives related to curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher effectiveness.

**Impact of Standardized Testing on Curriculum and Pedagogy**

The emphasis on standardized testing has had an impact on numerous curricular issues and concerns. Among these curricular issues is the foundational issue of the costs associated with testing and the ways in which these costs take resources from the educational programs of schools and districts. Nelson (2013) found in a mixed methods study of two mid-sized urban school districts; that the average cost of annual testing was between $700 and $1,000 per student per year. The costs are associated with test preparation, the costs of the tests, administrative costs, and other associated incidentals such as payments to proctors (Crowder & Konle, 2015). Not only does the cost of testing siphon monies away from educational instruction and materials, districts often further delineate additional resources towards tested curriculum and away from non-tested curriculum as examined by Maltese and Hochbein (2012). Their study found that although educational reformers emphasize the importance of offering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum to better prepare students for competing in a global economy, these programs are now receiving less funding due to the prioritization of curriculum that is tested for mandated AYP targets. In a related finding, Bhattacharyya, Junot, and Clark (2013) identified that novice teachers believed that directives to teach to the test were diametrically opposed to their original motivations for entering the teaching profession. The participants in this qualitative study were surprised by the de-prioritization of non-tested curriculum. The redirection of funding and prioritization of tested curricula has led to restricted funding of other programs and curriculum.
The diversion of funding has impacted all aspects of educational funding and spending from educational materials to teacher salaries. However, as the funding has been allocated to testing, legislators are creating new government-funded markets for education entrepreneurs as examined by Antush (2014). Private educational corporations are receiving the funds that would otherwise have been directed to schools and districts for programs and curriculum development. As Crowder and Konle (2015) found, educational corporations such as Pearson and ACT are the beneficiaries of the prioritization of standardized tests in that they create the tests as well as curricular programs that failing schools are mandated to buy and follow, demonstrating the direct connection between federal mandates and corporate interests.

An additional cost to curriculum resulting from the prioritization of standardized testing is that of a reduction of instructional time in all curricula. In Nelson’s (2013) study on testing, it was revealed that students in heavily tested grade levels spent between 20 and 50 hours of instructional time taking tests and lost an additional 60 to 110 hours in test preparation activities further impacting course curricular coverage. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) found in their 80-question national survey of National Board Certified Teachers that teachers employed in states with higher accountability consequences spent significantly more time on test preparation than teachers in states with lower stakes attached to testing. Bulgar (2012) conducted qualitative longitudinal research on the impact of testing and test preparation on math teachers and observed the impact and interruption of testing on instructional units and concepts as teachers were given specific dates and testing windows for standardized test preparation, thus disrupting curricular flow and development. The participants in this study demonstrated a lack of confidence in the non-traditional teaching methods they were to use in the classroom. Teachers also had to limit or
completely cut key conceptual ideas and skill development to accommodate the instructional time directed to test preparation and test taking. This study supported an earlier mixed methods study on the narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy by teachers as “the only way to ensure alignment of test scores and school scores is to narrow one’s teaching so that it focuses on the exam” (Slomp, 2008, p. 195).

In their 2007 qualitative study of the impact on curriculum and pedagogy of standardized testing on new teachers in urban schools, Crocco and Costigan found that even though there was an increased emphasis on English language courses, the packaged and prescribed programs which included minute-by-minute scripts for teachers allowed little time for concepts and lessons that teachers deemed important. Beyond that, teachers of non-tested curricula, such as social studies, had little time to cover their content areas as their students were involved in test preparation during their courses and classes. Similarly, Hardy (2014) found in an ethnographic study that teachers who had to implement prescribed curricula and pedagogy experienced “a professional habitus struggling to engage with pedagogical expectations surrounding a heavily prescribed curriculum in the context of complex realities” (p. 213). In a related finding on the narrowing of curriculum, Rooney (2015) noted that increased control of curriculum by policy-makers combined with the narrowing of curriculum resulted in negative beliefs about the work that teachers did as well as about the profession itself.

The federal government has further inserted itself into educational policy making beyond the initial scope of NCLB and ESSA through a related program it has introduced called Reading First. To receive Reading First monies, schools must allocate three hours a day to English and math, thus further impacting the time available for other curriculums (Bhattacharyya et al.,
The incentive of federal funding replicates states’ initial adoption of NCLB and ESSA (La Ferrara, 2013), and further prioritizes tested curricula over non-tested curricula.

The focus on tested curriculum has devalued other curricula according to Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) whose quantitative survey of 161 middle and high school science teachers found teacher concern over the issue that many states do not include science on standardized tests and therefore reduce the focus and spending on science education. Even within a tested curriculum, there is a de-emphasis on concepts that are not covered in the test, although the concepts are essential to a greater understanding of the course and related areas of study (Phelps, 2011). Cho and Eberhard (2013) found that teachers in a Title I school expressed dissatisfaction about changing curriculum solely to meet the demands of high-stake testing rather than to strengthen student learning. Furthermore, in a purposeful sampling of U.S. History teachers, Mueller and Colley (2015) found:

Teacher frustration with high-stakes assessment was often attributed to a perceived disconnect, either between the curricular expectations communicated by the district and the demands of the state test or between state standards and the discrete items on the state test. (p. 97)

While more experienced teachers were better able to adjust their curricula and practice, they disagreed with many conceptual elements of the assessment as “teachers were hesitant to legitimize the use of standardized testing for measuring accountability at the expense of their own beliefs regarding quality education” (Cho & Eberhard, 2013, p. 18).

Related to the de-valuing of non-tested concepts and skills development is the importance of curriculum design that emphasizes cognitive development and processing. Bogard, Liu, and
Chiang (2012) found that when teachers incorporated multiple knowledge interactions and infrastructures into curriculum design and instruction, students could better master the analytical operations needed to work through complex problems and surpass knowledge thresholds and achieve transformational concepts. However, if teachers are unable to provide the foundational structure and cognitive development stages for the multi-layered process, students will not make the advances. With restrictions on instructional time and redirection of curricular prioritizations, teachers are often unable to help students develop cognitive processes. These findings were further supported by Grant, Stronge, and Xu (2013) in their study of effective curricular and instructional strategies that help move students through varying cognitive levels. The best practices scaffold essential concepts and skills. The teachers involved in the study emphasized the role of the curriculum planning of their courses and lessons as key to student learning.

The introduction of district curriculum guides and pacing guides limit teachers to teaching specified skills and content that are integrated into standardized tests without regard for curriculum completion or student understanding of non-tested curriculum (Antush, 2014). Additionally, Stauffer and Mason (2013) found that teachers resented the numerous curricular changes required by their districts. One teacher stated that “‘county changes the curriculum way too often [and] they need to leave it alone for enough time to see a difference,’ which directly links the curriculum changes with student achievement” (p. 821). Not only are many teachers required to adopt prescribed curriculum, they are also directed to focus on key concepts and skills thus limited their opportunities to make curricular choices that directly support student learning (Mueller & Colley, 2015). Teachers of tested as well as non-tested curricula have been
directed to integrate test preparation and practice into their courses in lieu of essential concept and skill development, impacting teachers as well as students.

Beyond curricular changes and adaptations resulting from the reliance on standardized testing to measure student performance, Mueller and Colley (2015) found that teachers also had to adapt their pedagogical practices to provide instruction that prepared students for standardized tests. Although teachers in Kentucky supported the concept of standardized tests as a form of accountability, they questioned the accountability which resulted from the focus in the tests which were written by American College Testing (ACT). Mueller and Colley (2015) also found:

Teachers felt an obligation to help students succeed in this high-stakes environment, not just because of their professional reputation but also because of a broader responsibility to their students, thereby becoming very conscious of the EOC’s influence on their practice. (p. 102)

Change in pedagogy is often a result of the focus on high-stakes testing, but teachers may be confused about the reasoning behind the changes and if pedagogical change will have a positive impact on students and their test scores. Mausethagen (2013) studied the phenomenon of primary school teachers experiencing the introduction of standardized testing and identified that there have been limitations to previous studies on the impact of standardized testing on pedagogy in that “there is a need for empirical studies that explore testing within various contexts to enhance knowledge about the implications for teaching” (p. 132).

Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) found that science teachers had to adapt their pedagogical practices to accommodate test preparation practice and test taking. The concern of these teachers is that the foci of standardized tests does not reflect the expectations of science
curriculum. “The findings also reveal that standardized testing has a significant influence on science teachers’ instructional and assessment practices in ways that are counter to the learning goals promoted by the science education reform documents” (p. 234). The curriculum and pedagogy integrated into classrooms does not necessarily support the educational mission and objectives of curricula experts.

An additional concern over pedagogical change is that of teachers having to adapt new practices in order to comply with directives. Bulgar (2012) found:

Many teachers and school administrators with a dilemma regarding the effectiveness of their newly acquired teaching methods; they are challenged by the fear that students will not demonstrate their knowledge when tested as well as if they used more traditional means of test preparation. (p. 41)

Legislative and district mandates on curriculum and pedagogy do not take into account teaching practices that have been effective, rather they mandate change that all teachers must follow. Not only do teachers question the effectiveness of pedagogical change, they are afraid of the risks involved in changing their practices if students do not demonstrate measured growth after teachers have implemented pedagogical change (Le Fevre, 2014).

Kowk (2014) found that teachers with more experience with curriculum and pedagogy were less concerned about curricular and pedagogical innovations as they had confidence in their abilities to work within new frameworks. In a similar vein, Hora (2012) found that teachers who believed that curricular and pedagogical changes were based on supporting complex cognitive processes were more likely to adapt and benefit from pedagogical change. This support for research pedagogical change was further examined by Bogard et al. (2012) in their study related
to the adoption of multiple knowledge interactions and infrastructures by teachers to move students towards mastery of the analytical operations needed to work through complex problems. The pedagogical impact of standardized testing has led to both resistance and support by teachers based upon their experience and ability to understand the role of pedagogical practices in student cognitive development. Novice teachers often prefer curriculum guides and narrowed curriculum due to their inexperience and lack of content knowledge (Mueller & Colley, 2015; Winkler, 2002). While many teachers fear negative consequences of mandated curricular and pedagogical changes, others support it if it is research based and will help their students meet their learning objectives and improve their performances as measured by standardized tests (Mueller & Colley, 2015). The prescribed curricular and pedagogical guidelines issued by districts have restricted the decision-making ability of teachers. Sass, Flores, Claeys, and Pérez (2012) found that increased standards expectations as well as consequences of standardized testing, along with increased accountability and focus on test-taking skills over other curricula also had a negative impact on teacher retention. The identified concerns about curricular adaptation and limitations have led teachers to voice other concerns related to standardized testing beyond the impact on curriculum and pedagogy as a growing number of states are incorporating student test scores into the teacher evaluation process.

**Impact of Standardized Testing on Teacher Evaluations**

In attempting to improve students’ test performances as measured by standardized tests, many states have incorporated student test scores into the teacher evaluation process (Hull, 2013). Adcox (2014) reported that the South Carolina teacher evaluation process would incorporate student test scores for 30% of the total evaluation for a teacher of tested curriculum.
However, that same 30% of an evaluation for teachers of non-tested curriculum would be at each district’s discretion with acceptable exchanges of portfolios, additional observations, etc., thus setting up two evaluation systems, one of which may be interpreted as punitive towards teachers of tested curriculum. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) found in their mixed research design study centered on five school districts, evaluating teachers by pre-set standardized test performance measures ignored vital data such as year-to-year and grade-to-grade performance changes for teachers based on the demographic and learning characteristics of students. A constant change in student learning and demographics was not reflected by stagnant performance measures. “Value-added models of teacher effectiveness are highly unstable: teachers’ ratings differ substantially from class to class and from year to year, as well as from one test to the next. . . teachers are advantaged or disadvantaged based on the students they teach” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011, p. 634). Winters and Cowen (2013) also found that value-added teacher retention policies were not necessarily effective strategies for dismissing ineffective teachers while retaining effective teachers due to the differing policies and standards about dismissal as well as the potential numbers of teachers who would be dismissed.

Mausethagen (2013) found that teachers expressed great concern over student test results becoming public knowledge and used in evaluations. These tests “are examples of a concrete and mandated accountability policy that intervenes directly into relations between teachers and students, subjects, and principals” (Mausethagen, 2013, p. 140). Part of the concern evidenced by teachers regarding the inclusion of test results into the evaluation process is that “there is no way they could isolate the impact of teaching itself from other factors affecting children’s learning, particularly such things as the family background of the students, the impact of poverty,
racial segregation, even class size” (Porter, 2015, para. 16). Connected to teacher concern about environmental and learning issues surround their students is a case study Leone and Whitson (2013) that found that a student felt an increased sense of responsibility for the impact of his test performances on his teachers’ evaluations. Legislators and bureaucrats do not account for the influence of family and environment as affecting test scores (Tienken, 2014). Related to these findings, Croft, Roberts, and Stenhouse (2016) cited the high poverty levels in Georgia as cause of concern by teachers related to the inclusion of test scores in the evaluation process. The role of test scores in teacher accountability and evaluation sets apart those teachers of tested-curricula from teachers of non-tested curricula as well as administrators and policy makers.

Due to the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process, many teachers have abandoned the coverage of non-tested items and have followed curriculum scripts and guidelines in the hopes of keeping their positions. Antush (2014) examined the phenomenon of the ignoring of essential concepts in lieu of tested items and wrote that “driven by fear of a drop in student test scores which will have a major impact on their evaluation rating, teachers are likely to conform to the suggested curricula” (p. 35). Although teachers tried to help students improve their test taking skills and their test performances, there was a questionable motivation behind the desire to improve student test scores as Bhattacharyya et al. (2013) found that some teachers were more concerned for their own ongoing employment rather than improved student learning. This finding was further supported by Ohemeng and McCall-Thomas (2013) and their discovery that many teachers changed their professional practices and behaviors because of high-stakes testing and the accountability standards for teachers of tested curricula. In their study of Ontario schools and the introduction of Performance Management (PM), they defined and
analyzed the system “as the development and incorporation of performance measurement into an organization’s management and policy systems, and the subsequent use of the information generated for decision making by managers and the politicians to whom they are accountable” (p. 457). Policy makers, most of whom do not have a professional educational background, are determining the standards by which educators are evaluated.

Domaleski (2011) identified the philosophy of the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process “given the ability to associate test scores with a particular teacher over a term of instruction” (p. 11). However, when states put this concept into practice it does not allow a full examination of student progress, only one look at one time on one particular test which does not follow Domaleski’s observation that “any use of test data to inform teacher effectiveness should control for prior performance. Therefore, the assessment system must produce a measure that reflects the progress or growth of the student during the period of time the teacher provided instruction” (p. 11). The full expectation that all students achieve at the same level(s) and the corresponding expectation that all teachers of tested curricula can facilitate this performance are reflected in the practice “to penalize teachers and schools for children failing to perform” (Kamenetz, 2015, p. 84).

Teachers of tested curricula are being held accountable for student test performance in a growing number of state teacher evaluation systems (Marchant et al., 2015). Therefore, there has been evidence of some teachers participating in unprofessional behaviors due to the fear of losing their positions. Strauss (2015) examined the growing number of cheating scandals that have emerged as a consequence of high-stakes testing and teacher evaluations. These scandals have involved both classroom teachers as well as administrators who are also evaluated against
their schools’ test scores. In Atlanta alone, 35 educators and the superintendent were caught changing student test answers (Vogt, 2013). Ohemeng and McCall-Thomas (2013) explained the rise in unprofessional behaviors through their observation that “performance management, with its perennial theme of target achievement and reporting, tends to encourage undesired organizational behaviors. The likely causes of these behaviors are the incentives and pressures that employees and managers encounter when attempting to achieve set targets” (p. 458). In their 2015 study, Ballou and Springer found that many teachers participated in opportunistic behavior by modifying student test rosters as well as answer sheets. Croft et al. (2016) identified the teacher evaluation process as mesoscale evaluation system in that the evaluation efforts are meant to serve as mechanisms of accountability for educations and educator preparation” (p. 73), creating a system in which even pre-service teachers are having to meet a semblance of testing accountability. While the accountability for student performance as measured by high-stakes testing has been incorporated into the teacher evaluation process by many states and has, in some cases, led to unprofessional behaviors, other teachers have reconsidered staying in the profession because of the pressures associated with high-stakes testing that coincide with reduced opportunities for professional decision making and classroom effectiveness.

**Impact of Standardized Testing on Teacher Retention**

Not only do many teachers of tested curricula face evaluation processes that incorporate student test scores into teacher evaluations, many teachers face the dilemma of determining whether or not to stay in the profession because of high-stakes testing. The South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) (2015) found that 12% of the state’s teachers left the profession in 2014. This continued the trend of teachers leaving
the profession in South Carolina which represented a loss of 50% of the teachers who taught five years previously. Retirement reflected a minimal loss of teachers while less experienced teachers left the profession in far larger numbers than any other demographic group. Hughes (2012) found that “turnover, migrating to another school or leaving the teaching profession, is greater among teachers than other professions, and the staffing problems of public schools cannot be explained only by teacher retirement and increased student enrollment” (p. 245). Due to the attrition rate of teachers in South Carolina, CERRA (2015) found that many districts are facing a teacher shortage for the foreseeable future. This scenario was supported by a descriptive, longitudinal quantitative study of 600 elementary teachers by Pas, Bradshaw, and Hershfeldt (2012) in which they found a statistically significant connection between increased levels of burnout and increased teacher attrition.

Although there are many factors involved in a teacher’s decision to leave the profession, Farber (2015) found that many teachers who leave the profession cite the prioritization of standardized tests and the associated test taking culture that has emerged. Teachers who perceive that they are not directly supporting student learning is another factor that leads to increased teacher attrition (Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011). Beginning teachers often face disillusionment as their expectations for being agents for positive change fade after they enter the reality of the school setting (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Stauffer and Mason (2013) found that the nature and expectations of teaching have changed due to increased high-stakes testing and have led to many teachers leaving the profession as they did not seek to become educators in order to oversee test preparation in lieu of curricula and essential skill development. Gallant and Riley
(2014) found similar attitudinal criticisms in their study on early-career attrition and included this statement from one of the study’s participants:

> Education is a production line. There is no time for critical thinking in the classroom and there is certainly no time for genuine exploration and play . . . I was told by the Deputy Principal not to waste time on philosophical questions that children cannot afford to think about [while preparing for literacy and numeracy tests] . . . I’d happily undertake the challenging workload if I thought I was doing something worthwhile. (p. 572)

This change in expected outcomes and increased mandates from the federal, as well as state, government were determined to have influenced the attrition of teachers from the profession in a mixed research design study conducted by Thibodeaux et al. (2015). They wrote:

> Research suggests that at a time when teachers must carefully examine and master the roles and responsibilities of their profession to meet the needs of students as well as the demands of administrators and policy makers, strains experienced by teachers are resulting in teacher turnover . . . these strains may be a result of high-stakes testing and stressors that are associated with test preparation, procedures, and accountability. (p. 228)

Furthermore, Thibodeaux et al. (2015) found that “teachers felt that policy makers made decisions that affected educators, and it bothered teachers that so many mandates had been placed on them” (p. 247). Their findings also identified key differences in retention between teachers of tested curriculum as opposed to teachers of non-tested curriculum. Rather than high-stakes testing being a determination of educational professionals to measure student performance, policy makers have mandated that not only are students to be measured through
these processes, but teachers as well; causing many teachers to leave the profession as they are limited in the professional decisions and actions that they are able to make.

Researchers have identified many factors that influence a teacher’s decision to remain in the profession, including variables related to job satisfaction and workload related to educational priorities and policies as experienced by newer teachers (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Many early career teachers do not think that they will be able to sustain the components and expectations of teaching over the length of time required for a long-term career in education (Clandinin et al., 2015). In a quantitative study incorporating the Boston College Teacher Education Survey, Ávalos and Valenzuela (2016) found that early career teachers who left the profession identified the “scarcity of time for lesson preparation, pupil assessment and feedback is particularly stressful” (p. 286) as factors solidifying their decisions to leave teaching. In addition to other aspects and expectations for teachers, many of those who leave the profession cite low salary schedules related to the responsibilities and demands placed upon them (Stinebrickner, 1998).

Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, and Hoffman (2012) found in their quantitative study of 1,214 Dutch teachers that there were many factors that led to changes in teacher’s perception of their effectiveness and identity as an educator. However, factors that influenced teachers’ sense of self-efficacy influenced decisions to remain in the profession due to its effect on job satisfaction. Von der Embse, Sandilos, Pendergast, and Mankin (2016) found that test-based accountability led to reduced levels of job satisfaction and efficacy while Aldridge and Fraser (2016) found a direct correlation between teachers’ job satisfaction and teacher retention. In a study focusing on the retention rates of beginning teachers who were
highly recruited into their positions, Kelly and Northrop (2015) found that the lack of autonomy and “the difficulties of teaching, outweigh the benefits for newly recruited teachers, resulting in reduced efficacy, commitment, dissatisfaction, and, ultimately, low levels of career persistence” (p. 631). Therefore, with changing demands and expectations placed on teachers due to the prioritization of standardized tests and other educational policies, more teachers may have reconsidered the future of their careers in education.

**Standardized Testing and Teacher Autonomy**

The increasing demands, expectations, and mandates placed upon teachers due to high-stakes testing have effectively changed the role of the teacher within the classroom. Even before the passage of NCLB and ESSA, teachers in high-control school districts struggled with what they perceived to be a lack of autonomy within the classroom (Archbald & Porter, 1994) and that the lack of autonomy was a key predictor for teachers who left the profession (Pearson, 1998). However, with the passage of legislation mandating that student performance be measured through standardized testing, one of the ways in which the role of the teacher has evolved is that there is an increase in the educational decision-making related to curriculum, pedagogy, and instructional priorities that were being made at the state and district levels. Prichard and Moore (2016) found that districts and schools vary in the amount of autonomy that they allow teachers to have in terms of making educational decisions in support of student learning. They observed that “organizations often struggle to find an appropriate balance between top-down administrative control and individual autonomy, and in education the tension between standardization and teacher autonomy has intensified over the past two decades” (p. 58).
One of the key issues with increased accountability combined with decreased autonomy is that “teacher autonomy is strongly related to feelings of professionalism, and it is a key factor in influencing teachers to stay in education” (Prichard & Moore, 2016, p. 60). Rahimi and Riasati (2015) also found in a quantitative correlation study that there was a statistically significant relationship between autonomy and self-efficacy and that teachers desired at least some professional autonomy and explained that “teachers’ autonomy refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach students and how they teach it” (p. 618). In a mixed methods study of 298 participants conducted by Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) the results showed that teachers experienced lower degrees of autonomy than those in other professions and that there is an increase in the number of disengaged and demotivated teachers. Parker (2015) clearly connected teacher autonomy with motivation and noted “it is somewhat paradoxical that Government initiatives, designed to raise standards, in reality make teaching less effective, as the related burden of bureaucratic tasks reduce time spent on more valuable activities” (p. 25). However, Parker (2015) also noted that oftentimes newer teachers appreciate the guidelines that have resulted from the prioritization of standardized testing as they do not necessarily have the content knowledge or experience that allow them to effectively practice classroom autonomy.

Wermke and Hostfalt (2014) found that teacher autonomy was essential to student learning. The context of teaching implied the necessity of making educational decisions that reflected student learning needs in additional to social and cultural considerations. The ability to practice autonomy was an elemental feature of effective instruction as “to some extent, autonomy is an essential element of teachers’ work as, by its very nature, judgement calls are
made in uncertain situations and specific contexts must be accounted for within such decision making” (Parker, 2015, p. 21).

Not only did a lack of autonomy limit teachers’ decision-making capability, it often led to changes in professional behavior to the degree that some teachers began to act in unprofessional ways. Policy makers and school districts were viewing and treating teachers as non-professionals in that all teachers of tested curricula were expected to follow predetermined guidelines without their input. Cho and Eberhard (2013) found when teachers are mandated to follow prescribed curricula and pedagogy “rigidly prescribing what teachers do and when minimizes the autonomy of teachers and thus negatively affects teacher professionalism” (p. 3). In a quantitative correlational study with significant limitations, Hughes (2012) found 83% of the study’s 789 participants planned on staying in education, which was in opposition to the actual percentages of teachers who leave the profession before retirement. However, of those who responded to the survey, Hughes (2012) found “teachers want to work in schools where they have greater autonomy” (p. 247). Teachers with greater senses of autonomy were more likely to be engaged in their profession and position as well as perceive themselves to have high levels of self-efficacy according to the results of a quantitative study of 2,569 Norwegian teachers conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014). However, the institution of mandated guidelines negated the educational background, autonomy, and professionalism of the profession. Teachers, who at a minimum must possess an undergraduate degree and oftentimes had earned graduate degrees, had limited opportunities to practice their profession due to the high-stakes nature of standardized tests and related policies and mandates.
Standardized Testing and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1994) directly connected one’s sense of self-efficacy with one’s ability to effectively achieve one’s objectives. In education, teachers’ abilities to support student learning are often a direct result of their beliefs in their capabilities to support student learning as stated by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010), “high expectations create a normative press that encourage all teachers to do what it takes to excel and discourage them from giving up when faced with difficult situations” (p. 1060). Their quantitative study of 2,249 participants found that external controls had a direct impact on teacher self-efficacy. A key aspect of teachers accomplishing their objectives is the sense of teacher empowerment that includes the ability to make decisions to effectively meet objectives (Jiafang et al., 2015). Jiafang et al. (2015) also found that teachers need to believe that they are competent and therefore able to meet these objectives. The imposition of mandated curriculum and pedagogy directly contradict these findings about teacher sense of competence and effectiveness (Baumert et al., 2010). Additionally, as Pas et al. (2012) found, “with approximately half of all teachers leaving the field within their first five years, there is a great need for research on factors commonly associated with teachers’ job satisfaction and retention, such as teacher efficacy and burnout” (p. 129). The findings of a study conducted by Kelly and Northrop (2015) further supported this perspective.

Crocco and Costigan (2007) found that the narrowing of curriculum and reduced opportunities for teachers to make educational decisions led to a “negative effect on beginning teachers’ perceptions about their opportunities for developing a satisfying teaching practice” (p. 514). Klassen and Chiu (2010) found in their quantitative study of 1,430 practicing teachers that a lack of job satisfaction directly impacted a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran
and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) developed their own research instrument to have a more reliable instrument to understand the ways in which efficacy beliefs impacted teacher effectiveness and found high correlations between efficacy and instruction, engagement, and management. Although there were many influences on teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy, limitations to their practice had a significant impact on their perceptions (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Additionally, Crocco and Costigan (2007) found that teachers resent the changing status of teaching itself in that “teaching is low-status work, especially for talented people” (p. 521) which directly affected how teachers viewed their professionalism and effectiveness. How teachers viewed their professionalism and ability to be effective had an impact on their practice as Cerit (2013) found in a study that illuminated a direct connection between teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and their willingness to make curricular changes in response to standardized testing.

As Wood and Bandura (1989) stated, “perceived self-efficacy concerns people’s beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives” (p. 364). Such an event in the lives of teachers is seeing themselves as responsible for student success as well as student failure (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) which becomes a seemingly impossible responsibility and task when teachers perceive that they have low levels of self-efficacy. Sousa and Guillamon-Saorin (2012) connected levels of self-efficacy with effectiveness in their statement that “Bandura’s theory posits that people with high self-efficacy, those who believe they can perform well, are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided” (p. 160). Those with a strong sense of self-efficacy were able to demonstrate high levels of achievement and performance (Mojoudi & Tabatabaei, 2014) as well as effective coping
strategies for dealing with work-related stress (Reilly, Dhingra, & Boduszek, 2014). However, site administrators and district leaders were not providing opportunities for teachers to develop master experiences which are a key element to building teacher self-efficacy (Angelle & Teague, 2014). Rather, teachers were mandated to follow prescribed curriculum and were then evaluated against student test scores, causing some teachers to sense that they were not competent to make learning decisions and to help students succeed in meeting their learning objectives (Jiafang et al., 2015).

Further complicating teacher sense of efficacy and responsibility for student learning is the incorporation of standardized test scores into student grades (Domaleski, 2011). As this study is centered on the phenomenon of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, it is essential to note that students’ test scores comprised 20% of their yearly grades (Domaleski, 2011, p. 5). Not only are teachers in South Carolina, as well as other states, limited in their curricular and pedagogical decision making and evaluated against student test performance, their students are directly impacted by a standardized test for which teachers do not have input, nor have they even been able to view the construction of the questions and responses as South Carolina has never released test questions (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). This puts an extra burden on teachers of tested curriculum, especially when those tests comprise a percentage of each student’s course grade, as teachers believe that they have a responsibility to help their students succeed and, therefore, become very conscious of the impact of the EOCE on their practices (Mueller & Colley, 2015).

In their 2014 study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik found that both teacher autonomy and teacher self-efficacy were associated with levels of job satisfaction and sense of effectiveness. In their
meta-analysis on self-efficacy and work-related performance, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) concluded that self-efficacy “was found to be positively and strongly related to work-related performance” (p. 255) and that self-efficacy “is a significant predictor of performance for each level of task complexity” (p. 249). The connection between self-efficacy and complex task performance was also identified as a connection between self-efficacy and a teacher’s ability to think critically in response to issues that arise (Zangenehvandi, Farahian, & Gholami, 2014). In a related quantitative study focusing on teacher efficacy, Bordelon et al. (2012) found that:

Efficacious teachers have (1) confidence in their teaching strategies, (2) expect success from themselves and their students, (3) are innovative in their pedagogical practices, (4) report being more satisfied with their job, (5) manage their classrooms with purpose and control, and (6) invite students to participate in democratic decision making. (p. 15)

Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy realized this through their effective performances in the classroom related to student learning.

