

FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEIVED IMPACT OF DUAL ENROLLMENT
AND ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH COURSES

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Abstract

High school students in the twenty-first century have many choices for what courses to take. The task of choosing courses can become daunting, especially for upper classmen looking to earn college credit in high school. The two most common methods of earning college credit in high school are dual enrolling at a local community college or university or taking Advanced Placement courses. These two options share some similarities but differ in significant ways such as the format of the course and the credits earned. The courses also differ in who instructs the course and how much oversight there is over the courses. In order to see whether these courses, especially in English and composition, help students perform in college, the research included a broad survey of student perceptions of their experiences in these courses. The respondents were then narrowed to volunteers to participate in interviews. The purpose of this study was to see if there is any correlation between taking college English classes in high school and student success in college.

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Laura Hollandsworth
March 30, 2020

Dedication

I dedicate this to my sweet husband and daughter who lived with “Mommy’s schoolwork” while I completed the degree. Without Dan’s patience and willingness to take over many duties at home, this would not have been possible. Without Madison’s understanding that I could not always play because I had to do my work, I could never have finished.

I also dedicate this to my parents, Jon and Brenda, who have been nothing but supportive of me. They always had more faith in me than I had in myself, and they continued to provide emotional support throughout this process, never letting me doubt that I could do it.

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Dr. Mark Gonzales, Committee Chair

Dr. P. Mark Taylor, Methodologist

Dr. Holly Paul, Content Member

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Chapter 1: Purpose and Organization

Introduction and Background of the Study

Since the advent of the Advanced Placement Program (AP) in the early 1950s, high schools have offered advanced options in course choice. The term “advanced placement” first appeared in a committee report entitled *General Education in School and College: A Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale* in 1952 (Rothschild, 1999). The discussion of the importance of offering more challenging courses in high school began in the wake of World War II and America’s engagement in the Cold War; colleges and elite high schools saw a need for more rigorous education as a method to combat communism (Rothschild, 1996). Parallel to the creation of this report, the Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE) supported a project to address the same problem of students not being sufficiently challenged in high school; however, the FAE took a different approach (Rothschild, 1996). According to Eric Rothschild (1996), the FAE focused on “the establishment of descriptions of college freshman-level courses that college faculty would accept even if taught in high schools” (p.178). By May of 1954, the first Advanced Placement (AP) exams were administered with ten courses, including English Composition and Literature (Rothschild, 1996, p.179). Thus, the AP Program was born. In 1995 the College Board took over and chose to retain ETS (Educational Testing Service) as the creator and scorer of the exams (Rothschild, 1996). According to Eric Rothschild (1996), “The best selling [sic] point for AP was probably the college performance of former AP students” (p.182). The AP program has a long history of excellence in terms of preparing students for college and earning college credit for high school students.

Since 1954 when the first AP exams were administered, the landscape of education has changed, and even more options exist for high school students. While high schools still offer the traditional college preparatory and honors course options along with the AP program, students now have more options in taking college coursework. According to Adelman (1999), “Educators almost universally agree that offering academically challenging high school courses plays a significant role in the development and academic preparation of students (as cited in Dutkowsky, Evensky, & Edmonds, 2009, p.264). Due to the acknowledged benefit of taking challenging courses, colleges and universities have collaborated on ways for students to earn college credit in high school. The dual enrollment program allows high school juniors and seniors to earn college credit based on earning a passing score in the course; this differs from the credit earned from Advanced Placement which requires students to earn a passing score on a challenging exam. According to the Tennessee Department of Education (nd b), “Tennessee is the first state in the nation to have a fully funded K-14 program” (np). This fully funded education is offered through a program called TN Promise (Tennessee Department of Education, nd b). TN Promise is a program that offers two free years of community college to high school students (Drive to 55 Alliance, 2018). Because the free courses can start in high school, students now have even more incentive to try to earn credit while still in high school. Programs like this have gained in popularity due to the rising cost of college. With AP and dual enrollment, students now have many choices in how to earn college credits while still in high school.

Statement of the Problem

Experience has shown that because students have so many choices in which courses to take, it is more imperative than ever for students to be aware of their options and make the best choices for their individual, post-secondary goals. Because of the multitude of choices available,

students must carefully consider their plans and determine whether they want to stay with the standard high school curriculum or choose a more challenging path. With the growing prevalence of dual enrollment, students have more choices than ever. According to Conley (2003), “more rigorous coursework and expectations improved student access to degree credit-bearing courses” (as cited in Royster, Gross, and Hochbein, 2015, p.211). The AP program provides a set of standards and generalized curriculum taught by high school teachers as a high school course. AP courses are considered college course equivalents but do not automatically replace the college courses. Students must earn a passing score on the standardized exam, and different universities determine different scores for which credit will be given. Dual enrollment, in contrast, provides a different program for students by which they can earn college credit. Students are enrolled in the actual college course to be taught by someone determined by the university to be qualified. Instructors may be college professors on the college campus, college professors on the high school campus, or high school teachers whom the university determines to have the necessary education and qualifications. Because dual enrollment students are enrolled in the actual college course through the college or university, the credits they earn can be more universally transferable to their colleges of choice without reliance on a passing score on an exam.

With the rise in popularity of dual enrollment, students now have a more challenging choice to make. According to Jessica Bock (2013), “The two approaches — dual credit and AP — offer competing schools of thought on helping high school students earn college credits. AP prepares students to pass an exam to prove their mastery of college-level curriculum. Dual credit in effect enrolls students in college courses while they are still in high school, allowing them to earn credit for both” (np). Counselors and other interested school personnel have a more

complicated task now in advising students which path to follow if districts offer both. School districts also complicate the issue by showing a preference for one program over the other, many pushing students into AP because of the rankings awarded by *U.S. News and World Report* based on the number of AP exams given (Iatorola, Conger, & Long, 2011). However, according to Jessica Bock (2013), “Experts say both approaches can work. When done the right way, they [experts] say, many students are able to lop off an entire year or more of college before they even get there” (np). This can be a huge advantage to students—one that is worth considering when registering for classes. However, Jessica Bock (2013) also points out the drawbacks, stating, “Students in AP classes, for example, may find that although they passed an exam, their score isn’t high enough. At some elite colleges, even the highest mark doesn’t count. And while dual credit offers students a transcript proving they completed a course, it may be a transcript some colleges do not accept” (nd). This means that even when students take the advanced courses, they may not receive college credit. This leads to the question: What benefit is found from taking advanced courses in high school? While some studies have been conducted, they mostly involve longitudinal studies focusing on degree completion; very little research has been conducted into the benefits students see from these courses once they get to college, specifically in the areas of English and writing.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what perceived benefits first-year college students find from taking either Advanced Placement or dual enrollment English courses in high school. Focusing specifically on English courses taken in high school allowed for a broader application of these courses in college. Even if students test out of taking a freshman college English course because of AP scores or dual enrollment credit, writing is a skill that they will

have to utilize in other areas. Therefore, first-year college students should be able to reflect on the potential benefits of taking college English courses in high school and how those benefits extend beyond only English courses.

Research Question

This study used the qualitative approach to seek to answer the following question:

What are student perceptions regarding how AP and dual enrollment English courses in high school help their performance in college?

Theoretical Foundation

Brown, Collins, and Dupuid (1989) addressed the idea of situated cognition. Based on situated psychology, this idea posits that knowledge is part of content, context, and culture (Brown, Collins, & Dupuid, 1989). Situated cognition assumes that “Learning and cognition are fundamentally situated” (Brown, Collins, & Dupuid, 1989, p.32). This means that the learning itself cannot be separated from the environment in which the learning takes place. Darvin (2006) addressed the idea that setting includes much more than just physical space but that it also includes values, attitudes, and social interactions. This builds on the work of Brown, Collins, and Dupuid (1989) which discussed the idea that teachers must “embed learning in activity and make deliberate use of the social and physical context” (p.32). Darvin (2006) discussed literacy and English instruction specifically. She noted that all discussions of literacy must “take into account the interactions that continuously occur between learners and the settings where they engage in cognitive activities” (Darvin, 2006, p.398).

These ideas become relevant with the discussion of dual enrollment and AP courses because of the difference between standard high school curricula and the college curricula followed with these courses. The rigor expected from these courses along with a need for more

self-pacing provides a different type of environment (setting) for students in these courses along with a proposed different level of discourse. Therefore, this study sought to research whether Darwin (2006) is correct in noting that students' perceptions of their setting impact their learning.

Rationale for the Study

This study is significant right now because of the many choices available to students and to school districts. While research has been conducted into the AP program and into various aspects of dual enrollment such as financial benefits and the benefits to students who may not otherwise have the motivation to go to college, very little research has been done into the perceptions of first-year college students regarding the value of taking these courses in high school. The research conducted thus far has consisted of longitudinal studies looking at graduation rates and degree completion. This study sought to identify student perceptions of how taking Early Postsecondary Opportunity (EPSO) courses in high school has impacted their motivation, time management, independence, and ability to write in their college courses. By researching student perceptions in these areas, students still in high school may have more motivation to make the appropriate course choices. High schools will have more anecdotal information available about individual student perceptions of the impact of EPSO courses on their college success. This could enable high schools to help students make better choices during the counseling process. This study could impact colleges by reinforcing the value of EPSO courses taken during high school, which might encourage colleges to look more closely at what college credit is offered for the taking of these courses.

Researcher Positionality Statement

This became an important issue to me as both an Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition teacher and a dual enrollment teacher responsible for ENGL

1010/1020 (the Composition and Literature courses) for a local community college. As juniors and seniors, the students have a choice of whether to take AP English or dual enroll at the community college. The district in which I teach prefers Advanced Placement over dual enrollment and has a stated goal of raising not only the number of students enrolled in AP but also the pass rates. Teaching at two different high schools, first as just the AP English Language and/or Literature teacher and then as both the AP and dual enrollment teacher, I became interested in what benefits college students see in these courses once they have left the world of high school. Bias, however, is mitigated because I taught both courses and the fact that I have since left that teaching position for a district position as a literacy coach.

The sample of students surveyed included some of my former students as well as many students I did not teach. The responses that I received for interviews contained four students I taught and one I did not. Because of the nature of the qualitative study, these were the respondents with whom I could work. However, I used a closed questioning method that ensured the same questions were posed of all students. I also reassured each student at the beginning of the interview that I was looking for their honest perceptions. No incentive was provided for responding, so students did not feel obligated by outside factors to respond in certain ways.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The major limitation in this study was the reliance on student self-reporting. Student honesty is essential to accurate findings. The students must have accurately self-reported the courses they took, their performance in those courses, and their perceptions of concepts such as rigor.

Time was also a limitation. Students received the survey at the beginning of January which did not give them much time to have experienced college with the exception of one

student who is currently a college junior. The interviews occurred over a two-week period beginning the end of January and continuing through the first week of February. Because the interviews took place after the beginning of the second semester of college, the students have had little time to experience their second semester classes. Therefore, most of their feedback centered around courses taken their first semester. Given more time with the study, their perceptions after completing their first year of college would be valuable.

One delimitation is the use of volunteers. The surveys were distributed using convenience sampling, relying on college freshmen known personally by myself and a colleague. The participants in the interview and focus group were those who volunteered to continue with the study. Both students who took AP and dual enrollment completed the survey, but the nature of the respondents depended on those who volunteered to continue to the interview and focus group stages. The result was four students who took AP and one who took dual enrollment.

The major assumption was student honesty and their ability to correctly recall what they did in their high school EPSO courses and make connections to their performance as college freshmen.

Definition of Terms

For clarification purposes, the following terms are defined. Other necessary terms will be defined in the review of literature.

Early Post-Secondary Opportunity (EPSO): a course or exam that gives students a chance to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school (Tennessee Department of Education, nd).

Advanced Placement: college-level courses taken while in high school and taught by high school teachers. Credit may be awarded based on a passing score on the exam given at the end of the year (The College Board, 2019).

Dual Enrollment: students enrolled at the same time in a college course and a high school course (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). While many different terms exist such as dual credit and concurrent enrollment that various people define in different ways, this general definition will be maintained.

Phenomenology: a study that relies on individual's perceptions in order to make meaning (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, & Walker, 2014).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background along with the statement of the problem and research question. Limitations and delimitations are also addressed here along with the theoretical framework to be used. Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant literature regarding both dual enrollment and AP courses and their role in student success. Chapter 3 provides the outline of the qualitative, phenomenological study to be completed. Chapter 4 provides the data collected from the study in the form of surveys, interviews, and a focus group. Chapter 5 provides conclusions drawn from the study.

Summary

In summary, high school has changed since the advent of the AP program in the mid-1950s. According to data from the 2011 ACT administration, 19 out of 100 high school students graduate prepared for postsecondary rigor (Royster, Gross, & Hochbein, 2015, p.208). This is a frightening statistic. With different options for high school courses including courses for high school credit only, college courses offered for dual credit, and AP courses offered for potential

credit, it is important to investigate the different options in terms of student perceptions of benefit. For high schools to help students make the best course choices, evaluating student perceptions of course rigor, quality, and direct application to the college coursework is essential in understanding the impact of these college-credit courses once students have begun postsecondary learning. By gaining student perceptions about benefits in terms of their experience with the high school courses and as first-year college students rather than merely looking at test scores or financial benefits, greater understanding will exist in terms of the non-measurable outcomes from taking EPSO courses.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Background of the AP Program

Since the 1950s, high schools have been trying to make courses more rigorous in order to challenge those students identified as academically gifted. The need to challenge those who had already mastered high school content provided the impetus for the AP Program which pioneered its first exams in 1954 (Rothschild, 1999). The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) or College Board for short, was established in 1900 (Lacy, 2010). The College Board provided the umbrella organization under which the AP program was organized. Post-World War II, with the advent of the GI Bill, a college education was more readily accessible for a larger population (Lacy, 2010). This paired with scientific developments such as Sputnik in 1957 fed into the need for educators to keep students motivated and interested in continuing school (Lacy, 2010). By 1954, the year the first exams were administered, the culture was right for a program to challenge students more in high school and award them college credit for their efforts in high school. The program developed out of two projects financed by the Fund for the Advancement of Education of the Ford Foundation (FAE) (Santoli, 2002). According to Tim Lacy (2010), the FAE, not the federal government drove the idea of establishing more of a transition program from high school to college for gifted individuals. According to Susan Santoli (2002), the first project came from John Kemper, the headmaster of Andover Academy. He noticed the problem of his students who were academically very capable being forced to repeat courses in college they had already taken in high school (Santoli, 2002). The recommendation was for achievement exams to be created by which students could earn college credit for courses taken in high school (Santoli, 2002). The second project financed by the FAE was the Kenyon Plan in which high school teachers, college professors, and representatives of Educational Testing Service (ETS) met to develop course

outlines, syllabi, and tests based on the course outlines (Santoli, 2002). By recognizing the need to offer credit for what students already knew and by meeting with all stakeholders to set some academic standards, the AP program was born.

