

ADOLESCENT MALE LITERACY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
ESSENCES AND EXPERIENCES IN RURAL APPALACHIA

by

Robert K. Cornelius

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Middle Tennessee State University  
Murfreesboro, TN

Dissertation Committee:

Dorothy V. Craig, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Charlene True, Ed.D., Committee Member

Andra Helton, Ed.D., Committee Member

I dedicate this dissertation to the two people who have exerted the most influence in my life and have always believed in me from the moment I was born, my parents, Bob and LaRue Cornelius. They have always inspired and encouraged me to achieve the utmost. Sadly, during the first year of this journey, my mother died of brain and lung cancer. It was always her dream to see me earn my doctorate. I know she will still see me when I walk across the stage. Again, thank you, Dad, for all you do and have done for me.

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## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examines the lived experiences and personal perceptions of nine adolescent males aged 15 to 17 related to struggles, difficulties, and frustrations with literacy. Data was collected through in-depth personal interviews, focus group interviews, and periodic observations of participants at the study site. The data revealed that the young men assign a great degree of importance to the writing process and highly value the ability to construct writing artifacts in a cohesive and coherent manner. The participants reported how they believe important people within their social constructs form opinions about them based upon the quality of writing they produce. The study also found that participants value the connection of relevance to literature, especially the writing process. Furthermore, participants acknowledged how developing collegial relationships with instructors helps to improve overall self-efficacy where writing is concerned. As a result of the research, recommendations are offered to curriculum specialists and policymakers in the area pedagogical practices, curriculum structure, and the need to emphasize relevance and relationships as measures to improve writing ability.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Males use, on average, half the brain space that females use for verbal-emotive functioning. Statistics from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004) revealed a sobering trend when comparing males to females from 35 countries including the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan. Gurian and Stevens (2004) found that the gender gap in mathematics and science education had lessened for girls largely because of an emphasis on more verbal functioning, such as reading and written analyses in those courses. However, the opposite is true for boys where literacy is concerned. Boys earn 70% of the D's and F's and fewer than half of the A's. Boys account for two-thirds of learning disability diagnoses, 90% of the discipline referrals, 80% of the high school dropouts, and fewer than 40% of college students (Gurian & Stevens, 2004).

According to Johannessen and McCann (2009), literacy is defined as a lifelong journey framed by experiences, interpretations, and engagement with multiple forms of texts. Linking literacy to the period of adolescence, Strauch (2003) explained adolescence as a period of life where brain development accelerates with much of the brain's ability to make decisions, think abstractly, and begin to reason with varying degrees of higher order thinking occurring during this period. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) report demonstrated eighth grade male students in 2013 scored a mean of 263 on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) while female students scored a mean of 273, and twelfth grade male students in 2013 scored a mean of 284 while female students scored a mean of 293. The data demonstrate male adolescents continued to fall

behind female adolescents without significant gap closure between the eighth and twelfth grades; however, George (2009) cautioned how every effort should be made to identify which boys underachieve and avoid making the assumption all boys underachieve. Boys are anywhere from three to five times more likely than girls to have a reading disability requiring placement in special classes, and boys are approximately twice as likely to be retained as girls according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014). These statistics revealed male adolescents definitely struggle with literacy across the continuum. The statistics are congruent with the findings at the proposed research site.

The results of the 2014 American Collegiate Test (ACT) PLAN test administered to 405 sophomores at the study site, a high school in a small rural area in Appalachia, revealed that males scored an average of 13.1 on the English subsection and 13.2 on the reading subsection compared to females scoring 17.3 on both subsections of a possible 32. Results of the 2014 ACT administered in March to 307 juniors showed males scoring an average of 18.3 on the English subsection compared to 18.9 state average and 19.4 on the reading subsection compared to 19.7 state average while females outperformed males scoring 19.5 on the English subsection compared to 20.3 state average and 19.9 on the reading subsection compared to 20.6 state average of a possible 36. Also, at the study site, 58 students failed their English course in 2014 with 42 of the 58 or 72.4%, almost 3 of every 4 being male.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the 2010 United States Census Bureau statistics 15% of males over age 25 did not possess a high school diploma in the local region compared to only 10.3%

of females over age 25 in Tennessee. Subsequently, 30.6%, or almost 1 in every 3 adult Tennesseans living in poverty have not earned a high school diploma or equivalency. Nationally 30 million adults were found to be below basic in literacy skills needed for daily activities, and 1 in 8 Tennesseans lack basic prose literacy skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Nationally, 33% of adult education literacy providers responding to the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education 2010 survey reported having 20 or more learners on a waiting list (Tennessee Literacy Coalition, 2014).

Based on these results and trends across the nation, this study will examine how experiences with literacy along with self-perception and self-efficacy have impacted adolescent males' literacy skills in rural Appalachia. The study will use the following overarching questions as a guiding framework:

- (1) What in the life experiences of adolescent males causes a struggle with literacy?
- (2) How do adolescent males perceive and describe their struggle with literacy?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study will be to understand and describe the reasons male students struggle with literacy with a central focus on the unique experiences that capture the essence of the frustration and difficulty with literacy in conjunction with participants' perceptions concerning the experience. The study will draw from a volunteer population of adolescent male students enrolled at the research site. Using the framework of Moustakas (1994), it can be seen that he promotes the importance of the idea that

phenomenological research studies allow the investigator to recognize that a relationship exists between external perceptions of a particular phenomenon and the internal perceptions, memories, and judgments that the participants hold to be true. This phenomenological study also allows the investigator to focus on the pure constructs of the participants and to derive meaning from findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection. The results will be used to formulate and propagate instructional changes and adapt pedagogies that will reciprocally enhance the performance of male adolescents' literacy skills. The researcher intends to discover how the experiences of adolescent males impact self-perception, identity, self-efficacy, and overall academic performance. Also, the researcher hopes to identify the societal and geopolitical influences that might impact the struggle, challenges, frustrations, and difficulties associated with adolescent male literacy particularly indigenous to this region.

The literature reviewed in this study will focus on findings from major researchers in the area of adolescent literacy with particular focus given to the reasons why adolescent males struggle with literacy compared to females. The areas of culture, identity, self-efficacy, choice and voice, instructional practices, multiple literacies, and the decline of adolescent literacy will be reviewed in an attempt to discover some of the unique experiences that lead to common frustrations and challenges with literacy. The study is qualitative in design. Data will be collected from personal interviews, observations, and focus study groups consisting of students enrolled at the research site. The theoretical framework of the study will then follow a mix of ontological, axiological, and methodological philosophical assumptions.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explain what is unique in the experiences of adolescent males that may cause struggles with literacy and to identify, understand, and describe possible relationships that help to shape the struggle with literacy. Particular focus will be given especially to the effects that culture, identity, and the unique educational experiences, such as variability in instructional practices and the inherent differences that educational environments, have on the participants. The study will document and describe the beliefs and attitudes associated with masculine identity and how perceived societal expectations surrounding literacy help to mold and frame masculine identity as researched by Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps & Waff (1998); Love and Hamston (2003); Coles & Hall (2001); Brozo (2002); Hall (2006); and Vacca (1998). The study will also explore how adolescent males process past and present literacy instructional practices and experiences as connective pieces that shape their literacy structural belief system. The varied teaching and instructional practices that adolescent males have been exposed to by educators will also be examined to determine how these varied instructional practices have influenced the unique experience of each individual.

### **Significance of the Study**

A gender gap in adolescent literacy levels is widely attested across the literature. For example, Dee (2006) concluded that the underperformance of 17 year-old boys in literacy is equivalent to 1.5 years of schooling. Furthermore, Dee found that, in reading, 17 year-old boys scored 31 percent of a standard deviation below 17 year-old girls, a deficit equal to about one grade level. This study will significantly impact contemporary

curricular policy. Current policies and curricular practices ignore the interests of adolescent males; moreover, policies and practices must include more informational, career, and vocational texts instead of relying solely on traditional canonical literature (Alvermann, 2001). This study will also contribute to educational research by identifying qualitative data gaps by giving voice to adolescent males and to secondary educators in an attempt to identify commonalities regarding the literacy experiences of struggling adolescent males (Brozo, 2002; Love and Hamston, 2003; and Lenters, 2006). The results from the synthesis of data through transcribed interviews and observations will be used to identify the unique common experiences and perceptions that adolescent males possess, which may compound the difficulties, challenges, and frustration associated with literacy.

The researcher anticipates that the answers to questions generated in this study might impact curriculum planning and teacher training. Gurian (2006) reported that teacher pre-service and in-service programs fail to evaluate the distinct learning differences between the male and female brains, especially as they relate to the area of verbal ability. Gurian and King (2006) found that teachers tended to view the natural assets of the male brain, such as impulsivity, single-task focus, spatial-kinesthetic learning, and physical aggression, as problems rather than realizing the need to alter instruction in order to capitalize on the uniqueness of the male brain. Educators overlooking these unique differences could possibly contribute to the frustration that many adolescent males experience with literacy and its inherent challenges.

An examination of literature will also explore the myth versus fact in relation to gender bias concerning literacy struggles. The contributions of this study to the body of



knowledge will hopefully benefit stakeholders with the discovery of what causes this frustrating challenge for males in the realm of language arts and the common experiences perceived among individuals and among instructors of students. As the primary investigator, the researcher anticipates the overall benefits of this study and the contributions to education will be manifested by: (1) improving student achievement in language arts and high content area subjects, (2) improving upon teaching methods currently in practice, and (3) informing future instructional decisions through curriculum redesigns that will sustain and grow functional literacy throughout a student's life.

### **Methodology Description**

Participants will include adolescent male students from a rural southeastern United States High School that have experienced a struggle with literacy, are interested in understanding the meaning of the literacy challenge, and are willing to participate in lengthy interviews and follow-up interviews as needed. Participants will be included on a strictly voluntary basis. Participants will agree to interviews being tape recorded and agree to data being published in this dissertation and other possible publications with the understanding that pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. The researcher will easily establish a collegial and scholarly rapport with participants. The researcher will adhere to all ethical principles surrounding confidentiality and informed consent through the Institutional Review Board process of the university before any interviews are conducted.

As Moustakas (1994) explains, evidence from phenomenological research is crafted from the first-hand accounts of the life experiences of the participants. Moustakas

further categorizes the first-hand evidence as: (1) the Epoche process, (2) phenomenological reduction, and (3) imaginative variation and synthesis. Moustakas states that in the Epoche process all preconceived perceptions and biases on part of the investigator are set aside as to allow for the purity of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon or phenomena to be explored fully: “The world in the bracket has been cleared of ordinary thought and is present before us as a phenomenon to be gazed upon, to be known naively and freshly through a ‘purified’ consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To paraphrase Moustakas’s meaning of the Epoche process, he describes the Epoch as allowing the investigator to view things and events with a new awareness as if looking for the first time. The consciousness of the phenomenon is entered into with openness and offers the investigator the chance to clear the mind. Moustakas suggests that, with intensive effort, false notions of truth and reality can be bracketed and placed out of action.

The research processes will involve collecting data that will be in the form of interviews and observations of the participants supported by filed notes from the researcher’s journal. The interview protocol will follow Moustakas’s (1994) guiding principles by engaging the participants in informal, interactive processes using open-ended questions and comments. The researcher will develop questions that solicit a comprehensive account of the participant’s experience with the phenomenon of literacy struggle. Participants will be allowed opportunities to focus on the experience, and the investigator will create an atmosphere of relaxation and trust while fostering an honest

and comprehensive conversation with the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The methodology of the study is described in greater detail in Chapter III.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following is a list of words to be found in this study that may appear ambiguous to the reader and are defined operationally in the context that the researcher is using them.

- (1) Struggle is defined as difficulty, frustration, or challenge that a participant may experience in relation to the phenomena associated with adolescent literacy experiences.
- (2) Phenomenological is a form of qualitative research defined by Moustakas (1994) as a method in which the experiences of individuals is defined by how they experience phenomena and how it is experienced, leading to the discovery of the truth of how phenomena are experienced.
- (3) Culture in this study is defined as shared patterns and behaviors common among a group of individuals. The value assigned to culture is defined within the context of the individual.
- (4) The word identity used in this study refers to socially constructed societal norms that adolescent males in the rural southeastern United States would typically describe as normal.
- (5) Self-efficacy is defined as "the belief and confidence that one has the knowledge and skills to accomplish meaningful tasks that will produce a desired result in academic settings" (Brozo & Gaskins, 2009, p. 172).

### **Research Questions**

- (1) What in the life experiences of adolescent males causes a struggle with literacy?
- (2) How do adolescent males perceive and describe their struggle with literacy?

### **Limitations of the Study**

One of the limiting factors in this study is that the participants who will be selected are from the foothills of Appalachia – primarily an area steeped in a rural agricultural economy, but consequently, also less than 75 miles from a major metropolitan urban center according to the Appalachian Regional Commission. Experiences of other adolescent males vary from region to region, therefore causing this study to have a different set of geopolitical and cultural norms already pre-established, making generalizability limited to the rural southeastern United States. In addition, participants will be limited to 15-17 year-old males.

Despite these limitations, the benefits of the study do allow for an in-depth portrait of participants to be formed to gain a deeper understanding of the common experiences that impact self-efficacy as described by Brozo and Gaskins (2009); self-perceptions as reported by McDermott and Varenne (1995) and Finn (1999); and cultural identity as defined by Coles and Hall (2001), Vacca (1998), and Love and Hamston (2003) among adolescent males struggling with literacy. The study will also provide opportunities to inform policymakers about potential curricular and pedagogical changes. Curricular changes must reflect the diversity of the young men in today's classrooms.

Curriculum will also be impacted by societal changes that affect how young men engage with multiple forms of literacy on a daily basis (Alvermann, 2001; Brozo, 2002).

### **Organization**

Information is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction of the study with a particular focus given to a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study. Chapter II reflects a comprehensive review of related literature relevant to the problem associated with adolescent male literacy and reports of previous studies that support the need for continued study. Chapter III describes the methodology of the study, data collection, and how data will be analyzed. Chapter IV reviews the results of the data collected and provides an analysis of data. Finally, Chapter V provides the reader with a summary, discussion of findings and results, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

In summary, the researcher hopes to examine the impact that struggles, difficulties, and previous failures related to literacy experiences have had on adolescent males at the research site. The researcher plans to examine how these experiences have potentially framed the self-perception of the participants. Chapter II begins by exploring the supporting literature based upon the researcher's assumptions. Chapter II will examine common themes which have emerged from previous research in the field of adolescent literacy with the primary focus being on adolescent males.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

According to Johannessen and McCann (2009), literacy is defined as a lifelong journey framed by experiences, interpretations, and engagement with multiple forms of texts. Linking literacy to the period of adolescence, Strauch (2003) explained adolescence as a period of life where brain development accelerates with much of the brain's ability to make decisions, think abstractly, and begin to reason with varying degrees of higher order thinking occurring during this period. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) report demonstrated eighth grade male students in 2013 scored a mean of 263 on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) while female students scored a mean of 273, and twelfth grade male students in 2013 scored a mean of 284 while female students scored a mean of 293. The data demonstrate male adolescents continued to fall behind female adolescents without significant gap closure between the eighth and twelfth grades; however, George (2009) cautioned how every effort should be made to identify which boys underachieve and avoid making the assumption all boys underachieve. Boys are anywhere from three to five times more likely than girls to have a reading disability requiring placement in special classes, and boys are approximately twice as likely to be retained as girls, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014). These statistics revealed male adolescents definitely struggle with literacy across the continuum.

Illustrating a common factor between literacy ability and postsecondary success, Biancarosa and Snow (2004) show that:

1. More than 8 million students in grades 4-12 struggle with reading on a daily basis,
2. Only 70% of high school students graduate on time with a regular diploma, and
3. High school drop-out rates continue to increase with 53% of high school graduates enrolled in remedial courses in postsecondary institutions.

Gallagher (2010) further added that secondary school students read at rates significantly below grade level. In addition, one in four secondary students were unable to read and comprehend textbook information. Last, the 2005 ACT College Readiness Benchmark showed one-half of the students were prepared for college-level reading with the scores being the lowest in a decade. Gallagher (2010) laid part of the blame on the constant standardized testing focus promulgated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. She coined the term “readicide” to describe the process of how the constant focus on raising test scores is killing the love of reading in our nation's schools. Furthermore, the same author carefully articulated schools act as if they value the development of test takers over the development of readers. Gallagher (2010) stated the constant emphasis on test scores serves to limit the engagement with curriculum because a great degree of importance is being placed on the value of simply checking off coverage of skills rather than an analytical and critical engagement with curriculum.

Additional studies found breadth over depth of curriculum was winning the battle of curricular frameworks in all subjects nationwide. Cavanaugh (2009) concluded curricular guidelines in all subjects are consistently laden with mere superficial topics and

therefore do not provide the crucial opportunities for deep student-to-teacher interaction and verbal discourse. Dillon (2009) described how states have cleverly lowered reading and math standards to make those states appear to be in compliance with adequate yearly progress under the "No Child Left Behind" act. Dillon stated the bait and switch tactic makes it publicly appear scores are improving, but when looking at national assessments, students are actually regressing.

Gorian-Bevelhimer (2008) reported how adolescent males tend to possess a more negative attitude toward reading, writing, and literacy in a structured educational setting. Most of the perception has been attributed to the typical "assign-assess" model of instruction. Therefore, males tended not to see literary tasks being coupled with real purpose and relevance to them. The typical male student must perceive a sense of real value and connectedness to literary endeavors. Attitudes affect academic performance more than their skill. Male students reported a desire to write for a purpose and a clear goal. Gorian-Bevelhimer recommended focusing on creating curricular and instructional experiences that male students find to be motivating and ones that work to build a positive attitude toward literacy.

A study conducted by Eccles, Wigfield and, Schiefele (1998) attributed much of the decline in adolescent literacy to differences in instructional practices among educators. They recognized a substantial decline happens with intrinsic motivation as students shifted from the elementary years to the secondary years. Alvermann (2001) refuted this claim by stating research was much less clear about the reasons surrounding the intrinsic decline and actually supported the need for more qualitative research studies



concerning the decline with intrinsic motivation. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) found the external pressures associated with standardized testing, achievement testing, and interim classroom performance assessments played a lesser role in evaluating student engagement with texts but, more importantly, noted teachers being aware of instructional practices promoting self-efficacy, engagement, social interaction, and motivation were of higher importance. Finn (1999) further supported the claims, indicating how the instructional practices, beliefs, and expectations held by educators were more important in helping adolescents become lifelong literate learners. Finn justified his findings by describing two types of education:

1. Empowering education, which leads to powerful literacy, eventually transcending into positions of power and authority, and
2. Domesticating education, which leads to functional literacy and makes a person productive, dependable, and less troublesome.

Finn (1999) also stated students can be more astutely aware of the distinctions with which the educational system intentionally or unintentionally used to categorize them.

Adolescents also experience huge demands on their academic literacy abilities in the high content subject areas. Alvermann (2001) supported the findings and subsequently raised concerns about the results from the National Reading Panel's (NRP) 2000 study, showing exactly how reading comprehension in the adolescent mind is an extremely complicated process because the capacity for the adolescent brain to critically think is just beginning to emerge. Alvermann advocated for the NRP findings which encouraged educators to employ seven key strategies in literacy instruction:

- Comprehension monitoring,
- Cooperative learning,
- Use of graphic and semantic organizers,
- Providing intentional feedback from responses to teacher questions,
- Student generated questions,
- Using text structure to assist in organizing information, and
- Summarizing and generalizing ideas.

However, Alvermann (2001) admonished educators to take caution in overgeneralizing the NRP's findings because second language learners' were not included in the study and reading in subject-specific classes were also not included in the NRP study. Alvermann also criticized the findings by stating her research participants included individuals who learned better in more socially interactive settings and with broader ranges of literacy experiences than adolescent students engaging only in school-based literacies.

This literature review sheds light on reasons that lead researchers to conclude a problem with adolescent literacy exists and why in particular adolescent males experience a struggle with attention given to unraveling some of the underlying causes. The overall major emerging trends relating to the problem of male adolescent literacy mainly centered on themes such as:

- Masculine culture,
- Masculine identity,
- Self-efficacy,
- Student choice and voice,

- Interventions and instructional strategies,
- Multiple forms of literacy, and
- The decline of adolescent literacy

However, a gap exists in research which clearly identifies explicit reasons why males lag behind females in literacy ability and engagement. A further lack of qualitative studies dealing with experiences and perception of adolescent males is also evident. This literature review will topically organize the major research available, focusing on the problem of the struggling male adolescent in regards to literacy based upon the claims, positions, and ideas of previous researchers.

### **Masculine Culture**

West (1999) conducted a qualitative research study by observing and interviewing 14-year-old boys from four schools across Sydney, Australia on how boys' ideas of masculinities affected school achievement and how the culture of the education system impacted boys' achievement in school. West reported boys emphatically agreed the culture of the schools promoted the idea of constantly proving their masculinity in the academic setting. Furthermore, the author believed schools should choose to examine their culture internally with a critical lens and explore the possibilities of changing the culture from one with preconceived ideas and ingrained attitudes about boys to one which is more dynamic and one which allows boys to explore and express feelings. The teachers' ambivalent attitudes toward boys continued to echo throughout the study, but evidence showed when teachers held higher academic expectations of boys, then much higher grades were attained in courses such as literature, foreign languages, and history

courses where boys had previously demonstrated failure (West, 1999). Here it becomes obvious that students purposely seek to align themselves with prevailing cultural expectations, whether from teachers or from peers. The former has the power to either raise or diminish male student performance. It thus becomes crucial that teacher enacted attitudes toward males match prevailing educational objectives.

Amplifying this perspective, West (1999) also found that deeply ingrained teacher attitudes about how boys interact with their environment, and further how boys actually shape their cultural experiences through peer interactions, both negatively impacted literacy performance. Historically, his study revealed negatively biased attitudes continued to persist in the arts, literature, language, and history classes. Furthermore, those attitudes had counterproductive effects on how boys qualified identity and masculinity. Finally, from information gained through interviews and observations, boys responded best to the teachers who listened to them, invited and encouraged verbal exchanges in the classroom, and fostered an atmosphere where peer-to-peer conversations were valued. The importance of West's study reveals how classroom teachers must adapt to prevailing cultural norms of masculinity in order to engage boys in maximally productive learning.

Extending the narrative of the socially embodied literacy struggle among adolescents, McDermott and Varenne (1995) examined a framework they defined as a "culture-as-disability" perspective when studying adolescents struggling with literacy. Proponents of the perspective tended to argue how too much emphasis on skills-based instruction in reading was insufficient and provided a vehicle that allowed schools to

easily attempt to normalize reading instruction and engagement with texts. From the “culture-as-disability” mindset, society – not the individual – was seen as creating struggling readers from adolescents; therefore, society was viewed as having turned its back on secondary school literacy in general. However, schools did not bear the complete burden, but the community shared responsibility and ownership of the problem created. The McDermott and Varenne study coalesced with Finn (1999) by stating school and societal culture arrange for certain types of readers to be subjected to labels and categorized by learning styles. A major recommendation from both studies was that teachers should recognize that not all adolescents struggle with texts and reading material in one area and that struggling readers can overcome reading difficulties. Comparing to West’s (1999) study, teacher internalized biases are shaped by surrounding sociocultural systems at large. The cultural research studies of Finn (1999); McDermott and Varenne (1995); and West (1999) illustrate the need to move away from the “culture-as-disability” mindset to one of “culture-of-enabling”.

### **Masculine Identity**

To study how masculine identity relates to adolescent male literacy, a social constructivist research study designed by Love and Hamston (2003) examined adolescent boys defined as reluctant readers, those who can read but choose not to read. Interviews with participants revealed adolescent males choose to engage with literacy that offers a broad appeal to alternative types of print, especially electronic media. From this finding, Love and Hamston (2003) agreed teachers must direct adolescent males toward pathways they find engaging. The study underscored the earlier findings of Millard (1997), who

stated that digital technology is basically seen as male dominated and that the literary identity of these young males is being shaped by an ever-changing digital culture.

