

**“How Do I Keep These Kids Motivated?”: An Evaluation of High School Social Studies
Teachers’ Perceptions of Motivational Teaching Techniques and there Implementations**

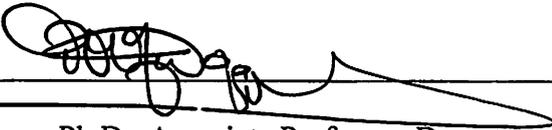
**A Master’s Research Project Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Education
Ohio University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education**

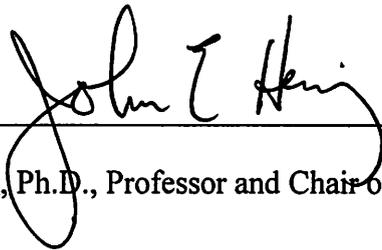
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This Master's Research Project has been approved
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate high school social studies teachers' perceptions of what effect the teaching techniques they use in their classrooms have on the motivation levels of their students. This Master's Research Project includes a literature review, a discussion of the research methodology, the study's findings and its implications. It is the hope of the author that this Master's Research Project will be beneficial to social studies educators in deciding what teaching methods to use when seeking to motivate their students.

Statement of Problem

The main goal of educators should be to create learning environments that cultivate personal growth and lead to the future successes of students beyond the classroom. In creating these environments, educators hold the liberty to decide which instructional methods they may use. This great responsibility influences the will of students to understand the information presented during lessons and their skill to know how to best participate in the learning process (Strahan, 2008). However, without the knowledge of proven teaching strategies that motivate student-learning and the proper implementations of these strategies in their classrooms, educators are doomed to provide egregious disservices to their students and, ultimately, community.

By increasing the motivation levels of their students, social studies teachers are able to increase the levels of their students' academic achievement. Social studies educators may use a wide variety of educational methods and tools, but the methods and techniques they choose are crucial to attaining high levels of student motivation (Peters, 1994).

Research Question

The research questions in this study are as follows: “What teaching techniques do high school social studies teachers believe positively affect motivation levels of their students?” and “What teaching techniques do these teachers use in their classrooms?”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the perceptions social studies teachers have regarding what teaching methods they believe best motivate their students and to what extent they implement the strategies they believe are motivating to their students. The purpose of the literature review is to evaluate whether the findings in published research studies regarding student-motivation by educational scholars are reflective of the practices used by the social studies teachers in this study.

Limitations

For the purpose of this study, eight social studies educators teaching at Rosebud High School were surveyed. The school is located in Rosebud, an affluent suburban city neighboring Columbus, Ohio. Neither the high school, nor the eight teachers who participated in the study were chosen at random. The high school in which the study was conducted was chosen because of the author’s access to the building and the participants teaching in it as a substitute teacher during the 2008-2009 academic school year. As a substitute teacher, the author had personal contact with the participants, but only as a colleague. Never during the study, did the author observe the participants in the classroom-setting, thus, the findings of this study are limited to the self-reporting of the participants.

The participating teachers were chosen based on the grade levels of students they taught. The participants taught courses spanning grades 9 – 12. Each grade level was represented by at

least two participants who taught courses that correspond to each of the aforementioned grade levels. This was done in an attempt to create a population sample that provides better understanding of the motivational teaching methods used by educators to teach students at each grade level of high school. A gender breakdown of the participating educators reveals five males and three females. All information gleaned from this study is limited to the high school in which the participants taught.

The literature review focuses on teaching strategies and their correlations to student motivation. The studies in the literature review range from quantitative studies that extrapolate data over many schools in several regions of the United States to qualitative studies that rely on the anecdotal evidence of a single educator. The research literature provides a multitude of teaching strategies designed to motivate students regarding social studies education. Not all of the strategies examined in the review are proven to be successful in motivating students. Ultimately, the literature studied in the review is limited to those studies that are published in scholarly journals and educational publications on file in the Ohio University Libraries system and those made available by other Ohio colleges and universities that are members of OhioLINK, the Ohio Library and Information Network.

Methodology

The collection of data for the study was completed through a survey that was completed anonymously by the eight participating teachers. The survey featured seven questions that were designed to identify four variables that are routinely identified in the literature on teachers' perceptions of student motivation. The four variables are as follows: Years of Teaching Experience, Grade Level Taught, Teaching Methods Used, and Differentiation of Teaching

Methods Used. The seven-question survey used in the study featured three guided questions and four open-response questions.

Organization of the Study

Chapter Two is a review of research literature relevant to the topic, which seeks to determine what teaching techniques high school social studies teachers believe positively affect motivation levels of their students and what teaching techniques have been proven to positively affect student motivation levels. Chapter Three details the methodology used in this Master's Research Project and Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Chapter Five concludes the Master's Research Project by summarizing its findings and presenting recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching techniques educators use in their classrooms greatly affect the levels of motivation and, subsequently, achievement attained by their students. Motivating students has long been a vexing issue for educators. As John Dewey (1916) pointed out, “Method is not antithetical to subject matter, it is the effective direction of subject matter to desired results” (Dewey, p. 165).

Alfie Kohn (1993) argues that motivation is an intrinsic entity that exists in each student and must be allowed to flourish. Kohn believes that the role of educators is not to motivate students, but rather to create stimulating settings in which learning is possible. “Given an environment in which they don’t feel controlled and in which they are encouraged to think about what they are doing (rather than how well they are doing it) students of any age will generally exhibit an abundance of motivation and a healthy appetite for challenge” (Kohn, p. 199).