In Defense of AP

Not long after the advent of the program, Gerhard Friedrich (1959) wrote an evaluation of and defense for this new approach to teaching students in high school and acquiring them credit in college. In background, Friedrich (1959) noted that what the advanced students needed was not more work to challenge them but different work. In discussing the work that was being done in AP courses in the late 1950s, Friedrich (1959) noted that “the advanced work in some schools is so highly motivated, so ambitious and persistent, that actual colleges courses are often embarrassingly inferior” (p.13). Of course, the percentage of students taking AP was much lower in the early years of the program. Friedrich (1959) noted that 5% of students taking the courses and exams was considered high. In today’s world, the exclusive nature of AP has changed; more students are being encouraged to challenge themselves with these courses. Schools and districts even go so far as to value the power of the 2, a 3 being considered a passing score to earn college credit.

One of the ways that the AP program is unique from the dual enrollment program, which will also be discussed, is the way that it pairs high schools and colleges together. Friedrich (1959) addressed some benefits of the AP program, not the least of which is the shared responsibility and collaboration of both high schools and colleges. In the current world, the committee that creates the AP exams consists of both high school and college teachers/professors (Meet the Committee, AP English Literature and Composition Reading, June 7, 2019). This team of combined high school and college creates the test, and then college professors volunteer to test

the exam in their freshman composition and literature courses (Meet the Committee, AP English Literature and Composition Reading, June 7, 2019). This shows that the commitment of sharing begun by the College Board and ETS in 1954 continues today. The process of the AP reading itself consists of a combination of high school teachers and college professors who work together to norm essays and score them so that all students receive equal and fair treatment on the exam for credit which supports the statements of Friedrich (1959) about the partnership between high school and college forged with the AP program.

Background of Dual Enrollment

The dual enrollment and early college models are newer, having grown tremendously in the last 15 years (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). Terminology used when referencing dual enrollment is also complicated as many different models exist. First established at the University of Connecticut in 1955, the Early College Experience (ECE) program became the first of its kind to offer true college courses to high school students and the longest continually existing program (Boecherer, 2016). Another example of concurrent enrollment began in 1972 in Syracuse, NY with Project Advance, an attempt to provide challenging curriculum for seniors who had finished all their required coursework (Edmonds, 2016). Programs like ECE and Project Advance differed from existing programs like AP because they allowed students to take college courses rather than high school courses and did not require a test for credit like AP does (Boucherer, 2016 & Edmonds, 2016).

Defining Dual Enrollment

Edmonds (2016) discusses the various terminology such as concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment, dual credit, and joint enrollment and the fact that different people use these terms in different ways. As of 2017, 1.3 million high school students were participating in dual

enrollment (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). According to Christine Denecker (2013), all 50 states now have some form of dual enrollment program. Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) define dual enrollment as a system that “provides high school students with the opportunity to enroll in college courses and earn college credit through partnerships between local school districts and institutions of higher learning” (p.14). Different people define dual enrollment in different ways based on where the courses are taken, who the teachers are, and whether the students earn college credit only or high school also (Edmonds, 2016). However, the broad definition provided by Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin best represents most of the programs. The reasons for choosing a dual enrollment option are many, but one of the primary reasons for the rise in students choosing the dual enrollment option is the rising cost of college (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017).

Framework for the Importance of Analyzing Course Rigor in High School

In 1999, Clifford Adelman published a study for the United States Department of Education entitled *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*. He conducted a longitudinal study of a national cohort who started 10th grade in 1980 until 1993, when the participants were roughly 30 years of age (Adelman, 1999). The research question Adelman (1999) sought to answer was “What contributes most to bachelor’s degree completion of students who attend 4-year colleges at any time in their undergraduate careers?” (p. 15). Over the course of the study he analyzed surveys, college transcripts, and test scores. He also analyzed 11 different variables. General findings showed that socioeconomic status was the only demographic variable with any impact, and this showed only a “modest contribution” to degree completion once students had completed their first year of college. The two variables which Adelman (1999) found contributed the most to

degree completion were what he calls academic resources and continuous enrollment. Academic resources consist of the combination of academic content and performance students bring to college. Adelman (1999) stated, “This measure is dominated by the intensity and quality of secondary school curriculum” (p.8). His research showed that 41% of the academic resources students bring to their postsecondary education comes from their high school curriculum. 30% of academic resources comes from test scores, and 29% of academic resources comes from class rank and GPA. This means that the number one most important indicator for bachelor’s degree attainment is the level and rigor of high school courses the students had the opportunity to take. The second variable as noted was continuous enrollment once one has started fully in higher education (Adelman, 1999). In discussing this, Adelman (1999) concluded, “No matter how one divides the universe of students, the curriculum measure produces a higher percent earning bachelor’s degrees than either of the other measures” (p.8). This research is significant for a study of dual enrollment and AP courses because of the purported rigor that these courses provide. When compared with a standard level course, students who choose to challenge themselves with a college level course up their rigor, which according to Adelman’s statistics, can translate into a greater chance for college degree attainment. In addition, students who have already enrolled in college through dual enrollment may be more likely to continue, therefore addressing Adelman’s idea of continuous enrollment.

Effect on Minority Groups

In terms of benefit to minority groups, Adelman (1999) found significant benefits to quality high school courses for minority populations. Adelman stated, “The impact of a high school curriculum of high academic intensity and quality on degree completion is far more pronounced—and positively—for African-American and Latino students than any other pre-

college indicator of academic resources” (p.9). Adelman (1999) notes that while SES clearly influences the lives of students involved, education has tremendous power to alter the effects of SES either for the positive or for the negative. This data is important for looking at course choices and offerings, particularly those that offer the chance for college credit.

Adelman’s research paves the way for an examination of course rigor in high school, particularly those course options that allow high school students to begin earning college credit such as AP and dual enrollment. He notes specifically dual enrollment as one way to help give students an academic chance, noting specifically the opportunities a dual enrollment partnership provides to fill the curricular gaps left by some high schools (Adelman, 1999).

In 2002, Thomas Bailey, Katherine Hughes, and Melinda Mechur Karp prepared a paper for The High School Symposium “Preparing America’s Future.” The result of this was the federally published document ED465090 “What Role Can Dual Enrollment Programs Play in Easing the Transition Between High School and Postsecondary Education?” Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) explain the history of how dual enrollment began for the intellectually gifted as a way to offer them challenging courses in high school; however, they turned their focus to the idea in the early 2000s that it would be better to expand the program to middle and low-achieving students. This agrees with Adelman’s (1999) research about the impact of rigorous high school curriculum on minority students. Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) discussed the idea of motivation and how often students’ senior year of high school is not as meaningful as it could be because students opt out of taking appropriately challenging course loads. Often, the attitude of seniors is that they want to coast and “have fun” during their senior year, but this attitude contradicts the research that shows greater challenge translates into a greater chance for college success. Matthew Giani, Celeste Alexander, and Pedro Reyes (2014) discussed the positive

impacts of dual-credit when they noted, “Students who participate in dual-credit might be able to arrive at more realistic expectations of the demands of postsecondary, demystify a process that is mysterious for many, and increase their postsecondary aspirations if they are successful in dual-credit” (p.203). This supports the idea put forth by Baily, Hughes, and Karp of the benefits of taking dual enrollment in high school.

Using the framework of rigor and challenge, Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) promote the idea of offering all students, but particularly those classified as under-achieving, “academically rigorous and engaging courses” which “might promote hard work and high achievement” (p.6). Because it is well-known that academic rigor in high school leads to the potential for more success in college, dual enrollment provides a needed opportunity to expose middle and low-achieving high school students to appropriately challenging work (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002). In addition to the benefits to students of increased motivation and course rigor, Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) also discuss the financial benefits when students can earn up to an entire year of college credit before leaving high school.

Problem with Different Standards of Rigor

Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) begin by noting that for many, the transition to college is difficult for numerous reasons: lack of academic preparation, concern about applying and/or paying for college, and fear about balancing school and work (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002, p.1). Citing Adelman (1999), they address his research about rigor of high school curriculum and bachelor’s degree attainment (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002). However, in looking at the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (2001), in 2002 only ten states had aligned high school requirements and college admissions requirements in English; only two states had aligned these standards in math (Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2002). This has the potential

to become problematic. If high schools are not requiring four years of English and at least three years of math, then the curricular rigor is not present in those high schools to adequately prepare students for college success. Bailey, Hughes, and Karp's (2002) research backs up what Adelman said in his 1999 report about the necessity of high school curriculum being sufficiently challenging; however, Bailey, Hughes, and Karp focus not on a longitudinal study but on proposing dual enrollment as a solution to help curricular gaps in high school and aid in students' transitions to college.

Looking at criticism of college preparedness in general, confusing signals are sent to high school students by four-year schools that have open door policies. These schools allow anyone admission, but many students are required to take remedial courses before they may continue with the college course of study that will count towards their graduation hours (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002). Knowing that rigor in high school curriculum sets students up for success, these students sent into remedial courses may not have the skills necessary to ensure degree completion. The confusion from students comes from the fact that they are admitted to the university, but they do not really have the skills necessary to succeed. Something needs to be done to aid these students and give them the skills in high school so they may be successful in postsecondary school. Therefore, dual enrollment became the focus of Bailey, Hughes, and Karp's 2002 study.

Financial and Scheduling Benefits to Dual Enrollment

While the cost of college itself is a benefit to dual enrollment, there are other benefits as well. Besides the opportunity to earn college credits, students enrolled in dual enrollment also begin creating their college transcript which can help them with the admissions process (Boecherer, 2016). Boecherer (2016) also noted that once dual enrollment students enter college,

they have an advantage because of an already existing transcript; scheduling may be more flexible, and these students may have the opportunity to take different or more advanced courses. In addition, according to Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002), while dual enrollment can provide vocational education, it can also provide advanced liberal arts coursework. Therefore, dual enrollment has the potential to help many different students experience success. This idea fits with the trend to expand the open access of dual enrollment to more varied populations.

Psychological Benefits

Beyond the financial and admissions benefits are the potential psychological benefits to students. Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) cite Noel Levitz, and Saluri (1985) by stating, “Frequently, students who did not persist in college cite non-academic factors as reasons for dropping out” including being unfocused, overwhelmed (p.7). Many dual enrollment programs are taught on the college campus, which can help “demystify” the experience for students (Bailey, Hughes, and Karp, 2002, p.7). In addition, because high school students are enrolled as college students for their dual enrollment courses, they receive access to campus resources (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002). Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002), summed up the psychological benefits to students by stating:

Giving students a realistic expectation of what college is like enables them to adjust more easily to full-time college life upon high school graduation. Alternatively, expensive false starts in college can be avoided as a dual enrollment experience may show some students that college, at least at this time, is not for them. (p.7).

Therefore, the benefits to dual enrollment go beyond curricular knowledge or financial easement; giving students the opportunity to become college students while still in the relatively safe-haven

of home and high school can lead to better achievement once these students matriculate to postsecondary school.

Different Forms of Dual Enrollment and Its Rise in Popularity

Dual enrollment takes many different forms as noted earlier; Early College provides one of those distinctive forms of dual enrolling. Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin (2017) define early college as being specific to schools that serve underrepresented populations and that “provide dual enrollment as part of a curriculum that integrates academic and social supports enabling all students to earn transferrable college credit toward a degree or credential” (p. 14). The major difference between dual enrollment and early college is that early college is more of a cohesive program within the high school in which the goal is to first get students to graduate high school and second, to graduate with an associate’s degree (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). Early College also recognizes the emotional needs of high school students and seeks to meet those, even though those high school students are also college students. By contrast, dual enrollment is more of a course by course voluntary opportunity for students to earn high school and college credit at the same time which sends them into college with credits already earned. Both models have the potential to benefit students.

Howard Tinberg and Jean-Paul Nadeau (2011) discussed the political climate that has led to the rise of programs like dual enrollment and early college. They discussed President Obama’s Race to the Top Initiative as well as work of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with a focus on changing the current forms of high school (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). In addition, Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) also noted that calls for more college readiness have led to an acceleration through dual-credit programs. In line with what Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) discussed about the early college model, Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) stated that “Such programs are

intended to provide high school students with a jumpstart on their college experience and thus, it is argued, motivate students to continue with their high school experience while at the same time send them on their way toward eventual graduation from college” (p.705). Therefore, the intent of dual enrollment programs is positive in that it can help encourage students to continue their college education.

Criticism of Dual Enrollment Programs

Tinberg and Nadeau (2011), however, criticized dual enrollment programs, stating that dual enrollment programs have “not been proven to enhance student learning” despite positive impact on “the persistence of some students” and their continuing to college (p.706). Some criticisms they addressed were student readiness in the college class and lack of oversight in terms of curriculum (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). They discussed that these dual (or concurrent) enrollment programs are largely taught in high schools, not on the college campus (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). They also discussed instruction, noting that some courses are taught by high school teachers and some by college professors and that there is no standardized protocol for site visits from the college to maintain quality control (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) also addressed criticism in terms of rigor, noting that “Some fear the rigor of the curriculum is compromised by virtue of the fact that it is high school students who are enrolled in the course” (p.14). They also noted that some critics said that some models of dual enrollment differ very little from high school if students still take classes on the high school campus taught by high school teachers (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002). The inherent criticism here is that the college course may be watered down if either taught on the high school campus or taught by high school teachers. If this is the case, then it can be argued that students are not actually taking the

college equivalent, which could provide problems depending on what postsecondary courses they are placed in once matriculating.

Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017), also address critics of EPSO programs who say that it is blurring the line between high school and college, and there is a lack of quality control. Critics raise the question of whether these dual enrollment courses are real college courses (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). Chester Finn (2017) stated, “At a time when elevating academic standards is a major goal of education reformers, it seems ironic—perhaps outrageous is the most apt word—that we risk the erosion of such standards during the crucial transition from high school to college” (as cited in Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017, p.14). Critics like Finn assume that the standards must be lowered for high school students to be successful in college courses. Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) stated that for dual enrollment programs to be effective, they must have “a clear understanding among all interested parties as to core principals, practices, and outcomes for first-year college composition” (p. 710). This is one difference between AP and dual enrollment. According to Sadler (2010b), AP provides a bit more quality control through teacher training and the course audit process, whereas with dual enrollment, each college or university operates with a different relationship to the high schools offering dual enrollment.