Job satisfaction for teachers “refers to the relationships between teachers and their teaching” (Gkolia, Belias, & Koustelios, 2014, p. 324). Akomolafe and Ogunmakin (2014) found that levels of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy, along with their emotional intelligence, served as predictors of job satisfaction. Because of this relationship, “teachers’ high self-efficacy is related with their high confidence in their ability to confront different new issues that arise, as well as their ability to deal with the consequences that may be created in the classroom” (p. 325). Gur, Çakiroğlu, and Aydin (2012) conducted a quantitative correlational study of 383 teachers to understand the effect of varying dependent variables such as gender, years or experience, various forms of support, and years of experience had on teacher self-efficacy.
They found that teachers who were satisfied with their ability to meet the demands of the classroom in support of student learning as a result of mastery experiences had the greatest impact on their perceptions of their levels of self-efficacy (Gur et al., 2012). This finding demonstrated the contrast with teachers who see themselves as having low efficacy and therefore believed that they were unable to have a positive impact on students (Rooney, 2015). Furthermore, “teachers must be able to act in ways that align with their values in order to reap the intrinsic rewards that attract them to the profession” (Rooney, 2015, p. 488).

Implementation of district curriculum and pedagogical guides limit teachers’ ability to make decisions related to student learning objectives, and instead follow prescribed dictates which represent a lack of confidence by educational policy makers in teacher effectiveness and competence. The undermining of teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy may lead to underperformance by both teachers and students as beliefs and behaviors may interact and result in reciprocal determination as found in a quantitative study conducted by Ruan et al. (2015).

Summary

The relevant research referenced in Chapter Two provided evidence of issues and perceptions related to teacher autonomy and self-efficacy. Research has been conducted on the impact of standardized testing on curriculum and pedagogy indicating that curriculum and practice are being adjusted to improve student performance as measured by various standardized tests. Because of the prioritization of standardized tests and its surrounding culture, non-tested curriculum has been de-emphasized in favor of allocating resources to tested curricula. Also,
teachers are held directly responsible for student performance through the evaluation process which may impact both teacher job satisfaction and retention. Many teachers felt that they no longer can deliver instruction that supports student learning objectives as they had to focus on prescribed curriculum as mandated by state and district educational policy makers.

Although there have been numerous studies conducted on teacher self-efficacy, most of the studies have been quantitative in nature and have used measurements such as the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) which, while useful, did not allow teachers to identify factors that affect their sense of efficacy beyond those included in the survey. Beyond the limitations of quantitative research in understanding factors that impact teacher sense of self-efficacy, there was a gap in the research on the impact of course-specific standardized tests on teacher autonomy and the resultant impact on teacher sense of self-efficacy. It was essential to understand teachers’ perceptions of standardized tests on their practice and their effectiveness to understand how standardized tests have changed educational practices and systems of which teachers were crucial stakeholders. The qualitative design of this study provided insight into how teachers perceived and lived the experience of teaching a course which has an EOCE at the end of the year measuring both student performance and teacher effectiveness. This research study provided an understanding of the impact of standardized tests on teachers as well as contributed to the field of knowledge related to this issue while closing some gaps in the current literature.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter presents information about the methodology of the research study on the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. The first section of this chapter describes the design, setting, and participants of the study. Following this information is an explanation of the procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection, and data analysis. The final section of this chapter examines the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical considerations that were applied to the research.

Design

The research study of teacher perceptions of the impact of course-specific standardized testing on their autonomy and self-efficacy followed a transcendental phenomenological qualitative inquiry and design. According to Moustakas (1994) the aim of phenomenological research is “to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived” (p. 13). Framing the findings within a social constructivist framework, “the final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the research, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). The study focused on the phenomenon of the mandated course-specific South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy as experienced by U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina.
I selected a phenomenological design for this study to understand the perspectives of those who shared the lived experience of this phenomenon. According to Moustakas (1994), the “phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). Creswell (2013) stated “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76), thus demonstrating the appropriateness of the phenomenological approach for this study. The participants were asked to explain how they perceived the impact of the EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy. The participants had differing perspectives about the course, the EOCE, and the impact on their practices and expectations which were categorized and coded into relevant themes (Moustakas, 1994).

A transcendental phenomenological design was chosen for this study as this design allowed me, as the human instrument, to separate myself from my experiences related to the phenomenon to focus on the essence of the experiences of the study’s participants related to the phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified the role and importance of the human instrument in research as “it would be virtually impossible to devise a priori a nonhuman instrument with sufficient adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered” (p. 39). I bracketed out my own experiences related to high-stakes testing in order to bracket in the experiences of the participants “to be completely open, receptive, and naive in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). Additionally, a transcendental phenomenological design incorporated an intentional act of perception related to a phenomenon
rather than the investigation of the interrelationship of “science, art, and history which is at the heart of hermeneutic design and methodology” (p. 9).

While a hermeneutic phenomenological design leads to “an analysis and astute interpretation of the underlying conditions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 10) through an investigation of several factors that are integral to a hermeneutic design, a transcendental phenomenological design “emphasizes subjectivity and discovery of the essences of experience” (p. 45). As the purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of U.S. History teachers related to the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, a transcendental phenomenological design best suited my objective to understand the essence of the experience for the study’s participants.

Research Questions

Central Question

CQ: How does the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE impact U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy in the Midlands region of South Carolina?

Subquestions

SQ1: How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy?

SQ2: How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their sense of self-efficacy?

SQ3: How do the perceptions and experiences U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina related to the U.S. History EOCE impact their practice?
SQ4: How do the experiences and perceived impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy influence teachers’ views of remaining in the profession by U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina?

Setting

The setting of the research study included three high schools in one school district within the geographic region of the Midlands of South Carolina. The schools and district that were the foci of this study represented the overall demographics of the state of South Carolina as well as a convenience sampling for the researcher as they were located within a manageable area for me to gather data and conduct interviews. The school district involved in this study mandated curriculum and pacing guides for tested curricula. Oversight for the implementation of these policies and mandates was provided by the district coordinator for social studies and site administrators. Mountain School District (a pseudonym) practiced micromanagement of curricula and teachers as evidenced by the myriad of meetings and responsibilities that teachers attended that extended beyond curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The district also used student test scores throughout the evaluative process without a comprehensive look at language acquisition issues, student learning disabilities and objectives, or equity in teaching assignments.

U.S. History teachers at all four of the high schools in the district received recruitment packets. However, the study’s participants came from three of the high schools as none of the U.S. History teachers at the fourth high school were interested in volunteering to participate in this study. The three high schools used for research were comprehensive 9-12 schools. Two of the high schools had student populations of approximately 1300 students. Approximately 90%
of the students at Ocean High School (a pseudonym) were European-American and the remaining 10% of the students were minorities, primarily African-Americans (C. Crosby, personal communication, January 20, 2015). River High School (a pseudonym) had a student population that was comprised of 64.7% European-Americans, 29.3% African-Americans, and 3% others (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Skyward High School (a pseudonym) had a student population of about 560 students, 17% of whom were African-American, 81% were European-American, and 2% were Hispanic (U.S. News and World Report, 2016). Ocean High School was in a fringe rural setting while River High School and Skyward High School were located in suburban settings.

Socioeconomic differences among the schools were exemplified by the percentages of students who received free or reduced lunches. At Skyward High School, 15% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Contrasting with that status was Ocean High School at which 20% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. All three schools had reputations as schools with strong academic programs and extracurricular programs.

The teachers from the schools and district that we were the setting for this research study comprised a criterion convenience sampling. The participants of the study all met the criterion of teaching various levels of U.S. History and thus had experienced the phenomenon of the U.S. History EOCE. Creswell (2013) explained that “criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155). A convenience sampling was represented through the choice of schools and district that served as the sites for this study. They were located near to where I lived and worked for ease of interacting with participants as well as ease of the collection of relevant documents. Although
convenience sampling was used for ease of collecting data, there were some drawbacks to convenience sampling which were reflected in Creswell’s (2013) observation that convenience sampling “saves time, money and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility” (p. 158). However, the schools also represented diversity through their student populations as evidenced through the varied student racial and ethnic demographics as well as socioeconomic diversity. Therefore, the study’s participants had experience teaching diverse and disparate student populations.

The selection of the participants themselves represented a purposeful criterion sampling of individuals who experienced the phenomenon of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Flexibility in terms of scheduling and conducting interviews, both individual and focus group, was increased due to the locations of the schools and the participants.

Participants

There were 20 U.S. History teachers employed at the four high schools that were the foci of this study, all of whom were invited to participate in the study through recruitment packets which included a recruitment letter, an informed consent document, a professional profile survey, and a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return of the materials to me. From the 20 potential participants, I hoped to recruit 10 to 15 to participate in this research study. Creswell (2013) explained that it was essential that “the exploration of this phenomenon with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Thus, a heterogeneous group is identified that may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15” (p. 78). Of the 20 teachers who received recruitment packets, 12 participated in this study through individual interviews for
a 60% participation rate. Of these 12 participants, five volunteered to participate in the focus group interview for a 42% participation rate from the original pool of participants. All participants had taught U.S. History for at least one year in the Midlands region of South Carolina since the implementation of the U.S. History EOCE to ensure that they had experienced the phenomenon of the EOCE. Participants also had experience teaching non-tested curricula to ensure that they had experienced the impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their practice and autonomy. Participant selection followed Creswell’s (2013) three considerations of purposive criterion sampling which included whom to select, the specific type of strategy, and the size of the sampling. The participants represented a convenience sampling in that they all worked near to where I lived and worked for ease of data collection and conducting interviews.

The ages of the study’s participants ranged from 30 to 59. The average age of the participants was 45.6 years. Experience teaching U.S. History ranged from one year to 33 years with an average of 13.7 years of experience teaching U.S. History. In terms of how long participants had been educators, the years of experience ranged from seven years to 35 years; the average years of experience of teaching was 19.75. I attempted to incorporate gender balance in the study; there were seven females involved in the study representing 58% of the participants, with five males for 42% of the participants. Eight of the participants earned undergraduate degrees in history for a 67% rate while three participants majored in social science for a 25% rate. The remaining participant majored in criminal justice. Ten of the study’s participants had earned Master’s degrees for an 83% rate; two had an educational degree of Bachelor’s plus 18. Additionally, five of the participants were National Board certified for a 42% rate. All the participants had experience teaching CP U.S. History and 11 of the participants had taught
additional levels of U.S. History such as AP, HN, and IB. In examining the ages, years of experience teaching U.S. History, and levels of education and certification represented in this pool, in general the study’s participants were well educated, had sought post-graduate degrees, and had multiple years of educational experience. The participants represented a purposeful sample as they all taught in a district that provided pacing and curriculum guides, were teaching in South Carolina, and had experienced the phenomenon of the U.S. History EOCE. Therefore, “they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156).

**Procedures**

The first step after my dissertation committee approved my proposed research study was to apply for approval from Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Prior to receiving the IRB’s final approval and stamped consent document (see Appendix A for IRB approval), but after receiving the IRB’s conditional approval, I sent my letter requesting permission to conduct research to two school districts in the Midlands region of South Carolina. One district declined participation while the other, Mountain School District (a pseudonym) approved my research (see Appendix B for the letter of request to conduct research). Once I received permission from the school district on official letterhead, I sought written permission from site administrators.

Once I received IRB, district, and site approvals I sent an informational recruitment packet to all U.S. History teachers at the four high schools in the district. The packet contained a recruitment letter (Appendix B), a consent form, a professional profile survey, and a self-
addressed stamped envelope for the return of the consent form and professional profile survey (see Appendix C for participant consent/assent form). Once I received the participants’ consent forms I began to schedule the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview. Prior to the interview process, I conducted the pilot testing of the interview questions. The participants in the piloting process included content and research experts. Included in this group was the former social studies coordinator for the district at the center of this study who had also helped draft the state support document. Another participant in the piloting process was a research expert with an earned Ph.D. in teaching and instruction.

Each interview was digitally recorded on two separate devices after which they were transcribed verbatim for coding purposes within 24 – 48 hours (see Appendix D for a transcript from an individual interview; see Appendix E for the transcript of the focus group interview). All individual interview participants were invited to attend the focus group interview. I also began to collect relevant and appropriate documentation. The documentation included information related to the South Carolina teacher evaluation process, district pacing guide, state support document, and data team guidelines (see Appendix F for the relevant section for the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process; see Appendix G for the district pacing guide; see Appendix H for a selection from the state support document; see Appendix I for data team guidelines).

All data was analyzed according to the appropriate handling of each type of data. Open coding was used for the interview transcripts. I identified themes and categories based on participants’ responses and comments during the interviews. Following this step, I developed textural and structural descriptions of the data. The focus was on what the participants
experienced as well as how they experienced it, emphasizing the essence of the phenomenon as related by the participants. Participants’ perceptions of the impact of the South Carolina EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy was the essential foundational phenomenon of this study. It was crucial that, as the human instrument of this study, I accurately interpreted the interviews and documents to gain an understanding of the participants’ experiences with the phenomenon.

**The Researcher’s Role**

My role in this research was that of the human instrument as “only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). My relationship to the phenomenon being researched was that my entire career has centered on being an educator. I primarily served as a teacher of various courses and levels of courses, including AP, CP, sheltered, and bilingual courses. However, I also served as an activities director at two different high schools, a career center specialist, and a high school assistant principal overseeing guidance and instruction. Beyond those official and contracted positions, I was a mentor teacher, curriculum specialist, AP coordinator, department chairperson, and consulting teacher. My work as a Reader and Table Leader for the national readings for the AP European History, AP U.S. History, and AP U.S. Government and Politics exams allowed me the opportunity to collaborate with high school and college instructors from across the country. In addition to state issued teaching and administrative certificates, I was National Board certified in Social Studies. Due to the length and diversity of my career as an educator, I experienced many reform movements and programs which allowed me the opportunity to analyze and interpret my own experiences of these educational reform efforts and movements.
Although I had personal experience with the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE as well as with other high-stakes standardized tests, it was important that I, as the human instrument, conducted myself with integrity throughout the research study to avoid allowing any biases that I had affect my interpretation of data or leading of responses during the interviews. The credibility and trustworthiness of this study were dependent upon both my professionalism as the human instrument of the research study and my competence as a researcher.

Through my lived experiences I formulated opinions about the ways in which high-stakes standardized testing was used: both in measuring student performance and in the emerging practice of holding individual teachers directly accountable for the performances of their students. Although I had a high level of familiarity with the phenomenon of standardized testing which aided me in conducting research (Yin, 2016), my experiences were not necessarily the same as the experiences that others had with course-specific standardized tests. Therefore, I minimized any biased views through bracketing and by the vetting of questions by my dissertation committee and the piloting of questions by content and research experts to focus on current literature and the experiences of the participants of this research study.

The school district selected for this study was the same one in which I taught. Therefore, I knew some of the U.S. History teachers within the district, although I did not know all of them. However, I was not in any supervisory role over the other U.S. History teachers; therefore, there was not any coercion on my part to influence the participation of others. Conversely, the teachers who were recruited for this study knew that there would not be any punitive consequence for non-participation as I was a peer and colleague and did not hold any position of authority within the school sites or the district.
Data Collection

Phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences of research participants. Moustakas (1994) stated that data collection entailed “a systematic way of accomplishing something orderly and disciplined, with care and rigor” (p. 104). Creswell (2013) stated that in a phenomenological study “the inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals” (p. 76). Therefore, the primary data set collected in this study was participant interviews: both individual interviews and focus group interviews. Overall, three main data sets were utilized to understand the phenomenon of the impact of the South Carolina EOCE on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy. One-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and relevant documents were collected to understand the experiences of the participants related to this phenomenon. The use of data triangulation through three separate processes shaped the “common categories or themes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). The three types of data sets represented data triangulation that strengthened the trustworthiness of this study (Creswell, 2013). The participants all taught in one school district that was selected for this study due to the purposeful convenience sampling of participants.

The first data set that I collected was that of documents, including the state and district teacher evaluation standards, district pacing guide, and state curriculum guides. I also collected documents related to the responses of the participants in their interviews, such as the guidelines for data teams. Creswell (2013) wrote that “qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (p. 45). By examining the documents prior to conducting interviews, I understood the
environment in which the participants taught as well as the expectations and parameters under which they prepared students for the EOCE. Throughout the interview process I collected documents related to participants’ responses. The primary document collected as a result of the interviews was the guideline for data teams, as numerous participants identified data teams as an additional burden placed on them in connection with the U.S. History EOCE.

The second data set I collected was that of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. Moustakas (1994) stated “the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and questions” (p. 114). One-on-one interviews were conducted prior to the focus group interview to ensure that participants shared their experiences and perceptions revolving around the EOCE prior to hearing the opinions, experiences, and perceptions of others which may have influenced an individual’s responses during the focus group interviews. Individual interviews were digitally recorded on two devices and transcribed verbatim within 24 – 48 hours. After the transcription of an individual interview was completed, I sent an electronic copy of the transcription to each participant for member-checking. Because I sent transcriptions to each participant within one or two days, the interviews were fresh in their memories and they could ensure the accuracy of the transcription. I conducted one-on-one interviews with 12 participants; five of whom volunteered for the focus group interview. Moustakas (1994) identified the importance of interviews in that phenomenological interviews involved “an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions . . . the co-researcher shares the full story of his or her experience of the bracketed question” (p. 114).

I conducted the third data set of a focus group interview after the conclusion of the initial one-on-one interviews. I invited participants to be members of the focus group through which I
hoped to further verify the data that I collected through documentation and one-on-one interviews. The focus group interview was held in the meeting room of a local restaurant, Liberty on the Lake, and was digitally recorded on two devices. There were five participants in the focus group, all of whom received the transcription of the focus group interview within 24 hours for member checking. According to Creswell (2013), “focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other” (p. 164).

**Documents**

I collected relevant and appropriate documents for the first of the three forms of data sets for data triangulation purposes. I collected copies of the South Carolina teacher evaluation standards and process as well as district pacing and curriculum guides. State and district teacher evaluation standards and guidelines were analyzed and compared to participants’ interview comments regarding the impact of the EOCE on the evaluation process. I also analyzed school and district provided materials, such as the pacing and curriculum guides, and compared them to participants’ interview comments and statements. In response to the participants’ expressed concerns and frustrations with data teaming, I collected the data team guidelines that they received from their school sites. I integrated the process of memoing as I read and reread the various documents to write my ideas about identified themes related to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenological research, documents provided a different source of data than interviews which provided corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). Related documents served as artifacts that helped me understand the essence of the experience of participants related to the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their sense of autonomy and self-
efficacy as well as the context for the participants’ experiences related to the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and the parameters under which they taught U.S. History. The documents provided the context for this study’s subquestions related to teacher autonomy, and self-efficacy (subquestions 1, 2, and 3). However, the documents also provided a context for participants’ responses related to remaining in the profession (subquestion 4). As the research subquestions supported the central question of this study, the documents also provided the context for how participants experienced the phenomenon and their personal perceptions of its impact on their autonomy and self-efficacy.

**Interviews**

I conducted 12 one-on-one interviews for this research study. Moustakas (1994) identified interviews as the primary means of collecting data for a phenomenological study. Interviews were essential to this phenomenological research study as the data collected from the individual interviews reflected the experiences of the participants related to the impact of course-specific standardized tests on their perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions allowed me to follow-up participant responses for both clarity and developing deeper responses and meanings which corresponded to Creswell’s (2013) identification of the importance of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix J for the individual interview questions).

In order to confirm the content validity of the interview questions, I piloted the interview questions with content and research experts. The role of pilot testing interview questions was to refine both the questions as well as the procedures used in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). Based upon the responses and question evaluations of the piloting process, I made
appropriate revisions to the interview questions: both individual interview questions and focus group interview questions. The experts I invited to review and pilot test the questions included social studies teachers and experts as well as a research expert. Included in the social studies content experts grouping was a former district coordinator of social studies who had worked on the most recent revision of the South Carolina State Social Studies Standards. For research expertise, I invited a teacher with an earned Ph.D. in Teaching and Instruction. I provided the abstract, the problem statement, and the central and subquestions of the study to these experts so that they could gauge the appropriateness of the interview questions against the phenomenon being studied. I asked them to ensure that the questions were not leading, provided a balance, and were clear and concise thus maintaining research and process validity. Based upon the feedback and comments I received from the pilot testing process, I reworded some of the questions to include a brief descriptor of the words “autonomy” and “self-efficacy” as well as removed any language that reflected bias.

Prior to conducting individual interviews, I asked each participant to complete a professional profile that included each participant’s educational level, years of teaching experience, years of teaching U.S. History, and level(s) of U.S. History courses taught (i.e. CP, HN, AP, or IB) (see Appendix K for the professional profile). I examined each participant’s educational and professional experience to understand relationships to each participant’s perception of the impact of the U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy. Interviews were scheduled in 20 – 30 minute blocks, conducted face-to-face, and digitally recorded by two electronic devices to account for technological problems. Participants selected their preferred interview locations. I met them at their preferred interview locations and
endeavored to ensure participant privacy and confidentiality no matter where we met, whether on-campus or off-campus.

I asked each participant the same pre-written open-ended questions with follow-up questions based upon their responses. Moustakas (1994) stated “phenomenology is rooted in questions that give a direction and focus to meaning, and in themes that sustain an inquiry, awaken further interest and concern” (p. 59). Therefore, the framing of open-ended questions allowed participants to contextualize their experiences in their responses. The front-end questions were designed to help the interviewee relax and share openly (Creswell, 2013).

The interview questions were developed from my review of relevant literature related to standardized testing, teacher autonomy, and teacher self-efficacy. In order to understand their experiences related to the phenomenon of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, I developed questions that focused on different components of the central research question. As I wrote the interview questions, I checked them against both the literature as well as the central question and subquestions driving this study. Except for the front-end questions and the final summary question, all other questions related directly to the phenomenon and problem of the study.

Two recording devices were utilized in each interview to account for any potential technology issue or problem. I transcribed the interviews verbatim within 24-48 hours for use in the data analysis process as well as to provide for member checking.

**Individual Interview Questions:**

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.

2. Why did you choose teaching as a career?

3. What do you enjoy about teaching history?
4. Please describe how the EOCE has affected you and your teaching practice. (CQ)

5. How has the district U.S. History pacing guide affected your planning and instruction? (SQ1)

6. How has the district U.S. History curriculum guide affected your ability to support student learning? (SQ2)

7. In what ways have the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides supported you and your pedagogical practices? (SQ3)

8. In what ways have the EOCE and the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides limited you and your pedagogical practices? (SQ3)

9. How have you changed your curriculum and practice in order to help students be successful on the EOCE? (SQ2)

10. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your classroom autonomy which is the ability to make the educational decisions for your students? (SQ1)

11. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your sense of self-efficacy as a teacher which is your belief that you will be effective in meeting your goals and objectives for student learning? (SQ2)

12. Please describe how you feel about the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process. (SQ4)

13. How do you feel about teaching as a profession since the implementation of the EOCE? (SQ4)

14. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?
The design of questions number one and 14 allowed me to bracket myself out of any existing relationships that I had with interview participants as well as to provide participants an opportunity to comment and respond outside of the focused interview questions. Question one allowed participants to establish their backgrounds and experiences before narrowing them to the focus of the research questions. Question 14 provided an opportunity for the interviewee to address concerns, issues, or thoughts that were not conveyed through the interview and therefore was information not solicited by me as the human instrument. This represented part of the Epoche process of being the human instrument of the research and separating myself from the experiences of the participants related to the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994).

Questions number two and three served as icebreaker questions as they were intended to put the participant at ease by sharing the participant’s initial interest in teaching history and to also establish a comfortable atmosphere for the remainder of the interviewing process (Creswell, 2013).

Question number four provided for an overarching question that allowed the interviewee to respond with an initial impression of the phenomenon of the study. Although standardized tests had been used by states and schools for several decades to measure student progress, they became an educational priority with the passage of NCLB in 2001, and now ESSA passed in 2015 (U.S. Senate, 2015). Starting with a broadly-worded question allowed the participant to focus on the topic, and then respond to specified components of the topic in subsequent questions. Questions five through nine focused on specific aspects of the effect of course-specific standardized tests on the participant’s teaching practice including curricular and pedagogical changes, improvements, or limitations. Questions seven and eight were specifically
designed to solicit positive as well as negative comments on the participant’s experiences with curriculum guides and pacing guides to ensure a balanced understanding of the participant’s experiences related to the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Question nine, which was the concluding question in this series of related questions, served as an overall evaluation of any effects of standardized testing on student learning and performance as experienced by the participant.

Studies, such as those by Maltese and Hochbein (2012), Bulgar (2012), and Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) examined the impact of standardized testing on curriculum and pedagogy. Therefore, to understand the impact on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy, it was important to understand how participants perceived changes to the curriculum itself in order to understand their perspectives on possible changes to their autonomy and self-efficacy. The design of these questions allowed participants to “discuss the meaning of their experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 173). Additionally, questions four through nine provided an opportunity to “facilitate the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions of the co-researcher’s experience of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994).

Once participants shared experiences they had with the impact of standardized testing on their actual practices, participants responded to questions that specifically related to their perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. Questions 10 and 11 were the heart of the study and focused on the impact of the U.S. History EOCE on autonomy and self-efficacy. These questions helped me understand how the U.S. History EOCE impacted each participant’s sense of who he or she was as a teacher and his or her ability to make decisions and objectives related to student learning and effectively carry out those actions (Prichard & Moore, 2016; Rahimi &
Riasati, 2015). These questions also revealed participant vulnerability and personal perception of competency as an educator. Therefore, I placed questions 10 and 11 after questions regarding curricular and pedagogical adaptations. Questions 10 and 11 directly connected to the feelings of the participants regarding the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), this type of questioning “engages the total self of the research participant” (p. 105). How participants viewed their levels of autonomy and self-efficacy revealed how they perceived their professionalism, competency, and effectiveness (Bandura, 1994).

Question 12 connected participant views on curricular and pedagogical adaptation with one’s perspective on autonomy and self-efficacy in relationship to being held accountable for student performance through the evaluation process (Adcox, 2014; Antush, 2014). If participants perceived that they were limited in their autonomy and self-efficacy they may have felt that they were being evaluated more on district and state mandates and policies than on their professional abilities. On the other hand, if participants perceived that they were professionally autonomous and had high levels of self-efficacy, they may not have been concerned about the inclusion of student test scores into the evaluation process. Participant views on the evaluation process extended their perceptions of the impact of course-specific standardized tests to their future professional plans. Question 12 allowed for a fuller understanding of the impact of course-specific standardized testing on autonomy and self-efficacy as it allowed participants to connect their perspectives to a potentially impactful outcome. Moustakas (1994) wrote “following the reflective process, with its disclosure of the actualities and the potentialities of which an object is constituted, the individual constructs a full description of his or her conscious experience” (p. 47).
Similar to the intent of question four, question 13 allowed participants to reflect on the overall impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy as represented through their educational practices (Mojoudi & Tabatabaei, 2014; Sousa & Guillamon-Saorin, 2012). It also provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their thoughts throughout the interview process (Moustakas, 1994), while de-escalating any tensions or problems developed during the interview (Creswell, 2013). Following question 13, question 14 opened the interview to the participant to address any related points or concerns not previously identified.

The data collected through the individual interview process revealed that participants were deeply concerned about the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process as well as the limitations to their practice that were the result of the mandating of the pacing guide and data teams. Additionally, participants shared a changing understanding of what it meant to be autonomous in their classroom and how these structural changes led to a realignment of their sense of self-efficacy in order to still feel efficacious even when not making their own educational decisions for student learning.

**Focus Group**

A focus group interview was conducted and analyzed in this research study. This data collection strategy provided an opportunity for participants to interact with each other about the shared experience of the South Carolina EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy as well as an opportunity to examine their experiences at a stratified complex level (Yin, 2016). There were five participants in the focus group interview which was scheduled for a 45 – 60-minute block at a location away from participants’ schools: Liberty on the Lake which was a popular restaurant with a separate meeting room. I asked the focus group participants pre-written, open-ended
questions and conducted it in a semi-structured format (see Appendix L for the focus group questions). I asked follow-up questions based upon participants’ responses. Moustakas (1994) wrote that the use of broad questioning “may also facilitate the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions of the co-researcher’s experience of the phenomenon” (p. 116). I used two devices to digitally record the focus group interview. I transcribed the interview verbatim and sent the transcript electronically to all the participants within 24 hours for member checking of the interview.

Creswell (2013) emphasized the importance of refining interview questions through pilot testing. Therefore, I piloted the focus group interview questions with the same content and research experts who evaluated the individual interview questions for content validity. I made appropriate revisions to the focus group questions about participants’ perspectives about the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy.

I facilitated the focus group interview in an unbiased manner by following strict protocol as the group facilitator. It was important that I did not attempt to lead or dominate the discussion and that I encouraged participation from each group member. The focus group interview followed a semi-structured format to allow me to ask clarification questions as well as to follow a theme or concept that emerged in the group setting. I used pre-written, open-ended questions that allowed participants to respond based upon their experiences. The questions reflected this study’s research questions as well as on recent literature related to standardized testing, teacher autonomy, and teacher self-efficacy. The design of the focus group questions emphasized the same concepts and purposes as the individual interview questions. The following were the focus
group questions and prompts; the front-end questions allowed participants to relax and share openly (Creswell, 2013).

Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. What is your favorite event or concept in U.S. History to teach students?
2. How do you know when students “get” a concept?
3. How has the EOCE affected you and your practice as a U.S. History teacher? (CQ)
4. How have the district policies related to the EOCE changed your curriculum and pedagogy? (SQ3)
5. How has the EOCE impacted your decision making related to U.S. History? (SQ1)
6. How effective do you think you are in helping students be successful on the EOCE? (SQ2)
7. How effective do you think you are in achieving your objectives for student learning? (SQ2)
8. How do you feel about the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process? (SQ4)
9. How do you feel about your career and remaining in your career? (Subquestion 4)
10. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?

The participants’ responses during the focus group interview revealed a more complex understanding of the experiences of the participants of the EOCE and related policies. Any pretense of a positive perspective and experience of the EOCE was missing from the focus group
interview as participants built upon the experiences and feelings of each other. Participants revealed a complex, and at times conflicting, sense of self-efficacy; one of being efficacious in helping students prepare for the EOCE, but not efficacious in achieving their own objectives for student learning.

**Data Analysis**

Moustakas (1994) provided two primary processes for data analysis in phenomenological qualitative design and inquiry. For this study, I followed the basic procedures described in Moustakas’ (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis which focused on verbatim transcriptions of each participant’s full experience with the phenomenon being studied (p. 122). The process began with applying phenomenological inquiry to my own experiences with the phenomenon being studied. From the verbatim transcript of my experience, I followed the steps outlined by Moustakas for conducting inquiry and research. I considered each of my statements for significance related to my experiences with the phenomenon and listed the invariant meaning units. Through the clustering of these units, I identified the themes of my experiences and then synthesized these themes into textural descriptions of my experiences.

After I conducted phenomenological inquiry into my own experiences, I used the same process on the experiences of each participant in the study. By examining the verbatim responses of the participants, I identified themes and clusters of meaning that I used to “construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).
The specific steps and processes that I followed were based on Moustakas’ (1994) infrastructure. I focused on bracketing/Epoche, open-coding, and textural and structural descriptions.

**Bracketing/Epoche**

To identify and categorize themes, patterns, and commonalities from the experiences of the participants of this research study, I bracketed out my known biases and assumptions and bracketed in participants’ responses. Moustakas (1994) referenced this step as *Epoche* and identified the process as an essential first step in understanding participants’ experiences related to the phenomenon of the study. Moustakas (1994) wrote “in the *Epoche*, we set aside our prejudices, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). Therefore, the essence of *Epoche*, or bracketing, allowed me to separate myself from my own experiences and perspectives related to the phenomenon to see it from the experiences and perspectives of the research participants. I have had extensive experience with various forms of standardized tests; tests that I perceived to have been of value to students and their learning as well as tests that I perceived to not have measured student progress or to be of value to students. Therefore, after obtaining a full description of my own experiences, I separated them from the study and relied on the experiences of the participants.

**Open Coding**

I used open coding to analyze the data collected from the interviews to identify themes and descriptions of participant experiences (Creswell, 2013). I read through all the interview transcripts numerous times and made notes on key phrases, ideas, or concepts that participants
touched upon. Notes and memos were written directly onto the transcribed scripts to note initial thoughts and codes that were identified from the interviews (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) explained that the use of open coding followed the process of “coding the data for its major categories of information” (p. 86). This step integrated principles of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) in that I was receptive to all the responses and statements of the participants. Identifying clusters of meaning through textural descriptions was a crucial step in the research.

To support the identification of themes and clusters of meaning, I created an ongoing master list of themes and concepts to organize data. A visual matrix allowed me to visually see themes in another format that I may have missed through reading alone. Visual representation of the collected data was provided through a table representing the themes that were identified from the study. Creswell (2013) wrote that visual components may take the form of comparison tables, matrixes, or hierarchical tree diagrams.

Textural and Structural Descriptions

Once I identified themes and clusters of meaning, I developed textural and structural descriptions of the data (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) defined textural description as the description of the experiences of the participants while structural description is the context of their experiences. Therefore, I analyzed related and relevant documents as part of the structural description process to examine the context of participant experiences. The use of both textural and structural descriptions allowed me to focus on what the participants experienced as well as how they experienced it. This data analysis step allowed me to synthesize participant experiences to understand the essence of the phenomenon for the individuals involved in the study, or as Moustakas (1994) wrote, “an integration of the composite textural and composite
structural descriptions, provided a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience (p. 144). This process allowed me to integrate a larger meaning of the data.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the research study was essential to its significance as well as to its contribution to the literature. Therefore, I used bracketing, triangulation, member-checking, and an audit trail to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility**

I reflected upon and bracketed my own experiences with the phenomenon of course specific standardized testing to clarify and identify any bias I had related to the research study. I also utilized the piloting of the study’s interview questions for content and research validity and reliability. There were content experts as well as research experts who piloted the questions and then recommended appropriate changes to the questions and process. I integrated bracketing, and the inclusion of personal bias, into the first chapter of this study. Additional references are in the final chapter which contains the implications and outcomes of the study as well as the summary of the study.

Triangulation of data ensured the credibility of this study. Creswell (2013) wrote that the use of information gathered from multiple and different sources to collaborate the data and evidence revealed through the study will strengthen the reliability and credibility of the study. I used one-on-one interviews, a focus group interview, and documents as the three forms of data.
collection for coding and analysis. This process allowed consistent perspectives of multiple data sources to strengthen the credibility of the study.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

The dependability of this study relied on member-checking. Creswell (2013) explained that this process “involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants” (p. 252) which strengthened the credibility of the study. Therefore, I asked each participant of the study to read the transcription of his or her interview. Within 24-48 hours after each interview, individual as well as focus group, each participant received an email with his or her interview attached. I specifically asked each participant to review the interview transcript for its accuracy and validity. I transcribed each interview within the 24-48-hour window to ensure that participants were able to clearly recall the interview in order to make any corrections to inaccuracies that they found. Participants were also invited to read the results of the study prior to its finalization. This allowed participants to view the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the study as well as to make corrections to the written descriptions.

I developed an audit trail while conducting this research study. According to Creswell (2013) an audit trail, or external audit, provided documented details and records pertaining to the study, thus strengthening its confirmability. I created and maintained an audit trail detailing all steps and processes involved in this study. Included as available materials for inspection and reliability checks are complete transcriptions of all interviews, along with relevant dates and times. I also recorded any monies spent along with descriptors detailing the spending. The audit trail provided documented details and records pertaining to the research study.
Transferability

I used rich, thick descriptive data to allow others to determine if the study was transferable to their situations and sites (Creswell, 2013). The use of journaling and memoing throughout the process allowed me to record my immediate observations and thoughts as I conducted interviews and analyzed documents. The findings of this study contain complete descriptions of meanings and themes to provide a thorough backdrop for future research and application.

Ethical Considerations

My foundational ethical consideration was how I treated research participants. As a Christian, my faith demanded I not only love others, but that I took care of them. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment of the law, He referenced the teaching from Deuteronomy 6:5 “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (New American Standard Bible). However, He then added to this teaching by stating “this is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40; NASB). Therefore, no matter what obstacles or frustrations developed as a part of my research and dissertation, I had to consider the well-being of the participants and placed their interests ahead of my own interests.

As the IRB reviews all proposed research studies involving human participants, I sought approval for this study from Liberty University’s IRB. Upon IRB approval, I sought access to the sites involved in this study by gaining approval from the district, school sites, and any other
administrative body that oversaw site research. I received written approval from the district office and the four high schools on appropriate letterheads. I contacted U.S. History teachers at the school sites to recruit study participants. The recruitment packet included a recruitment letter, an informed consent document, and a professional profile survey. I informed all potential participants of the voluntary nature of this study and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The recruitment information also included notice that each participant in the individual interviews would receive a $10 gift card to Starbucks and that those who also participated in the focus group interview would be treated to a meal at the restaurant where the focus group interview was held. I informed potential participants of the privacy safeguards that I used throughout the study, including the use of pseudonyms and security precautions related to hard copies of documents as well as electronically stored materials. Privacy safeguards included the storing of all hard copies in a locking file cabinet and the use of a password-protected computer for the securing of electronic data.

I had pre-existing collegial relationships with potential participants from my school site. However, I was a teaching peer to those I already knew and had no supervisory or any other kind of authority over any of the participants. Therefore, there would not be any negative consequence should these teachers decide not to participate in the study. I did not have prior relationships with most of the teachers at the other school sites included in this study.

A potential issue from this study may be retribution by the school or district. Therefore, I used pseudonyms for all references to participants and institutions. Additionally, all participants chose their preferred email addresses and phone numbers for communications purposes. Therefore, I limited the ability of site administrators to track communications related to the
study. I conducted interviews at the preferred locations of the study’s participants, whether on-campus or off-campus. If on-campus, I ensured to the best of my ability that the interviews were private and I protected each participant’s privacy. No matter where the interviews took place, I took appropriate precautions to strengthen the protection of participant confidentiality.

Another potential issue was that participants may be afraid of disagreeing with the perspectives of others. By conducting individual interviews as the first component of this study, participants expressed their perspectives before hearing the perspectives of others. The focus group interview took place after the initial individual interviews. At this point, if one or more participants dominated the focus group discussion, I would conduct follow-up individual interviews with participants to ensure that, once again, each participant had the opportunity to fully develop their own responses and perspectives. However, throughout the focus group interview, the participants allowed the voices and perspectives of each other to be heard without anyone dominating the conversation or interview. Therefore, I did not need to schedule follow-up individual interviews.

To further protect the confidentiality of participants, I stored and secured all collected data and communication. I organized hard copies of documents and transcriptions and filed them in a locking file cabinet along with a master list of all documentation, interviews, themes, etc. All electronic data was stored in password-protected computers.

As I had experience with the phenomenon of standardized testing, I asked my dissertation committee as well as content and research experts to vet my questions to ensure that the questions did not represent my bias or lead participants to conclusions other than their own. This
safeguarded the reliability of the study and the voices of the participants. Additionally, I included all perspectives shared whether they agreed or disagreed with my own perspectives.

Summary

Creswell (2013) wrote that a phenomenological qualitative research design is utilized in order to understand the lived experiences of a group of people related to a common phenomenon. Therefore, to understand the experiences of high school U.S. History teachers related to the impact of the South Carolina U. S. History EOCE on their perceived sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, I followed a phenomenological qualitative approach in this research study. Data triangulation was realized through the use of three data sets which included individual interviews, a focus group interview, and the collection of relevant documents. In order to analyze the data, I applied bracketing, open coding, and textural and structural descriptions. In this chapter I identified the site, participants, and sampling of the study. Additionally, I described how I ensured the trustworthiness of the research study as well as the ethical considerations that were incorporated into the structure of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological qualitative study is to understand the perceptions of U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina of the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy. This chapter examines the findings of the three data sets of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and relevant documents. The data collected are presented through the identification of themes, participant narratives, and responses to the central and subquestions of the study. All quotes are from the study’s participants unless otherwise noted. Data are presented in the order in which the research questions (both the central research question as well as the subquestions) were stated in Chapter One.

Participants

Anne

Anne has taught for 12 years and was 36 years old. Her undergraduate degree was in social science. She held a Master’s degree and was working on her last submission to earn her National Board certification. Anne always wanted to be a teacher and always loved history ever since she realized, as a high school student, all the elements and aspects of history as well as what it all meant. She has taught both CP and HN U.S. History. She served as the U.S. History Data Team facilitator for her school site for three years. Her teaching experience included World History (CP, HN, AP), AP European History, South Carolina History, and CP Psychology.
Becca

Becca was 39 years old, had taught for nine years, and had a Master’s degree. Her undergraduate degree was in history. She felt that she defaulted into teaching as she always liked talking to people about things she found interesting, such as history. Although initially concerned about the limited income of a teacher, she ultimately decided to enjoy what she did for a career and entered education. She has taught both CP and AP levels of U.S. History, along with CP and AP Economics, and AP Government.

Brian

Brian was 55 years old and had taught for 29 years. His undergraduate degree was in social science. He had a Master’s degree and was also National Board certified. Brian always wanted to work with kids and initially thought he would do so as a psychology major. However, it was through his first job related to psychology in a high school that he realized that he wanted to teach. He has taught all levels of U.S. History (CP, HN, AP). He also taught CP Government, CP Economics, and CP Psychology.

Danno

Danno was 54 years old and had taught for 25 years. His undergraduate degree was in criminal justice and he held a Bachelor’s plus 18 certificate. Prior to teaching he worked in law enforcement. Once he decided to change careers, he chose teaching as he enjoyed coaching and therefore thought he would enjoy teaching. He had experience teaching both CP and HN U.S. History. He has also taught CP World Geography, CP Psychology, and Sociology. He plans to retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.
**Eloise**

Eloise was 55 years old and had taught for 18 years. Her undergraduate degree was in history and she had a Master’s degree. Eloise chose teaching as a career because she loved assisting students in attaining knowledge and attaining their next level of cognitive development. Her previous teaching experience was in a different district than the one in which she was teaching during the year in which the interview occurred. She had experience teaching all levels of U.S. History (CP, HN, AP). She also had taught CP Economics, CP World History, and CP World Geography.

**Elvis**

Elvis was 59 years old and had been teaching for 35 years. His undergraduate degree was in history and he had a Master’s degree. Originally, he thought that he would work with students as a guidance counselor and prepared himself by majoring in psychology. When he found out the job expectations for guidance counselors he changed his major to history as he wanted more interaction with students than was realized through counseling. He had been an athlete in high school and college so he thought that teaching and coaching would be the best career path for him. For 33 years he taught various levels of U.S. History including CP and AP; but was only teaching CP U.S. History during the school year in which he was interviewed. Elvis has also taught Sociology, CP Psychology, CP Economics, and CP Government. He may retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.
Emily

Emily was 35 years old and had been teaching for 12 years. Her undergraduate degree was in history. She had a Master’s degree and was also National Board certified. She initially resisted becoming a teacher as both of her parents were educators and she knew the struggles that they had as educators. Her resistance ended when she realized in college that her love of history was compelling her to become a teacher. Although most of her experience was at the middle school level, she has taught both CP and HN U.S. History. She also had experience teaching seventh grade World History and sixth grade World History.

Martha

Martha was 58 years old, had taught for 35 years, and had a Bachelor’s plus 18 certificate. Her undergraduate degree was in history. She has taught all levels of U.S. History (CP, HN, AP). She also had experience teaching CP World History, CP Psychology, CP World Geography, CP Government, CP Economics, and Sociology. She was also National Board certified and was set to retire at the end of the school year during which the interview was held.

Mary

Mary had taught for 21 years and was 45 years old. Her undergraduate degree was in history. She had a Master’s degree as well as her National Board certification. Mary was drawn to education as a career as she wanted to ensure that all children had access to the best teachers, styles, strategies, and knowledge possible as she felt that her own high school experience as a student had lacked those elements. She has taught all levels of U.S. History (CP, HN, AP). She also had been the facilitator for the U.S. History Data Team for her school site. Her teaching
experience also included Psychology (CP, AP, Psychology 101), AP Government, and CP Economics.

**Mikaela**

Mikaela was 37 years old and had taught 10 years, seven of which included U.S. History. Her undergraduate major was social science and she holds a Master’s degree. She entered the profession as she had always liked working with children and wanted to make a difference in children’s lives. She has taught all levels of U.S. History, including the International Baccalaureate (IB) History of the Americas. She is currently working on a second Master’s degree in order to go into administration.

**Rick**

Rick was 46 years old and had been teaching for 24 years. He had a Master’s Degree and his undergraduate degree was in history. Growing up he idolized his brother and as his brother became a teacher, Rick knew that he also wanted to be a teacher. Although he did not teach U.S. History the year I conducted interviews, he had taught CP U.S. History since the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Interestingly, he wrote the original pacing guide that was used by the district in which he was employed. He has also taught CP Economics, CP Government, CP World History, Sociology, and Law Education.

**Sam**

Sam was 30 years old and had been teaching for seven years, four of which were focused on U.S. History. He had taught both CP and HN U.S. History. He was the only participant from Skyward High School. Sam’s undergraduate degree was in history and he also holds two
Master’s degrees. Sam originally planned to enter a pre-veterinarian program, but decided to attend a different university where he majored in history. Sam has taught other social studies courses including World History, Government and Economics, and Psychology.

**Results**

**Theme Development**

As the study revolved about the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy, I identified many themes through the analysis and synthesis of individual interviews, the focus group interview, and relevant documents.

**Enforced Teacher Dependency**

One of the key themes that I identified through most responses was dependency on district-provided supports such as the district pacing guide and the state support document. Teachers, as well as students, were evaluated based upon student scores on the EOCE. Therefore, the study’s participants shared during both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview that they wanted to ensure that they would cover the required curriculum. In examining the district pacing guide, I found that the participants must cover a plethora of specific information, themes, and concepts in an abbreviated amount of time to prepare students for the U.S. History EOCE. Key indicators of each standard were assigned specific dates and lengths of time, necessitating an adherence to the pacing guide as teachers were also mandated to administer district written benchmark tests within the window of time that the district had allotted. Identifying the importance of the district pacing guide, Danno stated “it’s very helpful.
It’s kept me on track.” Building upon that, Eloise noted that “one thing about district pacing guides, it gives you a framework—it gives you the parameters to engage in a scope and sequence.” Martha reinforced the idea of the helpfulness of the pacing guide in getting through the required curriculum “and it’s helpful, I think, when we have those snow days, weather days, hurricane days, to help me stay on that track.”

Interestingly, one of the participants, Rick, created the original pacing guide for the district. He shared “the original pacing guide, basically, I did. I created a pacing guide that I sent to the district office and they used mine to kind of create the original one.” Brian noted that the pacing guide also provided the opportunity to “come closer to ensuring a common experience for all students” if teachers followed the guide throughout the year. This is the first year in Mountain School District for Sam who contrasted his experiences in a different district with his experiences in this district. He said:

I felt like I had a lot of freedom to do what I wanted with the EOC, how I wanted to prep for it. Now, with this district and school, now it’s all “this is what we’ll do and this is how we’re going to stay together on this.”

There was a distinct difference between the two districts in which Sam worked; one with a district pacing guide and one without a district pacing guide.

Participants also noted that the support document, which included essential concepts and information as well as specific vocabulary terms and identification, helped them focus on what it was that students needed to know to be successful on the EOCE as explained by Becca’s statement “I’ve actually found the support documents to be incredibly useful.” Mikaela found:
The pacing guide is helpful—especially for people who haven’t taught U.S. History before, and they need a guideline to what they need to prepare for the year and to keep them on pace to cover all of the content in the time that we’re allowed.

The South Carolina U.S. History EOCE covers concepts and information from pre-Columbian America to events within the last 10 years. The specificity of the standards and framework necessitated constant progression through the curriculum in order to finish coverage by mid-May when the U.S. History EOCE was given to students.

Interestingly, in the focus group interview, participants did not identify beneficial aspects of district and state guidelines and documents. Rather, all five of the participants spoke about the burden of following the prescribed pacing guides. Becca used strong language when she said, “the biggest thing is pacing. It’s like dictated—how long you have to cover various things because you have to cover this content and you have to do it in a certain amount of time.” In the district pacing guide, there were identified dates and the standards and indicators that needed to be covered on or by those dates. When referring to a project that supported students’ understandings of the Progressive Era, Anne added, “when I do that, I sacrifice something else, so that they can do that in class. And, I shouldn’t have to sacrifice that as a teacher. I should be able to do those things because they really relate.” When participants in the focus group discussed the limitations on their abilities to be creative with learning activities that supported student learning, Martha noted, “I don’t like that it limits their creativity” indicating that the district and state documents not only limited teachers, but students as well. The state support documents indicated the skills and knowledge that students were to demonstrate relative to the standards and indicators, thus restricting teacher developed learning activities and objectives.
Through participation in the focus group, the participants expressed greater freedom in critiquing the guides and documents than they did within the construct of the individual interviews during which participants initially identified the positives of these policies and then revealed a different perspective as they developed their responses.

**Breadth versus Depth**

However, even though most respondents were initially appreciative of the district pacing guide and the state support document, after their first statements related to these guides, participants voiced opposing perspectives to their previously stated ones. The South Carolina State Standards for U.S. History and Constitution had eight era and content standards and a total 43 indicators for the standards. However, some of the indicators contained extensive and complex concepts such as USHC-2.4 “compare and contrast the social and cultural characteristics of the North, the South, and the West during the antebellum period, including the lives of African Americans and social reform movements such as abolition and women’s rights” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011; p. 106). This indicator alone entailed numerous social movements, key individuals and organizations, regional differences, economic diversity, cultural significant religious and literacy developments, and a myriad of other historical events and concepts. Yet, it comprised only 1 of 43 historical indicators in the standards. Additionally, according to the district pacing guide, teachers should only take one instructional day to cover the information contained within this indicator.

Mary understood the complex responsibility and accountability that U.S. History teachers have when she observed “it’s a good roadmap, but I don’t pay that much attention to it.” This
perspective became even clearer when Emily noted that “even though I am definitely a follower of it, I don’t particularly advocate for it.” Danno added to this perspective in his statement:

The positive is that it keeps you on pace, so to speak. It makes you certainly cognizant of where you need to be and where you are. But the negative side is that there’s not that much room in the pacing guide to spend extra time on different topics, to try out some different techniques because you’re rushing.

During the focus group interview, Mikaela spoke to the dichotomy of the guides and the data teams through which teachers were expected to identify areas of weakness and reteach those concepts when she stated:

And, if they don’t get a concept, when are you going to reteach it? You don’t have the time to reteach it. That’s a part of data teams, you’re supposed to assess how well they’re learning. But, where’s that in the pacing guide?

In examining the development of participant responses, as participants built their answers they provided more insight into the depth of their feelings about the guides. According to Emily, “they’re just trying to cram too much in essentially in terms of a timeline rather than in terms of the actual events surrounding it.” Elvis stated:

Basically, it’s just rush, rush, rush. You don’t really get a chance to go into some things and go into detail. You’re thrown a pacing guide and we gotta get to this point. If we have an assembly or a bad weather day you gotta double up. To be honest, it has taken some of the fun out of teaching history. You’re pretty much, your hands are tied as to what you have to do and how you have to do it. And you’re kind of teaching to a test rather than teaching history.
The rushed nature of the course as outlined in the pacing and curriculum guides was noted by Mikaela when she stated:

Sometimes you have to teach them this so they can know that. Because they’re not going to understand this if you don’t teach them the other. They need to know this information to see how we got from Point A to Point B. Or, how we got from here in this year to there in that year. The causes and effects of the change over time.

In spite of noting the helpfulness of the guides, participants also communicated the limitations of instruction due to the guides as well as the restrictions they felt as teachers due to the importance placed on the EOCE by the state as well as by the district. Martha stated, “it has forced me to really leave behind some of the valuable things that I thought I did before,” while Sam noted, “I feel passionate about U.S. history and I feel like I give a little bit of that off, but I don’t feel like students leave there excited about learning more about U.S. history.”

Prioritization of Testing

Another identified theme from the interviews was that of the prioritization of testing and its effects on teacher practice. Martha said, “it’s teaching to the test, basically, and I disagree with that philosophy.” Although a proponent of accountability through testing, Brian shared:

When I first started teaching in 1988, if I would have used the term “teaching to the test” I would have been thrown out for blasphemy. And, I think now, it’s the thing-forget the joy, forget the passion, forget the student projects, so it’s force me to become too driven to get the students to pass the standardized test.

Danno spoke about the change in practice when he said:
It’s almost as if the amount of time we spend on the curriculum is equal to the amount of time we spend on testing techniques and jumping through hoops to justify a system that in my mind is not all that it’s believed to be.

Emily expressed a similar viewpoint during the focus group interview when she said, “I feel like a number of days are lost due to testing, whether one of the three district benchmarks, the ACT, etc., it only intensifies the stress of staying on pace.” The district pacing guide indicated the windows for the various, mandated district benchmark tests that teachers had to administer to their students, thereby converting instructional content coverage to test preparation. Danno added that “I think we short-change the kids with regard to the depth that we can go into topics because of the pace.”

Anne’s perspective on the prioritization of testing was that it limited essential skills development that students need. She said, “it can limit some of the writing process that is really, if we want them to think like historians, they have to be able to write like historians.” Both the district pacing guide and the state support document did not provide time for expository writing which had traditionally been embedded in history classes. When Mary shared her perspective, she stated:

It prevents you from digging deeply and it also-it creates a mindset where you become so focused on covering content that you sometimes lose track of some of your other goals as a teacher, because I can teach kids how to take a test, but sometimes I forget that perhaps that’s not my only purpose. The guides, and the pacing, and all the other things going on, you have to focus on them.
When asked a follow-up question about other goals, she responded “another goal would just be for people to understand how history can change over time.”

In analyzing the first two themes identified in the research, there was a complexity to participants’ responses. Although the initial reaction about the pacing guide and support document was positive from the respondents, as they developed their answers, they noted limitations placed upon themselves and the curriculum from these same guides.

**Limitations on Practice**

The role of pacing and curriculum guides, as well as the prioritization on testing, impacted teacher practice. Most notable, many participants spoke about the change and limits they faced in their practice. Consistently, participants spoke about the removal of projects and activities that supported student learning through fun and constructive means as neither the district pacing guide nor the state support document provided time or direction for the inclusion of such activities in the prescribed pacing and curriculum coverage of the course. As Mary said, “it’s made it less creative in some ways and more prescriptive due to, again, trying to make sure everything’s accomplished by the test.” She also stated that “I started being a lot more precise in delivery and providing less opportunity for open-ended inquiry, and even discussion.” Elvis referenced these limitations when he said, “basically it decides what we have to teach and how we have to teach it.” He clarified this statement with his follow-up “it restricts any time for project, or anything, you just have to stay on course.” He also later commented “I feel like I’ve been programmed.” The lack of time for creativity and projects was noted by several participants, both in individual interviews as well as during the focus group interview.
Brian responded to curricular change by stating “it’s a lot of drilling, just teaching the facts. And so, I do a lot of Kahoot, and I do a lot of benchmark tests and practice tests.” This change in his practice mirrors the requirements of the pacing and curriculum guides. When Rick examined the pedagogical changes, he had a positive reaction in that “it makes you re-evaluate what you’re doing a little bit. In many ways, it kind of puts all of us on the same wavelength a little bit which is good.” However, as he continued his thought, he identified a negative aspect of his experience “but, they also take out a little bit of the individuality, which I think it takes away a little bit the enjoyment of teaching the course.” Anne stated during the focus group interview “I should be able to do those things because they really related and because they really truly express that the student got the concept that way versus trying to memorize stuff for multiple-choice questions.”

The majority of the participants identified similar constraints to their practice as a result of the EOCE and related policies. Statements such as Anne’s “it’s more test-taking strategies, it’s working on flashcards, more ways to remember stuff” were reinforced by Becca’s perspective that “the way that I would like to do it involves a lot of writing, and research, and different thinking in looking at the bigger questions,” and Danno’s opinion that “it’s basically, in my opinion, made us to become robots. We’re just following the script.” Martha shared a similar perspective when she stated:

I used to really, really feel connected to my students-I knew exactly what they could do, and what they would do well on, and not. And, I don’t have that as much anymore. And, I’m sad about it. I’m very sad about it. Eventually, if we write all this great curriculum, great plans-I don’t even need to be here. They can just flip on something like google
classroom. Do they need me? I want them to need me, because I need to do certain things to be sure that they’re achieving something. I don’t want to be a robot.

In adapting their practice to the demands of the U.S. History EOCE as well as the district pacing guide and state support document, teachers were limiting the diversity of instructional practices as well as the opportunities for differentiated instruction due to the pace of the course as the district pacing guide allows for an average of one to two days per standard indicator; when looking at the pacing guide, it is important to remember that the district high schools operate on an A/B schedule which means that classes meet every other day, not every day.

**Limitations on Autonomy**

Perhaps the most unified responses reflected the limited autonomy of teachers of tested curriculum. Although there was phrasing which was intended to convey a continued sense of autonomy, participant responses reflected limitations that were placed on their sense of autonomy. This was demonstrated in Eloise’s response “(it) doesn’t really affect classroom autonomy for me. You may not be able to cover everything you would like to cover, but I don’t see it as being a limitation.” Mary further exemplified the effort to retain a sense of autonomy when she stated:

I would like to say that I still feel that I make those decisions. It’s just a lot of pressure to make sure those decisions comply with the expectations. I wouldn’t say that I have given up on autonomy, I just have to realize that the choices I’m making are the ones that are good for my students. But, I have to adjust to outside forces. I do think that I have choice, it’s just that now I choose to make decisions based on the students passing the EOC.
With this statement, Mary shared in order to retain a sense of autonomy, she had to adjust her decision-making capabilities to ensuring student success on the EOC. Therefore, her content-related decisions as well as the student learning activities that she employed in her classroom directly reflected the limitations on her decision making as prescribed by both the district pacing guide and the support document. Sam shared that he had changed his understanding of his decision-making abilities in that he now emphasized “the things that they’ll need, the skills that they’ll need on the EOC, which I think is definitely a better strategy than I had before.” Sam’s perspective showed that he adapted his decision-making processes to reflect the mandated district policies and educational decisions. Becca explained the impact on her sense of autonomy when she stated:

I definitely feel less autonomous than I feel in my classes without an EOCE. And, in fact, teaching other AP Courses. I don’t feel as autonomous in AP as I feel in CP economics which has neither kind of cumulative exam other than one I design myself. But, I feel more autonomous in my AP classes than I feel in an EOC class. And that’s because of things I’ve described before—the pacing is so tight, there’s not room for error. Delving into some things more deeply than others. The pressure from the powers that be for constantly improving scores, which I understand. I think that creates a sort of fear and also there are things that they want to hear in so far as what I’m doing to improve scores. There’s pressure to give the answers that they want. Which makes me feel like I can’t necessarily make decisions based on what I truly think is best for students.