Furthermore, Kohn sees the use of extrinsic motivators such as grades as destructive to student motivation because they focus students’ attention on their performance rather than the knowledge they are gaining. Learning must become a pursuit of knowledge based on information and experiences gained, not punishments and rewards (Kohn, p. 211).

Kohn presents five suggestions to teachers help them create learning environments that promote self-motivated learning in students. His first suggestion is to “Allow for active learning,” which includes presenting hands-on activities that give students the freedom to use all of their physical senses, rather than just listen to lectures. The second suggestion is to “Give the reason for an assignment.” This involves explaining to students why they are learning about the assignment and why they should be motivated to learn about it. Suggestion three is to “Elicit

their curiosity.” This suggestion includes asking students to hypothesize why certain events happened as they did or what events will happen in the future. The fourth suggestion is to “Set an example.” By this, Kohn encourages teachers to present themselves as positive role models who seek out learning opportunities and overcome challenges. Suggestion five is to “Welcome mistakes,” which involves fostering environments where students are not afraid to take intellectual risks (Kohn, pp. 211-213).

Kohn’s argues that educators should give students the freedom to explore their surroundings and find the endeavors that inherently motivate them. He believes that teachers should work collaboratively with students to determine the best practices in learning. By creating a positive and collaborative environment, students will be intrinsically motivated to learn.

Through the course of reviewing literature for this Master’s Research Project, several common variables concerning teachers’ perceptions of student motivation appeared. These variables, as previously mentioned in Chapter One, include: Years of Teaching Experience, Grade Level Taught, Teaching Methods Used, and Differentiation of Teaching Methods Used. Each variable will be discussed separately and subsequently in this chapter.

Years of Teaching Experience

The amount of years of teaching experience educators have appears to play a significant role in the teaching methods they regularly implement and their perceptions of how these methods motivate students. Gardner (1996) found that, generally, teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience believe students must learn to become “self-motivated” through independent assignments, such as note-taking and in-class essays, while teachers with less than five years of teaching experience struggle to develop assignments their students deem “challenging.”

In Gardner's observations, teachers with more years of teaching experience were more likely to place students in dichotomous categories, such as, "those who perform well versus those who do poorly on tasks and tests," while she quoted several first-year teachers as saying, "I hope this works," regarding their lesson plans (Gardner, pp. 20-21). Gardner concludes that teachers can motivate students regardless of their years of experience if they develop "inquiry-based" lessons which she described as "thought provoking tasks that require the organization of knowledge and a wide selection of assessments." While she concedes that this process may be difficult to develop initially, she argues that the process can be repeated several times with many different lessons that achieve equal success (Gardner, p. 33).

Allen's (1995) research shows similar findings regarding the effect educators' years of teaching experience has on what they believe motivates students to succeed in the classroom. Allen argues that more experienced teachers are more dependent upon traditional teaching techniques such as direct instruction and guided note-taking while entry-level educators are often too overwhelmed in the classroom to develop any true sense of what motivates their students.

Allen argues that new social studies teachers are often too unprepared when entering the classroom to give proper consideration to student motivation. He ascribes this unpreparedness to a lack of experience in day-to-day lesson planning and school structure that one must log before assuming the role of teacher. He advocates increasing the number of student-teaching observation hours required for certification and raising the screening levels of mentor teachers. Allen argues that this lack of preparedness in new teachers leads them to rely too heavily on textbooks and prepared worksheets, thus, neglecting to assess what teaching methods motivate their students (Allen, p. 74).

After examining his research findings, Allen concludes, “Unfortunately for innovative teachers of social studies there is little substantive support for motivating, engaging styles of social studies experiences. No textbook exists, so teachers must design their own learning units. Few teachers organize learning this way in their classrooms, and thus there are few models to emulate” (Allen, p. 75).

Grade Level Taught

The literature review for this study revealed a discrepancy between social studies teachers in the middle school setting and those in the high school setting. Social studies teachers in the middle school setting appear to be more focused on “task-driven” activities, which “call for the development of opinions that will not be scrutinized for their adequacy” (Stevenson, 1990, p. 339). Conversely, high school social studies teachers seeking to motivate students tend to focus more upon class discussions that center on human experiences that occur throughout time (Kincade, 1996).

Hootstein (1994) conducted a qualitative study in which he interviewed 18 U.S. history teachers of eighth-graders in seven middle schools in a Pacific Northwest school district. The study sought to determine what strategies social studies teachers use to motivate students and why they believe they work. The study showed the five most frequently mentioned strategies were simulations, projects, games, historical novels, and relating history to the present. All of the teachers expressed their beliefs that the aforementioned activities encourage active participation, thus, motivating students to accomplish the assignment they are given.

Hootstein suggests that teachers can make social studies courses motivating by including supplemental activities, such as simulations and student-centered projects, rather than trying to make class textbooks more interesting. The data of his study show that teachers in the middle

school setting attribute less importance to the relevance of subject matter than to their attempts to stimulate students' interests with a variety of motivational strategies that students may find interesting (Hootstein, 1994).

Kincade's (1996) study is a qualitative review of her experiences as a high school social studies teacher. Finishing her sixth year of teaching at the time of her article's publication, Kincade argues that students must be helped by their teachers to view history, "as a living subject, rather than as a dead one useful only for passing tests and getting into good colleges" (Kincade, p. 10). Through continual use of class discussions, Kincade contends she has been able to motivate students to elicit excitement concerning social studies.