Critique of Rigor

One other critique that has been lodged against the dual enrollment model is the idea of rigor. According to Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017), critics see success in community college courses and assume that dual enrollment standards are lower than standards in the non-dual-enrolled college course. Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) questioned how the readiness of students will be determined and whether GPA and grades are enough to combat the likely

emotional immaturity of the students. This contrasted what Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) stated about the opportunity for dual enrollment to serve as an emotional bridge for students between high school and college. Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) also addressed the rigor of dual enrollment courses, stating that common educational practice supports that idea that learning should be increasingly challenging; if dual enrollment students are succeeding in these college courses, perhaps the rigor of the college courses should be reviewed and recalibrated. They also questioned how much the dynamic of a college course on a college campus is altered due to high school students (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) noted that “To uphold their quality, dual enrollment courses must be equivalent to those offered on the college campus in every other way including the placement requirements, syllabi, textbooks, and assessment and grading policies” (p.17). While Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) are proponents of dual-credit programs, they do agree with Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) about the oversight needed to ensure the integrity of the college class is not compromised.

Critiques on Writing Skills of Entering Freshmen

Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) focused their critiques of dual enrollment mainly on English composition. Their contention was that “Student persistence is key, no doubt, but students must flourish as well—as readers, writers, and thinkers” (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011, p.706). Focusing on readiness and curriculum as noted above and being concerned specifically with English composition, they cited the National Commission on Writing (p.20) as noting that the writing of high school seniors lacks sophistication and shows immaturity in style (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). This has the potential to cause issues if these students take a dual enrollment class that may be watered down and are then placed in a higher-level English course as college freshman. They may not have the writing skills necessary to succeed.

Lisa Scherff and Carolyn Piazza completed a study which Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) referenced on what was being done in high school English classes. Scherff and Piazza found that the most common types of writing in high school courses were responses to literature and expository essays (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Scherff's and Piazza's study also found that research was only conducted about once a year (Tinberg & Nadeau). After researching high school and college English classes, Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) discussed the differences in content, noting that high school focuses more on timed writing to prepare for state exams and that college writing is more focused on the writing process including drafting, revision, and peer review. Scherff and Piazza noted that "Interestingly, the only high school students reporting to have spent significant time on writing other than responses to literature were the dual-enrollment students taking college writing at their local community colleges" (Tinberg & Nadeau, p.713). This study demonstrates a noticeable gap between the writing done in the regular college classroom and that done in the college classroom. While this does seem to be a positive statement about dual enrollment, it also serves as a warning, in the eyes of these researchers, about the level of preparedness of high school students to tackle college coursework, specifically writing. This provides both caution and support for dual enrollment. While dual enrollment English has the potential to bridge the writing gaps students may have from regular high school English classes, without any collegiate oversight, the possibility of the dual enrollment courses being altered for the high school population still exists.

Combating the Critics about Dual Enrollment

Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin (2017) combatted criticism towards the dual enrollment or early college model when they stated that "The best preparation for college success is supported, structured, immersion of students in postsecondary education experiences" (p.15). They

continued to note that schools have an obligation to help ease the transition from high school and college (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). They also argued that high school alone no longer provides adequate support for the world and life after high school; most living wage jobs require postsecondary training (Vargas, Hooker, & Gerwin, 2017). With that argument in mind, both dual enrollment and early college options provide students with supports to succeed after high school, whether they earn an associate's degree in high school through an early college program or they earn credits that will transfer to a local four-year college, two-year college, or trade school. Shapiro et al (2017) stated that 54.8% of those entering college earn a degree within six years and that that percentage is 20 points lower for Black and Latino students (as cited in Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin, 2017). Revisiting Adelman (1999), the best indicator of bachelor's degree completion is the rigor of coursework students attained while in high school. These statistics only further support the need to provide students with as much support entering college as possible. EPSO courses provide these supports for students.

General Advanced Placement Benefits

After exploring the pros and cons of dual enrollment, it is important to look at Advanced Placement as well. One research study conducted by April Bleske-Rechek, David Lubinski, and Camilla Benbow (2004) through Vanderbilt University sought to answer the following research questions: "What does the AP program do for students? And what are the potential implications of recent changes surrounding the AP program" (p.217). The study consisted of longitudinal data collected over 30 years with 3,937 participants and focused on a population of highly motivated and intellectually gifted population including their outcomes 15 years later (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004). Lichten (2000) questioned whether the rigor of the program has been compromised with how quickly it has expanded (as cited in Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, &

Benbow, 2004). In response to this, the research study by Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow (2004) found that “Students who take AP courses, compared with their intellectual peers who did not, appeared more satisfied with the intellectual caliber of their high school experience and, ultimately, achieved more” (p.217). They noted that AP provides a pace of curriculum appropriate to the needs of its population (Bleske-Recheck, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004). In addition, their research found that between 22-49% of their sample nominated an AP class as their favorite, and this was likely a low estimate because their survey responses were only coded as being an AP course if the students labeled the course as such (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004). Their study also found that students involved in AP were less likely to list lack of engagement or stimulation as something they did not like in high school (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004). Because the study was conducted over 15 years, Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, and Benbow (2004) found that at 33 years old, 70% who took at least one AP course obtained an advanced degree to 43% of those who did not take AP. In drawing conclusions for their population of intellectually talented students, Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, and Benbow (2004) found that “through self-selection or something intrinsic to the AP program itself, AP involvement is a positive predictor of educational success and satisfaction for intellectually talented youth” (p.219). Therefore, the AP program was found to have distinct benefits for the population of students who were already intelligent and academically motivated.

Benefits in College Admissions

One other area in which Advanced Placement can be seen to benefit students is in the college admissions process in general. Cecilia Speroni (2011) in “Determinants of Students’ Success: The Role of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs,” discussed that the advantage of AP rises as the ability of the student rises. This supports the research presented by

Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, and Benbow (2004). She also noted that “high-ability students with AP credits get an extra edge in college admissions relative to those with dual enrollment credits” (Speroni, 2011, p.3). This idea introduces the extrinsic benefit available to students of AP courses beyond the coursework itself or the opportunity to earn college credit. Iatarola, Conger, and Long (2011), in their article entitled “Determinants of High Schools’ Advanced Course Offerings,” discussed that students may not only benefit from college credit but may also qualify for additional scholarships because of participation in AP. According to Philip Sadler (2010), students perceive AP courses as their “ticket” to entry at their college of choice (p.3). What this means for high schools is that some students will take AP courses in areas they may not love or be particularly attuned to because they want to raise their chances of gaining admission to their college of choice or earning scholarships. Another economic benefit comes from data from Stanford University; over 50% entered with at least ten credits, and Stanford allows students to earn one year of credit in high school (Santoli, 2002). With the rising cost of college, the ability to start college as a sophomore due to credits from high school and to potentially gain entry to a more exclusive college is attractive for students as well as parents.

Recognized Value of Advanced Placement

State and even nationwide entities also recognize the value of AP. According to Iatarola, Conger, and Long (2011), an additional benefit to the AP program is that high schools are ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* based on AP participation. Therefore, it is to the benefit of the schools to encourage AP participation. This can be viewed as either a benefit or a critique, depending on perspective. Philip Sadler (2010) stated that often states require courses be offered and sometimes require credit acceptance from state universities. Sadler (2010) also noted that U.S. Department of Education grants “subsidize the expansion of AP offerings, which can

include underwriting the cost of exams” (p. 4). Sadler (2010) also noted that the rising importance to state and national governing bodies of AP has led to suburban and well-off public schools increasing course offerings and rural and urban public schools being able to offer AP courses where none existed previously. While these all sound like benefits, Sadler (2010) did offer caution, stating that “Although there is no shortage of strong views about the merits of AP, there is a shortage of evidence about the efficacy, cost, and value of these programs” (p.6).

Further benefits come from college perceptions and data. Susan Santoli (2002) cited a study by Morris and Willingham of freshmen in nine colleges who took at least one AP course; their sample was 1,115 students observed over four years. According to Santoli (2002), the study found that “AP students [had]... better academic records than non-AP students and [were] more successful overall in everything but athletics and student elected results” (p.28). Santoli (2002) also discusses the quality of the courses themselves aside from the exam score earned, noting that “Although the AP courses terminate in national exams in May of each year, information from colleges consistently revealed that it was not the AP exam grade that was important to them but the learning itself” (p.27). This implies that the course content itself can provide an advantage for students as they enter college.

Teacher preparation and some course standardization are also an advantage to the AP program. The College Board provides numerous training opportunities for teachers along with resources to help them teach the course more effectively (Sadler, 2010b). In fact, the College Board recommends that all teachers new to the course attend a one-day workshop and then a five-day AP Summer Institute to be better prepared to teach the course (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2010). In addition, beginning in the early 2000s, a policy began by which all teachers of AP courses must submit a course syllabus for audit (Sadler, 2010b); if the syllabus does not pass, the

course is not awarded the designation of AP. Beginning in 2019, the College Board is also providing even more resources, including a series of digital resources, benchmark formative assessments, and suggested course plans for AP teachers to utilize (Meet the Committee, AP English Literature and Composition Reading, June 7, 2017). These processes together help to ensure that across various regional areas, socioeconomic areas, and school types, there is equity in the AP courses students receive.

Advanced Placement Critiques

Philip Sadler (2010a) does offer some criticism of the AP program. Questions he raised include whether the rise in popularity has led to the program being “oversold” (p.4). Sadler (2010a) also questioned whether the standards have been lowered due to the “overselling” of the program. With increased access to the program, the question becomes whether the courses continue to hold their same level of rigor. He noted that many colleges and universities have raised their requirement to give credit, showing a reluctance to accept these credits (Sadler, 2010a). One possible reason for reluctance to give credit could be from a perception that the standards have been lowered in AP courses. This becomes an important critique of the AP program. Many would ask why students would take a course for college credit if the credit itself is not guaranteed, and those students may need to repeat the course again in college. Sadler (2010a) also addressed other areas of critique such as the fact that the increased prevalence of AP courses may have led to the elimination of other courses that would be of interest and value to students. Sadler (2010a) cited the National Research Council (2002) which noted criticism that AP courses “cover too much material, too superficially, and too quickly” (p.4). While he notes the expansion of the courses to rural and urban schools, he also discusses their scores as being “dismal” (Sadler, 2010a, p.4). The question is raised whether expanding the course access is

worth it if students, particularly those in minority or low socioeconomic groups are not earning credit due to “dismal” exam scores. Tim Lacy (2010) stated an irony that he says proponents of AP will never acknowledge—the idea that “truly superior—not merely talented—students are, by definition, rarely content with mediocrity; they do not need AP courses to demonstrate their drive” (p.31). He thus concluded that the students for whom the AP program was created in the first place probably did not need it in order to be able to succeed.

Kristin Klopfenstein and M. Kathleen Thomas (2009) also discussed some criticisms of the program. They discussed that the public, including state legislators, incorrectly interpret the College Board’s statement of AP as a predictor of college success as meaning that AP courses can cause success in college. In fact, Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010) distinguished between causality and correlation, noting that there is no research that develops true causality between AP course taking and college success, especially when considering students who did not take and/or pass the exam. Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010) found that “If students who succeed in the AP program and in college do so because they come from families of high socioeconomic status, their success does not inform the likelihood of success among AP participants from very different socioeconomic backgrounds” (p.171).

Klopfenstein and Thomas (2009) also noted that states are mandating AP courses over what they describe as possibly better courses. They conducted a regression analysis of all Texas public school students who graduated May 1999 and immediately entered college in a Texas public university (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). Their study included the curriculum experiences of both AP students and students in non-AP courses (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). In stating their findings, Klopfenstein and Thomas (2009) said, “We find no evidence that

AP course-taking increases the likelihood of early college success beyond that predicted by the non-AP curriculum for the average student, regardless of race or family income” (p.874).

Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010) also discussed ways in which AP courses can harm students in non-AP classes. Because AP classes must be smaller, an increase in AP courses raises the student-teacher ratio in the non-AP classes (Klopfenstein and Thomas, 2010). They also discussed the fact that the most experienced teachers are often given the AP courses to teach, pulling those teachers away from the non-AP students who need the best teachers too. Also, by states mandating AP course offerings, undue stress is placed on rural and sometimes urban districts who already serve the most underserved student populations (Klopfenstein and Thomas, 2010).

Therefore, while there are many potential benefits to AP courses, there are also other considerations that districts must keep in mind. These include the possibility of not receiving credit and the challenges to school systems to ensure that all courses, not just the advanced courses, maintain their pupil-teacher ratios and are staffed with quality teachers.

Comparison of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment

Matthew Giani, Celeste Alexander, and Pedro Reyes (2014) in their article entitled “Exploring Variation in the Impact of Dual-Credit Coursework on Postsecondary Outcomes: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Texas Students” noted that “...few studies compare the relative efficacy of dual-credit to alternative advanced courses such as Advanced Placement (AP or International Baccalaureate (IB). District leaders, school principals, and students must frequently choose between these diverse options, yet little research has shed light on the comparative benefits of the various advanced course offerings” (p. 201). Therefore, they conducted a study to look at the impact of dual-credit courses on “postsecondary access, first-to-second year

persistence, and eventual college attainment” (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014, p.201). While they suggested that dual-credit may be a positive way to help students access and complete a postsecondary degree, they also noted that these courses “may not have a significant impact on postsecondary outcomes in the event that the majority of students who participate are high-achieving and likely to matriculate and complete college regardless of their experiences in dual-credit (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014, pp.202-203).

In addition, Cecelia Speroni (2011) offered a comparison of AP and dual enrollment. In terms of curriculum, she noted that dual enrollment utilizes the actual college syllabus because it is an actual college class while AP uses a “standardized curriculum intended to be college level” (p.1). She also noted disagreement about whether the two programs equally prepare students for college (Speroni, 2011). She cited both proponents of AP and dual enrollment. Proponents of AP state that AP is the better course to take because “it provides smaller class sizes than college courses, more class hours, continual monitoring of progress, and a standardized curriculum that serves as a benchmark for the quality of the course” (p.1). In contrast, proponents of dual enrollment focus on the course itself; instead of a high school course, dual enrollment is a real college course which could allow for students to be better prepared (Speroni, 2011). In comparing programs, Speroni (2011) discussed the development of both programs by noting that both began with a focus on the advanced students but are now serving more diverse populations. Speroni (2011) also compared funding for both, noting that incentive programs or subsidized exam fees are bringing AP to more low-income students while the Early College Initiative by the Gates Foundation gives funding for dual enrollment in low-socioeconomic areas.

Comparison in Teacher Training

One comparison that can also be a contrast between dual enrollment and AP is teacher training. As already noted, AP strongly suggests that teachers go through the Summer Institute Training and provides many resources to teachers. Thomas Leahy (2016), in “Professional Development: Does it Matter?” discussed the idea of training teachers in a dual enrollment program. He discussed how important it has become for training to be part of the quality control that universities provide when undergoing any kind of dual enrollment program (Leahy, 2016). Unlike AP in which any teacher can teach the course because it is a high school course, Leahy (2016) discussed that dual enrollment teachers, if high school teachers, must meet all the qualifications they would need to meet to teach adjunct on the college campus itself. Leahy (2016) also discussed that many universities provide texts and syllabi to dual enrollment teachers in order to standardize the course with what college freshmen would receive. This is a difference from AP in which each teacher has a set of guidelines to follow but ultimately, the course created differs wildly from teacher to teacher. While there is no set “curriculum” for dual enrollment, universities do seek uniformity across their institution, whether serving high school students or college students.