Educators and curriculum designers must find ways of integrating digital media into all forms of academic literacy. The literacy development of the adolescent learner framed within the context of establishing an identity for oneself is what helps the adolescent reader learn to explore critical engagement with texts.

Continuing to expound on the theme of masculine identity, Coles and Hall (2001) reported how boys interacted with texts equated with how boys framed a literate identity for themselves; however, boys constructed their identities through more diverse text structures than traditional school settings recognize, such as informational magazines of interest, informational books, and Internet sites. They further found boys preferred to engage with analytical and factual material rather than narrative forms of literature. The study found preferences affecting boys' motivation and attitude toward school-based reading curricula, coupled with a generally narrow definition of literacy present in some schools today, account for some of the struggles that boys face with literacy. Coles and Hall stated, "If we were to broaden current definitions of school literacy, we might find boys' vernacular literacies are actually serving boys rather well, although the school system is failing to recognize or capitalize on this" (p. 219). They continued to state that if schools would embrace broader definitions of literacy, which include and recognize alternative forms of media, then boys would definitely be more motivated to not only improve in literacy habits but to actually succeed in those areas even more.

This particular study also found that allowing boys to exercise a degree of choice control with literature to be studied produced a deeper engagement with texts. Challenging boys with texts in which they felt confident manifested an identity that the boys described as confident and successful (Coles & Hall, 2001). Smith and Wilhelm (2002) believed from their research that boys must experience a personal engagement with the issues they care about through inquiry-based instruction in literacy before self-identity is impacted. They found that when a teacher became a facilitator of constructed learning engagements, built and sustained a sense of community, and provided opportunities to collaborate about the literature, then boys became more interested in literature.

Another factor affecting how adolescent boys shape masculine identity centers on their ability to see other men being engaged with literacy. Brozo (2002) firmly believed that adolescent boy's seeing and being provided direct experiences showcasing men engaged with literacy produced a positive impact on shaping masculine identity. Brozo concluded such experiences would demonstrate literacy's relevance in their lives. He argued that many boys who rarely saw fathers or adult men engaged in any type of reading could potentially conclude that reading might be seen as a threat to identity and masculinity. However, one factor that the research omits is the role the parent or significant adult plays in shaping the meaning of literacy and the literary identity the boys will eventually form.

Hall (2006) clarified that students who demonstrated a sincere desire to be seen as a reader capable of comprehending text versus a non-reader perceived as incapable of

comprehending adolescent level text held a more negative perception of self-identity. The students explained how they tried to discover ways to engage with the text and make meaning from the material, which would mask and disguise reading difficulties to the teachers. The participants reported they did not desire an identity of weakness and vulnerability to be discovered that would label them as struggling readers or weak readers by instructors. The student participants reported how they would ask others for help, listen to teacher-led discussions about the text, and watch the ways peers attempted to comprehend the text. One flaw discovered was teachers sometimes rushed to hasty judgments and labeled students as lazy and non-compliant.

However, Brozo (1991) and Schunk (1989) suggested struggling adolescent readers are not necessarily resisting reading because of non-compliance or laziness, but confirmed students who felt they could not effectively manage more complex academic texts were less motivated to interact with the text. Hall (2006) concluded classroom methods alone are certainly not enough to improve reading comprehension, nor are they adequate to improve the perceived negative self-identity some struggling readers assigned to themselves. The study posited teachers must critically consider how they conceptualize their thinking regarding reading instruction and how they frame their beliefs about outside influences that effect student learning. Adding to this, Hall (2006) shared the social world of the adolescent and cultural influences surrounding the adolescent significantly impact decisions made with regard to text and instruction and further serve to shape the meaning of self-awareness and identity. Booth (2002) stated male adolescents have a difficult time identifying themselves as literate beings mainly due to a



history of failed attempts with literacy. Adolescent males will simply withdraw from engaging with literacy to avoid being further labeled as a poor reader or disengaged student.

A study by Vacca (1998) related a powerful personal story that, according to him, personifies the reason he became involved with research concerning adolescent readers, especially boys. Vacca was teaching English in Syracuse, New York in 1970 and began to allow one of his students to work on his 1960 Chevy whenever mechanical needs manifested themselves because the young man was most adept at repairing cars. The young man dropped high school and did not earn his diploma. However, years later, the author began to teach English for the regents classes where students could earn an equivalence diploma. Johnny (not the real name) appeared in his class again. A mutual relationship of respect and trust had been previously established. He stated his car needed work again, and he took it to Johnny's garage. He explained to Johnny how he would be leaving Syracuse in the fall to begin his doctorate work. Johnny quickly added how the author was already great at reading and did not require more degrees to prove it. The author then stated Johnny uttered a sentence which continues to haunt him to this day, "Reading robbed me of my manhood" (p. 608). He explained Johnny equated learning to read as a threat to his masculine identity and serves as a powerful reminder just how strongly some adolescent boys value their masculine identity. The author stated educators cannot be so quick to write off struggling adolescent male readers, but must rather nurture an educational relationship that will foster literacy growth. He pointed to the fact that high school English teachers are often the last literary instructional influence for

many of today's adolescents. Reading specialists are an endangered species in the secondary setting. He urged content area teachers to use the high-interest some of their courses generate to students' advantage in promoting literacy. Consequently, Vacca found many of the content area teachers resisted literacy practices and strategies largely in part because they see the greater need of curriculum coverage over curriculum depth.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as "the belief and confidence that one has the knowledge and skills to accomplish meaningful tasks that will produce a desired result in academic settings" (Brozo & Gaskins, 2009, p. 172). Brozo and Gaskins (2009) presented five guiding principles to be utilized when attempting to engage boys in literacy:

- Promote self-efficacy,
- Stimulate interest in reading,
- Connect outside-school with inside-school literacies,
- Have plenty of engaging and interesting texts available, and
- Allow for the expansion of student choices and options.

To test each of the five principles, these researchers conducted a qualitative case study at an "alternative" high school, a special school designated to house students with discipline issues, over a period of two years. The researchers created a narrative case study of one student through direct interaction, instruction, interviews and observations with the end result being an improved self-image and an increased confidence being reported by the student in regards to literacy ability. The researchers encouraged the student to speak in class and to participate in class discussions while modeling to the student during

instruction that his opinions were valued. The methods employed by the researchers helped to improve the reading fluency and comprehension of the student by three grade levels.

Underscoring the importance of building relationships, Brozo and Gaskins (2009) contended that when educators construct positive relationships with students and become aware of interests students possess, then the effectiveness of teaching improves along with students' overall academic performance. The study also reported connecting the literature to outside interests and allowing these to reasonably permeate the classroom, positively enhancing the ability of the young men to organize the reading and make meaning of literary assignments. Furthermore, Sax (2007) found by actively engaging boys with literary tasks that promoted active learning rather than passive learning, then comprehension of literary texts also improved. However, limitations in Brozo and Gaskins's (2009) research are class size is always smaller in the alternative school setting and students attending an alternative school are enrolled not by choice, but rather by disciplinary placement.

Adolescence is a period characterized by intense feelings of change and a journey to find oneself in life and society. Santa (2006) conducted research with students who struggled emotionally and academically. Subsequently, Santa found the building of trusting, caring, and professional relationships with students was essential to improving overall literacy and enhancing the self-efficacy concept among adolescent readers. Similar findings were concluded by Wolk (2003), proving achievement increases with literacy where a sense of community is established as students feel comfortable working

with each other and with the teacher. Other studies found students are more engaged and achieve more when a sense of self-efficacy and confidence is nurtured (Guthrie, 2004). Santa (2006) quickly corrected any notion on the part of the reader stating relationships alone work to improve literacy achievement; however, Santa believed a deep understanding of the curriculum in conjunction with positive relationships improved the efficacy of the struggling adolescent reader.

Researchers also studied the potential negative effects produced by over-inflated concepts of self-efficacy produced by a compelling need to excel in all areas. Kimmell (2000) found boys held a general expectation of being the “expert” in most any endeavor and equated the belief to the concept of masculine privilege. Kimmell concluded the concept of masculine privilege produced a feeling of overconfidence in boys. The feeling of overconfidence led boys into taking courses that they were not as prepared for and actually caused their scores to fall. Consequently, incorrect assumptions about reading ability were made about the boys in Kimmell’s study. An additional study conducted by Weaver-Hightower (2003) found the belief in masculine privilege contributed to boys’ seeking courses they perceived as more technological in nature, such as the applied sciences. The boys were found not to be prepared for the level of reading in those courses. However, Weaver-Hightower advised educators and policy makers to identify which boys struggled with literacy in those courses and not to assume all boys struggled as a result of perceived overconfidence.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found boys often turned away from reading because they found a great amount of difficulty engaging in the reading tasks in the academic

setting. The results of this study pointed to the fact boys preferred to be directly engaged with the reading that specifically covered areas where they felt more competent. The data indicated boys rejected reading in the school's academic setting because they are often required to encounter the literature they most often dislike and have no voice in choosing. Brozo and Simpson's (2007) findings indicate that teachers who supplemented traditional texts, especially those of high content areas, with alternative forms of printed media, such as graphic novels, topical magazines, electronic media, and informational texts, sustained reader motivation and subsequently improved academic achievement.

However, Vacca (2006) believed self-efficacy to be dependent upon the situation of the reader and the skills the reader already possesses. Struggling readers, according to Vacca, bring to the table with them much uncertainty along with deficiencies in reading strategies. Together those factors inhibit the struggling reader's ability to comprehend what the text and the subject matter are demanding of them. Vacca's research also supported the idea that when students believe they have a good chance at succeeding with a particular task, then they become more motivated to engage with and persevere in the reading. Vacca pointed to himself as a struggling reader and stated it took encouragement and family support for him to finally realize his fullest potential and to fully develop his personal meaning of self-efficacy. Vacca's findings concur with Gallagher (2010), who stated how teachers must include instructional strategies aimed at reducing problems encountered with texts and offer individualized solutions designed to improve self-efficacy with reading.

### **Choice and Voice**

The literature reviewed confirms boys should be given a choice and a voice in the selection and types of literature studied in academic settings. Millard (1997) contended boys are disadvantaged because of the emphasis placed on teacher choice and teacher selection of the literature texts and the lack of availability of literature that stimulates interest among boys. Brozo (2002) claims "evidence abounds language teachers are more likely to select and use narrative fiction which may be less appealing to boys" (p. 77). However, Taylor (2005) admonished researchers and educators to be keenly aware of not falling into the stereotyping trap assuming all boys are the same because boys represent unique individuals with unique needs just as girls do.

To further investigate the uniqueness between male and female adolescents, Manuel and Robinson (2003) conducted a study in New South Wales examining adolescent boys and girls aged 12 to 15 years with 35 male participants and 34 female participants. The conclusions emerging from the study suggest that educators, policy makers, and administrators must avoid stereotypical assumptions about boys not wanting to read or not thinking they are "good" readers. The literature reviewed stands in harmony with the belief that states adolescent boys and girls must be offered choice and a degree of control over what reading material is selected for study along with the selection of texts studied in academic settings and how applying overgeneralization of assumptions to just boys is dangerous, but rather to include both genders when arriving at research conclusions.

The critical question "What do adolescents say about resistance to reading?" bears serious deliberation and thought. Lenters (2006) confirmed listening to students' voices becomes an essential ingredient in any program that attempts to address the problem of struggling adolescent readers. Lenters found adolescents engaged in forms of reading for information and pleasure rather than academic pursuit, with boys less engaged than girls. Respondents in Lenters' study reported they viewed themselves as good readers in elementary school and seldom equated poor reading ability with a dislike for reading. The main reasons participants gave for resistance to reading were interest, identity, and agency.

Guthrie and Davis (2003) and Ivey (1999) reported the lack of interest in reading stemmed from readers' inability to find sense and purpose in the majority of reading assigned in secondary schools. Participants reported they seldom read required texts thoroughly, but chose to rely on skimming and looking for answers on assigned topics and questions. Participants demonstrated the common themes that schools tended to devalue what students consider relevant and what they enjoy reading outside school and chose to rely upon the "classics" rather than contemporary literature and readings, which appeal to most adolescents.

The ultimate goal of educators is to have adolescents engaged with reading and literacy. Ivey (1999) stated students desired some exercise of choice and control in what they read at school. Hamston and Love (2003) shared that as boys moved into adolescence, their reading choices reflected practical useful interests and purposes. Educators should not invalidate out-of-school choices, but explore with students common

themes that dominate reading choices. Reeves (2004) summed up the ideas of interest, choice, and voice by stating, "Younger people and older people get to choose what to read, only in middle school and high school are people's reading choices so controlled" (p. 242).

Examining reasons why students lose interest in reading as they mature, Bintz (1993) conducted research concerning the phenomenon. The author approached the study from a social constructivist inquiry point of view. The study's framework research used negative-case analyses, a qualitative data analysis to detect inconsistencies developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who described the method as a process to revise hypotheses with hindsight and to refine a hypothesis until all accounts of known cases can be discovered. Bintz reported his findings by constructing a narrative study of 44 students, 11 from each of four schools. Each subgroup of 11 students represented three achievement levels:

1. Four students demonstrating increasing reading achievement scores,
2. Four students demonstrating decreasing reading achievement scores, and
3. Three students demonstrating stable reading achievement scores.

The author investigated the personal, home, and school environments of the participants as they moved from grade 6 to 11. Interviews were transcribed to construct individual autobiographies written in first person. Data included in the autobiographies were teacher interviews, parent interviews, dialog transcribed from small focus group discussions, student interviews, and formal and informal classroom observations.



Bintz (1993) categorized participants as avid, passive, or reluctant readers. Avid readers identified a strong familial influence, citing a positive effect on reading because reading was modeled by influential adults in the adolescent's sphere of influence. Avid readers also reported that a wide variety of sources for reading material, always readily available to them, made finding time for reading easy. Participants falling into the passive reading category reported they did not actively seek opportunities to read and, when doing so, felt they gleaned little information or interest from reading. Reading was primarily completed to simply comply with teachers' requests. Brown, Campione, and Day (1981) described passive reluctant readers as students who frequently experienced difficulty in reading comprehension while Bintz used words such as apathetic, withdrawn, disinterested, and unmotivated to describe passive reluctant readers. Bintz stated these students could read poorly or could read well but chose to avoid reading at nearly every opportunity.

Bintz (1993) determined improper placements and incorrect engagements with text behaviors, such as an emphasis on decoding words, sentences, and paragraphs, led to adolescent readers comprehending less and reporting a more negative experience with regards to reading. The author stated adolescent reading decline is not a permanent condition and should not be viewed as such. The literature also pointed to the need for careful attention to be paid to the social context of reading outside school and not to solely judge all adolescents, especially boys, on reading tasks that are limited to the academic setting only. Finally, the researcher reported the negative-case analysis affirmed existing portraits of students as passive and reluctant readers.

The dominant idea in Bintz's (1993) study determined that students used a wide array of tactics to disguise themselves as reluctant and disengaged readers in the school context, but presented themselves much differently depending on the social context and the purpose for reading. Students reported they would deliberately skim text, look only at information in bold or italicized print, read first sentences in paragraphs, and anticipate teacher-made questions related to the text. Students perceived themselves as good readers but stated they expected academic texts to be boring even before engaging with the text.

This finding corresponded with Brozo (2002), who underscored how boys become disengaged with reading in which they failed to view as meaningful, useful, and pragmatic. However, this study was limited to boys, therefore not reporting findings concerning female students. Bintz (1993) implied his study included girls, but did not explicitly state the number of males and females in his study. The author gave recommendations to future researchers, admonishing they continue to reshape and reform thinking regarding adolescents in secondary schools with regard to literacy and literacy practices. He contended nowhere is the controversy surrounding reading and curricular decisions more evident than in secondary education.

Teachers described struggling reading students as apathetic and disinterested in reading (Bintz, 1993). Teachers reported the remedy to solve reading difficulties was to exert even tighter controls over reading activities and materials and to basically adopt a forced and rigid mentality regarding reading. The student participants reported teachers failed to explain why certain readings were assigned and had pre-developed instruction that left students with only the option of accepting or rejecting the literature. The teacher

participants in Bintz's (1993) research stood in stark contrast to Alvermann (2001) and Brozo (2002), stating how adolescents should be exposed to multiple literacies with multiple choices to discover the deeper benefits of literacy engagement. Alvermann (2001) identified a need for further examination in classrooms to qualitatively determine if teacher views and voices have changed or if educators and administrators are allowing their preferences for the types of reading to obscure the potential benefits of allowing students more exercise over the control of reading genres.

Bintz (1993) concluded his research by warning educators not to so readily place labels on students identifying them as avid, passive, or reluctant readers. He argued how this practice leads to an oversimplification of a more inherent problem with adolescent readers. The author suggested educational stakeholders accept adolescents will exhibit a wide array of literate behaviors depending on the interpretation they assign to assignments and texts. Also, he admonished educators not to assume students will engage in the same literacy practices outside school as inside school, consequently giving the appearance of a completely different individual than one observed in the classroom. Bintz (1993) concluded by cautioning educators to look carefully and critically at current beliefs they held about reading, curriculum, and assessment.

Following his 1993 research, Bintz (1997) conducted and completed more investigative in-depth research that explored the voice of the teacher as it relates to the problem of adolescent literacy. A total of 131 teachers provided responses to his question prompts. Of those 102 were secondary teachers and 29 were middle school teachers. Bintz intentionally researched secondary educators and noted rather disturbing

assumptions, which he described as nightmarish in nature: "Reading instruction is primarily, if not exclusively, the role of elementary teachers, not middle and secondary school teachers and reading is an isolated skill; once mastered in the elementary grades, students require no further direct instruction in the upper grade levels." (p. 14).

Countering the argument made by educators, Bintz (1997) stated student reasons for devaluing reading as they progress through school were complex. He found teachers' and students' reasons were divergent when it came to diagnosing the root of the problem. However, teachers described the overall problem with students being how they simply cannot, will not, or fail to fully comprehend what they read. According to the teachers, students did not enjoy reading and did not enjoy engaging with literary texts. The author had previously confirmed with his 1993 research students devalued what they did not experience success with or found not meaningful and relevant to their lives. As his 1997 research concluded, teachers' opinions began to emerge. Teachers viewed the literacy problem as being completely endemic to students. However, findings from this study reported the students felt that as they aged, they experienced fewer and fewer positive experiences with teachers, which compounded students' frustration. Subsequently, teachers did not view themselves as sophisticated readers unless they were teaching text specific to their content area (Bintz, 1997).

Teachers also reported feeling betrayed and frustrated because the number of students experiencing reading comprehension problems in classes continues to multiply. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed because of the lack of training to teach reading and because of being asked to address reading and literacy problems in content areas.

Many educators questioned the age old belief in a single textbook to anchor all the content for one subject, feeling textbooks are written way above the reading abilities of the average student. Finally, teachers rationalized the student deficiencies by stating the problem's foundation rested upon the previous educators or with parents (Bintz, 1997).

Concluding from his research concerning teacher voices, Bintz (1997) advised school districts and states' departments of education to re-examine the current commitment to reading at the secondary level. Without a critical overhaul, the mire and clay becomes deeper, and the student remains the loser in the perpetual cycle. The majority of the literature reviewed paints a rather simplistic answer to the problems surrounding adolescent's struggle with literacy, especially boys. The most common theme emerging is to look carefully and introspectively at the source of academic involvement and the complicated machine called the educational system. There must be theoretical changes in concert with curricular changes. Potential solutions also require teachers and administrators to determine exactly what is valued the most with regards to reading and how to improve literacy. The author suggested teachers begin to regard reading as a social construct and not just an isolated activity. Relating the interrelationship between learning to read and reading to learn allows educators to make the connection between the roles of the elementary and secondary teachers.

### **Interventions and Instructional Practices**

As shown by Johannessen (2004), educators typically approached struggling adolescent learners' reading difficulties by placing them in prescriptive intervention programs or remediation classes, which focus on a skills approach to reading instruction.

These programs promote two types of possible thinking: either all reluctant readers be subjected to remedial courses or struggling reading students do not possess the skills to have meaningful interactions with texts. Johannessen opposed the paradigm currently embraced by policymakers who support the RTI (Response to Intervention) philosophy where struggling high school readers are concerned. Johannessen contended struggling adolescent readers benefited from a cognitive approach that emphasized problem-solving and engaged the reader with learning tasks. Johannessen asserted his findings were supported by educators and psychologists, Means and Knapp. Means and Knapp (1991) had earlier concluded “using a standards-based remediation approach to address specific deficit skills of struggling adolescent readers as flawed because the approach underestimates student capabilities, postpones challenging work, and deprives students of truly meaningful and motivating context” (pp. 283-284).

Students who received instruction from innovative programs demonstrated higher reading achievement scores than students who received traditional teacher-led and teacher-driven approaches. Langer (2001) advocated for schools to place a high value on meaningful dialog and verbal discourse as a central focus for dealing with struggling adolescent readers. Langer's research involved 25 schools in four states, 44 teachers, and 88 classroom observations over a two-year span. The research focused on schools that had a higher proportion of at-risk and struggling students compared to other schools in those districts. Langer's research found six common features:

- Lesson types were greatly varied,
- Teachers allowed assessments to inform curricular and instructional decisions,
- Cross-curricular content and lessons were encouraged,
- Capacity was built for strategies that promote critical thinking,
- Schools encouraged generative learning (accepting new ideas with open-mindedness), and
- Classrooms encouraged shared collaboration.

Langer also found if teachers exposed struggling readers to the same kind of reading strategies as non-struggling readers, then skills such as summarizing, clarifying, questioning, and predicting improved reading comprehension. Supporting Langer's findings, Alvermann (2001) reported effective literacy instruction for struggling learners should incorporate multiple sources of literacies, such as interactive technology and printed materials found outside the traditional academic setting.

Reporting on the efficacy of reading intervention strategies, Fisher and Ivey (2006) stated before any intervention program is established in a school that addresses struggling readers, the school must first have a pre-established supplemental reading program targeting specific difficulties. Second, the learning community should recognize adolescent literacy as a problem and develop a focus on increasing student achievement and performance. In this study, the researchers recommended block scheduling as an intervention to increase time for reading and language support. Without the

implementation of these suggestions, the efficacy of intervention programs is called into question (Fisher & Ivey, 2006).

Struggling readers should be provided balanced instruction that blends computer programs with teacher-led instruction. Alvermann and Rush (2004) found solely expending time with a computer was an insufficient method to evaluate students' needs or to diagnose problems. They concluded the complexity of the difficulties reached far beyond computer interaction. Johnston (1987) found students benefited from experienced expert teachers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to make quick decisions that impacted students' understanding. Ivey and Baker (2004) warned against programs for struggling adolescent readers that focused strictly on phonemic awareness, the making sense of consonant and vowel blends, and pure phonics instruction because research failed to prove benefits for secondary students. Fisher and Ivey (2008) agreed with Alvermann (2001) and Brozo (2002) that reading and writing intervention must begin with complete engagement of meaningful text and have instruction that supports word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and techniques to improve vocabulary.

For achievement to be increased and for motivation beyond the intervention to be completely effective, Fisher and Ivey (2008) proposed that students must be actively engaged with textual material and for teachers not to be deceived into thinking a false sense of compliance and understanding of material has been reached. Guthrie (1996) supports this in sharing, "Compliant students are not likely to become lifelong learners" (p. 433). Fisher and Ivey (2008) described struggling adolescent readers as extremely complex and that this complexity calls for a closer look at evaluating literate needs and



preferences. They argued teachers must engage the learner with authentic literary tasks that are used to make crucial decisions regarding students, such as alternate forms of reading and instructional writing tasks developed with a distinct purpose. Fisher and Ivey (2008) concluded the study by stating they had yet to find a single student who absolutely could not grow to some extent.

