Situational or personal: interest in American history

Victoria Caterina Stewart

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A Dissertation

entitled

Situational or Personal:

Interest in American History

by

Victoria Caterina Stewart

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Curriculum and Instruction

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May 2010
The main purpose of the study was to investigate how individuals with a stated interest in American history described their interest. Understanding interest and the factors influencing interest development in a particular content is important as personal interest has been described as "having a critical role in the learning and development of both younger and older students" (Renninger, 1992, p. 393). Lack of interest in American history has been described as problematic, and there is a paucity of research addressing this issue.

The study used a sequential two-phase mixed-method approach, using survey and interview to investigate the meaning of interest. Overall, results revealed the complex nature of interest in the content and factors both inside and outside the classroom as relevant. Factors stated as important included significant others, place, story, storytelling.
patriotism, and valuing knowledge. Additionally, results of a multiple regression suggested the importance of classroom activities to interest as classroom content.
This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Sinforosa Anita Pauluzzi.

Mom never allowed anything to keep her from fulfilling her dreams; I couldn't have had a better role model for life. She taught me to always look forward and never quit. I wish she were here to share this accomplishment with me.

Also to my family, my husband, John, and my sons, John-Wyatt and Liam. Your belief in me, support, and patience helped me to keep moving forward in order to get _er done! You fill my life with laughter making me want to be the best person I can be every day.
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Contents

Abstract iii
Acknowledgement vi
Contents viii
List of Tables xi
List of Figures xii
1. Chapter One: Introduction 1
   1.1 Statement of the Problem 3
   1.2 Significance of the Study 4
   1.3 Driving Research Question and Secondary Questions 10
   1.4 Definitions 11
   1.5 Perceived Limitations 12
2. Chapter Two: Review of the Literature 14
   2.1 The Social Studies 15
   2.2 Perceptions of Social Studies 18
   2.3 Perceptions of History 20
   2.4 Interest as a Psychological Construct 26
   2.5 Mixed-Method Approach 38
   2.6 Quantitative Method 43
   2.7 Measurement: The Rasch Model 52
   2.8 Qualitative Research 62
   2.9 Conclusion 69
3. Chapter Three: Method 71
   3.1 Research Design 72
   3.2 Participants 73
   3.3 Phase One: Instrumentation 75
   3.4 Data Collection 77
   3.5 Analyses 79
   3.6 Qualitative Results 84
   3.7 Phase Two: Qualitative Coding and Analysis 85
   3.8 Defacto Limitations 86
4.2 Situational Interest Survey: High School Sample 94
4.3 Situational Interest Survey: College Sample 98
4.4 Interest in Method Survey: High School Sample 103
4.5 Interest in Method Survey: College Sample 106
4.6 Course Rankings 107
4.7 Frequency of Activity: High School 109
4.8 Multiple Regression 109
4.9 Method Interest: College 114
4.10 Qualitative Results 114
4.11 Interview responses 128
5. Chapter Five: Discussion 133
  5.1 Method Overview 134
  5.2 Participants 136
  5.3 Analyses 137
  5.4 Results Overview 139
  5.5 Qualitative Results 143
  5.7 History Compared to Other Academic Disciplines 143
  5.8 American History 144
  5.9 Interview responses 145
  5.10 Limitations 146
  5.11 Sampling 146
  5.12 Survey and Administration 147
  5.13 Definitions 148
  5.14 Rating Scale 149
  5.15 Coding and Analysis 149
  5.16 Instrumentation Discussion 149
  5.17 Measurement Issues: Complexity of Interest 149
  5.18 Interest in Method Survey: High School & College 152
  5.19 Discussion 155
  5.20 Participant Perceptions of Course Rankings 155
  5.21 Frequency of Activity 157
  5.22 Short-answer responses: Nature of the classroom context 160
  5.23 Interview Responses 166
  5.24 Telling: Interest in American History 168
  5.25 Place 175
  5.26 Story and Storytelling 176
  5.27 Significant Others 179
  5.28 Additional Themes 181
  5.29 Conclusion 182
  5.30 Implications 192
List of Tables

4.1 Course Ranking: High School 108
4.2 Course Ranking: College 108
4.3 Perceived Frequency of Activities: High School 110
4.4 Perceived frequency of activities: College 111
4.5 Means: Frequency of Activities 112
4.6 Reason American History Rated as Favorite: High School 116
4.7 Reason American History Rated as Favorite: College 117
4.8 Reason American History Ranked as Least Liked of Academic Disciplines 118
4.9 What high school participants like most about American history 120
4.1 What college participants like most about American history 122
4.11 What high school participants like least about American history 124
4.12 What college participants like least about American history 126
4.13 Common themes with exemplars: Interview 129
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>SIS Probability Curve (Rating Scale 12345) High School</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>SIS Probability Curves (Rating Scale 12345, item 5 deleted) High School</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Wright Map: SIS (Rating scale 12345, item 5 deleted) High School</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>SIS Probability Curves (Rating Scale 12345) College</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>SIS Probability Curves ( Final Rating Scale 11233, 4 items deleted) College</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Wright Map: SIS (Rating scale 11233, 4 items deleted) College</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>CPS³ Probability Curves (Rating scale 1234) High school</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>CPS³ Probability Curves (Rating Scale 1234) College</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

Schools have been among the most hotly contested arenas in what have been sometimes called the “history wars.” Our respondents has a great deal to say about history in school; they told us that they felt less connected to the past there than in any other setting we asked about. (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998, p. 179)

The adage, you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink, aptly describes the challenge for classroom teaching as it relates to student learning. Educators can provide information, assign readings, lecture, test students and even create exciting, stimulating lessons and activities for their students, but they can’t make them learn. As with the horse, which has to be thirsty to drink, so must the student either have a “thirst” to learn a topic or must be enticed to learn. Teaching and learning are so intertwined that this may be forgotten; “learning” is not a natural outcome of “teaching”. An important condition for this seemingly symbiotic relationship of teaching and authentic learning is the presence of interest (Dewey, 1913; Hidi, 1990; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Tobias, 1994).

In layman’s terms, interest might be viewed as liking, curiosity, attentiveness or even excitement. It would seem logical from this perspective that, in a learning environment, students who are attentive, curious, excited, or like the content, would be interested in the content, which would potentially positively affect learning. Considering this perspective, the question becomes, how do students become interested? While it may be assumed that interest, or interestingness is important to maintaining student attention,
understanding what is meant by interest is another matter. It would seem to make sense that if content can be *made* interesting, students would *become* interested in the content, thus become more successful in the classroom.

The challenge seems to be what constitutes interest or interestingness for various individuals. Further, once again considering the layman’s term for interest, how do you encourage and sustain the initial attentiveness, curiosity, liking, or enjoyment? Unfortunately when it comes to the social studies and history, especially in an academic context, it is commonly known that the disciplines are not well liked. It has been documented that social studies, and to a lesser extent, history has not been perceived as well-liked by students. Studies have indicated students find disciplines falling under the socials studies umbrella (Barton, 2008; Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Fernandez, Massey, & Dornbusch, 1976; Fraser, B., 1981; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985), including history (Loewen, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998), to be boring, irrelevant and lacking in usefulness.

However, not all individuals find the social studies disciplines, including history, to be boring. Rather, personal experiences with students in the history classroom along with sparse research on the topic (Harris & Haydn, 2006, 2008; Lord & Harland, 2000) suggest individuals do find the content to be interesting. Still, there is little evidence as to why American history might be considered interesting or why someone might like the content. Consequently, my goal was to find individuals expressing an interest in American history and investigate the meaning of their experience of interest. Particularly, I wanted to explore how individuals with a stated interest in American history described their interest and the meaning of experiences within the domain.
Statement of the Problem

Interest is an enigmatic, yet important component of teaching and learning. When students are interested in a topic, they are often more engaged and willing to learn. However, existing scholarly literature suggests students perceive the social studies as boring, and have negative attitudes toward the discipline (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985) calling into question whether they are engaged and learning the content. As a social studies educator, I have had first-hand experience with student’s exhibiting negative attitudes and in some cases, apathy for social studies content and history in particular. In my experience, it was difficult to get students engaged in content for which they had no interest. Additionally, students who were not engaged put little effort and spent little time on assignments, negatively affecting their learning the content; there seemed to be a connection in my classroom. Indeed, the effect of student’s negative perceptions of content on their academic achievement in the domain has been a concern for researchers (Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Linter, 2006; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985), as US students have long struggled with basic knowledge of history.

Even so, interest in American History is still evident in some individuals. It seems a vicious circle; interest in a domain has been related to improvement in student achievement in that domain and achievement to interest. Still, while individual interest may provide impetus for students’ to pursue opportunities to engage with content both in and out of the classroom, such interest is not thought to be directly accessible to outside influence. However, situational interest has been described as a potential avenue for educators to support students’ academic learning and achievement in a domain (Dewey,
1913; Mitchell, 1993) with the potential for becoming individual interest (Hidi, 2006; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger, 1992). If school classes have been described as boring, and studies have suggested that social studies are irrelevant and useless, what is it that brings individuals to develop such an interest? Certainly, there must be contextual factors, both in a classroom and in everyday life, which people with a stated interest in American history can identify as important to their interest leading them to engage and learn more about the content. The focus of this study is the meaning of experience of interest in American History.

**Significance of the Study**

Knowledge in American History has been identified as important for all American’s as informed and responsible citizens. The National Standards for History (1996) state the following,