AP and Dual Enrollment and Degree Completion

The purpose of Speroni’s (2011) study was to look at whether participation in these programs was associated with enrolling in a four-year school and earning a bachelor’s degree. She found that both AP and dual enrollment are related to the likelihood of college enrollment in four-year schools and earning bachelor’s degrees, but they are not equal predictors of success. In using the data from two Florida public schools, Speroni (2011) found that dual enrollment students enroll in college at a higher rate but at a lower rate for four-year schools. This means

they are enrolling more in two-year institutions. While there is a higher percentage of college enrollment overall for dual enrollment, this does not necessarily translate to bachelor's degree attainment (Speroni, 2011). She stated that students who take both dual enrollment and AP courses do better than those who take only one path (Speroni, 2011). This supports the value of both AP and dual enrollment courses. Her results are also limited to those who took dual enrollment on college campuses, not at the high school (Speroni, 2011). This limits her study in not including the large number of students who dual enroll but take courses on the high school campus and sometimes taught by high school teachers. In concluding her findings, Speroni (2011) stated that "the dual-enrollment-AP college enrollment gap, while negligible for students with very low ability, is fairly constant for students along most of the ability distribution" (p.3). Therefore, while there are some differences in terms of degree acquisition, both AP and dual enrollment are predictors of higher college enrollment, and taken together, they can provide greater success for students in college.

Comparison in Persistence and Performance

A study by William Duffy II (2010) sought to compare dual credit opportunities and the regular high school experience in terms of the effect of persistence and performance at a four-year school. For the purpose of his study, he defined dual credit in a broad way to include a variety of different courses both taught on the high school campus and taught at the college for high school students. Unlike some definitions of dual credit, Duffy (2010) did not limit his definition to any physical space or instructor type. His study was conducted using students at the University of Tennessee at Martin (Duffy, 2010). Prior to describing his study, he noted that when looking at the existing research, "dual credit students typically exceed persistence and performance norms when compared to non-dual credit students in college" (Duffy, 2010, p.140).

He also stated, however, that typically students who take advantage of dual credit opportunities (AP/IB/Dual Enrollment) are academically sound already (Duffy, 2010). Therefore, the students who choose to take the college track courses are typically the ones who would have succeeded anyway. He acknowledged the conflict ongoing in dual credit courses over turf (who gets to determine the standards) and credibility (is the learning college-level?) and acknowledged growing concerns with these dual credit programs (Duffy, 2010). Because there is so much variability among dual enrollment courses in terms of the physical space in which they are taught and who does the teaching (high school teacher or college professor), it is more difficult to generalize findings.

Duffy's (2010) study consisted of 300 non-dual credit college students, 181 former AP students, and 305 former dual enrollment students from the University of Tennessee At Martin. He looked at four variables including family income and educational level of mother and father, ACT composite, high school GPA and high school class rank, gender and race, and type of student (dual credit participant or not). His results found that there were no significant differences in degree attainment among the three different student types when controlling for the pre-entry variables and that the only significant predictor was the achievement variable (Duffy, 2010). He went on to note that college GPAs and degree attainment in five years showed no significant difference when controlling for the non-achievement variables. Duffy (2010) stated that "the major finding of this study is that no significant differences in persistence and performance outcomes were discovered among regular course, AP, and credit-based college course participants" (p.156) which contradicts previous research. The importance of this is that it calls into question whether the taking of dual credit courses themselves raise achievement in college or if non-controllable variables such as race, gender, and income level truly impact

college success. This comes back to the issue of causation or correlation. While some studies have shown a correlation between high school course taking and college success, they do not prove causation between course taken and college success (Adelman, 1999; Bleske-Recheck, Lupinski, and Benbow, 2004). Duffy's study differs because it shows no difference in degree completion in five years.

Access and Diversity of AP and Dual Enrollment Programs

While the AP program began by targeting elite and private high school students, between 1975-present it has grown tremendously in access and diversity. According to Lacy (2010), there was tremendous growth in the 1980s in terms of "racial, ethnic, national, and age democratization" (p. 35). Lacy (2010) discussed not only growth in terms of expansion to differing ethnic groups but also the internationalization of the program. By working with foreign universities and encouraging them to accept credit, the AP program expanded to new populations (Lacy, 2010). In addition, according to Lacy (2010) the U.S. Department of Defense was on board with the program by the late 1980s, recognizing exam results and bringing these courses to DOD (Department of Defense) international schools. According to Lacy (2010), 50 countries hosted AP examinations in 1994. Access to rural and urban areas also began in the 1980s with many governmental and nongovernmental initiatives (Lacy, 2010). One example is the South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984. This act mandated that by August 1987, AP programs and programs for gifted and talented should be offered across the state (Lacy, 2010). Many other states including Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas helped to promote AP by reimbursing exam fees (Lacy, 2010). All these expansions taken together have helped to bring the advanced coursework of the AP program to more students from diverse areas and backgrounds.

The policy of the College Board itself is that “there should be no prerequisites for an AP class and that any motivated student should be allowed to enroll” (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2010, p.183). Despite this, schools vary widely on what kind of access they give to AP courses. According to Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010), some follow the open enrollment policy preferred by the College Board, while others require application, recommendations, and sometimes even contracts by students and/or parents. According to Laurie Davis, her school in the Boston area requires students to complete extensive summer reading for admission to the AP English Literature course; if the assignments are not turned in when school starts, students are dropped from the course (personal communication, June 4, 2019). Carrie Karkut, who teaches AP English Language and AP English Literature at a faith-based school in California, notes that students must apply for the courses and be admitted (personal communication, June 4, 2019). Many schools take the opposite approach by allowing anyone who expresses interest to take the courses. While the College Board’s expressed policy of openness allows more students the benefit from some of the best teachers, Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010) note that AP courses are designed to be equal to college courses, not to “remediate students who are not academically prepared for the rigors of college coursework” (p.183). The trend of AP scores has been on a downward turn in recent years, possibly due to the open access policy.

Both AP and dual enrollment programs have aimed at promoting equity for diverse groups. The state of Minnesota addressed the issue of diversity through the Entry Point Project (EPP)—a program through three universities meant to serve students with academic potential that was yet unrealized (Henderson, Hodne, & Williams, 2016). Despite some of the highest achievement scores in the nation, the data showed a different story when broken down into sub-populations (Henderson, Hodne, & Williams, 2016). Graduation rates were double for white

students, and the rate of four-year college attendance was also much greater for white students, with blacks, Latinos, and Asian students having much higher attendance at two-year colleges (Henderson, Hodne, & Williams, 2016). In further disaggregating the data, Henderson, Hodne, and Williams (2016) learned that minorities were also significantly less likely to have participated in dual enrollment programs. Therefore, the Entry Point Project was formed to serve more diverse students in dual enrollment. This shows a common trend with both AP and dual enrollment—seeking to spread these opportunities to minority groups through either funding to take the courses or just open access.

Brian Boecherer (2016) discussed household income and its role on educational experiences. Schools in low-income areas struggle more than those in affluent areas to provide opportunities for their students. Looking at economics, Boecherer (2016) commented that logic shows that students will choose the academic program that gives them the “greatest reward at the smallest cost” (p.258). Speaking specifically of the University of Connecticut ECE (Early College Experience) program, Boecherer (2016) commented on the attempts in the last 20 years to try to diversify the students who take these courses as well as to keep the fees low. The ECE courses started as free to all high school students who meet the admission requirements; there is now a fee of \$25 per course, but this is waived for any students on the Free and Reduced Lunch plan (Boecherer, 2016). In schools where 85% or more of the student body receives Free and Reduced services, the fee is waived for the entire student body (Boecherer, 2016). This provides evidence of how dual enrollment can be a very cost-effective option for many students, especially in comparison to AP where they pay \$94.00 per test and may not earn any credit from the college or university they attend. In his study, Boecherer (2016) looked at all three levels of income (low, middle, high) and on student enrollment in the ECE program. He found that there

was no relationship between participation in ECE and household income, leading him to the conclusion that “In the middle and lower quartiles, access to concurrent enrollment partnerships should be opened with as few economic restrictions as the program can manage” (Boecherer, 2016, p.278). This research supports the policies of open access to EPSO courses. Bridging the financial gap can provide benefits to all students, but especially those in the low- and middle-income brackets.

The Space Between High School Writing and College Composition

Focusing specifically on writing and on the transition between high school and college, Christine Denecker, in her article entitled “Transitioning Writers Across the Composition Threshold: What We Can Learn from Dual Enrollment Partnerships,” discussed the complex relationship between high school and college English programs specifically in context of writing. Denecker (2013) noted that many college professors berate high school English teachers for not adequately preparing students for writing at the same time that high school teachers like Greg Shafer address the “catch-22” that high school English teachers face—the pressure that comes from on high to teach prescriptive writing such as the five-paragraph essay. In high school, these formulaic structures are encouraged because they help beginning writers and give structure for state writing assessments. However, these structures do not show the sophistication with writing that may be needed in college. However, Denecker (2013) also stated that colleges have not clearly defined what students need to do to be considered successful writers. This makes it very difficult for high school teachers to adequately prepare students for college writing when the college writing standards are not clearly communicated. Thus, there is a disconnect and distinct lack of communication in terms of the transition from high school writing to college writing.

Dual enrollment English provides one place to examine this disconnect since students take an actual college composition course.

Denecker (2013) conducted a study in Ohio at the University of Findlay. She studied three distinct dual enrollment options: the college campus in a traditional composition setting, the high school campus with a trained high school teacher, and the college campus in a class with only high school students. Denecker's (2013) pilot study took place between 2006-2007 of three different college writing classrooms, and her research consisted of surveying and interviewing 7 teachers, surveying 17 students, and interviewing 15 of the 17 students. She then conducted a follow-up study from 2007-2013 of dual enrollment composition classrooms (Denecker, 2013). Each setting used the same general syllabus from the University of Findlay and the same three types of writing assignments: narrative, analysis, and argument (Denecker, 2013). All the teachers in the study had experience with secondary and post-secondary writing (Denecker, 2013). For the purposes of this study, good writing was defined as "that which moves beyond a formulaic structure (five-paragraph essay) and includes attention to style, audience, organization development, thesis, and grammar" (Denecker, 2013, p.30). What she found was that the most important factor from moving students from high school writing to college writing was not what the students do, but what the teachers know; in other words, closing the gap in expectations comes best from those who plan, oversee, and carry out the dual enrollment instruction (Denecker, 2013). This supports the idea that students are capable of learning new ways of writing, but they must be taught how to do so.

Denecker (2013) also identified three factors which lead to inconsistency between high school and college writing. The first factor is the scope of material high school teachers must cover and the fact that composition is not taught as an individual course in high school like it is

in college (Denecker, 2013). The second factor is the state and national standards which high school teachers must follow, and the third factor is the paper load with somewhere between 100 and upwards of 150 students (Denecker, 2013). The sheer number of students that high school teachers are responsible for is prohibitive to assigning and scoring sufficient writing. Denecker (2013) concluded by saying:

These three factors suggest that from the start, a dual enrolled student entering a college composition classroom is crossing the threshold into somewhat foreign territory—a place where writing is king, a place where the expectations for writing are not dictated by state or national mandates, a place where the instructor’s time and energy are (presumably) focused on the needs of fewer students. (p.32)

Therefore, there should be benefits to students in taking dual enrollment courses in English composition when they then transition to the world of college. By giving high school students the opportunity to move beyond the five-paragraph essay and only focus on writing related to literature, students are being better prepared to enter the world of college.

Howard Tinberg and Jean-Paul Nadeau (2013) in their article “What Happens When High School Students Write in a College Course?” detailed their concern with dual enrollment composition course and the research they undertook in this area. They began by acknowledging the draw of dual enrollment: in many states the courses are free to students, these courses are seen as saving time and allowing students to more quickly move on to their desired course of study, and these courses provide a perceived opportunity to impress admissions boards (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) then posed their major research question: “Does skipping ahead and missing the writing and reading assignments in their high school English classes make these students less prepared for college-level writing and reading?” (p.35). As

professors at a community college, this question grew out of experience and wondering if dual enrollment students were ready to “tackle assignments that called for more analysis than summary” and “possess[ed] the self-awareness necessary to reconsider process” (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). Unlike many previous researchers, they question whether missing out on the final years of high school English truly benefit students.

Their methodology consisted of interviews and a review of writing samples of four dual-credit writing students in the Fall of 2010 who ranged from 15-17 years of age (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). Tinberg & Nadeau (2013) in their research were mainly looking to understand these students’ “grasp of writing process, genre knowledge, and rhetorical situation” –all common requirements in a freshman level composition course (p.36). Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) interviewed each student three times, at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester and collected as much writing as they could to analyze that included instructor feedback. They shared the findings on two students—Dan and Michelle. Dan was 15 years old and went in to his two college courses (composition and psychology) with confidence (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). Despite his confidence, he struggled with writing in the non-traditional genres present in freshman composition, did not fully revise, and earned a C+ with a GPA of a 2.75 in his writing course (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). According to Tinberg and Nadeau (2013), Dan particularly struggled with including proper support and evidence and taking an authoritative tone. Michelle, on the other hand, was 17 years old and was taking her full semester load at the college; she had no courses at all at the high school that semester (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). From the three final draft papers she shared, Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) found that she seemed most comfortable in courses like history that required summary, but this still did not stop her from switching genres and including analysis where none was required. She also struggled to interpret her instructor’s

models for writing and did not feel comfortable asking her instructor for help because she blamed herself for not understanding (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2013). As a negative response to dual enrollment, Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) noted that her experience in dual enrollment seemed to lower her confidence as a writer. Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) concluded that while dual enrollment students struggled with similar issues as all novice college writers, these particularly struggled with understanding the tasks, fully embracing non-traditional genres, and understanding the needs of their audience and effective revision. Their case studies bring up the issue of maturity and whether high school students truly have the necessary maturity to succeed in college writing.

Effects on Student Persistence in College

Joni Swanson (2016) started by discussing reports published by the U.S. Department of Education in 2006 recommending that “college students’ knowledge acquisition” needed to be assessed (p.331). This recommendation from the U.S. Department of Education drew on already existing concerns about the K-college educational system (Swanson, 2016). Swanson (2016) noted organizations such as Achieve, Inc. and the National Diploma Project that have been tasked with finding data such as this. She also referenced the now common knowledge that “college persistence is affected by the skills and knowledge students bring to their initial matriculated postsecondary experience” (Swanson, 2016, p.332). In other words, students are already “programmed” for success in postsecondary school before they get there. However, while many students are very successful in high school, for some the transition to college harms them as they try to succeed in a new environment. Swanson (2016) hypothesized that because dual enrollment provides the function of both high school and college by “promoting academic

and social integration,” these courses may impact students’ decisions to persist through college (p.333).