When asked about autonomy and decision-making, Elvis laughed and said “you don’t get to make them. It’s pretty much made for you.” Anne stated, “I just feel very stifled in what I can
do as an educator.” During the focus group interview, Mikaela summed up the perspectives of others when she said, “it’s basically made it cut and dry. It’s ‘here’s what you teach, and what they need to do.’”

All participants felt limitations on their sense of autonomy whether they initially responded that their autonomy was not affected and then identified limitations as they developed their responses or whether they immediately identified limitations to their sense of autonomy. Several participants went beyond identifying limitations to their sense of autonomy by stating that they had no autonomy due to the impact of the U.S. History EOCE and related policies. The issuance of the pacing guide by the district conveyed a lack of confidence in teachers’ abilities to cover the curriculum when making their own objectives for student learning. Additionally, the state support document chronicled the specific information that students needed to know, although participants noted that there was missing information that they deemed essential for students to know. Participants also identified skills that they believed that students should develop through the course. Becca said, “when U.S. History is done the way that I would like to do it involves a lot of writing and research.” The limitations on autonomy coincided with the pedagogical changes that were identified throughout the interviews.

A Changed Understanding of Self-Efficacy

One of the most significant and telling themes of the study was that of teachers transitioning to a new understanding of their self-efficacy. With expressed limitations to their sense of autonomy and its impact on their abilities to determine learning objectives for their students, participants re-identified and justified their effectiveness in meeting their goals. The state support document dictated content coverage and specific skill sets that students needed to
be successful on the EOCE. Mary stated “in a sense I feel very effective in that. I don’t know-I feel very effective in getting the kids to pass the EOCE. Now whether or not that’s the same as feeling effective as a teacher I’m not sure.” After a moment’s pause she added “that’s not necessarily why I went into teaching, so I don’t feel as effective in accomplishing those other goals like making kids love history like I love history.”

Having the state and district prescribe the prioritization of the U.S. History EOCE led Becca to state:

It has really made me question my efficacy, because, it’s tricky because I’m not getting to determine goals and objectives for students’ learning. If I were to establish my own goals and objectives for student learning, outside of what percentage of them would pass the test-if I could say that I want students to write a coherent thesis or be able to judge events. Then I would feel better. But, not having created the standards myself, not having created the test, not even have access to the questions on the test, but still being judged by my ability to get students to achieve a certain score on that test, I really feel like I could work really hard or not and the results might not be that different.

Danno reinforced this perspective when he said “well, it’s not my goals. It’s not my goals, it’s not my objectives. It’s the state’s and the district’s.” Danno’s perspective reflected the imposition of the district pacing guide, the state support documents, and the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process; all of which impacted curriculum, pedagogy, establishment of learning objectives, and the potential for punitive consequences if teachers did not follow the prescribed directives.
This perspective was reiterated by Martha when she said, “my goals are sometimes different from the End of Course people, or the district, or the administration.” Anne’s comment supported this perspective “I feel like I’m very successful with the EOC, but my personal goals of having them become historians, I feel like that part I struggle with on a daily basis.” When talking about his sense of self-efficacy, Brian said “this is one that is hard to come to terms with, because it’s all about the numbers. the numbers that are public.” And, in the saddest response throughout my research, Emily identified the effect of the EOCE on herself “I don’t like the teacher I’ve become now, because of having to do so many things quickly and rushed to get through it rather than how I would like to do it,” while Martha shared “that makes me very sad. I’ll look at those kids and think ‘you’re not one bit better having known me.’”

During the focus group interview, Mikaela said, “I think they’re prepared as far as what to expect testing wise. I think we do a fairly good job of that. Like, here’s how it’s structured, it’s multiple-choice, here’s how it is.” Emily added “in regard to the content, I know they have been exposed to everything. Their ability to rationalize it and apply it is questionable.” But, when the questions turned to their perceptions of self-efficacy beyond preparing students for the EOCE, their answers demonstrated feelings of not being efficacious as exemplified by Becca’s statement “I have to disassociate my objectives from what has been placed upon me. It’s so hard and it’s been so long now.” To which Anne replied “I feel like what I want to do is not really what’s happening in my classroom. It’s really sad.” Mikaela added “well, because it’s dictated to you. I don’t even get to set the objectives, it’s dictated.”

Most respondents shared that while they effectively prepared their students to be successful on the EOCE, they were not effective in achieving their learning objectives for
students that reached beyond the EOCE. This perspective reinforced the realigning of one’s sense of self-efficacy to reflect the state’s and district’s goals and objectives rather than one’s own objectives for student learning.

*Resentment*

One of the greatest identified concerns and themes was that of resentment and frustration with the inclusion of student test scores in the South Carolina teacher evaluation process. Two participants expressed frustration with the fact that they were held accountable for student test scores while teachers of non-tested curricula were not. The following excerpt from the South Carolina teacher evaluation guideline contains information about teachers of non-tested curricula being able to use alternative measures while those in courses requiring test scores may not:

For teachers in all grades and subjects, Alternative Measures may be used; however, those in courses requiring ESEA Test Scores must use the state-selected ESEA Test Score measure 7 as a component of Student Growth. The vehicle for compiling evidence of Student Growth based upon Alternative Measures is the Student Learning Objective (SLO). Teachers with EVAAS test score measures who are not in a grade or subject for which ESEA requires assessment (e.g., social studies) may use the EVAAS test score measure as evidence of Student Growth, or may use an SLO, or may use an SLO that includes the EVAAS test score measure as one evidence point for establishing Student Growth. (South Carolina State Board of Education, 2015, p. 12)

Not only were teachers of tested-curriculum and grade-level testing held accountable for student test scores, their colleagues of non-tested curriculum were allowed to be evaluated against different standards and use of evidence.
Participants indicated support for some type of teacher accountability within the evaluation process. Mary observed “I feel like we should see some results from what people put in and what’s expected from students” and Emily stated, “I understand that obviously as a teacher, kids should be learning.” However, even with some statements regarding teacher accountability, without exception, participants identified undue pressure and the inequity represented within this construct.

Most of the participants noted that they felt that being evaluated against student scores was unfair due to extenuating circumstances, most notably factors that were outside of their control. Danno stated “it would be okay if you could have some say so into who is in your classroom; if you had the ability to determine the equity with which certain students are placed into classrooms.” Elvis said, “the majority of them have IEPs and 504s and their attendance is not good but yet I’m going to be held accountable for that.” In a similar vein, Brian stated “it would be based just on those four, five kids that no matter what I do, they’re going to be in the basement.” Rick’s opinion was “when you’re judged on a set group of 20 or 25 students, that each set that comes into your classroom is a different group and with different abilities.” He then added “if you judge me on my team, let me pick the team.” This perspective was further supported by Sam who added another element to it when he said:

You have that one teacher who is all Honors level U.S. History and then a teacher like me who was teaching all CP. And it was much more work for me to get my kids to make that 70 than it was for her Honors kids to do that. So, that gets tied into my evaluation.

This perspective of having no input into the students placed in their classes resonated throughout the interviews. “So, if kids could be here every day and I knew that they were taking
the test seriously, yes,” noted Emily before adding “but it’s just-there’s too many variables that factor into a kid that could potentially do well that just doesn’t have anything to do with me.”

Elvis shared his frustration that “I don’t think my job should depend on a bunch of 16-year olds.”

Martha went a step further when she said, “I would really hate for my salary, my pay, or anything in the evaluation of me, to be tied to a 14 or 15-year old.”

In considering the impact of student test scores on teacher evaluation, Mikaela demonstrated a different perspective when she shared:

Maybe if you focus on growth: where the students were at the beginning of the year and how they ended up at the end of the year. Might be a better process in evaluation-if you focus on growth. Not just here let’s take this test at the end of the year and see how they did.

She was not the only participant who tried to expand the current use of student test scores to demonstrate student progress rather than student performance. Becca stated:

I welcome a new evaluation process or something. You know, we all know teachers that are good and teachers that are not. Teachers who are fantastic teachers and I would love some sort of recognition of the good ones or elimination of the bad ones.

However, the difficulty is in what the process would entail.

Mary brought up the inequity of the teacher evaluation process due to not every teacher teaching tested curriculum. Her statement “I think that it’s not fairly distributed. Not everyone in social studies teaches a class that has test scores of the same requirements” reflected the differing components of teacher evaluation based upon the subject(s) that one taught. Also, due to the weight that the state placed on standardized testing, she added “I think it allows some
teachers to never have to teach a class like that because people know that they’re not going to do well.”

Throughout the interview process, the most consistent perspective regarding the incorporation of student test scores into the evaluation process was represented by Anne who stated “I think it’s horrible. I don’t think it’s ethical. I don’t think it should be. I think it’s illegal. I just don’t think it should be part of it at all. There are way too many factors and variables.” Mikaela laughed when asked about the inclusion of student test scores in the teacher evaluation process and then added “need I say more?”

During the focus group interview, I identified a different perspective related to the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process. As a part of the evaluation process, teachers provided a target growth rate for their students that would be measured by the EOCE. This target growth rate was then embedded into each teacher’s Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) that were a part of the evaluation process (see Appendix M for the SLO template). Mikaela said, “you don’t want to overestimate because it’s going to come back on you. So, we’ll have these low expectations of achievement for the kids.” Anne observed, “I really shouldn’t have to set a growth target and then I’m evaluated on it. And it’s like ‘that growth target that you set? You didn’t meet it; therefore you fail.’” The discussion during the focus group interview revealed the anxiety of the participants related to setting growth targets for students against which teachers were evaluated through the measurement of student performance on the EOCE.
Burden of Data Teams

During the interview process, several participants spoke about what they perceived to be additional responsibilities placed upon them that made teaching U.S. History even more burdensome and difficult. Seven participants specifically referenced data teams as the additional burden that impacted them the most. Although none of the interview questions directly asked about data teams, several of the participants mentioned them in response to other interview questions, both in individual interviews and in the focus group interview. Not only did participants identify data teams as taking time away from curriculum development and related activities due to the frequency of meetings, but they also spoke about the paperwork involved and the required steps of data teaming that they felt were unnecessary as well as redundant. Data team guidelines required content specific (i.e. U.S. History) data teams to respond to and record pre-determined process steps and analysis. Included in these steps were a series of meetings to discuss the instructional strategies that were the foci of the instructional unit as well as measurement of student progression within the unit. During the focus group interview, Mikaela identified the conflict between data teams and the district pacing guide when she asked, “when are you going to reteach it? You don’t have the time to reteach it. That’s a part of data teams, you’re supposed to assess how well they’re learning. But, where’s that in the pacing guide?” Although data teams require remediation, the pacing guide does not allow time for it.

Becca mentioned the data teaming in response to how the U.S. History EOCE had affected her teaching practice. I asked a follow-up question about data teaming to which she responded:
Honestly, the data team process has been a hindrance to better teaching. I feel like it’s a good process for somethings; in AP, I’ve used the process and modified it for writing skills and not for multiple choice questions. In that way, I modify it and make it work for me. Certainly, the collection of data for the purposes of instruction is not a bade thing. But, to create a common assessment of multiple choice questions geared to the EOC and using that as a pre-test and finding something meaningful in that to guide your instruction has been elusive in all the years that I’ve done it.

During his interview, Elvis said that “I tell the young teachers this all the time—that if I thought I had 29 more years of this, because it’s not just the EOC, it’s the data team, it’s the SLOs”. He later added “now we have to go to meetings and it’s just a series of just one more thing that we have to do.” Emily also voiced a concern about the number of data team meetings when she said, “I think data teams don’t have to happen as frequently as what it does.” She then suggested “I like the idea of using data teams to reflect on semester exams” to try to limit the number of data team meetings that teachers must to attend. Regarding data teams, Martha stated:

Data teams is a tremendous amount of work, paperwork and other, and I wonder sometimes if we’re just bogged down in paperwork. And that it doesn’t really translate into my classroom. If I spend a lot of time on something, I want to see the results of it with my kids. And, I don’t know that we always get that.

Adding to the observations shared about the impact of data teams, Mary stated:

The problem with data teams is that it focuses narrowly on one sort of small segment of data and then we have to create a common strategy that we’re all going to utilize and we have to assess the strategy. It’s supposed to be ‘hey, let’s find some great strategies for
all of our people.’ Instead, I think it becomes sort of that whole prescriptive-here’s the handbook on teaching and we’ll just follow these then everyone would be super successful. I call it teacher-proofing the curriculum-that you could put any teacher in the box and give them this script and they would achieve success, and it’s not. The problem with data teams is that it does not really open up the opportunity for creativity.

The process, steps, frequency of meetings, and other expectations and requirements of data teams when combined with the pre-determined pacing and coverage of content as prescribed by the district pacing guide and the state support document have led some U.S. History teachers to feel even more time pressures related to teaching an EOCE course. Limitations to differentiation and the lack of time allotted to concept remediation highlight the contradictions between these two district mandates that were placed on teachers.

**Relief**

The theme of relief of either not currently teaching a U.S. History course, or very shortly not having to teach U.S. History due to retirement, was not a recurring theme, but was noted by a few participants. Rick, who did not currently teach U.S. History, but taught it in the past and created the original district pacing guide, stated, “I’m glad that I don’t have to do them anymore. To be honest, I was kind of glad to get away from U.S. History because of the test.” Danno, when referencing his intended retirement in June of 2018, stated, “can’t wait to get out. Teaching’s not enjoyable anymore. It’s gone from a profession to a job. and, the things that I believe in are not, would not, be tolerated in order to achieve the state and district goal.” As they are two out of the four participants who either did not currently teach U.S. History or saw a retirement date in the near future, they may have felt the freedom to express their relief.
Rick, who did not teach U.S. History at this time, established his own standards for measuring student growth as part of his evaluation process. This reflected the state’s guidelines that the evaluations of teachers of tested curricula incorporated student test scores for 30% of the evaluation while teachers of non-tested curricula (South Carolina State Board of Education, 2015).

Martha, who retired at the end of the 2016-2017 school year expanded upon her feeling relief of no longer teaching U.S. History after this year when she said, “the people making the decisions for education are not the educators. We’re not in charge of our own profession anymore.” Martha, Danno, and Elvis all reflected the perspective that the constraints of being an educator changed so much during their careers that they looked forward to retiring and leaving the profession.

Research Question Responses

**CQ:** How does the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE impact U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy in the Midlands regions of South Carolina?

The central question that drove the research related to this phenomenological study focused on teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. The associated subquestions identified specific themes related to the overarching central question. Participants in this study spoke about various components and elements of their profession and practice that they perceived to be impacted, whether in a positive way or in a negative way, by the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and the state and district policies related to this exam. In analyzing the collected data, Emily expressed the overall synthesis of data when she shared “I don’t like the
teacher I’ve become now, because of having to do so many things quickly and rushed to get through it rather than how I would like to do it.” Even those participants who supported some aspect of accountability, eventually responded with a statement indicating some sense of frustration with the entirety of the exam process and policies which included pacing and curriculum guides, other district initiatives, and the inclusion of student test scores into the evaluation process.

I identified two themes that most directly answered the central research question about autonomy and self-efficacy. These themes were:

- Limitations on autonomy.
- A changed understanding of self-efficacy.

The documents that I collected for this study showed the required pacing (district pacing guide), the plethora of historical events, individuals, and concepts for which students were to demonstrate mastery on the Exam (state support document). I also collected documents outlining the responsibilities and requirements of data teaming (data team guidelines), and the inclusion of student test scores into the evaluation process (state evaluation guidelines). Participants identified and developed these themes and the impact of the lived experience through their responses regarding their perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy.

A few of the participants, such as Mary and Eloise, initially stated felt little impact on their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, but later revealed that they did feel limitations. Eloise responded that the EOCE and related policies “doesn’t really affect classroom autonomy for me” but also stated “you may not be able to cover everything you would like to cover, but I don’t see
it as being a limitation.” In a similar vein, Mary first responded “well, I would like to say that I still feel that I make those decisions. It’s just a lot of pressure to make sure those decisions comply with the expectations,” but later added “I do think that I have choice, it’s just that now I choose to make decisions based on the students passing the EOC.” Both participants adapted their decision-making to reflect state and district policies and mandates while also acknowledging that they adjusted their preferred objectives in order to accommodate these changes.

On the other hand, many of the participants immediately identified limitations to their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy. Whether Elvis’ laughter followed by his statement that “you don’t get to make them” when asked about his perception of his autonomy and ability to make educational decisions for his students or Anne’s heartfelt answer of “I just feel very stifled in what I can do as an educator,” the majority of participants spoke about limitations on decision-making as well as effectiveness on student learning objectives outside of performance on the EOCE. Anne exemplified this impact when she said, “what my goals are versus what’s the EOC’s goals. I feel like I’m very successful with the EOC, but like my personal goals of having them become historians, I feel like that part I struggle with on a daily basis.”

The subquestions of the study led to the identification of themes that related to teacher sense of autonomy and self-efficacy through the lens of their practice and other elements that affected their lived experiences of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE.

**SQ1:** How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy?
In responding to interview questions related to this subquestion, the element of teacher practice was integral to participants’ responses. Participants correlated state and district practices and policies to the impact on their autonomy as represented by the EOCE and related policies. The related policies references in their responses included the documents collected for this study, such as the district pacing guide, state standards for U.S. History, and the state support document. I identified five themes that represented this subquestion:

- Enforced teacher dependency.
- Breadth versus depth.
- Prioritization of testing.
- Limitations on practice.
- Limitations on autonomy.

The district pacing guide combined with the state developed support document provided an outline of what should be covered and by when. In many instances, this created a dependency on these supports that while acknowledged as being beneficial, also led to an understanding by participants about their limitations in making educational decisions. These decisions included the importance of concepts and events, additional projects and assignments that they would like to include in the course. Mandated district decisions reflected content coverage completion dates, district benchmark tests, and student assessment data for data teams.

Most of the participants found some value in the district pacing guide and the state support document. Becca stated, “I’ve actually found the support documents to be incredibly useful,” which coincides with Brian’s perspective that “I think it’s very helpful. It’s kept me on
track.” He also added “I think the good thing about the testing and the pacing guide, both of them, is they come closer to ensuring a common experience for all students.” Mikaela added another dimension to their usefulness when she stated:

I think the pacing guide is helpful. Especially for people who haven’t taught U.S. History before, and they need a guideline to what they need to prepare for the year and to keep them on pace to cover all of the content in the time that we’re allowed. So, it’s definitely been helpful in that respect.

Rick reinforced this theme when he said, “I think it makes you re-evaluate what you’re doing a little bit. In many ways, it kind of puts all of us on the same wave length a little bit which is good.” However, he then went on to state, “But, they also take out a little bit of the individuality” which led into the next identified theme of the breadth versus depth of the course.

Because of the pacing guide as well as the general language of the state support document, coverage of deep and important concerns is limited when teachers try to cover the entire curriculum before the EOCE in mid-May. Mikaela stated, “it’s kind of like ‘here you go, teach this.’ And then that’s it.” Anne expressed her dissatisfaction with the pacing and curriculum guides:

I think that I really have no flexibility. I have no freedom, creativity-you don’t have time to do truly in-depth projects or anything like that. I just don’t feel like I’m teaching facets of history because it’s so dictated that you have to teach a certain subject or content.

The frustration with the perception of the lack of depth was further identified by Danno in his statement, “but the negative side is that there’s not that much room in the pacing guide to spend
extra time on different topics, to try out some different techniques because you’re rushing.” He later added, “I think we short-change the kids with regard to the depth that we can go into topics because of the pace.”

In examining the district pacing guide I noted that there were complex concepts with essential supporting information and evidence that were to be covered in one or two class sessions. The district pacing guide allowed one class session for the coverage of the following indicator:

1.2: Analyze the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system and the rule of law as written in the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights, and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the British Parliament over the right to tax that resulted in the American Revolutionary War.

This indicator included not only the specifically referenced concepts and information, but the Enlightenment, the Mayflower Compact, Virginia’s House of Burgesses, the French-Indian War which lead to the end of salutary neglect, and other key events and concepts of this period. This factor alone contributed to comments such as Emily’s observation:

There are things I really want to go into a little bit deeper. I feel like we don’t have time to go into them. And, you know, certain things like the Cold War is just a couple of indicators, and in seventh grade World that was a whole entire standard. So, I feel like what makes history meaningful is really knowing the whole story, and I feel like it’s just hit or miss sometimes where it’s just no—they’re just trying to cram too much in essentially in terms of a timeline rather than in terms of the actual events surrounding it.
Directly related to the theme of the breadth rather than depth of the course was the identified theme of state and district prioritization of testing. The district pacing guide and the state support documents were created to direct the coverage of curriculum in time for the EOCE in mid-May. Numerous participants felt that their purpose as U.S. History teachers was to prepare students for the EOCE rather than to help create a love of history or the development of historical analytical skills and understandings in their students. Martha shared:

I don’t want to teach to the test, I want to teach history to children. And, that’s such a distinction with me.” Anne said, “it has limited my creativity. It has limited the time that students get to truly understand a moment in history, because we’re so rushed.”

Brian observed, “I think now, it’s the thing-forget the joy, forget the passion, forget the student projects, so it’s forced me to become too driven to get the students to pass the standardized test.” Brian lamented, “we’re just following the script.” In a similar vein Sam said, “I’m teaching to the test and that kind of thing and it’s like there’s so much more, and so much more in-depth that we could have gone that I feel handcuffed because of the support document.” Finally, Mary stated:

It’s forced me to become a lot more precise-what I cover in the classroom in a narrow window of time and a specific amount of content that has to be transmitted. It’s made it less creative in some ways and more prescriptive due to, again, trying to make sure everything’s accomplished by the test.

These views not only represented a frustration with the rush of the course due to the EOCE, but also a frustration with the overall limitations on teacher practice. Mikaela stated:
Well, it’s definitely hindered creativity in the classroom I would say first and foremost, because now you have to teach specific content within a specified timeframe. And, certain lessons or certain aspects you might want to spend detail on and do neat little activities or go into further, you can’t do that anymore. You have to spend a day and move on. Sometimes things are glossed over in half a day, and move on. So, it’s definitely limited my ability as far as any activities.

Her statement reflected a consistent perspective by the other participants that the activities they incorporated into U.S. History prior to the implementation of the EOCE supported student learning and were enjoyed by students. However, the participants felt that these activities no longer had a place in the course. These identified themes were subsets of the overall theme that the EOCE and related policies led to limitations on teacher autonomy.

**SQ2: How do U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their sense of self-efficacy?**

Because of the enforced prioritization of the U.S. History EOCE by the state and district, I identified a clear theme from the interview process. That theme was:

- A changed understanding of self-efficacy.

Prior to the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, U.S. History teachers established their student learning objectives and then measured student progress against those objectives. Once the U.S. History EOCE and related policies were implemented, teachers adjusted their decision-making to support student performance and the EOCE and, therefore, readjusted their understandings of what it means to be efficacious. Mary’s statement, “I feel
very effective in getting the kids to pass the EOCE. Now, whether or not that’s the same as feeling effective as a teacher I’m not sure” reflected the realignment of what it meant to be efficacious. Other participants expressed this perspective as they believed they were generally successful in helping students prepare for the EOCE. However, when addressing their effectiveness with other learning objectives, Danno summarized that, “it’s not my goals, it’s not my objectives. It’s the state’s and the district’s.” Further supporting this perspective, Anne said, “what my goals are versus what’s the EOC’s goals. I feel like I’m very successful with the EOC, but like my personal goals of having them become historians, I feel like that part I struggle with on a daily basis.” Therefore, the new reality for participants was that the state and district have set their learning objectives and goals for students through the implementation of the EOCE and related policies. The measurement of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy was against pre-determined objectives, not their own objectives.

**SQ3:** How do the perceptions and experiences U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina related to the U.S. History EOCE impact their practice?

The responses related to this subquestion reflected the responses to the central question as well as the other subquestions of this study. However, I identified two themes through participants’ responses directly related to this subquestion in addition to the previously identified theme of limitations on practice. The two themes were:

- Resentment.
- Burden of data teams.
In response to the identification of these two themes, I collected the documents mentioned by the participants. The state guidelines for teacher evaluation specifically stated that teachers of grade-level tests or tested curriculum and subject areas would have student test scores incorporated into their evaluations. The guidelines also stated that teachers of non-tested grade levels or curriculum would have other components, such as portfolios, incorporated into their evaluations.

The primary document collected for the theme of additional burdens related to the EOCE was the guidelines for data teams. Seven participants mentioned that data teaming was the most impactful additional burden placed on teachers.

Although Eloise stated, “test scores are a measure of how effective your teaching is,” most participants expressed deep dissatisfaction and dismay over the inclusion of student test scores in the teacher evaluation process. Emily said, “it’s so scary, honestly” and then went on to elaborate:

I’ve had kids come in mid-semester-I don’t know what they’ve been learning. They might not even have gotten, like the pacing might be off or whatever, so there’re gaps in their knowledge of U.S. History, but they’re attached to my scores.

Rick shared the perspective that “to be evaluated on a set of students that’s different from the next teacher’s, it’s kind of unfair.” Other participants noted that the placement of students into classes was not equitable. Additionally, participants noted that there were numerous factors and variables that had an effect on student test scores for which there were no accommodations. As Elvis stated, “the majority of them have IEPs and 504s, and their attendance is not good, but yet I’m going to be held accountable for that.”
Demonstrating a different perspective about the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process, Mary explained, “it’s not fairly distributed. Not everyone in social studies teaches a class that has test scores or the same requirements.” Her response showed an understanding of the guidelines for teacher evaluations in that teachers of non-tested curriculum and grade levels are held to different standards than teachers of tested curriculum and grade levels. Having spent most of her career at the middle school level, Emily noted a significant difference between grade-level testing and course specific testing when she stated:

It is evident to me that, obviously, we’re getting paid the same thing but I have all this added pressure put on me. Whereas in seventh grade, everybody was accountable. Everybody took social studies PASS, everybody took science PASS, math PASS, ELA PASS, so it was like this unifying testing, so it’s different at the middle school level. But, here, I definitely feel, and the AP teachers probably feel the same way—there’s a difference between the two.

Several teachers noted that some district initiatives served to place additional burdens on teachers of tested curricula. These teachers specifically mentioned the processes and requirements of data teams as impacting their practices. Elvis spoke about the changes in education throughout his years of experience and how some of the changes added to the burden of teaching “it’s not just the EOC, it’s the data team, it’s the SLOs” and that “it’s just a series of just one more thing that we have to do.” Becca saw data teams as “a hindrance to better teaching” as the requirements of data teams took so much time. Mary’s statement that “the problem with data teams is that it focuses narrowly on one sort of small segment of data” which then necessitated several steps and strategies to address.
SQ4: How do the experiences and perceived impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy influence teachers’ views of remaining in the profession by U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina? The least developed, although identified, theme was in response to this subquestion. That theme was:

- Relief.

Danno expressed this theme when he said, “can’t wait to get out. Teaching’s not enjoyable anymore. It’s gone from a profession to a job.” Danno planned to retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year primarily due to the changes within the profession. Although not retired, Rick had a similar perspective when he said, “I’m glad that I don’t have to do them anymore. To be honest, I was kind of glad to get away from U.S. History because of the test.” Rick taught U.S. History since the implementation of the EOCE, but currently taught government and economics.

Reiterating the idea that teachers had a sense of relief when not teaching U.S. History, Becca shared anecdotal conversations with other department members:

What I take antidotally from other members in the department-history used to be fought over. It used to be that teachers with seniority were the teachers who got to teach U.S. History. it was a privilege. Now, we’ve got a teacher retiring from our department, and of the veteran teachers who are here, you ask them, would you step into that role and teach U.S. history and they answer is like “no way I see what you all go through in terms of additional responsibilities,” and, you know, called in to answer for our school’s scores and things like that pressure and they’re like “no thank you.”
Combining these three perspectives, they created a theme that there were teachers who purposefully avoided teaching U.S. History, relieved when not teaching U.S. History, and looking forward to retirement.
Table 1.

*Impact of the EOCE on Teacher’s Perceptions of Autonomy and Self-Efficacy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-Codes</th>
<th>Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<td>Enforced Dependency</td>
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<td>District Accountability Checks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Support Base</td>
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Summary

This chapter reported the results from the 12 participants in this phenomenological study of the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on high school U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy. The participants all experienced the phenomenon of the U.S. History EOCE, and all participated in individual interviews. I also invited participants to participate in a focus group interview to develop a more complex identification of themes as participants responded to questions as well as to each other. The third form of data collection involved the collecting of relevant and appropriate documents.

Through the analysis of the interviews and documents, I identified themes that represented the lived experiences of the participants related to the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and related policies as dictated by the state and district. I identified theme connections and overlaps among some of the themes. However, each theme had distinct characteristics developed by the participants. The themes I identified in this study were:

- Enforced teacher dependency.
- Breadth versus depth.
- Prioritization of testing.
- Limitations on practice.
- Limitations on autonomy.
- A changed understanding of self-efficacy.
- Resentment.
- Burden of data teams.
• Relief.

All the themes represented teacher perceptions related to the central research question which focused on U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy.

Through the data analysis process, it became clear that teachers perceived that the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, and related policies, impacted their practice, autonomy, and sense of self-efficacy. Participants spoke of having to follow prescribed learning objectives for students as well as the district’s pacing of the course which incorporated the standards and indicators from the state support document. Additionally, student test performance counted for 30% of the evaluation of teachers of tested curricula and grade levels. Participants noted that the concepts and skills that they deemed essential to the support of student learning and achievement were deemed unimportant by policy makers, causing participants to re-evaluate what it meant for them to have autonomy in educational decision making as well as what it meant for them to be efficacious as educators.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenologic qualitative study is to understand the impact of course-specific standardized testing on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy. The course-specific standardized test that is the focus of this study is the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. The teachers involved in this study are U.S. History teachers located in the Midlands region of South Carolina. This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study from three data sets which include individual interviews, focus group interviews, and related documents. Following the summary of the study’s findings is a discussion of the findings related to the relevant literature and the theoretical framework of this study. The next section focuses on implications of the findings, both methodological and practical which is followed by the identifications of the delimitations and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research follows the delimitations and limitations section. After which a summary of the chapter is provided.