Kincade also asserts that teachers must allow high school students the freedom to establish their own rules of discussion. Establishing a civil decorum of discussion may take students several attempts and teachers should intervene only when attacks become personal or physical. Kincade argues that this approach allows high school students the freedom and comfort to share their thoughts, which, in turn, motivates them to learn more about the discussion topic so they may share their opinions (Kincade, 1996).

After interviewing six social studies teachers and 50 students divided between three high school and three middle schools, Stevenson (1990) asserts that there is a, "seeming general absence of higher-level cognitive work from U.S. history classrooms" and that evidence suggests that, "students may resist solving challenging problems" (p. 329). He implies that these student practices of low-level thinking in social studies classrooms may be the product of the traditional teaching practices used by middle school and high school teachers.

Rather than relying on the traditional teaching method of a lecturing teacher dictating notes to students, Stevenson believes teachers should create lessons that involve active student

participation and asserts that it is the responsibility of the early education teachers to begin to engage students' interests in the subject matter during their maturation into young adulthood. Once students are engaged in social studies activities, teachers may begin to utilize the students' intrinsic forms of motivation. Throughout students' school careers, their academic tasks must be cognitively challenging so mastery of the intended learning outcomes can be achieved and built upon for future learning (Stevenson, 1990).

Teaching Methods Used

The teaching methods social studies educators use play a large role in academic studies involving teachers' perspectives of student motivation. Thornton's (1998) analysis of 20th century social studies pedagogy is founded upon his argument that, "The daunting task of motivating students to learn what we think they should learn depends far more on the purposes and methods brought to bear in the classroom than on a curriculum proposed by a national commission or mandated by a state education agency" (p. 1).

Thornton concludes his analysis by stating that the importance of social studies education lies in the teaching methods educators use to motivate students, not the curriculum they teach. Subject matter and instructional methods should not have a dichotomous relationship. The two should be addressed concurrently when determining how to best motivate students in social studies classrooms (Thornton, 1998).

Using a pre-test, post-test design, Gehlbach, Brown, Ioannou, Boyer, Hudson, Niv-Solomon, Maneggia and Janik (2008) examined 305 middle school students who participated in a web-based simulation. Previous research cited by the authors shows that the motivation levels of students typically begin to decrease during their middle school years. However, in their study, participants in the simulation became more motivated and interested in social studies. Through a

breakdown of the data they collected, the authors suggest that the students' interests in social studies were bolstered by two factors: "the challenging nature of the activity, and the students' increased propensity to engage in social perspective taking" (Gehlbach et al., 2008, p. 911).

Gehlbach et al. argue that simulations serve as the best teaching method to use in order to evoke the two factors that their study found bolsters student motivation.

Rather than using simulations in the classroom setting to increase student motivation, McKay (1997) strongly supports the use of life experiences in one's community. She calls this teaching technique the "operational teaching and learning method" and defines it as, "the offering of young people real opportunities to be effective citizens in ways that are meaningful to them and their life experiences" (p. 166). McKay argues that the true focus of social studies education is that of promoting citizenship and stewardship in one's community. With these educational goals in focus, she asserts that development of student motivation is inherent in the operational teaching and learning method because students can directly and instantly see the impacts their schoolwork has on their communities.

In an operational perspective of social studies, students learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be effective citizens by taking direct, active roles in their communities. Social studies teachers using this teaching method present their students with real challenges that transfer their studies outside of the classroom. It is these experiences outside of the classroom that propel student motivation (McKay, 1997).

Differentiation of Teaching Methods Used

Numerous studies cite specific teaching methods as being highly effective in motivating students. The authors of these studies are themselves educators and, thus, present their thoughts and experiences regarding motivating students. Also, many educators warn of the dangers of not

differentiating instruction, which will lead to boredom – the opposite of the intended purpose of the lesson. A well-planned activity that promotes active learning in the social studies classroom means little to students when it is the same activity they completed a week earlier (Bennett, 2007).

Bennett's (2007) qualitative analysis presents several teaching styles she and many of her colleagues have successfully used in the high school setting to motivate students. Bennett's tactics include allowing students to examine their cultural backgrounds, connecting local history with world history, leading class discussions, and individualizing assessments.

Bennett acknowledges that each of the teaching methods she introduces includes a common theme of flexibility. She argues that social studies teachers must be flexible in their approaches to teaching in order to accommodate unique student interests and talents. By being flexible in their lesson planning, social studies teachers are less likely to miss opportunities for “teachable moments” when student interactions present them. “Students are motivated to learn when the content of the lesson relates to their daily life” (Bennett, 2007, p. 4).

Likewise, Gerzon-Kessler (2006) presents five principles designed to motivate students and boost their academic achievements. The principles include: Convey a sense of urgency; Develop personal bonds; Foster a joy of learning; Raise the bar with high expectations; and Cultivate social and emotional intelligence.

Gerzon-Kessler's first principle, Convey a sense of urgency, is designed to express to students that education is an integral part of their lives. Students must be challenged by assignments that demand critical thinking skills and stress a relationship to their daily lives. However, Gerzon-Kessler warns that without developing positive rapport and personal bonds, which is Principle Two, they may not respond positively to the academic challenges.

Developing personal bonds can be done through subtle ways such as maintaining a friendly nature and positive outlook. Also, Gerzon-Kessler strongly suggests eliciting student input regarding lessons and making time in the school day to address them. By maintaining positive attitudes, teachers can foster a joy of learning in their students, which is the third principle.

Creating daily routines and rituals in the classroom fosters a learning environment that is safe and comfortable for students. Greeting students at the entrance of the classroom and providing a daily warm-up routine to begin lessons are methods to accomplish this goal. Once teachers have fostered in their students a joy of learning, they can accomplish the fourth principle, raising the bar with high expectations (Gerzon-Kessler, 2006).