Adding to the overall movement of increasing literacy achievement in adolescent males, Brozo and Simpson (2007) believed one of the most powerful ways to fight the literacy problem concerning adolescent males is to equip secondary teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for all to see themselves as teachers of reading. Their recommendations and guiding principles stemmed from work conducted with Hoover High School in southern California and Foothills High School in eastern Tennessee. The researchers emphasized the importance of not overwhelming teachers with too many strategies simultaneously. At Foothills High School, teachers agreed to consistently apply three strategies:

1. Sustained silent reading to increase the amount of time students engaged with printed material,
2. Multiple sources of literacy, and
3. Lesson impressions or "frontloading," which means to set the stage for the topic and focus the discussion on the topics to be studied.

Teachers reported a greater sense of commitment and satisfaction, knowing the entire school was using the same initiatives to increase literacy ability and engagement with literature across disciplines. Also, Brozo and Simpson ensured additional support

throughout the year was provided to teachers in high content subjects and in language arts. Teachers were not simply left to fend for themselves after a two-day workshop at the beginning of the year, but instead received direct instructional support the entire year.

The "frontloading" strategy was also advocated by Gallagher (2010) as teachers began to engage students with books or literary classics. The researcher stated teachers must frame and set the stage for the adolescent reader to begin to have his or her own frame of reference with the literature. Without this crucial step, adolescents will see no purpose in the reading, disengage immediately, and portray the role of struggling reader to the average teacher. The researcher also found when purposeful discussions ensued prior to text and relating text about to be read to actual student experiences in some form, then reading achievement increased with students who identified themselves as struggling readers. The researcher recognized for reader motivation to be properly generated, providing students initially with an idea of what they will actually gain from the text was key to increasing comprehension of material and engagement with the text.

At Hoover High School, teachers recognized the need to alter some of their own intrinsic beliefs about reading, especially the long-held tenet espousing the idea it is only the job of the English teacher to teach reading. Teachers there were given an active voice in planning and developing improvement efforts. The literacy committee comprised of teachers from all disciplines set the literacy agenda for the school. Brozo and Simpson started with teachers who showed the greatest concern and enthusiasm for trying new strategies. A science teacher became completely convinced during the year-long study in which student achievement and engagement with scientific texts had improved because

of the detail and attention given to teacher-led professional development. This study supported teachers and administrators looking introspectively at teaching methods and practices where adolescent literacy problems are concerned (Brozo & Simpson, 2007).

### **Multiple Literacies**

Alvermann (2001) reported for literacy instruction to be considered effective, multiple literacies, including electronic media, should be included in secondary schools' reading programs. She also noted book reading in isolated content subjects typically did not appear until later grades as students began to encounter assignments that required supplemental academic reading. The author observed how students engaged and reacted to academic reading was easily evaluated by teachers; however, teachers lacked the capacity to judge effectively how students used informal literacy. She believed effective teachers deliberately sought ways to discover students' interests and matched tasks with complexities students faced. Effective teachers took advantage of incorporating multiple literacies and exercising sound judgment when evaluating approaches tailored to a "one size fits all" concept of instruction.

Alvermann (2001) supported the need for adolescents to be more engaged with literacy using a critical lens now more than ever because of the exponential explosion of Internet material so readily available. She stated the critical lens is crucial because of the widespread reality that adolescents accept almost all information from the Internet or social media to be true when, in fact, it silences particular views. In addition, the study found students deemed as struggling readers were quite capable of producing their own electronic texts and multimedia documentaries. The research examined 30 adolescents in

a 15 week media club project. Participants had all scored in the lowest quartile of standardized state reading assessments, but demonstrated an uncanny critical awareness of how popular media and popular culture tend to shape thinking. The research framework called for educators to explore alternative ways to engage struggling readers with printed media and texts that responded to the environment in which they received and processed information. Rather than the teacher transmitting facts and knowledge, the researcher stated adolescents must be engaged with literacy from a participatory approach to learning (Alvermann, 2001).

Adding to Alvermann's assertions and findings, Moats (2014) explained for struggling readers to have instructional needs adequately met, a blend of computer-assisted instruction in conjunction with teacher-led instruction is best. She promoted the careful scrutiny of the pros and cons of computer-based instruction. Furthermore, the study described a major advantage of computer-assisted instruction as being students' ability to work at their own pace and feel less embarrassment over not knowing some of the material. A major disadvantage noted was the teacher's inability to provide on-the-spot feedback and an inability to more astutely diagnose problems.

Another literacy outlet, graphic novels, was studied by McVicker (2007). Graphic novels help to capture the attention of male adolescents by appealing to the visual part of the brain. The researcher found the graphic novels helped adolescent males make meaning of the text and actually promoted thinking whereby readers used the graphics to infer the author's intent and purpose for writing with increased comprehension becoming

an added benefit. Teachers in the study also reported boys became more engaged with the classics if they experienced previous success with engagement using the graphic novels.

Building upon the popularity and increased use of graphic novels, Gavigan (2011) conducted a four month mixed methods study exploring the benefits of graphic novels with adolescent males. The researcher found that two of the four young men in her case study significantly improved their self-concept score and overall reading efficacy after engaging with graphic novels. Detailed findings from interviews and observations showed these two young men began to report an increased ease in reading some of the classic novels chosen by the instructor. Comprehension and motivation were definitely enhanced by the illustrations used in the graphic novels. The research study opened the door for further exploration in the use of graphic novels, not only in literature classes, but across the curriculum to improve reading ability in content area subjects.

### **Decline of Adolescent Literacy**

Vacca (1998) posited a great neglect exists, which has permeated itself through the educational policy arena, school curricula, and the court of public opinion, stating that literacy does not extend beyond the learning to read and write in early childhood and elementary school. Vacca warned part of the war is being lost with the struggling adolescent reader due in large part to the constant literacy debate among educators and policy makers. The focus must shift toward allowing the nurturing and development of critical thinking in adolescent literacy to take center stage in the secondary schools. Campbell, Donahue, Reese and Phillips (1996) found approximately 60% of adolescents they surveyed demonstrated reading capabilities of basic performance with reading

comprehension, main ideas, and recognizing relationships among ideas, but fewer than 5% of the same sample population performed at an advanced level when required to examine, extend, engage, and elaborate on the more inferential meanings of literary and informative texts. More complexities and greater demands of sophistication begin to get placed on adolescents as they enter secondary schools with a meager attempt to prepare them for the transition and to prepare them for the challenge of engaging with texts on a critical level.

The study found few schools past the elementary grades actually provided the needed continued support required for struggling readers. Vacca (2002) believed content literacy programs in the secondary setting offer a beginning point to address the needs of the struggling adolescent reader. The study described content literacy programs whereby the level of reading and writing is framed within the context of the academic subject with a sub-layer of extra support. According to the researcher, this extra sub-layer can be used to help students think more critically and more deeply about texts. The content area teachers then bring their subject area expertise and relate to the value of reading and writing in the teachers' respective disciplines. Furthermore, the study found content area teachers are realizing the importance of assuming the responsibility for reading and writing and not leaving the matter solely to the language arts teachers.

Additionally, this study briefly looked at research devoted to pre-adolescent learners to discover possible connections between preparatory programs and its relationship to the continued decline of adolescent literacy achievement among adolescent males. Gurian (2006) conducted research focused on teaching to boys and the

inherent differences which exist in the brains of boys compared to girls. Gurian believed educators failed to account for these differences in daily instruction, thus failing to differentiate the teaching and the learning experiences of the different genders. Gurian asked the question, “Is something wrong with the way we are teaching boys?” to Douglass Elementary School teachers in Boulder, Colorado. In 2005, boys at the school represented 75 percent of the special education population and possessed a 13-point deficit gap on the state assessment. Gurian challenged the faculty to look critically at his question and to devise methods and strategies to close the gap between male and female students. Within one academic year, the 2006 state test administration revealed boys had outperformed girls in reading and writing and achieved a 5.4 percentage point gain. Special population students achieved 7.5 times the average gain in their population subgroup.

Douglass Elementary teachers realized overall its classrooms were a better fit for the verbal-emotive, sit still, take notes, listen carefully type of child. They knew quickly this was the complete antithesis to what the natural assets of boys are. Gurian (2006) described boys as kinesthetic learners with a single-task focus mindset filled with impulsivity. Teachers began to alter strategies. More kinesthetic learning opportunities were made available. Teachers began to get students physically involved in learning tasks, which not only tapped into boys’ strengths, but also energized the girls to become more competitive. Teachers began to support literacy through spatial-visual representations, such as story boards, and pictorial descriptions of the writing thoughts were coming to mind with boys while engaging in first-stage brainstorming. The spatial-

visual aspect aided boys when they began to express thoughts and pictures into words. Teachers began to allow boys to choose topics that were of interest to them and refused to confine the imaginations. Boys preferred more action literature and male protagonist related literature. Boys also tended to read less for pleasure but more for information. Teachers found that by allowing more choice in the literature, boys' interest surged along with reading and writing skills. The school realized boys did their best work when teachers established an authentic purpose and meaning for literary engagement. Teachers also discovered boys did not feel the need to continue to work on papers that were given poor marks immediately. Teachers moved the grading portion to the end, allowing for several revisions before ever issuing any kind of grade or mark on a project. Competition and the opportunity to earn public respect helped to motivate many under-motivated students, especially the boys. The school sought every opportunity to present positive male role models to the boys. Men and fathers were encouraged to visit the classroom and share their own literacy experiences with students.

### **Chapter Summary**

The review of literature affirms that adolescent males do struggle with literacy. Statistically, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, (2013) confirms the fact males achieve at an average of ten points lower in language arts compared to females in grades 4, 8, and 12. The literature supports seven categories that affirm the adolescent male struggle with literacy: (1) culture, (2) identity, (3) self-efficacy, (4) choice and voice, (5) interventions and instructional practices, (6) multiple literacies, and



(7) the decline of adolescent literacy. Adolescent males require literacy instruction that broadens the understanding of the unique literacy learning needs of boys.

Defining “culture-as-disability” emphasizes that society should share responsibility for the decline in adolescent male literacy. Multiple studies report that framed literacy meanings from experiences with literacy in academic and social settings are critically important. In addition, males using multiple literacies from academic and non-academic settings help to construct a strong literacy identity (Coles & Hall, 2001; McDermott & Varenne, 1995).

Self-efficacy and overall confidence in reading ability is directly proportional to the kinds of relationships educators are attempting to build with adolescent males in the educational setting. Educators must be willing to assist young men to make connections with reading and to make meaning from what is read. It becomes even more important for educators to realize the benefits of trusting, caring, and professional relationships and how these relationships can and do enhance the belief among adolescent males that they can be successful and confident readers (Brozo & Gaskins, 2009; Guthrie, 2004; Santa, 2006; and Wolk, 2003).

Adolescent males hunger for a choice in the type of literature to be studied and yearn for their voice in those matters to be heard. Adolescent males engage with literacy for information and for pleasure rather than for academic pursuit. As young men look for a purpose for reading, self-efficacy and confidence in reading ability help shape the kind of readers they become. The ultimate goal of educators should be to consider the positive impact that providing boys with choices that focus on practical and useful interest can

produce (Bintz, 1993; Hamston & Love, 2003; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Ivey, 1999; and Lenters, 2006).

Instructional and intervention strategies must consider innovative and out-of-the-box type programs aimed at enhancing critical thinking skills, which will concurrently yield higher achievement scores in literacy for young adolescent male students. Approaches to improve reading instruction should not be narrowly focused on simple skills-based remediation, but rather strategies that will improve and deepen the conceptual understanding of reading. Only these approaches will improve overall reading ability and comprehension. Classrooms must encourage open dialog and collaboration. Struggling readers must be exposed to the same level of rigor as skilled readers to avoid widening the achievement gap. Finally, instruction should be a balanced blend of innovative programs and pedagogical practices in conjunction with teacher-led instruction (Brozo & Simpson, 2007; Fisher & Ivey, 2006, 2008; Gallagher, 2010; Johannessen, 2004; and Langer, 2001).

Adolescent males possess an inherent need to be engaged with literacy in a variety of formats. The overall decline in adolescent literacy can be attributed to a direct result of state and local curriculum not keeping pace with the changing trends. Adolescent males engage in literacy activities outside the confines of textbooks and traditional canonical literature. Students should be exposed to alternative forms of delivery for literacy activities, such as electronic media and the use of graphic novels (Alvermann, 2001; Gavigan, 2011; Gurian, 2006; McVicker, 2007; and Vacca, 1998).

In Chapter III, the methodology of the proposed study will be detailed. This study will focus upon the unique experiences and perceptions of adolescent males as they relate to literacy struggles. The study is a phenomenological qualitative study examining adolescent males in a rural southeastern United States high school in the foothills of Appalachia.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

Gurian and Stevens (2004) reported boys earned 70% of the D's and F's and fewer than half of the A's in public schools. Boys account for two-thirds of learning disability diagnoses, 90% of the discipline referrals, 80% of the high school dropouts, and fewer than 40% of college students. Nationally 30 million adults were found to be below basic in literacy skills needed for daily activities, and 1 in 8 Tennesseans lack basic prose literacy skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Locally, 58 students failed their English course in 2014 with 42 of the 58 or 72.4%, almost 3 of every 4 being male. These statistics prove adolescent males represent a vulnerable population where literacy ability is concerned.

Adolescent males who struggle with literacy represent a marginalized subgroup because current curricular policy in most every district fails to consider the types of literacy adolescent males find appealing (Alvermann, 2001). Rather, according to Alvermann, there remains a strict adherence to traditional canonical forms of literature, works that young men often find difficult to relate to their own lived experiences. The exact phenomena to be researched in this study are the common experiences that adolescent males undergo in shaping their literacy framework. Because capturing the essence of these experiences is critical, this study will be framed as a phenomenological research study guided by the writings of Clark Moustakas (1994). The environment greatly influences how their experiences are developed, and subtle environmental differences are worth noting in the study. The meaning and value that adolescent males

assign to literacy is crucial to the understanding of how their literary beliefs and frameworks are shaped. The overarching questions that the researcher will attempt to answer are as follows:

- (1) What in the life experiences of adolescent males causes a struggle with literacy?
- (2) How do adolescent males perceive and describe their struggle with literacy?

### **Rationale**

Moustakas (1994) underscores that the phenomenological approach must capture the most comprehensive descriptions possible to construct a detailed and reflective analysis that comprises the totality of the essences and experiences of the participants. Moustakas makes the point to emphasize that the ultimate goal of phenomenological research is to ascertain the meaning that participants assign to their experience along with a fully detailed description of the experience. To begin a framework for analyzing participant responses to the overarching questions, the researcher will focus descriptions in the context of the situations the participants present (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology systematically attempts to eradicate prejudices and predisposed suppositions to illuminate the researcher to view with the clearest lens possible phenomena that are approached in the purest sense possible based on the reflective knowledge of the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Using the framework of Moustakas (1994), it can be seen that he promotes the importance of the idea that phenomenological research studies allow the investigator to recognize that a relationship exists between external perceptions of a particular

phenomenon and the internal perceptions, memories, and judgments that the participants hold to be true. This phenomenological study also allows the investigator to focus on the pure constructs of the participants and to derive meaning from findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection. Moustakas (1994) also frames the importance of participants' perceptions in phenomenological studies on the work of Husserl (1977). The importance of Husserl's thinking comes from providing a logical process concerning the different angles from which participants' perceptions emerge. Husserl (1977) explained the process as horizontalization where every perception counts, and every perception adds importance to participants' experience.

Furthermore, phenomenology is best suited for this study because phenomenology is concerned with the wholeness of meaning in its entirety. Phenomenology searches for meaning through intuition, reflection, and intentionality of conscious acts related to the experience being researched. Phenomenology commits itself to descriptions of experiences rather than explanations or analyses with those descriptions, retaining as much original texture and meaning from the participants as possible. These descriptions serve as a life support system to keep a phenomenon alive and to discover its true meaning. Phenomenology grounds itself in questions that give direction and focus to meaning and provide an origination point for sustained inquiry and further research (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) describes the goal of phenomenological research to be able to understand with the greatest degree possible the common and shared experiences of the participants in regard to the phenomena being studied.

### **Participant Sampling Procedure**

Patton (1990) details the process of purposeful sampling in qualitative research in order to provide the researcher with information-rich cases from which large amounts of detail can be gleaned about the phenomena being studied. This study will employ a combination of qualitative sampling methods. First, maximum variation sampling will be utilized by allowing the researcher to ascertain common themes or patterns that emerge with the sole purpose aimed at capturing core experiences, turning possible weaknesses into strengths. Patton adds how maximum variation sampling will also allow the researcher to learn a great deal about the issues potential participants possess, adding credence to the purpose of the research. As an added benefit, the maximum variation method will usually yield high-quality descriptions, explaining uniqueness of experiences from participants. Patton explains how the researcher would be looking for common patterns arising from participants' experiences with the phenomena. Second, the researcher will utilize what Patton terms as snowball or chain sampling. This will be accomplished by locating key informants, well-situated people, who hold critical information about the participants and about the phenomenon of literacy struggle with adolescent males. The key informants' role will be to assist the researcher with identifying potential participants through direct experience with the participants and by having evaluated participants' literary performance.

Participants will consist of adolescent male students from a rural southeastern United States high school who experience a struggle with literacy, which they describe as a challenge, difficulty, and/or frustration. Participants will express an interest in

understanding the meaning of the literacy struggle and are willing to participate in lengthy interviews and follow-up interviews as needed. Participants will be included on a strictly voluntary basis. Participants will agree to interviews being tape recorded and agree to data being published in this dissertation and other possible publications with the understanding that pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. The researcher will easily establish a collegial and scholarly rapport with participants. The researcher will adhere to all ethical principles surrounding confidentiality and informed consent through the Institutional Review Board process of the university before any interviews are conducted.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Epoche**

As Moustakas (1994) explains, evidence from phenomenological research is crafted from the first-hand accounts of the life experiences of the participants. Moustakas further categorizes the first-hand evidence as: (1) the Epoche process, (2) phenomenological reduction, and (3) imaginative variation and synthesis. Moustakas states that in the Epoche process all preconceived perceptions and biases on part of the investigator are set aside to allow for the purity of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon or phenomena to be explored fully: “The world in the bracket has been cleared of ordinary thought and is present before us as a phenomenon to be gazed upon, to be known naively and freshly through a ‘purified’ consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To paraphrase Moustakas’s meaning of the Epoche process, he describes the Epoche as allowing the investigator to view things and events with a new awareness as if



looking for the first time. The consciousness of the phenomenon is entered into with openness and offers the investigator the chance to clear the mind. Moustakas suggests that with intensive effort that false notions of truth and reality can be bracketed and placed out of action.

### **Phenomenological Reduction**

Concerning phenomenological reduction, Moustakas (1994) qualifies this process as allowing the experience to become the focus by describing and describing again with references to the textural qualities that participants assign to the experience. This process allows the researcher to view and describe the experience with varying degrees of intensity. Phenomenological reduction is also a way for the researcher to not only see but listen with deliberate intentions and allow the phenomena or phenomenon to illuminate new pathways to understanding. Moustakas believes that when the looking and noticing and looking again process is undertaken, then the researcher is afforded the benefits of a deeper rather than superficial reflective process. To summarize the phenomenological reduction process of qualitative data, Moustakas defines one part as bracketing whereby the focus of the research is placed in brackets, and everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is focused on the topic and the question(s); horizontalizing is where every statement is treated with and assigned equal importance. Later, irrelevant and repetitive statements are deleted.

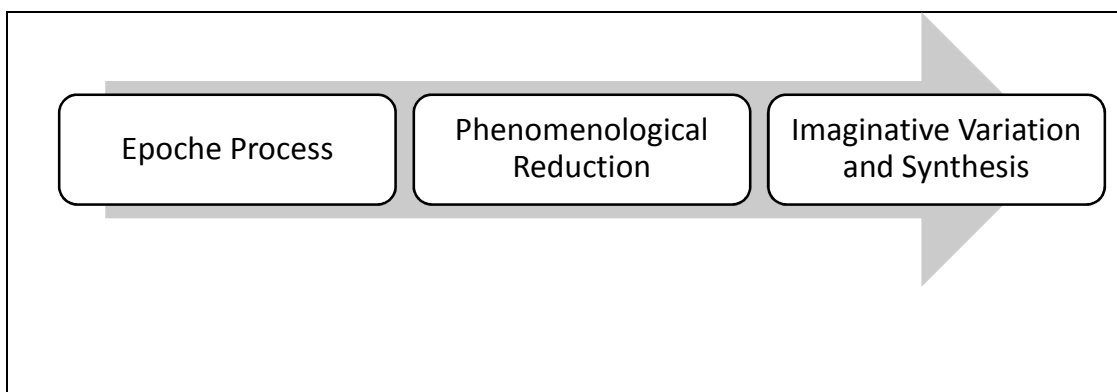
### **Imaginative Variation**

Following phenomenological reduction, the next step in the phenomenological research process concerning participant data is what Moustakas (1994) refers to as

imaginative variation. Imaginative variation, as Moustakas (1994) explains, allows the investigator to construct themes from textural descriptions gathered during the phenomenological reduction process. The investigator understands that through imaginative variation there does not exist a single destination to truth but rather innumerable possibilities emerge that become intimately connected with the fine nuances and meanings of experiences. This process allows participants' thoughts and feelings to become intertwined in the themes that emerge from the data analyses process.

### **Intuitive Integration**

Moustakas (1994) summarizes the final step in the phenomenological research process as the researcher allowing the intuitive integration and structural descriptions to come together in unified fashion, ultimately producing a statement about the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole. The following figure summarizes Moustakas's phenomenological research process.



*Figure 1.* Moustakas's Phenomenological Research Process

## **Interview Process**

Patton (1990) provides researchers with key principles surrounding interview protocols and purposes. Moreover, Patton explains how the interview process allows the interviewer to be drawn into the world of the person being interviewed and subsequently obtain information to increase understanding of the phenomena being investigated. First, the researcher will use an informal conversational interview approach, which allows questions to flow from the immediate context without a predetermination of wording. According to Patton, this type of interview technique allows information gathered from participants to emerge naturally in the course of open discussion. Second, the researcher will utilize a set of pre-constructed open-ended questions to be asked sequentially during each interview. This protocol will allow the researcher to compare responses on a set of complete interview data and potentially reduce interviewer bias over the course of several interviews.

The interview plan will follow Moustakas's (1994) guiding principles by engaging the participants in informal, interactive processes using open-ended questions and comments. The researcher will develop questions that solicit a comprehensive account of the participant's experience with the phenomenon of literacy struggle. Participants will be allowed opportunities to focus on the experience, and the investigator will create an atmosphere of relaxation and trust while fostering an honest and comprehensive conversation with the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews and observations will be transcribed through phenomenological analysis as described by Moustakas (1994). The process of transcribing will include horizontalizing the data by

regarding every statement as relevant and of equal value to the experience of the struggle with literacy. The researcher will then organize the horizontalized statements into meaning units that are then clustered into common categories or themes, removing redundant and overlapping statements. The clustered themes and meanings will then be used to construct a detailed textural description of the experience and essence of the phenomenon. The Moustakas method of transcribing data is closely related to the methods described by Creswell (2013) and Saldana (2009).

**Table 1: First Round Interview Protocol**

- 
1. If I followed you through a typical day, what would I see you doing?
  2. How do you use literacy in these typical activities?
  3. What experiences would I observe you having?
  4. How do you feel about reading and literacy?
  5. What is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties, or struggles you have had regarding literacy?
  6. What do you think causes these frustrations?
  7. How do you feel this affects you and why?
  8. When did you first become aware that you were having problems with reading or understanding what you read? How did you feel then? Describe your feelings in as much detail as possible.
  9. What do you think has made reading and engaging with literacy difficult for you?
- 

*Note.* First round interview questions

### **Coding**

Using the process of phenomenological data transcription described by Creswell (2013), the researcher will assimilate all the raw data by questions and then move to the process of open coding, which is, coding the data to unlock major categories of

information as outlined by Saldana (2009). Next, the researcher will move from open coding categories to axial coding whereby the research will identify a more narrow set of coded categories that focus on the nuclei of common experiences that will help explain the struggle with literacy. The final step in the coding process will be to selectively develop these axial codes into emergent themes, which: (a) explain the phenomena in question; (b) allow further assumption formation; and (c) allow assembly of the findings into a framework emphasizing emergent themes based on the data.

