GENDER-SPECIFIC READING MOTIVATION:
CONSIDERING READING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FIVE ETHNICALLY
DIVERSE FIFTH GRADE BOYS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2012
This qualitative study used a triangulation of survey, conversational interviews, and observations in an authentic setting to explore the phenomenon of reading motivation from the perspectives of a specific group of individuals. Five participants, all African American fifth grade boys qualifying for meal subsidies, gathered in a local youth facility, where they regularly attended as members. The researcher interviewed and observed the boys over the span of three months. Three major themes from the study unveiled the influence of individual interests on reading motivation. This particular group of boys was motivated to read according to measured success and competition, familiarity of topics, and varied selections of reading materials. The study’s findings could potentially influence the gender achievement gap in literacy.
Dedication

To my husband Joe, who never doubted that I would succeed.
To my children Allison, Abby, and Jackson, who kept my life balanced.

To God be the glory.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

Boys are not less capable or less intelligent than the opposite gender, but they are not finding the same success in literacy when compared to girls, especially those boys of minority background living in poverty (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Tatum, 20005). Young boys are behind girls in the beginning stages of early literacy and continue to show even greater differences as they progress through school (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Tatum, 2005). The inconsistencies of reading success from one gender to the other suggest not only that boys learn differently than girls, but also that boys may be at a disadvantage to girls at school.

Boys often accommodate for their own literacy needs and interests at school (Blair & Sanford, 2004); however, these accommodations are disguised from educators, and academic requirements do not appeal to boys’ interests. Schools are not aware of genres, time allowed for reading, and classroom structures preferable to male readers. As they advance in age, boys become less motivated to read at school. They adopt their own style of literacy and separate academic reading from leisure reading (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991).
The intent of this study was to understand more about reading motivation and how it may influence the achievement gap in reading between genders. Consideration was given to the variations between boys and girls and how they learn to read, as this study determined the significance of those differences and how they may influence the achievement of male readers. Yet, the research focused primarily on attitudes and perceptions of male readers. The purpose of this study was to describe reading motivation from a boy’s perspective and in what ways his perceptions of reading differ in academic and leisure settings. The findings of this study have the potential to close the gender gap in literacy performance by providing qualitative data necessary to meet the needs of male readers. When applied to the classroom, appropriate reading opportunities developed from this study will eliminate the existing barriers for male learners.

This unique study addressed the much-needed areas of qualitative research including reading motivation and elementary-aged male readers (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Wigfield & Asher, 1984), as it took a unique look at those who are failing to find success in reading. While the gender gap in literacy achievement is recognized internationally (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010), the gap between boys’ and girls’ reading attitudes is even more significant (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Lever-Chain, 2008; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). Also significant is the age of the participants, as elementary-aged boys will offer a much-needed and unique addition to recent qualitative reading research in this area. This qualitative study offers a strong addition to the few gender and literacy studies involving subgroups of boys (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Guthrie, Coddington, Wigfield, 2011) through qualitative design (Dunbar, 1999; Hamston & Love, 2005; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005), and the even sparser
studies involving elementary-aged male readers (Blair & Sanford, 2004; Farris, et al., 2009; Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). The researcher gained responses through survey, interviews and observations in order to acquire boys’ beliefs and attitudes about reading.

Research Questions

Principal Question
What motivates boys to engage in literacy?

Subordinate Question
In what ways does motivation differ for boys in the areas of academic reading and pleasure reading?

Important Terms

*Literacy*: Literacy includes four language arts, the two receptive arts of reading and listening and the two expressive arts of speaking and writing. Students use oral language communication of speaking and listening to become readers and writers (Duke & Carlisle, 2011). With the influence of technology and education, viewing and visual representation of new literacies are recognized as language arts.