Summary of Findings

CQ: How does the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE impact U.S. History teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and self-efficacy in the Midlands region of South Carolina?

Participants felt, to an extent, their perceptions of both their autonomy and their sense of self-efficacy were limited as a result of the EOCE and related policies. Although the participants initially appreciated the intent and helpfulness of the district pacing guide and the state support document, they also felt that these intended supports hindered the scope and development of
their own student learning objectives in lieu of the state and district objectives exemplified by the EOCE. Additionally, the emphasis on the EOCE and the inclusion of student test scores into the teach evaluation process further impacted their teaching practices.

SQ1: How do South Carolina U.S. History teachers perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy?

While some participants explained that they still felt a level of autonomy in that they had chosen to make decisions that would support student preparation for the EOCE, most participants felt severe limitations in the goals, objectives, and decisions they could make related to student learning objectives outside of student performance on the EOCE. While one teacher stated that she still made decisions about skills development outside of the EOCE, others stated that there just was not time for other skill development such as writing and document analysis based on the pacing and punitive nature of the EOCE as related to the teacher evaluation process.

SQ2: How do South Carolina U.S. History teachers perceive the experience and impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their sense of self-efficacy?

In a similar vein to subquestion 1, teachers who focused on preparing students for the EOCE felt that they were effective in achieving that objective. However, most participants felt that as they were not the ones who were, in fact, establishing goals and learning objectives for their own students. This led them to believe that they were not efficacious in their roles as teachers. As most participants felt they had limited autonomy, they also felt that their self-efficacy was limited in that they were following prescribed pacing and curriculum for their students rather than their own.
**SQ3:** How do South Carolina teachers’ perceptions and experiences of the U.S. History EOCE impact teacher practice?

Even those teachers who adjusted their perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy to reflect state and district policies as well as the U.S. History EOCE felt there was a significant impact on their practice. Participants examined various components of teacher practice to explain why they felt limitations based on the EOCE and related policies. Several participants mentioned the lack of writing for students and some spoke of the inability to emphasize analysis of documents and events. However, the most heartfelt comments referenced the inability to integrate various projects into the curriculum and instruction. Participants felt that the fun of history and ability for students to learn through experiential learning activities had been virtually eliminated. Participants expressed sadness about the lack of depth and knowledge due to the time constraints and coverage requirements of the state and district policies.

Additionally, the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process had a significant effect on teachers and their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy. As student scores represented a significant component within their evaluations, teachers felt tied to the EOCE and related policies because no matter what extenuating circumstances or other factors and variable were reflected in the lives of their students and students’ learning, teachers were held accountable without regard to student sets.

**SQ4:** How do the experiences and perceived impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy influence teachers’ views of remaining in the profession?
Participants did not indicate that they would leave the profession prior to retirement. One participant retired at the end of the 2017-2017 school year and two participants stated that they might retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Danno noted that if he retired at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, that was earlier than he had anticipated due to the changes in the profession. Another participant expressed relief that he no longer taught U.S. History. Yet another participant related antidotal conversations she had with other social studies teachers in which they expressed that they would never voluntarily teach U.S. History. When asked why, they responded that they did not want the responsibilities and accountability that went along with teaching U.S. History. Additionally, it was shared that prior to the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, teachers considered it a privilege to teach U.S. History and the assignment usually went to the most senior members of the social studies department.

Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand how U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina perceived the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, and its related policies, on their autonomy and self-efficacy. To understand the phenomenon of this course-specific standardized test on U.S. History teachers, I conducted a literature review to read current studies related to this phenomenon. The results of my research supported the findings of previous studies especially related to the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process and the curricular restrictions resulting from the prioritization of standardized testing. However, there were unanticipated findings that included the burden of data teams and other related policies as well as a changed understanding
of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Further development of these results is found in the literature and research synthesis that follows. I identified the type of research I would conduct and the criterion participant sampling from which I recruited potential participants. I sought and received IRB final approval, district office approval, and site administrative approvals before recruiting participants.

The data collection process represented data triangulation with the use of three data sets consisting of individual interviews, a focus group interview, and the collection of relevant documents. Through bracketing, open coding, and the development of textural and structural descriptions I identified themes that embodied the lived experiences of the participants related to the phenomenon.

I identified two significant findings of the study that addressed gaps in the literature. One of the findings was the burdens placed on teachers of course-specific standardized testing beyond pacing and curriculum guides. Participants identified this burden as the additional distraction and dictates of data teams. However, the re-evaluation and realignment of what self-efficacy meant to participants was the most significant finding.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study centered on Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy, combined with key concepts from his social cognitive theory (2001). The elements of Bandura’s social cognitive theory that directly supported this study were his identification of how each individual has effect on one’s own sense of agency, how one has agency through indirect means, and the role of collective agency. The perspectives of the study’s participants
related to the impact of state and district policies on participants’ practice, autonomy, and sense of self-efficacy supported this framework. Due to the limitations on practice represented by prescribed curriculum, participants such as Danno felt “it’s basically, in my opinion, made us to become robots.” Another participant, Martha, had a matching perspective when she asked, “are we becoming robots?” She furthered that sentiment by adding, “I don’t even need to be here.” Although participants initially expressed appreciation of the district-created pacing guide and the state support document, they also felt that much of the decision-making opportunities had been eliminated or seriously impacted by the focus on the EOCE and related policies. For an educator to have agency over one’s professional life, an educator would have the ability to synthesize the learning environment of the classroom and then be able to effectively integrate decisions, practice, and goal-setting to “bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities promotes foresightful behavior” (Bandura, 2001, p. 3). The incorporation of an educator’s curriculum and pedagogy into lesson planning and in support of student learning had been seriously curtailed by participants’ experiences with the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Participants identified the mandated and prescribed curriculum they had to follow as limiting their decision-making. They also identified the prioritization of preparing students for a standardized test for which they had no input as impacting their effectiveness.

Bandura (2001) directly connected his self-cognitive theory to his theory of self-efficacy (1994) through connecting “people’s beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning and over environmental events” (p. 4). Bandura (1994) also identified the four major processes for the realization of a strong sense of self-efficacy. These processes were “cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes” (p. 71). Beyond
these four major processes were the three sources of self-efficacy which included mastery experiences, vicarious experiences of social influencers, and the social persuasion of others. Of the three sources of self-efficacy, mastery experiences were the most effective way of developing strong self-efficacy. “In sum, the successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the nonanxious, the nondepressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 77). This aspect of self-efficacy was demonstrated by several participants who identified that they had strong senses of self-efficacy even when preparing students for learning objectives that were made by state and district policy makers rather than by themselves. Mary stated, “I feel very effective in getting the kids to pass the EOCE.” However, she immediately followed that statement with “now whether or not that’s the same as feeling effective as a teacher, I’m not sure.” Participants of this study found ways to feel a sense of strong self-efficacy, but they changed their understandings of self-efficacy to do so. Connected to that was a changed understanding of autonomy such as when Mary said, “I would like to say that I still feel that I make those decisions. It’s just a lot of pressure to make sure those decisions comply with the expectations.”

Bandura (1994) wrote that “the striking characteristic of people who have achieved eminence in their fields is an inextinguishable sense of personal efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing” (p. 77). This statement served as the foundational perspective that many participants expressed when they responded to questions about their sense of autonomy and their sense of self-efficacy which focuses on achieving their objectives for student learning. Anne explained, “they’re supposed to be writing, they’re supposed to be analyzing documents,
and even at the lower levels they’re supposed to be doing those things. And, that is not the main focus of the EOC.” She then continued “it’s very multiple-choice based, which is not real, in the real world. That’s not preparing them for anything except a multiple-choice test.”

Becca stated, “it has really made me question my efficacy. It’s tricky because I’m not getting to determine goals and objectives for students’ learning.” Other participants shared the perspective that they had to adjust what autonomy and self-efficacy meant to them professionally, as the state and district mandated that for U.S. History teachers their effectiveness as teachers would be measured through student performance on the U.S. History EOCE.

### Impact of Standardized Testing on Curriculum and Pedagogy

Previous research revealed a plethora of factors that impacted curriculum and pedagogy as a result of standardized testing. Nelson (2013) examined the cost of testing and preparation for testing for districts and states which supported the findings of Crowder and Konle (2015). Building onto the concept of the costs of standardized testing was that deprioritizing non-tested curriculum as examined by Maltese and Hochbein (2012).

Beyond the fiscal impact on curriculum and pedagogy as a result of mandated testing was the limitations to practice and pedagogy within the classroom of grade-level and content-area testing. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) found in their study that teachers of tested curriculum and grade-levels dedicated instructional time to preparing students for the tests which limited the time spend on actual curriculum. This finding was reinforced by Bulgar’s (2012) study in which participants identified the limitations of content coverage as well as disruptions caused by test preparation in addition to the tests themselves. Study participants shared this
perspective as exemplified by Danno when he said, “it’s almost as if the amount of time we spend on the curriculum is equal to the amount of time we spend on testing techniques.” Emily mentioned the specific testing that occurred prior to the EOCE itself, “I feel like a number of days are lost due to testing, whether one of the three district benchmarks, the ACT, the ACT Workkeys, etc.” These specific standardized tests were in addition to test-taking strategies and preparation that the state and district built into the curriculum through both the district pacing guide and the state support document. Participants consistently expressed this perspective as they noted the lack of time for learning activities not directly connected to preparation for the EOCE or prescribed by state and district policies. Brian stated, “forget the joy, forget the passion, forget the student projects, so it’s forced me to become too driven to get the students to pass the standardized test.” In examining the district-provided pacing guide for the 2016-2017 school year, it was clear that the district provided a support that, when followed, kept teachers on pace to cover the entire curriculum related to the state framework for U.S. History.

Brian was not the only participant who lamented the loss of learning activities that engaged students and encouraged them to attain a deeper understanding of history. Anne shared:

I think it can limit some of the writing process that is really, if we want them to think like historians, they have to be able to write like historians. And I think that part of it is eliminated because you’re just trying to figure out ways for them to remember the facts.

That’s all the EOC is asking them to do.

Rick observed that “you have to teach to a test and stay on a very strict timeline and it really does limit your creativity.” Several participants noted the inability to be creative with learning activities, including Mikaela who said, “it’s definitely hindered creativity in the
classroom I would say first and foremost, because now you have to teach specific content within a specified timeframe.” Beyond limitations on creativity, participants noted other ways in which their curriculum and pedagogy were impacted by the EOCE and related policies. Mary said, “I don’t know if that goes along with my pedagogy of wanting to have students have the opportunity to engage with material and really do inquiry based work.” Elvis summarized the perspectives of the participants when he shared:

Basically, it’s just rush, rush, rush. You don’t really get a chance to go into some things and go into detail. You’re thrown a pacing guide and we gotta get to this point. If we have an assembly or a bad weather day, you gotta double up. To be honest, it has taken some of the fun out of teaching history. Your hands are tied as to what you have to do and how you have to do it. And you’re kind of teaching to a test rather than teaching history.

The experiences of the participants in this study echoed the findings of Bulgar (2012), Slomp (2008), and Rooney (2015) who found the narrowing of curriculum and instruction that resulted from the prioritization of testing in education.

Participants found that their changing pedagogy and practice reflected the limited essential skills development that students needed per the state support document. Anne said, “it can limit some of the writing process that is really, if we want them to think like historians, they have to be able to write like historians.” Mary shared “it prevents you from digging deeply.” Multiple participants lamented the elimination of projects and other learning activities that they believed helped students learn concepts, analyze documents, and further their understandings of history and its impact on the modern world. Sam noted this when he said, “which is one of the
moral dilemmas that I have because even when it’s in the ‘not essential to know’ I still feel like it’s essential to know.” During the focus group interview, Erin stated:

I want my students to be independent learners. I hated history in high school because it was memorization of facts and we never had a chance to challenge ourselves by applying what we had learned; it was simply regurgitating it for a test and then forgetting it. I feel like the EOC has pushed me more towards teaching for the test versus teaching using methods to foster students’ curiosity and critical thinking skills.

These perspectives supported the findings of Cho and Eberhard (2013) who found that teachers in a Title I school were dissatisfied about the focus on testing rather than supporting student learning.

Even though participants experienced limitations to their practice and curriculum, they did initially express appreciation for the district pacing guide and the state support document during the individual interviews. Faced with a mandated EOCE, they found the provided materials and useful to the end of preparing students for the EOCE even though the materials had an impact on their practice. Most of the participants expressed this appreciation similarly to Becca’s comment “I’ve actually found the support documents to be incredibly useful.” However, as participants fully developed their responses during the interviews, their perspectives changed regarding these documents and policies. Participants started identifying how these prescribed guides actually limited their practice as reflected in Anne’s statement, “it has limited my creativity. It has limited, I think, the time that students get to truly understand a moment in history, because we’re so rushed.”
The participants in this study had an initially different perspective on these types of guides and documents in their individual interviews than did participants in other studies such as the study conducted by Stauffer and Mason (2013) in which they found that teachers resented the guides. However, during the focus group interview a different perspective immediately emerged. During the focus group interview, participants expressed frustration towards the pacing guide and support documents as exemplified by Anne who stated “I’m always behind. And like the last benchmark, they’re like ‘this is the window for the benchmark’ and I’m like ‘when’s the last day?’ Because that’s when I’m going to do it.” Martha added “that’s when I feel like I’m a robot,” and Becca said, “the pacing guide is only useful to a point.” In a study by Mueller and Colley (2015), it was found that novice teachers appreciated the guides while more experienced teachers did not. However, in this study, experienced teachers initially voiced an appreciation of the guides while they did not appreciate the pedagogical changes they had to make in order to cover the requirement content by the test date in mid-May. And, in the focus group, the voices of the participants only expressed frustration with the guides.

Impact of Standardized Testing on Teacher Evaluations

An increasing number of states included student standardized test scores, grade-level tests and course-specific tests, in the teacher evaluation process (Hull, 2013). In South Carolina, the teacher evaluation process incorporated student test scores for 30% of the total evaluation process (Adcox, 2014). The South Carolina Evaluation Guideline (2015) explicitly stated the differing evaluation processes for teachers of tested curricula and those that pertain to teachers of non-tested curricula. Mausethagen (2013) noted that these tests “are examples of a concrete and
mandated accountability policy that intervenes directly into relations between teachers and students, subjects, and principals” (p. 140). Porter (2015) noted that “there is no way they could isolate the impact of teaching itself from other factors affecting children’s learning, particularly such things as the family background of the students, the impact of poverty, racial segregation, even class size” (para. 16). Darling-Hammond et al. (2011) found that the evaluation of teachers using standardized test scores ignored vital student data, a perspective shared by many of this study’s participants. Elvis identified even more factors that impacted student performance on standardized tests when he said, “the majority of them have IEPs and 504s and their attendance is not good, but yet I’m going to be held accountable for that.”

The perspective that the incorporation of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process ignored environmental or learning factors that impeded student achievement was shared by most of the study’s participants. During the focus group, Mikaela stated:

They should focus on the growth of the student. If you’re going to measure growth, you should give them the test at the beginning of the year, see where they’re at, and see at the end of the year-how much did they grow? Not whether they passed the test. If they started the class with a 5% and got to 20%-that’s great. That’s significant.

Rick reinforced the perspective that students differ from each other and should be measured against differing standards when he said, “when you’re judged on a set group of 20 or 25 students, that each set that comes into your classroom is a different group and with different abilities. If you judge me on my team, let me pick the team.”

Beyond the disparity within their classrooms, some participants felt that they, as U.S. History teachers, had burdens and expectations placed on them that other teachers did not. Mary
said, “I think that it’s not fairly distributed. Not everyone in social studies teaches a class that has test scores or the same requirements.”

Ohemeng and McCall-Thomas (2013) found that some teachers changed their practice and content to meet the policies enacted by managers and politicians. Martha stated during the focus group interview, “the people making the decisions for education are not the educators. We’re not in charge of our own profession anymore.” Thibodeaux et al. (2015) wrote that “teachers felt that policy makers made decisions that affected educators, and it bothered teachers that so many mandates had been placed on them” (p. 247). And yet teachers changed their practices to reflect the prioritization of testing, whether to include more test-taking strategies and practice tests to just covering the required content and ignoring untested content, reflecting the concern that teachers had regarding their own on-going employment (Bhattacharyya et al., 2013).

**Impact of Standardized Testing on Teacher Retention**

The issue of standardized testing having an impact on teacher retention was not a focal point for the study’s participants. While the current literature and statistics related to teacher retention showed increasing numbers of teachers leaving the profession (CERRA, 2015), most of the participants in this study did not identify course-specific standardized testing as a motivator for leaving the profession. Many recent studies, including the one by Pas, Bradshaw, and Hershfeldt (2012) found that teachers faced higher burnout rates and attrition rates than other professions. However, most of the studies that reflected teacher attrition due to the impact of standardized testing on teacher practice involved new or less experienced teachers (Henry,
Bastian, & Fortner, 2011), as well as teachers who realized that the nature and experiences of teaching changed due to the culture of test-taking (Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Only Emily specifically responded “I do worry about burnout and after 12 years of teaching I have definitely contemplated leaving the profession. I hope things don’t perpetuate to where I feel more pressure to make a change in my career.”

The discrepancy between the findings in the current literature and this study could be explained by the fact that new teachers were not a part of the criterion sampling of this study due to the criteria of teachers having taught U.S. History for at least one year in order to have experienced the phenomenon of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Additionally, schools prioritized the assignment of effective teachers to the U.S. History classes to achieve higher passing rates for their students.

Although participants did not explicitly cite course-specific standardized tests as reasons for leaving the profession, Danno did share that as he anticipates retiring at the end of the 2017-2018 school year that he “can’t wait to get out. Teaching’s not enjoyable anymore. It’s gone from a profession to a job.” Rick, who is currently teaching Government and Economics which did not have EOCEs said, “I’m glad that I don’t have to do them anymore. To be honest, I was kind of glad to get away from U.S. History because of the test.” Although only one participant in the study stated that she may consider leaving the profession due to the changes within it, including the culture of testing, four participants indicated that they were either relieved to not be teaching U.S. History due to the changes associated with the EOCE or that they were glad that they were retiring soon as the profession had drastically changed over the years of their careers.
Standardized Testing and Teacher Autonomy

With the prioritization of grade-level and course-specific standardized testing, many states and districts prescribed curricular and pedagogical directives that may impact teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy (Prichard & Moore, 2016). Cho and Eberhard (2013) wrote “rigidly prescribing what teachers do and when minimizes the autonomy of teachers” (p. 3). The increased number of state and district mandates placed on educators led to the findings by Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) that teachers experienced lower perceptions of autonomy than did individuals in other professions.

Notably, Wermke and Hostfalt (2014) found an important correlation between teacher autonomy and student learning in that the context of education necessitates the making of educational decisions that reflected student learning needs that incorporated factors beyond the classroom. Supporting this finding, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) found that teachers with perceptions of high autonomy more likely perceived themselves as effective and more likely to be engaged in their profession and positions. Rahimi and Riasati (2015) found that teachers desired at least some professional autonomy and that there was a direct correlation between teacher sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.

The findings of this study were consistent with those of earlier studies in that participants felt that their professional autonomy had been severely limited through the mandates, policies, and teacher evaluation changes that were a result of the increased focus on standardized testing. Although some of the study’s participants initially responded that they did not have limited perceptions of their profession autonomy, they eventually revealed that they did, in fact, experience a lower perception of their autonomy. As Mary examined her perception of her
professional autonomy, she stated “I would like to say that I still feel that I make those decisions. It’s just a lot of pressure to make sure those decisions comply with the expectations.”

Nine participants immediately responded with an identification of the limitations in their autonomy that they had experienced because of the U.S. History EOCE and related policies such as the district pacing guide and the state support document. In examining the district pacing guide, it was evident that teachers had to cover an entire indicator, with all the relevant, detailed information in a span of one to two days depending on the weight given to each indicator by the district coordinator. Four of the participants (Brian, Danno, Elvis, and Mikaela) specifically used the term “limited” before expanding upon their initial responses. I identified the theme of a limited perception of autonomy throughout the interview process even in questions that did not specifically address autonomy. Anne said, “I just feel very stifled in what I can do as an educator” while Becca demonstrated a deeper effect of the loss of autonomy when she stated “the pressure from the powers that be for constantly improving scores . . . I think that creates a sort of fear.” Not only did the participants perceive limitations to their sense of autonomy, many of them felt that there would be repercussions if they tried to make educational decisions independent from the state and district policies. Sam, Danno, and Martha used the term “robots” to describe how they perceived their roles as educators in U.S. History for which there is an EOCE as well as district and state policies attached to the course. Martha said, “I really don’t want to sound like a cynic, but, think about this for a minute---are we all becoming robots?”

This perceived lack of the ability to make educational decisions for their students led many participants to identify specific learning activities that they could no longer do because of
the EOCE. Elvis said, “I feel like I’ve been programmed and this is what I gotta do. I’ve been limited as to my autonomy I don’t think I have any.”

While this study supported current research regarding the impact of standardized testing on teachers’ sense of autonomy, it provided new insights as to how deeply teachers felt this impact and its limitations on their decision-making capabilities as well as their practice. Participants consistently identified examples of the limitations on their perception of autonomy through the learning activities that they could no longer use to engage students and lead them to a deeper understanding, and love, of history.

An identified theme from this study related to autonomy, but not referenced in current literature, was the imposition of data teams and the impact those teams had on participants and their sense of autonomy. The theme of the burden of district mandates, such as data teams, while unexpected by the researcher, was clearly identified through the individual and focus group interviews as the research progressed. Seven of the study’s participants identified data teams as having an impact on their autonomy. Becca stated:

The EOC has created a lot of extra curriculum work. Now, there has always been curriculum, but it serves as the cornerstone and created other things like data teaming, additional forms and things that we had to fill out . . . Honestly, the data team process has been a hindrance to better teaching.

Elvis said, “it’s not just the EOC, it’s the data team, it’s the SLOs . . . now we have to go to meetings and it’s just a series of just one more thing that we have to do.”

However, it was not just the attendance at additional meetings that impacted the participants. As Martha stated:
Data teams is a tremendous amount of work, paperwork, and other, and, I think-I wonder sometimes if we’re just bogged down in paperwork. And that it doesn’t really translate into my classroom. If I spend a lot of time on something, I want to see the results of it with my kids. And, I don’t know that we always get that.

Martha’s statement was centered on the prescribed processes and steps that were outlined in the mandated Data Team Guidelines. Mary’s perspective added to this when she stated:

The problem with data teams is that it focuses narrowly on one sort of small segment of data and then we have to create a common strategy that we’re all going to utilize and we have to assess the strategy . . . Instead, I think it becomes sort of that whole prescriptive—here’s the handbook on teaching and we’ll just follow these then everyone would be super successful. I call it “teacher proofing” the curriculum.

Not only did the data teams require artificial goals in that all members of the data team had to administer the same pre- and post-assessments and establish the same goals for their students, they all had to also focus on the same narrowed curriculum identified by the team as needing more support. However, Mikaela identified a key issue of the whole data team process when she said:

And if they don’t get a concept, when are you going to reteach it? You don’t have the time to reteach it. That’s a part of data teams, you’re supposed to assess how well they’re learning. But, where’s that in the pacing guide?

The intent and purpose of data teams, when combined with the district pacing guide and state support document, created a scenario in which teachers were directed to specific processes and steps, but the policies under which they worked were contradictory in purpose and outcome.
Therefore, not only did these policies impact teachers’ perceptions of autonomy, many of the study’s participants felt that they created additional burdens upon their limited time with students, as well as upon being able to effectively prepare students for the U.S. History EOCE.

**Standardized Testing and Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Bandura’s (1994) theory of self-efficacy explained that those who believed they had high self-efficacy would be able to effectively attain their goals and objectives. Bandura’s theory further developed the findings by Wood and Bandura (1989) in which they stated, “perceived self-efficacy concerns people’s beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed” (p. 364). In applying this theory to education, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found that a high sense of self-efficacy helped teachers persevere and achieve their goals in spite of the difficulty of the tasks. Mojoudi and Tabatabaei (2014) found that those with a strong sense of self-efficacy demonstrated high levels of achievement.

However, many studies such as those by Angelle and Teague (2014) and Jiafang et al. (2015) found that the decisions and mandates made by various policy-makers directly limited teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy and ability to achieve student learning objectives. Bordelon et al (2012) found that efficacious teachers had strong pedagogical practices, effective classroom management, integrated student participation into their learning activities, and had confidence about the success of themselves and their students. However, teachers who perceived limitations on their autonomy, practice, and sense of self-efficacy experienced underperformance by themselves as well as their students (Ruan et al., 2015).
Although the current literature identified an impact on teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy due to the increase of standardized testing and related policies, this study found that most participants, in order to feel themselves to be efficacious, developed new understandings of what self-efficacy itself meant. This was an unanticipated finding.

Within the parameters of this study, Eloise was the only participation who noted no impact on her sense of self-efficacy as a result of the U.S. History EOCE or the connected policies. She said:

That’s one thing I like about the pacing guides and the curriculum guides is that, you want to be efficacious and I find myself to be very effective because I’m going to make sure that I cover what needs to be covered.

Although her perspective appeared to reflect satisfaction with her sense of self-efficacy, when combined with a similar view from Rick who noted “as teachers we adjust . . . so, I feel I was just as effective, but we certainly had to adjust to meet the new standards,” the theme of adjusting goals and expectations to have a strong sense of self-efficacy started to be identified by the researcher. Eloise, Elvis, and Rick may have veiled their sense of self-efficacy in positive language, but a deeper need to realign expectations to feel efficacious was expressed by the other participants.

Mary illuminated this perspective when she said, “I feel very effective in getting the kids to pass the EOCE. Now whether or not that’s the same as feeling effective as a teacher I’m not sure.” After further development of her response, she ended with “that’s not necessarily why I went into teaching, so I don’t feel as effective in accomplishing those other goals like making kids love history like I love history.” Therein lies the dichotomy of participants’ perceptions of
their self-efficacy; they adjusted their goals to reflect their reduced sense of autonomy and the prioritization of the U.S. History EOCE, but still felt a loss of effectiveness when measured against what their learning goals for students were prior to the implementation of the EOCE.

Providing additional insight into this perspective during the focus group interview, Becca said, “I have to disassociate my objectives from what has been placed upon me.” Anne responded to this statement with “I feel like what I want to do is not really what’s happening in my classroom. It’s really sad.” To which Mikaela said, “because it’s dictated to you. I don’t even get to set the objectives, it’s dictated.”

During her individual interview, Anne said, “what my goals are versus what’s the EOC’s goals. I feel like I’m very successful with the EOC, but like my personal goals of having them become historians, I feel like that part I struggle with on a daily basis.” Participants expressed variations of this theme of differentiating state and district goals from personal objectives for student learning. Danno succinctly stated “it’s not my goals. It’s not my goals, it’s not my objectives. It’s the state’s and the district’s.” Martha identified this perspective when she said, “my goals are sometimes different from the End of Course people, or the district, or the administration. My goals are different. I’m looking at the total child. And, there’s not really a place for the total child in this.” Becca said, “it has really made me question my efficacy; it’s tricky because I’m not getting to determine goals and objectives for students’ learning.” This element of adjusting one’s understanding of self-efficacy to reflect the goals and objectives mandated by policy-makers revealed the efforts of the participants to maintain their sense of self-efficacy even though they no longer make student learning objectives that were not directly related to being successful on the U.S. History EOCE.
Implications

Qualitative design and inquiry is used when researchers want to hear the essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for the study’s participants (Moustakas, 1994). Through the qualitative design of this study, I listened to the voices of the participants and identified the themes related to the essence of their experiences with the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and related policies as mandated by state and district policy makers. One of the significant aspects of qualitative data analysis used by the researcher was allowing participants to develop their responses to the interview questions, whether individual interview questions or the focus group interview questions. When allowed to fully develop their thoughts, most of the participants’ responses morphed into a different response than their initial reactions to the questions. Five of the participants initially responded with positive statements regarding the impact of the EOCE, the district pacing guide, and curriculum guides upon their practice, autonomy, and sense of self-efficacy. However, as they further developed their responses and continued through the interview, they started identifying specific limitations to practice, autonomy, and self-efficacy. I observed that while they wanted to respond in a positive manner, the more that they could develop their responses, the freer they became with their insights and experiences. Therefore, an implication of this study was that researchers should use more qualitative design when studying similar topics with participants as not only are participants free from having to select a response from a pre-determined set of factors, they also tend to reveal more of the essence of their experiences when allowed to respond to open-ended questions.
Implication for Policy Makers on the Mandates Placed on Teachers

Another implication from this study was the forced change of understanding regarding self-efficacy that participants developed due to limitations placed upon their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy that resulted from the implementation of the EOCE and related policies. Policy makers need to consider the mental and subconscious effects of their policies and dictates upon the individuals who must carry out the programs, curricula, and other impacts of the legislation or policies. Bandura (1994) emphasized that those who felt a strong sense of self-efficacy were generally more efficacious than those who felt a weak sense of self-efficacy. Participants in this study spoke about their collective struggle to have some amount of autonomy and to feel some amount of effectiveness related to the EOCE. Beyond the fiscal cost of testing and test preparation and the human cost to students of the pressures of mandated standardized testing is the cost to educators related to their beliefs about their professionalism and effectiveness. In an era of increasing attrition rates among educators (CERRA, 2015), educators are concerned about the added pressures of policies and mandates related to student performance on standardized tests, and the pressure of having student test scores account for 30% of the teacher evaluation process for teachers of grade-level or course-specific testing (Adcox, 2014). Therefore, state and district policy makers must develop policies that support teachers’ sense of professionalism while developing equitable evaluation systems that are not punitive to teachers of tested curricula.