Swanson (2016) noted that part of what makes the college transition challenging is that students “must demonstrate both the willingness and ability to assume college behaviors and attitudes toward learning” (p.334). Swanson’s (2016) research questions included:

1. Does dual enrollment participation affect the likelihood that students will enter college within seven months of high school graduation as compared to non-dual enrollment participants?
2. Does dual enrollment participation affect the likelihood that students will earn at least 20 credits during their first year in postsecondary education as compared to non-dual enrollment participants?
3. Does dual enrollment participation affect the likelihood that students will demonstrate higher rates of second-year college persistence as compared to non-dual enrollment participants?
4. Do students who have participated in dual enrollment programs experience positive effects upon college persistence after accounting for specific demographic attributes, when compared to non-dual enrollment participants after accounting for these same attributes? (p.334).

She concluded that “logistic equations point decidedly to statistically significant positive estimates for dual enrollment participants who persist toward a degree” (Swanson, 2016, p.347). Swanson (2016) attributed these results to the academic momentum achieved from taking college courses in high school and then entering college. Swanson (2016) noted that a higher percentage of students who took dual enrollment than those who did not had earned at least 50 credits by the

end of their sophomore year, although this did not translate into greater degree completion. In summation, “dual enrollment participation provides students with the momentum to persist, without which a degree is unlikely” (Swanson, 2016, p.348). This study shows that some research has been already conducted into dual enrollment and its positive impact on its participants as they enter postsecondary courses. It should be noted, however, that the results deal only with student persistence, not with establishing any causation between course-taking in high school and success in college.

Theoretical Framework and Context in Writing Instruction

The theory of situated cognition developed by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) regarding knowledge acquisition as part of context is essential to the learning of writing. David Foster and David Russell (2002) cited Muchiri, Mulamba, Myers, and Ndoloi (1994) as noting that “writing development is, like all academic work, situated within complex national, regional, and local environments” (p. 6). This brings the idea of situated cognition and context directly into the instruction of writing. Foster and Russell (2002) discussed the striking difference that exists between writing in the United States and writing in other countries, noting one of the significant differences as the prevalence of general writing courses in the U.S. educational system. Foster and Russell (2002) explored a more global view of the teaching of writing, and stated that “In most national education systems, students’ writing development plays an important—though often unacknowledged—role in the crucial transition from secondary school to university” and how writing is often “bound up with questions of equity in access to higher education and to powerful roles in society” (p.1). Foster and Russell (2002) discussed how in the United States education is seen as an opportunity to gain social advancement and to improve one’s situation; it is no longer limited to the upper class as in earlier times and in other countries.

They stated that the U.S. educational system which provides formal writing instruction to students is designed to “make new chances possible” (Foster & Russell, 2002, p.9). In looking at a framework of situated cognition and context, Foster and Russell (2002) stated that “Students moving from secondary to higher education are...between worlds, and their writing reflects this transition” (p.15). Because their context is changing, students must acclimate themselves to new expectations and greater responsibility (Foster & Russell, 2002). Foster and Russell (2002) stated that students moving from secondary to postsecondary studies “carry unconscious habits of writing into the university environment—until they experience the shock of difference, and often failure” (p.16). While Foster and Russell focused on a comparison of writing instruction in colleges on a global scale, this concept of the situated context of learning is very applicable. It bears researching whether students can be assisted in making this writing transition through programs like AP and dual enrollment that place them in college contexts early and perhaps in a safe environment. This provides support for studying how best writing may be taught to ease the transition from secondary to postsecondary school.

Summary

There are many avenues for high school students to try to get ahead by taking college courses in high school, including ones not discussed here like the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The two most common and likely most researched are the Advanced Placement Program and various programs of dual enrollment, whether they be classified as concurrent enrollment or dual credit. While both options offer the opportunity for students to earn college credit in high school, they differ widely in application and in perceived benefits.

The AP exam began earlier and was founded out of a perceived need by elite private schools to give highly intellectual and gifted students the opportunity to earn college credit

through high school courses they were already taking. The desire for this program to grow occurred in the late 1950s with a need to employ more people in science and math due to historical events such as the space race. A study conducted at Vanderbilt University by Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, and Benbow (2004) showed a benefit to this very student population in taking AP courses. However, over time the population of students taking AP has drastically changed due to many factors including a perceived benefit in getting into college, attempts to save on the rising cost of college tuition, and state-mandated and College Board encouraged open access policies. Students from a wide variety of ethnical, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds are being encouraged to take these courses, though as noted by Sadler (2010a), the scores received by these sub-populations are often “dismal,” and insufficient to earn college credit. The question that is then raised is whether the content learned from the taking of the course alone, regardless of credit earned, is worth the cost in terms of preparing students to enter the world of college. However, as noted by Iatarola, Conger, and Long (2011), there are benefits beyond just the earning of course credit through preference during the admissions process merely for taking the courses as well as possible scholarships. In addition, the AP program has expanded in a more international way, allowing possible transfer of credit to international schools (Lacy, 2010). Therefore, while some research shows benefits to high achieving students in taking AP, any research done has been correlative, not causal. Many factors must be considered when attempting to determine the benefit of taking these courses.

The dual enrollment path has been around for a shorter amount of time, coming into being in the 1950s and beginning to expand in the 1970s. It takes many different forms and is much less standardized than the AP program. Dual enrollment requires a partnership to be formed between high schools and colleges and universities who agree to accept credits from high

school students. Because of the lack of a standardized assessment such as the AP exams, it is difficult to measure the equivalence of these courses. The physical surroundings of the course and instructors also differ greatly, as some are taught by high school teachers on the high school campus, some by college professors on the high school campus, and some by college or adjunct professors on the college campus. Courses taught on the high school campus consist of entirely high school students, while courses taught on the college campus blend high school and college students together, creating a different dynamic. Credit is typically awarded based on a passing score on the coursework and the teacher or university created final exam.

Adelman (1999) in his research on the importance of course rigor in high schools, suggested dual enrollment as a possible way to set students on a path towards college success. Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) went into more depth about the benefits of dual enrollment, including not only the financial benefits but also the psychological benefits to students. Early College programs, such as those described by Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017), can also provide that psychological support because these programs show a true partnership between a specific college and a high school as students receive instruction from both college professors and high school teachers with the goal of graduating high school with an associate's degree. Critics of dual enrollment, however, focus on lack of standardization, possible watering down of the curriculum itself, lack of training of high school teachers, and lack of oversight from colleges and universities. Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) focused specifically on composition and raised the question whether advancing students out of their last years of high school writing is in the best interest of the students.

While research has been conducted into both AP and dual enrollment and their influence on students who enter postsecondary schools, very little research has been done regarding

student perceptions of how these courses have benefited them. While several longitudinal studies have been noted here that did show some positive impact for students' persistence in college or attainment of bachelor's or advanced degrees, these studies are by no way conclusive (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009; Speroni, 2011;). Most of these studies were also quantitative in nature, accounting for statistics rather than student perceptions. Tinberg and Nadeau (2013) did conduct some case study research into the performance of four high school students in community college English courses, but this research was not generalizable or expansive enough to be conclusive regarding the value of these courses. Little research has been conducted up to this point regarding student perceptions of how taking EPSO courses in high school benefited them in terms of persistence, preparation, organization and time management, or writing across college courses.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze student perceptions of whether taking EPSO courses in high school, specifically AP and dual enrollment English, has allowed greater success as first-year college students. The definition of success may be different for each student, as some may view it in terms of preparedness while others may view it in terms of numerical grades on assignments or courses. The qualitative approach used in this study was appropriate in analyzing student responses to determine whether any correlation exists between courses taken in high school and college success for these specific students. This research included a broad survey sent out to students personally known to this researcher and colleagues using convenience sampling. Based on the final question of the survey which asks for volunteers to be interviewed, volunteers were narrowed to five students who either took AP or dual enrollment English to continue the study with a closed interview and a focus group. While the review of literature uncovered that researchers have studied both the AP and dual enrollment programs, very little research has been conducted into the specific impact of taking college-level English courses in high school on student perceptions of college success.

Research Question

The focus of this research on student perceptions lent itself to a qualitative study. The research question guiding this study was the following: **What are student perceptions regarding how taking AP and dual enrollment English courses in high school help their performance in college?**

Research Approach

A phenomenological approach was used to approach this study. Because this study surveyed and interviewed mostly first-year college students regarding their experiences, this

research approach was appropriate because the definition of phenomenological research is that it “is designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014, p.501). The basis of this ethnographic model is that people’s experiences are varied and that reality is specific to each individual, though it may differ from that of others (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). In addition, the participants are important to a phenomenological study as they must have “been through the experience being investigated and can share their thoughts and feelings about it” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014, p.503). Kevin Davis (1995) stated, “Instead of asking “What does the social world mean to me the observer?” researchers should be asking questions such as the following: “What does the social world mean for the observed actor within this world?” (p.121). These questions aid in focusing in on the individual and the individual experience rather than the shared experience of any group. While similarities may be found in the experiences of varying people, the goal of phenomenology is to allow voice to individuals. Phenomenology was the appropriate ethnographic match for this research question because the students selected from the survey responses have taken either AP and/or dual enrollment, and they will all have had varied experiences both in high school and in college that will color their perceptions of success.

Study Participants and Setting

This study was conducted using convenience sampling of students at varying colleges and universities. The survey was sent out via personal e-mail to students in their first year of college. Convenience sampling of former students and those of a colleague was utilized along with the survey being distributed via respondents to their friends. The purpose of including first-year college students was to gain student perceptions of their high school coursework while it is

still fresh in their minds and unbiased by skills or content they have learned while in college. While the survey collected data from many students, only those who volunteered to continue and who took either AP English or dual enrollment English were considered for an interview. A group of five students who took either AP or dual enrollment English their junior and/or senior years of high school was assembled to be interviewed. No identifying information was requested during the survey except for those volunteering to continue in the study. Consent forms were sent to those volunteering to participate beyond the survey. The survey served as the beginning of analysis; results were analyzed and coded for themes that the interviews explored further. Interview participants were identified by letters rather than their names to maintain their expectation of confidentiality.

Description of Instruments

There were three components to this research study, a widely distributed survey, a closed- question interview, and an electronic focus group. The survey was a cross-sectional survey, which according to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Walker (2014) looks at a sample of a population at one point in time. The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions. The survey included closed questions using checklists and Likert-type questions ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Google Forms provided the survey tool. Open-ended questions were included on the survey to allow students to expand on their responses. This allowed for more information by which to develop themes for addressing during the interviews. The interviews were conducted using closed questioning so that all students are asked the same questions, although the order and wording differed depending on the responses. The purpose of the interviews was to allow students to tell their stories of their experiences with EPSO English courses in high school and discuss what skills or

work habits may have been useful to them in their college coursework so far. The focus group was conducted electronically and allowed students to confirm the validity of the results.

Research Procedures and Time Period

The survey was sent out to as many first-year students as possible using convenience sampling of students known personally to the researcher and a colleagues who represented a variety of colleges and universities. Within five days of sending the survey, sufficient responses were obtained and the survey was closed. Within two weeks of closing the survey, results were analyzed for themes and survey questions were written. Students who volunteered to be interviewed were contacted with a consent form and attempts were made to schedule the interviews. The interviews all took place within a two-week window. Not all the students contacted responded. Five students did return the consent form and schedule interviews. These student volunteers were then administered a closed interview where all students received the same questions, though a semi-structured approach was taken by which the interviewer could respond appropriately to the responses of the participants. The questions were formulated based on the responses received in the surveys. The purpose of the interviews was to allow students to tell their stories of their experiences with EPSO English courses in high school and discuss what skills or work habits may have been useful to them in their college coursework so far. After studying and coding the interview responses, the group was contacted for an electronic focus group to share the results.

The data from the surveys was collected electronically and analyzed using Google Forms. This data was used to draw broad conclusions and to provide insight into the questions addressed during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in person and by digital methods, depending on the availability of the college students. The interviews were transcribed word for

word for coding purposes. The focus group was conducted using digital means due to the widespread colleges and universities represented in the interview respondents.

Peer Debriefing

Prior to the focus group, peer debriefing was utilized. The coding and results were shared with a colleague who is also going through the dissertation process, so she understood both her role and the importance of performing it with fidelity.

Member Checks

The focus group served as a member check, allowing the research and findings to be presented to the participants. Students were contacted for a virtual focus group since they are away at college in different states. They had the opportunity to hear the conclusions and verify accuracy.

Audit Trail

In addition to the peer debriefing and member checks, the survey results along with all transcriptions will be maintained to create an audit trail.

Data Analysis

The survey results were analyzed to identify common sentiments and themes. Fill-in responses were read and coded by hand. The transcriptions of the interviews were read and coded using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was used first to look for commonalities among the data collected. Axial coding was then utilized to categorize the data into themes. Finally, selective coding was used to draw some conclusions based on the data collected. In order to effectively code the data, the results from the Google Forms survey were analyzed for themes, and the transcripts of the interviews were printed. Different themes were highlighted in different color pens in order to visually categorize commonalities. Because this is

a qualitative study grounded in phenomenological ethnography, there was no hypothesis to be proven. Instead, the data was analyzed to see if there were any common experiences running amongst the students interviewed and if there are any differences in the perceptions of those who took AP versus dual enrollment English in high school.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine using phenomenological qualitative means whether there is any connection between taking AP or dual enrollment English in high school and success as first-year college students. Convenience sampling was used of former students of both the researcher and a colleague from a school district in Middle Tennessee. These students represent a variety of colleges, both public and private. Students were initially contacted personally and requested to complete a survey. The survey provided an opportunity to volunteer for interviewing. Those who volunteered were contacted and sent a consent form (Appendix B). Once the consent form was returned, students were contacted and interviews were scheduled. Out of the nine consent forms that were sent out, five were returned and five interviews were conducted.