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none are more important to a democratic society than this: knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence. Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, what its core values are, or what decisions of the past account for present circumstances. Without history, we cannot undertake any sensible inquiry into the political, social, or moral issues in society. And without historical knowledge and inquiry, we cannot achieve the informed, discriminating citizenship essential to effective participation in the democratic processes of governance and the fulfillment for all our citizens of the nation’s democratic ideals. (http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/dev-5-12a.html)
```
While the reasoning for an informed and knowledgeable citizenry may seem obvious, the lack of Americans’ historical knowledge has been called into question, as American students have struggled to illustrate proficiency in this area.

According to the 2006 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) report card in US History, merely 13% of 12th graders performed at a level considered proficient and only 47% illustrated basic knowledge of American History as measured by this assessment (retrieved http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ushistory/). Similar results were reported in the 2001 and 1994 NAEP report cards. In response to the 2001 NAEP US History report figures, and the events surrounding 9-11, President Bush in 2002 introduced *We the People*, an initiative by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The focus of the program was to address “teaching, studying and understanding of American History and culture” (http://www.neh.gov/news/archive/20020917.html). The plan provided economic incentives for educators toward the end goal of improving students’ historical and cultural knowledge.

Undeniably, students’ poor performance on tests of basic knowledge of American History is troubling. As one component of Public Law 107-110, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* (2002), *We the People* advocated increased emphasis in American History through education on a national level. Ironically, at the same time the social studies (including history), were being deemphasized in schools in response to “SEC. 1111. State Plans” of the same of the law which stated:

(C) SUBJECTS.—The State shall have such academic standards for all public elementary school and secondary school children, including children served under this part, in subjects determined by the State, but including at least mathematics,
reading or language arts, and (beginning in the 2005–2006 school year) science, which shall include the same knowledge, skills, and levels of achievement expected of all children. (http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf)

The decision to leave social studies disciplines out of required testing at the state level de-emphasized the place of the discipline in schools. As schools sought to improve student achievement in disciplinary content (reading, writing, and math) emphasized on standardized tests, school resources were redirected to those disciplines, resulting in a reduction of time spent on other disciplinary content, including the social studies (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Hutton & Burstein, 2008; Lintner, 2006; Manzo, 2005).

While NCLB has decimated social studies at all the elementary level, the effect of NCLB on social studies at the secondary level has also been troubling. In the 7-12 milieu, social studies requirements have decreased in reaction to changes in testing, with some states all but removing social studies from the curriculum. For instance, in Florida it is possible to not encounter a social studies course during high school (Rosenfield, 2004). Ultimately, without exposure to the content, interest development is further challenged, as content knowledge has been identified as a precursor to individual interest (Tobias, 1994).

The lack of basic understanding and recall of our history has become fodder for comedic entertainment, such as the popular “Jay-walking” segment in which talk show host, Jay Leno, encourages guests to overtly display their incompetence in the area of American history. Sadly, without exposure to the content, people cannot develop knowledge; thus incompetence should be expected. Additionally, without exposure, without knowledge, interest cannot develop.
Such a shameful display of historical illiteracy as made evident through Jay-walking underscores the need for scholarly work attempting to document why and how people become interested and engage in American history. Promoting knowledge acquisition in the domain of American history is indeed an important component for an informed and responsible citizenry. However, we must also consider why this knowledge is not being sought out and retained by citizens. Since interest does instigate interaction with content, the goal of this project is to investigate the origins of interest in the domain of American history.

Research in the area of social studies and history has documented that individuals have negative perceptions of history (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985). However, research revealing reasons individuals are interested in history are scarce (Adey & Biddulph, 2001; Harris & Haydn, 2006; Lord & Harland, 2000; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998) and nearly non-existent when specifically considering interest in the history of America (an exception is Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998).

Past research has focused on student perceptions of social studies and/or history, including method and other classroom contextual factors (Adey & Biddulph, 2001; Biddulph & Adey, 2003; Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Harris & Haydn, 2006; VanSledright, 1997; Zhao & Hoge, 2005); interestingness of texts (Alexander, 2003; Alexander, Jetton, & Kulikowich, 1995; Ataya & Kulikowich, 2002); approaches to teaching (Barton & Levtik, 2003; Schur, 2007); and ways common people use history (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998). To date, there is no evidence of a study with the specific intended goal of examining interest in American history. Further, previous studies have been confined to
examining participants from essentially a single population. Considering how individuals across various levels of education and experience is important for beginning to understand how interest develops from early exposure to American history through interactions with the content on a professional level.

Different factors have been described as having the capacity to instigate and influence interest in an individual. Approaching the construct of interest from the perspective of educational psychology, both situational and individual (also referred to as personal) forms of interest have been described as pertinent to academic contexts and disciplines. Situational interest has been described as interest that is borne out of an individual’s interaction with factors in the environment and is said to be superficial and transitory (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2000; Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991). For example, such an interest might occur as a result of students’ interactions in their classrooms, or a person’s attendance at an historical reenactment. Conversely, individual interest has been determined to come from within the person and is long-lasting (Hidi, 2006; Krapp, 1993, 2000; Krapp, Hidi & Renninger 1992; Renninger, 1992, 2000; Renninger & Wozniak, 1985). Individual interest may be apparent in individuals who have had many experiences with American history, and have chosen this as their occupation. Each of these conceptions of interest has differing implications on how an individual may experience and thus, describe such an interest.

Further, it has been suggested that, under the right circumstances, situational interest may develop into an individual interest (Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi, 2006; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger, 1992). Such a progression would require opportunities
for continued engagement with the content of interest and appropriate scaffolding, resulting in an increased knowledge in the topic of interest.

Considering such a development in academic contexts, Alexander (2003) suggested this progression as occurring essentially across three stages, *acclimation*, *competency* and *proficiency/expertise*, with each stage indicated through increased knowledge, improved strategy use and interest progression from interest instigated through the environment to one that is ingrained in the person. If this does occur, this line of reasoning suggests it would be possible for individuals with differing levels of interest to provide qualitatively different descriptions of their interest.

In addition, Brophy (2008) suggested research was needed which included discussions with “people who already have well-developed interests in particular domains” (p. 140) in an effort to understand ways they appreciate the value of a domain in their everyday life. The meaning and development of an interest in American history as described by people of differing ages, levels of experience and education, has yet to be considered. Thus, this is the focus of this study.

As a result, the purpose of this study was to investigate how individuals across three levels of knowledge and experience describe their interest in American history. Understanding interest and the factors influencing the development of interest in a particular content is important for educators as individual interest has been described as “having a critical role in the learning and development of both younger and older students” (Renninger, 1992, p. 393). Yet, there is a dearth of research related to how individual’s experience interest in American history.
Driving Research Question and Secondary Questions

The overarching research question addressed through this study was: *How do individuals with different levels of education and knowledge describe their interest in American History?* The first phase of this mixed-methodological, multi-phase research was quantitative in nature. Simultaneous administration of two surveys, the *Situational Interest Survey SIS* (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) and the *Class Preferences and the Social Studies Survey (CPS³)* (Stewart, unpublished) was completed in an effort to address the following research questions:

1. How do students rank their interest in American history compared to other core academic content areas?
2. How frequently (daily, weekly, monthly, once a term, never) do students report the use of different instructional methods (i.e., collaborative work, projects, guest speakers)?
3. Is there a significant relationship between individual interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?
4. Is there a significant relationship between situational interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

Responses to the above queries were used to inform and develop an interview schedule utilized during the second qualitative phase of the research. A semi-structured interview format guided my exploration into individuals’ experience with interest and interest development in American history. Interviews attempted to garner response to the final research question and sub-questions:

5. How do participants describe their interest in American history?
a. How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate, professional) describe their interest in American history?

b. How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the origin and evolution of their interest in American history?

**Definitions**

As is often the case with language, terms may have multiple meanings (i.e., the word *play*) including technical meanings. To aid the reader and delineate the terms I have used in this study, I have provided the following list of definitions. This list is not inclusive and may include terms that have alternative meanings from those considered in the main stream. The list is presented in alphabetical order.

**Catch**- refers to an element in the environment that spontaneously, but momentarily, captures an individual’s attention (Dewey, 1913); often referred to as the first phase in the experience of situational interest.

**Hold**- second of two phases in situational interest; refers to an element in the environment which is relevant to individual, encouraging sustained involvement with the content, topic etc. (Mitchell, 1993).

**Individual interest**- interests which are stable and enduring across contexts. Such interest comes from within, either as predispositions, inherent abilities, or through past experience with a topic (Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp, 1992).

**Interest**- conceptualized in many ways. Common to most definitions is the premise that interest is the result of the interaction of an individual with their environment, described as person-stimulus interaction (Hidi, 1990). Given the contextual focus of the current research, this will be the working definition for interest.
Mixed-method- indicates the use of both quantitative and qualitative components in research design, data collection and analysis, in an effort to take advantage of the strengths that each of the research approaches brings to the table.

Phenomenology - an approach attempting to report the lived experience of an individual in relation to a phenomena (van Manen, 1990, 1984), in this case an individual experiencing interest in American history.

Situational interest- interests which are content-specific and temporary, occurring as a result of an interaction between an individual and specific features of an individual's immediate environment (Hidi, 1990).

Perceived Limitations

American history covers a plethora of content spanning over 500 years from exploration of the continent to current date. As such, it is conceivable that students may in fact have described or indicated an interest in a specific topic in American History. For instance, a young man I know is very interested in America’s role in World War II and more specifically, in weaponry and military tactics of that era. When asked about American history as a content area, he stated he doesn’t like it! Accordingly, I understand there may be ambiguity between topic (i.e. World War II weapons) and content interest (i.e. American History). It was not the purpose of this study to decide whether topic interest or a more holistic interest in American history constitutes “interest” in the discipline. Rather, as a phenomenological study, the experience of interest, either topic or holistic, as reported by participants, was the focus.

Contextual factors in the classroom and the influence of individual teacher personalities, abilities, knowledge, and comfort level with differing topics, content and
instructional methods were also considered limitations. Teachers, as individuals, each bring their own unique education, talent, ability, and topic interest to the classroom. However, teacher attributes while important, were not considered a main focus of the current research. I hypothesized that factors in the educational milieu, including attributes of the teacher, would emerge as one component of many of an individual’s overall experience of interest in American history. Thus, while such differences may emerge, they were not directly investigated in the current research.

Finally, as a past American History teacher, I had to consider my own biases about content, methods, and other issues encountered during the study. Employing the phenomenological research method, I bracketed my subjectivity in an attempt to account for these issues in advance (Moustakas, 1994). This personal reflection is presented in Appendix A.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

At first sight the hope of gaining a working consensus regarding interest on the educational side is futile (Dewey, 1899, p. 6.)

This study addressed interest in American history, both in and out of the classroom. However, for the most part, the research focused on American history from an educational perspective. As such, the literature presented focuses on the place of American history in an educational context, as situated in the social studies. This review describes the nature of the social studies, as well as the debated relationship between the social studies and history in an ongoing struggle for disciplinary dominance in the K-12 curriculum. Possible ramifications, including student perceptions of the social studies are also presented.

Review of interest as related to educational milieu is presented. This review provides a brief historical overview of the focus on interest research in education and provides discussion of the main literature pertinent to the current study. In particular, research related to both situational and individual interest is discussed.

Finally, as a mixed methods study using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis including use of the Rasch (1960, 1980) model, literature pertinent to each of the methods used in the study is presented. Since use of mixed method studies are of relatively recent development, I thought it important to describe the attributes of using this approach to address the specific research questions.
This review includes discussions of advantages and disadvantages of mixed methods, as well as both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with an emphasis on the use of phenomenology. Additionally, description of the attributes and benefits of the Rasch model have been included.

**The Social studies**

In K-12 schools, history content falls under the disciplinary umbrella of the social studies. Typically in schools this umbrella is thought of as covering such content as history, geography, economics, and civics at the elementary levels with the addition of government, sociology, and psychology customary for the high school. While this list covers little more than standard social studies content, content considered relevant to the study of social studies has been defined in more broad terms. According to the National Council for the Social Studies (1994):

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences.

The social studies umbrella is thus, at least conceptually, large and far reaching, including at a minimum content from fourteen disciplines. Consequently, there have been disagreements regarding the place of the social studies in the schools. In particular, the argument that has been made is whether the social studies should in fact be the
overarching structure for the disciplines, or whether each discipline should be addressed independently as discrete content (see Leming, Ellington, & Porter-Magee, 2003; Ratvitch, 2003; Ross & Marker, 2005).

The crux of this debate is made evident in the manner in which schools conceptualize and address the disciplinary content both as an interdisciplinary content area and as independent content areas. In educational contexts, disciplinary content falling under the auspices of social studies may be presented holistically, as is the general approach in the elementary school, with multiple disciplines coming together to form a single course, usually referred to simply as “social studies.” For instance, in an elementary level social studies lesson, historic, economic, civic as well as other content/factors may be presented together in one lesson addressing the establishment of a local neighborhood. This integrated approach has been dubbed the “expanding environments” curriculum and has been blasted by critics decrying the move away from distinct disciplinary approach, especially failure to teach history as a discipline in its own right (Lemming, Ellington, & Porter Magee, 2003; Ratvitch, 2003).

Alternatively, the disciplines may be approached as distinct content and taught as such, which is generally the approach in the high school. In such a scenario, study focuses on separate and distinct courses such as American or world history, economics or civics. In this way disciplinary content is presented with more breadth and depth than possible using a combined (social studies) approach. However, due to the nature of such content, overlap between disciplines is inevitable. Students are, of course, still exposed to economic issues through their history or civics course, and civic or historical knowledge may come to light through the others such as economics. In any case, the disciplines
taken together are considered “social studies”, and are often referred to as such and administrated through social studies departments.

From my perspective as a researcher, whether content was to be conceptualized as social studies or as an individual discipline presented a challenge for this research. If I considered the dilemma of interest from the perspective of the social studies writ large, I had to consider the plethora of disciplines and possible content affecting such an interest. Such an investigation would have, potentially, presented an overwhelming number of confounding factors. However, there were several studies investigating social studies in the educational context. These studies included investigations of students affective responses to the social studies including boredom (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladya, 1985), interestingness of texts, (Alexander, 2003; Ataya & Kulikowich, 2002) and the effects on academic achievement (Shaughnessy & Haladya, 1985) to provide background information and support the direction of this research using social studies as the overarching discipline. Research was not as readily accessible if I chose to address the problem from a content specific approach. Thus, identification of a singular disciplinary domain presented other challenges for the research, both positive and negative.

While “social studies” can be identified in almost every school, course offerings and titles vary from school to school. For instance, some high schools offer courses in economics, psychology, sociology, and advanced placement courses in addition to the fairly standard history and government courses. Others, in response to No Child Left Behind and the requirements of standardized testing and funding, offer only those courses required by the state or included on the proficiency tests, such as American history and
Government. Further, there is the dilemma of the name game; history courses generally cover the same time periods and content from school to school, but the course titles are often different. Thus, a dilemma using distinct disciplinary approach would be identifying courses at different schools covering the same content regardless of title.

A second issue was that there was very little research conducted in the United States focusing on interest in history, let alone American history. This dilemma led me to ultimately use a hybrid approach to research. While I focused on and defined the study in terms of interest in American history, I included literature addressing student’s affective and perceptual reactions and interest in both social studies as a discipline and American history as a content area in its own right. Since the social studies is seen as the overarching discipline, and there has been more research in this area, this literature review focuses on the social studies first, and then history as one component within the social studies.

**Perceptions of Social Studies**

The extant research investigating students’ perceptions of the social studies has identified the classroom context, more particularly the methods used, as important to students’ perception of the domain (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Descriptions of student experience reinforced perceptions of social studies as “boring” when dominated by the teacher, text and workbook pages, but students did express “a utilitarian value for social studies” (Chiodo & Byford, 2004, p. 22) in one study. Utility value has been described as how useful an individual believes content is now and for their future (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). For example, a student with the goal of becoming a lawyer or politician may know that a foundation in history, and more specifically
history of law, is important for their future career. Therefore, they may have interests in
the content because the usefulness in their future career. Such usefulness transcends
teacher or situational conditions.

**Teaching.** Transmission models of teaching seem to be the norm in the social
studies and in particular in history classes. Studies reported students identified lecture and

**Text & other method.** Other studies investigating social studies as content have
focused on such things as interestingness of texts, illustrating differences in perceptions
of interest in text for novices versus experts (Alexander, 2003; Ataya & Kulikowich,
2002). While convenient and pertinent, especially considering the reliance on text in
academic contexts, a narrow focus on text and textually based instruction ignores other
instructional methods, the learning environment, and other contextual factors that interact
to achieve student involvement with the content. Providing opportunity in the classroom
environment to create situational interest in particular has been described as a potential
avenue for educators to support student academic learning and achievement (Hidi, 1990;
Dewey, 1913; Mitchell, 1993; Hid & Renninger, 2006). Additionally, both theoretical arguments and research supports the use of multiple approaches to teaching is most effective to instigate student learning (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Brophy, 1999, 2008; Schur, 2007).

**Perceptions of History**

According to researchers investigating history as an academic discipline in the U.K. as part of government funded research, Harris and Haydn, (2006) as well as Lord and Harland (2000), reported literature focused on student perceptions of history was sparse. It has been my experience that literature focused specifically on student perceptions of American history is virtually non-existent. The studies I have reviewed did not focus on interest, at least not using a psychological definition and/or framework. Rather, these approached the topic of history from the perspective of the historian, investigating ways common people use history (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998); pupils’ perceptions of history (Adey & Biddulph, 2001, 2003; Biddulph, & Adey, 2003; Harris & Haydn, 2006, 2008); as well as a mass of information regarding use of history, teaching of history, methods of history, historical inquiry, and much comment on the history wars.

While the literature review I included here does not directly address interest as a construct, the researchers cited concern over the representation of history as boring and/or irrelevant. Each seemed to be an attempt to document an alternative view of history. Thus, it was in this way that the review of the literature on history was both useful and interesting to consider.

**Common uses of history.** Perhaps one of the most well-known studies addressing popular perceptions of history has been documented by Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) in
The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life. Through telephone interviews with approximately 1500 individuals, the team of researchers documented Americans’ ‘connectedness to the past’ (p. 20); the means by which Americans interacted with the past, (p. 19); and the trustworthiness of sources of historical knowledge (p. 21). Researchers in the study coined the term ‘popular history-making’ (p. 3) to reference the overall attribute they were investigating. Popular history-making was described as a person’s ‘active role in using and understanding the past—that they’re not just passive consumers of histories constructed by others’ (p. 3).

One component I found significant to the overall approach of their research was the decision to refer to ‘the past’, as is evident in the definition, rather than to refer to ‘history’. This decision was made because participants in pre-testing reacted negatively to the term history. Such a perspective is poignantly presented in the following as Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) stated participants,

described studying history in vividly negative terms. When we asked them to pick a word or phrase to describe your experiences with history in elementary or high school,’ almost three fifths choose such words as ‘irrelevant,’ ‘incomplete,’ ‘dry,’ or, most commonly, ‘boring.’ (p. 31).

Such perceptions were reiterated throughout the text, and makes apparent that participant’s perspectives of studying history in school paralleled those for the social studies presented above.

School history was differentiated from other forms of history and the past by both researchers (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998) through their questions and participants in their responses. History taking place in the classroom was ranked lowest by these
participants for personal connectedness to the past (p. 20). As with the social studies, school history was disliked in part due to the approach to teaching and learning. Classroom lessons were described as dry, and simply recitation of facts, which were irrelevant to students and the present (p. 180). Additionally, high school teachers were not considered to be trustworthy sources, ranked fifth out of the seven sources provided, only non-fiction books and television shows ranked lower (p.109). College history professors were ranked as more trustworthy than high school teachers (fourth of seven), in the Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998, p. 91) study, perhaps in part due to perceived esteem of the position. Differences regarding the perceptions of high school teachers versus college professors centered on topic expertise and knowledge.

**History in UK schools.** More recent research (Adey & Biddulph, 2001; Biddulph & Adey, 2003; Harris & Haydn, 2006, 2008; Lord & Harland, 2000), focusing specifically on student perceptions of history, originated in the United Kingdom in response to decreased enrollment in history courses and as a review for the national curriculum. This literature presents the popular notion of interest through the investigations of students‘ enjoyment, liking, and usefulness rather than as a construct from the perspective of educational psychology as presented in the current research. Together this research presented consistent claims regarding student’s *enjoyment* and/or *liking* for history while their findings regarding perceived *usefulness* seemed contradictory. Lord and Harland (2000) reported participants did not see history as useful, thus were not enrolling the course as they progressed through school, while participants in the Harris and Haydn (2006, 2008) study reported the content as useful for their future.
Investigating middle school student perceptions of history and geography since in the UK, these subjects are frequently managed under a ‘humanities’ umbrella where the two are taught (and learned) under various guise from single subjects” (p. 440), Adey & Biddulph (2001) described a paradoxical representation of student’s present situation and perceptions of their future in such courses. A general goal of their study was to attempt to understand the decreasing enrollment in history and geography related courses once students entered the British equivalent of a US high school and were presented other options. They found that while a majority of participants in their study enjoyed their history/geography courses in the lower grades, they reported they were not enrolling in additional courses as they were “boring” or “not enjoyable” (p. 444). In addition, history was reported as not being useful, unless a person planned to pursue employment in a field directly related to the discipline. While this finding supported the social studies literature previously discussed, it does not align with similar research on history conducted by Harris and Haydn (2006).

A large scale study of 1740 students across grade levels, Harris and Haydn (2006, 2008), explored reasons students’ liked or disliked history as an academic discipline in the UK, using questionnaires and focus groups to investigate student preferences and utility for the academic discipline. An important difference from other literature presented here, was that the authors suggested participants in their study overall indicated a clear preference for history over other academic disciplines across grade levels, and generally reported enjoyment of the content. In addition, history was described as useful by a majority of the participants. Obviously, most useful to me for the current study, was information regarding what participants’ stated they liked and disliked about history.
Preferences were related to three components common to all academic contexts: method, topic content, and of course, the teacher (p. 41). Participants reported they preferred methods described as “active and participatory teaching approaches” (p. 41). Such methods included, “role play, drama, presentations, discussion, debate, making things, and so forth” (p. 41). Further, topic content was important in relation to both the method used in the classroom and the teacher’s knowledge and ability with the content, as the authors were unable to determine whether participant’s overall held specific topic preferences. Finally, teachers described as “fun,” “enthusiastic,” as well as not treating students like “little kids” were considered important to the development of preference for history.

**Implications for current study.** It is clear there are numerous reasons that people like or dislike history and/or the social studies; it is a complicated matter. Adults and students described history as boring, especially as a school subject. However, history was also described as enjoyable and liked by individuals from both groups. From the classroom perspective, it appears that how the content is taught is as important as what is taught. Thus, contextual components including class activities and method use were considered important to at least instigating an interest. By association, the teacher and their approach to teaching and learning were also important factors in individual’s experience.

Some aspects for individuals liking or enjoying history extend beyond the classroom. Relevance of the content was identified as important to individuals liking and enjoyment of the content. Not surprisingly, when the content applied to a person’s life, it was better received, in and out of the classroom. Related to relevance, perceived
usefulness of historical content, both in the current moment and in the future, was described as a factor that affected individual liking and enjoyment. Consequently, these aspects may have a bearing on the development of interest when considered for the current research.

For the most part these studies of history focused on both what students liked and disliked about the content. They were not investigations focused on finding and documenting the experience of individuals interested in American history. What is lacking is evidence as to what creates interest in the long term, development of individual interest. While studies described many situational factors, from class activities to storytelling and personal involvement through genealogy, for the development of liking or enjoyment, descriptions of embedded individual interest were predominately inferences to adult interaction with content in their personal lives. Thus, what seems to be missing is what interested individuals do to become and maintain such an interest.

While the literature relating to individual perceptions of history is sparse, these studies do present the difficulties encountered when not only considering the meaning of data, but more importantly in attempting to investigate such constructs. In particular it is clear from the literature reviewed here, that “perceptions” may have different connotations. Perceptions of history may mean, actual liking, anticipated enjoyment, or something from a remembered past. Thus, lacking a common frame of reference, liking and enjoyment become synonymous—even when they are clearly not described as one in the same. As a result of my review of literature covering both the social studies and history, it is ever more apparent that a concise meaning for the construct of interest must be delineated before engaging in an investigation of this topic.
**Interest as a Psychological Construct**

Interest is a complex construct which has been difficult to define. From a laypersons perspective, interest may be synonymous with liking, enjoyment, engagement or curiosity. Perusal of one dictionary provided the following definitions (among others) – 1. a. A feeling of curiosity, fascination or absorption. b. The cause of such a feeling. c. The quality or aspect of something that enables it to cause any such feeling” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, p. 683). Each of these definitions is aligned with the layman’s vision of interest. The first is that there is an affective dimension; interest is a “feeling”, most often positive in nature, serving as a preference or passion (Valsiner, 1992). Secondly, there is some “thing” that causes this feeling, moving one toward engagement with the object. What creates this feeling of interest is as perplexing and debatable as defining the construct. The term interest has been used in a variety of different ways in educational settings as well.

**Theoretical underpinnings.** The factors encouraging or resulting in interest in an educational context have been debated for at least the last century. Dewey (1895/1899, and 1913) suggested interest is innate, becoming observable in the right environment, so that “When things have to be made interesting, it is because interest itself is wanting” (p. 11). Others have suggested interest is the result of an interaction between an individual and the environment. Some have inferred a biological connection, (Hidi 1990, 2006; Hidi & Renninger, 2006), while others stop short of proposing biology as an influence on interest (Krapp, 2000; Schiefele, 1991). In either case, the environment and other contextual factors are of importance to the development and/or fulfillment of an interest.
Thus, my review of the literature is limited to theoretical and empirical studies considering the construct of interest as relevant to the academic milieu.

Interest in interest as a psychological construct, especially as applied to an academic context, has waxed and waned as an area of research for over a century. While the emphasis on interest as a facet for educational attainment has vacillated, the dilemma surrounding what interest is, how it might be defined, or what instigates interest has remained constant. One broad definition of interest is that it —is a phenomenon that emerges from an individual’s interaction with his or her environment” (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). This definition is applicable to both broad theoretical and more specific empirical work, but leaves some ambiguity regarding the specific traits of the phenomenon and what interactions might cause the phenomenon to occur. It has been suggested that interest may be temporary, such as when one engages in an event as a result of something in the immediate environment (situational), or long lasting, as when an individual pursues a career borne out of a passion for the interest (individual) (Hidi, 1990; Krapp, 2000; Renninger, 2000; Schiefele, 1991). Such difficulty of meaning and definition has been encountered by researchers as much as by the average person, creating a situation in which researchers seeking answers are faced with more new and perplexing questions regarding the construct.

Much of the early research on interest from an educational perspective was theoretical in nature, proposing what interest might be, how it might apply to students in the classroom or how interest could potentially be instigated. The current discussion considers the historical context of predominately theoretical investigations into interest as a psychological construct starting with the work of Herbert (1891, 1895), Dewey
(1895/1899), Arnold (1906), and Berlyne (1960). A discussion of more current theoretical and empirical research follows, using Berlyne as a transitional figure between the early theoretical underpinnings of the construct and later theoretical and empirical work of Hidi (1990); Schiefele (1991); Renninger (1992); Hidi and Renninger (1992, 2006); Krapp (1999); Silvia (2006) and others. Finally, this section concludes with a discussion of the Model of Domain Learning as proposed by Alexander (1997, 2003).

One of the earliest educational philosophers to consider interest as a psychological construct applicable to teaching and learning was Herbart (1891) in the nineteenth century. Not merely one component of many, Herbart’s perspective of interest was that it was the drive and reason for teaching and learning. While instruction ended once a student left academia, Herbart suggested that varied interests initiated in the context persisted long after leaving the school room. An important, though misunderstood and thus highly debated description of his view of interest was that it was "many-sided" (p.11).

For some (Dewey 1895/ 1899; Williams, 1911) the essential meaning of many-sidedness of interest was that there are multiple objects, ideas, or events to have an interest in, and as such, the teacher was responsible for building student interest and inspiring new interests using the multitude of objects, or events at their disposable. "Interest arises from interesting objects and occupations. Many-sided interest originates in the wealth of these. To create and develop this interest is the task of instruction, which carries on and completes the preparation begun by intercourse and experience" (Herbart cited in Williams, 1911, p. 72-73). However, Arnold (1906) argued that followers of Herbartian theory understood the many-sided view of interest in reference to a six item
system made up of two aspects: (1) experience made up of empirical, speculative, and aesthetic spheres; and (2) intercourse consisting of sympathetic, social, religious spheres (see Williams, 1911, pp. 86-87).

While there were other components important to interest as a psychological construct according to Herbart, Felkin, Felkin, and Browning (1895), “Observation [also translated as Attention, see Williams, 1911] and expectation, as the two steps of interest, belong likewise to the fundamental notions of general pedagogy” (p. 168). Observation here referred to both the teacher and the student, the former observes the student to become knowledgeable of their interests and thus builds on these and helps to create other interests; the latter observes or attends to stimuli in the environment, including teacher directed instruction to develop interest and achievement. Ultimately, interest grew and changed as individuals were exposed to more information and gained knowledge (Williams, 1911, p. 73). Interest was likened to desire, with the critical difference, interest was considered to be dependent on a particular object. Attachment to an object of interest resulted in continued interaction and engagement with the object. Such as notion of interest would suggest it emerged from the situation of the moment, as described in when referring to situational interest. Herbart’s thinking regarding interest as influenced by the environment inspired educators and educational philosophers who followed him.

Pondering the meaning of interest in education both Dewey (1895/1899, 1913, 1916) and Arnold (1906) put forth theories regarding interest as a psychological construct applied to education. Arnold (1906) in particular grappled with the idea that interest had too many meanings, arguing that “What makes it [interest] useless, however, in many discussions, is the loose and varied manner in which the subject is treated. Whether the
discussion is dealing with instincts, impulses, feelings, attention, will, the term interest seems broad enough to cover them all” (p. 221). Further, he argued the circuitous reasoning educational theorists used to describe interest created an overly simplistic view of using/implementing interest in a classroom setting. For example, Arnold railed against the idea that interest was merely attention, and that attentiveness of children would inspire interest. Accordingly, there must be other components or factors at work to inspire or instigate interest.

Education is a process, with steps or stages along the way to the end goal of learning. Within this process, interest was considered an important part of each step. If interest was seen only as the end goal, then Dewey (1895/1899) considered interest to be external to the person. For authentic learning to occur, Dewey proposed teachers must consider the child’s developmental level, the previous habits and environment of the child (p. 28). Using this knowledge about the child, the teacher must help the child to see possibilities and their potentialities to find interest in each step toward learning so that interest becomes the means to an end goal of learning.

From the Deweyian (1895/1899) perspective, interest was comprised of three features, first there was action, as in acting on an interest, referred to as the “active or propulsive stage” (p. 13). Second, was an objective stage at which point an interest becomes apparent through attachment to an object (p.14). Without such object centered interest, Dewey warned interest disappeared into a “subjective feeling”. Considering this comment regarding subjective feeling, it is ironic that the third and final stage is affective, in which value in the interest/object of interest comes to play. Each of the
stages was important for the development of interest, but also was seen as becoming interest in and of itself.

While Dewey (1913, 1916) believed interest could be instigated through internal and external means, his main conception of interest was based on the internal, as interest coming from within and propelling an individual forward to act. According to Dewey (1913), interest is made up of internal and external components in that “Genuine interest is the accompaniment of the identification, through action, of the self with some object or idea, because of the necessity of that object or idea for the maintenance of a self-initiated activity” (p. 14). As such, interest was considered a prerequisite for learning.

Interestingly, a definition of interest provided by Dewey (1913) seems incomplete in light of the three stages or components of interest. He stated, “This is our definition of interest; it is impulse functioning with reference to an idea of self-expression” (p. 22). Absent from this definition is reference to an object in the same manner Dewey described the objective stage as an attachment to a tangible object, not a mere idea. Perhaps this reference to an idea was meant to indicate the internalization of the object of interest once a level of individual interest was achieved. Dewey described individual interest as “true interest” suggesting that once a student experienced true interest there would no longer be the need for exertion of undue effort by the student or for teachers to “occupy ourselves with making things interesting for the child” (p. 9). Accordingly, each step becomes interesting and an interest in itself. This conception aligned with Herbart’s (1891, 1895) view of interest as psychical activity, the “inner activity of self” (p. 28). Both theorists stressed the highest level of interest as coming from within, not requiring an external
component to instigate interaction with the interest, because the interest, being internalized, no longer needed external influence.

Both Herbart and Dewey described the complete immersion into the object of interest. According to Herbart, “Interest means complete absorption for the time being in what has excited it” (Williams, p. 84). Dewey's (1895/1899) consideration of the full attention and immersion ascribed to interest, appears to be similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) conception of flow:

It [interest] puts itself forth with no thought of anything beyond. The present activity is the only ultimate in consciousness. It satisfies in and of itself. The end is [emphasis original] the present activity, and so there is not gap in space not time between means and end. All play is of this immediate character. All purely aesthetic appreciation approximates this type. The existing experience holds us for its own sake, and we do not demand of it that it takes us into something beyond itself (p.15).

From this perspective, just like with flow, experiencing and interacting with an interest is for its own sake, existing on a level of its own.

Berlyne (1960) contemplated the meaning of interest as an educational construct that impacted and was thus important to student learning. According to Berlyne interest was linked to curiosity and arousal, with dependency on four collative variables: complexity, uncertainty, conflict and novelty. The term “collative variables” referred to how the four factors being experienced compared to what was already known (Silva, 2006). Results of Berlyne’s (1960, 1970) work suggested that collative rich environments enhanced learning for less interested individuals. Such environments are
necessary in the absence of individual interest to instigate an optimal level arousal.
Curiosity was an additional component in creating optimal interest and learning, brought about by conceptual disequilibrium.

Recent Works. The influences of earlier theorists, are apparent in the more recent empirical work of Hidi (1990); Hidi & Renninger, (2006); Krapp, (2000); Schiefele, (1991); Silvia (1990) among others, as each attempted to grapple with the multi-dimensional nature of the construct of interest. Early theorists described external influences as important to the individual internalizing an interest or an object of interest. In such discussions there appeared to be a theoretical differentiation between an interest that was incited through an interaction with the environment or an object in the environment, and an interest that seemed to come from within the individual.

Recent empirical evidence supports the differences with interest conceptualized as either situational or individual in nature (see Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Situational interest is described as interest that is content-specific and transitory, resulting out of the interaction between a person and features of their environment (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2000; Schiefele, 1991). Research describes two levels within situational interest, "catch" and "hold" (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Mitchell, 1993). During the "catch", something in the environment gains an individual’s attention, inciting at least momentary interest. For example, a teacher may dress as an historical character to introduce a period in history. While this method may intrigue some students, inciting an affective reaction, curiosity, or even a level of entertainment, interest may not be sustained beyond the moment or activity.
Once attention has been stimulated through situational interest-catch, meaningful connection must be made with the content in order for interest to continue. For situational interest-hold to occur, content must be relevant to the individual and the environment should encourage students’ personal involvement in their learning (Mitchell, 1993). Meaningful connection to the content by the student empowers students to continue to focus in the domain (Dewey 1913; Mitchell, 1993). Hidi and Renninger (2006) proposed that prolonged interaction in an environment supporting the interest can cause individuals to begin to internalize this interest and potentially develop an individual interest.

In contrast to the fleeting nature of situational interest, individual interest is considered stable and enduring, existing across contexts (Krapp, 1993, 2000; Krapp, Hidi & Renninger 1992; Renninger, 1992, 2000; Renninger & Wozniak, 1985). Such interest has been described as coming from within, either a result of inherent abilities, predispositions or from past experience with a topic (Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp, 1992). Individual interest drives individuals in the choice of content and the level of involvement with the content, and to persist in spite of difficulty (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Schiefele, 1991).

However, since individual interest is deeply seated and specific to the experience of the individual, early conceptions of interest suggested that little could be done in an academic context to alter these interests. Recently, this notion has been challenged, and will be discussed later in this study. Within the academic arena, research has illustrated positive relationships between interest and factors pertinent to improving student learning. For example, interest in an academic domain has been associated with improved attention in the domain (Hidi, 1990; Hidi, et al., 2004), task persistence (Renninger &
Hidi, 2002) and use of higher cognitive processes resulting in deeper level learning (Krapp, 2002). Dewey (1913) suggested the interest of the child should be used to direct their learning.

Due to the multifaceted, complex nature of the construct, various models of interest have developed attempting to explain and account for the different levels or phases of interest. For instance, Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., (in press) suggested situational interest as represented through three factors rather than just catch and hold. In an effort to further account for developing interest in its early stages, their model differentiated between a surface level affective component they termed, “situational interest hold-feeling”, and a second deeper level, referred to as “situational interest hold-value” (p. 27). In this case, hold-feeling was described as the affective reaction to classroom contextual factors while hold-value addressed how meaningful the content was to participants.

Addressing individual interest, Hidi and Renninger (2006) proposed a four-phase model of interest. The four-phase model accounts for differences between cognitive aspects and affective elements of interest (Alexander, et al, 1995; Schiefele, 1996). Situational factors were defined essentially as in previous work with the term trigger used instead of catch, with the term hold also being used. In an effort to understand and describe how interest developed more fully for some, the four-phase model suggested that individual interest could be differentiated into two components, an emerging individual interest and a well-developed individual interest. The model stressed the continued interaction of cognitive and affective factors required to produce a well-developed individual interest.
The four phase model suggested interest development occurred almost along a continuum, starting with a situational trigger (catch), and with continued support and interaction with the content, progressing through hold, then developing into an emerging individual interest, and finally, possibly a well-developed interest as the fulfillment of continued cognitive and affective engagement and interaction with content. Hidi and Renninger (2006) contended that interest was different from other motivational constructs in that interest involved both affective and cognitive components; had biological foundations; and was a result of the interaction between the individual and the content.

**Related Theory.** The development of interest has also been addressed by both Brophy (1999, 2008) and Alexander (2003) as one component in their individual theories of academic development. Each of the theories might be useful in the explanation of an individual's interaction with disciplinary content, which is one aspect of the current study. Additionally, both authors discussed aspects of the development of expertise in a domain, including knowledge base and interest.

Alexander’s (2003) Model of Domain Learning (MDL) considers knowledge, interest and strategy use in the development of expertise. More specifically, the MDL addresses the complexity of learning in academic contexts through the interplay of knowledge (domain and topic knowledge), strategy use (surface level and deep-processing) and interest (situational and individual). According to the model, individuals progress through three stages, *acclimation, competence* and finally *proficiency/expertise*. Theoretically, progression through each stage occurs as knowledge increases, allowing individuals' to rely less on surface level cognitive strategies in favor of deeper-level
strategies, and reliance on contextual factors as a means to promote interest gives way to individual interest in a domain.