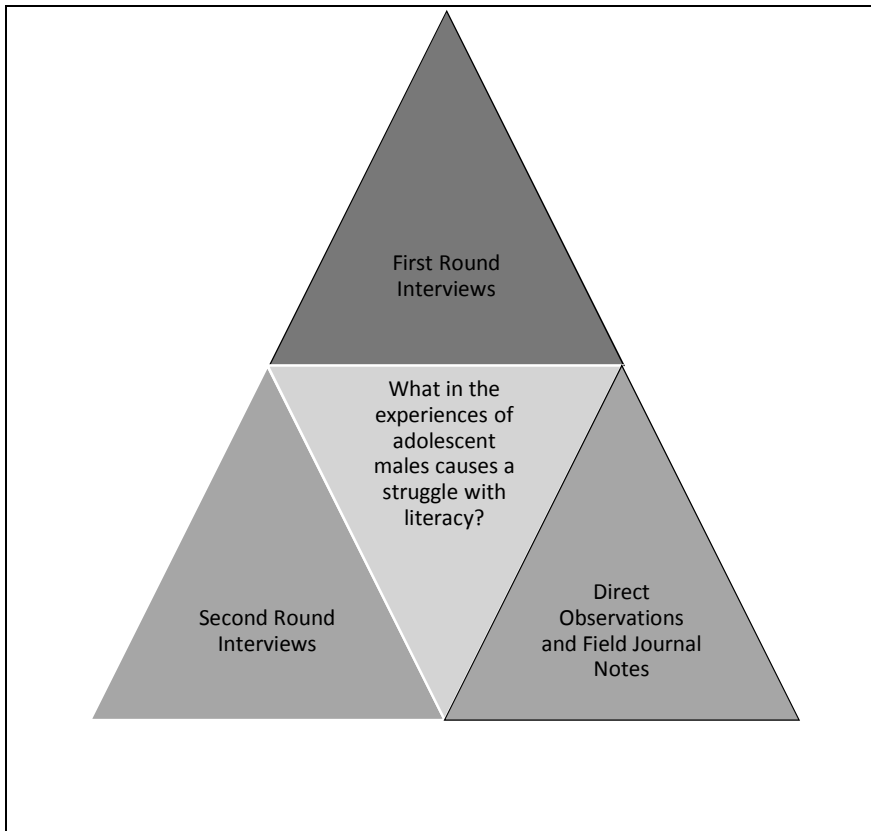
Direct observations will also be included as part of the qualitative data.

Observation allows the researcher to note the act of a phenomenon occurring or not occurring in the participant's environment. Observations will note participant activities, interactions, conversations, and behaviors. The researcher's role in the observations will be that of a non-participant. The researcher will not interact with participants during the observations (Creswell, 2013).

Date:	Time:
Focus:	Focus Notations:
Events Observed:	

Figure 2. Observation Protocol

The following figures revisit the overarching research questions of the study and illustrate the triangulation of the data sets.



*Figure 3.* Triangulation Process of Research Question One.

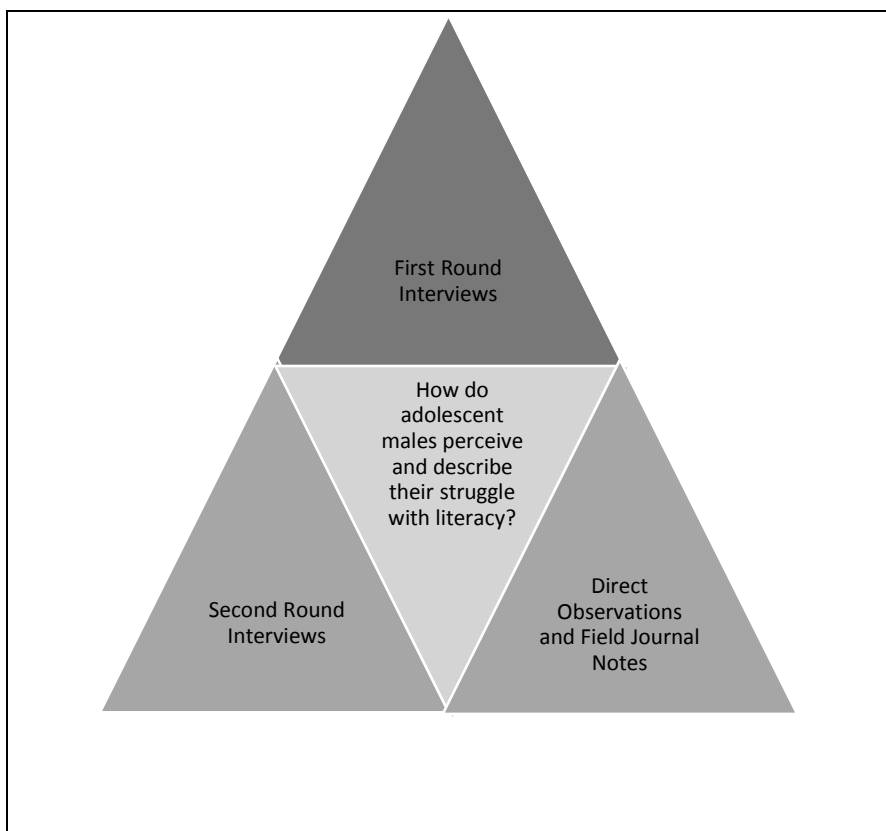


Figure 4. Triangulation Process of Research Question Two.

**Table 2: Proposed Timeline for the Study**

Time Frame	Event
May-June 2015	Obtain IRB approval from the University Compliance Office
August 2015	Identify potential participants for the study
September 2015	Conduct first-round interviews and observations
October 2015	Conduct second-round interviews and observations
November 2015	Conduct more direct observations as needed
December 2015	Begin to transcribe and analyze data

*Note.* IRB = Institutional Review Board

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter III provides a detailed explanation of how the researcher will incorporate Moustakas's phenomenological framework when analyzing collected data. The researcher will navigate through the epoche stage, progress to the phenomenological reduction process, and finally conclude with imaginative variation. Chapter IV will then provide a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data while ultimately adhering to the underlying principle of phenomenological studies which states the ultimate goal of data analysis is not to attest to the veracity or the fallacy of participant statements but rather to accept each statement as a truth in its own merit.



## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPREATION

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the reasons male students struggle with literacy with a central focus on the unique experiences that capture the essence of the frustration and difficulty with literacy in conjunction with participants' perceptions concerning the experience. The study used the framework of Moustakas (1994), whereby he promoted the importance of the idea that phenomenological research studies allow the investigator to recognize that a relationship exists between external perceptions of a particular phenomenon and the internal perceptions, memories, and judgments that the participants hold to be true. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the intent of the data analysis and interpretation is neither to determine the veracity nor the fallacy of participants' statements, but rather to accept each as truth in its purest form (Moustakas, 1994).

The qualitative method employed in the study provided detailed descriptions of the lived experiences that adolescent males have experienced with regard to the phenomena related to the difficulties, frustrations, and struggles with literacy. Data were collected by conducting in-depth digitally recorded audio interviews of nine participants in a rural southeastern United States high school. An in-depth focus interview was conducted with the same nine participants along with observations of the participants over a three month period to present a triangulated perspective to the data.

The data were then analyzed and organized according to the phenomenological method outlined by Moustakas (1994) which is comprised of the following interrelated

stages: (1) epoche process, (2) phenomenological reduction, and (3) imaginative variation. In the Epoch stage, the researcher recalled and recognized his own experiences and prejudices while simultaneously acknowledging that he cannot completely set his own personal experiences aside but rather channel and shift the focus to the participants. During the phenomenological reduction step, the researcher assigned equal value to all statements about how the participants were experiencing the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) refers to this step of reduction as horizontalization. The statements were then grouped into five significant statements, each with a formulated meaning (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings**

<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Formulated Meanings</b>
I have to be interested in what I am reading. If it [reading] is interesting, then I can find myself and picture myself in the situation.	To be completely engaged and saturated with reading, the reader must make a connection with the material.
The writing process frustrates me. I get an angry feeling when I can't put my words together to write them right way. I get irritated and embarrassed by my lack of ability to write well.	A higher value is assigned to the perceived belief concerning the ability to write coherent thoughts and to the productive component of literacy versus the interpretative component.
I have the desire to write well and to improve. I want others to look at me as someone who tries hard and has the will to believe in himself. My mind is telling me I can't write, but my heart is telling me I can.	Self-efficacy manifests itself as a powerful intrinsic force, urging the individual toward improvement with writing tasks and perceived writing ability.
I learn more from a teacher who pushes me. They don't give up on us. Make me believe I can do something. Don't let us stop just because we think it	Instructional practices that emulate a growth mindset, coupled with active and engaging pedagogical practices, serve to improve writing ability.

[writing] gets hard. They help us by example and don't just do it for us.

The way I was raised up has a ton to do with my frustrations I feel about literacy. Parents weren't really good with English, and it sort of continues. I was brought up as a man to be respectful, to try hardest. People respect you more when you talk and write with sense...that is how I was brought up.

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The culture beyond the academic setting influences perceptions and beliefs about the future benefits of being able to write and communicate meaningfully.

To complete the reduction process, the investigator revisited the main research questions:

- (1) What in the life experiences of adolescent males causes a struggle with literacy?
- (2) How do adolescent males perceive and describe their struggle with literacy?

Then the researcher identified the following emergent themes based upon an analysis and interpretation of the formulated meanings in light of the research questions:

- Importance of a connection to and an engagement with literacy
- Value given to the ability to produce quality writing
- Power of self-efficacy
- Instructional practices that directly engage the learner
- Cultural influences

Next, the researcher engaged in the third step, imaginative variation, by constructing textural and structural descriptions from the emerging themes and concluding with a combining of the two into a culminating paragraph, forming the essence of the experience. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to a detailed synthesis of the emergent

themes, supported by data, followed by the interpretative discussions of the textural and structural descriptions of the experience, and finally a capturing of the essence of the experiences of the participants.

### **Emergent Themes Interpretation**

#### **Importance of a Connection to and an Engagement With Literacy**

Engaging and finding a personal connection to all forms of literature was identified as an essential component necessary for the participants to derive meaning from literature. A definite interest must be generated for the readers to persevere with the assigned task. Participant observations, whereby the researcher was a non-participant, revealed the adolescents to be less vocal in the academic setting when teachers employed the use of traditional literature. However, when participants were observed in technical vocational classroom settings, participants were vocal, engaged, and eager to express knowledge verbally and to demonstrate learned knowledge kinesthetically. One participant stated,

If you are interested in the subject, you will read about it and write about it. I'm a hands-on type of person. When I get really interested, then I focus better and picture myself and find myself in the situation (Participant 6, 2015).

Consistently, participants emphatically reported that the success with reading must equate to a direct interest and engagement with the reading material. One participant stated, "If I am interested, I'll read all day. I need to like what I'm reading. I love hunting and sporting magazines. I'll read them all the time because it's what I like" (Participant 5,

2015). Another added, “I like to read. I have to get into what I’m reading. [I] could read all day long as long as I like what I’m reading” (Participant 8, 2015).

### **Value Given to the Ability to Produce Quality Writing**

All participants shared the belief and self-perception that the ability to write “correctly” and coherently impacts how they view themselves and also how teachers, authority figures, and even potential employers view them. The young men believed the productive component of writing coupled with the ability to produce writing artifacts in the “right” manner outweighed the interpretive component of writing (Focus Group Interview, 2015). Participants reported feeling “frustrated”, “embarrassed”, and “irritated” by a perceived lack of ability to write well enough to produce quality work. Some participants stated,

You need to be able to write because it [writing] is likely to get you places in life. I get irritated about how I write. I get embarrassed by my lack of knowledge about the writing process. Writing irritates me because I just don’t like it and I don’t get it. Writing is hard for me and it [writing] frustrates me. I am just god-awful writing. Writing frustrates me. I know writing is important in life and I gotta have it. I know other people will judge me by how my writing looks and if I can write things out the right way. The ability to write like something will get you places in life like future places of work (Participants 9, 2, 6, and 1, 2015).

The participants were focused on the writing process, particularly the ability to correctly construct pieces of writing. The beginning process concerning the formulation of initial thoughts and ideas was judged to be the most difficult. Participants described

the initial writing process to be “extremely hard.” Interviews also confirmed one of the main sources of “irritation” with writing to be a general lack of interest in the process and how “attitude” impacted the ability for participants to produce what they deemed to be quality writing (Participants 2, 3, and Focus Group Interview, 2015). Some participants reported,

I just can't get the words down. I try to write but it [words] just don't come out right. Setting up my writing is difficult. I just have trouble trying to figure out what I need to put in it and where to start off. It drives me insane when I can't figure out where to put the sentences and have them make sense. My entire attitude is affected by it [writing]. I just have to get into the right mindset of writing. Writing papers is a struggle. I just don't understand the whole process the way I should. When I try to write, I have all this good stuff and I just go blank. My mind goes blank. I try to push but I just can't. The thinking is the hardest part. I get angry at myself when I can't put the words together to write (Participants 2, 3, and 6, 2015).

Continuing the analysis of data related to this theme, participants recalled from earlier experiences that they experienced problems with the writing process. Participants reported not being able to “set up a paper right,” “not knowing how to write period,” and “papers were always just full of mistakes.” One participant stated,

I got bad grades on every paper and essay since my freshmen year. Not being able to set up papers right really started to grow on me and affect me. It still does to

this day. I really struggle with that whole thing [writing process] (Participant 1, 2015).

### **Power of Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as "the belief and confidence that one has the knowledge and skills to accomplish meaningful tasks that will produce a desired result in academic settings" (Brozo & Gaskins, 2009, p. 172). In this theme, participants identified how an inner desire manifests itself as a driving force steering one to the belief that writing is a meaningful academic task and how with persistence and perseverance the task can be accomplished. Participants acknowledged the self-imposed importance assigned to how they are perceived, judged, and evaluated by others each according to his ability to write coherently. Overwhelmingly, the participants identified an internal "desire" and "will" inside the mind, which ultimately serves to push them toward "acceptable" writing. When asked to discuss what they felt the most difficult facet of literacy to be, all nine participants identified the ability to express themselves through writing and the writing process to the most arduous tasks. One participant powerfully and emotionally commented,

I want people to look at me as somebody who tries hard and has the will. I have the desire to write well and improve. My mind is telling me I can't write, but my heart is telling me I can. It's that struggle between the two...the mind and the heart. I really know that I can write how I need to when I put my mind to it (Participant 2, 2015).

### **Instructional Practices That Directly Engage the Learner**

In this cluster, interviewees focused on instructional practices used by teachers when teaching writing. Respondents felt that they gained more confidence as a writer when they were exposed to instructors who exhibited a belief in a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset approach to writing. Participants also identified a higher sense of satisfaction with their writing products when instructors directly engaged students in the learning and not solely relying on the passiveness of learning to teach writing skills. Participants also reported a boost of confidence in writing ability when the instructors employed a collaborative approach to the writing process in conjunction with frontloading the instruction such that participants felt like they understood the ultimate goal of the instructor. One participant commented,

I learn more when they [teachers] are teaching me how to get through a passage and have me highlight the key concepts. I can respond better to the writing prompts and [writing] assignments when they help me like that. It makes my vocabulary stronger so that we know more words and use the words better in sentences especially when we write sentences, paragraphs, and put them together. Teaching me like that helps me to understand what a passage is really saying. Whenever I have problems and some of my buddies have the same problems he [the teacher] gives examples and helps us. He don't just all of a sudden quit on it like some of the others have done in the past years. He don't just write it for you, but he tells and shows how things relate to what he wants us to write about. He



really helps give direction of where you need to go and don't just leave you hanging and wondering about what to write or to do (Participant 9, 2015).

Drawing upon the theme of Carol Dweck's growth mindset versus the fixed mindset of writing instruction, Participant 9 reported during the Focus Group Interview (2015),

I learn more from the teacher who pushes me and don't just settle. They do not just give up or give up on us. It make me and us [focus group peers] believe we can do something. They [teachers] don't let us stop because we might just think or at least think we know the writing gets hard. I know and we all know in here that it [writing] gets real hard sometimes. We all believe that in here. We have said that a bunch already. I like and relate better to the teachers that helps us with our thinking and helps us see how we can always get better. Those teachers are the best, the ones who will always give you help, but we just got to make sure we ask for help.

### **Cultural Influences**

A perceived and sometimes preconceived self-awareness of cultural influences from friends, family, and environment finds itself at the center of this theme. The participants felt that the environment in which they grew up played a pivotal role in forming their literacy identity associated with the perceptions and beliefs they equate as important. One participant noted,

I have just never been good at writing because of the way I was raised up...a lot of Southerners...we just talk different in my family than what English and writing expects you to be (Participant 4, 2015).

Respondents also related being “brought up” as having a major influence on their attitude toward literacy in general. All nine participants stated how they had much rather be engaged with “hands-on” activities that made them feel productive. Participant 5 (2015) engaged in a verbal and physical demonstration concerning automotive braking systems during a career technical education class. He was noted to speak with ease and confidence while interacting with peers. During the focus group interview participants were asked what they thought distinguishes a good writer from a poor writer and why. Participants commented,

I think it is because of the way I was raised up (Participant 4, 2015).

I think it is because my parents had parents that never really learned English well and that kind of thinking well just continues (Participant 4, 2015).

I just know that my family, my grandparents really, and my parents never finished school like they should have and just don't write and read like we should and know we should (Participant 5, 2015).

The way I was raised up has a ton to do with all of my frustrations related to literacy (Participant 8, 2015).

At this point in the focus group interview, the conversation shifted to the characteristics and traits that the respondents felt were important in defining a man and masculine identity. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9, (2015) reported,

I was raised up for a man to be respectful, to try hardest.

Around here we are all raised up to work, to work with our hands. I know I'm a hands-on type of guy.

Being a man to means showing people...helping people. Being a comforter, provider, and protector.

Being a man means being respected and doing the things that get you respect.

People will always respect you more if your talk makes sense.

A real man has to try to do his best and speak and talk his best at the same time.

### **Textural Description**

In this study, participants focused almost exclusively on their perceived inability to write correctly and coherently. Participants recalled past experiences and events in middle school and the freshmen year of high school as being the moment in life where they realized that problems with written expression outweighed any problems with verbal expression. Throughout the study, participants described a strong intrinsic desire to portray themselves as adequate writers and often referred to the beginning of the writing process, the creation of thoughts and ideas into words, as being the most frustrating of all. Participants believed that persons in positions of authority developed negative connotations about them solely based upon their writing ability.

The themes of self-efficacy and the value participants assigned to the ability to produce quality writing were interdependent on each other. The young men described intense feelings such as “frustrated”, “embarrassed”, and “irritated” when relating the explanation of their perceptions of the phenomenon. The importance of the productive process in writing assumes the utmost importance to the participants rather than the interpretative component. The participants all reported how being judged and evaluated by the writing products they produce negatively impacts the ability to even begin the

writing process. Participant 6 (2015) noted, “Writing I cannot do. I just can’t get it down. I just don’t like not being able to get the words down.” Participant 3 (2015) stated, “Writing papers is my greatest struggle. I just do not understand the entire writing process. Trying to break it down into smaller topics is hard. But, I have the desire to want to write well. It is very important to me.”

Aligned with self-efficacy and the value assigned to the importance of producing quality writing products, the participants emphasized the role pedagogical and instructional practices played with them. All completely agreed more learning and a feeling of deeper personal satisfaction is gained when they are directly engaged in the process and not left to flounder or fend for themselves. The participants recognized the importance of quality, deliberate, and intentional academic feedback from instructors. Participants agreed that when teachers explained mistakes the obstacles and barriers to improving writing and self-efficacy were improved. Each claimed how writing improves and their thinking about their writing ability improves when teachers directly engage with them in the entire process. A participant stated,

If I have a teacher who knows what he’s talking about and he comes to me one on one and really tells me and explains to me what I need to know and what I need to know is right then I get better. I get better and better with one on one (Participant 1, 2015).

The themes of a connectedness to the literature and cultural influences were also noted be closely related and centrally dependent to the experiences participants encountered where struggles with literacy are concerned. For interest and engagement

with literacy to spark, a real feeling of interest and connectedness needed to be felt among participants. When asked to describe the importance of a connection and engagement with reading and writing, participants responded with words and phrases such as “interesting” and “must really like what I am reading or writing about” (Participants 4, 6, 8, and 9, 2015). Moreover, the cultural element was manifested by the environment. Participants did not perceive they were disadvantaged so much by being located in a rural southeastern state but rather indicated the belief system held by family members toward reading and writing exercised more influence over the perception and feelings they have formed. Participants used “brought up” and “the way I was raised up” to describe the influence. The participants also felt that cultural experiences did not handicap them where literacy ability is concerned, but rather served to increase self-awareness that others outside their spheres of influence would judge and evaluate the merits of their literacy ability based upon the way they produced written and spoken language.

### **Structural Description**

Being labeled as a struggling reader or writer carries powerful stigmas among young adolescent males. An internal barometer measures the pressure associated with the feelings, experience, and perception. The feeling is very real and very tangible to those who experience it. Participants felt as if they were always being judged and evaluated by the writing products they produce and the manner in which they speak. The negative perceptions of themselves unfolded into a complicated tapestry of belief and feelings of inadequate self-efficacy.

The young adolescent men in this study each pointed to a particular place and time in their lives when they realized their literacy abilities did not compare with their peers, especially writing. The young men noted negative experiences in middle school and in ninth grade as being the beginning of the feelings of inadequacy, frustration, difficulty, and struggle. In the academic setting, the participants failed to receive the necessary guidance and intervention from instructors whenever they expressed an interest to improve in their writing. As a result, the feelings of inadequacy multiplied exponentially until a strong sense of failure set in with the individuals. Society did not cripple the individuals; the lack of adequate, deliberate, quality academic feedback did. One begins to have feelings of positivity return when interventions in the academic setting occur. The constructs of the phenomenon occur in the psyche and the innermost parts of the souls of the young men. The struggling reader comes face to face with the inner feelings and perceptions of inadequacy only to see in the end that the negativity can be overcome with determination and proper intervention.

### **Essence of the Phenomenon**

The struggle is real. The importance of the ability to produce quality writing products and to be judged positively is not some lofty goal. It is a deeply rooted desire to feel adequate and to be respected by all individuals. Entering late adolescence with already preconceived ideas of the unknown future is frightening in and of itself. Compounding the already existing uncertainties of the future with perceptions of irritation, frustration, and struggle creates a mix that can lead to adolescent distress in literacy thinking and functioning. Adolescents, however, develop intricate compensating

mechanisms to mask or hide feelings of inadequacy and confusion. They perceive themselves as vulnerable in the light of others. The individuals in this study all strive to be respected by friends, teachers, employers, and parents. The young men feel the need to be able to write fluently and coherently to be one of the hallmarks of earning that respect.

No one wishes to be an individual that performs below the standards and expectations. The power of self-determination coupled with the will to succeed tears down the obstacles and hurdles associated with literacy struggles. The struggle with literacy can be devastating to those who experience it. However, through the struggle with literacy and its ensuing battles, one can emerge stronger from the ashes of defeat, just like the mythological phoenix. The final truth emerging from the phenomenon is that the struggle never fully resolves itself in the individual, but rather the individual finds ways to evolve and eventually compensate. This compensation results in the genesis of a renewed sense of self-efficacy and confidence in the individual, prompting real transformations in the lives of the young men affected by it.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has analyzed, interpreted, and synthesized the collected data using Moustakas's phenomenological framework. Data were analyzed for significant statements, which were then synthesized into formulated meanings. From there, the researcher determined five emergent themes coming from the data. The researcher then constructed textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and finally concluded with the essence of the phenomenon. Chapter V will conclude the study with a discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction**

This study was constructed by the phenomenological method described by Moustakas (1994). Specifically, the study investigated the life experiences adolescent males had encountered with literacy struggles and how they perceived, described, and qualified the experience. All nine participants submitted to an in-depth interview, a focus group interview, and periodic personal observations of participants during the school day. By following Moustakas's suggested methodology of phenomenological analysis, the researcher found meaning through the participants' transcribed interviews that provided me with a deep insight into the lived experiences and the perceived meanings assigned to those experiences that the participants felt contribute to struggle with literacy.