One of the reasons for the importance of this implication is the data related to how the participants of this study realigned or re-evaluated their understanding of self-efficacy to maintain a semblance of their sense of self-efficacy despite imposed limitations on their
autonomy and practice. Instead of focusing on their sense of self-efficacy in terms of effectively supporting student learning objectives related to the mastery and understanding of U.S. history, the study’s participants focused on effectively supporting students to be successful on the U.S. History EOCE, which was the state and district predetermined goal for student learning. Bandura (2001) identified elements that provided one’s agency to exercise control over one’s personal and social life as well as one’s occupation. The ability to analyze situations and environments to set and achieve objectives, goals, and outcomes was reliant upon one’s ability to make those decisions. Through the implementation and imposition of pacing guides, support documents, and prescribed data team processes, the participants of this study felt limited in their abilities to individualize effective learning activities and objectives for their students. Bandura (1994) stated, “after people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks” (p. 72). However, the study’s participants felt that the state and district educational policy makers did not trust them to be successful and therefore bound them to legislative and policy dictates.

Legislative and policy decision-makers need to consider the impact of their decisions upon the educators who are responsible for supporting student learning and achievement. The reality that this study’s participants realigned their conception of what it meant to have a strong sense of self-efficacy as a teacher underscores the importance of giving voice to their perceptions related to standardized testing and other policies. Policy makers must listen to this stakeholder component and integrate the concerns and voices of educators into the policy-making process itself as well as into educational policies.
Implications for Policy Makers on Prescribed Data Teaming

One of the most significant implications for district level and site administrators and policy makers is that of the forced implementation of data teams and data team processes that narrowly focused on one aspect of student performance which did not necessarily support student learning nor provide for differentiation. Seven of the study’s participants specifically mentioned the limitations and hindrances of data teaming to their efforts to support student learning. Although data teaming may have been of use to the participants, the prescribed conducting of meetings and the prescribed series of meeting along with mandated assessment practices had a direct impact on the participants’ sense of autonomy, effectiveness, and efficacy. District policies related to prescribed data teaming were in opposition to Bandura’s (1994) identification of mastery experiences as being the strongest foundational aspect of one’s sense of self-efficacy. When participants worked in their data teams they did not develop experiences that supported their educational decision-making or practice, they followed directives made by other stakeholders who did not teach courses of tested curricula. This policy does not support teachers who taught these courses and developed differing understandings of what students needed to learn to best understand U.S. History as, per the pacing guide, there was not an opportunity for remediation. Participants also felt that data teaming, along with other prescribed policies, affected their role as professionals in that policy makers and site administrators did not trust the participants to make decisions that would support student learning. Therefore, it is essential that policy makers and administrators allow a greater voice to teachers in terms of setting learning goals for their students through data teams as well as the curricular and pedagogical priorities and practices that would help students achieve those learning goals.
Delimitations and Limitations

There were several delimitations of this proposed study. Among the delimitations were the setting, criterion participant sampling, and the phenomenon at the center of the study. The setting of Mountain School District was selected based on convenience sampling as the district was close to my home and place of work thus allowing me to have easier access to the participants. The teacher participants invited to participate in the study taught high school U.S. History in this school district. I recruited only those teachers who taught U.S. History for more than one year to participate in the study to ensure that all participants had experienced the phenomenon of the U.S. History EOCE. An additional delimitation of the study was that I only invited teachers to be participants in the study about their perceptions of the impact of the U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy. I did not invite or include administrators, students, or other educational stakeholders to share their perceptions regarding the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on teacher autonomy and self-efficacy.

One of the limitations of this study was the possibility that individual participants were not forthcoming with their true perceptions of the impact of the EOCE on their autonomy and self-efficacy. I felt that Eloise, in particular, seemed to respond with what she assumed to be the correct responses in that all her responses were worded positively even though some limitations to her practice were included in her answers. However, she may have just been an outlier in terms of her responses not reflecting the perspectives of the other participants. Additionally, during the focus group interview, some participants may have felt intimidated or overwhelmed by other participants. My observation of the participants during the focus group interview indicated that all the participants shared and responded to each other; no one person dominated
the discussion. Additionally, some of the focus group participants may have aligned their responses with those of the other participants. However, when analyzed against the individual interviews, I did not find variances among the responses in the individual transcripts and the focus group transcript. Although dissertation committee, as well as a pilot test grouping of content and research experts, vetted my prewritten open-ended questions for any trace of bias, another limitation may have been that own perspectives emerged through the interview process. However, during the interviews I followed strict protocol to ensure that I did not interject my own opinions or perceptions into the findings by clearly identifying and bracketing them out.

The main limitation of this study was the lack of generalizability due to the focus on one course-specific standardized test. The findings related to the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE may not be applicable to other courses that have an EOCE or to other standardized tests. A related limitation was that the research study focused on participants at three high schools within one school district in one geographical region in South Carolina. Although the schools represented in the study included diverse student populations and settings, they may not represent the experiences of teachers of tested curricula in other states or regions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Although several of the themes that I identified in this study supported current literature and research, there were two notable and key findings not reflected in current literature. One was the perceived burden of data teams as a part of district policies related to standardized testing on participants’ autonomy and practice. Therefore, further research should be conducted focusing on the relevancy of data teaming to teachers being able to effectively prepare students.
for course-specific or grade-level standardized testing. Researchers should examine and analyze the impact of the practice in comparison to state and district policies that prescribe the pacing and curriculum coverage expectations that are placed on the teachers of these grade-levels and courses. Due to the identification of this theme through the conducting of a phenomenological study, it is recommended that future research on this issue also use phenomenological qualitative design and inquiry as this design will allow the voices of the participants to reveal the essence of their lived experiences with data teaming. This design will support the aim of determining “what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

The other major theme not previously identified in the current literature is that of a changing understanding of one’s sense of self-efficacy to maintain a feeling of being efficacious. Participants changed their sense of self-efficacy to reflect the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and its related policies on their practice and sense of autonomy to be able to continue seeing themselves as efficacious and effective. This was the most significant finding in my research and one that should be further researched. As this theme demonstrated how the participants had to adjust their professional as well as personal views of self-efficacy and effectiveness, further research should be conducted primarily following qualitative design. Throughout the interview process of data collecting, both individual and focus group interviews, this theme was identified only as participants developed their responses to the open-ended questions. Although many participants initially responded that there was little to no impact on their autonomy or sense of self-efficacy, as they continued to respond, their answers clearly conveyed the perceived limitations on autonomy and self-efficacy that participants truly felt. Future research into the realignment of the understanding of self-efficacy for teachers of grade-
level or course-specific standardized tests will help to further understand this phenomenon. While quantitative research could be conducted to identify specific student learning activities and teacher practices that have been limited through prescribed pacing and content coverage, qualitative research will allow deeper and richer participant responses to this topic. As Creswell (2013) stated, “the final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the research, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (p. 44), thus supporting the prioritization of qualitative design for future research.

This study did not identify a strong connection between teacher retention and the phenomenon that was studied. Four out of the 12 participants indicated relief that they were either not currently teaching U.S. History or that they were retiring within the next two years. Therefore, another recommendation is that additional research be conducted on the aspect of teacher retention and standardized testing. This research topic would be suitable for a quantitative design and inquiry study as researchers would be able to conduct research with participants representing many grade-level and course-specific standardized tests and be able to include multiple factors that may relate to participants’ perspectives on remaining or leaving the profession.

Additional recommendations for future research include additional diverse regional settings to be studied as well as researching the impact of course-specific standardized tests on teachers of other curricular content areas that are tested through standardized testing. A recommendation for the type of research to be used would be that of qualitative inquiry and
design as it was only when the study’s participants were able to fully develop their responses that their true beliefs and perceptions were exposed and identified.

**Summary**

In order to understand how the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and its related policies and mandates impacted high school U.S. History teachers’ autonomy and sense of self-efficacy, I conducted research focusing on U.S. History teachers in the Midlands region of South Carolina. Following phenomenological qualitative design and inquiry, I interviewed participants in both one-on-one interviews as well as in a focus group interview. I also collected relevant documents that had been identified either before the interview process or during the actual interviews themselves. The interview questions for both types of interviews were developed to first create a comfortable environment and setting for the participants and led participants into responding to questions that directly answered the central and subquestions of the study.

Many of the participants’ responses supported current literature such as their negative perceptions on the practice of incorporating student test scores into the teacher evaluation process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Mausethagen, 2013; Porter, 2015). However, their responses to other questions identified themes that I did not anticipate when I began to conduct my research based upon the literature or my own lived experience with the phenomenon.

As the majority of the research in the current literature relied on quantitative design and inquiry, the use of a phenomenological qualitative design in this study allowed the voices of the participants to emerge which led to the identification of themes that had not been previously significantly developed or researched. Therefore, participants developed responses that
accurately reflected their lived experiences of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE on their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy rather than respond to pre-determined and limited factors that characterize quantitative inquiry. This necessitates the increased use of qualitative research as it was through this design that participants developed their responses to truly reflect their perceptions and feelings.

Participants of this study shared ways in which the district and state policies related to the EOCE impacted their practice, autonomy, and self-efficacy. However, they identified the burden of data teaming as having a huge impact on them as data teams were not only mandated by the district, but the formatting and guidelines of the data teams limited the actual usefulness of these teams to teacher effectiveness and student learning. Because the data teams had to follow district and site administration steps and foci, teachers had to spend time fulfilling these requirements rather than focusing on actual student learning. Several participants spoke about the narrow focus on pre- and post-assessments that did not accurately reflect student learning needs. Additionally, one of the primary purposes of the data teams was to identify concepts and information that needed to be retaught while the district pacing guide did not provide any time for the reteaching of concepts and information that were identified through the data team process. Therefore, the prescribed pacing guide that teachers were to follow did not allow for reteaching the items identified through the data team process which then became an unnecessary waste of time for the participants as it did not directly lead to the support of student learning as mandated by the state support document in preparation for the EOCE. The implication of the incorporation of data teams into the expectations and requirements placed on teachers is that the educational policy makers are not presenting policies that consistently help teachers support
student learning, but rather that policy makers issued directives and policies that not only were contradictory with each other, but which placed undue burdens upon the teachers who were held accountable for student learning and student performance on the EOCE.

Perhaps the most significant and heart-felt finding of this study was the realignment of the understanding of what it means to have autonomy and a strong sense of self-efficacy that were made by the study’s participants. In order to continue to believe they made the educational decisions for their students, several participants stated that they made decisions reflecting the goals set by legislators and policy makers as realized through the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and related policies and mandates. Instead of making decisions related to essential skills, such as writing, or the ability to analyze and critically assess historical events and concepts, participants made decisions based upon helping students be successful on the end of the year multiple-choice test. Adjusting their professional autonomy to represent the goals and objectives of legislators and policy makers, participants also readjusted their perceptions of their sense of self-efficacy. The readjustment, or realigning, of their understanding of their sense of self-efficacy to reflect their effectiveness in preparing their students for the EOCE negated their sense of self-efficacy related to other student learning objectives. Participants focused on preparing students for the EOCE rather than reflecting their core values related to helping students to think critically about history, understand the cause and effects of historical events, and to value the contributions of historical individuals to the world in which we live today.

Although the intent behind NCLB, and its successor ESSA, was to provide the equity of a quality education to all students throughout the country without regard to socioeconomic status,
this study found that teachers of tested curriculum, as represented by the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE, adjusted not only their practice, but their autonomy and sense of self-efficacy in order to prepare students for the standardized test. The costs of mandated testing, fiscal as well as human, must be evaluated against measurable improvements in the quality of education that each student experiences. As found through this study, the cost of this testing to teachers negatively impacted their professional autonomy and self-efficacy to the point that participants realigned their understandings of both to continue to retain a sense of being an educator in a professional occupation.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 28, 2017

Debra Ann Whitmore

Dear Debra Ann Whitmore,

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

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

Sincerely,

The Graduate School

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Appendix B

Letter of Request to Conduct Research

March 16, 2017

Dear Dr. [Name],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ed.D degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study of the Impact of the South Carolina U.S. History End of Course Exam on High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Autonomy and Self-Efficacy. The purpose of my research is to understand the impact of course-specific standardized testing on teachers’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy will be defined as teachers’ perceptions of their abilities to make curricular and pedagogical decisions to effectively help students achieve their learning objectives.

I am writing to request your permission to contact U.S. History teachers in [School District Name] to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will be asked to sign a recruitment letter after which we will schedule an interview session. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For education research, district permission will need to be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s). Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval. You may either mail it to me or attach it to an email.

Sincerely,

Debra Whitmore
Doctoral Candidate

dwhitmore@liberty.edu

[School Address]
Appendix C

Informed Consent Document

CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study of the Impact of the South Carolina U.S. History End of Course Exam on High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Autonomy and Self-Efficacy

Debra Ann Whitmore
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of how the South Carolina U.S. History End of Course Exam (EOCE) impacts teachers’ perceptions of their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy. You were selected as a possible participant because you have taught U.S. History for at least one year in the Midlands region of South Carolina since the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand how the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE impacts teachers’ perceptions of their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.

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

1. Sign and return the consent document.
2. Schedule and participate in a one-on-one interview by April 30th. This interview will be audio-recorded and held at a site and time of your choosing during the month of May, 2017. Individual interviews will take approximately 20-30 minutes.
3. Complete a participant survey before participating in your scheduled individual interview. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey.
4. You will also have the option of participating in a focus group interview to be held at Panera’s Bakery during the first week in June, 2017 (date and time to be determined). Once I send the date and time of the focus group interviews to all participants, you will have one week to respond to let me know if you will participate or not. The focus group interview will be audio-recorded. The focus group interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes; lunch will be in addition to this time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society may include data and insights that will be valuable to various educational stakeholders. This study is important as standardized testing is driving curriculum and has a direct impact on teachers and the learning process. If an insight is gained on teachers and their perceptions on the EOCE, states, districts, and schools may be able to make policies and decisions that better support teacher autonomy and effectiveness related to student learning and the EOCE. Additionally, South Carolina policy makers may revise the teacher evaluation
process so that teachers of course-specific standardized tests do not feel that they are operating under greater scrutiny and face more punitive consequences than their colleagues who teach non-tested curricula.

**Compensation:** Each participant will receive a gift card to Starbucks, and focus group participants will also receive lunch at Panera’s Bakery. Even if a participant withdraws from the study, he or she will keep the gift card to Starbucks.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that may be published, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. All written references to individuals, schools, and districts will use pseudonyms in order to protect participant confidentiality and privacy.

- Individual interviews will be located at participants’ preferred sites whether off-campus or on-campus. If an individual interview is conducted on-campus, the researcher will do her best to ensure confidentiality and privacy.
- All data will be stored in secured locations. Hard-copies of data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Electronic data will be stored in password protected computers. All written work will use pseudonyms. Any published manuscript will only use pseudonyms without any actual references to persons or locations. Federal regulations decree that data must be retained for three years. However, after three years all data will be destroyed. Hard copies of data will be shredded; electronic data will be deleted and wiped.
- Audio-recordings will be electronically stored on password secured computers. After three years, all audio-recordings will be deleted.
- Although there is a high level of confidentiality for the individual interviews, there may be a possibility of a limited breach of confidentiality from the focus group interviews. I cannot assure participants that other members of the group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the focus group. However, I will remind focus group participants of the importance of privacy protections and confidentiality and encourage all members of focus groups to not share information from the interviews.

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

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

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Debra Whitmore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her.
at (803) 932-2629 or at dwhimore@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Clark, at cclark7@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 188/, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irbs@liberty.edu. Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

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

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**Signature of Participant**

[ ]

**Date**

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**Signature of Investigator**

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**Date**

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**Participant email address:**

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**Participant phone number:**

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Please identify three preferred dates and times for conducting a one-on-one interview:

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Appendix D

Individual Interview Transcript

Transcription for Becca

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
   a. Becca (*I have deleted her actual response to protect her privacy as this will be included in the appendix and therefore part of the manuscript*)

2. Why did you chose teaching as a career?
   a. I actually kind of defaulted into teaching. And now I love it, and social studies as well. I like talking to people about things I find interesting. So my friends, when I was younger, were all like you should be a history teacher. For a long time I didn’t want to commit to a somewhat stagnant income, but ultimately I decided that I would rather enjoy what I was doing.

3. What do you enjoy about teaching history?
   a. I really like telling stories and I like learning new stories. That’s one of the fun things that even though I teach the same thing, not exactly, but fairly closely, and I learn new things year to year. That’s really fun. I enjoy interacting with the kids about history and you get to ask some of the big questions and get to think about things.

4. Please describe how the U.S. History EOCE has affected you and your teaching practice.
   a. The EOC has created a lot of extra curriculum work. Now, there has always been curriculum, but it serves as the cornerstone and created other things like data teaming, additional forms and things that we had to fill out. But, as far as specifically like my teaching practice, mostly what has changed is like the structure and the pacing. And, to an extent, you know, certain, inclusion of certain topics.
      i. **FOLLOW-UP QUESTION**: Several people have mentioned data teams or data teaming. How do you see data teams as affecting you?
         1. This is all confidential right?
      ii. Absolutely. I think people who know me know that I would not do anything to endanger them.
         1. Honestly, the data team process has been a hindrance to better teaching. I feel like it’s a good process for somethings; in AP I’ve used the process and modified it for writing skills and not for multiple choice questions. In that way I modify it and make it work for me. Certainly, the collection of data for the purposes of instruction is not a bad thing. But, to create a common assessment
of multiple choice questions geared to the EOC and using that as a pre-test and finding something meaningful in that to guide your instruction has been elusive in all the years that I’ve done it, as it’s designed that way. Once I switched to AP type questions it’s been good. But, in addition to the data teaming, we’ve been asked to come up with, actually like a performance plan because our school’s EOC scores fell last year. Now I think that in addition to, or maybe opposed to teaching practices, a lot of that can be attributed, you know, movement within the district, and other things that are not necessarily under our control. We’ve had to spend additional time just to define what we’re doing and that seems like an additional step in the data team process. And the time they have been giving us to address those things is like data teams work.

5. How has the district U.S. History pacing guide affected your planning and instruction?
   a. I have to cheat a little bit on this one because, since I only teach AP I don’t follow the U.S. History district pacing guide. Just because we have a different set of things to cover.

6. How has the district U.S. History curriculum guide affected your ability to support student learning?
   a. Okay, um, I’ve actually found the support documents to be incredibly useful. Specifically with AP because, you know, we do so much reading and document work and all sorts of things, yet the EOC is still incredibly important to them. I use it kind of like a backstop; we’ve covered all this stuff in the unit, here’s stuff you should have already learned, but it’s kind of condensed. Read this and make sure you understand everything and we have EOC style questions on our tests as well as the AP style questions. I know that they tell us not to do this, but I give it to my kids and I’m like you’re AP kids, you’re readers, you should be able to read this and understand everything based on what we have already learned.

7. In what ways have the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides supported you and your pedagogical practices?
   a. I’m not sure that I can answer. I mean, that’s an answer (laughter).

8. In what ways have the EOCE and the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides limited you and your pedagogical practices?
   a. Okay, here we go then (laughter). It’s useful in terms of guiding questions, but, you know, I think that when U.S. History is done the way that I would like to do it involves a lot of writing, and research, and different thinking in looking at the bigger questions. In the support documents, they might be looking at the bigger questions, but with a specific answer in there which is you need to figure this out
as it’s interpreted as opposed to having us come up with our own ideas. And, obviously as a teacher, the biggest challenge with students is getting them to answer those sorts of questions and writing takes time. And the support documents are chalk full of information which on the one hand is fantastic, on the other hand, it dominates pacing and I don’t think that teachers have the time to do some of those writing analytical documents papers.

9. How have you change your curriculum and practice in order to help students be successful on the EOCE?
   a. The big thing that I’ve done in comparison to before the EOC is give them the support documents and to have practice EOC tests, so it’s very drill oriented. As far as that goes.

10. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your classroom autonomy which is your ability to make educational decisions for your students?
    a. Um, I definitely feel less autonomous than I feel in my classes without an EOCE. And in fact, teaching other AP courses, I don’t feel as autonomous in AP as I feel in CP economics which has neither kind of cumulative exam other than one I design myself. But I feel more autonomous in my AP classes than I feel in an EOC class. Um, and that’s because of things I’ve described before-the pacing is so tight, there’s not room for error. Delving into some things more deeply than others. The pressure from the powers that be for constantly improving scores which I understand. I think that creates a sort of fear and also there are things that they want to hear in so far as what I’m doing to improve scores. There’s pressure to give the answers that they want. Which makes me feel like I can’t necessarily make based on what I truly think is best for students.

11. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your sense of self-efficacy as a teacher which is your belief that you will be effective in achieving your goals and objectives for student learning?
    a. Whew. I know this is like one of the big questions. It has really made me question my efficacy, because, it’s tricky because I’m not getting to determine goals and objectives for students’ learning. If I were to establish my own goals and objectives for student learning, outside of what percentage of them would pass the test-if I could say that I want students to write a coherent thesis or, you know, be able to judge whatever. Then I would feel better. But, not having created the standards myself, not having created the test, not even have access to the questions on the test, um, but still being judged by my ability to get students to achieve a certain score on that test, I really feel like I could work really hard or not and the results might not be that different. But, I don’t have the sort of personality that would choose not to work just really hard. But then it’s still really challenging to me because I have had years where I’ve really tried my best and the results have not been what I wanted. And that’s always difficult.
12. Please describe how you feel about the incorporation of student test scores into the evaluation process.
   a. I feel like it’s just—there are too many variables. Um, I welcome a new evaluation process or something. You know, we all know teachers that are good and teachers that are not. Teachers who are fantastic teachers and I would love some sort of, you know, recognition of the good ones or elimination of the bad ones. Or, monetary compensation for the good ones. This is a capitalist society and we are not operating in that fashion. And I truly think that then we would get better teachers. Um, so I think that figuring out some way to, you know, judge the good, the better, and the best—I think that would be fantastic. I just think that I have not heard of any approach or policy that I think would be fair, because evaluating teachers based on student scores is chock full of problems. Based on what students you get—I had a remarkable group of students last year for AP U.S. History, they all passed the EOC, the scores were all in the mid-90s, um, higher than ever pass rates on the AP Exam, and I do feel like I did a better job teaching last year, but I think a lot of that was because I was able to adjust my teaching to such an exemplary group. So, even though the outcomes were awesome for me, I also completely recognize that the results were largely luck of the draw. I just had an exceptional group of students and while I think I am a great teacher, I don’t think it’s fair to see me as a result of having a great group of kids whereas this year I don’t want to be penalized because I’m certainly not a worse teacher than I was last year as I get better because you learn things every year. And so, you know, having seen all the different problems that can arise, and all the nuances in student attendance and students move and all sorts of other things. I just—it makes me very concerned. I think that good teachers may be unfairly judged, and bad teachers are not. They might get the benefit of having a great group of kids, or I can’t think of what other factors there may be, but it makes me nervous without reassurances. I would like to come up with a really genius way to use the standardized tests to find out who is a good teacher.

13. How do you feel about teaching as a profession since the implementation of the EOCE?
   a. Now this is tricky because I have only been teaching since we have these. I did not start teaching U.S. History before—I was in school when the EOCs were brought it. I remember that, but unfortunately, I don’t have a lot to compare to. What I take antedotally from other members in the department—history used to be fought over. It used to be that teachers with seniority were the teachers who, you know, the best got to teach U.S. History. It was a privilege. Now, we’ve got a teacher retiring from our department, and, you know, of the veteran teachers who are here, you ask them would you step into that role and teach U.S. History, and the answer is like ‘no way.’ I see what you all go through in terms of additional
responsibilities, and, you know, called in to answer for our school’s scores and things like that pressure and they’re like ‘no thank you.’ So I have never known another way, but it seems like it might be a little more stressful and fraught than it needs to be.

14. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?  
   a. Probably. No (laughter).
Appendix E

Focus Group Transcript

Focus Group Interview

1. What is your favorite event or concept in U.S. History to teach students?
   Becca: I really like things in every period, and they say ‘you say that all the time so we don’t trust you anymore that this is your favorite thing.’ I think maybe my favorite thing is this day that we have and it’s on the Civil War and we just call it Document Day. We use a bunch of documents to look at a bunch of different things related to the Civil War. So, in general I like teaching the documents.
   Anne: I really like the Progressive Era—I do these Superhero things that is actually pretty cool. And, it’s really hard for them to start, but when they get into it, it’s fun for them.
   Mikaela: I think that my favorite concept would be—I like teaching social history. I like looking at the social aspect of everything as we go through time. And in those times to kind of see how everything unfolds over time and how they all interconnect. I really enjoy that.
   Martha: I like teaching the Great Depression. I think it’s because it pulls in so many things. There’s social history there, there’s economics—it kind of covers all these different areas that I like. My dad is a child of the Depression and I like to tell his stories and personalize it for kids. So, that’s my favorite era.
   Emily: I love teaching Standards 5, 6, and 7. This is probably because I taught 7th grade World History for so long and have grown to love teaching this material. I also feel like these Standards really heighten student interest and you can dig a little deeper into the standards because students have been exposed to this material a number of times before as long as you have the time to do so.

2. How do you know when students “get” a concept?
   Becca: Reading their writing. Because there’s no room to hide, usually. And, sometimes if there’s not a writing assignment, then sometimes asking them questions in class would be an indicator if they actually get the right answer.
   Martha: I like it if they can just discuss—they got it, so they’re thinking beyond the obvious. There’s some depth there.
   Emily: If students can verbalize the concept and explain it to me or another person, then they understand. I try to implement opportunities for students to discuss and learn from one another and also use writing for students express their understanding.
   Anne: I like to do a lot of drawing. And I can tell like in their writing, but if they can draw the concept, they get it, they really and truly get it.
   Mikaela: I agree with all of these.
3. How has the EOCE affected you and your practice as a U.S. History teacher?

**Becca:** I’ll just say it—the biggest thing is pacing. It’s like dictated—how long you have to cover various things because you have to cover this content and you have to do it in a certain amount of time, so I think it’s the pacing.

**Mikaela:** To piggyback on that, it limits your creativity and what you can do.

**Becca:** Because it’s tight. It’s not like you have forever for the things that you like to teach.

**Mikaela:** So, the different fun activities, like the Superhero one, don’t work. Because you have like two days that you can spend on that, but sometimes you get a half a day or you get a day, and then you have to move on, so you can’t do these fun projects that might a couple of class periods, or take more than the allotted class period, because then you’re behind.

**Anne:** So, when I do that, I sacrifice something else, so that they can do that in class. And, I shouldn’t have to sacrifice that as a teacher. I should be able to do those things because they really relate and because they really truly express that the student got the concept that way versus trying to memorize stuff for multiple-choice questions.

**Emily:** The stress of the pacing and the lack of time to reteach the needed material is frustrating. I’m definitely used to strictly sticking to the pacing guide because as a 7th grade World History teacher, we had to have students prepared for PASS testing in early to mid-May. However, I feel like US History is even more of a struggle because there are more Standards and more information that needs to be covered. Having an A/B schedule to cover this amount of information can also be frustrating because you are often pushed to teach some indicators in a day or two and if a student is absent, it adds stress to the teacher to make sure they still grasp the material because the accountability of the EOC ultimately falls on me.

**Martha:** I don’t like that it limits their creativity. If there’s something they’re interested in. It’s not just what I want to do with them. It’s like they get ‘we can’t talk about that because that’s not here.’ Not that I literally say that, but that’s how it feels.

**Becca:** Oh, I do.

**Mikaela:** You get the pressure to almost say that. Not because you really want to, but because you have to.

**Becca:** Every year I have, this isn’t sexist—it’s just a fact. But, every year I have boys who are like ‘I love the Civil War’ and they’re very knowledgeable about like battles and the weaponry and that’s not really my cup of tea. Either way, I don’t know a ton about that. But, there’s not that capability for them to interact with all of that.

**Anne:** And it’s not my favorite to talk about, either, but they don’t need to know a lot about the major battles. It’s literally like, all you need to do is this, this, and
this. Every year, it’s the boys, and they get sad—“I thought that we were going to
be able to spend time and get in-depth with the War.’
Mikaela: Take a military history class in college. I had a student ask me ‘did they
use this weapon during World War II?’ And I’m like ‘what?’ I have to come
back and I’m like ‘let me look that up and get back to you. But, it doesn’t matter,
you don’t need to know that.’

4. How have the district policies related to the EOCE changed your curriculum and
pedagogy?
Martha: More structure.
Anne: I just feel like I don’t have freedom in what I want to do.
Becca: We’re held to that through like benchmarks and stuff which kind of
enforces it. If you wanted to be a little sneaky, and spend a little time on
progressive stuff and then catch up somewhere else, you can’t necessarily do that.
Anne: I’m like, I’m always behind. And like the last benchmark, they’re like ‘this
is the window for the benchmark’ and I’m like ‘when’s the last day?’ Because
that’s when I going to do it, because I’m always behind where I’m supposed to
be. Because I try to put in that stuff. And, it’s very stressful. To try to do both.
Martha: That’s when I feel like I’m a robot. That’s what I don’t like about them.
Mikaela: And, if they don’t get a concept, when are you going to reteach it? You
don’t have the time to reteach it. That’s a part of data teams, you’re supposed to
assess how well they’re learning. But, where’s that in the pacing guide?
Becca: Yes, the pacing guide is only useful to a point. Because the benchmark
window is a month long. Every year, I ask the API—I need to know these dates.
When is this test actually happening? So that I can plan from there. And, it’s
always like our school just got the dates for the EOC confirmed, like three weeks
ago? And it’s mind-boggling to me. How do you plan?
Emily: I feel like a number of days are lost due to testing, whether one of the 3
district benchmarks, the ACT, etc., it only intensifies the stress of staying on pace
and still enjoying what you are teaching. Due to this pacing, it definitely limits the
lessons I can do with students. I love to implement research projects and more
creative activities, but when you have a day to spend on an indicator, there is
simply not time. It’s unfortunate, because those are the things that really deeper
student learning and understanding.