While the MDL (Alexander, 2003) focuses on the interaction of the three components, knowledge, strategy use, and interest, as a means to describe development, it was not the intent of the current study to investigate these. Rather, the model is specific to academic domains and the unique issues related to learning in schools and align with the developmental differences represented through the three groups of individuals participating in the current research, high school students (acclimation), undergraduate students majoring in history (competence), and professionals in the field of history (experts). Most applicable to the current research is the suggestion that differences across the three MDL groups imply a qualitative difference may exist between people engaging with a topic at each of the varying levels of acclimation, competence and proficiency/expertise. As an investigation into how individuals across different levels of education and experience described their interest, such differences may be noted.

Similarly, Brophy (2008) described differences between experts and novices in their approach to domain knowledge and appreciation for and valuing content. In discussion of developing students’ domain appreciation, he suggested research include discussions with “people who already have well-developed interests in particular domains” (p. 140) in an effort to understand ways they appreciate the value of domains. Even though Brophy references interest here his appreciation model does not directly refer to or focus on the construct of interest. Rather, interest is only one facet of the model, which centers on students’ learning to appreciate the value of content in their personal lives.
Appreciation of a content and discipline extends beyond mere knowledge of the content; according to Brophy (1999, 2008) it must be valued. In educational research, value is often referred to in terms of utility, or the usefulness of content, rather than the satisfaction of achieving insights, aesthetic appreciation of the content or skill, or awareness of its role in improving the quality of our lives” (2008, p. 133). When students understand content to be of value to them, they are more apt to interact with the content and achieve at higher levels. However, value and appreciation are not only found in achievement situations. In fact, Brophy (1999) argued appreciation and value are more often evident in “potential learning situations that involve lifelong or at least sustained engagement in particular interest area” (p. 75).

Such learning situations are often neglected in research, as they fall outside the parameters of the traditional classroom and definition of “learning”. However, content that students choose to interact with on their own, beyond achievement situations are most likely those contents they are more interested in, be it sports, video-gaming or history. Additionally, pre-existing interest in a topic can lead to deeper-processing and better retention of new information about the topic, although we know much less about how to induce and nurture such interest if it is not already present” (Brophy, 1999, p. 76). Thus, there is a need to investigate the meanings of individual’s interaction with domains that extend beyond the classroom settings, as in the current study.

**Mixed-Method Approach**

There is an abundance of literature addressing the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. Much of this literature attempts to persuade readers to believe that one approach is inherently better than the other when pursuing research.
agendas in the social sciences, thus supporting Gage’s (1989) description of the
differences in the paradigms, as —“paradigm wars””. Text written by purists, in particular,
from either the quantitative or qualitative perspective, presented the paradigms as being
indisputably in opposition to one another. Howe (cited in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004,
p. 14) described the —“incompatibility thesis …which posits that qualitative and
quantitative research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should
not be mixed.” Still, others, (Leahy, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie
2000; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004; Poggenpoel, Myburgh, & van der Linde, 2001)
argued that the two paradigms are not only compatible, but also complementary, and
should be used together. This —“third research paradigm” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie,
2004), is what I believe to be the most useful and appropriate approach to social science
research agendas, particularly when addressing questions in education research.

It may be prudent, before going further about the paradigm differences, to
acknowledge the obvious, but overlooked similarities. Foremost, both have the goal of
—“attempt[ing] to provide warranted assertions about human beings…and the
environments in which they live and evolve” (Biesta & Burbules 2003, cited in Johnson
& Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Accordingly, the differences in the two approaches to research
are not a difference of goals, rather how each operationalizes strategies to reach their
goals (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005, 2007). Each approach still requires a fundamental
structure universal to all research to achieve the stated objectives. These universals begin
with the problem statement and questions, identifying a sample from a population,
deciding on what methods to employ, what type and how much data to collect, how to
proceed with data analysis, the nature and implications of theory, and maintaining rigor
(Glesne, 2006). The third research paradigm of mixed methods uses the same basic structure common to quantitative and qualitative research along with methods from each research paradigm simultaneously to address research questions. Therefore, to understand mixed approaches, it is necessary to understand quantitative and qualitative approaches to research first, and identify what each brings to the research table (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This section will provide a brief discussion of mixed-method, quantitative, and qualitative research. Each discussion will enumerate the advantages and disadvantages attributed to each of the research paradigms as posited by various researchers. Since my research questions required the use of a mixed-methodological approach, I begin with a discussion of mixed-methods, followed by quantitative approach to research and complete the discussion with a review of qualitative research.

**Mixed Method.** There is an apparent divide between the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research, leaving academicians and researchers favoring one method, thus, inadequately prepared to use the other. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004) recognized this problem and suggested “some graduate students who graduate from educational institutions with an aspiration to gain employment in the world of academia or research are left with the impression that they have to pledge allegiance to one research school of thought or the other” (p.14).

It has been my experience that individuals engaging in educational research ascribe to an either/or approach. They engage in *either* qualitatively or quantitatively designed research agendas (and do not hesitate to voice disdain toward the other.) The differences between the qualitative approaches and quantitative approaches have been so
emphasized the similarities have been lost (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). So that those versed in one, but not the other, have a difficult time speaking the other language. Yet, in my mind, the differences between the languages are equivalent to the differences between speaking “American” English and “Canadian” English, meaning they are negligible.

Although each person has different strengths and predispositions when it comes to engaging in academic pursuits, it is becoming increasingly important to engage in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Onwuegbuzie and Leech, (2005) coined the terms, “bi-researchers” or “pragmatist researchers” [italics original] in reference to persons trained in both paradigms. While I do not take as strong a position as these authors, I do appreciate their view, and have attempted to follow their advice, but for my own reasons.

From my perspective, at least on a surface level, the reason for understanding and engaging both research paradigms in a study is to address research questions in a method most appropriate to the question, setting, the sample, etc. It is clear that not all research questions are appropriately addressed using the quantitative approach; just as not all are answered using the qualitative approach. Rather, it is becoming more apparent the two methods working together are appropriate for more fully addressing multiple aspects of a research questions. Research employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches has been referred to as “mixed-method,” (Tashakkori, & Teddlie, 1998; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) or “mixed-design” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004); mixed-research (Johnson, 2006); and multi-method (Hunter & Brewer, 2003) research. Mixed methods research also is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in
answering research questions rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17). Accordingly, understanding both research paradigms, and further how to use them both separately and together provides a bigger "tool box" with the more "correct tools" for the job.

There is a plethora of ways to engage in mixed research methods in an effort to address research in educational settings. Essentially, this paradigm allows the researcher to use what is best from both quantitative and qualitative designs to create a sort of hybrid design that exploits the benefits of each while potentially decreasing the negative aspects. For instance, researchers might investigate participant's perceived attributes of a construct using a focus group on individual interviews. Using this information, a survey instrument might be created to further investigate the construct attributes with a larger sample. There are a variety of research designs using a mix of approaches, but it has been suggested research be primarily grounded in one of the two original methods, quantitative or qualitative (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As with other paradigms, the mixed method is not without its critics. Criticisms run the same gambit as those levied against either quantitative or qualitative approaches on their own, as well as arguments that either one of the separate paradigms is superior, or to mix them reduces the efficacy of each method (see Giddings 2006; Glesne 2006; Leahey, 2007).

Perhaps the most important point gleaned from my experience in classrooms, from engaging in research as part of a team, and on my own, is that both paradigms have strengths and appropriate uses. Further, it is important to understand how the research questions and topics you are interested in pursuing would be addressed by the various approaches to research, so the bottom line is that research approaches should be mixed
in ways that offer the best opportunity for answering important research questions” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2005, p. 16). It is this experience along with the nature of the research questions that necessitated the use of mixed-method approach in the current research.

**Quantitative Method**

Quantitative approaches to research have dominated the “hard sciences” for decades. Until recently, the hegemony of hard science and associated approaches to research was understood as a matter of fact in the world of research. Social sciences have in the past been described as “soft science” due to the type of questions addressed necessitating utilization of methods other than those strictly quantitative in nature. Creswell’s (2005) description of quantitative approaches to research emphasizes the systematic approach of such method, accentuating similarities between social science research, when using a quantitative lens, and the natural or hard sciences; both rely on numerical data and objectivity when employing quantitative research methods. The hegemony of quantitative research in the social sciences is a result of this connection to the natural sciences, coupled with the emphasis on objectivity. Numeric data using statistical analysis are seen as superior to other types of data (I hazard to guess this statement applies even when one does not understand the data or analysis), thus, quantitative approaches to research in education have been not only endorsed, but mandated by agencies (for instance the Department of Education) supporting and funding research (Creswell 2005). Undeniably, quantitative methods have a longer history of use in the social sciences (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006) and have greater acceptance beyond social sciences, which are its greatest strengths.
Quantitative approaches to research attempt to investigate a phenomenon using methods that are considered objective and free of researcher bias. Creswell (2005) stated that “Quantitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric (numbered) data from participants, analyzes these numbers using statistics, and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner” (p.39). Quantitative research is deductive, requiring the statement of a hypothesis or several hypotheses to be tested before research can begin (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Research questions are thus stated in terms of measurable variables to be observed and directly address the stated hypotheses.

Data collection is generally through instruments, such as survey, selected or specifically constructed to measure the variables under investigation. The collected data is either numeric, or can be converted to a numeric scale for purposes of analysis. Data analysis uses statistical approaches addressing both the variable type employed, the research questions and hypotheses. These analyses attempt to statistically support findings of either similarities and or differences between groups, trends, relationships, predictions, or provide support for cause and effect (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006) depending on the hypotheses and research questions. It has been claimed that evaluation and reporting of the results indicated through the use of quantitative method in a study are void of researcher bias and inference, rather reporting data analyses results merely addresses and takes into consideration the research question(s) (Creswell, 2005).

The ontological view of the quantitative purist is that there is an objective reality, which can be known, and thus researched and measured, “That is, time- and context-free
generalizations (Nagel, 1986) are desirable and possible, and real causes of social scientific outcomes can be determined reliably and validly” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14). Within this picture of reality, the researcher’s role is that of a passive, unbiased observer. Thus, quantitative researchers control as much of the environment as possible and restrict research to the specific variables indicated by the research questions based on predetermined hypotheses in an effort to get to this one reality. This also means replication of the research is possible in an attempt to find the same (or nearly the same) objective reality.

**Pros and cons of quantitative research.** The advantages and disadvantages of any line of inquiry are similar to the good news, bad news idiom. The point I am trying to make is to proceed with caution, things may not always be what they appear! Consider this good news about quantitative inquiry, it is widely accepted beyond educational research communities on the basis that it is aligned with what may be considered more “scientific”, and thus valid and reliable method. The bad news is validity and reliability may be compromised by poorly developed research designs, implementation, analysis, interpretation or reporting (Alreck & Settle, 1995). Further, the hegemonic position of quantitative method in the social science relies on a rather tenuous cornerstone – objectivity. Objectivity can be easily and seriously compromised when research is not conducted in a rigorous and consistent manner.

While I agree with most researchers that the strength of quantitative inquiry lies in part in the objectivity that is possible using this approach, and I concede that the method of analyses are more objective than qualitative (to be discussed later), I disagree with the notion that quantitative methods can be completely “value-free” (Nagel, 1986 as
cited in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) even under the most rigorous conditions. Thus, the form of inquiry is not totally objective in nature.

Quantitative research designs are replete with subjective decisions and a researcher’s subjectivity should be accounted for in quantitative reports just as it is in qualitative research. Thus, it is my opinion that non-disclosure of a researcher’s subjectivity is a negative aspect of quantitative research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) described the subjective nature of quantitative research agendas. They stated subjectivity is apparent in several areas of a quantitative research plan including making decisions about what to research, development of the research design, ways in which the research questions are constructed and stated, and design of the sampling plan. Each time a researcher makes subjective decisions, bias may enter into results, thus reducing the objective nature of the approach and, for some studies, perhaps more importantly, limiting generalizability of results to the larger population.

Appropriately constructed quantitative research designs control for variables in the environment secondary to those under investigation. This allows researchers to gain information on specific attributes or concepts, which can be especially useful for research in education settings. For instance, consider research exploring the effects of age, gender, ethnicity, or IQ on mathematical or reading ability. Quantitative analytic methods provide an opportunity to consider each variable independently of, or interacting with, the others. Thus, offering more information about the effects of each variable on reading ability. Additionally, when such research is conducted using large samples from the population, this allows for generalizability of findings to the larger population.
Generalizability of a study’s findings to the larger population is a common practice and one end goal of quantitative research. Because sample sizes need to be quite large in order to generate results from research in order to generalize finding to the larger population and adequately sized samples are not usually possible when conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006), this is a difficult goal to attain. Further, not all quantitative research results are generalizable, as generalizability requires not only a large enough sample, but also one that is randomly selected, or assigned, from the population under investigation, depending on the research design (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006).

Time constraints, inherent to the school setting, place restrictions on research agendas, and are serious considerations in developing any research plan and especially when conducting research in classrooms and schools. Quantitative methodologies such as pen and ink survey, telephones surveys, and the increasing use of the internet as data collection methods address such constraints. It would seem that the true advantage of quantitative research in education contexts lies in the ease with which data can be collected and analyzed. Additionally, because the researcher is removed from the participant through the design and methods of quantitative research (i.e., surveys), anonymity is more likely, which may provide increased accuracy and candor in responses provided by participants (Alreck & Settle, 1995, 2004).

Statistical analysis programs such as SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL) make analysis of the data a matter of data input and application of appropriate formulae and analytical tools. Although these advantages exist, I do not want to imply that using quantitative approaches mean pursuing an easier form of inquiry; rather to stress that even though
data collection may take less effort than other forms of research, all other aspects, including the research design, research questions, instrument selection or creation, implementation and analyses should be carefully and thoughtfully designed and implemented. A well planned quantitative design offers many advantages including, controlling extraneous factors and replicating research.

An ability to replicate research which has identified significant results found to be valid and reliable is another advantage of using quantitative research methods. The purpose of replication is to add to theory, to compare sub-populations, or test the validity and reliability of measurement instruments, among others (Creswell, 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). While these examples of advantages of pursuing quantitative research provide ample evidence for the continued superiority of the agenda, the research paradigm is not without its negative aspects.

Negative aspects of quantitative research include limitations on aspects that appear otherwise to be inherent advantages of the paradigm. For instance, while predetermined hypotheses provide focus and direction for a line of quantitative inquiry, they limit a researcher’s ability to move beyond the variables under investigation as described through the research questions (Creswell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Further, the goal of quantitative research is simply to explain phenomena (Creswell, 2005) through counting, classifying, and comparing features, making predictions or elucidating the cause and effect of specified variables during an observation. Thus, the quantitative research approach has been described as limiting, due to its narrow focus on the predetermined variables as set forth by the hypothesis and research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Additionally, quantitative research methodologies
using survey methodologies have been criticized for pushing participants into ill-fitting
categories, thus possibly tainting the data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie
& Leech, 2005). Anyone who has ever taken a survey can attest to the fact that some
questions cannot be adequately answered, either because of item wording or use of
inappropriate response categories. Thus, it is important to remember that quantitative
research is only as good as the instrument of measurement utilized.

One’s view of reality and whether/how it can be measured is the most important
difference between quantitative and qualitative methodologies in my opinion. From the
quantitative perspective, “a fixed reality exists external to people that can be measured
and apprehended to some degree of accuracy” (Glesne, 2006, p.5-6). Thus, reality that
can be known can be accounted for using the statistical, numeric approach to quantitative
research. If something exists or doesn’t it can simply be stated with the coding of either 1,
or 0. The point of such coding is simplistic, either an attribute exists (coded as 1 for
example) or it does not (coded as 0 for example). It is possible, but more difficult, to
provide information about how much of an attribute exists using quantitative statistical
methods. Consider Thorndike’s comment that “if something exists, it does in some
amount; thus, it can be measured” (as cited in Marshall et al p. 7). Such an approach
provides a broad view of whether an attribute exists in a sample, and how much.
However, what is missing from such an analysis is why something exists, what does it
mean, or what does it look like? (Fischer & Wertz, 2002). Such queries may only be
investigated at depth using qualitative approaches to research.

Survey. Survey attributes include flexibility and versatility, soliciting varied
information and offering multitude of collection methods including telephone, personal
interview and telephone approaches (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Dillman, 2000). As described above, surveys are often completed in a timelier manner than many qualitative data collection methods such as interview or focus groups. In turn this means lower cost and increased ease of analysis. Additionally, survey's can easily be adapted to conform to the special needs required of a research question, situation, content, or sample (Dillman, 2000). Finally, surveys are efficient. When surveys are designed in a thoughtful manner using appropriate principles of measurement, combined with appropriate sampling procedures (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005), it is possible to address questions through administration of the survey to small number of people, as “rarely do surveys sample more than about a thousand people, even when the results are to be generalized to many millions” (Alreck & Settle, 1995, p. 6).

However, survey method is not without its limitations. Surveys often ask participants to self-report and/or the survey cannot account for why participants act in a certain way. Thus, respondents may not disclose the reasons for their behavior, making it difficult to measure causality (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Dillman, 2000). There are many situations that may cause participants to respond in ways that provide inappropriate feedback. For instance, survey items may request sensitive information, could be poorly stated, or may use a rating scale that does not correspond to the item wording. Finally, through survey’s, participants often are responding to questions based on memory, or opinion. Accordingly, Alreck and Settle stated that survey results are not definitive in the sense they are “merely stand stand-ins for actual conditions or actions” (p. 8).
Survey research, like most other forms of research is an iterative process. At varying points, it may be necessary to review work completed previously, and make revisions. Alreck and Settle (1995) described six major steps in the survey process: 1) determining information needs; 2) defining the sampling design; 3) planning and creation of the survey instrument; 4) data collection; 5) data analysis; and 6) reporting of the findings (p. 26). Steps two, sampling, through step four, data collection, are described as iterative and circular in nature. Researchers are cautioned to remain open and allow for flexibility through the process and to constantly reconsider previous work completed and make needed revisions.

According to Alreck and Settle (1995), survey research is generally applicable to at least eight general topics, including attitudes, images, decision, needs, behavior, lifestyle, affiliations and demographics. The current study used survey to assess attitudes, regarding preferences to content areas and interest; behavior, in the description of frequency of interacting with classroom methods; and demographic data. Attitudes are aligned with interest in the necessity of an object or topic around which an attitude is displayed. “Attitudes predispose people to act in a certain way toward the object of the attitude. Attitudes come before behavior and affect the way the persons will act” (p. 11). When attempting to gather survey data on individuals' attitudes, as in my study, Alreck and Settle (1995) suggested taking into account three parts of attitude: knowledge of the topic, affect toward the topic, and likelihood an individual will take action based on the attitude” (p. 11).

To assess knowledge of a topic, the use of “unaided recall” or an index of respondents' knowledge through a series of true/false questions is suggested (Alreck &
Settle, 1995, p. 12). Use of rating scales to assess the intensity of affect and levels of action are appropriate. Additionally, short answer questions are described as useful for offering respondents an opportunity to describe the intensity of their feelings and levels of past, present and future behavior (p. 13). Surveys and survey items assessing behavior address the questions ―what, where, when and how often‖ (p. 18). The point of the questions is to determine how the respondent behaves in response to stimuli/topic under investigation.

To measure behavior it is appropriate to specify both actions and locations in which the behavior takes place. Such items utilize single or multiple response categories depending on the condition, frequency scales to measure number of occurrences in a specific time frame. Alreck and Settle (1995) stated individual data of behavior are not as reliable as the aggregate data because individual’s behavior changes for unpredictable and often unrealized reasons. Finally, demographic data are ―The key to accurate measurement of demographic status is the clear, concise statement of the categories or dimensions. This depends on clarity and meaningfulness to respondents and the degree of precision required by the information needs‖ (p. 24).

**Measurement: The Rasch Model**

Clearly, the development and use of instruments (survey) that are valid and reliable, measuring the construct under investigation is of the utmost importance when engaging in research. Attempts to measure an abstract construct, such as interest, are often hindered by instruments that are ill-suited to the construct and/or do not account for participant ability. The Rasch model addresses such issues as it is an objective additive conjoint measurement model which considers both item difficulty and person ability in
that it defines —the difficulty of an item independently of the population and ability of an individual independently of which items he has actually solved” (Rasch 1960, p.VII as cited in Fox and Bond, 2001, p.8). In other words, the model creates a single ruler against which both item difficulty and person ability can be measured.

Physical measurement tools such as a ruler or scale communicate one aspect of an object, such as length or weight, independent of other qualities of the object being measured. Further, it is not expected of such physical measurement tools, to provide information about other qualities of the objects being measured. Consider the meaning of a ten-pound bowling ball, or a seven-foot tall man. Such measurements have immediate implications for individual’s living in the United States: the bowling ball is heavy and the man is very tall. In addition, we understand that movement along such measure to have specific meaning. It is expected that a one inch movement along a ruler, for instance either from 7′0” up to 7′1”, or down to 6‘11”, is equivalent in its meaning of more or less height. In the same way, specifications of the Rasch Model (Rasch, 1960) define a single construct through a measurement tool using equivalent meanings independent of the object being measured:

The model is based on the idea that useful measurement involves examination of only one attribute at a time (unidimensionality) on a hierarchical more than less line of inquiry. This line of inquiry is a theoretical idealization against which we can compare patterns of responses that do not coincide with this ideal. (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 32).

The Rasch model is a two-parameter latent trait model considering both person ability ($B_n$) and item difficulty ($D_i$), in which the two are independent from one another,
but measurable on the same scale (Bond & Fox, 2001, 2007; Rasch, 1960; Wright, 1977).

It is claimed to address the issue of construct validity through a determination of whether responses conform to the specification of unidimensionality (Bond & Fox, 2001, 2007). Items not meeting the specifications of the model will be indicative of a possible deviance from the construct under examination. In addition, items should represent varying "amounts" of an attribute or ability, so that individuals endorsing more difficult items would have "more" of the construct under examination. It is assumed that those with "more" of an attribute, endorsing difficult items would also endorse those considered "easy" if the items represent the construct difficulty and person ability (Linacre & Wright, 1996).

In the same way the ruler is an instrument used to measure length but not weight, the Rasch model determines whether a data collection instrument, such as a survey or questionnaire, measures a single construct, and is thus, unidimensional. Additivity of the items is an additional specification of the model. In Rasch, "additivity refers to the properties of the measurement units, which are the same size (i.e., interval) over the continuum if the data fit the model (Smith, Wakely, de Kruijff & Swartz, 2003, p. 374). For instance, if a survey was constructed with the intent of measuring "enjoyment of fishing”, inclusion of items assessing "television viewing preference” would not be beneficial or appropriate as such items apply to an entirely different construct. Thus, such items would not add to our understanding of the construct, enjoyment of fishing.

Theoretically, just as each inch describes how much taller or longer an object is, each item included in a measure must aid in the understanding of the overall meaning of a construct. For example each item included on our enjoyment of fishing survey must
provide additional information regarding a person’s level of enjoyment, thus adding to our understanding of various levels of enjoyment of fishing. Items that are redundant or off-base do not add to such an understanding and thus are not helpful in defining a construct. Ultimately, the Rasch model essentially develops a “ruler” which illustrates measurement of item difficulty in relation to person ability measures along a single construct continuum.

**Rasch Diagnostic Tools in WINSTEPS.** The current research utilized the Andrich Rating Scale Model of Rasch (Andrich, 1987 as cited in Linacre, 2006) as prescribed through WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2006). WINSTEPS is an analysis program designed to construct Rasch measurement from the responses of a set of persons to a set of items” (p.26) and uses these data to create a linear measure that is person and item free. Generally, WINSTEPS produces a model which specifies the probability of person estimates of performance in response to a similar group of items, and item estimates of persons with like ability responding in a similar way to the set of items. Several indices are provided in WINSTEPS to assist in the diagnosis of whether an instrument meets the required Rasch specifications. For the purpose of my study, I considered rating scale performance, reliability and separation of both items and persons, identification of both misfitting items and persons, Wright map (also referred to as Item-person map) and the (Rasch) principal components analysis of residuals (PCA and/or PCAR) to examine the survey instruments.

**Rating Scale Diagnostics.** Examination of rating scale performance is an important component of the Rasch model. The rating scale as a whole provides the means by which researchers communicate their understanding of the construct being measured.
Each category defines a varying level of the construct and participants’ response to each item, (hopefully in a manner that is meaningful to them) conveys their level of “interaction” with the construct under investigation. As such, each response category is expected to add to the overall understanding of the construct under investigation. Just as with a ruler, where each inch is the same distance from the next and 12 inches equals one foot, according to Rasch specifications, if data fit the model, the representation of each response category (e.g. somewhat) is equidistant from other response options (e.g., very much or a little bit) so that the measure employed illustrates the additive nature of more (or less of) a construct (e.g., interest in classroom method). The Rasch model accomplishes this through the conversion of raw data to logits (logarithm of odds) which are equal interval units representing the probability of a person with a given ability achieving a specific score or rating given a set of items of varied difficulty (Smith et al., 2003). Additionally,

One subtlety of rating scale fit analysis is the detection of idiosyncratic category usage, particularly respondents’ over-use of central or extreme categories. … The response strings that best fit the Rasch model … descend in value stochastically. They exhibit MnSq’s near 1.0 and positive point-measure correlations (which are similar to point-biserial correlations, but correlate responses with Rasch measures rather than raw scores) (http://www.rasch.org/rmt/rmt103a.htm).

If the categories are not meaningful or are not being used as intended by participants, the data collected may not be representative of the construct being examined.

Bond and Fox (2007) provided the following questions to guide analysis under the Rasch model as a whole but further suggested their importance when considering rating
scale performance: Do we have reliable data for persons and items? Do the categories fit the model sufficiently well? Do the thresholds indicate a hierarchical pattern to the rating scale? Are there enough data in each category to provide stable estimates?” (p. 161). Aligning with the questions the following Rasch rating scale diagnostics were included in this study, examination of the Category Probability Curves, average measures, threshold or step calibrations, and fit statistic indices.

Participants’ definition of more or less of a construct is made known through the rating scale categories. Thus, it is important to determine whether the categories are functioning in a manner that is meaningful. Under the Rasch model, examination of participants use of the categories is illustrated though the Category Probability Curves and average measures providing information regarding how many people responded using each category and the relationship of each category to the other. Rating scale diagnostics often begins with a visual inspection of the category probability curves and considering the “shape of the distribution curve” (Bond & Fox, 2007, p. 161) taking note of irregular distribution curves and the number of responses per category” (p. 161), noting irregular distribution curves and categories with low response rates as these are indicators of potential problems. Guidelines for assessing category use suggest at least ten responses for a category to be considered useful,

In the event categories do not meet the specifications described above, it is common practice to “collapse” rating scale categories to create a more meaningful scale. Collapsing categories refers to the practice of reviewing the performance of each response option provided on a survey, and determining whether ill performing categories would better represent participants use of the categories if they were combined (Linacre,
(such that a 5 point scale, with options 12345 might become 12245, if collapsing response options 2 and 3). When collapsing categories, several iterations are often required to determine the most meaningful representation of participants use of categories indicated through the analyses.

Reliability and Separation. Reliability according to the Rasch model (1960, 1980) is described in terms of the person ability and the item difficulty. *Item Reliability* refers to the probability that items would retain their ordering along the continuum if samples of persons with of similar ability responded to the instrument (Bond & Fox, 2001, 2007). For example, if nearly equal ability classroom groups of 3rd grade students took a math test, questions pertaining to addition would consistently be easier to answer than questions referring to multiplication and those in turn would be easier than items assessing calculus. Such a continuum for third graders would range from easy (addition) to difficult (multiplication) to nearly impossible (calculus)! The point is that the items should differentiate the various third grade students in nearly the same way along the continuum.

On the other hand, *Person Reliability* refers to the probability that the sample, given a different but equivalent set of items measuring the same construct or content would be located along the continuum in the same order (Bond & Fox, 2001). As a very simplistic example, consider the math example again. Simply changing the problems assessing the same numerical operation on a math test (e.g., replacing 5 x 6 with 7 x4) should not change the reporting of an individual's ability. As long as the math problems are represented in the same manner and are measuring the same content, addition to multiplication and through calculus, persons should continue to be placed in the same
location and in the same order along a continuum. In this instance the continuum might be labeled from less able (third graders unable to add) to more able (third graders able to conquer calculus).

The Separation statistics indicate the possible number of strata of persons and items that can be differentiated along a continuum as specified by the measurement variable. The rule of thumb is that for a measure to be useful the separation must exceed 2 (see Fischer 2007, for rule of thumb chart). Separation of at least 2 is necessary to differentiate and place individuals in at least two differing groups. In order to determine the number of strata indicated by data, the following equation has been suggested and was used in this study,

$$H = \frac{(4G+1)}{3}$$ where $G$ = separation ratio (Wright & Masters, 2002).

**Fit Statistics.** The Rasch model determines how well the data, both persons and items “fit” the construct. When an item misfits, it means that the items fails to discriminate between high and low performers in a way that is inconsistent with other items. When persons misfit, it means that their response are inconsistent with the pattern of responses for people with similar ability measures” (Banerji, Smith & Dedrick, 1997). Essentially, purposes of the item fit statistics are to illustrate whether each item functions according to the underlying construct, maintaining the expected range of item difficulty and person ability; hence, adding to the measure.

The cause of item misfit is varied, for instance an item may not be well constructed, thus difficult to answer in an appropriate manner, or simple data entry errors (Smith, 1996). Another important consideration for misfit of an item is whether the item is measuring the same underlying construct as other items. In a similar fashion, person fit
refers to how consistent individuals are in their responses to the items. According to Bond and Fox (2001) –“fit indices help the investigator to ascertain whether the assumption of unidimensionality holds up empirically” (p.26). Consider an individual who answers all the more difficult items correctly on a math class, but is unable to correctly answer the easier items such as addition. Rasch analysis would consider this improbability of unusual or unexpected response and possibly identify the person as misfitting.

Detecting and addressing misfit is a recursive process,

Parts that don't [fit] are not automatically rejected, but are examined to identify in what way, and why, they fall short, and whether, on balance, they contribute to or corrupt measurement. Then the decision is made to accept, reject or modify the data. Modification includes simple actions such as correcting obvious data entry errors and respondent mistakes, and more sophisticated actions such as collapsing rating scale categories (Smith 1996, p.516-517).

Thus, when item and person misfit is identified, additional decision may be made to remove those items or persons not conforming to fit parameters. Outfit and Infit statistics have an expectation of 1.0, with those under 1.0 indicating overfit and above 1.0 indicate underfit; parameter fit specified for rating scale are MNSQ between 0.6 and 1.4 as specified through Rasch (Linacre & Wright, 1994). Once modifications are completed, it requires the review of other aspects of the analyses. Perhaps the most important aspect to consider is whether decisions affect dimensionality of the measure.

Unidimensionality. In order to develop a measure using the Rasch model, it is essential to determine whether the underlying construct is unidimensional in nature.
Unidimensionality refers to an instrument’s ability to measure one underlying construct. According to Smith (2002) unidimensionality is not a simple yes/no proposition. Rather, it becomes a question of “...at what point on the continuum does multidimensionality threaten the interpretation of the item and person estimates” (p. 576). Linacre (cited in Smith, 2002) described three steps to assess dimensionality, first consider whether item-correlations are functioning negatively or out of the norm, then identify unusual response patterns using the fit statistics and finally look “...for patterns among the standardized residuals using [Rasch] PCA...” (p. 582) using the RPCA as one part in the three step process.

The Rasch Principal Components Analysis (RPCA) is different than the PCA used in factor analysis in that the RPCA does not attempt to identify different components or factors; rather, the purpose is to explain variance in the residuals (Linacre, 2006). Remembering that Rasch specifies unidimensionality, it may seem intuitive that the goal for the RPCA is to find a single component (or factor) in order to explain the most variance through a single construct. As a rule of thumb, the measure, referred to as the “Rasch Dimension”, should account for more than 60% of the explained variance, while the unexplained variance explained by the first contrast (and subsequent contrasts) should account for less than 5% (Linacre, 2006). Following this procedure aids in the identification of problematic items and with the more important potentiality of the discovering the existence of additional underlying constructs beyond that being measured.
Qualitative Research

Qualitative approaches to research attempt to understand the meanings of a given topic, event, belief or understanding from the perspective of an individual or individuals. Qualitative approaches to research appear to be the antithesis of quantitative; they are inductive, and exploratory with research questions and theory emerging during the research process through interaction with participants (Creswell, 2004; Glesne, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). While quantitative is narrow, focused on numeric data, qualitative is broad and general seeking verbal, textual, graphic or artifacts as data (Creswell, 2004). Qualitative data analysis attempts to provide a detailed understanding of phenomena from the view of one or only a few persons as mediated through the researcher, thus analyses are reported using the researchers subjectivity and understanding of the participants account of reality (Glesne, 2006). This view of qualitative research provides a starting point for understanding the research paradigm, but in my opinion, does not portray the rigor that is as much a component of qualitative, as it is of quantitative research. In a description of qualitative research, Creswell (2005) stated it “is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (p.39).

Similar in content, the tone of the following statement, (Guba 1998 as cited in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) suggested the qualitative approach as being a serious albeit different approach to research addressing different questions and aspects of a given problem, counterbalancing the quantitative purists:
[q]ualitative purists (also called constructivist and interpretivists) reject what they call positivism...” rather they contend — multiple-constructed realities abound, ...time- and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible, ...research is value-bound...it is impossible to differentiate fully causes and effects, that logic flows from specific to general (e.g., explanations are generated inductively from the data), and the known is the only source of reality. (p. 14).

Taken together with Creswell’s definitions (2005) this statement further expounds the epistemological and ontological differences between the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.

**Pros and cons of qualitative research.** Qualitative researchers allow for and utilize the subjective nature of the qualitative process, and while not insisting on or attempting to remain objective, qualitative researchers are still rigorous. For outsiders to qualitative research, this is one of the main weaknesses of the approach. However, while rigor in qualitative research is not imposed through the method, the researcher imposes controls, such accounting for and recording their biases as part of understanding of the research as part of the process and reality of the participants experiences. Some qualitative researchers monitor their bias using their subjectivity to guide the research and thus understand it to be the foundation for their research (Glesne, 2006). In my opinion, as I stated in regards to the quantitative denial of subjective decision-making, this is strength to the approach, if the researcher is trustworthy and honestly reports biases.

Qualitative research occurs in natural settings where phenomena of interest are found. Therefore, researchers often seek to interpret, explain, or make sense of the
phenomena and its meaning to people as it occurs (Creswell 2005; Glesne, 2006) rather than in controlled environments external to the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative methodologies attempt to provide information at deeper levels than those from a quantitative approach. Thus, predetermined measurement instruments, such as surveys, are ineffectual because from the qualitative lens, “...reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (Glesne, 2006). Each person has their own reality, and qualitative approaches attempt to look at what an attribute, event or experience might be made up of from the view of the individual. The approach is “interpretive, recursive, and iterative” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), with researchers spending much time in an environment with participants, digging deeply into experience to grasp the meaning from the view of each individual or from the group.

The greatest benefit of pursuing research using a qualitative lens is the rich description and detail gathered in the form of data, an impossibility using quantitative methods alone. Time in the field getting to know the participants and the environment allows for the rich description. Qualitative data allow for greater depth and breadth based in the participant’s view of meanings of phenomena. In the absence of set hypotheses guiding (and to an extent constraining) the research, researchers are free to pursue avenues not available through quantitative data, as the data collection informs the research. The result of this freedom is that theory develops out of qualitative research, which is not possible in quantitative research.

There are disadvantages to using qualitative approaches to research, and much like the negative aspects of quantitative research, they too deal with seemingly positive facets of the research. The flip side to the richness and depth of time spent in the field is
that qualitative research is time consuming. Hence, if the research requires much time in the field, extensive data collection, interviewers, transcriptionists, or analysis is needed, it can be costly to do. Time is a constraining factor, and the intensive nature of qualitative research limits the number of participants in most studies, especially those in schools. As a result, investigations into experience are generally only gathered from the few rather than the many, potentially limiting the understanding of the phenomena under examination.

The limited numbers of both researchers and participants involved in a qualitative research study has been criticized since it can lead to increased bias due to the limited number of perspectives represented (Creswell, 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, for some research (depending on the research question) this make actually be a positive attribute, if the research is focused on a very specific phenomenon. Sampling methodologies are an important aspect to quantitative research, and equally important, but different for the qualitative approach (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004, 2007). Again, the focus of the research should guide the plan.

**Phenomenology.** Historical accounts are subjective in nature: everyone "has a history." An individual's history in total is known only to them and their experience creates who they are, shaping their reality. Phenomenology seeks to discover the essence of an experience, to investigate the unique and essential history of an individual. However, "The essence of a phenomenon is a universal" (van Manen, 1990, p.10) and such universals are part of our everyday life and existence. Applying a phenomenological approach addresses the experience illustrated through an attempt to
describe the meaning of individual’s lived experience with an event or a singular concept (Bogden & Biklen, 1982; Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology is based on the premise that the researcher will not make assumptions about the meanings of an event or experience for the individual (Bogden & Biklen, 1982; Moustakas, 1994; Taylor & Bogden, 1984; van Manen, 1984, 1990). Thus, in its purest form it is a reporting of the experiences of individuals in relation to phenomena, “[t]he phenomenologist is committed to understanding social phenomenon from the actors own perspective. He or she examines how the world is experienced. The important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Taylor & Bogden, 1984, p.2). This requires a level of detachment from the research on the part of the researcher and an ability to not become personally invested in the lives of the participants to maintain a modicum of impartiality. Such a commitment requires that the researcher understands reality as socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) rather than constructing meaning on their own. In addition, Willis (1991) warned that experience is mediated through external perceptions; memories are influenced by our own present and history. In this way representations of experience can only be considered as metaphorical” (p. 175), rather than as the accurate representation of reality. Thus, it is never possible to get more than one person’s representation of the experiences as mediated through their experience with the external and internal world.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: van Manen. Rather than the cold detachment of the hard sciences, with an emphasis on rationality and explanation, van Manen (1984, 1990) described hermeneutic phenomenology as a descriptive approach to research from the unique perspective of woman, man, or child and within their particular being. The
intention of hermeneutic phenomenology is to come to know the *experience* of the individual without their — taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it [experience]” (p. 9). According to van Manen (1990) — pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children’s realities and lifeworlds)” (p.2). It is this, the *requirement* of being sensitive and understanding student’s realities and lifeworlds that a phenomenological approach allows. With this requirement comes responsibility, the researcher must hear and communicate the meaning of the experience of each individual.

Lifeworlds are described as comprised from — four existential themes”, which are to be used as — guides for reflection in the research process: *lived space* (spatiality), *lived body* (corporeality), *lived time* (temporality), and *lived human relation* (relationality or communality)” (p. 101). Individuals each exist and interact within the four simultaneously, thus when attempting to research one aspect of an individual’s experience, the meaning will be impacted and informed through the other existential themes. The task for the researcher then, is to — construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience [italics original]” (van Manen,1990, p. 41) while understanding — that consciousness itself cannot be described directly” (p. 9). In order to construct such an interpretation, the researcher uses the — reflection” and — recollection” (p.10) of an experience by the individual. Which is also an interpretation of the actual event or experience, being brought back and recognized — as a possible experience” (p.41). Engaging in such reflection and the meaning fashioned through such recollection aids in the identification of the — essence” of an experience for the individual. It is this essence of an experience that becomes what the researcher seeks.