### **Discussion**

The discussion centers on the major emergent themes discovered while analyzing the data. The themes included: (a) importance of a connection to and an engagement with literacy; (b) value given to the ability to produce quality writing; (c) power of self-efficacy; (d) instructional practices which directly engage the learner; and (e) cultural influences. The discussion will also include interpretative findings supported by the data describing the essence of the phenomenon.

#### **Importance of a Connection to and Engagement with Literacy**

Participants felt that to fully understand and comprehend literature, they must feel a connection to what has been assigned to be read. The literature must be engaging and relating to a topic that piques their interest. Participants identified literature where the



protagonist is typically a young adolescent male as being the genre that generated the most interest. Success with literature and subsequent written responses to the literature were directly linked to the interest level of the material. Participants reported how they “would read all day” or “read as long as I like what I am reading” as being driving forces behind the engagement with the literature. When observing participants, the researcher noticed that the young men were much more verbose in career technical classes than in academic classes. This largely attributed to the fact that the career classes were more “hands-on” and required them to demonstrate learning verbally and kinesthetically.

#### **Value Given to the Ability to Produce Quality Writing**

All nine participants focused intently on their perceived belief about not being able to write correctly and coherently. Undoubtedly, this theme was considered the most urgent by the participants. The young men believed the productive component of writing to be more valuable to them than the interpretive component of writing. Participants felt strongly about how society and authority figures judge and evaluate people by how they speak and write. The young men assigned heavy importance to being able to produce writing artifacts, whether essays or even job applications. Participants reported feeling “frustrated,” “embarrassed,” and “irritated” by a perceived lack of ability to write well enough to produce quality work. The struggle with literacy could easily be traced to the ability to write well. Participants offered vivid descriptions of frustration and difficulty when describing the writing process. They described how the thinking process would not seem to allow them to begin to construct the writing artifact. The most poignant description came from one participant who stated, “I know that my mind tells me I can’t

write, but my heart is telling me I can” (Participant 2, 2015). The participants were describing how the tension between the physical aspects of producing writing overwhelms the psychological process. Much of the tension felt augments the themes of self-efficacy and instructional practices to be discussed next.

### **Power of Self-Efficacy**

The young men in this study felt an immediate need to be perceived as one who has a strong inner drive and will to succeed. Participants felt strongly that perseverance, determination, and tenacity would eventually result in them being able to write to acceptable standards. There is a self-imposed belief that the quality of writing products and the ability to produce adequate writing products equates to the amount of success experienced beyond secondary education. All participants reported the need to be viewed as productive members of society and of being an individual which contributes to society in a positive way. Self-efficacy is also manifest through the relationships formed between student and teacher. The participants felt that the more they were valued by the instructor, then the higher their self-esteem which in turn contributed to a greater satisfaction with the quality of writing produced.

### **Instructional Practices That Directly Engage the Learner**

How the teacher interacts with students and the relationships formed influence the amount of confidence participants felt they gained in writing ability. Participants reported a greater sense of satisfaction with instructors who exposed them to interventions that promoted a belief in growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. Participants also experienced a higher degree of satisfaction when instructors directly engaged with them and provided

interventions requiring a direct interaction with the instructor. Participants related the importance of being able to directly converse with instructors regarding how to improve the writing process. The level of importance placed on the engagement with the instructors was directly related to the self-confidence concerning the writing process and internal beliefs and perceptions associated with writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants not only seek validation about writing from instructors but also highly value the direct interaction with instructors.

### **Cultural Influences**

Participants focused on the belief that environment should not be used as an excuse to write poorly or to not be engaged with literacy. Actually quite the opposite was noted. Participants believed that the culture in which they are “brought up” or “raised in” encourages them to rise above any preconceived notions (Focus Group Interview, 2015). The participants did place an importance on how cultural influences from family and friends help to shape the self-conceptual framework and constructs associated with literacy struggles. Participants also revealed that parents, family, and teachers challenge them to set expectations which rise above any cultural barriers whether real or perceived and thus positively enhanced self-efficacy. The participants did not feel disadvantaged by cultural circumstances. Pure determination and fortitude compensated for any shortcomings as a result of literacy difficulties or frustrations.

### **Limitations**

Several factors are noted as limits of this study. First, the study was limited by the ethnicity and diversity of the participants. All participants were from one rural

southeastern high school in the United States. Conducting the study in different locations of the country would enhance and expand the scope. Second, the study included boys between 15-17 years old. The study could be extended to include younger adolescent males and pre-adolescent males in order to determine how the lived experiences related to literacy begin. Third, at the time of the study, the researcher was also an administrator at the site; however, he did not personally instruct the participants. Extreme caution was employed in order to establish the researcher-participant relationship and then to gradually withdraw from frequent interactions. Finally, while strictly adhering to the study's framework, the researcher realized some bias from personal experience could place limitations on the analysis. However, the researcher was painstakingly careful to acknowledge that fact from the beginning of the data collection process as to limit any preconceptions to taint the study.

### **Recommendations**

These recommendations are developed from and based upon the data collected and the analysis conducted during this research study.

#### **Examine Pedagogical Practices and Curricular Requirements Related to Writing**

Curriculum specialists and policymakers should consider the creation of technical writing classes that support the kind of writing necessary for vocational career classes or the revision of writing standards, which are designed to intentionally differentiate according to the targeted audience. Given the reported data from this study, adolescents express significant communication problems when asked to complete technical writings, such as job applications and resumes. Therefore, the need exists for writing standards to

be developed that directly address the technical aspect of writing. Revamping the writing curriculum with a focus on specific individual needs would improve verbal skills, as well. Theoretically, the standards coalesce; however, even with a balanced approach and the flexibility in the standards, there still exists a chasm between what students judge to be beneficial compared to what policymakers judge as beneficial. The findings from the research also confirmed contemporary pedagogical culture favors a heavy reliance on the use of canonical literature and traditional text over student-friendly relatable text. The challenge to curriculum specialists and policymakers is to achieve a homeostasis between writing related to relatable issues versus traditional canonical writing prompts and topics.

**Emphasize Relationships and Relevance to Support the Improvement of Self-Efficacy among Adolescent Males Where Engagement with Literacy Is Concerned**

To address relevance, policymakers should consider creating as many interactive collaborative curricular opportunities as possible. The results of the analysis of the data supported the need for more direct instruction and deliberate targeted instructional support and feedback where writing and literature engagement are concerned. Strict adherence to rules-based policy compliance compounded with an overdose of testing requirements has created an assembly line approach and a one-size-fits-all mentality toward the teaching of writing. Together, both serve to stifle creativity, all but eliminate collaboration, and leave the learner searching for meaning and craving intentional feedback. More time devoted to giving quality feedback to learners will improve self-efficacy. Establishing a justification for achieving relevance will assist the adolescent learner to understand the benefits of developing collegial relationships with instructors.

The ultimate goal is to bring forth a merging of relevance and relationships aimed to improve self-efficacy. Adolescent learners must experience the personal connection relevance holds in relationship to self-efficacy. Once the illumination occurs, a lifelong collegial mentoring relationships become possible.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study easily lends itself to expansion and further exploration.

Recommendations include the following:

1. Expand the geographical scope of the study. Include more areas of the country and compare the analysis of results to detect any possible differences in perceptions and lived experiences.
2. This study limited itself to males between 15-17 years-old. Expand the study to pre-adolescent males and to males between 13 and 14 years-old. Including the perspective of teachers, administrators, and policymakers would allow for even more in-depth data analysis.
3. By including earlier ages of participants, a more longitudinal study could be conducted.
4. Adding quantitative measures to the study would offer a causal-comparison aspect to the study.

### **Concluding Reflective and Personal Thoughts**

The thought that resonates the most with me as an educator and administrator is that the young men in this study assign a great deal of respect and worthiness to the writing process – much more, in fact, than I previously thought. When one participant

responded that he knew his mind was trying to tell him that he could not write, but his heart was telling him he could, I realized that we [educators] have a duty and responsibility to ensure that we do all we can to enable these young men to achieve that level of respect within them. We underestimate the power of the psyche and the determination and will that students possess. The time spent to develop healthy relationships that some of our students may otherwise not experience will yield dividends in human capital that are absolutely priceless.

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APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



5/8/2015

Investigator(s): Robert K. Cornelius and Dorothy Craig  
Department: Womack Department of Education Leadership  
Investigator(s) Email: rkc2d@mtmail.mtsu.edu; Dorothy.craig@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: "Adolescent male literacy: An examination of essences and experiences in rural appalachia "

Protocol Number: 15-318

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110, and you have satisfactorily addressed all of the points brought up during the review.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter for **20 (TWENTY)** participants.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918. Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

You will need to submit an end-of-project form to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research located on the IRB website. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Failure to submit a Progress Report and request for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of your research study. Therefore, you will not be able to use any data and/or collect any data. Your study expires **5/8/2016**

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to complete the required training. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers to the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.**

All research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion and then destroyed in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board  
Middle Tennessee State University

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT 1 INTERVIEW

XXXXXX interview #1, who will be referred to as Participant 1 in the final report.

Q: Question number one: If I followed you just through a typical day, what would I see you doing?

A: Well it's just the normal courses of what we have to take during school and then my program of study which is mechanics. All that other good stuff and mainly we do a lot of work in my mechanics class and all the other classes too. You'll see how basically a normal teen ager would go through high school.

Q: What kind of role or where do you see literacy fitting into your typical day? How do you use reading and writing and speaking how do you use all of that yourself during a normal routine day. How does literacy fit into your day to day activities?

A: Well I mean you have to communicate with others and literacy also teaches you how to not be shy. It helps you be yourself and not afraid to speak out.

Q: What kind of experiences would I observe you having? I'm kind of switching back and forth between the questions, but in your day to day activities what kind of experiences would I observe you having?

A: Could you specify?

Q: Yes just in a normal routine day, what does that look like for you?

A: Well during class its very hands on and active. And during class changes I communicate with my friends or basically just talking about how each other's day is going and about that.

Q: How do you feel about reading, writing and literacy yourself? What is your perception? How do you feel?

A: I think it's necessary because it helps us expand our knowledge and it makes us smarter and it helps us more throughout life. I mean most people just see it as unnecessary but it's very necessary. You have to have it in order to make it through.

Q: Do you view it as necessary?

A: I view it as very necessary.

Q: Qualify that even more for me.

A: Well if you don't have the ability to write and speak the way you should then more than likely it's going to be harder for you to get on places. Because they want somebody that has the knowledge of knowing how to do all these things and they don't want to train them, they want them already trained. Because it's something you should have gone through all through your school.

Q: What is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties or struggles that you have had regarding literacy?

A: I'm fairly weak on doing research papers because many teachers have different methods of how they want you to do it. So you have all these different methods and then, but some English teachers will let you do your method but they try to help you with their method. If I have a teacher who knows what he's talking about and he comes to me one on one and really tells me and explains to me what I need to know and what I need to know is right then I get better. I get better and better with one on one It just gets

complicated after a while because you have all these different methods and sometimes they mix match and you try doing them all in one and it just doesn't work out too good.

Q: What part of researching do you find the most difficult?

A: The one I find most difficult is like setting up the research, starting off. Once I get going it gets easier for me and it's just trying to figure out what I need to put in it and where I should start off and good sources.

Q: What do you think causes any kind of frustrations that you experience regarding literacy? What do you think may be the cause of that?

A: Well it gets irritating after a while because you are trying so hard on something that is so big and you have to have it. And you want to pass because it looks good on you and everything. You don't want to get a bad grade, you don't want to make like a 70 and just barely get through it because. That just shows your lack of knowledge of everything so you are trying and trying to get the knowledge.

Q: So you are telling me, I assume by what you just said. You are saying you don't want to settle for just passing you want more than that?

A: I want people to look at me as somebody who tried their hardest throughout high school and somebody who has the will to want to do something.

Q: How do you feel that what we just talked about affects you and why?

A: Well it affects me because everything that goes on outside of the normal routine day you sit and wonder about it and it gets on to you and you think about it and think about it and then eventually it just drives you insane to the max.. You know that

you're not doing a good job on it. And then even if you try getting help you feel like you are lacking at it.

Q: What makes you think that you are not doing a "good job" like you just said?

A: Whenever you go back, when you are typing it up it all seems fine but if you go back and read over it and you realize you put sentences where sentences shouldn't be and words where words shouldn't be and you didn't spell something right or you are going off topic.

Q: When did you first become aware that you were having any kind of problems with reading or understanding what you read? How did you feel then and describe that in as much detail as possible?

A: I first found out in my freshman year in English class. We would do all these papers and I would get these bad grades so I went and talked to the teacher about it. I asked her to help me in any spare time she had and I had. She would give me examples of other papers and she would ask me to write about something I didn't even know about and then it started growing on me on how to set up papers and make them the way they should be. And not the way somebody who just wants to settle for passing would do.

Q: You said that you sought help. Talk to me more about that.

A: Well at first I didn't really care because I knew that I could just do something to make it up. Then I realized it's just going to go on all the way through my life time. Writing papers and everything and you have to have that knowledge on how to write papers and you have to know how to do anything on what you want to do. Literacy is

going to follow you all your life. No matter what you do you are going to have to have it. You are going to have to use it. It's basically and every day thing.

Q: What do you think has made reading or engaging with literacy the most difficult for you?

A: Whenever my vocabulary is lower than what it should be. Like you have all these words that you have not seen before and it throws you off. You have that knowledge of literacy to help you through it because there is ways you can figure out the words, like reading around them. But still there are some words you can't figure out but you should know and you know that you should know it.

Q: So decoding words and perhaps you have felt, you feel like vocabulary overall has been a hindrance to you?

Maybe not reading, but understanding words? Is that what you are trying to tell me?

A: Yes sir.

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT 2 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 2 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you through a typical day start to finish, what would I see you doing normally?

A: Honestly I would be talking to my friends, goofing off instead of listening, but when the teacher does start talking I do listen, even though I'm still distracted. I just get distracted easily.

Q: How do you use literacy in your everyday activities, and when I say literacy I'm talking about any form of written expression or where you may have to verbalize or you may have to read? So how do you use literacy in your typical activities?

A: I really don't know. I don't think I use literacy throughout my typical days. Normally, the only time I could be literacy is when I'm talking to people if I want to talk like I know something, like I'm educated formal talking, speaking for example, probably buying a car. Formal speaking, no slang, nothing from friends, between... so I guess that would be the only time that I would use literacy when I'm being nice or addressing somebody the right way.

Q: Now answer this, I go back and I'm switching between questions a little bit. In your daily activities what kinds of experiences would I observe you having? If I followed you for an entire day, what kind of typical experiences would I observe you having?

A: Mainly watching my little brothers and through the school day normal, talking to my friends, kind of stuff. But when I get home, I'm watching my little brothers kind of baby-sitting them basically.

Q: How do you, and I emphasize the word YOU, how do you feel about reading and literacy?

A: Honestly I think it's needed because without reading or literacy we wouldn't be able to talk right, we wouldn't be able to understand things without it. I mean, it's important.

Q: What is your opinion, emphasizing the word YOU again, what is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties or struggles you have with literacy?

A: I have a few struggles with writing, writing papers and stuff like that. But normally the only struggle I have is doing my work with literacy. I love language; language is one of my top subjects. It used to be until I started having to write papers then I started struggling a little bit. Because I'm showed how to do it and stuff, I just for some reason, I still don't understand it.

Q: Talk about that writing, elaborate a little more on that, about the writing portion.

A: Kind of like if I'm writing an essay or something and its 500,000 word essays, I can do it but sometimes I'll go off track completely for writing about something or I won't be able to organize it in a way. Kind of focus and organization I can't write I don't know why, my mind just goes everywhere when I try to focus on one thing.



Q: What do you think causes any kind of frustrations that you might have? In your mind, what causes that for you?

A: Well, the fact that I know I can do it, it's just it seems like my mind won't let me do it. Even if I try to put myself to it, it drives me insane when I'm sitting there writing a paper and I've got all this good stuff and then all of the sudden it goes completely blank. And then I can't finish or something and as I said I know I can do it. I know I can write and do all this because I've been taught it's just as I said my mind apparently seems like it won't let me write unless I push myself and I don't usually push myself because it's just hard to.

Q: How do you, continuing along in this vein, how do you think this affects you and why? Talk to me even more, let's get deeper.

A: It affects me because I know somewhere along in life no matter what job I get I'm going to have to write, I'm going to have to read and stuff like that and if I can't do it the right way I might not have a job. And I want to join the army or the military, and it's not to try to get away from writing because I know I'm going to be doing a lot of writing there. But if I can't write right or prove that I know what I'm talking about they won't really have much use for me. I think and even if I get a job flipping burgers eventually I'll have to write something and if I can't write that I'll look like a , I don't want to say idiot but what would be a nicer word, imbecile. I want to make it look like I know what I'm doing not like I don't know what I'm doing. There we go. I want to make it look like I earned my degree or whatever in writing not that I have no clue what I'm talking about.

Q: When did you first become aware that you were having any kinds of problems with reading and writing?

A: Eight grade English that was when I really started. I was doing good and then we have to write a paper. I thought I've done it before, it should be easy, well then yeah the writing assessments that you get, they said whatever you want to write about. And then I was like "OK whatever I want to write about this should be easy". I'd go from writing one thing to another thing to another thing and I can't stay on that one topic. And I noticed when I can't stay on that one topic my mind is going everywhere.

Q: How did that make you feel? Describe your feelings then. How did that make you feel when you first realized or perhaps even a teacher first made you aware that you were having some difficulties with writing verbal expression or reading or the literacy? Talk to me about that.

A: It made me feel like I had no idea what I was doing anymore. Like I couldn't, cause as I said before then I was writing papers just find and also before then I was stuck in special ed for most of my life in school, which I guess made it easier because I wasn't around a lot of people and then me slowly getting into the regular classes I had to get used to it. I'm used to it now, but I still struggle on papers, but as I said it just makes me feel like I can't do it. But my mind's telling me, not my mind, my minds telling me I can't do it but my heart's telling me I can. And it's just a struggle between the two. Normally my mind wins because it just goes everywhere with my ADHD and stuff. I can't focus so I don't know. It makes me wish I didn't have ADHD or the problems that I have.

Q: What, talk to me, say something more about problems, elaborate on that with me just for a little bit.

A: I have, that I know for a fact, I've been diagnosed with, but I've been told I have other stuff. I know I have ADHD and that's where I can't focus. Everybody has different stuff; some people have a lot of energy and stuff like that. Mine is I can't focus. My mind is just everywhere, it's like a tornado in my mind, I can't focus, I'm constantly having to move, constantly twitching, constantly having to talk having to do something to keep me from having outbursts and stuff like that. Because I think I was diagnosed with tourettes, slight tourettes, which is outbursts and stuff like that. I also have anxiety; everybody in my family has bipolar. I have been diagnosed with that and then I have slight depression, slight, but I've gotten over that and then what was the other one, ADD. Kind of like ADHD but I don't pay attention. I have a hard time paying attention.

Q: Let me ask you this, this is about the last question for this first round. What do you think has made the reading, writing, engaging with literacy difficult for you? What do you attribute this to?

A: I think it's my surroundings. I mean, I can focus, but when I'm in a class full of people who are talking and just goofing off, and I'm actually trying to focus somebody can say something across the room and I'll look at them and immediately lose all train of thought to focus on what they are doing. And in my English class I have a lot of those people so my senior research paper I have a feeling I'm going to struggle on. I mean this seems like it's going to be the easiest, because Coach XXXXX is going to help us

through it. But still, I still have a feeling that I'm going to sit next to somebody who is going to talk and keep me off track and I don't want that to happen. Because I want to graduate because I know if I don't do the senior paper I don't walk the line. Now he's over there not caring and I'm trying to care but he's distracting me. That's why I be... that's why I'm careful who I sit next to. Somebody who I know don't talk to me or when they do don't keep talking to me long enough where I lose all train of thought. Like I have a friend in there XXXXX he's perfect, he don't talk to me a lot. And when the teacher starts talking we immediately stop. And so I have a lot of my friends in that class, not in that class but a lot of classes that help me do that. Because I've asked them, "If I start getting off topic shut me up, tell me I need to focus" and they have done it. And since then I think my grades have risen. Because I know in Eighth grade I made Fs. I've made Fs every year, at least once. But not as bad as I have been before my friends started telling me to do.. and now I'm making, I can't I don't know why I can't check my I now, but I know the last time I checked it I had A, A, A, all the way down. And I plan on keeping it like that the rest of this year, or at least A, B, A, B, A's and Bs as much as I can. And my friends said that they will help me with that. So hopefully the struggle in English goes away with XXXXX in there. Because as I said jobs are going to ask me to write and they are going to want me to know what I'm doing. Without that I can't get a job.

## APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT 3 INTERVIEW

This is interview with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 3 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you through a typical day just a typical day for you, what would I see you doing?

A: At school or home?

Q: It doesn't matter both places is fine.

A: OK at school you know I'd try to get all my work done. At home I'd probably be going over to hang out with a few of my friends. Playing some games, stuff like that, just hanging out.

Q: Now let me ask you this, in your day to day activities how do you engage with literacy in these typical activities that you do? How does communication, language, written, verbal, how does all that come into play?

A: Just talking and you know doing stuff like that. Talking or we aren't usually writing when I'm with my friends. School, you know I do a lot of writing here you know.

Q: Talk about that a little bit.

A: English classes we are getting ready to do a big paper, so a lot of other classes you'll be doing stuff like that too so.

Q: How do you feel about that?

A: Well, for the English paper we are going to have to type that but really I'd much rather hand write it. Either way is fine.

Q: OK you having any problems there with that?

A: No I'm getting it right now. We still got a few months until the deadline so we're working on it.

Q: OK. How do you feel about reading and literacy? What are your thoughts about that, just on your own? How do you feel about reading and anything that involves literacy?

A: Well, I mean I don't read as much as I should I guess. But occasionally I'll go home and read and sometimes stuff. I don't write but like here at school I don't go home and write as much as I should.

Q: What do you read? What do you typically read?

A: Well like it just depends. I've been reading, I can't even think of his name. He wrote uh... One of these books in the where this guy he crashes his plane. It's like a teenager in the Canadian wilderness.

Q: *Hatchett*, Gary Paulson?

A: Yeah I read that. Well it was over the summer, but I read that. Typically those types of things are what I read.

Q: Now let me ask you this. We are going to get into the meat of this a little bit. What is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties, or struggles that you have or have experienced in relation to literacy?

A: Frustrations, I don't know if I've been frustrated over literacy here at school or you know anything.

Q: Does it bother, does anything bother you, do you typically have any, do you struggle with verbal or written expression?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Explain that a little bit.

A: You know its' just like if we get a prompt in English. My mind goes blank sometimes whenever you are about to write something down so stuff like that. Writing papers is my greatest struggle. I just do not understand the entire writing process. Trying to break it down into smaller topics is hard. But, I have the desire to want to write well. It is very important to me. I have to think for a little bit before I can just start writing on the paper. Things like that.

Q: What do you think causes any of those frustrations?

A: I don't know really. Maybe not getting enough sleep the night before, things like that. Not eating breakfast, some mornings I might skip it just getting here to school. Things like that.

Q: How do you feel that affects you and why? Talk about that some more. How do you feel that that affects you?

A: I don't really know, its' just trying to think. Are you talking about not writing here at school?

Q: Yes, or anything with that.

A: I mean of course you want to get the good grade and stuff. If you don't do that you are not going to pass or whatever so. I don't know.

Q: Has that been a fear before?