*Reading*: Reading is one of the two receptive language arts necessary in producing written expression. According to Smith (2004), reading is thinking while having control over experiences. Reading involves the reader and his predictions, the writer and his intentions, and the relationship between the two in the representation of conventions and connections. Reading is about the people, language, and environmental conditions in which the instruction exists. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) uses three
elements, the reader, the text, and the activity to define reading comprehension, the “extracting and constructing” of meaning. Duke and Carlisle (2011) define reading comprehension as “the act of constructing meaning with oral or written text” (p. 200). According to the Report of the National Reading Panel by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000), an effective reading program should include five essential components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Reading Motivation: In addition to the five components of reading, motivation is critical in reading success. Without engagement, or the interest of a reader for aesthetic purposes, students will not desire to read (Rosenblatt, 1995). Pressley (1998) lists multiple facets that can affect a student’s motivation to read. Those factors include reading self-efficacy, reading challenge, reading curiosity, aesthetically enjoyable reading topics, importance of reading, reader recognition, reader grades, reading competition, social reasons for reading, compliance, and reading work avoidance. According to Walmsley and Allington (1995), students who receive availability of uninterrupted time to read widely and deeply are more motivated to read and become better readers. Motivation is an integral part of any balanced literacy program.

The Gender Literacy Achievement Gap: The gender literacy achievement gap is the difference in academic literacy performance between boys and girls. Data used to calculate the achievement gap is based on scores from high-stakes testing (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Zambo & Brozo,
Boys: The term, boys, used in this study will pertain primarily to those of intermediate elementary age and in attendance at public school. Special attention will be given to boys of minority background and low socioeconomic status as defined by the United States Census. References to boys will be to the gender as a whole unless otherwise stated.

**Significance of the Problem**

Reading success is possible for all students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, language, or gender. Yet, the results of reading assessments demonstrate that not all students are achieving the goals of literacy, especially those of minority background, those who live in poverty, and those of male gender (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Fleischman, et al., 2010; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). The equity of learning among all students depends upon the instruction and opportunities provided to each individual.

Most reading research neglects to acknowledge reading attitudes, but instead focuses on reading skills. In order to meet the expectations of high-stakes testing and education standards, very little attention in literacy achievement is given to motivation and pleasure of reading; yet, students with more positive attitudes toward reading spend more time reading, and become more successful (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Lever-Chain, 2008). While boys do not achieve as successfully as girls do in literacy, there is an even more significant difference in boys’ and girls’ reading attitudes (Lever-Chain, 2008; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). Due to the gender differences in reading attitudes and reading performance, boys seem have less reading motivation and reading ability. Yet, when boys
are truly engaged in reading, they demonstrate a higher level of text comprehension than less-engaged girls (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The conflicting results demand additional research in the areas of gender and reading motivation.

This study addressed the much-needed areas of qualitative research including reading motivation and elementary-aged male readers. Reading research is no longer limited to traditional forms of quantitative methodology, but as described by the editors of the most recent Handbook of Reading Research, now includes multiple forms of research methodology (Kamil, Afflerbach, Pearson, & Moje, 2011). Instead of analyzing test scores or evaluating effectiveness of instructional programs, this research study listened to the voices of those who are failing to find success in reading. The subjects were the boys themselves, and the topic was reading.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included the number of participants, timing of data collection, and possible influence of responses. The researcher recognizes and addresses each of the limitations in the methodology of the research.

Though this study included a focus group of only five subjects, the methodology of the phenomenological qualitative research enhanced the findings through depth of interviews (Creswell, 1998). The number of participants allowed for natural dialogue among commonly-aged peers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002). Short interviews were kept at a length of time suitable to the age of the participants so as to avoid lack of engagement.
The data collection was completed within twelve weeks, but the interviews were scheduled accordingly to maintain consistency while allowing appropriate span between sessions. In contrast to being an authentic setting to gain perspective on the phenomena of reading motivation, The Club also added limitations to the research procedures. The members and their families did not comply with the timeline for regular focus group sessions. Factors such as the weather, transportation, sporting events, church life, and individual situations often interfered with the anticipated goals of the researcher to gather all five boys for a specific duration of time. Even The Club itself, which supported the study, persuaded the boys on occasion to wander from the group session. For instance, one day while engaged in a discussion, the boys overheard an announcement that the boxing coach had just arrived in the building. One of the boys excitedly asked to leave. The unplanned arrival of such an influential guest outranked the opportunity to meet with an adult interviewer bearing snacks.