Transcendental Phenomenology: Moustakas. There are multiple approaches to conducting phenomenological studies, and while van Manen (1984, 1990) presented the clearest definition and explanation of phenomenology, Moustakas’ (1994) approach to conducting phenomenological research, referring to transcendental phenomenology, was used in this study. Moustakas described transcendental phenomenology as “a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 48). As with hermeneutic phenomenology, the focus of research remains on the experience of the individual and attempting to understand what this experience is, without the researcher adding, editing or changing the meaning from that gathered from participants. The transcendental phenomenological perspective focuses on an empirical approach to discovering the essence of an experience, whose —.aim 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” [emphasis added] (p.13). Through this approach the researcher seeks to know the core meaning of a phenomenon as described through the participants.

Since there exists —nsingle best methodology for conducting phenomenological inquiry and no single best way of blending it with other forms of inquiry (Willis, 1991, p. 184) a phenomenological data analysis, I choose the one approach addressing the research question, problem and mixed-method approach. Moustakas (1994), approach focuses on bracketing (or epoche) and phenomenological reduction of the data. The outlined procedure includes seven steps and requires the use of verbatim texts to maintain the meaning of the participant. The procedure includes: recording all relevant statements, reduction and elimination of repetitive statements, clustering and thematizing, synthesis
of meanings using verbatim examples, creation of textual description, creation of structural description, and creation of composite descriptions encapsulating the essence of participants’ experience (p. 120-122). Through each of the steps in the procedure data are chunked and reduced until the essential meanings of the experience under investigation are all that remain. In my study, I used the data analysis plan as prescribed by Moustakas for analysis of all interview data.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed literature relevant to the current study, including review of literature pertinent to both content and method. Since in the U.S. school systems, the two are often viewed as the same, literature review of the content focused on both the social studies and American history. Through this discussion I attempted to provide an indication of the place of American history and the social studies writ large in academia. From the descriptions, it should be clear that the disciplines are being challenged and such challenges have a direct effect on knowledge acquisition and interest.

More specifically review of individual’s perceptions of social studies and American history indicated an additional challenge to the disciplines. This research reported that people do not like the academic content, calling it boring, irrelevant and useless. Reasons cited for not liking the content included method and activities, teacher attributes, lack of relevance, and others. Ironically, the same were cited as reasons people liked history. Much of the recent research does not focus on American history, rather took a broad approach to history, indicating a gap in the literature. Overall, the review of this literature illustrated the complexities involved in attempting to address interest in history.
Interest as a psychological construct was presented using a historical approach addressing both theoretical and empirical work over the past 100 years. Since the current research used situational and individual interest as defining constructs to investigate and describe interest, the review centered on these conceptions of interest. Situational interest was described as affective, temporary and fleeting, while individual interest was deeply ingrained and more permanent. These differences led to a discussion of the development of interest from novice through experts through the work of Alexander (1997, 2003) and the Model of Domain Learning as well as Brophy’s (1999, 2008) call to investigate how people with various levels of education described their value of the content. The work of Alexander and Brophy both address the potential for interest to be qualitatively different depending on knowledge and experience, aligning with the conception of three levels of interest as indicated through high school, college students and adults in the current study.

Finally, a discussion of the merits and challenges of the various methodologies employed in the study were provided. This discussion focused on mixed-methodologies with added discussions centered on each of the approaches, quantitative, focusing on survey development, and qualitative, with a focus on interview. Description of phenomenological approach as the overarching methodology in data collection and analysis rounded out the chapter.
Chapter Three

Method

In an effort to consider the research question from multiple perspectives, this study used a mixed-method approach to address the research questions. The overarching research question addressed through the study was: How do individuals across different abilities and levels of education describe their interest in American History? This question was informed through the following research questions:

1. How do students rank their interest in American history compared to other core academic content areas?

2. How frequently (daily, weekly, monthly, once a term, never) do students report the use of different instructional methods (i.e., collaborative work, projects, guest speakers)?

3. Is there a significant relationship between individual interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

4. Is there a significant relationship between situational interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

5. How do participants describe their interest in American history?
   a. How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate, professional) describe their interest in American history?
b. How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the origin and evolution of their interest in American history?

**Research Design**

Engaging in the “third research paradigm”, my research agenda included both quantitative and qualitative components. The two have been described as not only compatible, but complementary and thus, appropriate to be used together (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Poggenpoel, Myburgh, & van der Linde, 2001) to provide information from dual perspectives. Such an approach allowed for more thorough and balanced data comparability across types of data collected, enriching the analysis. Further, multiple data sources, specifically in my study, two empirically focused surveys assessing both quantitative attributes (through rating and frequency scales), and qualitative elements (multiple open-ended survey responses and interview data from samples across three populations: high school, college and professionals), allowed for triangulation in an effort to address threats to validity (Glesne, 2006; Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) inherent to all research.

Accordingly, this research used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Guttman & Hanson, 2003; Creswell, 2005). While quantitative data was collected first, priority was given to the qualitative approach in data collection and analysis, using phenomenology as the guiding framework. Interviews prompts were developed as a result of quantitative analysis of participant responses to two interest surveys the *Situational Interest Survey* (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press), investigating personal and situational interest, and the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished), collecting information pertaining to perceptions of method use and interest in contextual factors.
According to van Manen (1984, 1990), the phenomenological approach focuses on the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals. Given that the main question explored individuals' experience with history with specific content, phenomenology was selected as the overriding method of data analysis.

**Participants**

Individuals participating in this study belonged to one of three populations identified using Alexander’s (1997, 2003) Model of Domain Learning (MDL) as a guide. Typically, high school students are just beginning to learn about American history as a discrete disciplinary content separate from the social studies, thus may just beginning to develop and explore an interest in the content, thus represent *acclimation* (Alexander, 2003, p. 11). This sample consisted of 130 (female n=54, male n= 72, not reported n=4) high school students. Students were recruited from one rural public high school (n= 56) and one urban parochial school (n= 74), during the spring of 2008. Students were recruited through their high school American History courses.

The second population, college students, represented Alexander’s *competence* stage (p. 12). It has thought that college students would have more knowledge of American history and thus, potentially more interest. This sample consisted of 44 college students (female n=28, male n= 13, not reported n=3) recruited through two mid-sized universities also located in the Midwest via an email invitation set through a College level list-serve or course instructor. Originally, the plan called for these students to be recruited through history courses, as it has been suggested that such students would have deeper knowledge, find value in the content and potentially greater interest (Brophy, 2008). However, this was not possible, thus the sample consisted of students majoring in
education (\(n=34\) of this number history \(n=1\) and social studies \(n=4\)), history \((n=2)\) and other \((n=4; \text{no response}, n=4)\).

Finally, four adult participants (female \(n=1\), male \(n=3\)) involved in the second interview phase of the study were identified using recommendation through others and represented MDL’s proficiency/expertise (p. 12). Each adult was either working or had previously worked, in a position in which in-depth knowledge and understanding of American history was a requirement. All four of the participants had taught social studies, including history, in a K-12 setting at some point in their adult career life. At the time of the study, one participant was a high school history teacher, two were social studies teacher educators, and the fourth participant was a college instructor in another field.

**Phase One Participants.** As a two phase sequential explanatory study (Creswell, 2005; Creswell, et. al, 2003), not all participants were included in both phases of the study. Participants for the first exploratory quantitative phase, survey administration, were high school students and college students described above. Participants in phase one totaled 177 \((n=130 \text{ high school students}, n=44 \text{ college students})\).

**Phase Two Participants.** The second phase, individual interviews included high school, college, and adult participants. High school and college level participants from phase one who had responded to the survey (see Appendix B and C), indicated an interest in American history and provided contact information were considered for phase two. Prospective interview participant’s names were put into an alphabetical list and contacted round-robin style. Attempts were made to contact every fourth name on the list via email and/ or phone. Several participants had provided inaccurate contact
information and were thus deleted from the list. Others did not return calls or respond to email invitations. Ultimately, a total of four high school students (female \(n=1\), male \(n=3\)) and three college students (female \(n=2\), male \(n=1\)) agreed to an interview from the original list of participants indicating interest through the survey. A fourth college level female participant was invited to participate based on my personal knowledge of their interest in American history.

Individuals defined as “professionals” in American history (e.g., Professors in history) participated only in the second phase of the study. A total of four adults were contacted and all agreed to be interviewed (female \(n=1\), male \(n=3\)). Participants from this group were either referred to the researcher as persons potentially having an interest in American history, or personally known to me as having an interest in the content.

**Phase One: Instrumentation**

High school and college level participants were asked to respond to two surveys (see Appendix B and C) during the first phase of the study. In the high school setting, paper surveys were distributed to students who had returned completed informed consent documentation. The first survey, the *Situational Interest Survey (SIS)* (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press), was a 20 item measure of interest assessing both situational and individual interest in academic content. A five point Likert-type response scales was provided with endpoints labeled, from 1 (*Not at all like me*), to 5 (*Very much like me*), with midpoints 2, 3, 4, each left unlabeled. Previously, the measure had been used with math and psychology content and reported to be reliable and valid with college and high school samples. Research (see Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) using the *SIS* provided evidence that the measure differentiated between situational and individual interest in
these academic domains. Additionally, the measure identified sub-dimensions that were defined as indicators of forms of situational interesting including, “catch”, “hold-feeling” and “hold-value” (p. 11-12). Items from the SIS were adapted from the original use in math (i.e. *It is important to me to be a person who reasons mathematically.*) and psychology to address interest in American history, since the measure had yet to be used with American history content, (i.e. *It is important to me to be a person who thinks historically (or like a historian),* to assess situational and individual interest in American history.

The second survey, the *Class Preferences and the Social Studies Survey (CPS)* (Stewart, unpublished), was a 53 item questionnaire assessing student perceptions of the social studies classroom context adapted to assess American history. In particular, the measure asked participants to rate their perception of the frequency of various methods used in their classroom, and the level of interest these classroom contextual factors incite in the students. Question formats and response options included rank order, short answer, frequency, and rating scale. An additional five demographic questions including, gender, ethnicity, year in college (freshman, etc.) and grade point average are included in the survey.

In a pilot study the measure was used to investigate student perceptions of social studies overall, but had not been used in a content specific context previous to the current study use in American history. The purposes for administering the instruments were two-fold; first, to address research questions one through five. Secondly, the surveys served as a method to inform the development of the interview schedule used in during the interview phase of the study.
**Data Collection**

**Phase One.** Data for this study was collected over two phases from three populations resulting in three data sources. The data sources were: 1) Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et. al, in press); 2) *Class Preferences and the Social Studies Survey* (CPS³) (Stewart, unpublished), and 3) interviews. These data were collected over the course of one year, beginning with survey data collection in April 2008 through final interviews conducted in March 2009.

The two surveys were administered simultaneously as part of one packet (see Appendix D for cover sheet) in the high school situation. Each survey was labeled individually and contained discrete directions. In an attempt to guard against order bias (Alreck & Settle, 2004) survey administration was alternated. This was accomplished through preparing survey packets alternating survey order, and distributing the surveys in alternating order. Thus, every other student received a packet with the SIS or CPS³ administered first in the packet. The last page of each packet was identical, requesting basic demographic information and asking participants for contact information for inclusion in the second interview phase of the study. Contact information was immediately removed from each survey packet before coding or data analysis.

The author administered survey’s to every high school class using the same protocol for each. Introduction and directions were read verbatim to each class and were:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our study. We are interested in finding out about student’s interest in American history and their interest in the things they do in their American History class. To help us understand what you think, it is important that you answer the attached...
surveys as truthfully and completely as possible. This questionnaire is voluntary, so you can choose to stop taking part in the project by not answering questions, or throwing the questionnaire document away. Please answer as many questions as possible, but if you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip it and move on. If you have questions, raise your hand and I will answer your question.

The only people who will see your answers are the University of Toledo researchers. Your teachers, other students or administrators will not see your responses, so please be as truthful as possible. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can stop completing the questions at any time you wish. The questionnaire asks you to respond to several different types of questions, so please take time to read each question carefully. Do you have any questions?

After the directions were read, questions were answered. Student questions were mostly related to definitions of terms and asked after they had begun answering the survey. On average, surveys were completed in approximately 13 minutes. The longest it took any one high school participant was 26 minutes, and the shortest time was 8 minutes.

Surveys were administered electronically to college students. Email invitations including a link to a web-based survey (Survey Monkey®, surveymonkey.com, Portland, OR) were sent out via third parties not associated with this research. The electronic survey was nearly identical to the paper version; exceptions were corrections made to address errors noted in the survey and are described in Chapter Five. One section of the survey included space for participants to self-select to be included in phase two, the
Phase Two. The interview schedule was created using data from survey responses to inform and add to the primary question asked of all participants, *Tell me about your interest in American history*. Alexander (2003) suggested the "expert" has a fully developed individual interest in the domain of expertise, which varies from the interest experienced by others with less expertise. Thus, in an effort to gain insight into individual interest across domain, high school students, college students, and adults, considered as experts were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix E). The essential purpose of the interview was to address the main and final research question, *How do participants describe their interest in American history?*

Individual interviews with the four high school students were conducted during the spring of 2008 after initial analysis of the high school survey data was performed. College level participants were interviewed in summer and fall 2008, while adult interviews were conducted from fall 2008 through spring 2009. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, including public libraries, offices on the campus of one university, coffee shops, the home of adult participants, and even a locker room. Interviews were continued until a point of saturation (Creswell, 2005) had been attained.

Analyses

**Phase One: Survey Analyses**

Participant data were maintained during data analysis with all high school participants analyzed as one group, and college participants as a second group. Multiple analyses were conducted for each set of survey data including Rasch analyses (1960,
Psychometric Properties. A series of Rasch analyses (1960, 1980) using WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2006) were performed to investigate dimensionality, rating scale and item functioning of the SIS (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) and sections of the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished). CPS³ items included in this analysis were items addressing Frequency of Activities (Which of the following methods were used in the course and how often, with 5 representing daily and 1 never), and Method interest (Which activities did you most enjoy?). The polytomous rating scale model, also called the Andrich Rating Scale Model (Linacre, 2006) as applied through WINSTEPS was the Rasch model applied in the analysis of both surveys. The equation as defined by Linacre (2006) in the WINSTEPS Help menu specifies the following:

$$ \log(\frac{P_{nij}}{P_{n(i-1)}}) = B_n - D_i - F_j $$

where, $P_{nij}$ is the probability that person $n$ encountering item $i$ is observed in category $j$, $B_n$ is the "ability" measure of person $n$, $D_i$ is the "difficulty" measure of item $i$, the point where the highest and lowest categories of the item are equally probable. $F_j$ is the "calibration" measure of category $j$ relative to category $j-1$, the point where categories $j-1$ and $j$ are equally probable relative to the measure of the item.

After an overall review of the indices reported in WINSTEPS, individual areas were revisited to address problematic issues starting with the rating scale. Thus, rating scale analyses were conducted to determine whether participants were using the response scales as expected. In the event the rating scale was not performing, scales were collapsed...
and the analyses repeated in an attempt to identify scale functioning proximate to participant’s actual use. After each iteration or change, review of each output table was reviewed before progressing to the next potential problem. Following rating scale analysis, a review of reliability and separation of items and then persons was conducted. Reliability was reviewed as this specifies the items would likely replicate with a similar sample, with perfect reliability set at 1.0 (Bond & Fox, 2007; Linacre, 2006), while separation is the number of statistically different performance strata that the test can identify in the sample” (Wright, 1996). If both these measures were within acceptable ranges, fit statistics were examined.

Review of item and person fit statistics was conducted to identify potential item and person misfit. In the event of misfit, items were removed and analysis performed to investigate effect on the overall measure. The same was conducted with person after the items were completed. Results of the Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (PCAR) were considered to determine whether the items were functioning as a unidimensional measure. Finally, examination of the Wright Map indicated whether the items and persons were being measured along the continuum, or if there were gaps between people and the items. Several iterations were conducted to determine functioning of the measure.

**Descriptive Statistics.** Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the CPS³ item one, *(For the following subjects, indicate your favorite and least favorite, using “1” for most favorite and “7”) which used a 1 to 7 rating scale as indicated through the item; and item four, *(Which of the following class activities do you think your American history teacher uses the most in your current American history class?)*, using a frequency
scale of responses labeled from occurs “Daily’’ through occurs –Never’’ (Daily—this activity occurs at least once every day; Weekly—this activity occurs at least one time a week, but not every day; Monthly—this activity occurs at least one time a month, but not every week; Once—this activity occurs at least once or twice a semester, but not every month; Never—this activity never occurs). These items addressed the first two research questions examining students’ reports on their interest in American history compared to other core academic content areas, and the frequency of use of different instructional methods in the content.

While the initial research plan called for the use of correlations to be examined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient calculations to determine the strength and direction of relationships between interest (situational and individual) and interest in instructional methods and individual interest, this was not possible. Problems encountered will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

The analysis plan was modified after the interest in method measure, part of the CPS³ failed to conform to Rasch (1960, 1980) specifications of unidimensionality as reported through the WINSTEPS Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (Linacre, 1998b, 2007). Failure to meet the specification of unidimensionality indicated the measure may not assess the construct as intended.

Consequently, the measure of interest in method could not be treated as a scale measuring a single construct. Rather, responses could only be considered as ordinal data, thus affecting the potential analysis methods available. As a result, multiple regression was used to investigate the relationship between individual’s interest in American history and methods used in the classroom.
**Multiple Regression.** Due to instrumentation an issue, *interest* was investigated using the Standard Multiple-Regression Model of Analysis to examine whether interest in classroom activity was predictor of individual interest. According to Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino, (2006) the “goal of multiple regression is to produce a model in the form of a linear equation that identifies the best weighted combination of independent variable in the study to optimally predict the criterion variable” (p. 149).

The criterion variable used was the person measures (Smith, 1986) as defined through Rasch (1960, 1980) using WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2006). WINSTEPS used CPS³ data to determine whether persons conform to the Rasch model, creating a continuum, a continuous measure of individual interest in American history.

Predictor variables were 19 of the 20 items listed in question 5 (*Which activities make American history most interesting to you?*) and entered as groups created based on theoretical use of activity in the classroom: traditional/large group (lecture, discussion, debates, cooperative learning); traditional/independent (reading text, questions from text, worksheet, notes); student choice (reading text of choice, independent research); arts (role play, art); primary documents (reading primary documents, mapping); technology (video, computer simulation); non-traditional (field trip, guest speaker); and assessment (test).

Tests of the assumptions required to conduct the multiple regression were considered before proceeding with the analysis. The regression criterion variable was individual interest as defined by WINSTEPS Rasch person measures (Linacre, 2006) from the analysis of the Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press). Predictor variables were twenty classroom methods from the CPS³ (Stewart,
unpublished). A multiple regression of the predictor variables entered as blocks was performed to investigate whether the activities were predictors of interest in American history. Following the advice of Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003), the items were entered in blocks (Appendix F) for the analysis as there were more than five to six variables, as “The multiple correlation coefficient can be spuriously large if there are a large number of predictor variables and a small number of observations” (p. 472-473).

Finally, Onwuegbuzie (2000), described a myriad of threats to validity in any study. Specifically in my study, I considered instrumentation concerns, selection of participants, implementation effects, researcher bias, and effect size. Effect sizes for each relationship were calculated to inform the practical significance of the findings for each statistically significant relationship.

**Method Interest: College.** In addition to the failure to meet the specification of unidimensionality as prescribed under the Rasch model (Bond & Fox, 2001; Smith, 2002), the college sample had less than 100 participants. According to Hinkle, et al., (2003), “. . .for studies with small n and numerous predictors, the multiple R may be spuriously large simply” (p. 473). For this study, there were a possibility of 20 items and the sample size was only 44 participants.

**Qualitative Results**

The overarching question addressed through this study was: *How do individuals with different levels of education and knowledge describe their interest in American History?* Taking a phenomenological approach to address this issue and related research questions: 6. *How do participant’s describe their interest in American history?*; 6a., *How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate, professional) describe*
their interest in American history?; and 6b. “How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the origin and evolution of their interest in American history?”

required prompts that were sufficiently broad to allow participants to relate their meaning of their experience. Responses were collected using both short answers prompts and interview.

Phase Two: Qualitative Coding and Analysis

An important pre-analysis activity was to bracket my subjectivity (Creswell, 2005; Moustakas, 1994), through reflecting on and writing about my own interest in and experience with American history overall, and history in general, as an interested individual and student, teacher, and researcher. Previous to commencing formal research, I reflected on my experiences and potential biases in an effort to consider preconceived notions of the origins of my personal interest and the way such notions may affect my research.

While in the multiple contexts field notes were written in an effort to not overlook note and observe context and other potentially important data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In the field notes, I recorded various information including: structural features, such as the building, room layout, and the like; actors, persons in the setting both those who may or may not have had a direct impact on the study; dialogue, between actors, participants and myself; and chronology, noting occurrence of events relevant to the study (see Appendix G.1 through G.4). Field notes were made as soon as possible after an event, with especially important points jotted down during interview. Analyses of these field notes occurred while writing and were used to refocus field visits (Spradley, 1980).
Participant data of a qualitative nature, including short answer and interview responses were analyzed according to sample first. Thus, all high school participant data was analyzed first, college data analyzed second, while all adult data analysis was completed last. Responses for each participant were entered into an Excel 2007 spreadsheet according to survey item and interview question. All qualitative data were analyzed verbatim using the procedure prescribed by Moustakas (1994). Thus, phenomenological data analysis involved recording all relevant statements, reduction and elimination of repetitive statements, clustering and thematizing, synthesis of meanings using verbatim examples, creation of textual description, creation of structural description, and creation of composite descriptions encapsulating the essence of participants’ experience (p. 120-122). After all groups analyses were completed, results were compared across groups. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter Four.

**Defacto Limitations**

Gaining access to college students enrolled in an American history class at the time of the study was problematic. While I was allowed direct access to four different classes, only three students actually completed the survey of the total of 23 students who initially agreed to participate in the study. Further attempts to gain access to college level history classes were futile. As a result, I modified the sampling to include students in the College of Education in one university located in the Midwest and adjusted the research plan to recruit students through the history department from a second, smaller university, also located in the Midwest. Students were invited to participate via an email sent out by a secretary in one department located in the College of Education. Participants recruited
through the History Department were recruited through their history classes. Both groups were sent an invitation via email, including a link to an online survey data collection site, (Survey Monkey®, surveymonkey.com, Portland, OR). The survey did not include questions identifying the path college students were recruited through, thus it was impossible to investigate differences between history majors and education majors. However, college participants did provide their college major, indicating only six participants either majored in history, or history and education combined.

Sampling during phase two of the study also proved challenging. The sampling plan called for purposive selection of students in an effort to “find” interested individuals. However, the participants self-selected for participation in the interview process. While surveys were used to measure both situational and individual interest, due to confidentiality concerns, participants’ survey results were not traceable to the participant. Thus, there was no way to confirm whether interview participant’s scores indicated they were statistically likely to have an enduring interest in American history as measured through the surveys administered as part of this research. While several participants did respond on the survey they were interested in American history, few agreed to participate in an interview during phase two. In addition, of those agreeing to an interview, the contact information they provided was incorrect. This left a total of seven possible college interview participants.

Neither survey had been used in the history classroom or specifically with history content. The Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) had been used in science and psychology while the CPS³ had been used in reference to socials studies, but not history specifically. Further, while Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., (in press)
found evidence that the measure supported a three-factor model, separating situational interest-hold into feeling and value components using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the SIS did not indicate an ability to assess both situational and individual interest.

Rather, according to the analyses, the measure was unidimensional, but did not measure situational and individual interest separately as suggested in previous work conducted in science and psychology (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press). This difference should not be surprising since the Principal Component Analysis Rasch (PCAR) and CFA are very different approaches. CFA requires the researcher to assume the items in the measure conform to a predetermined model and will determine whether this the data fit the number of factors (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006). On the other hand, PCAR seeks to identify a single dimension, the latent trait, in an effort to determine whether the data fit the model, meeting the specification of unidimensionality (Linacre, 1998a).

As a result, it was not possible to address two research questions. Specifically, questions 3 (Is there a significant relationship between individual interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?), and 4 (Is there a significant relationship between situational interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?) could not be analyzed independently as was anticipated. However, since the measure was indicated as unidimensional according to Rasch Principal Components Analysis (Bond & Fox, 2007; Linacre, 1998a), the questions were modified and analyzed as a single research question, Is there a significant relationship between interest in American history and interest in instructional method

88
used in the classroom?. This question was addressed using a multiple-regression and will be discussed in Chapter Three.

As an exploratory study with a phenomenological emphasis, it is not the intention to generalize to the larger population. Generalizability is always an issue to consider when conducting research. This is especially true when conducting qualitative research, as it has been suggested generalizability is not the purpose of qualitative approaches. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate or reasonable given the sampling limitations and related population responding to the survey. Sampling was in no means random and the college sample was small (n=44), leading to analysis related problems, described in Chapter Four.

Other possible limitations included data collection and analysis issues. Survey item definitions may not have been clear to all students. For instance, while the item, field trip, was overwhelmingly reported as never occurring in the classroom, a few high school aged participants (n=5) responded this occurred once a semester or once a month. The majority of these responses were from participants enrolled in the same class, however, not enough participants responded in this manner to conclude field trips ever occurred in this class. Such responses led me to consider whether students just filled in any answer, or may have attended an out of class event or exhibit on their own. Lecture was also problematic; as several participants responded -1” indicating once a month while the majority responded that lecture occurred daily. The problem of definitional confusion occurred to me during survey administration when one high school student asked me if I counted as a guest speaker. Additionally, during survey administration several participant’s indicated they did not know what a primary document referred to, asking for
the term to be explained. Certainly my explanation could have influenced student’s responses in the classes in which queries regarding definitions of terms were brought forth. After the initial question was asked, I modified the directions to include the same explanation for primary documents for all participants.

Use of multiple rating scales was also problematic and will be discussed fully in Chapter Five. However, I believe it is important to state up front that not all participants who appeared to respond to the rating scales inappropriately were removed for analysis. For instance, at least one person responded to the frequency scale by using the “middle” category, 2, most frequently. This person was not removed from the analysis, maintaining the fundamental nature of phenomenology, I did not believe it was appropriate to “guess” at the participants intentions. However, participants responding to only one or did not respond to any of the items were removed.

Finally, perhaps the greatest limitation was that all coding and analysis was conducted by a single person, the author. While I did bracket my subjectivity, and I was careful to follow the procedures set forth by Moustakas (1994) and others when conducting a phenomenological study, there were still only one set of eyes reviewing the data and attempting to make sense of individual’s meanings.
Chapter Four

Results

The overarching research question was, How do individuals with different levels of education and knowledge describe their interest in American History? As a predominately phenomenological study, the overriding data collection and analysis method was qualitative. To address the overall purpose of this study, data collection used both survey and interview. Two surveys, the Situational Interest Survey (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) and the Class Preferences and the Social Studies Survey (CPS³) (Stewart, unpublished), were administered prior to conducting interviews in an effort to examine high school and college participants perceptions of American history. Understanding participant perceptions was important to address the main purpose of the survey, to inform the development of the interview schedule using responses relevant to the sample. Together, survey and interview responses addressed the following research questions:

1. How do students rank their interest in American history compared to other core academic content areas?
2. How frequently (daily, weekly, monthly, once a term, never) do students report the use of different instructional methods (i.e., collaborative work, projects, guest speakers)?
3. Is there a significant relationship between individual interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

4. Is there a significant relationship between situational interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

5. Is there a significant relationship between personal (and situational) interest in American history and student’s basic knowledge in American history?

6. How do participants describe their interest in American history?
   a. How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate, professional) describe their interest in American history?
   b. How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the origin and evolution of their interest in American history?

While it should be clear from the research questions that the main purpose of this research was to seek out and investigate interest in American history, negative data are also presented. The point of including negative cases is to provide the alternative view as presented through the data in an effort to be open about the findings (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the alternative view of these data suggests the complexity of the nature of interest. Data from the survey results describing reasons participants stated they were not interested in or did not like American
history are provided. Interview participants overall did not make such references, with the exception of the classroom experience, which is described in Chapter Five.

As part of the overall analysis plan, both survey instruments were analyzed applying the Rasch method (1960, 1980) before other statistical analyses were performed in an effort to substantiate the measures. Thus, this discussion will commence with a report the Rasch measurement analyses results. Following this, results of the quantitative analysis will be provided with a description of the short answer survey questions. Finally, results of the interview will be provided. Interview responses are reported thematically, and will align with the research questions they addressed.

**Analysis of the Measures: The Rasch Model**

Following the suggestion of Fox and Bond (2007) and Linacre (2006) each analysis began with an inspection of the rating scale. Results of these analyses were considered before progressing to the next step” in the analysis. As a holistic approach to measurement, each procedure of the Rasch analysis informed decision making for the next step or iteration. Thus, the first course of action was to review all criteria to get a sense of the overall functioning of the measure. For the most part, each analysis was completed in the following sequence: initial examination of the rating scale; consideration of separation and reliability; review of item and person fit statistics; review results of the Principal Components Analysis of Residuals; and, finally examine the Wright Map. Hence, discussion begins with the same sequence of steps, and progresses through a description of each step in the analysis and decision process in the approximate order in which they occurred. However, while the initial iteration is described in detail, only noteworthy results are included from subsequent iterations.
Situational Interest Survey: High School Sample

Initial Iteration. Initial visual inspection of the Situational Interest Survey (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) rating scale probability curves indicated problematic use of the rating scale as represented through the probability curves (see Figure 4.1). Endpoints (1, 5) did not extend beyond 0.8 probabilities as specified through the Rasch model and midpoints (2, 3, and 4) were not differentiated, failing to extend to 0.5 (50%) probability. In addition, inspection of the step-measures, or thresholds (see Appendix H), revealed the distance between measures did not increase by the suggested 1.4 logits, however, all were under 5.0 logits (Bond & Fox, 2001; Linacre, 2006) while outfit MSNQ’s were all under 2.0. Taken together, the results indicated that the high school participants had difficulty using the rating scale as expected. Thus, collapsing the rating scale categories was warranted in an attempt to improve category functioning. However, before taking this action, other indices were assessed to ascertain the overall effect of each change to model fit.

Item measures were acceptable, with excellent separation and reliability reported as 5.65, and .95 respectively (Fischer, 2007). A 5.65 separation indicates the items differentiate to approximately 7.86 strata according to Wright & Masters (2002). Further, examination of item MNSQ and Zstd indicated one misfitting item, #5 (My American history class is so exciting it’s easy to pay attention) with an infit MNSQ = 2.06 and Zstd= 5.9 and outfit MNSQ= 1.91 and Zstd= 3.8, exceeding the acceptable limits for rating scales as suggested by Linacre (2006) of infit MNSQ .5-1.5, outfit MNSQ of <1.90 and Zstd of <2.
Similarly, person measures were acceptable with separation of 4.31, indicating the ability to identify approximately 6.08 strata among people and excellent reliability was .95 (Fischer, 2007). Six misfitting persons were identified through this initial analysis; however were not removed pending further analyses to address rating scale issues. While these misfitting data were indicative of problems, rating scale use was addressed through attempts at collapsing categories before other corrections were attempted (Bond & Fox, 2007).

Finally, inspection of the Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (PCAR) (Appendix I) illustrated the SIS measure performed in a manner consistent with the specification of unidimensionality as prescribed through the Rasch model. According to the PCAR, 86.8% variance can be explained by the Rasch dimension. Additionally, the total variance explained by the 1st contrast accounts for 2.7% of unexplained variance.
in the model well under the suggested 5% limit, lending further support for *SIS* as a unidimensional measure (Smith, 2002). This dimension will be defined simply as *Interest* from this point forward.

**Successive Iterations.** Successive iterations in which rating scale categories were collapsed did not provide improvement over the original scale with item five and a total of nine misfitting persons deleted. Attempts were made to collapse categories one and two, essentially changing the scale from 12345 to 11234. This approach created more visually appealing category probability curves but did not improve thresholds or other results (see Appendix J). Additionally, categories two and three were collapsed (12234) and three and four were collapsed (12334). In each case the person measures improved over the initial iteration, but the item measures were adversely affected.

Ultimately, the analysis deemed most acceptable across all criteria used the original rating scale (12345) with one misfitting item (#5) deleted and a total of seven misfitting people removed (Figure 4.2). Only those individuals having both unacceptable infit and outfit MNSQ/Zstd were removed. This analysis provided the most information and proved to be the best model fit overall. Category probability curves illustrated improvement up and above the iterations described above. Thresholds were reported as -2.15, -0.87, 0.78 and 2.24 illustrating improved distance between steps. Other indicators also illustrated improvement, including person separation and reliability of 4.95 and 0.96 respectively, while item separation was 5.96 and reliability was reported at 0.97. Finally, PCAR reported the Rasch dimension accounted for 89.4% variance, with contrast one and two accounting for 2.1% and 1.8% respectively well below the suggested 5.0% (Smith, 2002).
Finally, the Wright Map (Figure 4.3) illustrated high school students found it easiest to agree with items attempting to represent *Catch* (in fact item five, the only deleted item, was also the easiest to agree with as well as a catch item) while finding it more difficult to agree with items representing *Individual Interest*. However, this is not clearly delineated as can be observed through the Wright Map. Items representing various the four underlying components of interest according to this measure (catch, hold-value, hold-feeling, and individual interest) are intermingled and represented at multiple points along the continuum along.

As Figure 4.3 illustrates, the measures did not adequately measure persons at either extreme of the continuum. The Wright Map indicates that those who find it easy to agree with items on this measure, represented by X on the continuum, and those finding it
difficult to agree with items on this measure, represented by Y do not have items that align with their positions on the continuum, thus suggesting an inability to measure persons along each endpoint.

**Situational Interest Survey: College Sample**

Results of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis demonstrated respondents improper use of the five response categories ranging from, *Very true for me* (rated as 5) through *Not at all true for me* (rated as 1), with unlabeled 2, 3, 4, midpoint categories. Visual inspection of the probability curves (Figure 4.4) revealed categories were not being used as intended. Additionally, thresholds were reported as -97, -1.18, .88 and 1.24 confirming the visual diagnosis of problematic category use indicating categories one (not as all like me) and two (unlabeled) were disordered as -1.18 logit threshold indicated for category two should occur before -.97 indicated for category one. This issue required a modification to the scale in an effort to communicate participants' levels of response. Such results supported collapsing categories in successive iterations.

Additionally, reported item functioning for the college sample was quite different than reported for the high school sample revealing lower item separation of 2.76, indicating a sufficient number of strata as defined by H of 4 (Wright & Masters, 2002) and good reliability of .88 (Fisher, 2007). One misfitting item was identified with infit MNSQ outside the specified .5 to 1.5 logits and outfit MNSQ above 1.9 both statistics corresponding Zstd was above the specified 2. Item #3 (*It is important to be a person who thinks historically (or likes a historian)*) was reported to have an infit MNSQ and Zstd of 1.91 and 3.2 respectively with outfit of 1.91 and 3.0. A second item, #11 (*Thinking historically (or like a historian) is an important part of who I am*) had an infit
MNSQ and Zstd of 1.80 and 2.9 respectively, however the outfit was within acceptable range with MNSQ of 1.86 and Zstd of 2.9.

Person measures were only slightly higher than those reported for items with separation and reliability of 3.19 and .91 respectively, indicating 4.59 strata (Wright &
Masters, 2002). There were three persons (39, 34, and 4) reported as misfitting, again using combined infit and out statistics to identify misfit among persons. Interestingly, an additional five persons were found to overfit the model with reported MSNQ below 0.5.

The PCA (Appendix K) revealed the Rasch dimension accounted for 78% of the variance. The 1st contrast accounted for 5.5% of the unexplained variance, and was the only contrast reported above the 5.0% cut-off suggested by Linacre (2006). Taken together with other results of the analyses, the PCAR results indicated the presence of a single dimension.

**Successive Iterations.** Several iterations were conducted each attempting to address the problematic rating scale use. From these iterations a final decision was made to collapse categories one (*Not at all like me*) and two (*unlabeled*), into a single category, leave category three on its own, and combine four (*unlabeled*) and five (*Very much like*)
me) into a single category effectively creating a three point scale representing options 1 (Not at all like me), 2 (unlabeled), and 3 (Very much like me). Combined with other modifications, including the deletion of four misfitting items, 3 (It is important to be a person who thinks historically (or likes a historian)), 11 (Thinking historically (or like a historian) is an important part of who I am), 2 (What we are learning this year can be applied to real life.) and 8 (American history helps me in my daily life outside of school.) this option (Figure 4.5) provided the best overall fit of the model to the data. No persons were deleted from this analysis.

It was noted this solution did not provide the best person or item estimates with person separation and reliability reported as 2.90 and .89 and item separation and reliability as 2.52 and .86, however, it was the only approach with acceptable probability
Figure 4.6

Wright Map: SIS (Rating scale 11233, 4 items deleted) College

Participants found it easy to agree with even the most difficult to agree items.

Item 16 (When we learn about American history, my teacher does things that grab my attention) most difficult for participants to agree.

Item 17 (I like American history) easiest for the participants to agree.

This person had difficulty agreeing with the “easiest”
curves and provided the best threshold estimates (-0.93, 1.86). Finally, it provided the best model fit meeting the specifications for unidimensionality. According to the PCAR the Rasch dimension accounted for 86.4% of the explained variance, with the first and second contrasts reported as 3.4% and 2.1% respectively.

Finally, the Wright Map (Figure 4.6) illustrated college students found it easier to answer items representing Individual Interest (e.g. item 12, American history is exciting to me) and more difficult to agree with items representing the notion of “Catch” (e.g. item 19, This year, my American history class is often entertaining). Additionally, for the most part as can be seen through the Wright Map, items representing Catch clustered together, while Individual Interest items were grouped and those representing Hold-Value and Hold-Feeling were together suggesting three possible sub-dimensions within the Rasch dimension defined earlier as Interest.

**Interest in Method Survey: High School Sample**

Analysis of the Interest in Method portion of the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished) progressed in much the same manner as the SIS (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) with quite different results. Unlike the SIS, the Interest in Method Survey was not supported as unidimensional through several of the indicators, in particular the Rasch Principal Components Analysis. Rather, the results of the analyses to be presented here, provided evidence that the measure was multi-dimensional.

The CPS³ rating scale was a four point scale referencing levels of interest in American history created by various methods used in the participants American history courses. Each response option was labeled and directions included a definition for each option where, 1 = Not at all (The activity does not help to make American history
interesting at all and would prefer not to do it); 2= *Doesn’t matter* (The activity neither helps to make American history interesting or not interesting, but don’t mind doing it);

3= *Somewhat* (The activity helps to make American history somewhat interesting, but it’s not that exciting.); 4= *Very much* (The activity helps to make American history interesting and you look forward to doing it.). Visual analysis of the rating scale (see Figure 4.7) indicated categories were not meeting the 0.5% probability threshold. Furthermore, thresholds did not have the suggested 1.4 logits (Bond & Fox, 2001; Linacre, 1999, 2006) between response options, reported as 0.88, 0.10, and 0.97; indicating failure of the response options to discriminate between participants’ responses (Linacre, 1999).