A: I mean not passing, that is, in senior year you want to pass and everything. I guess it is.

Q: Does the writing or anything the English, are you worried any at all that you may have a difficult time with meeting those requirements?

A: Well this year Coach XXXXX is my teacher so I mean I've done everything in there so far. I think I'm making an A but it's early. But I think I'll be able to pass. I've got a good topic for my research paper so hopefully.

Q: Well good. Let me ask you this. When did you first become aware that you had any kind of glitch or hitch with literacy or reading or anything like that and describe that as much as you can to me?

A: Maybe like back in middle school. You know I never really, I was probably just lazy not wanting to write or do stuff like that so, you know not doing, I never really did it back in middle school so maybe you know, now you have to do it and all that stuff. So maybe I just kind of struggle with it every now and then.

Q: Talk to me about that middle school experience.

A: Well you know sometimes whenever we'd have the papers and that was even in ninth grade we had a paper I didn't do it. I just couldn't really think of what to write about and how to get it and things like that so. I don't think I did that. And in tenth grade I started doing all my stuff and last year.

Q: Was writing more difficult for you than the reading perhaps?

A: Yes for sure.

Q: OK and why is that?



A: Well reading, it's just easy reading through but writing you have to come up with your own ideas and things like that. You have to know how to word it kind of perfectly, stuff like that so.

Q: OK, what do you think has made the literacy or anything with reading and writing the most difficult for you? What would you say?

A: I don't know it's probably because it's just so much work in class and the English classes with that. In a lot of other classes you know it's not as hard and not as much work but always in English there's always a lot of stuff to do. So if you miss a day for instance or something it's hard to catch back up and get on the right track.

## APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT 4 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 4 in the final report.

Q: First of all the first question is, If I were to follow you through a typical day from start to finish what would I see you doing?

A: You would see me I would be talking, because I'm very talkative and during school and stuff. So you would see me talking that's for sure. And I'd be answering a lot of questions that they asked. And at least the questions I know and I'd be, can't hardly remember my day.

Q: That's all right, that's good, and that's good enough. Now how do you, when you interact with people during your typical day. Where does literacy fit into that? What I mean is I'm talking about verbal expression, written expression, anything you do with language, reading and writing? Where does that fit in? How does that play into your day?

A: Well it plays in during class that's for sure. And during hall change I have to talk a lot when I'm talking to people and during lunch. Writing would be coming mostly in my English class.

Q: Talk about the writing for a minute.

A: Well I'm not that good at writing but I use, I do use the correct grammar. Or try to anyway; there is a few times that I don't use the correct one because I don't really think about it before I do it. And usually whenever I write an essay it's usually about, I try to make it five paragraphs or so and I do all the indentions and commas and periods, just sometimes I put them in the wrong spots.

Q: Okay well alright absolutely. How do you feel about your reading and writing ability?

A: I feel pretty good about them. I'm not the best but people can understand what I'm saying. That's why I feel pretty good about it. I mean I do make a lot of grammar mistakes and stuff but they can understand it.

Q: What makes you think it's not the best as you say, or real good? How do you qualify that?

A: I've just, all the way through school, I've never been too good at English or writing and stuff. I guess it could be from the family I was raised up in because they were a lot of I guess southerners. So they talk a little bit different from the way the English expects you talk

Q: What in your opinion, this is your opinion totally. What is in your opinion any frustration, difficulty or struggle that you may have reading, writing, speaking or listening, regarding any forms of literacy?

A: What kind of trouble?

Q: Yes trouble, frustrations, difficulties or struggles, what is your opinion about any of those that you have with English as you call it.

A: I think that it only frustrates me because of some of the times I don't know what the words mean because I've never really heard the words before.

Q: So sometimes you might hear a word you don't know what it means and that frustrates you?

A: Yes that really frustrates me.

Q: OK how often do you encounter that?

A: Quite often.

Q: What do you do if you don't know what something means? What do you do typically?

A: I usually use context clues and try to find out by other words in the sentences. And if I can't do it that way then I'll ask somebody and then if it comes down to it, I'll just look it up in the dictionary.

Q: What do you think has caused or been the root cause of your difficulties or frustrations that you have experienced over the years with English, with reading, writing comprehension, anything like that? What do you think causes those frustrations?

A: I guess because whenever I am trying to read it and trying to find out what it means and I don't know I don't like to ask people because they might think that I'm not very smart. And so I'm just like, that could be why it frustrates me because I don't want anybody to know that I'm not really that smart.

Q: As you smart as what you would qualify it as?

A: Yes.

Q: How do you feel that affects you and why?

A: It would affect me because most people should know that word. Like if it's a word that I think people should know by this grade and I don't know then I'm just like, I don't know what to do about it.

Q: What kind of feeling does it bring up in you inside?

A: Angry feeling I guess you would say. I get pretty mad about it.

Q: Angry at yourself naturally?

A: Yes.

Q: When did you first become aware that you were having problems with reading or understanding what you read or you know, how was that feeling? Describe that when you first noticed that maybe you were having more difficulties than maybe some of your friends were.

A: Probably in fourth grade, third or fourth grade.

Q: Describe that. It is what you think this is all about you, not me.

A: I guess like in fourth grade whenever we were reading and stuff. I didn't really understand it. I don't really know how to describe that feeling. I just had a feeling like I should know this but I don't. And sometimes I do know it just comes to me later on.

Q: What do you think has made the writing, the reading difficulties that you have had, what has made that engagement with that the most difficult for you of all? What's the most difficult piece of the reading or the writing that you have experienced?

A: It was an English paper on Poseidon.

Q: Oh when was that? Talk to me about that.

A: Freshman year. I don't really remember all of it. I know I get bad grades on every paper I'd try to write for her. I can remember it was like two or three paragraphs. I had a lot of capital errors like capitalization after periods and stuff and then sometimes I

would write capital letters whenever it should not be a capital letter. And I mean I knew what I was writing but at the same time I didn't know exactly what I meant.

Q: So the expression of it?

A: Yes.

## APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT 5 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 5 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you just a typical day, what I see you doing? What would I observe you doing?

A: Well you would see me walking from class to class or stopping at my locker, probably using the rest room. That's probably about it.

Q: What do you do after school? What do you engage in after school?

A: Every day I feed the horses, feed the animals, do my homework and then pretty much eat supper and stuff. Might go to town or something and go to sleep eventually.

Q: Now think about this. Think about your typical day. Get that in your head. How do you bring in literacy? When I say literacy, I'm talking about verbal communication, written communication, reading, writing anything like that. How does literacy pop up in your typical activities? I mean throughout your day.

A: Sure, There is nothing I can think of writing and stuff. When I do homework and stuff at home. Well like my little sister, I help her all the time with her stuff and that's really it.

Q: Let me ask you this. I'm going to continue on in that questioning. How do you feel about reading and literacy? What are your thoughts?

A: I like to read. If I read I like to get stories and stuff it's when I read, if I have the time I'll read all day long, like books anything especially sports or hunting magazines

and stuff like that. If I get into a book, but if I don't get into it, if I don't get past chapter two then I'm not going to read it.

Q: What is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties or struggles that you have had in your experiences so far relating to literacy?

A: I can't really think of a struggle I've had you know. Spanish two might be a struggle. Not really anything. I'm pretty good at English and stuff.

Q: Have you ever experienced any kind of road blocks or anything with reading or writing or verbal expression or written expression?

A: Not really that I can think of. English I'm pretty strong in. Math and Spanish I'm not good at.

Q: So you don't feel like you have any problems with literacy?

A: Sometimes with on the computer, if I have to type, I'm not good with the computer but that's about it. Other than that if I'm going to write something down I can write anything and spell and get it on out.

Q: What kind of feedback have you received from English teachers in the past?

A: Average. Average student you know. I either do really good or not so good. All my English teachers they love me. I've always did good in English.

Q: How do you qualify? If there's anything where you haven't done good as you say, qualify that for me.

A: Well I mean. I can't explain it. I'm not honors in English but I'm not a below average you know. I'm not bad at it. I'm pretty good at it too. The best I can explain it.



Q: Have you ever had any issues comprehending what you read?

A: Not really at all. If I'm going to read something I'm going to read the whole thing I'm going to figure it out.

Q: What do you like to read?

A: I don't know like sports, sports and horses and stuff. Stuff like that but that's about it.

Q: Alright. Do you. What is your view on assigned reading or forced readings?

A: It depends on what I have to read. Like if it's something I don't like to read or something that don't interest me I cannot stand it. I don't like to read it at all. It puts me to sleep. If it's something I don't find interesting then I just might as well not even read it. That's where you get me at right there.

Q: So you feel like that your interests are important?

A: Yes if I'm interested in it I'll read it all day long. But if it's something that I don't know nothing about or I don't like, I don't even, you might as well let me listen to it.

Q: What is your opinion about schools in that respect?

A: Oh I mean it's not really the school, it's the teacher and the classes some of them are different you know. I can't really give an example. I just know the stories that we have to read in English are not like what I like to read and that's what makes it rough on me. Because then I have to write about everything and deal with all the essays and stuff and that's where it gets me. If it was something about a horse or sports or

something I could write paragraphs upon paragraphs, papers and everything. But if it something I don't like you know...

Q: So that, so you think that the choices that you have are important in whether or not you like....

A: That's definitely important there's a big difference in something I don't like and something I do like that makes a big difference.

## APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT 6 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be known as Participant 6 in the final report.

Q: Questions one: If I followed you just through a typical day for you from start to finish. What would I see you doing?

A: Probably being a goof ball, laughing talking to a bunch of people.

Q: Anything else? What else might I see?

A: Well you'd probably see me do some school work. I'm very social. I always talk to people. That is probably about it.

Q: Now let me ask you this, when you interact with people, think about any type of interaction you have, verbal or written anything like that. How does that play into your activities? Or your interactions with people in general.

A: I'm an all-around friendly guy. I don't care if you are gothic or a weirdo if you give me a reason to like you I'll like you. But if you give me a reason not to I won't.

Q: Do you find it fairly easy to talk to people?

A: Yes, I'll talk to anybody.

Q: Do you find that people will talk back with you?

A: Yes.

Q: How do you feel overall, this is important, we are getting into some deeper questions? How do you feel over all about reading, writing, and literacy? Talk to me about that.

A: I like reading to a certain extent. I have to be interested in what I'm reading. But I can't stand writing? I do not like writing at all.

Q: What bothers you about that?

A: I'm more of a look at it and learn it kind of guy. Not write about it and then study about it. I'm more of a hands-on type of person.

Q: Talk to me some more about that. Go deeper with me.

A: When I read, like I rarely read, but when I do I'm really interested in it when I find something I want to read. If I've got somebody trying to hang out with me I'm gonna read my book. I don't know that one book gets me and it makes me stay focused on it. Like "Hatchet", I love that book. I read it I don't know how many times. I'll just sit there and read and read it and if somebody tells me I don't even hear them.

Q: What makes you like that particular book?

A: It's interesting, it gives you the, it puts you kind of in the moment. It feels like I know exactly what he's talking about. I mean I could kind of see the plane and all this stuff he's talked about. I can picture myself in that situation. And that is interesting to me.

Q: Now you use the word interesting a lot. So do you find anything uninteresting? Are you ever forced to read anything you find uninteresting?

A: What was that book called, "To Kill a Mockingbird"? We had to read that. And I didn't really; I didn't read much of it because I didn't like it. I wasn't really interested in it.

Q: Talk to me about, more about that for just a minute. I want to make sure I'm saying this just right, clarifying what you said. If you're interested and you like the subject or what's being written about you'll read it?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any trouble understanding what you read when you read something that interests you?

A No

Q: What about if something did not interest you or you are being forced to read it. Do you have some troubles then?

A: Yes.

Q: What is your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties or struggles that you have encountered yourself with reading, writing and language?

A: Reading and writing is everyday thing, you do that every day whether you have to or not. I mean I have to write and I don't like it but I know I have to, the same with reading. You read a text or you get on Facebook, you are always reading. Well I am. I mean. My opinion I just don't know. I guess I would say it's something you have to do, but writing I like it but then again I don't

Q: What makes you not like it? What irritates you about the writing part?

A: Because it's something I don't like really. I want to do something that I like. For a job for instance as an example. You are going to pick a job you like and if you don't you are going to be miserable. That is the same thing with writing. Writing I cannot do. I just can't get it down. I just don't like not being able to get the words down. I just don't really like it. I mean I'll write if it's something I like to write about like right now we are in XXXXX class we are doing our paper and mine is over *Bonaroo*. And I

can write about that all day long. Because I'll go to *Bonaroo* and I know what it's about and it's interesting to me.

Q: When in that particular class when he gave you some choice in that then that made a huge difference to you. Than if the teacher had picked it for you?

A: He gave us a bunch of interesting topics. But *Bonaroo* is one of mine. I go to *Bonaroo* and I know a lot about it. So I figured it would be easy to work with.

Q: So he gave you some choice in it?

A: We had about 30 choices.

Q: Talk to me about classes that you've had to write with where you don't have choices?

A: Hate it. Because when the teacher says hey you've got to write about this. And if it's something I don't like. I'm not really going to want to do it you know. That's just the way I am.

Q: What do you think causes that?

A: I guess my attitude towards things I guess just the way I was brought up.

Q: Talk about it some more, clarify or qualify brought up for me.

A: When I was growing up I didn't read. My mom she didn't read to me much. She didn't make me write. You know I was more of an adventure guy. I always went outside and done something. I always dressed up like a cowboy. John Wayne was my role model when I was little.

Q: What do you think would have been the case if you had "been forced to read or write at an early age?"

A: It would have probably helped me out in the long run, but it didn't really happen. I mean I read little children's books, because when you are a little kid you like pictures and stuff. That's probably all I read when I was growing up.

Q: How do you think that affects you to this day and why?

A: Well, I know how to read and write but I'm not say 100% good at both of them. I mean I can read pretty good but my writing it is terrible. It is God awful. And I mean yeah it affects me in the long run because you know when I fill out a resume my handwriting ain't gonna be the prettiest and they are going to look at me and be like "well he aint got too good of handwriting, I don't know if I want to hire him" you know. Handwriting tells you a lot about somebody to be honest with you, in my opinion.

Q: Well there's some truth to that. Do you worry about, do you ever have any kind of worries about how you express yourself in writing?

A: Not really. I mean honestly I'm the guy that could care less what you've got to say about me. Especially people around here because I got six something months and I aint ever gonna see them again. I mean I've got a few friends that, but I could care less what anybody says about me or what I do.

Q: Go back to your handwriting on your resumes. You talked about that, or applications, that seemed to be important to you.

A: Well yeah, I mean when I do fill out an application I go really slow with it because I try to make it look good. I don't write fast like I usually do. So I want to make sure I'm not looking like a slob.

Q: When did you first become aware that you at least perceived yourself with having any kind of problems with reading or writing or verbal expression anything like that? Describe that and describe how you felt. When did you first become aware of any of that?

A: I know in kindergarten they give you those ABC's and you have to trace over them and I remember the first letter I traced it was awful. It didn't even look like an A. I guess from the first then, kindergarten. I've never been able to write good.

Q: Did you ever have teachers that worked with you with it?

A: No. never. I know they had a program in elementary school it helped you read and write better.

Q: Did they put you in that?

A: No.

Q: They didn't? They did not put you in that?

A: No.

Q: What about middle school. How did you do in middle school with language and reading and writing?

A: Well I'm trying to think of. Sixth grade wasn't a very good English year. I'm trying to think of seventh grade; Mrs. XXXX is who I had. I did pretty good in seventh grade class. She was more of a teacher, she taught you something. I don't know some teachers they don't. They just talk about it, and it's hard for me to understand when they just go up there a noun is blah, blah, blah and a verb is blah, blah, blah. And I'm just, I mean I know what they are but at first it was just hard for me to comprehend.



Q: What do you think has been the biggest obstacle for you personally for the reading, the writing or the literacy?

A: The big old essay. I always have trouble with essays. Especially say I had a ten page essay, I'd probably only get seven or eight done. Because the topic that I'm given I've already written so much about it there aint really much to go into about it. I know there is but I can't myself. I don't know I can't do it.

Q: Have you, talk to me about that mental block that you have with that writing that's seems to be very important to you so talk to me. I want you to tell me more about that.

A: Well Coach XXXXX for instance, he really doesn't teach us anything. He just stands up there and talks and I, it just doesn't help me out any. I would rather a teacher come up to me one on one and explain something to me instead of the whole class. I just seem like I can do better one on one because I'm not having to worry about everybody else and what they say and what they're doing and confusing me. If I have a teacher who knows what he's talking about and he comes to me one on one and he tells me what I know is right then I don't have. I just get better one on one.

Q: Have you asked him for any personal help? Do you plan on it?

A: Not yet, but probably, probably with my essay.

Q: The essay that you are doing is this an essay a senior paper?

A: Yes.

Q: Naturally you are telling me that you want to do good on it?

A: Yes.

Q: That is something that is important to you.

A: Yes because its 50% of your grade, something like that. I heard if you fail it you fail your whole semester. I don't want to fail my semester.

Q: In your opinion then for you personally the writing is what gives you more fits?

A: Yes. Reading I can do it all day long. My brother he'd rather read a book than watch TV. My sister ain't too good on reading but I mean he reads these books called War Hammer and it's about these big old giant robots. I don't know it's some weird stuff but he loves it. I just don't see how he loves it but I guess if I read a book about cars, I love cars. I guess if I read a book about cars all day long I guess I could do the same.

## APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT 7 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 7 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you through a typical day what would I see you doing?

A: Well I mean you'd see me, just in school or what do you

Q: I can't coach you, just a typical day, a typical day of XXXXX.

A: Well I go to school, I'm just a normal student. I mean I try to do my work and you might see me fall asleep in class or something like that. And then after school you will probably go to work with me if you follow me. I'll be weed eating or whatever I do. I do different stuff. Then after that I would go to my house and feed horses and maybe ride horses a little bit. And then just go to the house after dark and lay around until time to go to bed.

Q: How do you use literacy in any of your daily activities?

A: I really don't know.

Q: Let me see if I can rephrase it a little. How do you use communication devices? How do you communicate with people? Tell me about anything that you have to read or use written words in on a day to day activity.

A: English class at school and I guess when somebody texts me I text them back.

Q: Is that about it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Alright let me ask you this. Talk to me and describe to me about experiences I would observe you having when you interact with your friends or in your daily activities

usually. Anything, experiences with people, with your friends. What experiences would I observe you having? How do you engage typically with people?

A: Well I guess I'm outgoing and I mean I try to make all the friends I can because maybe I'll need them in life. I mean, I'm nice to everybody.

Q: Describe outgoing to me. What makes you outgoing? Elaborate on that for me.

A: I mean I just try not to meet a stranger. If I don't know them then I'll shake their hand and introduce myself to them.

Q: Do you feel like you have any kind of trouble communicating or initiating a conversation?

A: No, not at all.

Q: Who taught you that?

A: That's just how I've always been. Momma said I was like that when I was a baby. I would walk up and start mumbling to them, I didn't even know how to talk.

Q: Now we are going to get into a little more specific questions. How do you feel about reading and literacy? Tell me about that?

A: I feel that it's important in life. I don't feel that I'm very good at it but I know I gotta have it.

Q: What makes you feel that way?

A: Well I've just never been able to read really good and I really can't read out loud. And I can't comprehend stuff that I read so I have to read it two or three times.

But I mean I can read it but it's just slow and there's a lot of words I have to jump cause I don't know, but other than that...

Q: How do you compensate for that? When you come across words you don't know.

A: I either ask somebody what the word is or just sound it out the best I can.

Q: This one may take you a little bit longer. I want you to talk to me and tell me your opinion about any frustrations, difficulties or struggles that you have had regarding literacy. Talk to me about that.

A: Well I mean I don't really know other than I can't read that good.

Q: Talk about that.

A: I've just never been able to read good. I mean my dad when I was little we would lay down in the floor and do phonics and stuff and he would help me with it but I just still can't read that good. I've just never been able to.

Q: Ok, what made you notice that? When did you first start noticing that?

A: When I first started noticing that that I couldn't read was sixth grade we did a story that each person in class had a part and you read it off. I was the lead character because everybody voted me. Then I started reading and it took like two weeks longer than it should have to finish the story. I was pretty slow at reading.

Q: What kind of reading was that?

A: It was just a story. I can't remember what it was.

Q: Were you having to read aloud?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was that the first experience you had had with reading aloud?

A: No I've read out loud before but I just never noticed that I was behind every body until sixth grade.

Q: So that is when you became knowledgeable of it yourself. Talk about that for a minute. How did that make you feel?

A: I wasn't worried about it. Didn't really make me feel like nothing, I was just laughed about it.

Q: What do you think caused that? What were some of the causes? I mean you had been, you said sixth grade, but obviously you had been in school way before the sixth grade.

A: The only think I can think of is when I was younger like fourth grade and we were suppose to read books, for AR testing or whatever over them, I just waited for somebody to read them, the book and copied what they had. I don't know why.

Q: So you're saying even in fourth grade you realized that perhaps you were having some trouble reading?

A: I just didn't do it. I just didn't read. But I still go the work done; I just didn't do it the way I was suppose to.

Q: Did you try to ever hide that from teachers?

A: Yeah I did.

Q: Do you think, did teachers ever talk to you about reading?

A: I don't think teachers ever knew that I couldn't read good. I just didn't let them know about it.

Q: How did you not let them know? Talk to me about that.

A: Well like I say, I just copied I never read out loud. I could spell fine.

Q: How did you avoid the reading out loud in elementary school? Because is that something typically that elementary schools do in a reading class. How did you avoid that?

A: I just told them I got through with it.

Q: OK and the teacher would accept that. Do you ever recall having any meetings or personal meetings with teachers?

A: My mom met all my teachers, like every year because my mom wanted to meet the teachers. But, other than that not really.

Q: How do you feel this affects you to this day? And why? Talk to me about that. Talk to me about high school experiences how do you feel this has affected you where you are now and perhaps why.

A: I mean it affects me because you know I can't read as good as everybody else so I'm slower. But I guess it affects my grades.

Q: OK talk about that.

A: I mean my grade could be better.

Q: But what has your high school experience been as far as literacy and reading and how you feel about it. You know deep down inside.

A: Well I mean honestly I guess I wouldn't really care much for it because it's hard, writing reports and anything at English. I'm terrible at English.

Q: Do you have to ask for help?

A: I mean, not really.

Q: Talk to me about that. Is there a reason why you don't ask for help?

A: I don't know I just don't really ask for help much.

Q: When did you first become aware that you were having problems with reading or understanding what you read?

A: The sixth grade.

Q: I want you to go to that time, think about how you felt. Get as detailed as you possibly can with me and tell me some more about that. Share some more with me about that.

A: I just realized I couldn't read that good because it took our class like two extra weeks to finish the story. I was the lead character and in the middle of the story I told Miss XXXXX, that was the English teacher, I told her to give my part to somebody else because I wouldn't hold the class back. So she gave it to somebody else so we still held back but that's when I realized I couldn't read that good.

Q: So you said your friends wanted you to be this part. And then you started reading out loud and that's when you realized, you felt like you were holding them back.

A: Yeah.



Q: What did she say to you? Can you remember anything she said or what she talked about with you at that point?

A: She never talked to me about anything. I guess she just agreed or said yeah that she would give it to somebody else.

Q: But she didn't go into detail with you? That's interesting. OK.

What do you think has made reading and engaging with literacy difficult for you? What do you think are the root causes that have made this difficult? Or makes reading difficult for you? And then I want you to talk to me about what in reading exactly causes you problems and why. What do you think. I'm wanting your opinion.

A: The reason that I can't read?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Probably, the only thing I can think of is when I was little, not paying attention in school. Cause I was like a, I wasn't ADHD, but I was always real hyper you know. My mom tried to see if I was ADHD but I wasn't. But I just never paid attention. And that is where I messed up.

Q: Talk about that not paying attention. Talk about that a little. Tell me more about that.

A: Well I mean when the teacher was teaching us I guess I'd be off in space looking around or talking to somebody and not listening to what she said.