The initial data collection was done through a 28-question survey (Appendix A) that included a variety of questions including check all that apply, Likert scale, and short response. The purpose of the survey was to determine themes that could be developed further during the interview process. Questions varied from demographic regarding size of high school and college to questions asking students to attribute value to such statements as “The feedback I received was beneficial” and “The course benefitted me in courses other than English.” The results of the initial survey provided support for the importance of this research study. In terms of demographics of what course(s) were taken, of survey respondents, 68.8% took AP English Language and Composition, 81.3% took AP English Literature and Composition, and 15.6% took dual enrollment. The high percentage of students in AP over dual enrollment is indicative of the norm in school district where the respondents were educated. The overlap in percentages is because students can take some combination of these three courses over the course of two years

(11th and 12th grades). The results indicated that most of the survey respondents took a combination of AP English Language and AP English Literature. 84.4% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their writing improved due to their AP or dual enrollment course. In addition, 84.4% agreed that they would take the same high school courses over again if given the chance. The free response portion of the survey where students had the opportunity to elaborate on their responses provided the information needed to write the interview questions.

The research question posed was:

What are student perceptions regarding how AP and dual enrollment English courses in high school help their performance in college?

Coding

After previewing the survey results in Google Forms where the survey was taken, the free response questions were studied. Students were asked to elaborate on their responses to most questions, and these were coded by hand using different colored pens to identify themes and common responses. Every response was read and analyzed. Responses that were similar in nature were paired together until common themes emerged. The major themes that emerged were preparation in terms of reading analytically and writing preparation/growth in ability. Another theme that emerged was the rigor of the high school class in comparison with college. These became the themes that guided the interview questions. The interviews were conducted from a closed list of five questions compiled from the themes that emerged from the survey. The nature of the survey was semi-structured allowing for flexibility in terms of the responses given.

Once participants had been interviewed and the interviews transcribed, further coding occurred by highlighting responses to the different themes (reading/analysis, writing, and rigor) in different colors and by drawing connections between responses using post-it notes laid out in a

linear format. This allowed connections to be drawn among the responses of the various participants.

Interview Questions

The interview questions were as follows:

1. Tell me about the reading and analysis in which you engaged in high school AP/dual enrollment and whether you think this has benefited you in your college courses.
2. Compare the types of writing you did in high school dual enrollment with what you have done in college so far. Did the writing you did in high school help prepare you for the expectations of college writing?
3. Compare the rigor of your AP/dual enrollment course with your college courses.
4. Have you experienced a connection between rigor in high school and college success?
5. Overall, has the AP/dual enrollment English course you took in high school benefited you as a first-semester college student in any courses (English or otherwise)?

As the interviewing took place, questions 1 and 2 were often broken down into smaller parts to allow the interviewees to thoroughly discuss what they did in both high school and college as well as draw connections to perceived benefit. The order and wording of the questions was also sometimes altered due to the participants' responses.

Participant Demographics

All participants are graduates of high schools from the same district in Middle Tennessee in 2019 except for one who graduated in 2017. They vary in terms of the combination of high school courses they took as well as the size and type of college they attend.

Participant A is a freshman at an elite university in a major city in the South who is double majoring in Anthropology and Human Organization and Development (HOD). In high

school, she took both AP English Language and AP English Literature along with several other AP courses. The interview took place in-person. In talking before the formal start of the interview, she noted that college is significantly harder than high school. That led into the interview questions which progressed from her addressing this idea to discussing reading, writing, and rigor in context of both high school and college.

Participant B is a freshman at a large state school in the West who is majoring in Business with a concentration in Sustainability. In high school, she took Honors English as a junior and dual enrollment English 1010 and 1020 as a senior on the high school campus. The courses she took were the equivalent of freshman composition and freshman literature. The interview was conducted electronically.

Participant C is a freshman at a large public university on the East coast who is majoring in Theatre Stage Management. In high school, she took Honors English as a junior and AP English Literature and Composition as a senior. The interview was conducted by telephone.

Participant D is a freshman at a large public engineering school in the South who is majoring in Civil Engineering. She will likely specialize in Environmental Engineering as she gets further along in her major. In high school, she took Honors English as a junior and AP English Literature and Composition as a senior. The interview was conducted electronically using Zoom.

Participant E is a junior at an elite music conservatory in the Northeast. At this music conservatory, she majors in Harp Performance and Music Education while minoring in French at the University of Rochester. In high school, she took both AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition. She was homeschooled up until the 10th grade. The interview was conducted by telephone.

Findings

Using the themes gleaned from the survey, the interview questions were written focused around three areas: Reading/Analysis, Writing, and Rigor with a fourth area of Overall Impression. The results are as follows:

Reading/Analysis

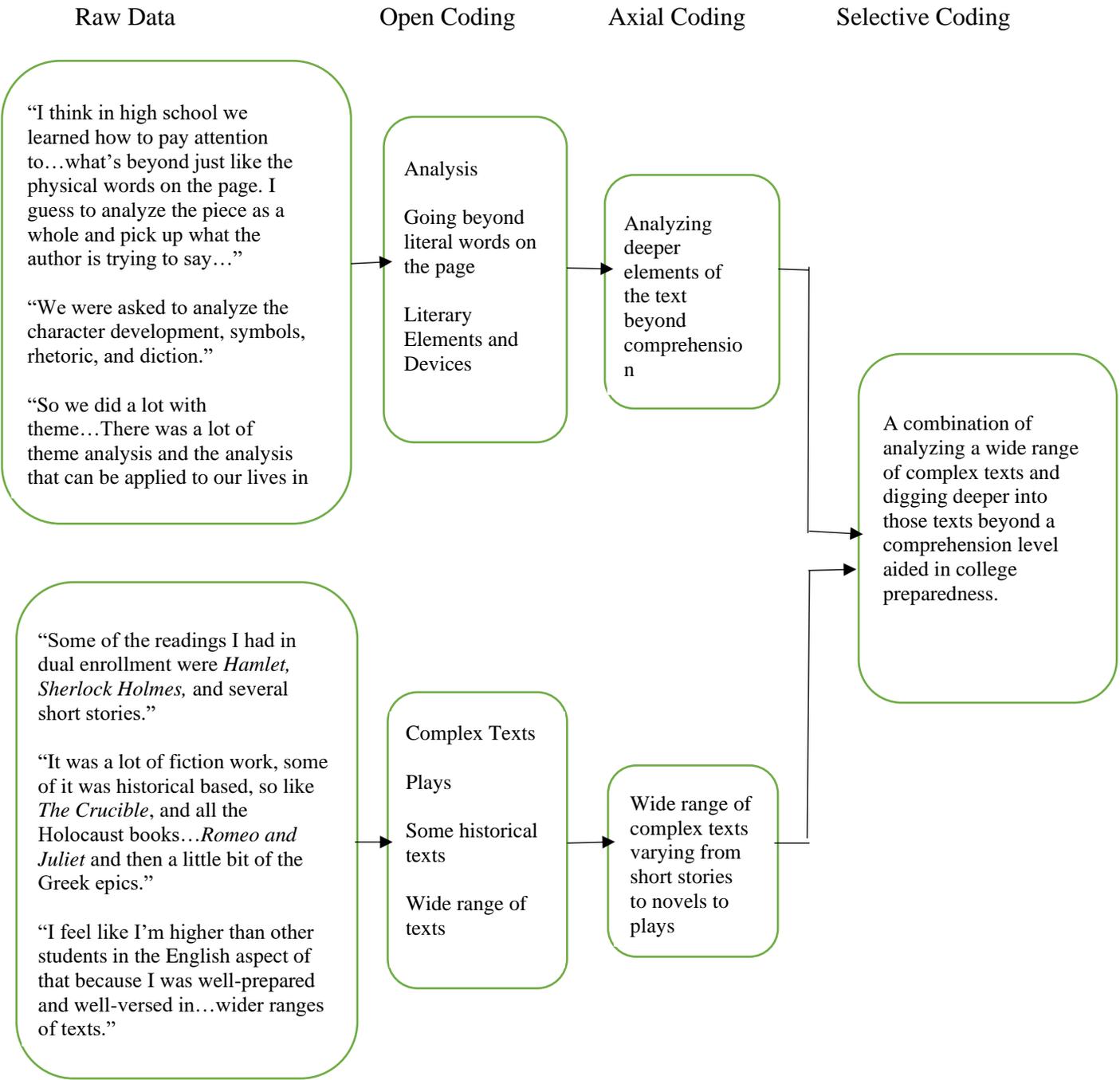
All five participants noted a connection between the reading and analysis they did in high school and success in college, although they chose to address some similar as well as some different aspects of what they did in high school and how it has impacted college. Participant A addressed the question generally, focusing less on specific texts that were read and more on skills that were acquired as a result of the reading. Participant A noted that “in high school we learned how to pay attention to what's beyond just like [sic] the physical words on the page.” Participant A continued by talking about how she learned to pay attention to the piece as a whole and pick out what's important. She connected this to college assignments by noting of papers she had to write that “I had to learn how to pick out what was important and to leave behind what wasn't because if I included something that wasn't important I'd get points taken off for it, so I kind of learned how to be selective when it comes to paying attention.”

Participants B, C, D, and E were very specific about texts that they read in high school. One theme that emerged from the listing of texts was the variety of complex texts that students read in their AP/dual enrollment classes. Participant B listed *Hamlet* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* along with various short stories and poetry. She noted that “We were asked to analyze the character development, symbols, rhetoric, and diction.” Participant E noted also reading a great number of short stories as well as reading such complex texts as *In Cold Blood* and *The Great Gatsby* in AP English Language and *Heart of Darkness* and *As I Lay Dying* in AP

English Literature. She noted focusing on learning to annotate and on using Socratic Seminars to discuss, noting the discussion of “important themes and important concepts that are presented with the novel as well as the historical correlations with the author and things like that.”

Participant C and D also focused on specific texts, with Participant C noting *The Crucible*, Holocaust literature and Greek plays with a surprising absence of Shakespeare. Participant D specified *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Participants C, D, and E all focused on the analysis of themes within the texts read. In response to question 1 about reading and analysis, Participant D stated that “I feel like in high school it was a whole lot more comprehension, like pull themes. It was a lot more in-depth than what my college one is.” Participant C focused on the value of analyzing theme in high school by taking a broader, more universal view. She stated, “There was a lot of theme analysis and the analysis that can be applied to our lives in high school and in society today and how it’s still representative in the literature that’s being written today... I feel like being able to depict themes within literature in high school and how they apply in society today made me a little more well-rounded for a writing class where it’s more focused on societal issues.” Participants C and E also noted reading texts with historical connections.

Table 1



Writing

All five participants noted the amount of writing completed in their AP/dual enrollment classes. Some themes that emerged regarding writing involved types of writing, including narrative and analytical/research. Three of the five participants noted learning more about style and formatting in high school than in college. Two out of five participants discussed specifically writing in subjects other than English in college. Participant B took a different perspective in response to the writing question, noting “Dual enrollment has helped me learn how to time managed and also showed me the level of difficulty that professors want when you turn in a paper. I felt completely prepared when writing my papers because of taking dual enrollment.”

Regarding types of writing, Participants A, C, and D noted the narrative writing required of them in college. Participant A discussed writing narrative essays in college that she compared to essays she wrote in her high school AP class. She noted a difference in terms of not using a book but “using our own stories from our lives.” She stated that her English class had her complete this kind of writing. Participant C stated of a course called Focused Inquiry that she took her first semester, “My first essay got to be a narrative about something that I went through in my life.” In discussing how different this narrative writing is from what she did in high school she stated, “[of the writing done in high school] It’s very professional, very structured, and then the writing I’m doing now doesn’t have to be that way, and it’s such a struggle for me because it’s the complete opposite of what I’ve been doing in the last 4,5,6 years in high school and middle school... We don’t have to worry about it being so perfectly organized and having all the sources to back it up and making sure it’s completely unbiased.” Despite noting the differences in writing expectations and mode in high school and college, Participant C stated that “my professor really loves my writing” and that “my professor pulled me aside one day and told me

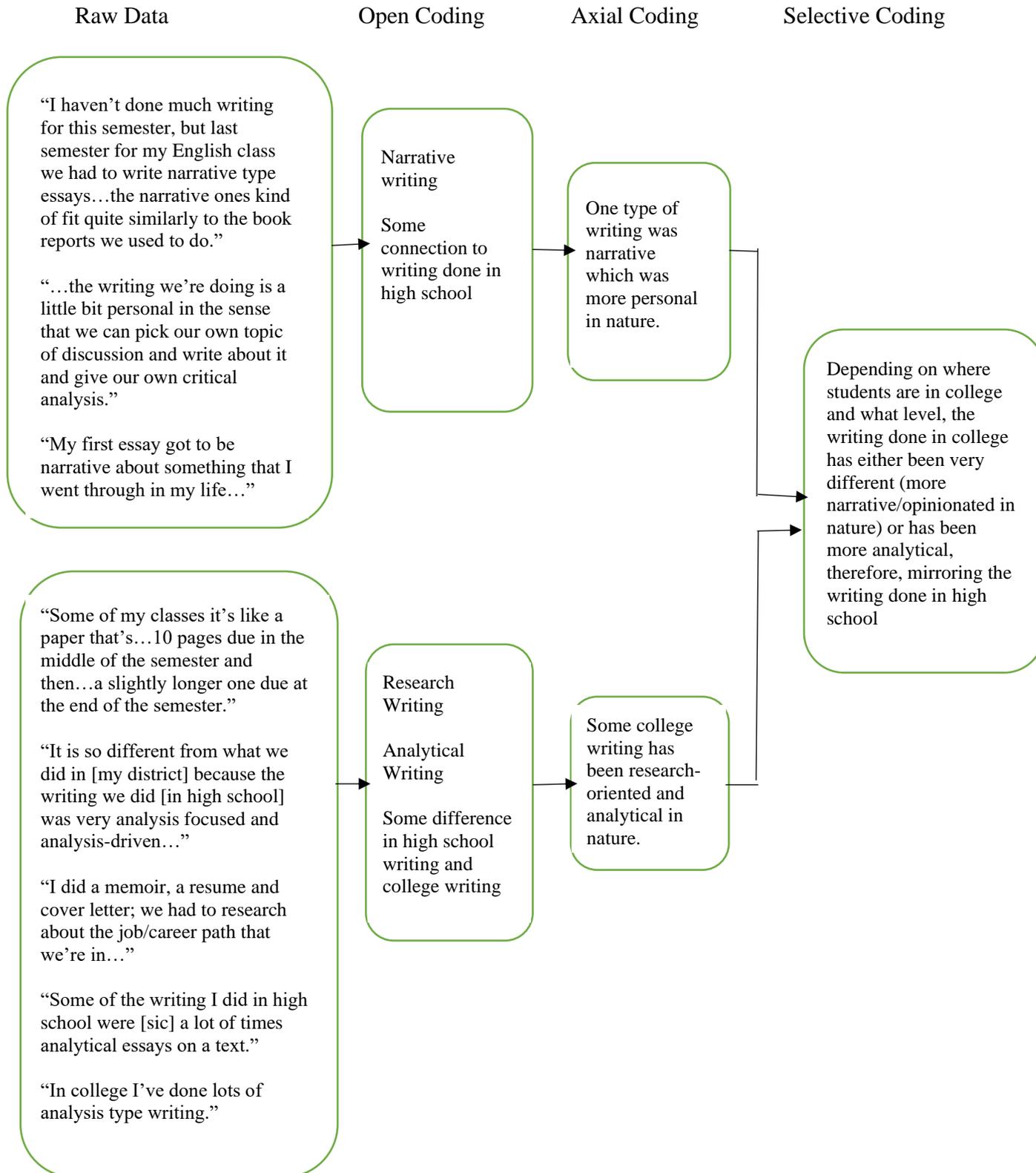
she doesn't think I'm challenged enough in this course." Participant C then stated that she believes that taking AP English has helped her writing in college, that it "definitely prepared me for college writing because it allowed me to think critically whether...it was on a personal level or not." Participant A compares the writing in high school and in college by stating that the practice AP essays she wrote helped her learn how to write more concisely. This has benefited her in a class for her major (not English) in which essays had to be two pages or less. Participant D also noted having to write a memoir for her first-semester English course. She described it as very different from what she wrote in high school, noting that her high school writing was more analysis.