### Figure 4.7

**CPS Probability Curves (Rating scale 1234) High school**

Both person and item measures were within acceptable ranges with separation reported as 2.64 and reliability .83 for persons, and 5.53 separation and .97 reliability for
items. These results suggested the measure identified 3.85 strata for persons and 7.71 strata for persons (Wright & Masters, 2002). Rasch PCAR identified the potential of multidimensionality, as 46.3% of the variance was explained through the Rasch dimension, below the suggested 60% (Fisher, 2007; Smith, 2002). In addition, two subsequent dimensions were above the suggested 5%, reported as 10.5%, and 5.4%. Finally, item misfit was identified in one item, #6 (field trip) with reported infit MSNQ of 1.63 with a Zstd of 4.2, while outfit MSNQ was 1.73 and Zstd of 4.3. Person misfit was indicated in five people. Thus, the decision was made to revisit the measure, and attempt corrective actions as prescribed through the Rasch model.

In an effort to address the problems with the measure identified through the initial analyses, corrective analyses were performed. Subsequent iterations attempting to address the rating scale issues did not improve the overall picture for the measure. The analyses were repeated using modified scales that included recoding from the original 1234 scale to 1223, 1233, and finally 1123. It is important to note that each of attempts at collapsing may have improved one area, but negatively impacted others. For example, recoding to a three point scale represented as 1223 improved threshold measures, but visual analysis indicated a scale lacking distinction between categories. Additionally, using this correction, separation and reliability for both items and persons were reduced. Finally, for this example, results of the Rasch PCAR indicated variance explained by the Rasch Dimension was reduced further to 7.1%, with 62.9% of the remaining variance unexplained. Taken together, this indicated a potential problem with the measure. As result of the measure failing to meet the specification of unidimensionality of the measure, these data cannot be conceptualized as interval data. Thus, these results
necessitated a change in the data analysis plan and will be described in the following sections.

**Interest in Method Survey: College Sample**

**Initial Iteration.** Rasch analysis of the $CPS^3$ indicated the measure did not perform as a unidimensional measure of participants reported interest in American history as promoted through the various activities. Rating scale analysis of the rating scale probability curves indicated problematic use of the rating scale as represented through the distributions curves (see Figure 4.8) as option 2 did not extend to .5 (50%) probability suggesting the option was not used as expected. This suggested the response option failed to differentiate from other options. Inspection of the step-measures supported this finding, with reported thresholds of, -.99, -.21, and 1.20, illustrating a lack of acceptable distance between the options of less than the specified 1.4 logits, but each was still under 5.0 logts (Bond & Fox, 2001; Linacre, 2006).

Item separation and reliability were fair, 1.89 separation, reliability of .78 (Fisher, 2007), indicating the measure was able to differentiate to 2.85 strata (Wright & Masters, 2002), essentially meaning the measure has the ability to differentiate to nearly three distinct groups. Reported person separation and reliability measures slightly better and were 2.57 (3.57 strata) and .87 respectively. Item 17 (*Roleplay*) misfit (infit MNSQ, 1.77, ZSTD 3.2; outfit MNSQ 1.74, ZSTD, 3.2) and one item, 13 (*Quiz*), overfit (infit MNSQ, .48, ZSTD, -3.3; outfit MNSQ, .49, ZSTD, -3.2). Person fit results indicated that three people misfit and four over fit. Finally, the PCAR reported the Rasch dimension was poor, accounting for 42.6% variance, with additional dimensions accounting for 12.2%, 7.6%, 6.1% and 5.4%, each above the suggested 5% cut-off (Smith, 2002). Review of
these results supported collapsing the rating scale and searching for other problems with the measure.

Figure 4.8

CPS³ Probability Curves (Rating Scale 1234) College

Course Rankings

Research question one, *How do students rank their interest in American history compared to other core academic content areas?*, was addressed through survey item one, asking students to rank their interest in seven common academic content areas. High school responses are provided in Table 4.1 *Course Ranking: High School*. College responses are provided in Table 4.2 *Course Ranking: College*. Total responses vary for each method as several participants indicated more than one favorite (ranking multiple items as 1) and more than one least favorite (ranking multiple items as 7). Data in Table 4.1 is organized using the highest response to category one, “most like” to lowest response to category one.
Table 4.1

Course Ranking: High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>37 (26%)</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>22 (17%)</td>
<td>14 (12%)</td>
<td>10 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (10%)</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>23 (16%)</td>
<td>13 (11%)</td>
<td>27 (21%)</td>
<td>17 (14%)</td>
<td>14 (11%)</td>
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<td>15 (11%)</td>
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<td>24 (21%)</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
<td>17 (14%)</td>
<td>15 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>25 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>20 (14%)</td>
<td>13 (11%)</td>
<td>17 (13%)</td>
<td>14 (12%)</td>
<td>16 (13%)</td>
<td>21 (19%)</td>
<td>24 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>18 (13%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
<td>14 (11%)</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>20 (16%)</td>
<td>25 (22%)</td>
<td>20 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Language Arts</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
<td>22 (19%)</td>
<td>16 (12%)</td>
<td>22 (19%)</td>
<td>20 (16%)</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
<td>16 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>20 (15%)</td>
<td>17 (15%)</td>
<td>26 (21%)</td>
<td>19 (17%)</td>
<td>20 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
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<td>117</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>135</td>
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</table>

Table 4.2

Course Ranking: College

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>14 (33%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>11 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>11 (25%)</td>
<td>12 (28%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>12 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>10 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (23%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>ELA</td>
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<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>13 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% may add to more than 100% due to rounding
Frequency of Activity: High School

High school and college participant responses to their perceived frequency of methods used in the classroom are presented in Table 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. Survey item two addressed research question two, *How frequently (daily, weekly, monthly, once a term, never) do students report the use of different instructional methods (i.e., collaborative work, projects, guest speakers)?* Responses are listed according to means, with higher means representing higher perceived frequency and lower means representing lower perceived frequency.

In addition to the methods reported above, participants had the opportunity to respond to an *Other* category with a write-in the option. Of participants choosing this option, nine wrote-in *story*, five identified *news*, two wrote-in *comedy* or *bad-jokes*, and *teacher dress-up, extra-credit activities, or teaching the class something we learned* was added by one participant each.

Means are reported in Table 4.5 for both college and high school samples to provide a side by side comparison between the two samples. Both samples rated the same four methods, in slightly different order, as occurring most frequently. While reporting the same six methods in the same order as occurring least often.

Multiple Regression Method Interest

Prior to conducting data analysis, variables were screened for data coding errors, missing values, outliers and violations of assumptions using SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL). Missing values were indicated in response to one item (notes, 13% of the cases) and were replaced using SPSS replace missing values algorithm. Identification of outliers
Table 4.3
Perceived Frequency of Activities: High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Label</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Activity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
<td>18 (14%)</td>
<td>95 (75%)</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>26 (20%)</td>
<td>91 (71%)</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>72 (65%)</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading text</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>12 (10%)</td>
<td>78 (62%)</td>
<td>26 (21%)</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>21 (17%)</td>
<td>101 (80%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>59 (46%)</td>
<td>67 (52%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets</td>
<td>15 (12%)</td>
<td>9 (7%)</td>
<td>23 (18%)</td>
<td>68 (53%)</td>
<td>13 (10%)</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>13 (10%)</td>
<td>65 (51%)</td>
<td>46 (36%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>9 (7%)</td>
<td>20 (16%)</td>
<td>33 (26%)</td>
<td>52 (42%)</td>
<td>11 (9%)</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions from text</td>
<td>26 (21%)</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>20 (16%)</td>
<td>55 (44%)</td>
<td>19 (15%)</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>28 (22%)</td>
<td>15 (12%)</td>
<td>26 (21%)</td>
<td>31 (25%)</td>
<td>25 (20%)</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>17 (13%)</td>
<td>34 (27%)</td>
<td>40 (32%)</td>
<td>32 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary documents</td>
<td>26 (21%)</td>
<td>33 (27%)</td>
<td>39 (32%)</td>
<td>22 (18%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent research</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>71 (56%)</td>
<td>48 (38%)</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
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<td>Art</td>
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<td>11 (9%)</td>
<td>13 (11%)</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
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<td>Computer</td>
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<td>9 (7%)</td>
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<td>0.88</td>
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<td>11 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<td>10 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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</table>
Table 4.4
Perceived frequency of activities: College

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<th>Category Label</th>
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<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>Classroom Activity</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>35 (80%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>34 (90%)</td>
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<td>4 (10%)</td>
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<td>18 (46%)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5 Questions from text</td>
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<td>8 (21%)</td>
<td>17 (44%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
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<td>4 (10%)</td>
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<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
<td>18 (46%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
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<td>7 (18%)</td>
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<td>5 (13%)</td>
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<td>14 (36%)</td>
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<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
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<td>1 (3%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 (13%)</td>
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<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
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<td>8 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Field Trip</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0.23</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5

Means: Frequency of Activities

<table>
<thead>
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<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>COLLEGE</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Classroom Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Lecture</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1 Lecture</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Discussion</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2 Note taking</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Note taking</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3 Reading text</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Reading text</td>
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<td>4 Discussion</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Quiz</td>
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<td>5 Questions from text</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tests</td>
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<td>6 Tests</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Worksheets</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Video</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>8 Quiz</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Cooperative learning</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>10 Cooperative learning</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Questions from text</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>9 Debate</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
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<td>11 Debate</td>
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</tr>
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<td>17 Guest speaker</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
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<td>18 Reading of choice</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
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<td>19 Role playing</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Field Trip</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>20 Field Trip</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to conducting data analysis, variables were screened for data coding errors, missing values, outliers and violations of assumptions using SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL). Missing values were indicated in response to one item (notes, 13% of the cases) and were replaced using SPSS replace missing values algorithm. Identification of outliers using results from SPSS for both Mahalanobis Distance and the Casewise Diagnostics with scatter plot indicated the existence of twelve cases of outliers. These cases were reviewed in the data set and, while qualitatively different (i.e., one case was all 1’s,
another mostly 1’s and 4’s) the decision was made to maintain the data set intact for
analysis. This is in keeping with the advice of Meyers, Gamst and Guarino (2006), that,
while such outliers are usually removed, they are not always. The fundamental question
you should ask yourself is, „Does this outlier represent my sample?“ If „yes,“ then you
should include it” (p. 66). Additionally, in an effort to preserve the phenomenological
approach as the guiding research principle for this study, I felt it important to avoid
making subjective judgments’ of person’s responses to survey items. Due to extreme
skewness (2.026 ) and kurtosis (7.918), the criterion variable, interest as defined through
Rasch (1960, 1980) person measure was transformed using base-10 logarithm in SPSS.
Finally, one predictor variable (discussion), with extreme skewness, and one (roleplay)
with extreme kurtosis, was transformed using the same approach.

**High School.** The analysis plan was modified after the interest in *activity*
measure, item 4 on the *CPS³*, failed to conform to Rasch (1960, 1980) specifications of
unidimensionality as reported through the WINSTEPS Rasch Principal Components
Analysis of Residuals (Linacre, 1998b, 2007;). It had been planned to examine potential
correlations using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient calculations to
determine the strength and direction of relationships between interest (personal and
situational) and interest in instructional methods. However, since the data could not be
considered as interval data, a multiple regression was performed using the Rasch person
measures as reported in WINSTEPS as the criterion variable and classroom activities as
the predictor variables.

Results of the multiple regression for the high school sample indicated the
nineteen methods entered in six blocks were statistically significant predictors of interest
in American history. The first block including lecture, debate and video, accounted for 32.4% of the variance in the criterion variable accounted for by the model. The overall model accounted for 89.4% of the variance in the criterion variable, interest, \( R^2 = .894, \) adjusted \( R^2 = .851, F=(19,66) = 20.80, p, < .001 \). Appendix L.1 and L.2 reports the results for each of the six models entered for this analysis. This final group included the variables: guest speaker; artistic expression; discussion; field trip; debate; cooperative learning; computer simulations; role play; video; lecture; reading of choice; independent research; mapping; primary documents; worksheets; reading the text; notes; questions from the text; and tests.

**Method Interest: College**

In addition to the failure to meet the specification of unidimensionality as prescribed under the Rasch model (1960, 1980), the college sample had less than 100 participants. According to Hinkle, et al., (2003), “for studies with small n and numerous predictors, the multiple R may be spuriously large” (p. 473) thus should not be used. For this study, there were a possibility of 20 items and the sample size was 44 participants to begin analysis, removal of persons resulted in 32 possible participants, not meeting the specified 20 cases per predictor (Meyers, Gamst and Guarino, 2006. P. 165). Consequently, it was not possible to analyze these data using quantitative statistical procedures.

**Qualitative Results**

The overarching question addressed through this study was: *How do individuals with different levels of education and knowledge describe their interest in American History?* Taking a phenomenological approach to address this issue and related research
questions: 6a. How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate, professional) describe their interest in American history?; and 6b. “How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the origin and evolution of their interest in American history?” required prompts that were sufficiently broad to allow participants to relate their meaning of their experience. Responses were collected using both short answers prompts and interview.

Short answer survey item 2. Considering your favorite from the list in question 1 (Art, Computer, English/Language Arts, History, Math, Physical Education, Science, Other) explain why it is your favorite, addressed individual’s interest in American history. Responses to this prompt are provided in Table 4.6 for the high school sample, and Table 4.7 for the college sample. A total of 19 high school students and 9 college students responded that American history was their favorite subject and provided a short answer response to support this choice. One high school participant reporting American history as the favorite subject did not provide a short answer response. More exemplars are presented than participants responding to this item as some participants provided multi-part answers. Combined with the interview prompt one (to be discussed later) Tell me about your interest in American history, the responses addressed research questions 6 and 6a.

Survey item 3 of the CPS was a short answer item asking high school and college participants –Considering your least favorite from the list in question one, explain why it is your least favorite”. This item was included to investigate reasons students did not like multi-part answers. Combined with the interview prompt one (to be discussed later) Tell
Table 4.6

Reason American History Rated as Favorite Class: High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know past to understand present/future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand: societal view (n=5)</td>
<td>... learning about stuff in the past and how it has effected America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... we're a part of history. It's about us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... it teaches us about the past which makes us know who we are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... comparing history to the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... to know what we have come from and where we are going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand: personal view (n=3)</td>
<td>... by learning history that you gain a better grasp of your own present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... it shows me how to deal with future situations and it allows me to not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... repeat some else's mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... I could use what i learned in class to help me understand allusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... made in everyday life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (n=6)</td>
<td>... my teachers were very knowledgeable about what they taught: they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... didn't just teach from the textbook, and they liked what they taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is the most interesting subject that is never boring if you have the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... right teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... it is good to know the truth about our past instead of the untruth we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... may have learned before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... teacher making learning history fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... had great teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... had very good History teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (n=2)</td>
<td>... raised with people interested in history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... interesting to learn about historical events that our ancestors and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... others were a part of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect/Enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=5)</td>
<td>... I love learning things about the past and it's fun...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... fascinated by historical facts and events (especially wars).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... our past and other cultures past are fascinating to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... enjoy learning about history (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... enjoy learning about our country's past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories (n=3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... an interest in stories and events that have happened in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... it's the story of the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... learned about the stories and people that made the world what it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excel (n=1)</td>
<td>I excel in it too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy (n=1)</td>
<td>... most interesting topic and there is nothing complex about it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7

Reason American History Rated as Favorite Class: College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know past to understand present/future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand: societal &amp; personal  (n=2)</td>
<td>Knowing and understanding history is required to know and understand the present. History is the result of a dialectical and material process which we, today, can use to better understand the political, economic, and social realities which surround us. On top of that, real historians have an important job; we have to rid ourselves of the indoctrination and propaganda which passes for historical works and bring truth to light. It is our job to expose the past for what it is and use it to help direct and guide ourselves and our world for a brighter, progressive future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...history is unique in the fact that we use it in many aspects of our life. History dictates what policies, decisions, and actions are undertaken every day. I also love history because it is one of the few subjects that allows you to know more about your culture, nationality, and past. History involves critical analysis and not just facts. That is why I like history the most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...progression of the human race as a whole and of the United States as a particular State. ...learning where we have been and seeing where we are going. ...understanding how the world works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...learning where we have been and seeing where we are going...intrigues me to see how my parents, grandparents and even farther down my family tree at one point lived, and survived through hard times and times that have based us for who we are today. ...important that as an individual I know and understand how/why we as a country and world are where we are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time period</td>
<td>...always loved History, with particular concentrations of time spent on Ancient Egypt (2nd Dyn.), and American History, Civil War. History is quite alive and dynamic to me. It is like a literature course on the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>...fascinated by it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

me about your interest in American history, the responses addressed research questions 6 and 6a. Survey item 3 of the CPS³ was a short answer item asking high school and college
Considering your least favorite from the list in question one, explain why it is your least favorite”. This item was included to investigate reasons students did not like American History.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason American History Ranked as Least Liked of Academic Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring; *It's so boring; It's very boring; History is very boring; It is easy, but really boring; It's annoying, boring and gives me a headache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring, can't hold attention (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, it's boring!! It doesn't grab my attention; Because it is so boring that I can't pay attention; There's only certain topics that grab my attention; It's hard paying attention &amp; I don't like what we are learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring, qualified (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History is boring. It's all about wars. Teachers talk about what they should have done differently, but we cannot change the past!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History is one of my least favorites because you can't get into history. In my opinion it's a boring subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like memorizing dates &amp; facts &amp; I find it boring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not exciting or interesting (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...they are not exciting at all; History, it's not very interesting to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American history has always been my least favorite subject because unlike most people, I don't find it very fun. Also, I struggle the most in this class because it I'm not very interested in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorization (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*I don't want to take time to memorize dates and people and places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History has always been about facts and dates, it's hard for me to remember dates and names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, methods &amp; other factors (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate my teacher; *Teachers I was given did not really care for subject area or were more relaxed because the &quot;unintelligent&quot; or the students who did not apply themselves, were in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History b/c it's in the past teacher doesn't try to do anything to make it interesting, easy to fall asleep in . Last class of the day, always bookwork, activities, my friends aren't in the class, hard to stay focused/remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My least favorite happened to be history. I feel that I should be more interested in history because it would be respectful of that history figures who made history but no matter how hard I try, I just can't direct my interest in History. I loved History in Middle school and the history teacher I had was my favorite teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never really go into for some reason. It was just a bunch of reading and I could never picture it in my mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like history because all you’re doing is looking in the past and I always look toward the future.; History is my least favorite because we really don't talk a lot about the culture of the time periods just events that happen during them.: Because its history, I really don't need to know it because its history.; History, it goes on forever.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*College participant answers (n=3)
a particular academic discipline, ranking the discipline as 7 on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being most liked and 7 least liked. Additionally, results were used to create questions for interview. Results are listed according to common themes and listed in Table 4.8.

Items, 6, “What do you **like most** about American history?” and 7, “What do you **like least** about American history?” of the CPS were intended to specifically examine what high school and college participants state they like and do not like about American history. While the focus of this study is to investigate the meaning of interest, it was considered important to also consider the opposing view. Responses were used to address research question 6, *How do participants describe their interest in American history?*, and inform the development of the interview schedule. Results to are grouped according to common themes and provided in Table 4.9 What high school participants like most about American History and 4.10, What college participants like most about American History. Responses to what participants liked least about American history are presented in Table 4.11 for high school and 4.12 for college.

Interview responses were grouped according to common theme. Themes included **significant others, place, story and storytelling, patriotism, and valuing knowledge.** Each theme had additional sub-themes. The theme **significant other** predominately refers to one sub-theme, family. Family members described included parents, grandparents,
Table 4.9

What high school participants like most about American History.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic (n=35)</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Wars</td>
<td>WWI, WWII; Civil War; Korean, Vietnam, and other things related to the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Holocaust</td>
<td>What happened back then, my fav is the holocaust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People/Presidents</td>
<td>having a chance to learn about great historical figures; interesting, funny facts about important people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Colonial/revolution</td>
<td>the old colonial days (you know Pilgrims &amp; stuff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pearl Harbor</td>
<td>other huge events like Pearl Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>civil rights; Great Depression; inventions; minority oppression; specific parts of history; some things are fun to learn about; Watergate; witch trials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method (n=28)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Debating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fun activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Video/movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Primary documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance (n=28)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Personal relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Past to now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How we got here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cause &amp; effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Generic: Past, history (n=21)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Learn about past</td>
<td>Learning about past events; fascinating to learn about our past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>It's all about America and we learn stuff we might not know about America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Important things</td>
<td>Learning history of important things. If it's boring I can't focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Something new</td>
<td>Learning something new and something that has happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Great things</td>
<td>Many great things that have happened; some things that have happened to nations;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher (n=17)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Intensely devoted so it makes me want to learn; taught in exciting ways; makes it fun, stresses how we should not take it for granted; Normally I don't like American history, but this year my teachers style of teaching keeps me wanting to learn more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>He gives us maps and we have to color code them; He has all kinds of stories about every topic we discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jokes</td>
<td>Way that my teacher teaches. He's very funny and makes awesome jokes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nation's Birth (n=12)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>How our country came to be; country's background; ground upon which our country was formed; starting of the US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Truth (n=9)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lies &amp; misconceptions</td>
<td>Being told THE TRUTH (since most textbooks cover facts with fiction half the time); finding out the truth about events I had previous misconceptions on; the truth everybody doesn't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stuff others don't know</td>
<td>Facts I didn't know about history that aren't widely known, so I feel informed; We learn stuff we might not know about America; Personal stories of historical people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nothing (n=7)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>It's too much work &amp; I'm lazy. I'm serious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>But does like…</td>
<td>I like quirky + misc facts and stories that my teacher shared with us that the textbook did not. I mostly liked my Amer. History teacher rather that the subject itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>7th period ends and I get to go back home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10

What college participants like most about American History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (n=x)</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic (n=20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Time period</td>
<td>1950s, 20th Century American, Gilded Age, colonial time area, early American, post WWII,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>War</td>
<td>detailed battles; World Wars; Tactics, strategies, time period, the people involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>all the different cultures that came to America and how they were treated; developed over time in American culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>the Presidents, especially JFK assassination,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Slavery</td>
<td>slavery and its abolition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>how words have been invented; Watergate scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance/Heritage (n=11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>effected everyone’s past. It is a part of us; It's true. It's our history and that makes it interesting; our past and how our country came to be how it is today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>relevance to my own life; find out about my history; it is a part of who I am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellany (n=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (n=x)</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>Everything; details of it; our culture in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Easy; understand it well and easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Class environment</td>
<td>easy going atmosphere of the classroom. It makes it easier to learn and more enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>History repeats</td>
<td>understanding how history repeats itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>makes me more patriotic knowing what we went through to get here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress, change (n= 13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Change</td>
<td>How different people have been, and how much society has changed; American history is not just &quot;linear&quot; but always changing. There have been a variety of periods in American history, each of which was defined by a different vision or line of thought.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Progress</td>
<td>progression of our country as a whole and as individual cultures/groups of people; where we came from as a country and how we've progressed over the years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 People</td>
<td>Learning about people in need, and how to help them; how people made it without what we have today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>It's uniqueness from the rest of the world. There is no other cultural or national history like that of the United States; What we have achieved in such a small amount of time for a country in comparison to the rest of the country's of the world.; how our country became what it is today as well as what has yet to be accomplished in our country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Societal Pride</td>
<td>It's true. It's our history and that makes it interesting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Personal Pride</td>
<td>It expresses my love for the country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle (n=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Struggle</td>
<td>how life was different for people throughout different time periods. The struggles that they faced on a daily basis; struggles that people faced throughout the history of this nation (and the world) are immense. The native genocide, the labor battles, the civil rights movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method (n=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Discussion/ debate</td>
<td>discussion; discussing politics and debating the merits of issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (n=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nothing</td>
<td>I do not like American History. It makes me feel less proud every time I read it; I don't like anything about American History.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know (n=1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Don't know</td>
<td>I'm not quite sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Participants did not write in a response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.11
What High School participants like least about American history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (n=)</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorization (N=31)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Dates</td>
<td>so much pressure is put on dates; don't understand how knowing an exact date will make me enjoy history or understand it any better; mesmerizing dates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 People</td>
<td>All the people's names, who they were, and what they did confuses me; matching people and certain events with different time frames.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Confusing</td>
<td>I get them confused sometimes; it's hard to keep it all straight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Too much content</td>
<td>how much information there is; too much information can be boring; it's hard and they you really need to pay attention to it to get all the information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Facts, definitions</td>
<td>boring details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic (N=30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Some periods not that interesting</td>
<td>beginning of history; revolution; late 1800's early 1900s; the 70's; before WW1: reconstruction; American Indians; Industrialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Wars</td>
<td>bloodshed &amp; idiots causing it; can't remember their names; technical aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Government</td>
<td>Politics; Congress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Foreign affairs,</td>
<td>I don't like to learn about other countries: Irrelevant details and their foreign policies; Nixon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Presidents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Negative history</td>
<td>our darkest times. Example: The Gilded Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Other social studies</td>
<td>business; economic type stuff; do not study geography but should</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method (N=29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Textbook use</td>
<td>Textbooks; I don't understand or soak in reading well; I really dislike the history textbooks that are currently offered. They are so bland it is extremely hard for me to read them and I think it is one of the reasons many people dislike history.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Lecture</td>
<td>Lecture; I don't like plain facts in the lecture; I like a little bit of pep or humor in the lectures to keep me paying attention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Written work</td>
<td>general bookwork, though it does help with learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research papers; Probably research papers, they're just too time consuming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/quiz; Test, quizzes and guided reading = RETARDED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher (**N=5**)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality conflicts/authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. X; monotonous, boring, they don't know how to pump it up; much of the teaching is biased; hate when teachers won't let voice or argue your opinion or force you to vote this way because they don't support the other side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long lectures; when teachers tell us to read from the book without teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Repetitive (**N=4**)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum repeats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always start during the Revolutionary War and never get past WWII. It seems like we learn the same things over and over; very much the same year after year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time on a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about the same thing for a week or two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuff we already knew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irrelevant (**N=5**)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never use, future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The information that I'll never use; things that I don't need to know for my future career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long lesson that are so pointless and have no impact on me; We do not learn that much about culture or important events that have happened currently or even within the last 15 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't change history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That we can't change the past, why learn about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other students (**N=3**)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The kids in my class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes it can get boring, especially when we're being apathetic. Students that don't participate, or care, make it hard for me to stay interested; I don't like how people can bring a whole class down because they are not interested.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellany (**N=8**)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forced to learn things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is not real fun way to teach some certain topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How bad we once were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuzzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That its fuzzy at times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 participants checked item, but did not provide a short answer response
### Table 4.12

What College participants like least about American history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (n=x)</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memorization (n=16)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>date memorization; focus on the important dates; it's more important to have a general timeline/timeframe of when things happened. Exact dates don't really matter to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Names/People</td>
<td>Memorizing dates and people; names of generals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>Memorizing mundane facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers (n=6)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Way it is taught</td>
<td>the way in which it is often taught. Many teachers just teach the facts...lack of interconnection between topics...the way it is written and presented, with the indoctrination of patriotism, nationalism, etc. which automatically infuses itself with it...absence of a normal, working-class and poor perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lacking passion</td>
<td>Many teachers just teach the facts and fail to make the subject interesting; ahistorical and often antimaterial view which teachers presented; unpassionate teachers. Teachers should at least seem excited and quite knowledgeable about what they teach, in any subject. Teachers cannot genuinely motivate their students without being interested themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic (n=6)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Topic/ Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Some of the topics are dry and boring.;&quot;Current history&quot; events; explorers of North America; modern war; Puritan and colonial times; nothing about sexual history is discussed in any grade level when discussing historical contexts and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bias (n=5)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>It's uniqueness from the rest of the world. There is no other cultural or national history like that of the United States; What we have achieved in such a small amount of time for a country in comparison to the rest of the country's of the world.; how our country became what it is today as well as what has yet to be accomplished in our country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pride (societal level)</td>
<td>It's true. It's our history and that makes it interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pride (personal level)</td>
<td>It expresses my love for the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method (n=6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lecture</td>
<td>Lecture; long lectures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Text</td>
<td>relying on the textbook to get facts and to study from.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Video</td>
<td>the boring films about history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Research papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boring (n=4)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Too much</td>
<td>I've had so much of it in high school, that it is boring to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Past</td>
<td>It is really boring to me, it's in the past and it's done with. That is just how I feel about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everything (n=3)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Everything</td>
<td>everything hahahaha; I dislike everything about American History.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Qualified</td>
<td>Everything. We were (still are) arrogant people who stole without regard and killed without regard. The founding fathers were all hypocrites who spoke eloquently. But did not follow their own words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nothing (n=1)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is nothing really specific that I don’t like.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance (n=2)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In high school it was not up-to-date with the war on terror. Our teachers were hesitant to teach us about the subject through freshmen year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview responses

Interview responses were grouped according to common theme. Themes included significant others, place, story and storytelling, patriotism, and valuing knowledge. Each theme had additional sub-themes. The theme significant other predominately refers to one sub-theme, family. Family members described included parents, grandparents, siblings, or other blood relative. Additional subthemes included, teachers and others such as mentors and care-takers. Place as a theme indicates participant reference to a particular location described as important to the development of their interest. For the most part, this theme refers to places the participants have actually visited.

However, it also included historical locations mentioned as important, but not actually visited by the participant (i.e. Plymouth, Virginia). Stories included reference to events that were described as both fictional and non-fictional by the participant, and thus were identified by these sub-themes. In keeping with phenomenological approach of the study, decisions regarding whether the story was factual or not, was determined according to the participant’s words. Fiction and non-fiction subthemes were further broken down according to origin of the story, including, teacher, family, and other. Patriotism contains two subthemes, citizenship and heroism, and refers to participant descriptions of pride in America, being American, the American experience and such references as important to the development of interest in American history. The final two themes, valuing knowledge and humanity were mentioned by the least participants, and did not include subthemes. Responses are provided in Table 4.13.
Table 4.13 Common themes with exemplars: Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/ sub-themes</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant other</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>Person(s) influencing the development of interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>SO(f)</td>
<td>Any relative, in this study parents, grandparents and male relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar</em> I always liked history. I think I’ve always liked history and I think it’s more than anything from my Dad. My Dad was a big history buff I grew up on his World War stories...</td>
<td>A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar</em> My grandmother. Because she would tell stories about, her grandparents and, how everybody came to be in this country and ...our origins. It was always very fascinating to find out about..., these people, even though we see them in books and even for the people that were never famous</td>
<td>C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar</em> I can’t point to one person. But that would be too easy. ... certainly my parents were...</td>
<td>A4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>SO(t)</td>
<td>Teacher, professor or instructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar</em> My, .....eleventh grade American History teacher. probably instilled in me the conviction that story telling was the way to teach American History. He always held me kind of spellbound with his stories.</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar</em> I’d have to say my fifth grade teacher. ...she didn’t sugar coat it. She gave it to us point blank....So, it was like she wanted our opinion and then she took those opinions and she used it for the next chapter ...and that’s what I like about it because a lot of times my opinion was heard.</td>
<td>HS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>SO(o)</td>
<td>Non-family member or teacher, such as a mentor or care-taker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar: mentor</em> I had some of the finest mentors in the state... I was exposed to the leaders in the local historical societies, at the county levels, I was introduced to the leadership of the state level to the people who were the movers and shakers.</td>
<td>A4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>exemplar: care-taker</em> ...so she didn’t have any kids to babysit, so she went and got a job [at a historical site]... and it was cool to do stuff like that, cause, you know, not only were you working with “Grandma”, but you were also in a historical place, a historical setting. And when...I turned fifteen, I started volunteering more often</td>
<td>HS3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemplar: historical figure</td>
<td>The Founding Fathers. That’s quite, really a generic answer, but probably Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin…. they really helped develop that and also how they influenced … obviously like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and they were really, I think the founders, or the ground layers of how we run things today.</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Both personal experience (visit) and not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemplar: place visited</td>
<td>…like one time we were at Manassas…we’ve been to Gettysburg, but being able to visualize things really makes it come alive for me.. in history class which is why I really think I enjoy history so much</td>