Raising the bar with high expectations extends beyond classroom achievement. Gerzon-Kessler uses the confidence students gain through achievement in the classroom to motivate them to take active roles in the school and local communities. By knowing their teachers care about their achievement and actions, Gerzon-Kessler believes students are motivated to continue to make positive decisions well after class is in session.

The fifth principle, cultivate social and emotional intelligence, encourages students to be proud of their accomplishments and express their feelings in positive ways. The life skills of punctuality and politeness are emphasized in this final principle. Students are motivated to acquire life skills that transfer to daily situations because they have the confidence that they can succeed in the tasks they are assigned in the classroom. The author believes that students can be motivated to achieve well beyond the classroom (Gerzon-Kessler, 2006).

In a study also linking several teaching principles to increasing student motivation, Margolis and McCabe (2004) present a plan to give students assignments at their individual

learning levels to avoid increasing their frustration levels. The authors leave the assessment of individual learning levels up to the individual educator and suggest taking time to develop positive relationships with each student in order to best evaluate his or her ability levels.

Margolis and McCabe state that frequently linking new assignments to recent successes helps build confidence in young learners. The authors also suggest that educators should teach their students learning strategies, such as sequencing tasks from easiest to most difficult, in order to build their confidence and motivation as they complete assignments. To reinforce these actions, students who achieve at higher levels and are willing to assist classmates, should act as peer models of motivation. The end goal of this process is to mold confident and motivated students who independently create personal goals for achievement (Margolis & McCabe, 2004).

The authors also provide caveats when implementing this approach. During the process of implementing these teaching principles, teachers must monitor their effects on students, and continue to use and refine the principles that work and modify or abandon those that do not. Moreover, the assignments created to build students' respective confidence levels must be intrinsically interesting tasks that challenge and motivate them (Margolis & McCabe, 2004).

Summary

A review of the research literature on educators' beliefs about teaching methods that motivate students reveals several discrepancies among social studies teachers. First, a difference of opinion exists between social studies teachers with a greater number of years of teaching experience than those with fewer years. More experienced teachers tend to rely on traditional methods of teaching that are criticized by other educators, such as Allen (1995), yet less experienced teachers lack the training to fully execute motivational teaching methods. Likewise, opinions differ between middle school social studies teachers and high school social studies

teachers regarding which teaching methods motivate students. Hootstein (1994) found a majority of middle teachers believed that projects that are driven by their students' interests motivate them, while Kincade (1996) argued that high school students are motivated by free-flowing and civil class discussions.

The academic articles reviewed provided advice regarding which teaching methods have shown evidence of increasing student motivation, but fall short in practical implementation. For example, the time needed for the individualized instruction recommended in several studies, such as Gerzon-Kessler's (2006), and Margolis and McCabe's (2004), may not be available to every social studies teacher. For example, the participants in this study averaged 22 students per 43-minute class period. To instruct each individually would have left the participants with less than two minutes per student for one-on-one instruction. Therefore, it is of interest to my study to understand what teaching methods high school social studies teachers believe motivate students during the time the teachers are available to instruct them. Also of interest is to what extent the participating teachers suggested they establish learning environments, described by Kohn (1993), which are designed to intrinsically motivate students to seek their own avenues of study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Background

This study was conducted through a survey that was completed anonymously by eight participating high school social studies teachers [see Appendix A]. The survey was designed to identify the four variables that were identified in the literature review regarding teachers' perceptions of student motivation: Years of Teaching Experience, Grade Level Taught, Teaching Methods Used, and Differentiation of Teaching Methods Used. The seven-question survey used in the study featured three guided questions and four open-response questions.

The eight social studies teachers who agreed to participate in this study all taught at Rosebud High School located in Rosebud, a suburban city in Ohio. The participating teachers were chosen based on the grade level of students they taught. The participants taught courses spanning grades 9 – 12. Each grade level was represented by two participants who taught courses that corresponded to each of the aforementioned grade levels. This was done in an attempt to create a population sample that would provide a better understanding of the motivational methods these teachers used at each high school grade level. The participating teachers included five males and three females. The author did not observe the participants teaching in the classroom setting, thus the results of the study are limited to the self-reporting of the participants.

The school and community in which the participants were employed are thriving and continue to grow. According to the 2000 United States Census, more than 31,000 people lived in community and, in 2009, Rosebud's municipal government estimated its population at more than 37,000 people.

Among Rosebud's student population, 50.6% are male, while 49.4% are female. Racially, 81.6% are identified as White. Asian-Americans compose the largest minority group with 13.8% of the population, while 2.3% of the population identify themselves as African-American. Concerning social and economic characteristics, the U.S. Census information reveals a highly educated and financially prosperous community in comparison to the national averages.

Of the population 25 years of age and older, 97.8% have graduated high school and 70.8% have earned bachelor's degrees, which are markedly higher percentages than the national averages of 80.4% and 24.4%, respectively. Also, the Rosebud community has a vacant housing percentage of 7.3%, which is nearly half the national average of 11.6%.

According to 2000 U.S. Census data, 73.9% of the population 16 years of age and older were in the workforce, which was well above the national average of 64.7%. The median family income was also well above the national average. The average family living in the community earned \$126,402 annually, while the national average per family earned was less than half of that at \$60,374 annually. The high income levels for city families reflect the strikingly low percentage of families below the poverty level, 2.9%, which was nearly one-third lower than the national average of 9.2%.