Participants A and D noted having to write research papers in college. Participant A discussed a 10-page paper required in her first semester. Participant D talked about various types of writing including a research paper.

As discussed earlier, Participants C and D noted the writing in high school being much more analytical than what they have done so far in college. Participant E also discussed the analytical nature of writing. She noted that the majority of writing she did for her two AP English courses was analytical and persuasive. However, she also noted that she has done lots of "analysis type of writing" in college. She discussed the music theory and history courses she had to take and how "most of our tests in history are actually essay-style tests." She also noted doing writing for her French class and writing a paper doing a character portrait from a play. Her perspective may differ from the other participants because she is a junior in college, not a freshman. Therefore, she has had more courses in which to write. Participants A and E note more writing done in courses other than English. These participants are both similar in that they attend private, selective universities. They also both discussed doing more analytical writing than the

other participants, despite the fact that Participant A is also only a second-semester college student.

In terms of style and format, Participants A, D, and E all discussed learning about a formal style and proper formatting in high school. Participant E, when posed the question about whether there is a connection between the writing done in high school and successful writing in college, stated, “100%. I learned how to write in those AP classes. I did not know how to write before...I think there’s a huge correlation for me, especially when it comes to writing.”

Table 2

Rigor

The third theme that emerged from the survey that was used to formulate interview questions was rigor. The question posed asked students to compare the rigor of AP/dual enrollment with college courses and determine if there was a connection between high school rigor and college success. Some interesting connections emerged with the student responses. Participants B, C, and D all said that high school was more rigorous than college.

Participant B stated that “Reading multiple chapters of a book or a few short stories before each class compared to having the professors lecture on the chapters is a difference in the rigor of dual enrollment and college.”

Participant C stated, “I, maybe it’s just the college courses I’m taking, but I think high school was way more rigorous than college is.” She continued to attribute it to volume and speed, noting that in her high school AP course “it was, we’re going to read this book and this book and this book, and in-between every book we’re going to write an essay, and we didn’t have a lot of down time to settle in.” In speaking of college, Participant C stated, “...the thinking that I had to do wasn’t as extensive as I had to do in high school... it definitely doesn’t feel as rigorous as high school was.” When questioned further regarding a connection between rigor in high school and college success, she stated, “I do think that having a very high level of rigor in high school kind of prepared me and got me into this mentality of putting forth a certain amount of effort and turning in work with a certain level of work ethic that has made me very successful in college.”

Participant D discussed how writing was an area of weakness for her in college and how she just naturally expected to struggle through college English. She stated that “I walked in the first day and I was fully expecting just to kind of struggle through it just to get through it. Ok. I

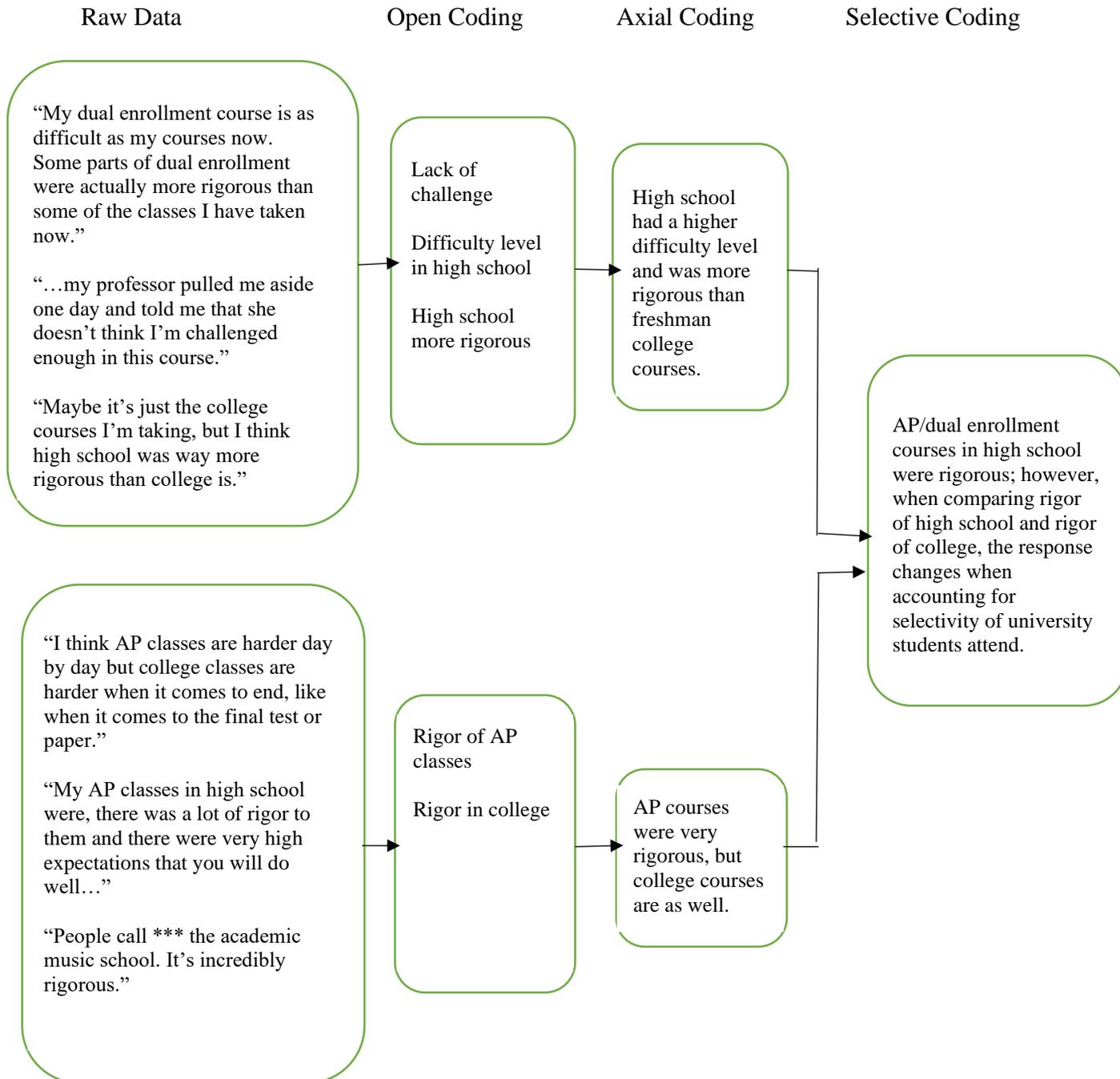
know it's going to be hard, but at least I have some AP Lit behind my back." However, she went on to state that "And I got there, and I was kind of like 'Oh, that's what this is' And it was so easy I would just zone out...I wasn't expecting that." When questioned further about a specific connection between rigor in high school and college success she compared herself to other students in her class and the background knowledge she had coming in. She discussed already knowing how to do some of the assignments from her English class and stated that the other students "just really didn't know." She then ended by saying that the "classes that I had been in very much prepared me for English classes that I'm in now."

It should be noted that Participants B, C, and D are all at large public universities and are all first-year college students.

Participants A and E had a slightly different perspective. Participants A and E are both at very selective private universities. However, Participant A is a first-year student and Participant E is a third-year student.

In casual conversation prior to the start of the interview, Participant A noted that college is significantly harder than high school. When questioned further about that statement, she added, "I think it depends on your major very very much because a lot of my friends are doing biology or like [sic] biomedical engineering, things like that, and my major...I guess it takes more writing and that kind of stuff than it does math and science." She continued to discuss the high volume of reading she does (100-200 pages a day) and compared that with friends doing math problems. When asked to compare the rigor of AP classes with college classes, she stated, "I think AP classes are harder day by day, but college classes are harder when it comes to the end, like when it comes to the final...test or the final paper."

Participant E is a junior at a music conservatory. She stated of her high school courses that “My AP classes in high school were, there was a lot of rigor to them, and there were very high expectations that you will do well because you were preparing for the AP test at the end of the year.” So, Participant E did acknowledge the level of rigor experienced in high school. However, she went on to discuss college saying, “People call [name of university] the academic music school. It’s incredibly rigorous. The coursework here is not easy.” Participants A and E differed from B, C, and D because they did not definitively state that high school was more rigorous than college. They both acknowledged that their high school AP courses were rigorous, but they also focused on the difficulty and rigor they are experiencing at college.

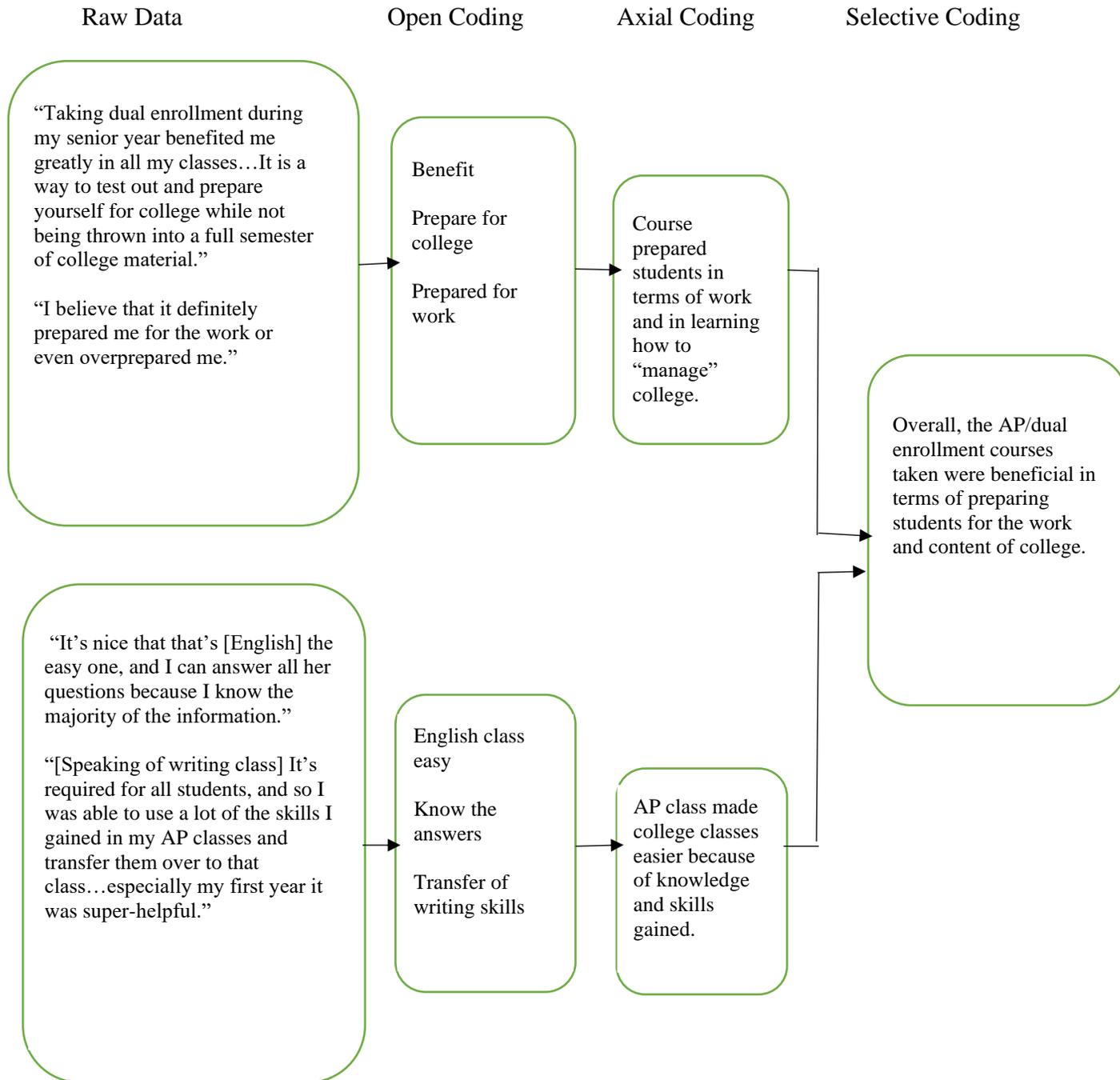
Table 3

Overall Assessment

The final question posed asked students to think in overall terms, not specifically about reading and writing, about whether their AP/dual enrollment course helped prepare them for college. All five participants agreed that their AP/dual enrollment course(s) helped prepare them in various ways. Participant A brought the question back to reading and writing, saying “Yeah, I think it’s taught me how to be selective when you’re read for the author’s purpose and meaning rather than [like] literal sentences.” Participant C also focused on a specific area of growth by focusing on the value of the work itself. Participant E focused on writing when given the opportunity to reflect overall. She stated that “We have a writing requirement ... as part of our curriculum. It’s required for all students, and so I was able to use a lot of the skills I gained in my AP classes and transfer them over to that class. So that especially my first year it was super-helpful.” Participant C stated “that it definitely prepared me for the work or even over-prepared me... I don’t know if it prepared me much beyond the work of the class that I’m facing in college.” Participant D focused more generally in terms of preparation, although she still kept the focus on the work. She stated, “Yes. I feel like it benefited me.” She continued in speaking of her English class, “It’s nice that that’s the easy one, and I can answer all her questions because I know the majority of the information.” Although Participant C did not specifically mention reading and writing, her response was similar to that of Participants A, C, D, and E in focusing on the work completed in high school and success in college.