<td>HS2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemplar: place not</td>
<td>… when I was younger I would watch movies, with more historical context like the Alamo or the Battle of the Bulge and that got me quite interested in it.</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Account of an event, factual or fictional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>S(nf)</td>
<td>Accounts that are based in fact, have evidence as support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>S(nfh)</td>
<td>Historically factual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemplar</td>
<td>He [was] a sergeant in the Civil War. Oh, Bedford Forest…and he was actually in the movie Forest Gump, they say he was related to him. But, anyway… he accidentally…went across the Confederate lines as a Union sergeant, or something. And then he got shot, or something, and he was still on his horse and he grabbed another guy from the Confederate Army and put him on the back of his horse and they all shot that guy and he [Forest] escaped or something crazy. I don’t have the exact story. Something like that I like.</td>
<td>HS1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>S(nffh)</td>
<td>Events based on factual familial history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemplar</td>
<td>…my great-grandmother is still alive, she’s ninety-four now and so I get the hear her talk about what it was like when she was growing up and how difficult it was like for her to watch her brothers volunteer for the wars or to live through the Depression first hand. There’s a story that really always stuck out in my mind. She said she was …in charge of milking the cows. And so to milk the cows you had to cross a little creek, and there was a fallen, tree that had made a little bridge that she used to get over [the creek]. One day she was going over and she slipped off the log and she was carrying a milk pail.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and she said she fell in the water. But somehow she managed to not spill the milk and how important that was because if you didn’t have milk for the day, you couldn’t do your baking and you wouldn’t have it to drink with your supper. So it’s something to think about that you don’t really get from a history book but something that makes history more personal.

Fiction S(f) Accounts that are not factual, or considered to be fabrications

Teacher stories S(fts) Stories for the purpose of making a connection or a point in classroom

...our teacher we had this year told a lot of stories, a lot of personal experiences and if not he made them up. But this one thing was about...industrialization of America...and he made up this story about how he was coming to work ...and he [voices changes to mimic teacher] “looked out on the fall cornfield and the field was half harvested and there, a combine stood in the field, not moving yet because was still dawn. But as I looked out there, a tear came to my eye as I realized that people are not working as hard as they used to, but I know it is for the better because we are getting more food.” [voice changes back] [I]t was just about industrialization how we went from hand planting to horse plowing planters and now we have combines, and things that can do things thousands of times faster than ... we used to...when you can visualize, it’s so much better it’s so much more interesting when you can apply it to ... something that you’ve seen you’re like “Oh yeah, I remember that one time” ya know?

Generational tales S(g) Fictional stories passed on through families for the purpose of maintaining family identity

...add to that my family’s history, and I suppose that kind of triggered it [interest] too. [T]here were supposedly connections back in my family to revolutionary war times. ...my mom belonged to a family that had the last name "X". And there was folklore in that family that they were the defendants of the people who owned [land] which was [important to the] Boston Tea Party... it’s never been firmly established... but it was just fun to think that might be a connection ... I’ve always had that intrigue.... and then the other part my mom's family [reference to signer] of the Declaration of Independence and he was reputed to be an ancestor too. So, but they liked to recount and regale us with... stories from the past.

Patriotism P Demonstrating a sense of National pride.

Citizenship PC Reference to "being American"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heroism</th>
<th>Reference to American heroism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>just because it’s the Constitution and it’s about when our laws and really the infrastructure of the United States and….I guess one of my favorite things in history is how we got here and why we got there and how….different…situations and different scenarios….went to…development in laws or influenced people, leaders…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference to American heroism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... the whole hero worship of some of the people. ... I guess it’s just like the spirit of America ...being all strong and courageous and being able to fight for what is right and, you know. I like that a lot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanity</th>
<th>Reference to the human condition, common experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know I just think that that’s how humans are, if we don’t know if we can’t connect anything, ... it’s just in one ear and out the other or shoved in the back of the brain, and if you can connect it then you’ll remember and you’re like “Oh, yeah”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Knowledge</th>
<th>History as important to being considered knowledgeable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>..someone that knows a lot about history really shows how much they know, I think, the amount of knowledge they have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think we just like to be quite knowledgeable about things….that carries over through history and other subjects too…I think we find it exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...they were so knowledgeable to ongoing things and they could just tie it in…and it was the first time I started to see, the more you know about some things, the more you are able to understand current things…. that…convinced me that there’s a lot of things I could learn from a class to make me a smarter person today… [T]hey sounded so intelligent, they would talk about economic issues or what was going on in the news, when all I could say was “she’s pretty” or “He’s weird”, or whatever, typical kids comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five

Discussion

Interest is an enigmatic, yet important component of teaching and learning. In regards to history, interest seems to be elusive, as the content has often been described as boring and irrelevant (Loewen, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998). When I first embarked on this research, these perceptions were reinforced by many adults I came in contact with; there was much dismay at the thought that someone could be interested in American history. Contrary to such perceptions and descriptions, I have had many encounters with people who do have an interest in American history. Thus, my study attempted to examine the meaning of experiencing such an interest.

In view of this, I began by investigating high school and college students' perceptions of and experience with American history, gathering survey data in an effort to begin to understand these participants' interactions with American history in an academic context. These data began to illustrate how such an interest might be expressed by individuals with an interest in American history and were used to inform the interview protocol. Using the interview protocol, I began the process of discussing and documenting the meaning of experiencing interest in American history with high school, college and adult participants who indicated they had such an interest. Using a predominately phenomenological approach, I made every effort to maintain the meaning of their experience.
The current discussion will review the method presented in Chapter Three and results of the research presented in Chapter Four. In an effort to discuss the multifaceted nature of interest and the data collected, I will use a sequential approach, discussing quantitative and then qualitative results in an effort to present the many-sidedness of participants’ experiences as represented through these data. An important and appropriate beginning to the overall discussion of the findings is the description of the impact of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses of the Situational Interest Measure (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., in press) and Class Perceptions of Social Studies Survey (CPS$^3$) (Stewart, unpublished) on subsequent analysis decisions.

This discussion of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses and results will focus primarily on the effect on subsequent analysis decisions. Research questions are used as a guide for the chapter. Thus, results of the analyses of the CPS$^3$ (Stewart, unpublished) and the SIS (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., in press) are described, with qualitative data infused into the discussion when relevant, to address each research question, and more importantly, to address the primary question of this research, *How do individuals with different levels of education and knowledge describe their interest in American History?*

Adhering to the phenomenological nature of the study, commonalities of experience among the three samples, high school, college and adult, are described when appropriate to discuss the meaning of experiencing interest in American History.

**Method Overview**

The overarching research question addressed through my study was: *How do individuals across different abilities and levels of education describe their interest in American History?* This question was informed through the following research questions,
which were adapted from the original research questions (see Chapter One) over the
course of this research:

1. How do students rank their interest in American history compared to other core
academic content areas?

2. How frequently (daily, weekly, monthly, once a term, never) do students report
the use of different instructional methods (i.e., collaborative work, projects, guest
speakers)?

3. Is there a significant relationship between interest in American history and
interest in instructional method used in the classroom?

4. How do participants describe their interest in American history?
   a. How do individuals at different levels (high school, undergraduate,
      professional) describe their interest in American history?
   b. How do individuals majoring in history and professionals describe the
      origin and evolution of their interest in American history?

To best address the multiple levels represented through the research questions, this study
used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Guttman &
Hanson, 2003; Creswell, 2005) situated in phenomenology to investigate the meaning of
experiencing interest in American history.

Using mixed methods approaches in research have been described as
complementary (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Poggenpoel, Myburgh, & van der
Linde, 2001) allowing for more thorough and balanced representation of the construct
under investigation as a result of the multiple types of data collected. Such an approach
allowed for triangulation in an effort to address threats to validity (Glesne, 2006; Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) inherent to all research.

During the first phase of the study, quantitative data were collected from two samples, high school and college students, via two surveys. The Situational Interest Survey (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., in press) was administered in an effort to examine participants‘ situational and individual interest in American history. While the focus of the Class Perceptions of Social Studies Survey (CPS$^3$) (Stewart, unpublished) was participants‘ perceptions of their classroom interaction with American history and utilized both quantitative elements, through rating and frequency scales, and qualitative elements, multiple short answer responses. The surveys were administered simultaneously.

The second stage of the study was qualitative in nature using interview as a data collection tool. Participants identified as having an interest in American history across three samples, high school, college, and adult, were asked to discuss their interest. Interviews prompts were developed as a result of quantitative analysis of participant responses to the two surveys. A semi-structured interview approach (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006) was employed, allowing additional interview questions to emerge in response to participants re-telling of the meaning of their experience of interest in American history.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected using Alexander's (1997, 2003) Model of Domain Learning (MDL) as a guide. Individuals belonged to one of three populations:
high school students ($N=130$, female $n=54$, male $n=72$, not reported $n=4$) representing acclimation (Alexander, 2003, p. 11); college students ($N=44$, female $n=28$, male $n=13$, not reported $n=3$) representing competence; and adults, ($N=4$, female $n=1$ male $n=3$), representing the proficiency/expertise (p. 12) stage.

High school students were recruited during the spring of 2008 through their high school American History courses from one rural public high school ($n=56$) and one urban parochial school ($n=74$) located in the Midwest. College students were recruited through two mid-sized universities also located in the Midwest, via an email invitation sent through a College level list-serve or their course instructor. The four adult participants (female $n=1$, male $n=3$) were recommended as individuals with an intense interest in American history. Each adult had professional experience which required an in-depth knowledge and understanding of American history. These experiences included teaching American history at the middle school, high school and college level.

Analyses

Epoche

Previous to commencing this study, as an individual interested in history I reflected on my experiences and potential biases in an effort to consider my preconceived notions of the origins of my interest in history and this study, and the way such notions might affect my research. Bracketing my subjectivity was important as a pre-analysis of potential thoughts and biases surrounding the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). My approach to reflection included both the origin and development of my interest first in history, and more specifically with American history (Appendix A).
Quantitative Analyses

A series of Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses using WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2006) were performed to investigate dimensionality, rating scale and item functioning of the SIS (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) and the interest in method measure included in the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished). CPS³ items included in this analysis were items addressing Method interest (Which activities did you most enjoy?). The polytomous rating scale model, also called the Andrich Rating Scale Model (Linacre, 2006) as applied through WINSTEPS was the Rasch model applied in the analysis of both surveys.

Subsequent to the Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses, SPSS (SPSS, Inc., Chicago IL) was used to analyze survey data collected through the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze items one and four of the CPS³ which examined students' rankings of core academic content areas, including history, and the frequency of use of instructional methods in their classrooms.

Standard Multiple-Regression Model of Analysis (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006) was used to examine whether interest in classroom activity were predictors of individual interest. The Rasch (1960, 1980) person measures (Smith, 1986) as defined through WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2006) was used as the criterion variable. Predictor variables included 19 of the 20 classroom methods listed in question five (see Appendix C). Following the recommendation of Hinkle, et al., (2003), the variables were entered as blocks (see Appendix F) due to potential for deceptively large multiple correlation coefficients as an effect of the sizeable number of predictor variables.

Qualitative data collected during this study included short answer survey data and interview responses. As a mixed method study with an emphasis in phenomenology,
these data were analyzed using the procedure prescribed by Moustakas (1994). Each interview was transcribed verbatim into a Word document. Then, participant responses to each interview prompt were entered into an Excel 2007 spreadsheet, maintaining responses according to sample. Repetitive statements were identified and responses were then organized into thematic clusters using verbatim exemplars. Syntheses of participant meanings of the experience of their interest in American history, using these verbatim examples, were used to create composite descriptions encapsulating the essence of participants’ experience according to sample (see Table 4.13).

Results Overview

Situational Interest Survey

**High School Sample.** Results of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the *Situational Interest Survey* (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) using WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2007) indicated that, with item five removed (see Chapter Four) the group of items represented a unidimensional measure of interest in American history. The Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (PCAR) (Appendix I) reported the Rasch dimension accounted for 89.4% of the variance.

Reported item and person measures for the *SIS* were excellent (Linacre, 2006) indicating the items were able to differentiate to approximately 7.86 strata and persons to approximately 6.08 strata (Wright & Masters, 2002). Examination of item and person fit indicated the deletion of one misfitting item and nine misfitting persons (see Chapter Four) for best model fit.

Finally, the Wright Map (Figure 4.3) illustrated high school students found it easiest to agree with items representing *Catch* while finding it more difficult to agree
with items representing *Individual Interest*. The map also suggesting an inability to measure persons along each endpoint on the continuum (see Chapter Four, Figure 4.3)

**College Sample.** Results of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the college participants *SIS* responses indicated the items functioned as a unidimensional measure of interest in American history after collapsing the rating scale to a three point scale and deleting four items. The existence of a single Rasch dimension accounting for 86.4% of the unexplained variance in the measure was supported by the Principal Components of the Residuals. Person separation and reliability were reported as 2.90 and .89 respectively and item separation and reliability as 2.52 and .86.

In contrast to the results for the high school sample analysis described above, the Wright Map (Figure 4.6) illustrated college students found it easier to agree with items representing *Individual Interest* and more difficult to agree with items representing the notion of *Catch*. Additionally, three sub-dimensions suggested as *Catch, Individual Interest*, and *Hold* were identified.

**Interest in Method Survey**

Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the *Interest in Method* section of the *CPS*\(^3\) (Stewart, unpublished) failed to support that the items functioned as a unidimensional measure. Rather, results of the Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residual provided evidence of multi-dimensionality. Considering the high school sample, only 46.3% of the variance was explained through the Rasch dimension, below the suggested 60% (Fisher, 2007; Smith, 2002). Compounding the problem, the analyses indicated the presence of two dimensions accounting for 10.5%, and 5.4% of the variance.
Similar results were reported for the college analysis. Results of the PCAR again suggested multidimensionality, with the Rasch dimension accounting for 42.6% of the variance. The results also indicated the possibility of four additional dimensions accounting for between 12.7% and 5.4% of the variance, above the suggested 5% cut-off (Smith, 2002).

Both person and item measures were within acceptable ranges for the high school sample, but were merely fair for the college sample according to Fisher’s (2007) guidelines (see Chapter Four). The rating scale was problematical for both samples and attempts to collapse categories did not improve model fit, rather degraded person and item measures. Considering the failure of the measure to conform to Rasch specifications, in particular unidimensionality, these data could not be treated as continuous level data, thus requiring a change in the research plan including the revision of two research questions.

**Descriptive Analyses**

When asked to rank seven common academic disciplines, high school and college participants illustrated differences in their responses. High school participants reported art, science, and history, as the top three “liked” disciplines. Conversely, the college sample indicated math, science, and art were disciplines they most liked with English/language arts and history ranked as the two least liked. For more details regarding these results, refer to Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Responses referring to the high school and college participants’ perceived frequency of method use in their classroom were similar across the two groups. The four most frequently used methods reported by both groups were seemingly teacher centered
approaches, with lecture reported as occurring most often by both. Discussion, note
taking, and reading the text were ranked by both groups as also occurring often (refer to
Table 4.3 and 4.4).

Methods perceived as occurring least often in these participants classrooms were
the same for both groups and were reported in the same order. Reported as occurring least
included (from more to less frequent) computer, guest speaker, reading of choice, role
playing and field trip. Please refer to Table 4.5 for a side-by-side comparison.

In addition, participants had the opportunity to respond with a write-in option
titled, Other. Nine participants wrote-in story, five identified news, two wrote-in comedy
or bad-jokes, and teacher dress-up, extra-credit activities, or teaching the class
something we learned were added by one participant each.

**Multiple Regression Results**

Decisions entering the data in blocks were made based on a combination of
factors, both empirical and theoretical. I hypothesized that a possible failure of the
measure to conform to Rasch (1960, 1980) specifications was due in part to the fact that
participants had not encountered all of the methods in their classroom. Thus, participants
were reporting potential interest in response to some items, versus actual interest for
others. Therefore, means were calculated for each activity and used as one component of
how interesting the activity might be. Additionally, activities were aligned using
qualitative responses to CPS³ survey item 6, *What do you like most about American
history?* Finally, I reviewed the activities looking for further theoretical commonalities as
suggested by Meyers, Gamst & Guarino (2006). For instance, *discussion, debate, video,*
and lecture might be considered traditional classroom activities reported as occurring
frequently, and were considered moderately to very interesting. Activities in the blocks and order in which they were entered into SPSS are presented in Appendix F.

Results of the Standard Multiple Regression analysis using SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL) with the high school sample indicated the nineteen methods entered in six blocks were statistically significant predictors of interest in American history with the overall model accounting for 89.4% of the variance in the criterion variable, interest, \( R^2 = 0.894 \), adjusted \( R^2 = 0.851 \), \( F = (19, 66) = 20.80, p < .001 \). Appendix L.1 and L.2 reports the results for each of the six models entered for this analysis.

The results of the analysis were somewhat surprising. Traditional teaching methods represented in block one, including discussion, lecture, debate and video, were identified as accounting for most of the variance in the predictor variable. One possible explanation for this finding is that these are the same activities participants reported they frequently engaged in during their classes. To some extent, this hypothesis is supported by the betas reported in Appendix L.2.

The college sample had less than 100 participants thus did not meet the specifications of Standard Multiple Regression (Hinkle, et al., 2003; Meyers, Gamst and Guarino, 2006), therefore this analysis was not completed with this sample.

**Qualitative Results**

**History Compared to Other Academic Disciplines**

In response to two survey items included as part of the CPS³ (Stewart, unpublished) participants from high school and college explained reasons for choosing an academic discipline as either their most” or “least” liked. Only responses related to why American history was most/least liked were considered for this study. From the high
school responses five essential themes emerged in response to reasons participants most liked American history: knowing the past to understand the future, stated in terms of understanding themselves and society in general; influence of significant others, including teachers and others; affective responses, such as liking and enjoyment; and miscellaneous, good at it, or excelling in the subject.

The same theme of knowing the past to understand the future was present in explanations provided by college participants. Overall these were also stated in terms of the personal and the society in general, but were stated in more complex terms and revealed a focus on the importance of studying American history. These responses are presented in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

Common themes surfaced among participants’ responses explaining why they least liked a particular academic discipline. Confirming the findings of similar research in the social studies, most participants who had indicated they least liked history stated they felt the subject was boring; relied on transmission methods of instruction, in particular memorization; teacher factors; and the content lacked usefulness. Only three college participants responded to this item, thus all data was presented together and are presented in Table 4.8.

American History

College and high school survey participants reported what they liked most and least about American history as a discipline, and these responses are presented in Table 4.9 and 4.10 (liked most) and Table 4.11 and 4.12 (least liked). Both groups of participants provided references to liking specific topics, referencing specific events, time periods, wars, and relevance, among others.
High school students described methods used, including story, discussion and debate; a generic response regarding liking history; their teacher; that it is about *our* country; learning the “truth” about historical events; and several other miscellaneous reasons for why they most liked American history (refer to Table 4.9). College responses included additional themes of the importance of understanding struggle, progress and change; and patriotism (refer to Table 4.10).

Interestingly, high school and college participants’ explanation of what they liked least about American history included more similarities then responses to what they liked most. Emphasis on memorization, was stated most often by participants from both high school and college as what they least liked about American history. Other common responses mirrored what others stated they liked most about the discipline, including specific topics, such as time periods, wars, and people; methods used in the classroom, especially reliance on the textbook; teacher attributes; and lack of relevance to participants lives. For a complete reporting of these results, refer to Tables 4.11 (high school) and Table 4.12 (college).

**Interview responses**

Interview responses were grouped according to theme, with most themes also having at least two subthemes. For example, the theme *significant other* referred to one dominant sub-theme, *family* and two additional subthemes, titled *teachers* and *others*. Family members described included parents, grandparents, siblings, or other blood relatives. Teachers included instructors from across traditional academic contexts, K-12 and college. Others referred to individuals named by participants such as mentors and care-takers.
Primary themes identified in the data included significant other, place, story and storytelling, patriotism, and valuing knowledge. Place as a theme indicated participant reference to a particular location described as important to the development of their interest. Stories included reference to both fictional and non-fictional events described by the participant, and thus were identified by these sub-themes. Fiction and non-fiction subthemes were further broken down according to origin of the story, including, teacher, family, and other. Patriotism contains two subthemes, citizenship and heroism, and referred to participant descriptions of pride in America, being American, the American experience and such references as important to the development of interest in American history. The final two themes, valuing knowledge and humanity were mentioned by the least participants, and did not include subthemes. Responses are provided in Table 4.13.

Limitations

Sampling

A first and perhaps most important limitation occurred during participant recruiting. Gaining access to college age students enrolled in an American history class at the time of the study was problematic. As a result, I modified the sampling to include students in the College of Education in one university and adjusted the research plan to recruit students through the history department from a second, smaller university. Students were invited to participate via email sent through the College of Education. Participants recruited through the History Department were recruited through their history classes. Both groups were sent an invitation via email, including a link to an online survey data collection site, Survey Monkey® (surveymonkey.com, Portland, OR)
As an exploratory study with a phenomenological emphasis, it was never the intention to generalize to the larger population. Generalizability is always an issue to consider when conducting research. This is especially true when conducting qualitative research, as it has been suggested that generalizability may be possible, especially if the study adds contextual understanding, but the overall goal of qualitative approaches is not to quantify a trait and generalize to the general public (Glesne, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

For my study this is even more so, as it would not be appropriate or reasonable given the sampling limitations and related population responding to the survey. Sampling was in no means random and the college sample was small ($n=44$), leading to analysis related problems as described in Chapter Four.

**Survey and Administration**

A second limitation was related to the inability of the survey instruments to address the research questions as stated. Neither survey had been used in the history classroom or specifically with history content. The *Situational Interest Survey (SIS)* (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) had been used with science and psychology while the *Classroom Perceptions of the Social Studies Survey (CPS³)* (Stewart, unpublished) had been used in reference to social studies as a discipline, not specifically history. This proved challenging to the overall ability to use these data collected with the instruments in accordance with the research plan.

Furthermore, the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the *SIS* (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press) did not indicate the existence of items assessing both situational and individual interest. According to the analyses, the measure was unidimensional, lacking
any indication of clearly definable subdimensions that might be considered as situational or individual interest. The SIS did not measure situational and individual interest in American history separately as suggested when used with science and psychology in previous studies (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press).

As a result, it was not possible to address two research questions. Specifically, questions 3 (*Is there a significant relationship between individual interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?*) and 4 (*Is there a significant relationship between situational interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?*) could not be analyzed independently as was anticipated. Since the item measure was unidimensional according to Rasch Principal Components Analysis (Bond & Fox, 2007; Linacre, 1998), the questions were modified and analyzed as a single research question, *Is there a significant relationship between interest in American history and interest in instructional method used in the classroom?*. This question was addressed using a multiple-regression and discussed in Chapter Three.

**Definitions**

The problem of what I considered to be “definitional confusion,” occurred to me during survey administration when one high school student asked me if I counted as a guest speaker. Also, during survey administration several participant’s indicated they did not know what a primary document referred to, asking for the term to be explained. Certainly my explanation could have influenced student’s responses in the classes in which queries regarding definitions of terms were brought forth. After the initial question was asked, I modified my verbal directions to classes to include the same explanation for primary documents for all participants.
Rating Scale

Use of multiple rating scales was also problematic and will be discussed more fully in this chapter. However, I believe it is important to state up front that participants who appeared to respond to the rating scales inappropriately were not all removed for analysis. For instance, at least one person responded to the frequency scale by using the “middle” category, 2, most frequently. This person was not removed from the analysis, maintaining the fundamental nature of phenomenology; I did not believe it was appropriate to “guess” at the participants’ intentions. However, participants responding to two or less items were removed.

Coding and Analysis

Finally, perhaps the greatest limitation was that all coding and analysis was conducted by a single person, the author. While I did bracket my subjectivity, and I was careful to follow the procedures set forth by others (such as Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutman & Hanson, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori, & Teddlie, 1998) about conducting mixed-method and phenomenological research (including Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1984, 1990), there was still only one set of eyes reviewing the data and attempting to analyze and present the individual meanings of what it means to experience interest in American history.

Instrumentation Discussion

Measurement Issues: Complexity of the Construct of Interest

Rasch Model. Results of the analyses using the Rasch Model Andrich Rating Scale (Linacre, 2007) approach illustrated the complexity of attempting to measure the construct of interest. There were several intriguing findings resulting from the analysis of
each of the two surveys, the *Situational Interest Survey* (SIS) (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., in press) and the Class Perceptions of Social Studies Survey (*CPS*³) (Stewart, unpublished) used in this study. This section of the discussion will commence with the *SIS* then move to results of the analyses of the *CPS*³. Comparisons are made between the samples to illustrate the nature of interest in American History across persons.

Interest has been conceptualized as developing through various stages, including *catch* and *hold*. Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., (in press) went one step further suggesting a more complex theory in which *hold* could be differentiated between affective and value components. According to their theory, *catch* would be a precursor to *hold*, and *hold* to individual interest. The *SIS* was developed to attempt to measure these differences. Unfortunately, the current research does not support that the *SIS* measure represents the theoretical model. Rather, using a Rasch (1960, 1980) approach to analyze the measure, indicated evidence of three sub-dimensions that might be defined as the more traditional theoretical approach through the results of the college sample analyses. These dimensions are defined as individual interest, *catch*, and *hold*. However, due to the small sample size, this finding is only suggested and would need to be investigated further to substantiate such a claim.

**Item misfit.** A problem identified thorough Rasch Analysis was item misfit, which proved to be an issue for each of the measures and samples to some degree. Beginning with the *SIS* college sample, deletion of four misfitting items, 3 (*It is important to be a person who thinks historically (or likes a historian)*), 11 (*Thinking historically (or like a historian) is an important part of who I am*), 2 (*What we are learning this year can be applied to real life.)* and 8 (*American History helps me in my
daily life outside of school.) was supported due to failure of participants to respond to the items as expected as indicated through item fit.

However, there were some interesting observations regarding the four misfitting items relevant to this study. First, each item was relevant to the person or outside the classroom, rather than stated as third person, or referring to the context, or teacher. Secondly, the two items with poorest fit, 3 and 11, both referred to the notion of historical thinking as applied to the individual participant. I would argue that historical thinking is a rather difficult concept to define. Furthermore, domain knowledge would be especially important in beginning to understand and define this concept. Since few of the participants were history majors or had an expressed interest in American history, their knowledge in the field may have been limited. It would be expected that items 3 and 11 would be most difficult to agree to as these both refer to having an individual interest in American History.

Such a finding would be contrary to the theoretical representation of the measure as described by Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., (in press). Considering their theory and traditional conceptions of interest, including catch and hold, it would be expected that participants would find it easiest to agree with items assessing catch, then hold and finally, individual interest items. Meaning a less to more continuum would place catch at the bottom portion, hold in the center, and individual interest items (such as 3 and 11) would be located in the top. In contrast, items 3 and 11 were identified as two of the three most difficult items for high school students to agree, indicating a difference in the way the two samples interacted with the measure and a possible difference in their experience of interest in American History in the classroom.
Individual interest in a domain such as American History would seemingly be rare. In the current study, using the SIS this does not seem to be the case. While the hierarchy of items was not as clearly delineated for the high school sample, as there was disorder of items compared to the theory defined by Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., (in press) overall, these high school participants did respond to the catch items as being easi**est to agree** with while the individual interest items were more difficul**t to agree**. Given the multiple issues with the measure, further study is required to investigate any possible difference.

Sub-dimensions. While the results of Rasch analysis using WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2007) supported the SIS (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., in press) as a unidimensional measure, potential sub-dimensions were also noted. The Wright Map provided additional information pertinent to the possibility of sub-dimensions represented in the SIS. In particular, the manner in which the items clustered together may be indicative of sub-dimensions within the unidimensional measure defined here as Interest. For the most part, items representing Individual Interest clustered together, while Catch items were grouped and those representing Hold-Value and Hold-Feeling were intermingled, further supporting the possibility of three sub-dimensions within the Rasch dimension. However, this was not consistent with the analysis results of the high school samples as the high school sample lacked a clear hierarchical response pattern to the SIS items.

Interest in Method Survey: High School & College

The results of the Interest in Method portion of the Class Perceptions and the Social Studies Survey (Stewart, unpublished) indicated the instrument failed to meet the Rasch specification of unidimensionality (Bond & Fox, 2001; Smith, 2002). As a result,
the measure could not be considered to be assessing a singular construct, representing interest instigated through activities. Rather, results of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses suggested the presence of potentially three dimensions. Such results indicate problems with the measure, and while the purpose of this research was not to diagnosis and/or correct issues with the measures, I would be remiss to not discuss the factors affecting the current research. Several factors could have led to the poor functioning of the measure, ranging from poor item wording, lack of appropriate response options, items that seemingly assess different constructs or a combination of these. As a holistic approach to measurement, Rasch specifies reviewing multiple aspects of the measures to determine whether unidimensionality has been violated. In this case, review of the items, scale, and survey directions each provided plausible explanations for the problematic measure.

To begin with, the general directions for the interest measure survey may have presented problems for participants. Directions requested participants use a four-point scale to indicate “Which activities make American History most interesting to you?” Four response options (see Appendix D) were provided with extensive definitions as to the meaning of each of the options in an attempt to avoid ambiguity in an effort to improve participant’s use of the rating scale (Lopez, 1996).

On the paper version of the survey used by high school participants, following the definitions, a second set of directions was provided, requesting participants to respond to how much they “enjoy” each activity. This problem was identified before being administered to the college sample and removed from the electronic version of the survey. Finally, a list of 20 items (classroom activities), was presented in a chart format for both samples, with the four categories labeled with the titles (e.g. Not at all, Doesn’t
matter, Somewhat, and Very much). Put simply, there may have been just too much for participants to read. Additionally, the fact that, for the high school sample at least, the directions referred to interest in the beginning and then used the term enjoyment in the latter set of the directions could have inferred different meanings for the participants.

A second and perhaps more important issue related to the poor performance of the measure, was that participants were asked to provide responses for activities they may have never encountered within the context of American history. For instance, considering the perceived frequency of activities portion of the survey, participants reported activities such as field trip and guest speaker never occurred in their classroom. Yet, these were identified as often causing interest in American History on the activity interest portion of the survey. As a result, participants used the same scale to respond to activities they actually engaged in and used frequently in their classroom, as activities they had never used in the classroom, and perhaps had no experience with. These differences with experience could lead to different response patterns, and thus result in the measure actually being multi-dimensional,—as it attempted to measure interest resulting from experience and at the same time measure what I will refer to as ―anticipated interest,‖ two different constructs. In future research, it would be useful to consider only those activities students engaged with and had experience.

Finally, the third problem, relevant to the college sample alone, deals with sample size. According to specifications of Rasch, rating scale analysis requires a minimum of 10 observations per category (Linacre, 1999, 2002). The college sample was n=44 at the beginning of the analyses, with four response categories for participants use in responding to items, barely meeting the specification. After misfitting persons were
identified, the sample failed to meet the specification and thus, performing the analyses was no longer appropriate. I am hopeful that in the future I will have an opportunity to investigate this aspect of the study with both college and high school students to further understand the CPS measure and participants perceptions of methods use in the classroom.

Discussion

Participant Perceptions of Course Rankings

High School. Contrary to negative perceptions of American History, high school level participants in the study ranked social studies third most liked of seven common academic content areas (art, computer, English/Language Arts, history, math, physical education, science) behind art, ranked first, and second ranked science (see Table 4.1). Additionally, history was reported as second favorite by 21% of the sample, more than any other content area. However, these data convey only a part of the story.

When both ends of the continuum are taken into consideration, history was selected as “least liked” of the content area by 19% of the participants, ranking first in the “least liked” category (see Table 4.1). This dichotomy may be explained in a number of ways. Perhaps the most obvious explanation can be attributed to sampling. The original research plan called for purposeful, attempting to locate participants with an interest in American history. Therefore high school participants were recruited through American History classes in their high school. Accordingly, purposive sampling may have resulted in students responding in a “socially acceptable” manner (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Lopez, 1996) given the context of survey administration through their history classes. It would
seem plausible that students responded more favorably than if they were in an environment not directly associated with the content of the survey.

Conversely, the classroom context, and in particular the three different teachers may have had an impact on student responses. Participants in the study were drawn from two schools and enrolled in one of three classes, each with a different teacher. Students do not always like their teachers, and such opinions were evident on the survey short answer with participants responding to the prompt, *What do you like least about American history?* by describing their negative feelings toward their teachers. However, at least one class did not have a negative comment noted on the surveys, rather, students included comments related to the teachers sense of humor, storytelling and overall positive approach to teaching American history.

**College.** With regard to the rankings of academic disciplines, the college level participants were much different than those reported for the high school sample. It was evident from the course rankings that the college level participants did not have an interest in American History as an academic discipline. While this finding supports the literature describing social studies as comparatively not well liked of the academic disciplines (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985), the data set was small, and thus this result must be considered with reservation.

In addition, these results do not align with what would be expected given the results of the Rasch (1960, 1980) analysis of the Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et. al, in press) that indicated college students found it easier to agree with items related to individual interest in American history. While this was
unexpected, there clearly could be many explanations. Perhaps this was a result of participants referring to experience in their past, or, maybe they truly just did not enjoy the class American History, but did enjoy the content, related to history in America.

Even though the research plan defined purposeful sampling (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Glesne, 2006) in an effort to attempt to find individuals with an interest in American history, this was not possible and may account for the rankings. When recruiting through American History courses was not possible at the college level, the plan was changed to one of convenience and recruiting was conducted through the College of Education at one institution and individual history courses from another. Altogether only 44 participants responded to the survey with three-quarters (n=33) reporting their major as education, and only five students having a major related to American history or social studies.

As a result, perhaps the results of the college rankings provide a more accurate representation of perceptions of American History, one which would support other research on the subject (Chiodo & Byford, 2004; Loewen, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985), than the data collected from high school students through their high school classrooms. In any case, these results require further research before implications regarding college student perceptions of the social studies can be made using the CPS³.

**Frequency of Activity**

Researchers have suggested transmission methods of instruction dominate the social studies (Elhman, 2002) so it may not be surprising that lecture was identified by both high school (n=95, 75%) and college (n=35, 80%) participants as the activity used
most often in the classroom, reported by both groups of participants as occurring at least daily. In fact, both high school and college participants identified traditional classroom methods including lecture, discussion, note taking, reading the text and quizzes or tests as the top five occurring methods. The less predictable responses were interesting and should not be dismissed as unimportant to the current research. One interesting, albeit unusual response was that while Note taking was indicated by 35 (93%) college level participants as taking place with daily to at least once a week, three students selected the option “never.” Such seemingly insignificant responses reminded me that students are individuals, and that while most college students take notes, some do not. Considering individual student differences in approach to classroom interaction and engagement would contribute to building an understanding of the meaning of an individual’s interest in an academic discipline.

At the opposite end of the continuum, high school and college participants reported the same five activities as occurring least frequently in their classrooms (field trips, role playing, reading of choice, guest speaker and computer simulation). Again, what was curious, were unexpected responses. For instance, six high school participants, all from the same school and class, stated field trips occurred once a semester, while four responded they happened at least monthly, and one person responded to this activity by checking the weekly category. The difference in responses may be attributed to mistakes, carelessness, or something else.

Additionally, it was interesting that college students did not report reading of choice as occurring often, nor was independent research indicated as occurring in the college classroom, as both are hallmarks of historical inquiry. However, the fact that
these participants were predominately from the College of Education, not students
majoring in history as was called for in the sampling plan, may explain the unexpected
responses. Another possible explanation was the absence of concrete definitions for each
of the activities listed, and in keeping with the primary phenomenological approach to
this study, such unexpected responses were included in the analyses. It is possible that a
participant considered alternative meanings then those anticipated by the researcher in the
absence of such definitions.

Many of the findings were to be expected. For example, any of the methods that
take an extended period of time, such as field trips, would not be conducive to the college
classroom; it would be difficult to fit in within the college schedule. Similarly, factors
inherent to the public school classroom setting may account for lack of engagement in the
activities reported as occurring least often. In addition field trips can be expensive and
time consuming, making it more challenging to engage students in such activities.
Likewise, guest speakers can be difficult to find and may not address the topic as
expected by the teacher, questioning whether teachers would justify using this activity.
Such explanations seem straightforward, and would be expected.

The final information gleaned from data in response to the items related to
activity interest to be discussed was from write-in options. Write-in options were
provided on the paper and electronic versions of the survey for both frequency (see
Appendix C item #D) and activity interest (see Appendix C item #E). Responses to these
items provided important information to suggest that simply ticking an option does not
tell the whole story. Nineteen (15%) high school and one college participant responded to
the “other” option, choosing to write-in an activity not already on the survey. Of those
writing in a response, twelve participants, including the lone college participant, wrote in either story or storytelling, as an activity both used frequently, and that they felt increased their interest in American history. What is perplexing is that students, who rated lecture low, provided story as something they like. Additionally, story was indicated as occurring daily, as was lecture. Thus, it would be interesting to consider how these participants differentiate between the methods.

Additional write-in responses included current events, news, and notes during movies. Such responses were supported by additional qualitative data through short answers responses on the CPS³ and interviews. Beyond the first question for the interview, results of the surveys were used to inform the interview schedule. One important outcome of this procedure was that a prompt addressing story became a follow-up item for the initial question, *Tell me about your interest in American history.*

**Short-answer responses: Nature of the classroom context**

Responses to the CPS³ question, *Considering your favorite from the list in question 1, explain why it is your favorite,* provided insight as to why participants ranked an academic content as their favorite. To provide the opposite perspective, the next short answer item asked participants to discuss why they indicated an academic discipline as *least favorite from the list in question 1,* in an effort to understand why participants disliked a subject.

For the most part, both high school and college level participants responding affirmatively to liking American History in response to item 2, stated they liked it because it helped them to *—understand”* society as a whole and/or themselves. Responses
considered as taking a holistic societal view for example, looked at citizenship overall. One survey respondent who answered in this way stated,

“we’re a part of history.”