The U.S. Census data reveal the affluent nature of the city. High economic standards coupled with high levels of educational achievement, as seen in the high levels of high school and college graduates in the community, form a positive duo that perpetuates the city's high economic and academic achievement.

According to the 2008-2009 School Year Report Card issued by the Ohio Department of Education (2009), Rosebud High School served nearly 1,800 students. The entire district served more than 13,000 students. Of those students attending the high school, 96.1% of students had

passed the Social Studies Content section of the Ohio Graduation Test by the end of their sophomore years while 99% had done so by the end of their junior year. These percentages were well above the state averages of 81.6% and 88.6% of students passing at the respective grade levels.

The recent socio-economic data collected by the Ohio Department of Education (2009) concerning Rosebud High School's students are similar to the community data of the 2000 United States Census. An overwhelming majority of the students who attended the school, 79.6%, were White with the largest minority group being Asian or Pacific Islander at 12.2%. Of the student population, 6.9% were identified as "economically disadvantaged" and 8.7% were identified as having learning disabilities. The racial homogeneity and economic affluence of the city clearly were reflective of similar characteristics at the high school.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected by use of a seven-question survey (See Appendix A). The questions used in the survey were chosen in order to gain insight regarding the motivational teaching methods used by the participating teachers, their rationales as to why they used them and why they believed their methods are motivational.

Participation by each of the participants was sought by directly approaching him or her individually and requesting his or her participation. All eight participants who were invited agreed to participate and were given two days to complete the survey. The participants were asked not to share their responses with their colleagues in hopes of preserving their honest opinions and avoiding bias in their answers.

Each of the participants returned his or her completed survey within the two day time frame. The responses were detailed and concise. Because the data provided sufficient insight

regarding the participants' beliefs and practices of motivational teaching methods, no further follow-up questioning was pursued.

Data Analysis

Because of the small sample size and the use of open-response questions, the collected data was analyzed using the qualitative research method. Best and Kahn (2006) define qualitative research as studying, "a particular sample of persons...because of the sample's usefulness...that describe in-depth detailed descriptions...that permit fuller understanding of what is being studied that could not be derived from other experimental research methods" (p. 251).

All of the answers from the surveys were categorized based on distinct differences and similarities. Specifically, the categories from Chapter Two's literature review, Years of Teaching Experience, Grade Level Taught, Teaching Methods Used, and Differentiation Teaching Methods Used, were used to analyze the data. This was done in order to aid in the drawing of comparisons of this study's findings to those of the studies detailed in the literature review.

After analyzing each of the participants' responses for certain distinguishing characteristics, each was assigned to its respective category. For example, the instructional terminology the participants used in their responses determined how each was categorized in "Teaching Methods Used." Furthermore, responses using terminology such as "lecture" or "direct instruction" were grouped together and separated from others such as "jigsaw" and "simulation."

As previously addressed in Chapter One, the limitations of this study include the non-random sampling of its participants and their employment at the same high school. Also, the affluent nature and academic success of the general student and greater community population,

which was addressed earlier in this chapter, limit this study's findings to similar suburban communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the completed surveys of the eight participating social studies teachers. Data was analyzed based on four categories: Years of Teaching Experience; Grade Level Taught; Teaching Methods Used, and Differentiation of Teaching Methods Used. The names of all participants were changed to protect their anonymity.

Years of Teaching Experience

Of the eight participants, the breakdown of completed school Years of Teaching Experience is as follows (Table 1).

Table 1
Years of Teaching Experience among the Participants

NAME	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Adam	4 years
Betty	28 years
Cathy	15 years
Dave	16 years
Evan	12 years
Frank	21 years
Gary	8 years
Harriet	2 years

The data collected reveal striking similarities to studies analyzed in Chapter Two's Literature Review. Like Gardner's (1996) findings, the teachers with a greater number of years of teaching experience appeared to rely more upon direct instruction as their preferred motivational method of teaching while teachers with less years of teaching experience tended to use simulations and discussions in their classrooms to motivate students.

With 28 years of teaching experience, Betty had been teaching the longest of all participants. In response to Question Four on the survey, "What teaching methods do you believe motivate students to be actively engaged in the classroom? Why?" her response was as follows:

I like to use lecture and note-taking in my class. I think this motivates students because they have to pay attention to my class in order to understand what we're going over. Also, lecturing prepares the students to go on to college and take notes from their professors.

Similarly, Frank, who had 21 years of teaching experience, responded to Question Four with the following:

PowerPoint lessons where the kids take notes are good at developing their note-taking skills that they will need in college. The PowerPoints motivate them because they are interesting to look at and they know that in order to pass the tests, they need to pay attention and take notes.

Contrary to Betty and Frank's responses, Adam, who had four years of teaching experience, answered the following:

I think projects and class discussions best motivate students because they force them to take a "hands on" approach to learning.

In corresponding fashion to Adam's answer, Harriet, who had two years of teaching experience, responded to Question Four as follows:

I believe assigning my students projects to complete is an effective way to motivate them because it allows them to use their talents and interests to complete the coursework.

As for the teachers who had between eight years to 16 Years of Teaching Experience, Gary Evan, Cathy and Dave, their responses varied but all purported an interest in student-centered projects and simulations. Gary and Cathy each noted that they liked class discussions, Evan preferred simulations, and Dave enjoyed assigning his students projects in which they have the ability to conduct research on certain historical events and choose their medium for presentation. None of them mentioned lectures or direct instruction.