5. How has the EOCE affected your decision-making ability related to U.S. History?
Mikaela: It’s basically made it cut and dry. It’s here’s what you teach, and what
they need to do.
Becca: We’re not making those decisions.
Mikaela: Yeah, we’re not making decisions, basically.
Emily: I just follow the support document, if it isn’t in there, I don’t teach it. I feel like the only decision making we have is the method of how we deliver and teach the material.

6. How effective do you think you are in preparing students to be successful on the EOCE?
Mikaela: I think they’re prepared as far as what to expect testing wise. I think we do a fairly good job of that. Like, here’s how it’s structured, it’s multiple-choice, here’s how it is. I think when it comes to the test-the questioning, it’s always so tricky.
Anne: Yes, the wording.
Becca: And we never get any feedback. So, I never know, I mean I know what grade this student got, but I have no idea how as a group-were they strong on the Great Depression? Were they weak on progressivism? Or, we’re not allowed to look at any of the questions. Like there’s only been 16 released questions. So, I never really know how effective I’m being.
Mikaela: We only get a generic ‘here’s your students were weak’ but it’s for the whole state.
Becca: Or, here’s one year to the next, but you don’t know what they did. I’ve looked at some questions and it’s very surprising how different they were written. One year I was like well this is giving some feedback, but the next year it was like ‘students seem to know facts but not understand concepts.’ And I was like ‘oh, what does that mean?’ Really, wow. It’s not really helpful.
Anne: I don’t understand, because the PASS test-teachers get a breakdown of how the students did on each standard.
Becca: Well on the AP tests, they give you so much information.
Emily: In regard to the content, I know they have been exposed to everything. Their ability to rationalize it and apply it is questionable. I feel that due to the intensity of the pacing, there isn’t a lot of time to really teach and practice test-taking skills that would prove to be beneficial.
Anne: If we’re going to do data teams as a state, I feel that’s part of it. I mean if we have to do data teams, the state should also have to do them.
Becca: Why do you think we don’t get that information?
Anne: That’s the thing I don’t understand, because for the PASS test, sixth, seventh, eighth grade-you get it, and that’s by the state, too.
Martha: Well, I think originally-originally there was X amount of money to produce the test. And so they knew that they could not release the test bank. They could not give us that kind of information. Because that would go over the money. They would overspend. So, that’s why the state department of education has been very closed about the items.
Becca: But, it would be their job to do the data interpretation for us, if they’re not going to give us the items.
Anne: I don’t need the items, I just need a general-like when I taught at the middle school, I got a general ‘Standard Six-weak, Standard Eight-strong.’ Like a percentage, like in AP-I just get a percentage. I don’t need anything beyond that. I mean, really, because that helps me go ‘oooh, that progressive thing is not working.’
Becca: Yeah, like that.
Anne: Like that activity I did.
Becca: Yeah, I thought it was gangbusters.
Martha: But when the question talks about preparing students. Some students are doing a great job. Other students, I think we all have students who are not where we want them to be academically. I can’t teach a kid to read and all of this content. I can only do one or the other. And, I probably can’t even teach them to read at that point. So, that’s really difficult. With some kids I’m not very effective. It’s frustrating.
Anne: You’re already at a huge disadvantage as a teacher if your students don’t know how to read. You can teach them strategies, and you can teach them how to do the best that they can. But, when they come in with a fourth-grade reading level when they’re a junior, or an eighth grade level, it’s very hard.
Martha: It affects everything. Vocabulary, their ability to decipher, to look at symbolism in a political cartoon, or anything like that-they don’t get it. So, the question is heart-breaking in a way.
Mikaela: Because it doesn’t really start with us.
Martha: That’s right.

7. How effective do you think you are in achieving your objectives for student learning?
Becca: I have to disassociate my objectives from what has been placed upon me. It’s so hard and it’s been so long now.
Anne: I feel like what I want to do is not really what’s happening in my classroom. It’s really sad.
Mikaela: Well, because it’s dictated to you. I don’t even get to set the objectives, it’s dictated.
Martha: And, the thing that I liked about U.S. History in the beginning was that I wanted to help them become better citizens. I know it probably sounds too corny or whatever.
Becca: No, that’s a lot of why I wanted to become a teacher.
Martha: I really think that’s still important to me even after all this time. And, I don’t know if I do that anymore. That makes me very sad. I’ll look at those kids and think ‘you’re not one bit better for having known me.’ And, I don’t want to think that. I don’t want it to be true. I don’t want to give up. I want to keep trying. But this puts it on a different level, don’t you think?
Mikaela: And, I definitely think, depending on the level you teach, too. So, like CP kids, it’s hard to assign homework and try to teach them time management skills. It’s a life skill. Okay, at least I can work on time management skills, that
needs to be an objective for them. Half those kids don’t even do their homework. You know, so it makes it hard.

Becca: And I think, it’s important and a good part of citizenship, part of my job, and in history and social studies in general, is to teach students how to read critically and look at the modern world and be able to see things coming in from different news outlets and to be able to discern and make judgements for themselves—and not just repeat what they hear the talking heads say on t.v. Whatever they’re saying on t.v., and I feel like those skills require a lot of time to teach. That’s not content. I can’t do that—I have to just go through and say ‘this happened, this happened, and this happened.’ But, they need to understand the historical interpretation of this event. It just really requires practice, and classroom that we don’t have.

Emily: Ultimately, I want my students to be independent learners. I hated history in high school because it was memorization of facts and we never had a chance to challenge ourselves by applying what we had learned; it was simply regurgitating it for a test and then forgetting it. I feel like the EOC has pushed me more towards teaching for to the test versus teaching using methods to foster students’ curiosity and critical thinking skills.

8. How do you feel about the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process?

(everyone laughs)

Mikaela: I do, like the way that they’re doing it now—you just can’t take a test at the end of the year and say ‘this is how this student performed.’ And, it’s like they should focus on the growth of the student. If you’re going to measure growth, you should give them the test at the beginning of the year, see where they’re at, and see at the end of the year—how much did they grow? Not whether they passed the test. If they started the class with a 5% and go to 20%—that’s great. That’s significant.

Anne: And, even then, I feel like I really shouldn’t have to set a growth target and then I’m evaluated on it. And it’s like ‘that growth target that you set? You didn’t meet it, therefore you fail.’

Mikaela: Right

Anne: If a student grows, that should be all that really matters. Just because I estimated or guessimated that this student is going to grow this much—oh, you know what—you didn’t meet that growth target now you fail as a teacher.’

Becca: Or, I like I significantly underestimated you and you blew it out of the water.

Mikaela: But, I think that’s what will end up happening. Because we’re scared that we won’t get them there. Well, I think you’re going to be here, but they may be significantly better, but you don’t want to overestimate because it’s going to come back on you. So, we’ll have these low expectations of achievement for the kids.
Becca: But, you also don’t want somebody else setting the growth targets.
Mikaela: No, you don’t. Because they don’t know our kids.
Emily: I understand there being a degree of teacher accountability in regard to student test scores and performance to ensure that we are teaching the standards. However, there are so many outside factors that play a role - absences for example - I have a student that has missed 20 days of my class, yet I still feel more accountable for his EOC score than he probably does. Also, transfer students - I just had a student transfer from another state last week and he is still taking the EOC and is attached to my scores, even though I haven’t taught him this year!
Anne: I feel that it adds more work to our plate, too. It’s because we want to prove that there was growth. How do you do that? Well, let’s do all of these pre-and post-tests that take more time. Testing is too much, it’s just too much. And then, it just adds more testing, less creativity, less reading of the documents, less writing. And, that’s not what history is about.
Mikaela: It’s not what education is about.

9. How do you feel about your career and remaining in your career?
Becca: Why don’t you start? (Laughter)
Martha: Well, I’m retiring this year. But, it’s 35 years. And, I’ve seen a lot of changes over those 35 years. In some ways, education cycles around. You know it’s coming back. But, the EOC is something that is new to us. So, that’s different.
Mikaela: And I agree with what you’re saying. There’s research that education is so progressive, per se, that they don’t give stuff enough time to actually see if it works. Because they’re jumping from one thing to the next. And that’s why they say that it will come back around. We tried this thing years ago.
Becca: This is kind of off topic, but kind of not. I heard this American Life story about a woman who wrote, maybe like her dissertation, about the basic idea that busing worked. And according to her data-and this is just very conversational, that according to her data that the only time the achievement gap, racially speaking, shrank was in that period of forced integration. And, as soon as people were like ‘that didn’t work’ and stopped that, the gap grew again. And, we try all these things all the time and we look at literacy, and we look at the EOC, and we going to declare that all students shall be proficient.
Mikaela: It’s like education has ADD.
Becca: Exactly. And it’s like-maybe this thing actually worked. But, nobody stood aside long enough to really look at it.
Mikaela: It’s too much political interference in education. Where it has no business to be.
Becca: Or it turns out that this paper that this woman wrote, about 30 years after the fact, and it’s going back to say-oh everybody said that this thing failed, why did we think it failed? You know, because somebody said so? Like, it wasn’t
popular with these people. You know I’m not trying to take a stand on busing. But on facts.

(laughter)

**Martha:** What you said is very much like I told you the other day that just thinking about the people making the decisions for education are not the educators. We’re not in charge of our own profession anymore. And I don’t know how we get back to that. I don’t know the answer.

**Anne:** I feel like the good teachers don’t want to leave the classroom, but the good teachers need to leave the classroom and get in politics. But, at the same time, we’re so burnt out, so stressed out, that the thought of doing that is like ‘oh, no.’ But, those are the people who really need to be involved in politics or we’ll never see a change.

**Mikaela:** Absolutely.

**Anne:** And, even voting and other things—we’re just so tired at the end of the day that by the time you do have the opportunity to have a voice, ‘I don’t want to go to a board meeting. I don’t want to go to a town hall meeting or whatever they’re going to have to make these decisions and sit there for four hours until 10:00 at night.’

**Martha:** I don’t know about other schools, but I don’t think we’re often given the opportunity to freely express any of that without penalty. Somebody’s listening, somebody’s holding it against you, there’s a grudge there-whatever. I don’t think I have the freedom to do that.

**Becca:** Yea, you’re not a team player if you’re not on board with the next new...

**Martha:** And for everything to be thought of as a problem or criticism-no, I’m not criticizing, I’m trying to fix it. But, it’s not perceived that way I don’t think. You know—‘we don’t want to hear anything negative.’ Well, how do we fix the things that are wrong then?

**Emily:** I definitely want to remain in the teaching profession because I love kids and I love history. But, I do worry about burnout and after 12 years of teaching I have definitely contemplated leaving the profession. I hope things don’t perpetuate to where I feel more pressure to make a change in my career.

10. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?

**Mikaela:** Death to them. (all laugh).

**Martha:** It’s a whole lot of money that doesn’t prove anything. Doesn’t prove who the good teachers are. It’s a lot of money for that.

**Anne:** It’s a lot of money. It’s a waste of money that could be used for other things. Professional development for us. Funding for creative things that are inventive instead of wasting all this money on testing.

**Mikaela:** Yea, and you shove it down their throats, and they’re going to forget. They forget by the next week. There’s no time to really internalize it; and to really think about the meaning of what happened, and even how it affects today.
Becca: And even about the fact that state to state these are different tests, and I would argue that our standards are a lot harder than a bunch of other states. I’m not speaking to anything other than U.S. History. Our standards are intense. Our standards support document has so much. Sometimes I have to chuckle—I tried to explain to my mom about the monetary theories during the Great Depression, and they’re in there. And that’s something that all 17-year olds in the state of South Carolina are supposed to understand.

Anne: I feel that it’s very—even though it’s not a South Carolina history class, the test is very focused on South Carolina.

Becca: Yes, the test focuses on that.

Anne: And, the questions that they are asked are very specific to South Carolina, when it’s supposed to be a U.S. History test. Or, they’re very detail orientated—when if they’re given an overarching test, they should be overarching basic concepts.

Mikaela: Yeah, like here are the high points that you need to know. And, the kids come back as say ‘they asked a question about air conditioning.’ And I’m like ‘air conditioning? What?’ Do you remember that?

All: Yes.

Martha: It was about the settlement of the Southwest and what allowed them to move into the Southwest.

Mikaela: And it was air conditioning. And there was another one on there, it was my AP kids, and it was like cyber-optics. Something they thought seemed more advantageous to that.

Emily: I just question the intent. Is the EOC a gotcha for teacher accountability? If so, why isn’t every subject tested? Or is it to measure student understanding? If so, why are we not give more feedback to help students improve or find new ways to teach the material if what we are doing didn’t prove effective? It’s like you get back the scores and then it’s just this cyclical process that continues and the needs of the students aren’t ever addressed.

Martha: But, I’ll tell you—I have a really good friend who works in the state department of education, and I said to her ‘I don’t think these questions are right for high school kids.’ She said back ‘does the test measure the standards?’ ‘Well, yes it does.’ ‘Okay, then it’s a valid test.’ She didn’t want to hear anything else. And, I really was offended because a lot of things can measure the standards. But, is that logically the only thing that we can use to determine if the test is valid?

Mikaela: Did you guys hear that they’re changing the standards and they’re into now there can be more than one answer?

Becca: The big shift is towards increasing the standards.

Mikaela: Yeah, there’s more than one answer and they’re bringing in a timeline and putting things in order on the timeline, or when did these things happen?

Martha: For our test?
Mikaela: Yeah. I’m like ‘they can barely get one answer right.’ What makes you think they can get two answers?
Anne: How is that even fair? Two answers are possible? Like, that’s not even-let’s go to Education 101 on how to write a test.
Mikaela: It’s changing to choose all that may apply. I don’t like that.
Becca: I don’t know what they’re trying to prove there. And I don’t think it’s proving whatever it is they want to prove.
Mikaela: Right. What is the purpose? What is your expectation?
Appendix F

Selection from the State Teacher Evaluation Guidelines

Student Growth In the context of classroom-based teacher evaluations, the “Student Growth” is defined as evidence of the teacher’s impact on students’ achievement growth. For continuing contract teachers Student Growth is evidence of that impact over multiple academic years. Generally, students’ “achievement growth” is the change in student achievement for individual students between two or more points in time. For grades and subjects in which assessments are required under ESEA § 1111(b)(3), “student achievement” (one point in time) is a student’s score on those assessments (“ESEA Test Scores”) and may include other “Alternative Measures” of student learning. For other grades and subjects, “student achievement” is “Alternative Measures” of student learning and performance, such as student results on pre-tests, end-of-course tests, and objective performance-based assessments; student learning objectives; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across schools within a district or local education agency. Because “Student Growth” requires two points in time, the grades and subjects for which ESEA Test Score assessment measures must be used are English language arts and mathematics in grades 4 through 8.

Educators focus and align professional practice to support intended student academic growth and development of the skills and life characteristics within the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Student Growth is measured using some combination of the following: (1) ESEA Test Score-based measures when required and there are two data points (2) Alternative Measures In
all circumstances, the “Student Growth” must incorporate state-assessment scores on ESEA specified grades and subjects listed above. When these guidelines are fully implemented, every classroom-based teacher will collect evidence of Student Growth every school year. During School Year 2014-15, South Carolina is administering the following statewide assessments:

- SC PASS Science and Social Studies, grades 4-8.

The SCDE is seeking guidance on use of the ESEA high school ELA and math assessments in educator evaluation. In 2015, South Carolina has amended its accountability workbook to designate the 11th grade college and career readiness assessment as its high school tests; however, those assessments are not designed to measure the effectiveness of any one high school teacher. Therefore, the SCDE questions the appropriateness of using these assessments in educator evaluation.

- The ACT Aspire ELA and Math, grades 3-8.

- End of course examinations in English I, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History and Constitution.

- Grade 11 WorkKeys and The ACT college entrance examination (English, Reading, Math, Writing; and Science, which is required for a college-reportable score).
### Appendix G

#### District Pacing Guide 2016-17*

##### First Quarter - August 17 - October 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days taught</th>
<th>Standard/Indicator</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
<th>Correlated Textbook Resource</th>
<th>Differentiation for Honors</th>
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<td>*Built in for First Day of School</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.1: Summarize the distinct characteristics of each colonial region in the settlement and development of British North America, including religious, social, political, and economic differences.</td>
<td>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</td>
<td>Ch 1 Lesson 3 Ch 1 Lesson 4</td>
<td>Puritan DBQ (APUSH 2010) American Issues 1.2 John Winthrop Advises Puritans to Emigrate American Issues 1.6 Coercion: The West African Slave</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.2: Analyze the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system and the rule of law as written in the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights, and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the British Parliament over the right to tax that resulted in the American Revolutionary War.</td>
<td>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</td>
<td>Ch 1 Lesson 5 Ch 2 Lesson 1 Ch 2 Lesson 2</td>
<td>Political Traditions Causation Timeline (w/ Thesis) America Issues 4.1 The Stamp Act: Congress Denounces Taxation Without Representation</td>
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<td>1.3: Analyze the impact of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution on establishing the ideals of a democratic republic</td>
<td>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</td>
<td>Ch 2 pg. 52-56</td>
<td>Combined with 1.2 Timeline (see above)</td>
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<td><strong>1.4:</strong> Analyze how dissatisfactions with the government under the Articles of Confederation were addressed with the writing of the Constitution of 1787, including the debates and compromises reached at the Philadelphia Convention and the ratification of the Constitution.</td>
<td><strong>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ch 3 Lesson 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ch 3 Lesson 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ch 3 Lesson 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Constitution Handbook</strong></td>
<td><strong>Compromises Graphic Organizer</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Simulation of Check/Balances</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>1.5:</strong> Explain how the fundamental principle of limited government is protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including democracy, republicanism, federalism, the separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and individual rights.</td>
<td><strong>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ch 3 Lesson 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contemporary Political Cartoon Analysis</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1.6:</strong> Analyze the development of the two-party system during the presidency of George Washington, including controversies over domestic and foreign policies and the regional interests of the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists.</td>
<td><strong>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ch 4 Lesson 1 and 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frayer Model (Fed vs Dem) then Document Analysis</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>American Issues 6.7 Washington and the Success of the Great Experiment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1.7:</strong> Summarize the expansion of the power of the national government as a result of Supreme Court decisions under Chief Justice John Marshall, such as the establishment of judicial review in Marbury v. Madison and the impact of political party affiliation on the Court.</td>
<td><strong>How did democracy develop in the United States from the colonial period through the American Revolution?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ch 4.3 p. 130</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discussion from Annenberg Supreme Court History</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ASSESSMENT USHC 1</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>2.1:</strong> Summarize the impact of the westward movement on nationalism and democracy, including the expansion of the franchise, the displacement of Native Americans from the southeast and conflicts over states’ rights and federal power during the era of Jacksonian</td>
<td><strong>How did regionalism and competing social and economic interests impact the development of democracy in the antebellum period?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ch 5.1 p.140-142</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ch 6.1</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ch 6.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jackson Calhoun Debate</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Westward Expansion Documents</strong></td>
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<td>democracy as the result of major land acquisitions such as the Louisiana Purchase, the Oregon Treaty, and the Mexican Cession.</td>
<td>p. 124-125, 128-129, 131</td>
<td>American Issues 7.3 Indian Removal Act Andrew Jackson Debate (Should Jackson be on a $20 bill) Ch 7.4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.2: Explain how the Monroe Doctrine and the concept of Manifest Destiny affected the United States’ relationships with foreign powers, including the role of the United States in the Texan Revolution and the Mexican War.</td>
<td>How did regionalism and competing social and economic interests impact the development of democracy in the antebellum period?</td>
<td>Ch 7.1-7.3 p. 144 American Issues 11.3 The Mexican View</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.3: Compare the economic development in different regions (the South, the North, and the West) of the United States during the early nineteenth century, including ways that economic policy contributed to political controversies.</td>
<td>How did regionalism and competing social and economic interests impact the development of democracy in the antebellum period?</td>
<td>Ch 5.2-5.4 Concept Web of Regions (w/ Thesis)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.4: Compare the social and cultural characteristics of the North, the South, and the West during the antebellum period, including the lives of African Americans and social reform movements such as abolition and women’s rights.</td>
<td>How did regionalism and competing social and economic interests impact the development of democracy in the antebellum period?</td>
<td>Ch 6.2-6.4 Antebellum Reform DBQ &amp; Discussion American Issues 10.1 The Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions</td>
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<td>ASSESSMENT USHC 2</td>
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<td>.5</td>
<td>3.1: Evaluate the relative importance of political events and issues that divided the nation and led to civil war, including the compromises reached to maintain the balance of free and slave states, the abolitionist movement, the Dred Scott case, conflicting views on states’ rights and federal authority, the emergence of the Republican</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 8 Document Walk 1-Slider American Issues 13.5 The Republican Party Platform of 1860</td>
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(A Day on last day of 1st 9 weeks) October 20th
Second Quarter- October 21-January 13

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<td>.5 (B Day on first day of 2nd 9 weeks) October 21st</td>
<td>3.1: Evaluate the relative importance of political events and issues that divided the nation and led to civil war, including the compromises reached to maintain the balance of free and slave states, the abolitionist movement, the Dred Scott case, conflicting views on states’ rights and federal authority, the emergence of the Republican Party, and the formation of the Confederate States of America.</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 8</td>
<td>Document Walk 1-Slider American Issues 13.5 The Republican Party Platform of 1860</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.2: Summarize the course of the Civil War and its impact on democracy, including the major turning points; the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation; the unequal treatment afforded to African American military units; the geographic, economic, and political factors in the defeat of the Confederacy; and the ultimate defeat of the idea of secession.</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 9</td>
<td>Emancipation Map and Document Application Battle Bracket American Issues 14.2 The War is over Constitutional Issues</td>
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<td>Assess 3.1-3.2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.3: Analyze the effects of Reconstruction on the southern states and on the role of the federal government, including the impact of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments on opportunities for African Americans.</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 10.1-10.2</td>
<td>Harp Week Cartoon Analysis</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3.4: Summarize the end of Reconstruction, including the role of anti–African American factions and competing national interests in undermining support for Reconstruction; the impact of the removal of federal protection for</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 10.3</td>
<td>Harp Week Cartoon Analysis</td>
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<td>Freedmen; and the impact of Jim Crow laws and voter restrictions on African American rights in the post-Reconstruction era.</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 13.5</td>
<td>WEB Dubois/BTW/Wells Hot Seat</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3.5: Evaluate the varied responses of African Americans to the restrictions imposed on them in the post-Reconstruction period, including the leadership and strategies of Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett.</td>
<td>How did the Civil War and Reconstruction reflect sectional tensions and change conceptions of democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 13.5</td>
<td>WEB Dubois/BTW/Wells Hot Seat</td>
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**ASSESSMENT USHC 3**

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<td>1</td>
<td>4.1: Summarize the impact that government policy and the construction of the transcontinental railroads had on the development of the national market and on the culture of Native American peoples.</td>
<td>How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 11</td>
<td>American Issues Vol 2: 3.4 Native Americans Native American Thematic Timeline</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4.2: Analyze the factors that influenced the economic growth of the United States and its emergence as an industrial power, including the abundance of natural resources; government support and protection in the form of railroad subsidies, tariffs, and labor policies; and the expansion of international markets.</td>
<td>How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 12.1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4.3: Evaluate the role of capitalism and its impact on democracy, including the ascent of new industries, the increasing availability of consumer goods and the rising standard of living, the role of entrepreneurs, the rise of business through monopoly and the influence of business ideologies.</td>
<td>How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 12.3</td>
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**Review for Semester Exam/ Flex/ Semester Exam**

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<td>1</td>
<td>4.4: Explain the impact of industrial growth and business cycle on farmers, workers, immigrants, labor unions, and the Populist movement and the ways that these groups</td>
<td>How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy?</td>
<td>Ch 12.4</td>
<td>2012 APUSH DBQ Populist Document Analysis for Conceptual Generation</td>
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</table>
and the government responded to the economic problems caused by industry and business.

| 1 | 4.5: Explain the causes and effects of urbanization in late nineteenth-century America, including the movement from farm to city, the changing immigration patterns, the rise of ethnic neighborhoods, the role of political machines, and the migration of African Americans to the North, Midwest, and West. | How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy? | Ch 13.1-13.2 | Concept Web Political Machine Simulation |
| 1 | 4.6: Compare the accomplishments and limitation of the women’s suffrage movement and the Progressive Movement in affecting social and political reforms in America, including the roles of the media and of reformers such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Alice Paul, Jane Addams, and Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. | How did post-Civil War economic changes impact democracy? | Ch 13.3 Ch 15.1-15.3 | Contemporary Connections Jungle Analysis Think Tank Problem Solve |
| **1** | **ASSESSMENT USHC 4** | | | |
| .5 | 5.1: Analyze the development of American expansionism, including the change from isolationism to intervention and the rationales for imperialism based on Social Darwinism, expanding capitalism, and domestic tensions. | How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century? | Ch 14.1 p. 317, 363 | Student-Created Crash Course Videos Social Media Project |

Third Quarter- January 14-March 22
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<td>.5</td>
<td>5.1: Analyze the development of American expansionism, including the change from isolationism to intervention and the rationales for imperialism based on Social Darwinism, expanding capitalism, and domestic tensions.</td>
<td>How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century?</td>
<td>Ch 14.1 p. 317, 363</td>
<td>Student-Created Crash Course Videos Social Media Project</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5.2: Explain the influence of the Spanish-American War on the emergence of the United States as a world power, including the role of yellow journalism in the American declaration of war against Spain, United States interests and expansion in the South Pacific, and the debate between pro- and anti-imperialists over annexation of the Philippines.</td>
<td>How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century?</td>
<td>Ch 14.2</td>
<td>Student-Created Crash Course Videos Social Media Project</td>
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<td>5.3: Summarize United States foreign policies in different regions of the world during the early twentieth century, including the purposes and effects of the Open Door policy with China, the United States role in the Panama Revolution, Theodore Roosevelt’s “big stick diplomacy,” William Taft’s “dollar diplomacy,” and Woodrow Wilson’s “moral diplomacy” and changing worldwide perceptions of the United States.</td>
<td>How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century?</td>
<td>Ch 14.3</td>
<td>Student-Created Crash Course Videos Social Media Project</td>
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<td>Assess 5.1-5.3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5.4: Analyze the causes and consequences of United States involvement in World War I, including the failure of neutrality and the reasons for the declaration of war, the role of propaganda in creating a unified war effort, the limitation of individual liberties, and Woodrow Wilson’s leadership in the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of the League of Nations.</td>
<td>How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century?</td>
<td>Ch 16 end at p.391</td>
<td>American Issues Vol 2: 7.1 The Germans defend their submarine policy Entry in WW1 DBQ/Discussion Treaty of Versailles Debate</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5.5: Analyze the United States rejection of internationalism, including postwar disillusionment, the Senate’s refusal to ratify the Versailles Treaty, the election of 1920, and the role of the United States in international affairs in the 1920s.</td>
<td>How did foreign and domestic policies contribute to the emergence of the United States as a world power in the 20th Century?</td>
<td>p. 391-393</td>
<td>Treaty of Versailles Debate</td>
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<td>ASSESSMENT USHC 5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6.2: Explain the causes and effects of the social change and conflict between traditional and modern culture that took place during the 1920s, including the role of women, the “Red Scare”, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, immigration quotas, Prohibition, and the Scopes trial.</td>
<td>How did social tensions and economic challenges contribute to the role of government in the 1920’s and 30’s?</td>
<td>Ch 17.3 p. 396-397</td>
<td>Historiography Activity (Document Analysis) Social Conflict Document Analysis (Thematic Generation)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6.1: Explain the impact of the changes in the 1920s on the economy, society, and culture, including the expansion of mass production techniques, the invention of new home appliances, the introduction of the installment plan, the role of transportation in changing urban life, the effect of radio and movies in creating a national mass culture, and the cultural changes exemplified by the Harlem Renaissance.</td>
<td>How did social tensions and economic challenges alter the role of government in the 1920’s and 30’s?</td>
<td>p. 394-395, Ch 17.1-17.2, 17.4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6.3: Explain the causes and consequences of the Great Depression, including the disparities in income and wealth distribution; the collapse of the farm economy and the effects of the Dust Bowl; limited governmental regulation; taxes, investment; and stock market speculation; policies of the federal government and the Federal Reserve System; and the effects of the Depression on the people.</td>
<td>How did social tensions and economic challenges alter the role of government in the 1920’s and 30’s?</td>
<td>Ch 18</td>
<td>Hoover v Roosevelt Debate</td>
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<td>Benchmark # 2 Window- February 21-March 7</td>
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| 2 | 6.4: Analyze President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal as a response to the economic crisis of the Great Depression, including the effectiveness of New Deal programs in relieving suffering and achieving economic recovery, in protecting the rights of women and minorities, and in making significant reforms to protect the economy such as Social Security and labor laws. | How did social tensions and economic challenges alter the role of government in the 1920’s and 30’s? | Ch 19 | Hoover v. Roosevelt Debate

| 1 | **ASSESSMENT USHC 6** | | | |

| 1 | **ACT WorkKeys** | | | |

| 1 | 7.1: Analyze the decision of the United States to enter World War II, including the nation’s movement from a policy of isolationism to international involvement and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2? | Ch 20.1-20.2 | American Issues Vol 2: 10.4 Undeclared War Entry Documents WW2 Timeline/Map (w/ Thesis) |

| 1 | 7.2: Evaluate the impact of war mobilization on the home front, including consumer sacrifices, the role of women and minorities in the workforce, and limits on individual rights that resulted in the internment of Japanese Americans. | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2? | Ch 21 | |