While, personal views related only to an individual or the student. Such perspectives referenced knowledge of history as important to the participant now or at sometime in the future. For example, one participant responded that,

“it shows me how to deal with future situations and it allows me not to repeat someone else’s mistakes.”

Not surprisingly, several of the responses referred to the idea that those who do not know history will repeat it. Additional similarities between the groups included that, participants from both groups provided affective descriptions, using terms such as “fascinated,” “love,” and “enjoy,” for example. Also, story was cited by participants from both groups as important to their liking American history.

While the idea of story as important to American History was stated by participants from both high school and college, comments on story also can be used to illustrate the differences in participants at the different levels, high school and college, and how educational attainment might affect how they thought about and described an interest in history. High school participants’ references to story were surface level, simply as an approach to hear about history. For them, history was story (Kennedy, 1998).

However, one college participant stated that it is “alive and dynamic to me. It is like a literature course on the world.”

Besides the depth of the description, college participants also stated that history was more than names and dates; history is alive and well as,
dialectical and material process which we, today, can use to better understand
the political, economic, and social realities which surround us.”
This exemplifies an important difference between the groups. While the high school
participants provided more responses, they were mostly surface level and diffuse. The
college level participants provided fewer responses, but they had more depth, illustrating
more familiarity and comfort with the content.

A final unaccounted for difference between the responses to why participants
liked American History the most was that eight high school participants stated they liked
the content due to the influence of another. Six cited their teacher as important, while two
described other people. Teachers were described as making the difference between the
content being interesting or boring, making it fun, and as purveyors of truth. Included in
such references to other people was the curious comment of one high school participant
that they were

—raised with people interested in history.”

Statements regarding the influence of another were completely absent from
college participants’ descriptions of why they like American History the most. Maturity
and the stage of life might be reasons for the difference as well as their focus on content.

Short answer survey responses regarding why high school and college participants
reported American History as least liked content area largely supported the existing
literature regarding social studies as boring and irrelevant (Chiodo & Byford, 2004;
Loewen, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy
& Haladya, 1985). Of the 35 participants indicating American History was their least
liked content area, nineteen stated American History was boring, not exciting, or not needed

“because it’s history.”

Other responses referred to methods of teaching, in particular reliance on the textbook and failure of the teacher to make it fun or interesting. However, one participant stated a teacher in their past had made American History interesting, but had lost that interest. Additionally, it was interesting that one participant had the perception that their not liking American History was unusual stating,

“unlike most people, I don’t find it very fun.”

More informative than responses to why participants ranked American History as most or least liked of the academic content areas, were responses to items 6, “What do you like most about American history?”, and 7, “What do you like least about American history?”. In part the responses were intriguing because even participants ranking American History as least liked identified something they did like about American History and the reverse. In keeping with the widespread perception of American history as a long list of dates and names to remember, both groups of participants described memorization as what they least liked about American History. One high school participant stated they least liked “mesmerizing dates,” an obvious, but seemingly appropriate play on words to communicate their (and others) feelings about memorization. Others described attempts at memorization as confusing and boring with one college participant stating,

“it's more important to have a general timeline/timeframe of when things happened. Exact dates don't really matter to me.”
High school participants reported they most liked certain topics, methods, content relevant to them, and teachers, and were mirrored in reports of what they least liked. For example, participants indicated they both most liked and least liked learning about war, people and certain topics. At least one participant from each group indicated they most liked the colonial period of American history and identified the“puritan and colonial” period of American History as what they least liked. Such contradicting responses remind us that students are individuals each with their own particular interests, and that, “great care must be taken to find the balance between, on the one side, undue separation and isolation, and, on the other, a miscellaneous and casual attention to a large number of topics, without adequate emphasis and distinctiveness to any” (Dewey, 1990, p. 110). The challenge of addressing interest in an academic context, it is clear, is not only in identifying the interest of one, but to balance the interests of many.

Teachers and teaching methods were also indicated as what participants both most liked and least liked about American History. High school participants focused on both teacher and methods and explicating one from the other was often difficult. Story was important as a method, and for the most part was discussed as explicitly coming from the teacher. However, story was also referred to on its own, without reference to where the“story” originated, or what was meant by story. Thus, it is conceivable that, even though the perception of textbooks as that they were“bland” and“difficult to soak in”, story could have also originated from the text.

Interestingly, lecture was not liked when used in the American History classroom, however, high school participants provided almost conspiratorial accounts of teachers sharing information which they described as facts and events that
many people are not aware of” and were
“behind the scenes facts,”
thereby seemly making the students feel more “informed” and “included” in American History.

Not surprisingly, teachers were described as another facet of American history that participants most and least liked. In addition to storytelling, and other methods teachers used such as lecture, teacher’s personal attributes were stated as important. In particular, teachers’ attitude toward the content and having a sense of humor were described as things participants liked about American History. In fact, one high school participant, who reported not liking American History (rated it 7 of 7), provided the following comment,

“Normally I don't like American history, but this year my teacher’s style of teaching keeps me wanting to learn more.”

Conversely, teacher’s personalities, and approach to content, described as monotonous, boring and biased were not liked. Additionally, teachers perceived as failing to listen to students’ perspectives in classroom discussion, were discussed in negative terms. College participants also stated teacher bias as a problem, something they least liked. Similarly, these participants described teachers as lacking knowledge and passion, suggesting that

“Teachers should at least seem excited and quite knowledgeable about what they teach, in any subject. Teachers cannot genuinely motivate their students without being interested themselves.”
Overall, college student’s responses to this item were much more complex. Teaching of history was described as one part of the larger problem of historical inaccuracy often perpetuated by uncaring and/or unprepared teachers. Additionally, college students identified teachers as focused on indoctrinating students, and perpetuating social inequality by not addressing the perspective of the poor and working class in their teaching. Social and political struggles were identified as issues needing to be addressed through the history classroom in order to educate students about the truth. For some of the college participants, this question allowed them to vent about what they believed to be wrong with America, not just our history. A good (and brief), example of this came from a college participant whose response to what they liked least was,

—Everything. We were (still are) arrogant people who stole without regard and killed without regard. The founding fathers were all hypocrites who spoke eloquently. But did not follow their own words.”

Conversely, others reported pride and patriotic sentiment almost to the point of ethnocentrism, describing the “uniqueness” of the United States, and the progress and success of this country in such a short time period. One college participant went so far as to indicate liking American History was an expression of

—my love for the country,”

this would be the polar opposite of the exemplar provided above.

Interview Responses

The following discussion recounts the experience of the twelve interview participants and primarily addresses research question, 6. How do participants describe their interest in American history? focusing on how individuals with different levels of
experience and interactions with the content describe their interest, with specific emphasis on the origin and development of their interest.

In an effort to address the research questions while maintaining the phenomenological approach, the first interview prompt was purposely general while still focusing on the individual's interest in American history. Each of the twelve participants responded to the following query: Tell me about your interest in American history. From participant's responses to this first prompt it was evident that common themes cut across the three groups, including involvement of family, visits to historical sites, and stories. Multiple themes cut across the interview prompts. Thus, this discussion addresses direct reference to major prompts, while following thematic commonalities within and across the prompts when appropriate.

Differences noted in regard to the first prompt were evident through both content, and the participants approach to responding. As a result, it is necessary to describe transcribing conventions used to illustrate participant's speech patterns. Ellipses were used to indicate both a break in the conversation and pauses. When a pause is indicated at the beginning of a response, the number of seconds will be indicated as follows (3s), referring to three seconds pause. Colloquialisms and other informal speech patterns, such as “um,” “ahh,” or repeated words, have been removed unless it was determined important to the meaning of the participant's experience. Italics indicate emphasis placed on a word or phrase by the participant. Finally, observations from field notes considered important to supporting the participants meaning have been added for some exemplars. Such notes are indicated by brackets and italics as follows: [sigh-almost to self].
Additionally, rather than referring to participants by pseudonyms, to help differentiate between the participants and their membership in various samples, codes will be used to identify the participants. High school students will be identified by "HS" and a number. The number refers to the location of their interview within the interviews for the sample, thus, HS1 refers to the first high school participant I interviewed. College students will be referred to by "C" and a number, while adults will be identified by an "A" and the corresponding number. "R" refers to the researcher.

**Telling: Interest in American History**

As would be expected, high school participants were less sophisticated in their responses than either college students or adults. Three of the four high school students provided the most brief, general responses to the prompt, *Tell me about your interest in American history*. The most ambiguous and brief response to this prompt was offered by HS4, who simply stated,

"I like American history…I just like to learn about the past…just something I’ve always liked”.

His response was quick and illustrated little reflection, which was a pattern he repeated over the entire interview. Additionally, as was evident from his halting speech, fidgeting and overall demeanor, HS4 was nervous. From conversations with him before and after the interview, I suggest his nervousness was, at least in part, because he wanted to answer in a socially acceptable manner. Similarly, both HS2 and HS3 provided general, brief responses to the first query and referred to story in history as important. The former stated he liked

"the stories in history”
while the latter referred to

“Lots of people have different stories”.

Ultimately, the theme story was common for both the participants and was repeated through theirs and others’ interviews.

In contrast to the three high school students discussed above, HS1’s response was more deliberate, personal, and reflective than either the other high school students or the college students, more closely resembling responses provided by adults. HS1 spent time reflecting on the question before answering, and throughout the response seemed to talk to herself about the events and experiences leading her to this interest. She stated,

I really like American history all together, but I really like the Civil War like the 1800s, anything in there. I don’t know why [sigh- almost to self]… probably because I always wished that I was living back in that time era it just really interests me…. my family goes on a lot of family vacations but it’s not go one place and sit there for a week, it’s stop, and go… and along the way we stop at historical sites like president homes…all sorts of places. Like one time we were at Manassas…and we’ve been to Gettysburg. But being able to visualize things really makes it come alive for me… in history class, which is why I really think I enjoy history so much.

HS2 was the only high school student to describe early personal experience with family and historical place as important to their interest in response to the first prompt.

However, when the other three high school participants were asked about visits to historical places through follow-up queries to other prompts during the interview, two of
the remaining high school individuals described visits to historical locations as important.

On a whole, responses from high school students to prompt one were diffuse, citing family, stories, vacations, the founding of American, and “just because,” as reasons for their interest.

Seven participant’s immediate response to interview prompt one was to cite specific time periods or historical events before moving on to other ideas. Of the seven, three referred to personal experiences at historical sites. For instance, HS2 started her explanation stating, she liked “American history altogether” but then specified the Civil War and 1800’s as era’s she most liked. HS2 further described other events in her life she felt had helped her develop an interest in American history. These events included family vacations to historical sites including Manassas, Gettysburg, and a tour of Lincoln’s homestead and memorial. The latter was remembered as an especially important childhood event that occurred while viewing Lincoln‘s Burial Tomb,

so we [family] went there and looked, and it was all dark and really quiet
…and it just affected me [voice chances, much softer, quiet and ominous sounding], because I was only in first grade, and we just went through and I was like, he’s really right there, like, right across that rope.. where I’m not supposed to cross. [voice returns to normal] It’s just … unbelievable to think they’re right there.

HS2 explained that such experiences helped to

 visualize things [and] really makes it come alive for me… in history class which is why I really think I enjoy history so much”.

170
HS2 had the longest response of the four high school students and her response was most similar to those of the adult participants. She recounted numerous experiences visiting historical sites with her family, described personal interaction starting at a young age with history across several contexts, illustrated reflection and took more time considering each prompt before responding.

College participant C3 replied to the first prompt in the following manner, referring to the application of his knowledge of American history during his everyday life. He stated,

I’ve always liked history….it’s always been in the family I guess … [M]e and my other cousins, we’ve always been interested in it …we like to play a lot warfare type board games….And I think we just like to be quite knowledgeable about things ….that carries over through history and other subjects too…I think we find it exciting…

Like others, especially college participants, C3’s description addresses his personal use of American history in daily life.

Adult participant’s responses to the first prompt, illustrated an important and unexpected difference in the manner in which participants responded. On the whole adults took more time and provided a greater range of feedback than either high school or college age participants. Five participants, including three of the four adults, paused for several seconds before responding to the first prompt. After the initial pause, some participants needed additional prodding or reassurance as evidenced in the following examples.
Additionally, participants who took more time initially responding to this prompt used “um” and “ah” more frequently in their speech when responding to this question compared to those who responded more quickly. However, this speech pattern was not evident during the rest of the interview for the adult participants. Thus, on the surface, it would appear the nature of the question was either quite difficult or thought provoking. As an example, the following exchange occurred with the Adult Participant One in response to the first prompt, *Tell me about your interest in American history*


It was clear during the interview the participant was expending mental effort to answer this prompt. Additionally, her voice was quieter and more thoughtful during this section of the response than at any other point in the interview.

After this initial difficult start, A1 began to describe events from her childhood and the influence of her parents in the development of her interest in history. Included in this discussion was a description of her childhood village, family excursions in the area, and ancestral ties to significant revolutionary war events and people. The retellings of these events came quite quickly and were retold with humor, creating an interesting “story”. This was the second longest response to the query.

Illustrating an even greater difficulty beginning to respond to the prompt, A 4 responded in a similar manner to the same prompt,
A4: Wow! Um [3s] R: I usually get the same response [both nervous laugh, 3s] A4: My interest in American history? [3s, speaking quietly, to self] I am not trained as an academic historian. Ummm, I read lots of history, I like to travel to a lot of historic places. Ummm I chose to live in an historic house, um I teach about the social studies [2s] so I have worked with lots of local historical societies in leadership positions for many years and membership. Ummm … I guess I … if you want to start at the beginning, [more quickly now] um both of my parents were educators, both at the university and the public school level and they did historical things for fun. I, um, they read historical books to me and then as I learned to read, I read about history and biography, they would travel to historical sites for vacations, they ummm…

Much like A1, A4 continued this discussion with important points from his childhood, in particular, parental influence, family trips and his involvement in historical societies and events starting in elementary school. The effort expended by these individuals to consider, recall, and respond to this prompt was obvious and brings forth questions regarding the complexity of individual interest, especially for individuals either expressing personal interest, or having more experience from which to draw.

The pauses and hesitant speech exhibited by A1 and A4 could be explained in various ways. For instance, they could be seen as attempts to answer the questions in a socially acceptable manner. Such a theory, while plausible, would almost certainly extend beyond the two adult participants to include others, especially it would seem those in
high school, desiring to make an impression on the researcher. However, this was not the case, leading to alternative propositions.

Perhaps this intriguing response pattern is the result of the expansive definition for the term “interest”. Interest is a difficult construct to delineate, further I did not attempt to define the term for the participants previous to beginning the interviews. It could be that adults with more advanced schema of American history and/or interest as a result of their vast experiences found it difficult to reduce to a single manageable response. As a result, participants spent time and effort attempting to compile a lifetime of experience into a brief cohesive statement.

Two participant’s responses did not share common theme with others’ responses to this query. As described above HS3’s response was short and general. While A3 referred to his interest as “a natural interest” placing his interest in context of an academic content area that was “people-oriented”. A3 responded to “Tell me about your interest” in the following way,

… just kind of a natural interest since the early days as a student, even in elementary school. History just kind of fascinated me. No doubt because it was people-oriented…individuals, flesh and blood people. That’s what interested me.

While content of the participant responses were dissimilar, one similarity was noted. As was true for other participants, A2’s description was that history “fascinated” him. C2 had stated he found history exciting, epic, sweeping, and enthralling. Such descriptors were used by others to describe their experiences as well.
Place

Rather than participants describing historical place as important as a result of their direct involvement with the sites, several used place and historical events as a backdrop or setting in which to place their interest. For example, participant HS3 provided a general survey of American historical events to illustrate the differences among Americans which he stated was why he was interested in American history. He stated,

American history is… how we got here. [I]t’s from Plymouth Rock to the Civil War and …the American Revolution and then you get into the World Wars and it’s how we became American….and we became the great melting pot. So, that’s why I’m interested because there are multiple backgrounds. Lots of people have different stories. You know, coming from different countries so they have different backgrounds, different cultures and it’s how we came together and built our own society as one.

The most recent time period or event mentioned in response to prompt one was World War II, with events up to, and including, the Civil War being cited most often. References were made regarding the Pilgrims, the Revolutionary War and surrounding events, including the Boston Tea Party and crafting the Constitution. The notion of “how we came together and built our own society as one” as cited above, and

—“the spirit of America like being all strong and courageous and being able to fight for what is right” (C4)

was shared by these participants. Others reference included ancestral connections to place or an event and stories.
It is interesting that participants did not refer to more recent historical events. While the group of participants was small, this on its own is probably not an explanation for the lack of reference to more recent events. Rather, I suggest this reflects the emphasis in schools on the beginnings of American history. Traditional tales of the founding of America and narratives of the heroism of American’s are begun in elementary school, and recycled through high school (Loewen, 1995, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998). Accordingly, this would be the history American students know best. Additionally, stories of early America are interwoven into the very fabric of our culture through traditions related to U.S. holidays such as the 4th of July, and Thanksgiving, thus lending more familiarity with early American time periods.

**Story and Storytelling**

Story and storytelling was directly mentioned by five of the twelve participants as important to their interest in response to the prompt, *Tell me about your interest in American history*. Notable among such responses, A3 provided the following description,

I grew up on his [Dad's] World War stories; he dropped out of high school after Pearl Harbor. And so, I heard all those stories over the years. Got to look at pictures of things that he did, and he just loved when I would come home with something or something was on TV he would talk about it, I always found it fascinating. And then I was lucky that some of the classes I had in school were people [teaching] like how I like to teach: stories. I didn’t get forced to memorize a bunch of dates that I think might have turned me off like a lot of the kids. I think history is fun. It’s fun learning about people….we all like understanding people, well people were the same back then too, so…I’ve always liked it.
Unlike other participants, A3 described interactions between the story and himself with both his father, and later also with his teachers. One other participant mentioned family, but was not as specific as A3, rather simply described that family members liked to recount and regale us with…you know, stories from the past” (A1).

While HS1 referred in general terms to the idea of history being stories,

Well, I like the stories in history, because I think it’s a….part of history. ...

It’s also like...someone that knows a lot about history really shows how much they know… the amount of knowledge they have. (R: Okay. So, tell me what you mean by stories.) Well, there’s a lot of interesting stories like narratives from like historical...events that… I think are interesting.

This more general notion of story and its relationship to history was shared by other participants in response to later queries.

Story and storytelling was included as a follow-up question for all participants. This follow-up prompt was asked at different places during interviews with various participants. While the prompt was included as the last questions on the interview protocol, it often made sense to interject in the flow of conversation when participants made comments related to story or storytelling and will be discussed later.

An example of one participant, C1, who did not bring up story or story-telling, during the interview, rather, she was asked,

→many students have added stories or story-telling ….What do you think the students mean when they write that …what do they mean by stories or story-telling?”
Her response indicated a connection to multiple themes also present in the responses made by other participants. C1 replied,

Probably stories passed down through generations. Of course firsthand experiences from a diary or from a personal experience, whether it be from like grandparents or great-grandparents or an uncle. And especially with, their being, [in] the World Wars, or World War II. Or being that they passed down those stories of the war and what happened to them. I remember when you know this story or this happened, only this was changed …my great-grandmother is still alive, she’s ninety-four now, and so I get to hear her talk about what it was like when she was growing up and how difficult it was for her to watch her brothers volunteer for the wars or to live through the depression first hand. There’s a story that really always stuck out in my mind. When she was young she was always in charge of milking the cows. So to milk the cows you had to cross a little creek, and there was a fallen tree that had made a little bridge that she used to get over [the creek]. And she said that one day she was going over and she slipped off the log and she was carrying a milk pail, and she said she fell in the water. Somehow she managed to not spill the milk and how important that was because if you didn’t have milk for the day, you know you couldn’t do your baking and you wouldn’t have it to drink with your supper. So it’s something to think about that you don’t really get from a history book but something that makes history more personal.

At the end of this retelling of the story, I stated that this was a great story, almost a metaphor of life. C1 responded,
―Yeah, you got to keep going over that bridge.‖

The explanation of the meaning of story and the story that was shared illustrated the complexity of what is meant by "story." For this participant, story was not make-believe or something written down by historians or scholars. Story was described as personal, dealing with experiences of individuals important to her and her understanding of the world. At the same time, the story referred to historical events that shaped the grandmother's life, and through her sharing, impacted the participant.

**Significant Others**

The second prompt, "Can you tell me who or what influenced your interest in American history?" was also asked of each of the twelve participants. Six of the twelve participants mentioned family as influential to the development of their interest in American history. Parents were mentioned most often \((n=4)\) with grandmothers, uncles and cousins also being identified as influential. Parents were mentioned in general terms, such as C2 explained,

―family is one, um I mean my parents just encouraging me to do well in school and I think my interest developed gradually through that.‖

But also more specifically, such as described by A2,

Definitely dad….once I got into college I majored in history… the history major wasn’t really what I planned to do much with. That was to make Dad happy because I was dropping out of the dental program…. But by far Dad was always the major reason why I liked it. I dug into it, I liked looking stuff up, because then we could talk about it, it was easier to relate to Dad then. Dad was always working, my dad was a great Dad, but
sometimes he seemed to find more time when you could connect in that way, so we could be working on a car but talking about ya know the Battle of Midway or something like that. So…definitely dad.

This response also illustrates the overlap of story as important to the participants interest in American history, as does the following description of C3’s grandmother’s stories influencing her interest,

My grandmother….she would tell stories about, her grandparents and, how everybody came to be in this country and …our origins. [I]t was always very fascinating to find out … that, these people, even though we see them in books and even for the people that were never famous… there’s always a history, there’s always a story behind each of them.

As is apparent through the exemplars, responses were rarely discrete. Rather, several participants began to address questions through their responses before the question was raised resulting in considerable overlap of themes from various responses. This was especially true of family and stories. Participants describing parents as influential to their interest also described stories as important, providing reference to their family member’s stories and as storytellers.

Interestingly, while high school students described the importance of their family in great lengths to their interest in American history in their discussions, when specifically prompted *who or what has influenced your interest?* All four of the students stated a teacher or a moment in the classroom as important. None of the four mentioned a family as important to their interest; other responses included books and movies.
Conversely, when adults and college age participants responded to the same prompt, only one participant (A2) of the eight provided teacher as the first answer; while A3’s response included stories of college instructors in general, he did not indicate one specific instructor and only provided this answer after prompting from me. The remaining responses included family (5), movies (2), textbooks (1) and the founding fathers (1).

**Additional Themes**

Being knowledgeable was a theme that took on a different meaning for adult participant A3 as compared to HS1 or C3. While the younger participants described being knowledgeable in reference to self, A3 identified being knowledgeable as a trait he observed in others and wanted to emulate, prodding his decision to change his college major to history. When describing an experience as a teaching assistant in college he stated the faculty members and history majors,

> were so knowledgeable to ongoing things and they could just tie it in with it and it just that was the first time I started to see the more you know about some things, the more you are able to understand current things. …. they sounded so intelligent, they would talk about economic issues or what was going on in the news…

Such a comment implies a more sophisticated understanding to the origins and meanings of an individual’s interest in American History. This corresponds with the experience level of an adult professionally engaged in the content, as was A3. During my conversation with A3 he readily and easily integrated historical anecdotes and references into his responses, something more difficult for other, younger participants.
Conclusion

I set forth to investigate the meaning and development of an individual's interest in American history. The results obtained align with Willis' (1991) metaphorical description of attempting to find phenomenological meaning as the peeling of an onion. While there are multiple layers of experiencing interest in the domain of American history, it remains to be seen whether there is a singular essence. Rather, what I have found through this study are multiple — commonalities, patterns and themes” (p. 181) shared by participants.

Multiple layers of interest in American history indicated as a result of this research can partially be explained as the difference between the conception of history, and History. American History is an academic class, represented by the big H (only because of its status as a title). The class is compulsory for most in high school due to state requirements. Some elect to continue to study in college and a few actually pursue American History as a career. As this study and others (Harris & Haydn, 2006; Loewen, 2007; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998) have described, “big H” is both appreciated and maligned.

However, there is also American history, the overall topic that extends and exists beyond school which encompasses all Americans and those interacting with America. This is the breathing, living history of our country. From the results of my study differences between the two conceptions were evident. Participants described their interactions and interest in the content and at times their descriptions seemed to be confounded between the meanings of interest from the perspective of the construct versus their involvement and interactions in the course.
Results of my work indicated differences between the three samples in regards to their responding to either American history or American History. For the most part, high school participants responded to survey and interview questions from the perspective of American History as an academic discipline. This was understandable, since many high school students have not had the exposure and interaction with history that either college age participants or adults have had. Additionally, high school students were accessed through their American History classrooms, influencing the meaning for them from the beginning. Overall, their responses were more surface level and illustrated the perspective of someone with little knowledge or interest in the content.

College participant responses, on the other hand, were not always clear as to whether they were responding in reference to the academic content, or the history of America. This was made most evident through interviews, as college participants rarely spoke of school contexts, but during conversations relied heavily on content most likely acquired through the classroom setting in their responses. They seemed to be integrating the academic content into who they were and what they stood for as they spoke of their interests.

Another important difference was directly related to the method of sampling used in this research, college participants were both invited to, and responded using electronic approaches and were not necessarily engaged with the content at the time of the study. Therefore, these participants were more removed from the content as few were enrolled in an American History course at the time of the study. Participant responses' from the college sample were thus referring to high school, college, and potentially other interactions with the content.
Overall, adults in this study considered and described the meaning of experience with American history. From their descriptions it was apparent American history was more than a class and a textbook, it was their past. Furthermore, this past was an important part of their identity in the present. In fact, three of the four adults did not bring up or refer to school related history until prompted. When they did, one of the three described the school experience with American History and the social studies as abysmal. Another recalled little from their school social studies or history class that was of value. The fourth adult stated that school did matter and it was through his interactions with one teacher in particular that his interest developed. Interestingly, during the interview he described his interest as occurring “late” and described no familial connection to history that was so richly described by other adult participants. Overall, this participant’s responses were quite different when compared to other adults.

**Levels of Interest: The MDL.** I hazard to suggest that the results of this study support that the three groups of participants align with the Model of Domain Learning (MDL) (Alexander, 2003) in respect to interest. The MDL described progression toward expertise as three levels: acclimation, competence, and proficiency. Further, this progression could be observed in an academic context as each level is evident in an increased knowledge, better (higher level) strategy use and deeper more integrated interest. Even though I did not investigate knowledge, participants short answer responses and interview responses illustrated differences between the three samples. From this, it was clear that, with a few exceptions, high school students represented acclimation, college age participants, competence, and the four adults, proficiency, in American history.
Participants experiencing difficulty in responding, for the most part adults, were also those who recounted numerous experiences with American history over the course of their lives. According to their telling of their experience, their interest developed starting in early childhood as a result of interaction with significant others, most notably family members, developed during adolescence through multiple interactions with family, school and community, and later as part of their chosen occupation. Each of the four did have or were currently employed in a position that required a high degree of knowledge of the history of America.

Researchers in the area of expertise, described the importance of tacit knowledge to the development of expertise (Minstrell, 1999; Patel, Arocha, & Kaufman, 1999). Tacit knowledge is subconsciously understood and applied, difficult to articulate, developed from direct experience and action, and usually shared through highly interactive conversation, story-telling and shared experience” (Zack , 1999). At least two adult participants (A1 and A4) in this study shared attributes aligned with tacit knowledge, that is, an ability to explain what they do, but a difficulty describing why they do it. Instead, they presented a searching litany of ways they engaged in their interest starting at a young age.

It occurred to me during discussion with both of them that they had never thought about their interest, it just was. Eventually both individuals did describe, in great detail the meaning of their experience. Taken all together, the level of knowledge apparent in the discussion of their interest, along with the depth and breadth of interaction with the content over the course of their lives, could suggest that the pauses and difficulty these participants had in responding are an indication of expertise in American history.
In contrast, the two other adult participants, as well as most college and high school participants, were able to quickly identify a basis and reason for their interest in American history. For example, A3 immediately identified his interest as a result of his father's influence, while A2 stated his was a natural interest because of the relevance to people. High school and college students overall responded in a similar manner with two exceptions. HS2’s and C2’s responses to several questions were more hesitant and thoughtful. However, unlike the responses of adults described above, this was a consistent pattern throughout the interview. Still, they both took considerable time to reflect and compose a response before speaking. Both also described a wider range of experience and interests.

Considering the multiple data sources and descriptions, what I did learn about interest in American history was best stated by one high school participant’s survey response that “It’s fuzzy sometimes.” Interest in American history has multiple facets and is many layered. However, there were layers that were common, identified by several respondents across interviews and supported by survey responses. One of the most obvious, yet complex layers was story and story-telling. Others, included influence of significant others, interaction with place, and classroom contextual factors.

Story was considered the most complex layer. First, story as a component important to interest development was included in the interview protocol as a direct result of the survey responses. Even some survey respondents who indicated they were not interested in American History, described story as what they most liked about the content area. Secondly, when asked, at least one college and one adult interview participant
vehemently disagreed with the idea of using story as an appropriate term in connection to history. For them history is more than story, it is a narrative of the past.

Interestingly, the first definition of “history”, offered by the *American Heritage Dictionary* is, “A narrative of events; a story; chronicle” (p. 625). It is no coincidence then that narrative and storytelling surfaced as an integral part of an individual’s interest in history. However, story and narrative are sometimes understood as having different meanings, and at a minimum, having differing levels of credibility:

History was originally an attempt to tell a true story, then to get the facts straight, to explain and even analyze the past. But in recent years the line between story and explanation, literature and history, has blurred” (Williams, 2007, p.9).

As children we all enjoyed stories, as in “Once upon a time, good and bad things happened, then everyone lived happily ever after”. Later, stories and personal narratives provided us information about others and helped us learn about expectations of our peers during adolescence. Still as adults we recount our successes, failures and quandaries to others using personal narratives, our stories linking us to humanity. It is “Stories that tell of the past in ways that give meanings and coherence to the present” (Williams, 2007, p. 7). But there are significant differences between the stories we tell and hear as children, or as lay persons, and those told by historians and/or history teachers.

One important and particular difference between the everyday story and historical approach to stories or narrative is in the level of truthfulness considered in the accuracy of facts presented through an historical account. It is this difference that was identified by high school participants when describing teachers who told them the truth, or shared information that others do not know.
Especially in the context of history, an important difference described by participants in this study between story and narrative, was the level of accuracy when utilizing each form of discourse. According to Danto (1965 cited in Clark, 2004) “History tells stories” (p. 87) and historical evidence only becomes meaningful when narrative is added. While this implies narrative and story are in some way part of the other, rather than different, for some, narrative is more believable. There seems to be an understanding, to the point of prejudice (or lingering childhood memory?) perhaps that story is the equivalent of make-believe, and for at least two participants in my study, story had this implication. “Story carries a connotation of falsehood or misrepresentation, as in the expression, ‘That is only a story.’ Narrative has been used in this sense to refer to a story that evinces a culture's world-view or ideology (Fisher, 1989; Lyotard, 1979/1984) and serves to legitimize its relative values and goals” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7).

The term narrative has found preference within the historical research community, through implication that it is more objective than story. Ironically, the level of objectivity truly attainable within an historical representation of the past is questionable and has been cause for much debate (Clark, 2004). The goal of the historian may be “to tell true stories, not make a fictional past…. to figure out what probably happened, not what we might imagine happened” (Williams, 2007p.9), but discerning truth can become a subjective endeavor with many factors impacting an understanding of what stands as/for truth. Such factors as gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, political beliefs, among other things, can influence one‘s interpretation/understanding of historical
documents or events, and thus create a version of a true story that differs from another person’s construction of their understanding.

From this perspective perhaps every telling is in some respect a story. In fact, historians now largely concede they only partially capture the past’s fullness and must diligently labor to build an explanatory context—the historian’s version of Geertz’s “thick description” (p. 25). Leading to yet another layer of the onion that is interest in American History, that is, who influences this interest?

Teachers often create the curriculum, deciding on content, methods use and the level of interaction with students. Accordingly, teachers must consider how students will perceive the curriculum and the environment created by the teacher (Fosnot, 2005, p.5). Evidence from my study supports this perspective, teachers who had passion, used humor and made American history content more accessible through story. Certainly, historians influence the telling of history. It is the historian who chooses the research and provides the documentation which legitimatize a specific perspective of the past (Polkinghorne, 1995). What others do with this knowledge it another matter, and historical events are told not only by the historian, but retold by educators, and laypersons.

There was evidence that stories retold by “significant others” close to the participants made an impact on the participants interest. They were repeatedly described as important to participants developing an interest in the history of America. Significant others included family members, caretakers, mentors, and of course teachers.

Teachers influence their student’s interest—both positively and negatively. There are a multitude of ways this occurs in an academic context. From this study, participants across samples identified ways in which the teacher impacted their interest in American
history and the course. Comments were made regarding teacher attributes and personalities, their approach to teaching and interaction with students, and their level of content knowledge. At times these comments extended over, addressing other themes, again illustrating the complexity of attempting to investigate meaning in such a construct.

The role of parents and other family members in the development of interest in American history (note the little h) is clear in the descriptions and stories retold by most of the interview participants in my study. When I consider all of the data—both quantitative and qualitative in nature—the descriptions of family and the influence of others were striking to me. It is not only because it was rather unexpected, but also due to the commonalities that cut across people and experiences.

Each participant who described the role of a family member or significant other in their development of an interest in American history did so by telling a story. Most of these stories were personal histories, rich in detail with full accounts of the characters, settings and events. The stories were so rich; I shared the experience with them as each spoke, able to visualize details of the events. There were commonalities among the stories: each occurred while the participant was quite young, contained elements of historically significant events and through these memorable moments, the participant described gaining some essential knowledge or understanding. For one participant it was the realization that the body of Abe Lincoln, the great American President, was just across a velvet rope. For another it was that once upon a time, spilling milk had such important implications, meaning the difference between eating for an entire day or not. Knowledge gained through such interactions—through story—helped to make connection
and deeper meaning for the individual, including becoming a metaphor for one participant’s life.

Important to these stories, as with every story was the setting, or place. For perhaps obvious reasons, this component of the individual’s interest was made evident only through interview. Results of the interviews revealed the impact of place on the participants as they relayed the experience “being there” had on them and their interest. It was important to consider the meaning of “being there” for these participants. For most, this phrase meant actually visiting a physical place with historical significance, providing them a backdrop for future stories and learning. For others, however, it was figurative, meaning placing themselves in a time and place while reading or listening to the stories of others.

One place not mentioned during interview, but important to American History, was the classroom. Rather than referring to the physical place, what participants described as occurring in the place of the classroom seemed important to the development of interest. In respect to the classroom, both survey and interview participants described methods, teacher interactions, and especially what was missing from the classroom that, for them, made the course less than interesting. For those participants’ who had expressed an interest, the classroom context descriptions centered on the content, method and teacher. However, for one non-interested survey participant, being disinterested was ascribed to physical class conditions including, not having friends in the class and not like the seating assignment, which caused boredom.
Implications

It was not possible to empirically identify differences in participant’s situational and individual interest in American history through this research. However, there are still interesting and important implications to consider as a result of this work. The implications cross multiple contexts and constructs, especially focusing on American history as a field and as an academic course. Ironically, from an academic perspective, the implications of this work can be perceived as both optimistic and discouraging.

Institutional Interest

It may be discouraging for those teaching the content that few participants in this study expressed an interest in American history. Even more discouraging may be that many participants in this study described American History in the same terms as past research, as seemingly meaningless, boring, and irrelevant. However, there was also evidence that even for participants stating they were not interested, they overwhelmingly identified positive aspects of the classroom contextual experience. These results emphasized the importance of the teacher, methods, topics, and relevance, in promoting at a minimum “liking” and “enjoyment” of aspects of the American History class and content. An especially important component described as making the content interesting was the use of story.

The results of this study imply that method does matter. While lecture as a method seemed to fail to incite interest for these participants, story did. The use of story as method in the American History classroom appeared to be one way to, at a minimum, capture students’ attention for the duration of the story, providing an opportunity to make the transition from short lived, transient interest (situational), to a meaningful, stable
interest (individual). Story holds possibility in the classroom, including opportunities to provide points of relevance, and meaning for topics and content which spans beyond students' realm of knowing.

Teacher education programs should encourage teacher candidates to understand the various methods of telling history. An important starting point would be with the university and college instructors. Lecture, being the common experience for college students, should not be the norm. Rather, teacher educators and especially history professors should be encouraged to include the use of story in their repertoire of approaches to use in their teaching. In this way, teacher candidates will model the methods of "retelling" history, which they themselves had as students.

It was clear that the school-aged participants in this study desired more variety in the methods used in their American history classroom. While it was obvious through frequency of activity reports on the survey that transmission methods dominated respondents' classroom experience, it was also apparent they did not find this to be interesting, nor what met their needs as learners.

Teachers need to begin to incorporate a variety of approaches in their teaching, delivery of the lesson, their enthusiasm and attitude toward their students all impacts students' enthusiasm, attention, interest and understanding. This is not only to incite interest, but to also address the various learning styles of their students.

The teachers' understanding of the content and ability to communicate the content in a meaningful way has an impact. An important aspect of this involves modeling and scaffolding appreciation for the content, not simply for classroom
achievement but for life application (Brophy, 1999, 2008). It is one thing to have knowledge of the content and another to value and appreciate the content as it applies to everyday life. Brophy brought forth this challenge and the current study underscores the need for attention to student’s prior knowledge and interest in the classroom context to attend to their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). It is the teacher’s appreciation, valuing and conception of the meaning of history that will determine the curriculum they develop and enact.

However, the teacher’s conception of history is also tied to the demands of the community, the administration and some seemingly far off bureaucratic agency, each making decisions about what knowledge and whose knowledge is most important. Thus, the shared knowledge and shared meaning is, in most ways, dictated by others, not by student interest. In addition, there are still others beyond the institution of school whose meanings also impact students. Thus, it was clear that it was not only teachers who influenced such an interest in participants in my study.