Years of Teaching Experience appears to make no discernable difference among the participants regarding Questions One, Two and Three. Questions One, Two and Three on the survey asked the participants to rate their responses to a statement regarding motivational teaching methods on 1 – 5 scale. Question One asked participants to rate their support of the following statement, "Educators should work to understand what teaching methods motivate students." The 1 – 5 scale was labeled in a range that listed 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree." Question Two asked the following, "When planning lessons, what importance do you place on encouraging student motivation?" Participants were asked to rate their responses to Question Two based on a 1 – 5 scale range that listed 1 as "least important" and 5 as "most important." Question Three asked the following, "When evaluating the academic performance of students in the classroom, what importance do their motivation levels play?" Question Three used the same scale as Question Two. Each of the participants responded to each of the questions

with either a four or five, which represented high levels of agreement or importance. Therefore, all of the participants claim to place high importance to identifying, encouraging and maintaining the motivation levels of students.

Grade Level Taught

The most noticeable difference regarding the motivational teaching methods used among different grade levels of students taught is that typically the more Years of Teaching Experience the teachers had correlated with teaching at higher grade levels, while less Years of Teaching Experience correlated with teaching students at lower grade levels. For instance, Betty, the most experienced educator, taught 11th graders and 12th graders while Adam, the second least experienced educator, teaches 9th graders and 10th graders. A breakdown of Grade Level Taught is as follows (Table 2).

Table 2
Grade Level of Students Taught among the Participants

NAME	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	GRADE LEVEL OF STUDENTS TAUGHT
Adam	4 years	9 th graders and 10 th graders
Betty	28 years	11 th graders and 12 th graders
Cathy	15 years	12 th graders
Dave	16 years	10 th graders and 11 th graders
Evan	12 years	9 th graders and 12 th graders
Frank	21 years	10 th graders and 12 th graders
Gary	8 years	9 th graders
Harriet	2 years	10 th graders

As previously mentioned, the teachers with more Years of Teaching Experience typically relied more upon lecture-based lessons to motivate students, while those with less Years of Teaching Experience tended to use student-centered projects and simulations to motivate their students. These teachers with more years of experience also typically taught students at upper grade levels, while those with less years of experience taught students at lower grade levels. Therefore, the most observable trend regarding teaching strategies used to motivate students and grade level taught was that the upper the grade level of students taught, the more likely teacher used direct instruction to motivate students, while the lower the grade level taught, the more likely the teacher used student-centered projects to motivate students. This trend is parallel to the findings of Stevenson (1990) and Kincade (1996).

For instance, Frank and Betty were the only two teachers to cite lectures and note-taking as motivational teaching methods. Betty taught 11th graders and 12th graders, while Frank taught 10th graders and 12th graders. On the contrary, the teachers who mentioned projects as a motivational teaching strategy, Adam, Harriet and Dave, all taught students who are below 12th grade, with Dave being the only teacher of the three who taught students at 11th grade.

In the category of grade level of students taught, there were three outliers, Cathy, Gary and Evan, who do not fit the aforementioned trend. Cathy and Gary both mentioned class discussions as motivational teaching methods, but taught students at different ends of the grade level spectrum. Cathy taught only 12th graders, while Gary taught only 9th graders. Likewise, Evan, who preferred simulations to motivate students, taught 9th graders and 12th graders. This suggests that while grade level of students taught may help one infer the types of teaching methods the participants used to motivate students, it is not the decisive factor.

Teaching Methods Used

Regarding Teaching Methods Used, there was a wide variety of answers as to why they used the teaching methods they believed are motivational to the students in their classrooms. Question Five, “Do you use these teaching methods in your classroom? Why or why not?” was used to evaluate the topic of Teaching Methods Used. Most commonly, the participants cited the ability to provide their students with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and the freedom to choose the methods of assessment in which they wanted to be evaluated. These responses correlated with the classroom environments promoted by Kohn (1993) which he believes foster intrinsic motivation in students.

For example, Gary, who responded that he likes to use class discussions to motivate students, answered the following to Question Five:

Yes, I do. I use [class discussions] because they help the students examine the topics on their own and form their own opinions. This motivates them because they can take an active role in the class and decide whether they agree or disagree.

Adam, who responded that he likes to use class discussions and projects in his classes, answered the following to Question Five:

Yes. I like to do projects in my class because students can use the things they like and relate it to my class. This motivates them to do their best work because they'll probably enjoy it more. Class discussions are good for having students look at a topic from more than one side – not just “black and white.”

Dave also enjoyed assigning his students projects as a motivational tool. His response to Question Five was as follows:

Yes, because they are fun for the students and they learn more in-depth about the subjects we study. I give them lots of options and they can do whatever they want (within reason) to complete the project.

The two teachers who responded that they use direct instruction to motivate students, Betty and Frank, hoped to prepare students for learning beyond high school. Betty's answer to Question Five was as follows:

Yes, I use lectures to better prepare my students for college learning. Most of my students go on to college and understand that developing note-taking skills is critical to their success. The ability to follow along and take notes is an important skill that they need to have.

Frank's beliefs echoed Betty's answer. His response to Question Five was as follows:

Yes. I like PowerPoints because they help get the kids ready for college. Most of them want to go on to college, so they're motivated to take notes because they know how important it is to passing my class.

Regardless of the participants' answers as to why they use the teaching methods they do to motivate students, they all had the best interests of the students in mind. Based on their answers, one may assume the participants desired to encourage their students to learn and prepare them for life outside of their respective classrooms.