Participant B responded in a slightly different manner, focusing less on the work itself and more on preparation for college. She stated, “Taking dual enrollment my senior year benefited me greatly in all of my classes. It was a great way to get a look into college course loads and schedules... It is a way to test out and prepare yourself for college while not being

thrown into... a full semester of college material.” She brought it back to course credit as well noting that she will graduate a semester early because of the English credit she entered with. This does draw a comparison to Participant D who stated, “I kinda [sic] wish I had taken English 1010 like the dual enrollment as opposed to the AP because I know a lot of people who took the dual enrollment, and they didn’t have to weigh on whether or not they were going to pass the AP exam.” Participant D was the only AP participant who noted the lack of credit earned from AP and having to take English in college. However, as noted earlier, she discussed how easy her college English courses have been. All five participants did state that they felt better prepared in their college courses in some way as a result of taking AP/dual enrollment.

Table 4

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study, both the general findings of the survey and the specific findings of the interviews. It described the coding method used with the survey responses in order to determine the interview questions. It also presented findings in the four major areas addressed: Reading/Analysis, Writing, Rigor, and Overall Assessment.

Chapter 5 will summarize the study as a whole and draw conclusions, make recommendations, and reflect.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The research question grounding this study was: What are student perceptions regarding how taking AP and dual enrollment English courses in high school help their performance in college? The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is any connection between students taking AP and/or dual enrollment English and college success. A qualitative format was determined to be the most effective due to the goal of seeking student perceptions of their own educational experiences. After sending out a survey in order to draw some general conclusions and to seek study participants, five students returned consent forms and were interviewed in a variety of formats due to students being away at school.

The conclusions will be presented as they respond to each theme that emerged:

Reading/Analysis, Writing, Rigor, and Overall Perception.

Reading/Analysis

All five students discussed the types of reading and analysis they did in their AP/dual enrollment courses in high school. All participants but one noted specific complex texts that they read ranging from short stories to novels to plays. Multiple students noted focusing in high school on deeper analysis such as theme, characterization, and the use of other literary elements such as rhetoric and persuasion. This was contrasted with the types of reading done in college. Two students (Participants A and E) noted a significant amount of reading in college. Both participants go to selective private colleges, and Participant E is a junior, not a freshman. One participant (Participant B) is not in any freshman English classes due to dual enrollment credit. The other two commented on the differences in analysis between high school and college. Despite the differences in content and difficulty, all five participants said that the reading they did in high school has been beneficial in their college courses, whether English or not.

Writing

In terms of writing, all five participants stated that the writing they did in high school has helped them to succeed in college. Whether the writing has been largely narrative (Participants A, C, and D) or analytical (Participants A and E) in college, all noted that the difficulty of writing in high school prepared them for success. They discussed how the more analytical writing they were asked to do in their AP/dual enrollment English classes prepared them for the expectations in their college courses; in some instances, the students feel that they were overprepared for the writing they have faced in college. Without exception, all give credit to the types of writing they were asked to do in high school for the ease of college transition and success in terms of writing.

Rigor

The findings were mixed in terms of rigor. While all participants discussed the level of rigor expected of them in their high school AP/dual enrollment courses as being high, they had some different perceptions in terms of how that rigor translated into college. In terms of comparing their high school AP/dual enrollment courses to college, a dichotomy emerged between the students who attend public universities and those who attend private. While all five participants unanimously agreed that taking AP/dual enrollment English was beneficial in their college courses, what differed was whether the students found high school or college to be the most challenging. All noted the rigor present in their high school AP/dual enrollment English classes, Participant C attributing some of that rigor to the rapid pace of the class and expectations in terms of reading and writing. However, the three students who are attending public state universities noted that high school was more difficult than their college courses so far. The two students attending private, selective universities (Participants A and E) noted that despite the

rigor of high school which prepared them for college writing, they still find college to be more challenging.

Overall Perception

Although the five participants noted levels of connection varying from it helped with the work only (Participant C) to high school English was more difficult than college English (Participant D), all participants noted a connection. When asked the final question regarding whether students saw a positive correlation between taking AP/dual enrollment and college success, all five agreed. This was also supported in the 32 responses received in the survey. One of the questions posed in the survey was: I have found my experience in AP or dual enrollment English to be beneficial to my college courses. Of the survey respondents, 59.4% strongly agreed with this statement and 25% agreed. Some of the comments from the survey in response to this question were “I know how to write for college professors. I do not need or want professors to give me an outline. Rather, I have my own voice and ideas and I know how to express them in the correct format and manner which has helped me in all my college classes” and “I am not afraid to write papers in college. I have learned to write as if it were a math formula or as if there was some science behind it to make it simple.” These sentiments were mirrored in the interviews. The participants noted feeling more comfortable with their college coursework and often being above their peers in terms of preparedness. They credited that preparedness to their AP/dual enrollment courses. Of the five interviewees, only one expressed that she wishes she had taken dual enrollment instead because it would have lessened the number of English courses she has to take as an engineering major. However, despite her desire to have taken a different course in high school, she still attributes her AP English course to how easy her college courses are for her.

Connection of Findings to Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework selected for this study was situated cognition, in which learning is directly related to the situation in which the learning takes place (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989). Jacqueline Darvin (2006) stated that “People do not live in isolation and they only rarely learn in isolation. Complex cognitive practices such as those involved with problem solving and literacy can only be discussed when one considers the settings where they are taking place” (p. 398). These complex cognitive practices noted by Darvin (2006) take place in the upper-level, challenging high school courses.

One of the questions posed in the survey gave students a list of choices of instruction methods and asked them to mark all the methods that applied to how they were taught in their AP/dual enrollment English course(s). The list of instruction methods included: lecture, debate, small group discussion, whole group discussion/Socratic seminar, and one-on-one conference with instructor. The results from the survey demonstrated that the methods of instruction used in the respondents AP/dual enrollment courses were such that they provided a setting for students to discuss complex texts and literature. 100% of respondents found small group discussion to be used in their AP/dual enrollment course(s) and 96.9% noted that whole group discussion or Socratic Seminar was used.

In terms of participant responses discussing the setting of the course and comparing it to rigor, Participant E stated, “We had lots of Socratic seminars in both AP classes where we discussed important themes and important concepts that are presented with the novel as well as the historical correlations with the author and things like that.” The structure of the AP/dual enrollment course was such that the physical setting of the course gave students the opportunity for in-depth discussion and analysis. Participant C also discussed the setting in terms of the

thinking expected. She noted in comparing her college writing course with high school, “It was very relaxed, and the thinking that I had to do wasn’t as...extensive as I had to do in high school.” She went on to discuss how the quick pace and preparing for the AP exam made the course much more rigorous than her college course. Continuing the connection of setting to rigor, Participant D noted that at first she expected to really struggle through her freshman English class because English was not her best subject; however, she stated, “And I got there and I was kind of like ‘Oh, that’s what this is.’ And it was so easy I would just zone out...I wasn’t expecting that.” All three of these participants drew a connection between the setting and the kind of work they engaged in while in high school and their success in college.

Critique of the Process

This process was challenging. When beginning the research study, the plan was to use first-year students at one Tennessee public university. However, after seeking IRB approval from three universities and not receiving it, the direction shifted. In lieu of a student sample representative of one university, the researcher instead reached out to former students personally known or known by a colleague. In one sense, this limited the responses to students who attended high school in a specific school district. The survey respondents and interviewees attended two different high schools within the same district. While this in some ways limited the ability to generalize the results beyond the demographics of that particular county, this process also opened the results up to be more generalized in terms of colleges. Because the students surveyed and interviewed attend a variety of different colleges and universities of varying sizes and levels of selectivity, the findings in terms of the impact of high school instruction on college success can be more widespread.

The interviewees consisted of three students attending public universities and two attending private. The schools represented span the globe from the Northeast, to the East coast, to the South, to the West. Even though these students all went to two high schools and shared similar high school experiences, their college experiences are varied. Yet even with the variance of colleges attended, connections could still be drawn.

The range of majors represented was also wide. Majors represented range from the arts (Stage Management and Cello Performance) to business to policy (Human Organization and Development with a minor in Anthropology) to engineering. Both the participant majoring in stage management and engineering found their high school courses to be equally challenging and their college courses to be equally easy in comparison, despite the college focus of one on the arts and one in science and technology. The two students attending private selective colleges representing majors ranging from policy to cello performance and music education found their high school courses to be adequate preparation for college but their college courses to still be challenging. The conclusion here is that regardless of major and type of school attended, the AP/dual enrollment courses taken in high school do have some correlation, at least in the perceptions of these five students, to their success in college.

One challenge involved Participant E, who is currently a junior in college, not a freshman. Somehow, the survey was sent to her despite her not being a first-year college student, and she filled it out and volunteered for an interview. It was not until the interview was underway that it became apparent she did not fit the demographics of the rest of the study participants. However, the perspective she brought being able to look back on high school and how her AP courses have impacted her through three years of college as well as the ability to

compare her with the other study participant attending a selective private university made her voice important to this study.

Implications

Despite the fact that studies have been done regarding low socioeconomic students and advanced coursework or longitudinal studies focusing on a set of students for many years through high school and college, this study is unique in that it focuses exclusively on a group of students from one area who took specifically Advanced English courses. By gaining these students' perceptions while they are still in college (and mostly first-year students), their high school experience was still fresh and they were able to draw specific connections between what they did in high school and how that has impacted what they have been tasked with in their college English classes. This qualitative study provided support for the fact that challenging students with advanced English classes in high school can impact their success in college courses, and this success is not just limited to English courses. The specific focus on analytical reading and on writing transferred to their other classes, as was especially evident in Participant E, the junior, who has taken a larger breadth of college coursework than the others.

Recommendation for Further Studies

Due to the unanimous conclusion that their AP/dual enrollment courses have benefited these students in terms of college reading, writing, and preparation for the rigor, further study is recommended beyond the limits of one school district to see if these results are true elsewhere as well. A study should be conducted of students in different school districts and in different states to see if the results are the same. In addition, a study into specifically dual enrollment students should be conducted. The dual enrollment student included in this study took the course on a high school campus with a high school teacher. A future study should look at students who took

dual enrollment on the college campus as well. Finally, a comparison study should be made to see if there is any difference in results between students who took AP and those who took dual enrollment. A larger sample size as well as more dual enrollment participants could lead to a difference in perceptions depending on high school course taken. In all, the results of this study with a small sample size showed a correlation between high school courses taken and college success. An expansion of the study to different areas of the country and more students would allow broader generalizations to be made.

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Appendix A: Survey

Survey for AP and Dual Enrollment Students

1. Which course(s) did you take in high school? Please mark all that apply.
 - a. AP English Language and Composition
 - b. AP English Literature and Composition
 - c. Dual Enrollment English
2. If you answered C in the question above, where did you take your dual enrollment course?
 - a. On the high school campus with a high school teacher.
 - b. On the high school campus with a college professor.
 - c. On the college campus.
 - d. Other
3. Which of the following best describes your high school?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural
4. Which of the following best describes the size of your high school?
 - a. Small – 800 or fewer students
 - b. Medium - 801-1400 students
 - c. Large – More than 1400 students
5. Which of the following best describes your college or university?
 - a. Public
 - b. Private

6. Which of the following best describes the size of your college or university?
- a. Less than 5,000
 - b. 5,000-10,000 students
 - c. 10,000-15,000 students
 - d. More than 15,000 students
7. Estimate how many essays and papers you wrote while taking AP or dual enrollment English.
- a. 0-3
 - b. 4-6
 - c. 7-10
 - d. 11 or more

Rate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

8. My AP or dual enrollment English course challenged me.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
9. Please elaborate on your response to question 8.
10. The workload of my AP or dual enrollment English course was manageable.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree

- c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree.
11. Please elaborate on your response to question 10.
12. I received feedback on my essays/papers that helped me improve.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
13. Please elaborate on your response to question 12.
14. I showed growth in writing over the course of the year(s) in which I took AP or dual enrollment English?
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
15. Please elaborate on your response to question 14.
16. I have found my experience in AP or dual enrollment English to be beneficial in my college courses.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree

- c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
17. Please elaborate on your response to question 16.
18. If I had it to do over again, I would choose the same AP or dual enrollment course in high school.
- a. Agree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Other
19. If you chose C for question 18, please elaborate.
20. Please mark all the following methods in which you were instructed:
- a. Lecture
 - b. Debate
 - c. Small Group Discussion
 - d. Whole Group Discussion/Socratic Seminar
 - e. One-on-One Conferences with Instructor (either during class or by making an appointment)
21. Of the previous types of instruction listed above, please elaborate on which methods you found to be the most helpful for your learning.
22. Do you feel that your AP or dual Enrollment English experience has benefited you in taking college English?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

23. Please elaborate on your response to #22.
24. Do you feel that your AP or dual enrollment English course has benefited you in courses other than English?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
25. If you checked Yes or Maybe, check all the following ways your AP or dual enrollment class has benefited you in other courses.
- Writing
 - Critical Thinking Skills
 - Ability to Participate in Class Discussions
 - Other _____-
26. If you feel that your AP or dual enrollment English course has not benefited you in college, please explain why not.
27. Would you be willing to continue this process with an interview?
- Yes
 - No
28. If you answered “Yes” to question 27, please list your name and e-mail address below.

Appendix B

Research Informed Consent**TITLE OF STUDY**

First-Year College Students' Perceived Impact of Dual Enrollment and Advanced Placement English Courses_

PRIMARY RESEARCHER

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine what perceived benefits first-year college students find from taking either Advanced Placement or dual enrollment English courses in high school. Focusing specifically on English courses taken in high school allows for a broader application of these courses in college. Even if students test out of taking a freshman college English course because of AP scores or dual enrollment credit, writing is a skill that they will have to utilize in other areas. Therefore, first-year college students should be able to reflect on the potential benefits of taking college English courses in high school and how those benefits extend beyond only English courses.

PROCEDURES

The initial survey was sent out to as many first-year students as using convenience sampling of students known personally to the researcher and colleagues at a variety of colleges and universities. Within 5 days of sending the survey, sufficient responses were obtained and the survey was closed. Within two weeks of closing the survey, results were analyzed for themes and survey questions were written. Students who responded “yes” to being willing to be interviewed and who provided their e-mail addresses were contacted. All student responses will be kept anonymous and will be identified only by letter coding.

RISKS

There are no risks associated with this process. Interviews are optional, and confidentiality will be maintained.

BENEFITS

Benefits include providing more insight into what courses students take in high school and how they translate into college success.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/letters for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is complete, your responses will be destroyed.

CONSENT

_____ By checking here and signing my full name below, I attest that I have read understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Researcher's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the reading and analysis in which you engaged in high school and whether you think this has benefited you in your college courses.
2. Compare the types of writing you did in high school with what you have done in college so far. Did the writing you did in high school help prepare you for the expectations of college writing?
3. Compare the rigor of your AP/dual enrollment course with your college courses.
4. Have you experienced a connection between rigor in high school and college success?
5. Overall, has the AP/dual enrollment English course you took in high school benefited you as a first-semester college student in any courses (English or otherwise)?