**Familial Interest Connection**

It has often been stated that parents are the primary educators of their child. In the case of appreciating the history of America and developing an interest in American history for the participants’ describing their interest to me during this study, parents and the extended family were considered important. Interest in the history of America is not relegated to the academy. In fact, for most interview participants in this study, interest began at home. Expressions of interest by family members, trusted caretakers, and neighbors mattered and impacted participants. Thus, the influence of those outside the academe cannot be taken for granted by those inside.
Existing interest in American history offers teachers an opportunity to take advantage of and encourage development of such an interest in the classroom. However, this would require that teachers take the time to become acquainted with their students on a more personal level.

One method teachers could use to encourage such an approach would be to use interest inventories during the first days of school. Interest inventories solicit students‘ likes, dislikes and experiences in regards to the content and topics being covered for the semester. Teacher‘s use this information for planning, and can draw on student interest and experience during class to support the development of interest in the content.

**Community Interest Connection**

Involving community members in the classroom is another potential for instigating interest in the history of America. As a people, American’s do not make use of one of our richest sources of history, members of our own community. Neglecting such sources discounts the value of history as occurring in our own lifetime to people like us. Including community members offers an opportunity to provide eyewitness accounts and diverse perspectives of historical events to students who may otherwise only get the packaged text perspective.

As a teacher, I made a point of inviting community members to come to class and share their stories. My students listened with rapt attention as a holocaust survivor, civil rights protestor and war veteran (among others) each described their experiences. Their telling went beyond just narrative or story, becoming a dialogue that I could never approximate as a mere third party re-teller of events for which they played an active role.
Eyewitness narrative provides a source of information which may confront the textbook, offering opportunities to address multiple perspectives and create dissonance.

Participants from my study described hearing such firsthand accounts as important to them as well, placing the stories they were told prominently within the meaning of their experience of interest. Such encounters included visits with elderly during visits to parent’s work place, discussion with local political figures and meetings with influential citizens from the communities. Each was described as having a story to tell, leaving a lasting impression on the participant.

**Place**

Before I began this study, I bracketed my experience to examine and begin to unveil my biases. During this exercise I detailed my personal meaning of experiencing interest in history. One important component to this development was my attachment to a specific place and time. For me, place mattered in the development of my interest, I remembered a time and place, that held (see Appendix A). Similarly, place mattered for many in this study.

Whether the place described was the site of rural historical village, the National Road, or Gettysburg, it mattered to the participant. Place provided context, helping participants to not only conjure images of the events occurring at the sites they visited, but also other historical events.

In the region where the majority of participants for this study attend school, work, and live, there are an abundance of sites with significant historical value. Standing on ground where great men and women stood, where blood was shed, can have a profound impact on perspective and understanding of events generally only read about in text.
Even so, field trips were not described as activities participants ever engaged in during their classroom experience. Finding ways to make connections to history through “place” is yet another avenue to opening the door to interest.

**Future Research**

While this study began and ended as an investigation of interest in American history, as with most research, it became much more, growing limbs for potential inquiry along multiple paths. First, the question that is most intriguing to me, and perhaps most important to the field, is how individuals conceptualize and understand the term “American history.” Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) described participants’ negative reaction to this term, choosing to use the term the “past” in its place in discussion with participants in their study. When reading their text, I did not understand the dilemma. However, the same negative response to the term “American history” became apparent to me in this study and evident in responses from participants across the three samples.

Thus, it would be interesting and useful to consider differences in how people understand the term, and suggest how “American history” is, and should be, defined. And, what is the difference between this and “American History?” Is it even possible to separate the academic discipline from the content itself? Without concrete definitions that can be communicated to others creating an understood shared meaning, as became evident for my work, responses lack a common meaning and thus a common measure.

Research in American History is needed to further investigate teacher’s use of “story” as a teaching activity, and students understanding of what is meant by story. Story was repeatedly described not only through survey as what participants liked most, but was also described across responses from interested individuals. Since high school
participants in particular differentiated between lectures, which was ranked as least liked, and story, an important component of such research would need to address the level of truthfulness that is acceptable for an historical story. There are multiple aspects of not only the nature of story, but also other teacher methods and attributes related to the American history classroom for further investigation.

Research in American History is needed to further investigate teacher’s use of “story” in their teaching, and students’ understanding of what is meant by story. Story was repeatedly described not only through survey as what participants liked most, but was also described across responses from interested individuals. Since high school participants in particular differentiated between lectures and story, investigations into differences between story and lecture from the student perspective would be useful. An important component of such research would need to address the level of truthfulness that is expected and acceptable for an “historical” story. There are multiple aspects of not only the nature of story, but also other teaching methods and attributes related to the American history classroom for further investigation.

Survey is one way to gather data to measure personal experience, attitudes and perceptions. One result of the current research was the recognition of how truly difficult it is to measure ill-defined constructs. Future research is needed to create meaningful and useful measures of interest in American history.

Results of the analyses of the measures used in the current study provided several starting points for this research, including, of course, issues related to definition. The adapted version of the Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press)
illustrated promise as a measure of interest, but more research is needed to address issues identified through the Rasch (1960, 1980) analyses.

The *Class Preferences and the Social Studies Survey*, (Stewart, unpublished) also requires further consideration. Usefulness of this survey was limited as it failed to perform as a unidimensional measure. Among other issues, future research should consider participants reporting of activities they have encountered versus those they have not.

Teacher attributes were not addressed as part of this study. However, it was clear from participants across the groups that teachers did have impact, both positive and negative, on participant’s interest in American History. For some, teachers were described as helping participants to become interested, if only for a short time, in American history content. For others, it was clear that the teacher was an impediment to participant interest. What is not clear is what teacher attributes contribute to the differences.

Additionally, from interested participants’ descriptions of their experience, it is clear considering teachers alone as important to this interest fails to address the influences of others. Most participants described family members as important. Thus, when seeking the meaning of interest in the history of America, the influence of family, and significant others is important to understanding this interest, as it is to understanding American History.

Results of this study encourage further investigation into what it means to have an interest in the history of America (and/or American History). The current study started to peel an onion exposing multiple layers. Many of the layers that were exposed, such as
family, story, and the influence of historical place, provided a starting point for what such an interest might look like.

However, this study was very small, encompassing a very small part of the United States. For the most part, the students have had access to the same educational experiences both in and out of school as a component of where they live. Due to these constraints this work cannot be generalized beyond the current participants and their experience. Thus, additional research is needed to further define this construct and encourage shared meaning of interest in American history. Research is needed to attempt to separate the multiple intertwined layers that are interest in American history.

**Final Words**

Interest in American history remains elusive and difficult to define. Yet, it does exist, and has been described here by at least twelve people across different ages, levels of knowledge, and experience. The nature of their interest was multifaceted, which included varied activities, actors, settings, and starting points. Descriptions of the development of such an interest for the participants in this study, included interaction with family and other people significant to the participant, historical place, the classroom, and of course, stories and the story tellers. For one, interest even came as a result of reading the textbook.

This research is just a beginning. The multiple layers of interest in American history have only begun to be considered, and it is obvious that the layers will not be separated cleanly. This study illustrates that interest in American history does have multiple starting points, and that each must be respected and nurtured.
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Appendix A

Epoche

When I describe my interest in social studies, and history in particular, I often relate an “Aha” moment of discovery. It is this sort of experience I wonder about in others interested in history. The experience and view of the reality of others may resemble mine, but it probably is much different than mine. The “Aha!” story I describe, I now realize, could be more fictional and sensational than actual, but it has become such a part of who I think I am and wanted to be, that perhaps it has blurred who I was and from whence I came! Embarking on qualitative research, I well know and understand the importance of knowing my past, of “bracketing my subjectivity” (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 2006), and of placing my “self” aside as I attempt to understand the other. However, for the purpose of understanding and bracketing my subjectivity (for my dissertation), I feel compelled to explore my experiences with interest in history.

Accordingly, I begin this personal experience narrative to investigate my meaning and experience with an interest in history. The “Aha” moment I have considered and have often described to others as the beginning of my interest in history occurred in 1976 in Rome, Italy, it was a Holy Year. I was in the sixth grade and visiting Italy with my family—my mother, my sister and two brothers. Visiting Rome occurred at the beginning of our trip and was a side trip with the real purpose of visiting my mother’s family in Northern Italy yet to come. Mom was the only person from her family living in the US, so that while all my friends went on great vacations to Disneyland and SeaWorld,
our family was dragged off to Italy and Germany every few years to visit relatives. Life seemed so unfair to me as a child.

While in Rome, friends of my Mom, Giuseppe (not his real name), drove us around and took us to places other people could never get access, Giuseppe was the chauffer to the Pope, and as such, had great privilege in the Vatican City and around Rome. I remember Giuseppe as a short, stout man, always dressed in dark pants, a pale blue shirt with a black belt surrounding his girth and to keep his burgeoning pants held in place. He was not fat as much as he was round about the middle. This I think is the vision of many middle age Italian working class men. When he spoke, he gesticulated with great flare as all Italians I know do, and I recall his shining hair grease could not stop his black wild curls from bouncing in time to his gestures. While Giuseppe spoke little English, his hand gesturing, wild and enthusiastic as they were, combined with emphasis on certain syllables seemed to make his Italian accessible to me. In my memory, it is Giuseppe who instigated the “Aha” moment even though I know I clearly could not have understood a word he said.

During this visit to Rome, my family and I saw and engaged in many unique, interesting and memorable events. For instance, we stayed in a convent and had the opportunity to eat —simply as the Nuns and sisters of the convent did, taking bread and coffee for breakfast and a soup at dinner. We also participated in their “quiet hours” (no easy feat for me or my brothers as I recall) if we happened to be on the grounds, but we were encouraged to be gone for most of the day. Additionally, we went into the inner workings of the Vatican City, entering the Vatican through a door “reserved” for the pope, my sister had her picture taken with the Swiss guards, which at that point was
actually forbidden. The high point of the trip was when we got to see the Pope in St.
Peters Square where elderly German women pushed us around in an attempt to bully us out of our prized spot by the rail. One woman went so far as to stab at my older sister (she was about 17) with an umbrella. We visited the Spanish steps, threw coins in the Trevi fountain and of course visited the Coliseum and were in awe of the number of cats living wild there. While each of these events remains chiseled in my memory and may seem more important to others, none of them make up the single —Aha” moment I have built up in my mind.

As I recall, the moment happened outside the bustling city on a green expanse of land, something rare in Rome. It was early evening and the sun was just starting to fall low on the horizon, creating the shadows reserved for the languishing days of summer. Of course the grass was more green and lush than any other I could recall seeing on this trip to Italy. My mom had just taken us to see a statue of her namesake St. Sinforosa. I cannot remember where my siblings were, but then again, this is my moment, and why would a 13 year-old care? What is vividly clear is that my mother was standing in front and to the right of me, her black hair pulled up and off her head in the heat (Mom liked to wear her hair in a French twist, but I can’t remember if this was the case this day.)

Giuseppe was standing to my immediate left and I had to turn to my left as he spoke. I was standing on the Appian Way, the cobblestones uneven yet smooth as I rocked among them and the stones rubbed against my sandals. I remember seeing an aqueduct behind him while Giuseppe described the scene I was viewing, he told me to imagine the story of the cobblestone, what might have happened on the road I was standing on. I stood looking down the road, and Giuseppe walked along the side of the
cobblestone looking intently at the ground until he found the object he was seeking. He kicked slightly a few times at the ground, then bent over and picked up a smallish ochre colored rock. Handing the rock to me, he said something like, “Just think…the Appian Way, with the entire cobblestone, and especially the rock in my hand had all existed when Christ was on the earth.” For some reason, the rock, the entire idea of this resonated with me; I felt a small, yet somehow significant and interconnected part of history. It is this that I recall as my “AHA!” moment when I feel I became interested in history.

I am not certain if this event really played out as I recall and retell it. I kept the rock until 1992 when it was lost in a fire that destroyed my mother’s business and home in one fell swoop. Some of the issues related to my memory of the moment, I think, have little to do with the event and have more to do with what I am leaving out as I attempt to uncover my interest in history. I believe there is more than this one moment that what is more important are the influences of people I grew up around, and the era in which I grew up while my interests and ideas about the world were forming.

In my childhood, there were not yet video games, cable TV, or the myriad other types of technological entertainment available to most children now. The two main forms of entertainment were playing and reading. My brothers and I played outside from the moment we got out of bed, had our mandatory home cooked breakfast and we were typically gone until dinner. Creativity reigned and was only stifled by what I could convince someone else to play with me. Many of my interests combined whatever I was currently reading with play. I remember I especially enjoyed playing explorer or adventurer such as Sacagawea. As a child I had very long dark hair, and I would ask my mom to braid it into one long braid hanging down my back, in this way I could scrounge
together whatever clothing seemed appropriate at the moment so I could dress and become an—Indian”. These are the simple, mythical memories.

My reality was as complex as any. Being the second girl in a family dominated by an Italian mother was not an easy place to be. As seems to be the case, males are more highly respected in the Italian family, and this was the case in my family. My mother was a double émigré, emigrating from Italy to Germany as a child and then to this country, after marrying an American. She loved the United States, and was proud to be an American, but also very proud of her country of origin, Italy. This all affects how I see the world, because I believe my mother was able to help me view the world through a multi-faceted cultural lens, maintaining the old and grasping and integrating the new. I really never realized it as a child, but Mom imbedded our lives in history. By the time of my—Aha! Moment” I had traveled to Europe three times so I wonder about the impact of earlier, perhaps not so easily-remembered moments? For instance I was probably seven or eight the first time I went to the Louvre, and I vividly remember standing at the bottom of a staircase, with just a few stairs going up and curving around to both the right and the left. At the top of the stairs was the craziest thing I had ever seen. There stood a very large—stone” statue of a woman. But the statue was very problematic for a young child, she was missing her arms, and she was without a shirt. I recall asking my mom what happened to the ladies arms, and I know she gave me some sort of explanation, but I don’t remember it. I was too shocked that a statue with no arms could be considered a piece of art. This experience may mean nothing. But I wonder about such experience combined with other influences.
I think the fact that everything in America had to be new, bigger and better, both intrigued and bothered my mom. While she was intrigued and excited about the economic opportunity and social-political freedom in this country, she would always point out the waste and lack of respect for anything old. For example, when historic buildings in our home town were torn down she could be very vocal about her displeasure. Often, when such an event would occur, mom would go on about how we value nothing in this country, that anything with “a history” has to be replaced with something new in America. Such discussions also often made the point that Europeans (or any other group—except Americans) have more of a sense of history and a respect for that history, and as a child I believed this to be true.

So I realize much of my interest in history in general has been influenced by my mother, her status as an immigrant and yet proud American has, of course, had a profound effect on my perspective. However, this impact, I believe, can only take a person so far, after all, I have three siblings and not one of the other three has this same interest. So, I must ask myself how am I different? What else inspires me to have this interest? Part of the answer I know lies in my nature to be inquisitive. I want to know “why” and try to understand how things have come to be the way they are.

As a child I imagine I must have made my parents crazy, I do know I talked a lot and asked a lot of questions. Additionally, my imagination could, at times, go a bit too far, and at times would lead to mischief. But all of this I know fueled my interest in history. This mixture of inquisitiveness and imagination brought me to ask questions of wonder. As a child I remember wanting to know why buildings were situated in specific
locations, who would have built them, and more importantly what were the life’s of the people like that lived in the buildings.

When I was four or five my mother began to clean houses for two wealthy families in my home town. At times she would choose one of us kids to go and help her. I loved being able to go with her, they were like mini-excursions into another world. The first family, ‘the Kirkland’s” (a pseudonym) was a doctor, his wife and his grown daughter, who only occasionally came home to visit. Dr. Kirkland was almost never home, even though I believe he had retired. Mrs. Kirkland, was occasionally home when we were in their house cleaning, and I remember her as being a very small, frail woman. I think I was originally fearful of her, she spoke very eloquently and was always dressed beautifully. But, as I got to know her more, I looked forward to her being at home when we were also there. Looking back, I think I actually saw her as sort of a museum piece herself, she seemed to me to be so old but very smart.

Their home seemed enormous to me as a child and it was situated on Lake Huron. I realize now that while it was larger than most in our town, it would rate as modest for current homes in the area. The view of the lake was spectacular, even in winter. While the size and location of the house was impressive to me, the contents amazed and inspired me. Dr. Kirkland and his wife traveled often and went to faraway places, such as China and I think an African tour. Mementos’ from their travels filled their home. The items they brought home were way beyond the snow globes and cheesy plastic tourist souvenirs I saw in my friends’ homes. There souvenirs were pieces of pottery, elephant tusks, and pieces of art. As I would dust I remember carefully remove each item from the table, mantle or dresser where it had been particularly placed and wonder about them. Where
did each come from? What was the place like? The people? What was so important about each piece that it was chosen? Additionally, their home was filled with real art, and while I cannot remember exactly what each of the paintings and sculptures were about, I remember spending long periods of time (what then seemed like hours, I bet were really minutes!) just looking at framed art and staring at sculptures. They had a room devoted to their art as I remember, and when I was allowed, I would sit in the room listening to a large grandfather clock as it ticked away the seconds and wonder what it was like to be an artist long ago drawing, painting and sculpting such beautiful things.

The second family, “the Stanford’s” (a pseudonym) had made their wealth through investment and hard work in an oil related business. They were very different from the Kirkland’s. In addition to Mr. (Jim) and Mrs. (Jen) Stanford, there were three children in the family, two boys, four years older and the other a year older than me, and a daughter, a year younger then I am. Shortly after Mom started working for them they purchased the largest Victorian house in my hometown. The house was in serious disrepair, and I remember going through the old house with its broken stairs, ripped wall paper, and overall dilapidated condition and feeling excited about being in something so old and special.” I know I did not come to this feeling on my own; rather it was initiated through the excitement of Jen. She loved history and keeping history alive. The house was slated to be demolished until Jen and Jim saved it. Because of my mom’s relationship with them, I got to have a front seat to the renovations. I recall spending time going through the house picking things up, and the excitement over all the treasures that were discovered in the basement, attic, and lying around the rooms. There were old bottles, coins, decorative pieces, and of course papers and pictures.
Being involved in the process allowed me to pretend that I lived in the house when our home town was in its heyday as a shipping and railroad town. Sometimes I would squint and look out the dusty, rippled glass of the huge front windows and believe I could see an immaculate lawn surrounded by a wrought iron fence (long gone by this time, but one of the treasures found was a picture of the house at the turn of the 20th century). Of course I was supposed to be helping clean during these mini-mental excursions, so I was often yanked back to reality and in trouble for daydreaming.

My childhood was such that encouraged daydreaming, which I feel is an important element in my developing an interest in history. My childhood was chaotic—such an environment led me to find an alternative, so I read and I daydreamed. I began to recreate my neighborhood with the aid of a pair of binoculars. Our "neighborhood" was really just a line of seven houses plopped down in the middle nowhere. The houses were of various shapes and sizes, but all fairly small and single-storied. Across the street was a single farm house and corn fields as far as I could see (about 40 acres). In the eight houses comprising our neighborhood, there were only five children, including me, about my age to play with and two were my brothers. I desperately wanted to live in a place like Mayberry. Mayberry was what life in America was supposed to be for me, you could walk anywhere you wanted to go and everyone knew you. It was safe and friendly and especially normal.

When I was about 8, I found a way to turn my street into a Mayberry-like town. My dad had just gotten a new pair of binoculars and I learned that if I took them to the roads edge and looked up and down the street the perspective changed. What was once a conglomeration of houses plopped along a street was suddenly transformed into a small...
town. Certain aspects I had to create all together, such as a general store and the filling station, but all the components were suddenly there. From this experience I came to understand that things are not always as they appear, and appearances are ever changing. What still was my neighborhood became fictionalized, and in my opinion, improved through sleight of hand. Whenever I wanted to live in a different area, I simply turned to the binoculars and changed the view of my street.

Story-telling is of course an important component to developing interest in history. I started this with my "Aha!" story, which is itself a story. But, I recognize the wonderful storytellers I have had in my life. Of course there is my mom, whom I have already discussed, but who I realize has lived the life of a story worth telling. She has been important in my developing into the person I am. My father was a story-teller, but his stories were more tall-tales. With him, I was never quite sure what was reality and what was fictionalized to suit the needs of his ego. I never knew my dad to fish or hunt (but I understand he did both when I was an infant), but his stories fit into one of two genres the "one that got away" and the "master of the hunt" and he used this format for every tale regardless of the content. From his stories I learned to question the validity of an account and to seek out other sources to verify an account.

The best storyteller I encountered in my life was my Nonno, my maternal grandfather. As a child I spent little time with him since he lived in Germany and Italy. It was my great fortune to have the opportunity to study architecture in Florence, Italy during college. I was already fond of history at this point and I had turned to architecture as a way to interact with my interest (I know this now—but at the time not so much!). During this time studying abroad I got to spend weekends and vacations with Nonno.
Nonno introduced me to a completely different way of thinking and looking at history, politics and the life of others than I had encountered in my previous twenty years of life. After dinner we often sat listening to the television, as I worked on some homework or attempted to complete one of the many word searches he got for me in an effort to help improve my Italian.

Sometime I would ask him questions about living in Italy and Germany, and especially about living during World War II. Other times he would begin the conversations prompted by something that was on TV, in the newspaper he was reading or simply a thought. While we had hours of such conversation, I remember only a small amount. One such memory is a discussion of Mussolini. Of course I had learned all about Benito Mussolini in high school history class so I already knew Mussolini was ruthless. In my mind he was a fascist dictator who had sided with Nazi Germany in World War II (this in and of itself was enough to make him a "bad guy") whose greatest accomplishment was getting the Italian trains to run on time. Nonno, however, shared with me a different story. Mussolini was a hero to my grandfather. He was responsible for creating jobs when there was economic depression throughout Italy, he put food on the table for all Italians. Additionally, Mussolini encouraged the Italian people to take pride again in being Italian, to be proud of their communities, their regions and country. I recall being completely shocked and in awe that my Nonno could speak so highly of a man I had been taught was one of history's truly bad guys. I admit it took me some time to rework my idea of Mussolini with the perspective presented by Nonno. There were other stories too, most dealing more with my grandfather's experience as a trusted "straniero" or foreigner in Germany during World War II. People came to him with items
for safe-keeping if they thought they were going to have to go away for a time. Many of these people never returned and Nonno talked about not knowing what to do with some of the items after a while.

As far as school is concerned I remember very little that excited or interested me in history (or for that matter social studies) class. My earliest memory of American History class is about the 7th or 8th grade, and while I can remember what the teacher looks like his name evades my attempts to recall it. I do know that he seemed really young and many of the girls thought he was really cute. This seemed odd to me because he seemed just old to me (age is of course relative and I bet he was in his late 20’s at the time.) My only other memory of this class is making a vinegar pie. Several girls were asked to make this —mat” following a recipe supposedly used by lumberjacks in early America and especially northern Michigan logging camps. The pie I made was rather disgusting looking, it was gelatinous and a slime yellow with a green tinge to it. I do think people tried it but I distinctly remember the teacher and students all sort of laughing at how strange it looked .I think it was edible for the most part once you got over the color and general appearance of the thing.

Other history class memories include sitting in a senior level American History AP class as one of only two juniors and being completely stupefied as the teacher talked on and on about the political, economic, and social factors that impacted our country. It all seemed meaningless. I really liked the teacher, and as I recall he was passionate about history in general. Unfortunately, I was not all that interested in sitting in any class at that point in my life and most of the teachers knew my families —had luck” story, I exploited this to skip class and spend time at the beach rather than attending history class. Later
During college I would regret this decision as I really believe it put me behind in several classes. During my undergraduate coursework, I did not have to take any history as an interior design major. Rather, I took history of architecture, art and design. While the experience in the classroom was little better than sitting in a lecture hall, I still had to listen to an instructor drone on and lecture about varied historical periods, it was different because history was now attached to something relevant to my life—it was obviously important to my future career. At the same time, this different view of history, the history of life’s artifacts if you will, started me to consider history from a different perspective. History no longer had to be viewed solely as content laid down in a book by some long ago far away author who stood as the expert. History, it was now clear to me, is *in things*.

Further, it is the interaction of people with their particular moment in time, political, social, and economic, with all the power and struggle that make things possible. So to understand why the “things” in life came to be, means to understand the history behind it. For example, during the Napoleonic era furniture began to take on a smaller scale, under direction of Napoleon. Anyone who knows even a little history can put part of this puzzle together, that Napoleon was small therefore he desired furniture that was comfortable for him. But, there is more than this, he also understood that if he put larger men in smaller chairs they would be uncomfortable and if his chair was larger than theirs, he could look down on them, thus he might have the upper hand. It was interesting to me that Napoleon used furniture design to psych out others. Additionally, as an undergrad I was able to spend time studying architecture abroad which reinforced this connection between history and the artifacts of civilizations that make up history.
In grad school, while working on requirements for a master's degree, I took several history classes. All of them run together in my memory. I do recall a few experiences for instance an American history course taught in a huge lecture hall and while the professor read from the text and lectured about the text a student cut her fingernails every week. I can still hear the click-click-click of the clippers, which about made me crazy and I remember I felt sorry for the professor, because I felt he wasn’t really a bad guy, he just didn’t know another way except lecture. The other stand out memory from a different course was being required to memorize every pope (including popes of the schism) and their important contributions to the Church and Europe. I immediately forgot this useless information after the exam.

From this narrative, it seems clear that I have had many of the same perceptions of American history as documented by others. At one point I did not see that history was relevant, or all that interesting, especially not in the classroom. However, I have had definable moments which I believe led me to this interest. Thus, I must take care to consider my background thoughts and beliefs as I move forward, remaining open to the meaning of the experience of interest in American history for others.
Appendix B

Situational Interest Survey (Linnenbrink-Garcia, et al., in press)

**Part I: Interest in American History Survey**

The following questions ask about your interest in American history. This questionnaire is voluntary. You can choose to stop taking part in the project by not answering questions, or discarding the questionnaire documents. Answer as many questions as possible. But, if you feel uncomfortable with a question, you may skip it and move on.

Please circle the number that best matches your agreement with each statement below. Use the rating system with 1= *Not at all true*, through 5= *Very true*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>American history is practical for me to know.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What we are learning in American history this year can be applied to real life.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It is important to me to be a person who thinks historically (or like a historian).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What we are learning in American history class this year is fascinating to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>My American history teacher is exciting.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>We are learning valuable things in American history class this year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>This year, I really enjoy the American history we learn in class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>American history helps me in my daily life outside of school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I like what we are learning in American history this year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I enjoy the subject of American history.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Thinking historically (or like a historian) is an important part of who I am.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>American history is exciting to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I enjoy learning about American history.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The things we are studying in American history this year are important to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>My American history class is so exciting it's easy to pay attention.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When we learn about American history, my teacher does things that grab my attention.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I like American history.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I am excited about what we are learning in American history class this year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>This year, my American history class is often entertaining.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>What we are studying in American history class is useful for me to know.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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Appendix C

Class Preference in the Social Studies (Stewart, unpublished)

Part II: American History Methods

This survey asks questions about your experiences and preferences particularly in regards to your American history class. Your responses are confidential and will not be shared with teachers, parents or anyone other than the researchers.

1. For the following subjects, indicate your favorite and least favorite, using “1” for most favorite and “7” for least favorite. (Courses are listed as examples only; you did not have to take every class listed to indicate a subject as your favorite.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Course examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=favorite 7=least favorite</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Drawing, Art Appreciation, Sculpture, Drama, Music, Choir, Band</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Computer Technologies</td>
<td>Computer processing, programming, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English/Language Arts</td>
<td>Literature, English I, II, III, British Literature, Reading, Speech, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Early American History, Current Events in American History, World History, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Integrated math, algebra, geometry, calculus, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Gym, health, sport related courses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>General Science, Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy, Physics, Botany, Ecology, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Considering your most favorite from the list above, explain why it is your favorite:

3. Considering your least favorite from the list above, explain why it is your least favorite:
4. Which of the following class activities do you think your American history teacher uses the most in your current American history class?

- Daily—this activity occurs at least once every day.
- Weekly—this activity occurs at least one time a week, but not every day.
- Monthly—this activity occurs at least one time a month, but not every week.
- Once—this activity occurs at least once or twice a semester, but not every month.
- Never—this activity never occurs.

For each activity listed on the left, place an X in the space that most represents your thoughts/feelings about how often you do the activity in this class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic expression</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer simulations (<em>Carmen SanDiego, stock market games, etc.</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning (<em>Group work</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>Field Trips</td>
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<td>Guest speakers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent research (<em>Reports, internet search etc.</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture (<em>Teacher led</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mapping (<em>creating, reading, or using maps</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions assigned from the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>Readings of your choice</td>
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<td>Reading primary documents</td>
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<td>Reading the textbook</td>
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<td>Role playing</td>
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<td>Tests</td>
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<td>Video or films</td>
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<td>Worksheets</td>
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<td>Other (specify): _______________________________</td>
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</table>
5. Which activities make American history most interesting to you?

*Very much* — The activity helps to make American history interesting and you look forward to doing it.

*Somewhat* — The activity helps to make American history somewhat interesting, but it’s not that exciting.

*Doesn’t matter* — The activity neither helps to make American history or not interesting, but don’t mind doing it.

*Not at all* — The activity does not help to make American history interesting at all and would prefer not to do it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Doesn’t matter</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tr>
<td>Artistic expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning <em>(Group work)</em></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent research <em>(Reports, internet search etc.)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture <em>(Teacher led)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping <em>(creating, reading, or using maps)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions assigned from the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings of your choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading primary documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the textbook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role playing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video or films</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify): _____________________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What do you like least about American history?

Place an X on the blank to indicate your status for each of the following:

1. What is your current class standing?
   _____ Freshman   _____ Sophomore   _____ Junior   _____ Senior

2. Gender: ______ Male   ______ Female

3. With which ethnic group do you most closely identify?
   _____ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish   _____ American Indian or Native American
   _____ Asian American or Pacific Islander   _____ Black or African American
   _____ White or European American   _____ Other,
   specify: ______________________
   _____ Prefer not to respond

4. Anticipated college major?

5. Is American history one of your interests?
   ________ Yes   ________ No
Are you willing to be interviewed about your interest in American history? If so, please provide contact information:

Name: _________________________________________________________________

Email and/or phone contact: ____________________________________________
Appendix D

Survey Instructions

ID: ____________

Student Survey
University of Toledo

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our study. We are interested in finding out about student’s interest in American history and their interest in the things they do in their American History class. To help us understand what you think, it is important that you answer the attached surveys as truthfully and completely as possible. If you have questions, raise your hand and the University research will answer it.

The only people who will see your answers are the University of Toledo researchers. Your teachers, other students or administrators will not see your responses, so please be as truthful as possible. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can stop completing the questions at any time you wish.

*This questionnaire is voluntary, you may skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering, or stop at any time.
Appendix E

Interview Schedule

1. Tell me about your interest in American history.

2. (Follow-up or new query) Can you describe if something or someone influenced your interest?

3. Do you remember a time or moment when you realized you had this interest?

4. What do you think about the classroom activities listed on the survey you took in class?
   Do/did any of the activities help to make you interested…or more interested?
   (Item #4: Not asked of adult participants)

5. Anything else you would like to include?

6. Many students added –Stories‖ or storytelling to the list…what do you think they mean by this?
### Appendix F

**Standard Multiple Regression Blocks as Entered with Explanation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Discussion, debate, video, lecture</td>
<td>Teacher directed traditional methods, story-telling as an element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Field trip, cooperative learning, guest speaker</td>
<td>Non-traditional methods, reported as interesting, not experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Art, computer simulations, role play</td>
<td>Non-traditional methods, reported as interesting, rarely experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Primary documents, reading of students choice, independent research,</td>
<td>Offers student choice, but also responsibility, traditional, rarely used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Map, note taking, worksheets</td>
<td>Used frequently, not interesting but necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Test, reading the text, questions from the text</td>
<td>Used frequently, busy work and assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Traditional method reported as occurring frequently and high interest
Appendix G.1

Field and Log Notes Example 1
Appendix G.2

Field and Log Notes Example 2
Appendix G.3

Field and Log Notes Example 3
Appendix G.4

Field and Log Notes Example 4
Appendix H

Situational Interest Survey Rasch Step Measures (High School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>SCORE-TO-MEASURE</th>
<th>50% CUM.</th>
<th>COHERENCE</th>
<th>ESTIM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LABEL</td>
<td>MEASURE</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>AT CAT.----ZONE----</td>
<td>PROBABLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>(-2.83)</td>
<td>-INF</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>82% 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>-.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-.67</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>(2.88)</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>+INF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M->C = Does Measure imply Category?
C->M = Does Category imply Measure?
Appendix I

Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (PCAR) SIS (High school)

STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL VARIANCE SCREE PLOT
Table of STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL variance (in Eigenvalue units)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Modeled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total variance in observations</td>
<td>117.1 100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance explained by measures</td>
<td>97.1 82.9%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance (total)</td>
<td>20.0 17.1% 100.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 1st contrast</td>
<td>4.0 3.4% 20.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 2nd contrast</td>
<td>3.7 3.1% 18.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 3rd contrast</td>
<td>1.5 1.3% 7.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 4th contrast</td>
<td>1.4 1.2% 6.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 5th contrast</td>
<td>1.2 1.0% 5.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL CONTRAST 1 PLOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Modeled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total variance in observations</td>
<td>117.1 100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance explained by measures</td>
<td>97.1 82.9%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance (total)</td>
<td>20.0 17.1% 100.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 1st contrast</td>
<td>4.0 3.4% 20.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ITEM MEASURE

COUNT: 1 11 21 111211 112 1 1 1
Appendix J

Rasch Probability Curve for SIS Scale 11234 (High School)

\[
\begin{array}{c|cccc|c|}
\hline
P & ++ & + & + & + & + \\
R & 1.0 & + & + & + & + \\
O & | & + & + & + & + \\
B & | & | & | & | & + \\
A & 111 & | & 444 & | & + \\
B & .8 + & 11 & | & 444 & | & + \\
I & | & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
L & | & | & | & | & + \\
I & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\
L & | & 222 & 11 & 33322 & 44 & 333 & | & + \\
I & | & | & | & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\
L & | & 222 & 11 & 33322 & 44 & 333 & | & + \\
I & | & | & | & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\
L & | & 222 & 11 & 33322 & 44 & 333 & | & + \\
I & | & | & | & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\
L & | & 222 & 11 & 33322 & 44 & 333 & | & + \\
I & | & | & | & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\
L & | & 222 & 11 & 33322 & 44 & 333 & | & + \\
I & | & | & | & | & + \\
T & .6 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
Y & | & 1 & | & 4 & | & + \\
O & .5 + & 11 & | & 44 & | & + \\
F & .4 + & | & 112222222 & 333333344 & | & + \\
I & | & 22221 & 2222333 & 43333 & | & + \\ \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

PERSON [MINUS] ITEM MEASURE
Appendix K

Rasch Principal Components Analysis of Residuals (PCAR) (College)

**TANDARDIZED RESIDUAL VARIANCE SCREE PLOT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Modeled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total variance in observations</td>
<td>34.8 100.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variance explained by measures</td>
<td>14.8 42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance (total)</td>
<td>20.0 57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 1st contrast</td>
<td>4.2 12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 2nd contrast</td>
<td>2.6 7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 3rd contrast</td>
<td>2.1 6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 4th contrast</td>
<td>1.9 5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 5th contrast</td>
<td>1.4 4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL CONTRAST 1 PLOT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Modeled</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total variance in observations</td>
<td>34.8 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance explained by measures</td>
<td>14.8 42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance (total)</td>
<td>20.0 57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained variance in 1st contrast</td>
<td>4.2 12.2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L.1

Multiple Regression Results

Table A

Predictors of Interest in American History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig. F Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.569a</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>7.429</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.649b</td>
<td>.421</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>3.291</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.797c</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>11.018</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.829d</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>2.936</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.931e</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>22.427</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.945f</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.851</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>3.959</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid, I Dis
b. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid Dis, CoLn, GSp, FT
c. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid, Dis, CoLn, GSp, FT, Art, Rply, Comp
d. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid, Dis, CoLn, GSp, FT, Art, Rply, Comp, RCh, InRs, PDoc
e. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid, Dis, CoLn, GSp, FT, Art, Rply, Comp, RCh, InRs, PDoc, Map, WkSt, Notes
f. Predictors: (Constant), Lec, Deb, Vid, Dis, CoLn, GSp, FT, Art, Rply, Comp, RCh, InRs, PDoc, Map, WkSt, Notes, RTx, QTx, Test
g. Dependent Variable: lmeasure (Person Interest Measure)
Appendix L.2

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Interest in American History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE\ B$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 (Constant)</td>
<td>-3.961</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deb</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis</td>
<td>0.988</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>0.225**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vid</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lec</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.244**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.194**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoLn</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSp</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.174**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rply</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.275**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDoc</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCh</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InRs</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.204**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WkSt</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.252**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTx</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.151*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTx</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Imeasure (Person Interest Measure)

*p < .05. **p < .01.