Differentiation of Teaching Methods Used

To evaluate the differentiation of teaching methods the participants used to motivate students, their responses to Questions Six and Seven on the survey were analyzed. Question Six asked, "How often do you use these teaching methods?" and Question Seven asked, "What issues/factors encourage or prevent you from using these teaching methods?"

Common themes among the participants' responses included using a variety of teaching methods, and citing time limits and amount of content they must address as restrictive factors. These themes reflect Tassinari's (1996) study in which he stated, "Creating meaningful lessons takes a great deal of time but is well worth the effort. Teachers only have a small amount of time each day with their students, so they need to make the most of it" (p. 17).

In response to Questions Six and Seven, Cathy summed up much of the participants' thoughts regarding differentiation of teaching methods. She answered the following to Question Six regarding how often she uses motivational teaching methods:

I probably use class discussions once per two weeks. I really like them but they are difficult to plan and can become boring for the students if you do it too many times.

She answered the following for Question Seven regarding factors that encourage or prevent the use of motivational teaching methods:

There is just too much material to cover to have discussions all of the time. I like to throw them in there every now and again, but we wouldn't get anything done if we did them all the time. The 43-minute periods limit what we can do.

Dave, who preferred projects to motivate his students, had similar thoughts regarding Questions Six and Seven. He answered the following to Question Six regarding the frequency with he uses his preferred motivational teaching method:

My students do big projects about once a quarter. They take quite a bit of time to complete, so they can't be done all the time. In between them, we do smaller projects that only take one or two class periods. We do these about once every week or two.

Dave also cited time and content as restricting forces regarding Question Seven. His response was as follows:

There are too many content standards and not enough time to do a lot of projects.

I wish we could do more, but I have to make sure we cover all of the material by the end of the year.

Betty and Frank, the two teachers who used lecture-based lessons to motivate their students both mentioned the efficiency with which they could address content using their methods of choice. Betty answered the follow to Question Six:

I typically lecture three days a week. As a college prep teacher, I want my students to be prepared for college-level learning.

Her answer to Question Seven expressed her belief that the amount of content she addresses in her class is an encouragement, not a hindrance, for her to use her preferred motivational teaching method. Her response was as follows:

The amount of content that I must cover encourages me to lecture. It is the most efficient and effective way to present the material in the time I have.

Frank also used his preferred motivational teaching method, direct instruction, in his classes more than once a week. His response to Question Six was as follows:

I lecture about three to four times a week. I feel like it's the best way to get everything done that I need to.

Much like Betty, Frank believed direct instruction is an efficient teaching method. His answer to Question Seven was as follows:

There is a lot of material to cover in a really short amount of time. Lecturing is a good way to cover all of the info and get the kids ready for college.

All eight of the participating teachers expressed time constraints as an issue affecting the number of times they instruct using their preferred teaching methods. These responses from the participating teachers are counter to the argument of Margolis and McCabe (2004) which encourages teachers to individualize their instruction to the ability levels of each of their students.

Summary

The participants' answers to this study's survey provided enlightening insights into what social studies teachers perceive to be effective motivational teaching methods. Much like Gardner's (1996) findings, the participants in this study expressed the greatest differences of opinion when they were categorized based on their respective Years of Teaching Experience. Those teachers with more Years of Teaching Experience relied far more on direct instruction to motivate students than those with fewer Years of Teaching Experience who preferred student-centered projects and simulations as motivational teaching methods.

Both Betty and Frank, with respectively 28 and 21 Years of Teaching Experience, stated that they use direct instruction to acclimate students for collegiate academics and to motivate them to be attentive in class. Kohn (1993), however, argues that the use of direct instruction does not motivate students to learn. "The implication here seems to be that the central purpose of school is not to get children excited about learning but to get them acclimated to doing mind-numbing chores" (Kohn, p. 218).

The grade levels at which the participants taught did not appear to be a significant factor. The more noticeable difference was that the more Years of Teaching Experience the teachers had, the more likely they taught students at upper grade levels. This observation may be due to

an unofficial hierarchy that existed at Rosebud High School as seniority in faculty status translated to teaching students at upper grade levels.

Another common theme that emerged from the data was the limited amount of time the teachers professed they had with their students and the large amount of content they were obligated to address in the courses they teach. All eight of the participants stated time constants as a major issue regarding the use of their preferred motivational teaching methods as Rosebud High School used an eight-period schedule with 43 minutes reserved for each class.

Also, six of the eight participants argued the large amount of content they must address in the courses they teach as a factor that impacted the use of their preferred motivational techniques. Many of the courses these social studies teachers taught spanned several centuries of history. These courses appear to include numerous events and concepts in history. The amount of time teachers are given to educate their students appears to play a large role in their determination of what teaching methods they implement to motivate their students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The participants in this study were eight social studies teachers who all taught at the same suburban high school. The participants were chosen based on the grade levels of students they taught. This was done to create a population sample that included teachers at all four grades that comprise the traditional high school setting – grades 9 - 12. The participants completed a seven-question survey that featured three guided questions and four open-response questions.

The principal questions of this study sought to determine what teaching techniques high school social studies teachers believe positively affect motivation levels of their students and what teaching techniques these teachers use in their classrooms. The review of similar literature reveals several discrepancies among social studies educators.

First, a difference of opinion exists between social studies teachers with greater numbers of years of experience teaching than those with fewer years of teaching experience. More experienced teachers in this study tended to rely on direct instruction and lecturing, while less experienced teachers tended to use class student-centered projects and simulations to motivate students. Further study into this discrepancy may reveal more information as to whether this is a larger trend throughout Social Studies education in the United States or simply isolated to the participants of this study.