Q: Was there, can you think of a possible reason for that?

A: Not that I can think of, I mean maybe I was just bored. I don't know.

Q: Can you talk about why maybe you were bored.

A: I just didn't have no interest in it.

Q: And when you say I didn't have interest, what was causing you not to have interest in it? Be specific about it. Tell me what it is.

A: Well English, because every other class I was interested in. Like math and science and English I just never really like it. I always thought it was hard. I just didn't like words.

Q: Do you get by, do you feel like you get by here in high school without reading?

A: No I think I'm behind.

Q: What are some interests you have? Talk to me about what you are interested in.

A: Like anything? I mean I'm interested in horses.

Q: Now if you're interested in that, so do you take AG classes?

A: Yes Sir.

Q: Do you have to do anything in those classes related to reading?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are you able to understand what you read in those classes?

A: I mean I can't say that, just it's hard to comprehend. I mean yeah I can do it. I just gotta read it a couple times. It ain't like I can't read. I'm not illiterate.

Q: No, no.

A: I can read it just takes me a second to comprehend it.

Q: So in the AG classes you'll say that you go back and reread?

A: Well I mean I do that anyway, but it just takes me longer.

Q: Do you understand what you are doing in literature classes right now.

A: Yeah, I'm doing fine in there.

Q: So you do engage with reading some?

A: Yeah I do what I have to do. But that's just me being honest.

Q: Absolutely, that is very important. OK.

## APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT 8 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 8 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you through just a typical day of yours what would I see?

What would I observe from you?

A: You would see me doing my work, well being shy basically. Doing my work and not talking to anybody unless they are actually my friends. That's basically it.

Q: Now let me ask you this, how do you feel, what is your perception and your feeling about literacy, about reading, writing, communicating, anything to do with reading and writing and communication?

A: I like reading. I could do it all day long if I like it and really get into it. The writing part I just cannot do. But somehow I do. I wrote a poem this past year for Mrs. XXXXX. She turned it in for the library poem contest. I haven't got it back yet. So I'm hoping I win something out of that.

Q: Talk to me some more about the writing. You were going to go down that trail with the writing. Do you feel like, are you telling me that you feel like you've had more difficulties with the writing piece of literacy? Talk to me some more about that.

A: It happens every time I start to do like a research paper or something, I struggle on the introductory paragraph. I don't know how to start it off, put the passages in the middle, and then do the thesis. That's what I don't understand.

Q: Talk to me some more about, this question that I'm wording, I'm getting into your opinion about those difficulties that you've had. Tell me more about that. Get into your opinion about the difficulties with writing that you have experienced.

A: This is hard questions.

Q: Just your opinion. Feel free to say what you want to say.

A: I don't like when I have to write the paragraphs because it takes too much time when you have to think about the person that you are doing and the paper that you are writing at the same time. I just don't like that.

Q: What do you think causes those frustrations?

A: I really don't know.

Q: What causes you to have that kind of a block? Nothing that you can think of right now?

A: No.

Q: When did you first become aware that you were having any kind of reading or writing difficulties or understanding any of that? Kind of describe that to me as much as you can.

A: I started to struggle with, we done it in middle school. Every time I turned in a research paper about me writing something I'd end up getting it back and have a lot of mistakes on it. And that's just made me difficult from there on out.

Q: Was anybody willing to help you with those mistakes?

A: No.

Q: So you don't think they were? OK. Did you get any kind of feedback related to your writing or those mistakes? Did teachers give you any kind of feedback on that?

A: Yes, my freshman year Mrs. XXXXX now, she helped me do, helped me somewhat on my research paper with "To Kill A Mockingbird"

Q: But in middle school you are saying that you would get frustrated when you would get something back and you'd see all the marks on it or whatever, and you were really wanting to perhaps know why you were getting those kinds of marks. Is that correct?

A: Yes

Q: What do you think has made your engagement with reading and writing the most difficult for you? What one piece or two pieces has made it the most difficult for you? Or caused the most difficulty?

A: People not helping me do paragraphs and research papers and them knowing the main ideas of the story and basically everything else.

Q: Have you had problems with comprehension before?

A: No.

Q: So you can pretty much understand what you read but if you wrote something, talk to me a minute about if you wrote something out, what kind of writing would you see later on. Could you go back and pick it up say a week or two later and be able to understand what you had written?

A: I understand, I can't understand once I've written something I can, I have a little system that's in my head that once I read something or write something I can put it away. About two or three weeks later I can pull it back out and still know what....

Q: Still know what you've read or what you've written... Good.

Q: Is there anything else that you can think of right now for me that you want to add about any kind of frustrations or difficulties, struggles that you've had with literacy in general?

A: No.

## APPENDIX J: PARTICIPANT 9 INTERVIEW

This interview is with XXXXX who will be referred to as Participant 9 in the final report.

Q: If I followed you through just a typical day for you from start to finish, what might I see? What am I going to see you doing?

A: You are going to see me listening in class trying to learn and trying to get knowledge so I can pass this year.

Q: So passing this year is real important to you? Good.

Q: How do you incorporate reading and writing in your day-to-day activities. Literacy in general, how do you incorporate that? How do you use it?

A: I use it more for helping me for writing papers or writing or if I'm trying to read a book. I use it more to help me understand, like if I don't get something we are going through the day then I'll go down through and write certain topics down. Like if we read a passage I'll write it down and it helps me get a better understanding of what we are going over.

Q: Very good. How do you feel about just in general, how do you feel about reading and literacy?

A: Reading and literacy, It's not a bad thing and I'm glad that this school teaches things that are into that category because it helps people have a better vocabulary and have a better mind set when they are trying to say a sentence.

Q: So you feel like it helps you choose your words more carefully perhaps? Do you feel like you are saying that here some of the experiences that you get help you, you feel like it gives you a wider vocabulary perhaps?



A: It gives us a wider vocabulary, instead of saying just a simple sentence you have more words to choose from so you can put it into a better sentence and maybe people can understand it a lot better instead of you having to explain just the plain old sentence.

Q: Alright. What is your opinion, now this is very important because it's your opinion that I'm after. What is your opinion about any kind of frustrations, difficulties or struggles that you have encountered or you have experienced regarding literacy?

A: Literacy?

Q: The reading and the writing.

A: It's more the writing than it is the reading. Because when you are reading, anybody can read and it's not hard to read a passage, but when you are writing some people don't have a mind set to create a passage to write down. So it's a lot more harder for some people to do that. Like I've had troubles to where I've had to ask a teacher to help me when I read a passage and I still didn't understand it. So I didn't have an idea on what I could write about. So I've had to have a teacher help me break it down or go into simpler detail for it. I learn more when they are teaching me how to get through a passage and have me highlight the key concepts. I can respond better to the writing prompts and assignments when they help me like that. It makes my vocabulary stronger so that we know more words and use the words better in sentences especially when we write sentences, paragraphs, and put them together. Teaching me like that helps me to understand what a passage is really saying. Whenever I have problems and some of my buddies have the same problems he gives examples and helps us. He don't just all of a

sudden quit on it like some of the others have done in the past years. He don't just write it for you, but he tells and shows how things relate to what he wants us to write about. He really helps give direction of where you need to go and don't just leave you hanging and wondering about what to write or to do.

Q: With your writing?

A: Yes.

Q: Talk to me some more about your writing. What causes those frustrations with that?

A: I think it's more, I don't think anybody has a problem with the writing, I think it's coming up with the idea of what to write about or to break it down into something smaller that way you don't go into a big topic about it.

Q: How do you feel about your writing ability personally?

A: My writing ability? It's not bad but I know it could be better.

Q: How do you qualify that? Get as specific as you can for me.

A: Like I could make, I'm not a person that like writes a lot of things down. So I don't write long sentences or anything. So I don't have a big enough paper with the words, but it could be better. I could go simpler down and make it longer and have more facts to back up if I'm supporting something or giving my opinion about something.

Q: How do you feel that affects you and why? Talk to me some more about that.

A: The way it affects me, I mean it helps me learn. It lets me know what I need to improve on and everything, which is a good thing. Because if I don't know what I need to improve on then I just, then I feel like I'm just doing the right thing. And it's in

the way it affects me, because if I don't know a mistake. Like if they just grade it and I don't know what a mistake is I made on it. Then I don't know what to fix. And it affects me because if I don't know what I can fix then I don't know how to fix it and I'm just going to keep writing it the same way.

Q: Oh, OK. So you have, I think I'm hearing you say you have a desire to improve constantly on your writing. So you want to, you have that desire to turn in a good product. To turn in something that you are proud of because it's got your name on it.

A: Yes.

Q: Very good. Let me ask you this. When did you first become aware that you were having any kind of difficulties or problems with literacy, with the reading or the writing and describe that as much as you can and detail that for me?

A: I mean I've noticed it more, when I was younger I used to be really good at English, I mean I used to, I was really good. It was more towards middle school and the beginning of high school that I noticed that I started not doing so good in English. And I always wondered why. And then I just realized that some of it was more complicated and that I needed more help with it than I usually do. I, when I got more help I do better on it and the only problem I really have with literacy and writing is just to extend it out, to make it longer, wider and more detailed.

Q: What do you think has made that piece, or that part you keep referencing the writing. What do you think has made that piece the most difficult for you?

A: It would be the thinking of it. Coming up with an idea, that to me seems like just the hardest part.

## APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

This is focus group interview September 23, 2015. The conversations were open to any participant at any time.

Q: Describe the main male relationships in your life, family, work, school anywhere; main male relationships.

A: Participant 4 speaking...Describe what we do?

Q: No, just who and then describe the kind of relationship.

A: Participant 9 speaking...For some people maybe like your teachers would be the main male influence. Because, some people might not have a parent, dad or whatever. You know the main male interaction they get is their teacher. So they may think of him like a dad or something.

Q: Has that been your case?

A: Participant 8 speaking...No, other people examples.

Q: Any of you tell me about your personal case.

A: Participant 4 speaking...The most male figure that has been in my life is my grandpa. I've never known my dad. My grandpa has been there since I was born. We've had our off and ons where we've argued and stuff but we've always been close. My dad never really came into my life until I was about 13. We never really hit it off and we don't speak now. I did find out that he had another daughter so I have another sister. I don't speak, but and now my grandpa we've actually gotten a lot closer than we've ever been now. He actually just got out of the hospital yesterday. He had to go have a test

done. He had to have a test to find out if he had cancer or not and we found out it wasn't. So that was a good thing.

Q: Who else, come on jump in?

A: Participant 1 speaking...What about buddies? Friends and, friends would probably come second. Closest would have to be Micah, I mean me and him used to hang out literally every day. It would be this guy sitting next to me and I'm hanging out with friends every day.

Q: Are they mainly male?

A: Participant 6 speaking...Yeah it's mainly male.

Q: Anybody else, keep going with the first question.

A: Participant 9 speaking...I would have to say it would be my great grandpa. Because, my dad he's not sober long enough for me to talk to him basically. Me and him don't really connect at all. But my great grand pa when he was alive, he's passed away now, he died in 2014. He was the one that I always went to when me and my dad didn't always get along or anything and he would let me come over there and he would let me stay with him anytime I wanted to. Yeah basically he would have been the main person in my life that was a male.

A: Participant 3 speaking...Mainly it would be my brother or my dad. My dad he was in and out of the family most of the time. He's a truck driver and that's why he's in and out. Before me and my brother were born he was in and out. He wasn't even there for my birth or my brothers' so that's it.

A: Participant 7 speaking...Mine would have to be either my dad or my brother. My dad has always been there for me, he's helped me through every step I've had in my life. He was there whenever I started playing sports. He was there whenever I wanted to do something. He backed me up 100%. He told me his opinion on it and if he told me it was my choice because it's my life. And my brother I mean, whenever I first started out it was hard on me because I didn't have much of anything. My brother would always give me opportunities to get stuff and they've both been a pretty fairly the men in my life that's watched out for me and helped me with everything I've needed.

A: Participant 5 speaking...Yeah, my dad too. He's basically been there for me too. He's the biggest influence, male on my life. I mean I don't really have any friends that I look up to like a father figure.

Q: As far as teachers go just in general, how many male teachers have you tended to have? Or has it been mainly females through the years or do you have just as many male teachers as you have?

A: Participant 4 speaking...Mainly just been, you mean a favorite subject or....

Q: Just anything, any teacher.

A: Participant 5 speaking...One teacher I've had for all four years is Coach XXXXX. I've had him for all four years and me and him has got a connection, we always mess around and everything.

Q: Have you had more female teachers typically than you've had male?

A: Participant 3 speaking...Yeah, yeah. I think XXXXX the only male teacher I've actually ever had.

A: Participant 8 speaking...I've had Coach XXXX and Coach XXXXX. I have Coach XXXXX right now and Coach XXXXX.

A: Participant 1 speaking...No I've had XXXXX. I've got XXXXX this year.

Q: Well let's take that same question and turn it around to female. What about female, main female relationships.

A: Participant 3 speaking...Main female would be my mom. My mom's been there every step of the way. She's given me opportunities to do a lot of things. She's given me opinions on stuff I've wanted to do and told me to do it if that's something I really wanted to do and if it's, but not to do it just because someone else is pushing me to do it. Do it because I want to do it and I like it. She was there, she backed me up when I did sports, she backed me up if I was doing something for this school. She's just always been there for me.

A: Participant 1 speaking...Same with me, it was my mom because she, she's never not been there.

A: Participant 4 speaking...Like most of the time when me and my dad got into it, my mom would always back me up and help me out so me and my dad wouldn't get into a fight or whatever. My mom she's the one who told me to stay with wrestling cause I almost left it. But my mom talked me into staying with it because she's said that's something I don't need to give up. She's been there for just about everything.

A: Participant 9 speaking...Yeah, mostly my mom. We've had our differences but she's been there for me every step of the way. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't without her support.



A: Participant 6 speaking...Mine is mainly my mom too because I'm, I mean, no matter what it was she helped me out. I had, she's the one that's basically raised me. My mom and my dad got a divorce when I was eight years old and I chose to live with my mom. And she was just a single parent for so long and she did everything she could to make sure I had everything I needed. And I mean despite our differences, I mean yeah we have arguments and everything but you know at the end of the day she's the female that's always there for me no matter what happens. I could go out and do something terribly bad and there she is still there to stand behind me.

Q: Could you say that one more time in case the bell....the last part?

A: Participant 6 speaking...Like if I was to go out and do something she would still be there behind me supporting me no matter how bad it was, yeah.

A: Participant 2 speaking...Probably my mom too, she's always been there for me. Done everything for me and if it wasn't like her another big influence in my life would probably be my aunt who came when I played like baseball and all that stuff. She'd always be there for me always helped me out.

Q: Any sisters in the family?

A: Participant 2 speaking...No.

A: Participant 1 speaking...Yeah I got one sister, maybe two possibly. I'm not sure. I've talked to both of them. My little sister she looks up to me a lot. I know I've got to set a good example for her because I don't want her doing any bad things or going out and doing and I mean. My sister is younger and people who think they can't learn

anything from little siblings, they actually can. Because I've learned a few things from my sister and she's only in middle school.

Q: I want to combine a few questions let's see if I can.

Q: Can I ask one more thing? So apart from mothers and sisters would you say the main females in your life are teachers? Like ...I mean you are here every day right? You have a couple male teachers, but pretty much the women you are around for the most part are your teachers then? How do those relationships, do you want to talk about any of those relationships?

Specifically involving female teachers or not?

A: Participant 5 speaking...I mean female teachers know what it's like to be a mom and they try to set the same example that they do for their kids, for the kids in the school and they help us get through the day. I mean if we have a problem they are there for us if we need them. No matter how personal it is they keep it to there selves. They don't, I mean like, say you just have a rough childhood in your house and you needed somebody to talk to and all the female teachers that I've seen here are pretty caring to the students. They just take care of us like they would do their own kids.

Q: Like a mother away from mother?

A: Participant 3 speaking... I've seen, I've heard some students say there are some female teachers in this school that they didn't like.

A: Participant 6 speaking...I've got a few actually.

A: Participant 6 speaking...That's their opinion. But I mean there just, they are not here to criticize you or to bring you down. They are here to help you and get you to

learn and to help you get a good education when you are out of high school, and hopefully go to college.

Q: Which individuals do you spend the most time with? And then the least time and why? Who do you spend the most time with and the least time with and then why?

A: Participant 4 speaking...I think the most person, the most I spend time with would be my mom. We're together every day I think the only time we are apart is if she's at work and I'm here at school. And the least individual I spend time with I'd say is, my aunt my mom's youngest sister. We don't spend that much time together because her, my mom and me, we've always butted heads. That family drama.

A: Participant 9 speaking...The least for me would be my dad because me and him don't get along. Because whenever he drinks he acts stupid. That would be the least and the most I usually try to spend it with my mom, but if my dad's around I don't spend much time with her. So since my great grand pa passed away I'm usually at my grandparents now. So I spend the most time with them because it keeps me away from my dad, but yet with my family.

Q: So compared with friends and stuff like that you are still with your mom more than your buddies, or with?

A: Participant 9 speaking...Yeah I would say so.

A: Participant 3 speaking...I would say the most would be my brother because he's around. He was one of the few that would play games with me. I have, I spend time with my friends but not much. My least would be my dad because he's on the road all the time. So I don't really get to talk to him as much.

Q: How old are your brother and you? What's your age?

A: participant 3 speaking...16 and 19.

A: Participant 4 speaking...The person I spend the most time with would have to be my girlfriend because I mean, here lately she got kicked out of her house. And she needed somebody to be there for her so we just moved in together and I try to help her through everything she's been through. So that's part of the reason why I spend most of my time with her. Because she's had a rough past and she needs somebody there to care for her.

Q: Until that change, what would you have said? Who's been the most??

A: Participant 4 speaking...I've spend the most time with my dad because I mean, at my dad's house I was free to do whatever I wanted to do like to an extent. Of course I had a curfew and I mean he always had things there for me like food and everything I would need. And the least I would say would have to be my uncle because he is a drug addict. He tried to get me to start doing drugs and to get me to sell drugs for him but, or buy drugs for him and I just try to avoid that.

Q: Is that your dad's side of the family?

A: Participant 4 speaking...That's my mom's side of the family.

A: Participant 5 speaking...OK, the person I spend the most time with is probably my dad especially on weekends. I'll usually watch college football and NFL. The least is probably my little brother. I mean we just don't really have many things in common so we don't spend that much time together.

Q: How much younger?

A: Participant 5 speaking...Uh, he's 12.

Q: That would explain that. Here's another, I'm going to combine a couple of more. Who do you respect the most and why and who do you respect the least and why? This could be somebody we've already talked about.

A: Participant 4 speaking...The most would have to be my uncle who is passed. He is my grandfather's brother. Between him and my grandpa I give them both the same amount of respect. Because, they both were in the army. So they were both strict on a lot of things. And how old we had to be to have or do things. But I know that all they really wanted was the best for me and my cousins and my little sisters and that's all they really wanted was for us to have a better life and to go to college and everything like that. And that's who I basically respect more.

Q: What about the least?

A: Participant 4 speaking...The least would be again, my aunt, my mom's youngest sister. She is technically a lia. She's tried to get me and my mom in trouble with our grandpa. But recently she has been, he hasn't believed her because he knows she does some things that he don't like. Specifically she's buying some stuff she don't need to be buying, especially with having two kids. I would honestly; I don't give her much respect at all. Not with having two kids and doing that.

Q: What about the rest of yall?

A: Participant 9 speaking...The most respect would have to go to, it's a hard choice between my mom and my great grandfather. But I'm gonna go with my great

grand father. My great grandfather he's passed away now. Like I said he passed away in 2014. But he was always by my side no matter what I done. No matter how bad it was. He was there for me back when I got into some trouble at school. I ended up getting into a fight at school and when I got arrested my mom she didn't come get me. But my great grand pa he came and got me out and took me back home with him and I stayed there for a couple weeks. He's just, the reason I would say that, is because he's always been there and he always could always if I was down, he knew what to say to bring me up. And the least respected would be my father. Because, part of the reason, most of the reason is probably because of what he does. Like when I was younger, I had asthma. I've grown out of it now. But even when I had asthma he refused to quit smoking in the house. And that's why, part of the reason why me and my mom had to move down to my grandmas for a while. I had to live on a machine because he wouldn't leave the house. He had to smoke in the house. So honestly I would say he is probably the least respected person in my life. That's it.

A: Participant 3 speaking...My most respected would be my mom and dad. Because they get me stuff where I need it and I wouldn't have been able to get it. My least respected person I would do would be my brother.

A: Participant 2 speaking...Most respected person in my life would have to be my dad because, like I said he started me out. He's the one that threw the opinions out there and gave me the choices. The least respected would have to be my uncle because of all the things he tried to get me to do and all the bad habits.

A: participant 1 speaking...My most respected person in my family is I would say my mom because she will do anything for you. She works hard and tries to get everything we want and tries to do everything for us. And least respected is I don't think I have anybody I don't respect in my family.

Q: What about school or a job? A boss, peers at school, teachers at school. I mean anybody that you can absolutely think of that you know on a personal basis.

A: Participant 3 speaking...I don't respect, there is a lot of teachers here that I don't respect.

Q: Can you dig a little deeper in that? Without saying names?

A: Participant 3 speaking...I don't know, it's just someone last year. I failed her class by a few points. I tried to get it a few points higher and she's just like, no that's the final grade. I was mad. I was willing to do it and it was a few points. There's a few others, but then there's some teachers who I really like here.

Q: Which ones are male and which ones are female out of curiosity?

A: Participant 3 speaking... I like, it goes both ways. I respect some. Most male teachers I've had I've got along with. A lot of female teachers a lot of them I get along with. It's just a few.

Q: The one that gave you a hard time female?

A: Participant 3 speaking...Yes.

Q: I'm going to combine some more down a little bit. I want you to think about the question that you just answered. Listen to this one. With the ones that you respected the most describe the interactions that those individuals have ever had with you where

reading and writing is concerned. You may have to think about it but think about that. The people you respected the most, what kind of interactions have you had with them where reading and writing are concerned?

A: Participant 5 speaking...Well all the way up to literature, my mom, I didn't say she was the most respected but she is one of them. My mom would help me with it because she was good at English she wasn't literature. So I guess from you know elementary school to probably freshman year or so is whenever she helped me every night with English and writing, reading...

Q: So she would help you, she would try to help you nearly on a daily basis then?

A: Participant 5 speaking...Until I got into literature then she just got lost.

A: Participant 9 speaking...My great grandpa, he never was much for reading and writing. Because you know he only went up to the sixth grade and then he had to leave school. So he didn't graduate. But this was also back in the forties. But yeah that would be about it for me.

A: Participant 4 speaking...My grandpa he wasn't big in literature or English. He's more of a social studies type guy. But his brother my uncle who died a few years ago, he helped me a lot. I used to have to go to speech class because I couldn't speak properly and I couldn't read. I'd be at home and he'd have me read books and he'd have me just read certain words off to him and he's actually. He got me a lot better at speaking and reading and by second grade English was just easy, it was nothing to me. And he's helped me a lot through it. And up until high school I had no problems with it, but now it kind of gets a little hard.



Q: What made it hard?

A: Participant 4 speaking...It's more of the reading and trying to make a concept of an essay and having to write it out. More of the thought process of what you are going to write about.

Q: The thought processes of writing?

A: Participant 4 speaking...Yeah.

A: Participant 8 speaking...It was really nothing that the ones that I respected because they were really into math and science. But they really didn't like English so they really didn't help me. The only one that really actually helped me was Ms. XXXXX. Last year she helped me write a poem that will be published in a book next year in 2016.

A: Participant 7 speaking...My dad whenever I was younger used to work third shift, second shift so he wouldn't really be able to help. But whenever I come to school the teachers would be the ones that helped me the most with the reading and writing because it's the biggest struggle that I feel like a teenager goes through.

Q: With what, what?