The subjects were of a young age; however, the questions encouraged detailed, informative responses. In effort to decrease effects of interpretations and influence, the researcher used an approved interview tool of semi-structured questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

**Summary**

Additional research is needed in the area of boys and reading motivation (Cooter & Perkins, 2011; Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). A thorough review of literature follows, detailing literacy achievement and its discrepancy among genders. The extensive review describes the gender literature achievement gap, the
reasons for the gap, and gender specific factors that influence academic success. Developmental, physical, and cognitive variables of boys in addition to socioeconomic, cultural, and school factors affect male achievement. The following review considers historical background and current literature in response to each variable. Also included is a review of reading motivation and current literature supporting the need for additional research in the area of gender-specific reading motivation. The review of literature offers compelling evidence for a significant topic of reading research.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Background

Gender differences have been an ongoing topic of conversation among psychologists, medical practitioners, neuroscientists, and educators. Stereotypes have existed for both males and females from infancy to adulthood. In many cases, the differences are no more than “all that’s nice” or “puppy dogs’ tails;” but academically, the contrast in gender performance is an international epidemic. This historical background includes a review of the research of gender in education and includes a brief history of reading research in order to determine the origins of the gender gap in literacy performance.

An attempt to help one gender overcome achievement differences is not a new challenge. The past few decades have witnessed the application of increased writing and discussion in classrooms to help meet the needs of girls in math and science (Gurian & Stevens, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). The scores of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that girls and boys are now performing at the same rate in science (Taylor, 2004). More recently, the attention has shifted from math and science achievement of girls, to the literacy performance of boys. Experts are labeling boys as learning disabled, attention-deficit hyperactivity disabled, or emotionally disabled (Smith & Willhelm, 2004; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Gurian & Stevens (2006)
propose that educators make similar attempts to assist boys in educational success as were provided for girls when they showed a need in the subjects of math and science.

The gender gap in literacy performance is widening (Taylor, 2004). Boys of all ages lack in literacy achievement and are falling behind girls in reading even by first grade (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Zambo, 2007). In many cases, boys come to school already lacking in literacy development compared to girls. Then, as they advance in grade level, the gap widens. A consideration of gender differences and literacy achievement differences from early school settings to the 21st century offers an attempt to find the origins of an existing problem.

**Gender Differences in Early Education**

The opportunities for schooling in the United States during the post- Revolutionary era were limited primarily to male students. Education was the route to social, political, economic, and religious stability through the strengthening of future American leaders, all of whom were men (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Schools were led by men and designed for young male learners.

The development of the common schools of the mid-nineteenth century replaced positions originally filled by male educators with female workers, cheaper to hire and more nurturing than their male predecessors. Men, however, still held the more prominent administrative positions. The first coeducational schools, or common schools, were opened later that century by the Quakers, and by 1900, most urban public high schools were represented by both male and female students, with females outnumbering males (Clark, 1994; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Single-sex schools were numerous
throughout the nineteenth century; but even in coeducational classrooms, gender differences were encouraged. Boys were given high expectations and taught to exhibit “masculine qualities, both inside and outside school,” resulting in a gender hierarchy (Urban & Wagoner, 2009, p. 202).

**Gender Stereotypes**

Outside of the academic setting, gender stereotypes spanned the social world. The social history of gender includes terminology, colors, and wardrobe selections that determine stereotypes of boys and girls of various periods in time. The American term *sissy* originated in the mid-nineteenth century, accepted both as a social and psychological clinical description of boys lacking in healthy masculinity. The beginning of early childhood education, nursery school, and kindergarten in the 1920s brought stereotypes of over-protected boys who “failed to exhibit the requisite independence and strength of character expected of them” in educational settings (Grant, 2004, p. 12). Female teachers, mothers, and society were blamed for stifling boys’ development of masculinity. It was in the 1930s that infant gender-specific clothing in the colors of pink and blue became popular. The increased participation of recreational activities, such as scouting and clubs for children was limited to boys or girls, specifically.