As stated in Chapter Four, teachers with a greater number of years of teaching experience tended to view their roles as teachers as that of guides to collegiate education. Their views of higher education were based on their beliefs that these institutions rely upon direct instruction to motivate and educate students. Therefore, the participants with greater numbers of years of

teaching experience expressed beliefs that high school social studies teachers must prepare students for such teaching methods. The literature review showed that these beliefs counter those shared by progressive educators such as John Dewey and Alfie Kohn who argue that motivation to learn is intrinsic and cannot be forced. Also, the literature review revealed that individualized instruction is a proven teaching method for improving students' levels of motivation (Margolis and McCabe, 2004).

Conclusions

At the high school in which this study took place, social studies teachers' opinions of what teaching methods motivate students differed greatly. This difference was especially apparent among teachers with different numbers of years of teaching experience. Those teachers with more years of teaching experience relied far more on lecturing and directing students to record personal notes than those teachers with fewer years of teaching experience. Teachers with fewer years of teaching experience believed class simulations and discussions are the best teaching methods to use to motivate students.

In addition, teachers with more years of teaching experience tended to teach students in high grade levels. An unofficial hierarchy based upon seniority of years taught at the school might have existed in which the teachers with more years of teaching experience taught students at upper grade levels while teachers with fewer years of experience taught students at lower grade levels.

Social studies teachers are free to determine which teaching methods they use to motivate the students in their classrooms. However, regardless of the methods they implement to motivate them, they should use a wide variety of instructional methods in order to include all students and their individual learning styles. Furthermore, continuing education is vital to teachers' sustained

successes as motivational educators. Social studies teachers must be active in seeking new teaching methods that have proven to be successful in motivating students.

The results of this study are limited to the high school in which it was conducted and the eight social studies teachers who participated in it. Based on the affluent nature of the high school and the community it serves, correlations to other social studies teachers in different high schools would be limited to those with similar socio-economic and academic statistics. Similarly, this study is limited to teachers in the social studies field regarding preferred motivational teaching methods and would not reflect the opinions of educators teaching in different content areas.

The socio-economic data from the 2000 U.S. Census revealed that the average family living in the school community in this study earned more than twice as much annually than families at the national average. Also, the percentage of families below the poverty level was nearly one-third lower than the national average. Furthermore, the academic data from the 2008-2009 School Year Report Card issued by the Ohio Department of Education (2009) revealed that of those students attending the high school, 96.1% of students had passed the Social Studies Content section of the Ohio Graduation Test by the end of their sophomore years while 99% had done so by the end of their junior year. These percentages were well above the state averages of 81.6% and 88.6% of students passing at the respective grade levels.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further study include further research on the topic of student motivation with several population samples could reveal many factors that explain the correlations between Teaching Methods Used and Years of Teaching Experience. Perhaps

generational changes in teacher preparation and licensure programs have been so significant as to influence the teaching methods used among teachers of different generations.

Further research should also examine the motivational teaching methods implemented among high school social studies educators teaching different levels of the same course, i.e. general education, honors, Advanced Preparatory, International Baccalaureate.

In addition, case studies in which several teachers are observed instructing classes while using their preferred teaching methods would provide rich detail regarding students' responses. This would help evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods the teachers believe positively motivate their students.

Furthermore, qualitative research that includes interviewing or surveying students in social studies classes to gauge their perceptions of what teaching methods they believe best motivates them to learn has the potential to offer new insights.

Recommendations for classroom teachers include using a wide variety of teaching techniques to motivate their students. Each student has different interests and abilities regarding social studies education. A single motivational teaching technique can not address the unique talents of each student. Therefore, as Gerzon-Kessler (2006) suggests, teachers should be driven to develop positive rapport with their students so they can better understand their talents and limitations. Also, as Kohn (1993) advocates, teachers should create an open and accepting learning environment in which students are allowed to explore their own interests relating to the subject matter.

In summary, teachers at the high school level are given a great opportunity to prepare their students to become future community leaders and stewards of our world. Social studies teachers must seize these opportunities. In doing so, they should determine, develop and

differentiate the teaching methods they use to motivate students to be active students and citizens.

APPENDIX A

Research Survey

The following survey is for a Masters Research Project completed by a graduate student in the College of Education at Ohio University. Please do **NOT** include your name on this sheet or any other identifying information. The responses on this survey will be viewed only by the person conducting the study and the student's academic advisor. The completed surveys will be destroyed after the data from them is collected.

Individual Information

- Grade Level of Students Taught _____ ● Years of Teaching Experience _____

Please answer the following question on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1. What is your opinion regarding the following statement?

“Educators should work to understand what teaching methods motivate students.”

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being least important and 5 being most important.

2. When planning lessons, what importance do you place on encouraging student motivation?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Least Important Less Important No Opinion More Important Most Important

3. When evaluating the academic performance of students in the classroom, what importance do their motivation levels play?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Least Important Less Important No Opinion More Important Most Important

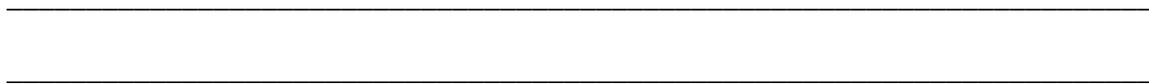
Please answer the following questions in two to three sentences. Please continue to the back.

4. What teaching methods do you believe motivate students to be actively engaged in the classroom? Why?

5. Do you use these teaching methods in your classroom? Why or why not?

6. How often do you use these teaching methods in your classroom?

7. What issues/factors encourage or prevent you from using these teaching methods?



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