A: Participant 7 speaking...The reading and the writing because there's so much to do just for one single thing. The writing you have to set up the outline of it so that way you know how to put it in order. If you just go in there and type stuff anybody can do that, but then it gets all out of order and it makes no sense as you are going through and reading it. You have to have citations so you have to know how to do that. Because if you don't cite sources that's a big offence.

A: Participant 6 speaking...My mom like from elementary through middle school would, not just with English, she would always make sure with all my homework, it was done. She would help me out on anything even English, she helped me with a lot of it. As for like reading we had to read at least 20 minutes a night and write what we read in there. So she's always made sure I'd get those 20 minutes in.

Q: We are almost through with this line of questioning but it's good. Now we are getting somewhere. Keep with me, Im going to ask one first. Have you had much contact with good readers and writers and would you say there are things that distinguish those kinds of people from others? So have you had much contact with good readers and writers and if you have what would you say are the things that tend to distinguish those type people from others? That could be positive or negative. This is not right and wrong answers.

A: Participant 4 speaking...Nobody in my family is really good at any kind of writing or English because of just the way they were raised. But my uncle is a really good writer. The things about him that would distinguish hm from everybody else is, he has an amazing imagination. Like he can think about it, he can turn anything into something good. Just by thinking about it so he's really a smart guy, I mean me and him don't have that much contact. Like when I was growing up hardly ever, like we seen each other like once a week. But that would be the best person in my family that I can think of that can read and write and make sense.

A: Participant 3 speaking... Yeah probably my brother. He just graduated last year. He made like a 33 on his ACT. Like he did real good in English. He did good in

everything but mainly like in English. I think he made 100s like all through school. I really don't know how. He never really studied. He never really did homework he was just good I guess. I guess writing and stuff, give him a pencil and he'd do good.

Q: What about in school. Do you know people in school who are good readers and writers?

A: Participant 1 speaking...Well the only contact I've really had with a good reader was last year in my English class. I mean the thing that sets him aside from everybody else is he teaches you how to go through and highlight the key concepts of what's going through. He helped us do the definitions. He made our vocabulary stronger so that way we could go through bigger passages and know more words. I mean that's why I think this keeps him away from everybody else because he helps you understand what the passage is really saying. Whenever you are having a problem writing it he gives you an example. He doesn't write it for you, he just tells you something that relates to it.

Q: So do you think that's universal across all good readers and writers. They all seem to be like that or they all seem to do that? Have you ever had any experiences like that?

A: Participant 1 speaking...Well I mean he was the only one that I seen that done it. He worked very hard on trying to get us to be able to write papers and learn the vocabulary that we needed to learn. He just taught us so much that we needed to know for the reading and writing that we needed.

Q: Anybody else?

A: Participant 9 speaking...Mine would have to be, it would be my little cousin. He's a smart kid. He's only 10 and two years ago his school, he goes to XXXXX. He was 8<sup>th</sup> then and they took this big state test and out of all the kids who took the test that were in his grade he got top 5 out of the whole state. He's really smart and they wanted to bump him up grade but his mom said no. I want him to stay here with his friends. And that way he has people to know. Writing wise I don't know what it is about him but he's always been able to write a story. Him and my sister they used to set out and tell each other stories and make up just stories out of their head and they would write it and they would be like here look and be like its' a play we wrote, and it was just amazing on what they could come up with. It the imagination they had. I mean I remember because there is a story we actually have put up in a picture from now. They put dragons and princess Barbie things tougher and made it and it was unbelievable. It was a really good book though.

Q: Were they illustrations to it or was it just a story line?

A: Participant 9 speaking...It was a story line and they had pictures, I mean it was a really good book.

Q: So like they are painting a picture in your mind with the words and with pictures?

A: Participant 9 speaking...And it was really good.

A: Participant 7 speaking...I really don't have anyone that I have contact with.

Q: We are almost done with this vein and then we'll have a few more. Have you had much contact with a poor reader, a struggling reader or writer? Let's go on the

opposite end. Have you had much contact with a struggling reader or writer and what would you say are the things that distinguish those kinds of people from others?

A: participant 4 speaking... Well I can tell you I'm a poor writer. I come in contact with myself all the time, but ..

Q: What qualifies that?

A: Participant 4 speaking... I think it's just because like I told you a while back the way I was raised up. I was raised in a family that wasn't too good at English. Because they just never really learned English. I guess the way their parents taught them, like my great grandpa he didn't know how to spell hardly anything. My parents had parents never really good in English and all that kind of thinking and writing just kind of continues. I mean he could talk and he was smart with some stuff but when it comes to spelling he was just out of it. Same things with my grandpa Billy. He was really good at math. Really good, cause he's a construction worker or was before he hurt his back. But when it came to spelling and writing and talking even he's not very good at it. But he can do it and you can understand what he means, but he's just not been very good at it his whole life. He's never been able to read. I don't now why. I don't talk to him about it because that hurts, he don't like talking about it.

Q: Like around the house do you guys or have you guys write each other notes or taken down telephone messages or you know stuff like that?

A: Participant 5 speaking... I've wrote my grandpa things but my grandma has to read it to him sometimes. But he never has wrote anything because when he writes it, I can make out what he says just by looking at it and comparing and contrasting what it

goes to. But if somebody were to look at it and not have any clue what he's talking about they would not know what to do. They would not understand it. I just know that my family, my grandparents really, and my parents never finished school like they should have and just don't write and read like we should and know we should.

Q: What about texting? Anybody ..

A: Participant 4 speaking...He don't know how to text. Nobody in my family, my mom can't even hardly text.

A: Participant 2 speaking... Mine would be it's actually I have a friend here at school. He, ever since elementary school we've both had writing problems and reading problems. And he's gotten better than what he has. It still can be hard if he's writing something to understand what he's writing. I mean he can draw but he can't write a letter. It's simple. I used to be my second grade year I could write in cursive all day long and be the best at it. And now it's just gotten to where it slacks off a little bit. But I've gotten better at reading and understanding words now than I used to be. He's actually gotten a lot better at it too, but still has a little trouble writing.

Q: So this is a situation where you are kind of coming up with the same group. It has the same problem and you get associated with each other over the years?

A: Participant 2 speaking...Yeah.

A: Participant 8 speaking...Mine would be my brother, he's got reading comprehension. He's actually on watch right now he's been struggling for the past maybe 10 years in school. In English, anything that he does.

Q: Is it particularly reading or writing?

A: Participant 8 speaking...It's reading and writing. He just got off of it this past year. They are still watching him, but if he needs help they will put him back on to it. He thinks he can do it by himself this year and he'll try to do it by himself, but if he needs help, he'll ask for help then the teacher will help him. But if he starts to understand it more then they'll start to leave him alone but they'll keep watching him.

Q: Does he kind of tend to, when they leave him alone, does he kind of tend to just trail down a little bit then they'll pick him back up and then he'll kind of trail down a little bit? What do you think that's, how do you explain that? Do you have any idea why?

A: Participant 8 speaking...No not really.

Q: Do you think it comes down, what am I trying to say? Never mind.

A: Participant 6 speaking...Mine would have to be a buddy of mine that goes here. He doesn't even try anymore because of how hard it was on him. He couldn't really understand what to do or how to do it. He understood reading, he was very strong on the reading but his writing was just horrible. He would try and try and try. I've never seen somebody try so hard but, and the teachers would help him but he still wouldn't understand it. So now I guess all he does is gives up on it and just writes something.

Q: It's the writing again?

A: Participant 6 speaking...It's the thing that he slacks off on. He can read excellent, it's just the writing that puts him down.

Q: Am I hearing a lot of you say that the people that you see that struggle with the reading and writing you are calling out writing still even more?

A: Choral response...Yes.

A: Participant 1 speaking...Probably I struggle, I think I'm pretty good in reading. I can read pretty well. But as for writing I'm not very good. The main key is like if I have to write a paper I'm just lazy and don't feel like doing it, just feel like going home instead of doing it. Doing something else and just not doing it.

Q: What about the people that you've had contact with like that? What would you, how do you describe people that you've had contact with that you know struggle with reading or writing? How you classify them or describe or categorize them.

A: Participant 5 speaking...A lot of my friends struggle in English. It's not because they can't do it, it's because they are lazy kind of like me.

Q: And that makes me think of XXXX's friend and XXXXX. That's what I was trying to think about your brother but I didn't want to say that. But it's like people hype it off and then he kind of trails off. Do you think it might be a similar situation? It makes me think, it's almost like people get so sick of it they are just like, to heck with it.

A: Participant 8 speaking...But I have a little reading comprehension myself. Maybe a little bit. But it really don't affect me because I can sit there and look at the words and I can say them, but I very rarely slip, but my brother he'll slip a lot. He'll sit there and read it but he'll slip. You'll notice it when he slips. We've tried to get him where he could. When he was younger, he would say just mumbo jumbo. I still think it's the way we are all raised up that causes all this frustrations like you say. I mean like it is



the way our parents taught us me and my brother. I'd be the only one to really understand him and my mom wouldn't so I would have to sit there and talk to him and get words out of him. I'd have to say it back to my mom and it's been ever since like that until we actually learned how to speak.

Q: Next question: What does it mean to you to be a male or man? What does that mean?

A: Participant 1 speaking...I guess it could mean like the provider for your family. A person that tries the hardest.

A: Participant 3 speaking...I believe it's like being a man I guess, it's I guess you kind of have more of a job to do than a female would. You got to be a hands-on type of worker. That's what most of us around here will end up doing. You have to provide for your family, you have to work so you can get paychecks so you can pay for food and water and things for the house and stuff. And for protection for people. Most girls if they are upset or they don't like something and they are off crying. They don't really run to other females they run to a guy for comfort. So I think more for a guy to be there for comfort and to help somebody out.

Kind of like an umbrella.

A: Participant 5 speaking....My aspect on it is men are raised up different. Not every man is the same. My view of being a man is someone who is going to take care of not only themselves but everyone around them. You got to help people. You got to provide. I mean my point of view of being a good man is be there for your kids and your wife your family, anyone who needs you really. Your friends, being a good man isn't

just giving, it's showing people that they can make a change in their life and showing them what's all out there in the real world. It's not just for protection it's for helping others achieve goals.

A: Participant 8 speaking... Being a man means being respected and doing the things that get you respect. People will always respect you more if your talk makes sense.

Q: So that would be like guidance?

A: Participant 8 speaking...They said it all what about I was about to say.

A: Participant 6 speaking...I was thinking the comforter, the protector, the provider, the feeling seeker, like he was talking about.

A: Participant 9 speaking...And it's like he said all guys are raised different and there are some that are raised to that are just disrespectful to people, and then there are those who have respect for every body. Me I'm one of those that respects everybody female and male. You got to speak and talk your best at all times and be respected. I've had a complication with a few people who have been disrespectful to a few people especially to a female. And it just doesn't sit right with me. I honestly you can't be considered a guy or a man if you put your hands on a female. I can't see why you'd call yourself a man if you'd do that. You are supposed to sit here and comfort, protect and be there when they need you. Not to sit here and bring them down and literally almost beat them to a pulp.

Q: Kind of switching gears. You are doing well. I'm going to try to merge these questions into one. I want to know what kind of reading materials or any kind of materials used to communicate; you might can ask this better. It's multiple literacy's.

Q: So basically we'll start with reading materials in your home and that could be notes that you write to each other, that could be magazines, books, websites, cell phones, texting. What about books magazines, children's books from when you were kids.

A: Participant 5 speaking...I have a bunch of those just laying around. A bunch of magazines, a bunch of books.

Q: Magazines you say magazines, what kind of magazines.

A: Participant 5 speaking...We've always had sports magazines. Sports Illustrated, Sports news, so we've always had sports magazines.

Q: Is that something you talk about it. Maybe a couple of y'all read them and then ....

A: Participant 4 speaking...Oh yeah, me and my grandpa we look at them and he'd look at them and then he'd let me look at them and we'd sit there and we just talked about it. There was a game that happened that one of us seen that the other one didn't or we both seen we'd sit there and talk about it. We'd talk about if someone got traded or a big name died or something like that.

A: Participant 9 speaking...Most of the magazines laying around my house are hunting magazines.

Q: Same kind of situation, everybody or a couple of people read and then kind of talk about?

A: Participant 9 speaking...Mainly the two people was me and my great grandpa. That's the only reason I still have them because most of them were some of his old magazines. That's the only reason they are really laying around now.

Q: Think about this. This will get you thinking. In general how do you communicate with people?

A: Participant 6 speaking....Mostly I would say face to face, I don't really do much internet. I do a little bit. I talk to people whenever I can't get to them. I'll message them on the internet or text them or something. But mostly if they are like around somewhere I will talk face to face to them instead of texting or calling.

A: Participant 9 speaking...That's how I am, if we are in the same house or we are near by it's face to face. But if you are far away and I can't drive over there, I certainly ain't gonna walk all the way. I'll text or call. Now my mom is a different story if I'm upstairs she'll shoot me a text and say "bring me a soda". Ha ha.

A: Participant 7 speaking... I mainly used texting to be honest because I'm more out than around the people around school. I'm mostly at work, which I talk to them face to face obviously because they are there. But the people that I talk to the most would have to be texting, because a lot of work and stuff I'm having to do.

A: Participant 1 speaking...I would probably say the same with my family at home I would go talk to them in person. I mean they are right outside the door. If it's my friends it just depends. We may text each other saying when we are going to meet up. Where we are going to meet up to talk and then talk in person there. General public I guess face to face.

Q: Describe the most effective teacher you've had and then describe the least effective teacher you've had and why?

A: Choral response...Effective for really what?

Q: That's up to you.

A: Participant 9 speaking...Well like I said there was this guy teaching he has been the most effective because he has always taught me not to give up on something. You may not get it now but that does not mean stop trying. Just push yourself harder and you'll end up getting your goal. Set goals for yourself and achieve them. Don't just stop because it gets too hard. Keep going and going. Keep going until you beat that goal even when you beat that goal, set another goal for yourself. Basically don't ever stop trying wether if you're lifting weights, or a goal in college, writing a paper, homework, anything.

Q: So somebody that is going to push you and help you set goals right? What about the least effective?

A: Participant 4 speaking...Least effective would have to be one of my family members. They always, she was always like a break down person. Nothing was cared about with her it was just all fun. No consequence, no anything and it was, she basically taught me what not to do when you live by yourself. So she's just, I don't talk to her much.

A: Participant 3 speaking...The most effective would have been a guy, it was because like XXXXX said he was a good teacher and he would push you. But it's hard to choose between two of them. The other most effective was back in elementary school. The reason being is this girl she was, if I didn't understand something she would stay after multiple times to explain stuff to me. She always told me that I was a really smart kid, you know, I was really good at stuff I just had to make myself see that and believe it

and if I did then I would be really smart. Well I mean not long after that I was starting to try in my classes and everything. I brought my GPA up a whole point in one semester. Easy. And it was mainly because I started thinking about that teacher again and what she had told me. The least effective would be a teacher that basically she just sits in her chair and she would give you stuff to do but she would be like you know. Here's 30 questions, answer these and turn it in. And then she wouldn't say another word to us about it. Next thing I know she would give you a test over it and you never did, you got your grade and you realized, but you had to go up to her and ask her why you missed it and to explain it to you. She actually works here. So there's this girl, but she just never would teach you anything. She just expected you to come into her class knowing it and that's why she's the least effective.

A: Participant 6 speaking... My most effective is a teacher here, I met him this year. He's helped me apply for college this year and he's helped me do what I want to do. It is what he done in college and I think it would be interesting for me because I'd like to do it. I want to do it. And I want to get somewhere and have someone help me and let me accomplish the things that I want. And my least favorite would be back in elementary school in second grade, the teacher failed me because of cursive handwriting. I could do it but I didn't do it well and the teacher didn't like me. So it didn't go well with both of us.

Q: Most effective & least effective and why.

A: Participant 9 speaking... Most effective would have to be here recently. Not this year but the year before. This teacher told us that we could do whatever we wanted

to do as long as we had our mind set to it. He said don't let anybody bring you down. I learn more from the teacher who pushes me and don't just settle. They do not just give up or give up on us. It make me and us believe we can do something. They don't let us stop because we might just think or at least think we know the writing gets hard. I know and we all know in here that it gets real hard sometimes. We all believe that in here. We have said that a bunch already. I like and relate better to the teachers that helps us with our thinking and helps us see how we can always get better. Those teachers are the best, the ones who will always give you help, but we just got to make sure we ask for help. He said people are going to talk, people are going to tell you that you can't do something but that should be your motivation to push yourself harder. And the least effective would have to be whenever I was in middle school I had a teacher tell me that I wasn't going to make it in the career I wanted because that's how she looked upon me. She seen my personality and she said you are not going to make it because you do this, this and this.

A: Participant 5 speaking...My most effective teacher, I've had him a few times in the last few years. I've never really been good at math. And he's always been like a great math teacher. It's hard to explain but he makes everything so much easier. And like he'll always help you when you ask him. It can be during homeroom and another class always willing to help you.

And my least effective would be a teacher who really she was an older person and so she really couldn't teach or do anything. She would just give us papers like Austin and say get to it.

Q: All of you said in your individual interviews and I've not been able to tell you this yet, but all of you called out, and it was ironic, all nine of you. You view yourself as an adequate reader, you'll say that. You told me, you said that you feel like you don't have a whole lot of problems reading, but writing was the exact opposite. That is where all nine of you called yourselves out it was on writing and your ability to write. So the last questions I've got is this. What is it about writing that makes you feel so ineffective? What is it about writing that makes you feel ineffective? Because every one of you called yourselves out on that.

A: Participant 1 speaking... For me it would be, it's kind of two things. One would be comprehending the story. Like I could read the story and understand it but kind of trying to summarize it down, I've never really been good at summarizing things. And then another part would be just reading the story and then going to write it down, thinking of what to actually write about. Like is there a specific point in the story I just want to write about? Do I just take bits and pieces of it or is it just, am I, it's all getting all kind of bundled up and confusing. That is what makes it hard for me to get it.

But usually if I can understand it and I'm able to summarize it in my head then it kind of helps me out and I'm able to understand what I'm doing. Not saying that it's still not hard because it's still hard to write it down on paper. Because even when you think about it in your head it may sound good in your head but it may not be right on the paper. There may be things you have to go back and fix. Like I've never been good at like, colons and stuff like that on where to put them. Now citation like if I'm writing something somebody else wrote, I'm always good at giving them credit for it because it's



not my writing. So I have to give them credit for it, it's their writing. I'm just using it to help me thinking out what I'm trying to say.

## APPENDIX L: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 1

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 1</p>	
<p>Date: August 25, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 9:40- 10:05 and 12:30- 12:40</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 1.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I found Participant 1 to be gregarious and interacting with about five to six different people during class change. He was actually on his way to English class. Once in class, I noticed that he sat in the back of the room in the middle row. The lesson was focused on how to locate reliable sources when conducting research. Participant 1 did happen to ask one question. He asked about how to “tell if a</p>	

source was real or fake”. The incident was the only verbal interaction I noted during this observation. Participant 1 is well-liked by peers.

I then observed Participant 1 near the end of his lunch period. He was seated with three peers and was verbally engaged with them. Due to the noise level, it was impossible for me to discern the gist of the conversation. Participant 1 is not an introvert.

## APPENDIX M: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 2

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 2</p>	
<p>Date: October 20, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 9:00- 9:15</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 2.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I observed Participant 2 in a computer drafting class working on a collaborative project with another student. I did note Participant 2 having slight difficulty staying completely focused on the assignment. However, he was quick to ask assistance from his peer. I did note all interactions with the peer to be positive and productive. Both were noted to be focused on completing the project assigned.</p>	

Participant 2 easily interacts with others and makes friends easily. I have not observed him in any negative situations. He always demonstrates a pleasant affect.

## APPENDIX N: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 3

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 3</p>	
<p>Date: September 10, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 10:45-11:05</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 3.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: Participant 3 was observed in an electronics class. He was able to focus on the instructor's comments and the objective of the lesson. I noted Participant 3 to engage verbally with peers and begin discussing the contents of the lesson. Participant 3 contributed to his group and is known to make friends easily. He interacts with peers regularly and is almost always seen to be verbally engaged with peers. I have never observed any negative interactions with faculty or peers.</p>	

## APPENDIX O: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 4

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 4</p>	
<p>Date: September 21, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 11:50-12:10</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 4.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I observed participant 4 in English class. Students were beginning to construct outlines of their research topics. Participant 4 was noted to be very talkative among his peers. He was also quick to ask the instructor for help with the assignment. At one time during the observation, Participant 4 required redirection from the instructor so that he could refocus his efforts on the task at hand.</p>	

While observing Participant 4 in the academic setting in social situations, the researcher notes positive interactions with others and a willingness to help others as needed.



## APPENDIX P: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 5

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 5</p>	
<p>Date: September 3, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 1:25-1:45</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 5.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: Researcher observed Participant 5 in an auto mechanics class. The focus of the lesson was on changing brake pads. I noted within a 20 minute span, Participant 5 was engaged in the lesson and eager to verbally and physically demonstrate his knowledge of changing brake pads. In fact, the instructor called on him 3 times during this span. Participant 5 spoke with confidence each time and peers were paying attention to him. Participant 5 has no problem interacting with peers.</p>	

I have also noted similar behaviors of Participant 5 on several casual observations during the semester. He is typically always smiling and respectful of faculty.

## APPENDIX Q: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 6

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 6</p>	
<p>Date: September 14, 2015 and September 22, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 9/14/2015 2:05-2:20 9/22/2015 11:30- 11:50</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 6.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I observed Participant 6 in a career technical class on 9/14/2015. I noted Participant 6 to have a negative verbal exchange with the instructor. The exchange centered on his lack of completing an assignment on time. Participant 6 noticed my presence and asked for my assistance. At that time, because I was</p>	

conducting an observation of the participant, I quickly excused myself from the situation.

I then chose to observe Participant 6 approximately eight days later in a different class, this time a math class. I noted him to be on task and interacting with peers. The class was engaged in a group activity and Participant 6 was verbally responding as prompted. He was noted to be contributing positively to the task at hand.

Participant 6 has no difficulty expressing himself or interacting with peers.

## APPENDIX R: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 7

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 7</p>	
<p>Date: December 9, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 10:30</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 7.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: At the research site, I was able to help Participant 7 with a problem. He wanted to approach an instructor about a problem. He was most reluctant at first. The area of concern was the course average. I spoke at length about the need for self-advocacy and the way to communicate his question and concerns positively. Participant 7 had sought my help within my current context. We discussed the plan and developed a course for action.</p>	

I followed up with the instructor who reported being impressed with his ability to communicate and advocate for himself. Participant 7 is well-liked and has always been noted to have positive interactions with peers in the academic setting.

## APPENDIX S: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 8

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 8</p>	
<p>Date: August 28, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 10:45- 11:05</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 8.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I observed Participant 8 in a science class. Participant 8 did not have any verbal interaction during the observation. He sat at his desk and passively participated in the lesson. I did note that he was quick to begin an assignment given by the instructor whereas other peers engaged in casual talk and conversation. Participant 8 did not engage with peers at all. Participant 8 is quiet and reserved, at least in this observation.</p>	

Note: I continue to validate the above findings with casual observations of Participant 8 throughout the semester.



## APPENDIX T: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL PARTICIPANT 9

<p>Observation Protocol</p> <p>Participant 9</p>	
<p>Date: September 1, 2015</p>	<p>Time: 1:30-1:45</p>
<p>Focus: Social and academic interactions in classroom and class changes with Participant 9.</p>	
<p>Events Observed: I observed Participant 9 in his Senior English class. The topic of the lesson was how to use MLA for citing sources in research papers. I noted Participant 9 to be focused on the instructor during the entire observation. He was taking notes and following with the examples given by the instructor.</p>	

I have also had the opportunity to watch Participant 9 interact with peers. He is always noted to have a pleasant and likable affect. He is very verbose with his peers and well-liked by peers. He also chooses on many occasions to help a special needs student in the gym on a near daily basis. I have observed this on several occasions during the semester. Participant 9 has stated that he was inspired by one of the coaches to volunteer to be a peer helper for the student.