<p>| 1 | 7.3: Explain how controversies among the Big Three Allied leaders over war strategies led to post-war conflict between the United States and the USSR, including delays in the opening of the second front in Europe, the participation of the Soviet Union in the war in the Pacific, and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2? | Ch 22 p. 505-506 | WW2 Timeline/Map (w/ Thesis) |</p>
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<th>7.4: Summarize the economic, humanitarian, and diplomatic effects of World War II, including the end of the Great Depression, the Holocaust, the war crimes trials, and the creation of Israel.</th>
<th>How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2?</th>
<th>Ch 20.3</th>
<th>Photographic Evidence</th>
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<td>ASSESSMENT USHC 7.1-7.4</td>
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<td>ACT Assessment</td>
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| .5 | 7.5: Analyze the impact of the Cold War on national security and individual freedom, including the containment policy and the role of military alliances, the effects of the “Red Scare” and McCarthyism, the conflicts in Korea and the Middle East, the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis, and the nuclear arms race. | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2? | Ch 22.2-22.4 | p.554-555
|   | Ch 24.1-24.2 | American Issues Vol 2: 11.1 “X” (George Kennan) | Taking Sides Debate on Truman | Cold War “Drop Slides” |
|   |    |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| Fourth Quarter- March 23-June 1 |   |   |   |   |
| 2.5 | 7.5: Analyze the impact of the Cold War on national security and individual freedom, including the containment policy and the role of military alliances, the effects of the “Red Scare” and McCarthyism, the conflicts in Korea and the Middle East, the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis, and the nuclear arms race. | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during and after World War 2? | Ch 22.2-22.4 | p.554-555
<p>| | Ch 24.1-24.2 | American Issues Vol 2: 11.1 “X” (George Kennan) | Taking Sides Debate on Truman | Cold War “Drop Slides” |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| 1 | 7.6: Analyze the causes and consequences of social and cultural changes in postwar America, including educational programs, the consumer culture and expanding suburbanization, the advances in medical and agricultural technology that led to | How did the United States respond to perceived challenges to democracy during | Ch 23 | Cold War “Drop Slides” |</p>
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<th>changes in the standard of living and demographic patterns, and the roles of women in American society.</th>
<th>and after World War 2?</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>ASSESSMENT USHC 7</td>
<td>8.1: Analyze the African American Civil Rights Movement, including initial strategies, landmark court cases and legislation, the roles of key civil rights advocates and the media, and the influence of the Civil Rights Movement on other groups seeking equality.</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>Ch 25</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>8.2: Compare the social and economic policies of presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, including support for civil rights legislation, programs for the elderly and the poor, environmental protection, and the impact of these policies on politics.</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>Ch 24.3 Ch 28.1</td>
<td>Modern Liberal &amp; Conservative Debate (w/ 8.4)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>8.3: Explain the development of the war in Vietnam and its impact on American government and politics, including the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the policies of the Johnson administration, protests and opposition to the war, the role of the media, the policies of the Nixon administration, and the growing credibility gap that culminated in the Watergate scandal.</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>Ch 26 Ch 28.1-28.2</td>
<td>American Issues Vol 2: The Hawk Position Vietnam Discussion</td>
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<td>8.4: Analyze the causes and consequences of the resurgence of the conservative movement, including social and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s, Supreme Court decisions on integration and</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies</td>
<td>Ch 27 Ch 28.4 Ch 29.1-</td>
<td>Modern Liberal &amp; Conservative Debate (w/ 8.2)</td>
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<td>abortion, the economic and social policies of the Reagan administration, and the role of the media.</td>
<td>shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>American Issues Vol 2: Ronald Reagan’s Vision of Freedom</td>
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<td>8.5: Summarize key political and economic issues of the last twenty-five years, including continuing dependence on foreign oil; trade agreements and globalization; health and education reforms; increases in economic disparity and recession; tax policy; the national surplus, debt, and deficits; immigration; presidential resignation/impeachment; and the elections of 2000 and 2008.</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>Ch 28.3-28.5, Ch 29.3, Ch 30.1-30.2 p.694-696</td>
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<td>8.6: Summarize America’s role in the changing world, including the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the expansion of the European Union, the continuing crisis in the Middle East, and the rise of global terrorism.</td>
<td>How did liberal and conservative perspectives on foreign and domestic policies shape contemporary issues from the 1960’s to the present?</td>
<td>Ch 29.2, Ch 29.4 p. 696-717</td>
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<td>ASSESSMENT USHC #8</td>
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<td>EOC Window May 4th - Jun. 1st</td>
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<td>May 1st - 12th AP Exams</td>
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Appendix H

Selection from the State Support Document

UNITED STATES HISTORY AND THE CONSTITUTION

STANDARD ONE (INDICATORS 1.1 and 1.2 out of 7 indicators for Standard One)

**USHC 1.1 – Standard USHC-1**: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the conflicts between regional and national interest in the development of democracy in the United States.

**Enduring Understanding**: Contemporary democratic ideals originated in England, were transplanted to North America by English settlers, and have evolved in the United States as a result of regional experiences. To understand this evolution of democracy and the conflict between local and national interests, the student will...

**USHC-1.1** Summarize the distinct characteristics of each colonial region in the settlement and development of British North America, including religious, social, political, and economic differences. Taxonomy Level: Understand/Conceptual Knowledge – 2/B Previous/future knowledge: Students should have background knowledge about European settlements in North America (4-2.2, 7-1.4) and about settlements in the three regions of British North America (8-1.2). They should also know about the impact of the triangular trade and the introduction of African slaves (4-2.3), the policy of mercantilism (7-1.3) and the beginnings of capitalism (7-1.5).

**It is essential for students to know:**

Students should have a mental map of where each colonial region was located. Because the colonial era has been extensively studied in earlier grades it should be enough to review the locations of the New England, the Mid-Atlantic colonies, and Southern colonies. It is important for students to understand the complexities of motivations for settlement and that these motivations impacted the type of society that developed in each region. Students should concentrate on colonies that are examples of their region such as Massachusetts for New England, Pennsylvania for the Mid-Atlantic colonies and Virginia and South Carolina for the Southern colonies.

Religion: One of the most common misunderstandings about the motivation of settlers is that they all came for religious reasons. Although the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were founded for religious purposes, most other settlers came to the New World to get land to improve their economic and social standing. The impact of religion in the English colonies depended upon which groups of Englishmen settled the region. The first Pilgrims and Puritans migrated for religious freedom for themselves but not for religious freedom for other religious groups. There
was very little religious tolerance in New England. This is a common confusion for students. The Puritans were trying to create a “city on the hill,” a community that England could look to as a model of godliness. They did not want their model community defiled by people with other religious beliefs, so they exiled dissenters such as Roger Williams to Rhode Island and persecuted Quakers. Religion played a large role in the cultural development of New England. There was more religious diversity and tolerance in the Mid-Atlantic colonies; however, it was also limited. Pennsylvania was founded by Quaker William Penn. Quakers believed that everyone had an inner light and this belief fostered tolerance. The Act of Toleration in Maryland is often cited as evidence of religious tolerance but is also evidence of the intolerance practiced by the Puritans in Maryland. Lord Baltimore promoted the Act in order to protect the rights of the Catholics in the colony. Southern colonies were founded for economic reasons and religion did not play as large a role in their cultural development until the Great Awakening. The Church of England (Anglican) was the established church in the South, but religious toleration was the norm. Religious intolerance in the colonial period was a prime factor in the establishment of the principle of separation of church and state after the American Revolution.

Society: Early migrants to New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies initially developed a somewhat egalitarian society based on religious equality that fostered the development of democratic political institutions but as economic prosperity developed and immigration increased, so did class distinctions. The Congregational (Puritan) church fostered the development of towns and educational institutions and shaped New England society. The English settlements in the South developed a hierarchical social structure early because of the plantation system and their dependence on indentured servants and later on slaves. The slave system was transplanted to the Carolinas from Barbados. The development of towns and schools was impeded by these large land holdings. Although Georgia was initially chartered as a penal colony that outlawed slavery in order to promote a more egalitarian society, it soon became a plantation colony that allowed slavery.

Politics: The political development of the colonies was impacted by the political traditions of the mother country. The British emigrants brought not only their language and culture with them but also their experience with the Magna Carta and Parliament. Colonial experiences and distance from the mother country fostered the development of democratic institutions starting with Virginia’s House of Burgesses and the New England town meeting. Dependence on slavery and the development of the plantation economy impacted the South’s less democratic political system in which the coastal planters had more political power than ordinary farmers. Civil war in England during the 1600s and the policy of salutary neglect helped to undermine the authority of the king in the colonies and strengthened the role of colonial assemblies. Although most colonies were royal colonies by 1750, colonial assemblies used the power of the purse to control the impact of the royal governors. It is essential for students to understand that British subjects in the colonies were loyal to the Crown but believed that only their colonial assemblies had the power to tax them based on the traditions of the Magna Carta and colonial experience. The English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution and the English Bill of Right all influenced the colonists’ perception of their rights as Englishmen. This understanding is essential for Indicator 1.2.
Economics: The economic development of the English colonies in the New World depended on their geographic location and the natural resources and the human capital available to them. Geographic conditions afforded the settlers in New England only a subsistence farming economy. They turned to the forests for shipbuilding and to the sea as merchants and fishermen. New Englanders were not as dependent on slavery as Southern colonists because of geographic conditions, such as rocky soil and a short growing season and this impacted their views of democracy. The settlers of the Mid-Atlantic colonies were able to exploit their geographic resources of fertile soil and moderate climate and employ their large families to develop an export trade in food stuffs and were not dependent on slave labor. The Southern colonies used their wide expanses of fertile soil to grow cash crops, such as tobacco, rice, and indigo, with slave labor and to export these crops on the ships of New England. It is a common misunderstanding that cotton was a major export crop of the colonial era. Cotton became an important part of the southern economy only after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. The three regions developed an interdependent network of coastal trade and trade with the British Caribbean as well as trade across the Atlantic with Africa and Europe. This trade and consequent economic development was impacted by the mercantilist policies of the mother country. Students should understand where the largest port cities were located and why they developed in those locales. This understanding will be essential background for future economic development included in standards 2 and 4.

It is not essential for students to know:

Students need not know the details of the settlement and development of each colony within a region in British North America. They need not understand the specific religious principles or practices of each religious group, the importance of the Half Way Covenant, or the religious implications of the Salem Witch Trials. They need only a very general understanding of the Great Awakening, not that this revival led to the split of churches into the Old Lights and the New Lights or that it resulted in the founding of new religious groups in America such as Methodists and Baptists or that it promoted religious tolerance and egalitarianism that laid a foundation for the American revolution. Students do not need to know that the religion of the backcountry of the English colonies was influenced by the migration of the Scotch Irish who brought Presbyterianism with them nor that the democratic nature of the presbytery influenced the political culture of this region. Although students should understand the tension between different groups within the colonies, they need not remember the details of Bacon’s Rebellion or the Stono Rebellion. They need not know the organizations of royal control for the English colonies or the differences of political organization of the various colonies. They need not know about the creation of the Dominion of New England nor its overthrow. They need not remember all of the products of each British colonial region nor the goods traded on each leg of the so-called triangular trade routes. They need not remember the specific acts that enforced mercantilism or the different ways in which mercantilism affected colonies in different regions. They do not need to know that Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations was an attack on mercantilism.
Social Studies Literacy Skills for the Twenty-First Century

- Analyze and draw conclusions about the location of places, the condition at places and the connections between places.

Assessment Guidelines: Appropriate classroom assessments could require students to be able to: Understand Interpret Exemplify Classify Summarize Infer Compare Explain or any verb from the Remember cognitive process dimension.

**Standard USHC-1:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the conflicts between regional and national interest in the development of democracy in the United States.

**Enduring Understanding:** Contemporary democratic ideals originated in England, were transplanted to North America by English settlers, and have evolved in the United States as a result of regional experiences. To understand this evolution of democracy and the conflict between local and national interests, the student will…

**USHC-1.2** Analyze the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system and the rule of law as written in the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights, and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the British Parliament over the right to tax that resulted in the American Revolutionary War. Taxonomy Level: Analyze / Conceptual Knowledge – 4/B Previous/future knowledge: Students should have previous knowledge of the development of representative government in the British colonies (8-1.3). In United States Government, students will analyze the British heritage that fostered the development of core American political principles including the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights and the Mayflower Compact (USG -2.3).

**It is essential for students to know:**

American representative government developed during the colonial period as a result of both the transfer of ideas of representative government from England and the circumstances of the New World. The English settlers brought with them concepts from British government of the Magna Carta and were later influenced by the English Bill of Rights. The Magna Carta recognized the rights of Englishmen to be consulted on the levying of taxes and to have their rights protected by a jury of their peers. This is the basis of the English parliamentary and judicial systems. Colonial charters granted by the king included statements declaring that English colonists continued to enjoy the rights of Englishmen. English political tradition also included the rule of law, the principle that every member of society must obey the law, even the king. In this legal system rules are clear, well-understood, and fairly enforced. The English Bill of Rights reiterated that the people have the right to be consulted, through their representatives, on the levying of taxes. It established that the power of the king (executive) should be limited by the Parliament. The English Bill of Rights states that the people have the right to religious freedom which is included in the First Amendment in the American Bill of Rights.
The settlers applied the principles of the right of the legislature to levy taxes and the rule of law to their colonial governments. The House of Burgesses, the Mayflower Compact, and the New England town meetings are examples of early representative government.

The Virginia Company allowed the colonists in Jamestown to start the House of Burgesses as a way of maintaining order in the colony and attracting new colonists. However, only property owners were allowed to vote and the development of social elite to whom others deferred meant that the Virginia colonists did not have a truly democratic government. By the 1620s, the king had appointed a royal governor, further limiting democracy in Virginia.

In New England, the Mayflower Compact was an early example of the principle that government derives its authority from the people. Puritan religious ideology supported representative government in Massachusetts Bay and these ideas were spread to other parts of New England as Puritans migrated. The Puritan church was governed by the male members of the congregation who also governed their civil society through town meetings. Each town sent representatives to the General Court in Boston. At first, only members of the Puritan church were allowed to vote but the franchise was extended to all male property owners by the end of the 1700s.

All thirteen colonies established a representative assembly which had the right to levy taxes. By the time of the revolution, most colonies had a royal governor. Circumstances in England during the 1600s also affected the development of representative government in the colonies. During the English civil war in mid century, the English government left the colonies fairly much alone to develop their political institutions. After almost a century of struggle between the king and Parliament, King James II was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution and replaced with William and Mary who agreed to abide by the English Bill of Right. The monarchs were forced to recognize the supremacy of Parliament and its right to make tax law.

In response to the Glorious Revolution, John Locke wrote that man had natural rights to life, liberty and property, that people established a social contract in order to form the government, and that the authority to govern rests on the will of the people. The control that Parliament was able to exert on the colonies was limited by distance and desire. After the 1720s, the English government followed a policy of salutary neglect, leaving the colonists to govern themselves. Their colonial assemblies had the right to tax the citizens of the colonies. It was the change of this policy that riled the colonists into revolt. During the French and Indian War, Parliament abandoned salutary neglect and enforced their mercantilist policies by cracking down on smugglers. They established admiralty courts [Sugar Act] which violated the right to a trial by a jury of one’s peers (Magna Carta). American reaction was to both protest the admiralty courts and increase smuggling. The cost of the French and Indian War caused Great Britain to change its policy towards the colonies and imposed taxes to help pay the war debt. Colonists vehemently opposed the Stamp Act because it was a direct tax rather than an indirect (import) tax such as the sugar tax. Parliament’s failure to recognize the exclusive right of the colonial assemblies to collect taxes constituted ‘taxation without representation’. Colonists responded with the creation of the Sons and Daughters of Liberty, the Stamp Act Congress and an effective economic
boycott which led to the repeal of the Stamp Act. The stationing of British troops in the colonies resulted in the Boston Massacre and further alienated the colonists. The Townshend Acts resulted in a continuation of the boycott and the Tea Act resulted in the Boston Tea Party, which led to the “Intolerable” (Coercive) Acts, the First Continental Congress, and the “shot heard ‘round the world” at Lexington and Concord that began the Revolutionary War.

Students should know the sequence of these events and that they were protests about the loss of the ‘rights of Englishmen’ and against ‘taxation without representation’. In addition, there are several common misconceptions that should be avoided or corrected. The colonists were not protesting against the taxes because the taxes were too high nor were they attempting to form a new kind of government. Instead the colonists were trying to hold onto the government that they had developed during the time of salutary neglect. Neither did the colonists want to have representation in Parliament; since they would have been outvoted. What they wanted was British recognition that only their colonial legislatures had the right to impose taxes on the citizens of the colonies.

It is not essential for students to know:

It is not necessary to go into detail about the circumstances surrounding the signing of the Magna Carta, the English Civil War and the Puritan Commonwealth or the Glorious Revolution since this should have been covered in grades 6, 7, and World History. Students do not need to remember the specific Navigation Acts, nor that this legislation actually aided the development of colonial shipping and provided subsidies for colonial growers of products such as indigo. They do not need to know about the different types of colonies (charter, proprietary or royal). However, students should know that most colonies were royal colonies by the time of the American Revolution. Students do not need to know about the various battles of the French and Indian War or specific conflicts with the Native Americans. They do not need to remember specific details about the conflicts between the colonists and Parliament over taxes not listed above. For instance, the Townshend Acts were an indirect tax on a list of goods including tea, however by this time the colonists were unwilling to accept an indirect tax designed to collect taxes rather than to regulate trade. The Townshend Acts, except for the tax on tea, were repealed as a result of the colonists’ boycott. The Tea Act was not a tax, but permission for the East India Tea Company to have a monopoly on the sale of tea in the colonies which would allow them to sell tea at a lower price. This lowered price threatened the effectiveness of colonial boycott and therefore their protest against the right of Parliament to levy taxes. It resulted in the Boston Tea Party. Students do not need to know the provisions of the resulting Coercive (Intolerable) Acts nor the details of the response of the First Continental Congress to the Coercive Acts. They do not need to know the details of the attack on Lexington and Concord, the midnight ride of Paul Revere, or the response of the Second Continental Congress to the “shot heard round the world.”
Appendix I

Data Team Structure

**Step One:** Collect and Chart the Data

Data Team:

Date of Meeting:

Assessment:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th># Students</th>
<th># Proficient or Higher</th>
<th>% Proficient or Higher</th>
<th># Close to Proficient</th>
<th>% Close to Proficient</th>
<th>Close to Proficient Students</th>
<th># Progressing</th>
<th>% Progressing</th>
<th>Progressing Students</th>
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**Students Proficient and Higher**

**Step Two: Analyze Data and Prioritize Needs**

*Identify strengths and performance errors. Please indicate one priority per students group.*

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<tr>
<th>Performance Strengths</th>
<th>Inferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps:

**Step Three: Set, Review, and Revise Incremental SMART Goals**

The percentage of __________________________ scoring “Proficient” or higher in __________________________

will increase from __________% to __________% as measured by __________________ and administered on ________________.

**Step Four: Select Instructional Strategies**

**Prioritized Next Step:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Instructional Strategies</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
<th>Time Duration of Instruction</th>
<th>Materials for Teachers and Students</th>
<th>Assignments and Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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**Step Five: Determine Results Indicators**
### Prioritized Next Step:

### Selected Instructional Strategy:

<table>
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<th>Adult Behaviors:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Behaviors:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What to look for in student work:</td>
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</table>

### Students Close to Proficient

#### Step Two: Analyze Data and Prioritize Needs

*Identify strengths and performance errors. Please indicate one priority per students group.*

<table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Errors and Misconceptions</th>
<th>Inferences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prioritized Need:</td>
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#### Step Three: Set, Review, and Revise Incremental SMART Goals

The percentage of __________________________ scoring “Proficient” or higher in __________________________

will increase from __________% to __________% as measured by __________________________ and administered on ____________.

#### Step Four: Select Instructional Strategies

<table>
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### Step Five: Determine Results Indicators

**Prioritized Need:**

**Selected Instructional Strategy:**

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**Student Behaviors:**

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<th>What to look for in student work:</th>
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### Students Progressing

**Step Two: Analyze Data and Prioritize Needs**

*Identify strengths and performance errors. Please indicate one priority per students group.*

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**Prioritized Need:**
**Step Three:** Set, Review, and Revise Incremental SMART Goals

The percentage of __________________________ scoring “Proficient” or higher in ____________________________ will increase from ____________% to _____________% as measured by ______________________ and administered on ______________.

**Step Four:** Select Instructional Strategies

### Prioritized Need:

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**Step Five:** Determine Results Indicators

### Prioritized Need:

**Selected Instructional Strategy:**

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What to look for in student work:</td>
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</table>

### Needs Practice

**Step Two:** Analyze Data and Prioritize Needs

*Identify strengths and performance errors. Please indicate one priority per students group.*

<table>
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### Performance Errors and Misconceptions

#### Prioritized Need:

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### Step Three: Set, Review, and Revise Incremental SMART Goals

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will increase from __________% to __________% as measured by __________________________ and administered on ____________.

### Step Four: Select Instructional Strategies

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### Step Five: Determine Results Indicators

#### Prioritized Need:

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<th>Student Behaviors:</th>
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</thead>
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</table>

Appendix J

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
2. Why did you choose teaching as a career?
3. What do you enjoy about teaching history?
4. Please describe how the EOCE has affected you and your teaching practice. (CQ)
5. How has the district U.S. History pacing guide affected your planning and instruction? (SQ1)
6. How has the district U.S. History curriculum guide affected your ability to support student learning? (SQ2)
7. In what ways have the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides supported you and your pedagogical practices? (SQ3)
8. In what ways have the EOCE and the U.S. History pacing and curriculum guides limited you and your pedagogical practices? (SQ3)
9. How have you changed your curriculum and practice in order to help students be successful on the EOCE? (SQ2)
10. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your classroom autonomy, which is your ability to make educational decisions for your students? (SQ1)
11. How have the EOCE and related policies affected your sense of self-efficacy as a teacher which is your belief that you will be effective in achieving your goals and objectives for student learning? (SQ3)
12. Please describe how you feel about the incorporation of student test scores into the evaluation process. (SQ4)

13. How do you feel about teaching as a profession since the implementation of the EOCE? (SQ4)

14. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?
Appendix K

Recruitment Letter and Professional Profile

March 29, 2017

Dear U.S. History Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the impact of the South Carolina U.S. History End of Course Exam (EOCE) on high school U.S. History teachers’ sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

You are being invited to participate in this study as you have taught U.S. History for at least one year in the Midlands region of South Carolina since the implementation of the South Carolina U.S. History EOCE and have therefore experienced the EOCE. If you are willing to participate in this study, you will be asked to schedule an individual interview, complete a professional profile survey, and join an optional focus group interview. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the professional profile survey, individual interviews should take approximately 20-30 minutes, and focus group interviews should take 45-60 minutes with additional time for the included lunch. Your name will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential as pseudonyms will be used throughout the manuscript.

A consent document is included with this letter as well as a participant survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the consent document and return it to me either as a hard-copy or in an electronic format sent to my email address.

On the consent document you will find a table in which you may indicate your preferred individual interview dates and locations. Prior to your individual interview, please complete the enclosed participant survey. You may either send the survey to me along with your consent document or you may bring it to the interview.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a gift card to Starbucks; if you choose to also participate in the focus group interview you will also receive lunch.

Sincerely,
Debra Whitmore
Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University
Dwhitmore@liberty.edu
803.932.2629
PARTICIPANT SURVEY: Please respond to the following questions and prompts

1. How many years have you been an educator?  _____

2. What is your age?  _____

3. How many years have you taught U.S. History?  _____

4. Please indicate the level(s) of U.S. History that you have taught:
   a. CP (College Prep)  b. HN (Honors)
   c. AP (Advanced Placement)  d. IB (International Baccalaureate)

5. Please identify any other history or social science courses that you have taught or are teaching:
   a. ______________
   b. ______________
   c. ______________

6. Please indicate your college major:
   a. History  b. Social Science  c. Political Science  d. other: __________

7. Please indicate your highest educational degree and/or certification:
   a. Bachelor’s
   b. Bachelor’s plus 18
   c. Master’s
   d. Educational Specialist (Ed.S)
   e. Doctorate
   f. National Board Certified

8. Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female
Appendix L

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What is your favorite event or concept in U.S. History to teach students?

2. How do you know when students “get” a concept?

3. How has the EOCE affected you and your practice as a U.S. History teacher? (CQ)

4. How have the district policies related to the EOCE changed your curriculum and pedagogy? (SQ3)

5. How has the EOCE affected your decision-making ability related to U.S. History? (SQ1)

6. How effective do you think you are in preparing students to be successful on the EOCE? (SQ2)

7. How effective do you think you are in achieving your objectives for student learning? (SQ2)

8. How do you feel about the inclusion of student test scores into the teacher evaluation process? (SQ4)

9. How do you feel about your career and remaining in your career? (SQ4)

10. Is there anything else you would like to mention about EOCEs and your role as a teacher?
Appendix M

SLO Template

Student Learning Objective (SLO) Template

☐ This SLO serves as the Professional Growth and Development Plan (Section I only)
☐ This SLO serves as one of multiple goals of the Professional Growth and Development Plan. (Section I and II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I. SLO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Name:</strong> [Click here to enter text.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SLO Evaluator Name:</strong> [Click here to enter text.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Level:</strong> [Click here to enter text.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SLO Type:</strong> Choose One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Individual (written by an individual teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Team (team of teachers focus on a similar goal but are held accountable for only their students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SLO Interval of Instruction</strong> Choose One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semester
☐ Other

If Other, provide rationale (i.e. quarter long course) and indicate days of instruction.

Rationale: Click here to enter text.
Days of Instruction: Click here to enter text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide a detailed description of the student population. Information should include, but is not limited to, the following: the number of students in the class, a description of students with exceptionalities (e.g., learning disability, gifted and talented, English language learner [ELL] status, etc.), and a description of academic supports provided to students (e.g., extended time, resource time with EC teacher, any classroom supports that students receive to help them access the core curriculum).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Historical and Trend Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the applicable past data for the students. In your description included the students’ level of knowledge prior to instruction, including the source(s) of data (e.g., formative and summative assessments, anecdotal data gathered from collaboration with other educators) and reflect on the relevance to the overall course objectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Baseline Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe which pre-assessment(s) will be used to measure student learning and why the assessment is appropriate for measuring the objective(s). Provide baseline assessment results for the student population. Attach the assessment and grading scale and/or rubric used to score the assessment(s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. Post Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate what assessment will be used as a post assessment and how it is aligned to the baseline assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. Progress Monitoring Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How frequently will you progress monitor students’ mastery of content? Indicate what ongoing sources of evidence you will collect in order to monitor student progress. (Other evidence of student growth can include student work samples, portfolios, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI. Learning Goal (Objective)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Provide a description of what students will be able to do at the end of the SLO Interval. The Learning Goal (objective) is based on and aligned with course- or grade-level content standards and curriculum. The goal should be broad enough to capture major content, but focused enough to be measureable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Standard(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the content standard(s) and indicators that align to the SLO learning goal (objective).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Growth Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Choose One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tiered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Targeted <em>(Sub population(s) of students are the focus of the SLO goal. Appropriate for course approach as a second SLO when the first includes all students.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| B. Considering all available data, identify the targets the students are expected to reach by the end of the SLO interval. List the growth target information below or on an attached spreadsheet. |
| C. Provide a rationale for the growth targets. Rationale may reflect typical vs. pretest performance, may include reasoning for using individualized targets for some but not all students, or any other influencing information used to determine anticipated growth. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Instructional Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Describe the best instructional practices you will use to teach this content to students. Include how instruction will be differentiated based on data. What interventions will be used if more assistance is needed during the learning progress?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. Conference Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Percentage of Students Who Met Growth Targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________ %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Reflection on Data

How does the data inform your instructional practice, goal setting, or your professional development for next year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signatures</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO Preliminary Conference</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SLO Mid-Course Conference</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO Summative Conference</td>
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Section II. To be completed only if additional goals are needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area to be addressed: (optional)</th>
<th>Area to be addressed: (optional)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Related ADEPT Performance Standard(s):</td>
<td>Related ADEPT Performance Standard(s):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2:</td>
<td>Goal 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies:</td>
<td>Strategies:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Desired Outcome:  

Reflect how these goals are related to your Professional Learning:  

Desired Outcome:  

Evidence that the supervisor will consider in determining progress/goal accomplishment:

**Preliminary performance review** *(to be completed by the supervisor on the basis of the evidence)*

___ The educator has *met* the above goal.
___ The educator is making *satisfactory progress* toward achieving this goal.
___ The educator is *not* making satisfactory progress toward achieving this goal.

**Comments**

The signatures below verify that the teacher has received written and oral explanations of the preliminary performance review.

Teacher

Supervisor:

**Final performance review** *(to be completed by the supervisor on the basis of the evidence)*

___ The educator has *met* the above goal.
___ The educator is making *satisfactory progress* toward achieving this goal.
___ The educator is *not* making satisfactory progress toward achieving this goal.
**Comments**

The signatures below verify that the teacher has received written and oral explanations of the final performance review.

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<thead>
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