Later in the twentieth century, boys were expected to misbehave. If boys did not cause trouble, they “became objects of concern” (Grant, 2004, p. 3). Angelo Patri, a New York City principal, responded to letters from concerned parents pertaining mostly to their school-aged sons who were struggling to learn. Patri shared his views of progressivism through his regularly-published column, recognizing that schools were not
meeting the needs of *real boys* (Patri, 1904-1962). Patri may have been one of the first educators to publicly recognize the needs of individual male students.

**Gender Achievement Differences**

The earliest article criticizing the performance of boys in school comes from an early edition of Educational Leadership (Hazeur, 1965). The author, a female principal in Delaware, described the boys as academically, socially, and physically poor performers lacking in areas of grades, motivation, and grooming. A group of male role models from the community recognized the discouraging community environment of mostly unemployed men or businesses administered by women. Even the school environment consisted of women, with the exception of a few support and custodial staff. The boys at Sarah Webb Pyle Intermediate School began attending assemblies led by male role models employed in the local community and traveling to local areas of business in order to help male students develop stronger motivation to achieve. While college was not a goal for the students or even an expectation of the facilitators of the project, the school did witness positive individual results of some boys, and the principal expressed the slightly hopeful comment, “Who knows—some of our children may go to college” (Hazeur, 1965, p. 284).

Instructional practice changed in the 1960s through the 1980s as neuroscientists began to learn more about how the brain works. Research provided educators with knowledge about learning styles, cognitive skills, and the differences between male and female brains (Glazer, 2005; Willis, 2007). The awareness of differences challenged educators to question what new instructional approaches might better meet male and
female learners. Even in larger society, best-selling books about male and female differences became popular topics of conversation. The neurological findings offered increased inquisition to a significant issue of gender-specific teaching and learning. However, neurological research has not avoided criticism from educational scholars. Willis (2007) fears that politically-connected activists have used neurological research to generalize and over-emphasize phonics instruction. Continuing research is needed in the areas of neuroscience and education.

Many current teachers were in preservice training in the 1980s and 1990s and focused on helping girls improve in science and math which led to an increase in female motivation and encouragement (Wiens, 2006). This awareness led to the Gender Equity in Education Act, passed by Congress in 1994, resulting in an increase in performance of girls in both math and science and a narrowing achievement gap of both subjects. Girls earn better grades in both math and science, perform better on standardized tests, take more advanced placement classes, and attend college more often than boys (Glazer, 2005). Now boys and their underachievement in reading are gaining the same attention. Toward the end of the twentieth century, researchers began authoring books that reported boys’ poor reading performance and the gender literacy achievement gap. Two adolescent males heightened this attention after the Columbine shootings of 1999, when America further recognized “the troubled sex” (Glazer, 2005, p. 462). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 mandated the use of standardized testing in the United States and increased an awareness of achievement, or lack of, among individuals across the nation. For the first time, data recognized the inconsistency of achievement between diverse students, including different genders (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). In order to fully
understand the historical origins of gender literacy differences, the history of reading must also be considered.

**History of Reading**

Reading and writing have not always been core subjects. Historically, literacy was a privilege for only the elite and was discouraged for the working class. Literature was customarily taught out of necessity, allowing students to gain knowledge through texts rather than appreciating and reading for enjoyment. Individuals from as early as 1891 describe literacy as a frivolous threat to political and social stability. Libraries were a place for lazy boys who could better use their time working rather than “wasting their masters’ time and resources” reading popular fiction (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, p. 17).

Reading research of the 20th century centered more around reading instruction and research-based practices. The first breakthroughs in reading research began in 1879 with the work of Wundt and continued into 1908 with Huey’s interests in eye movements, inner speech, comprehension, and reading rate. The work of cognitive psychologists in the area of reading loomed in the 1970s with the work of Smith and continued to be an area of interest among current psychologists (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). The blend of cognitive and motivational processes in reading development have become more evident through reading research (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). Readers consider personal goals and interests as they make sense of text. Interests can come in forms of emotional, cognitive, situational and individual interest, each affecting the reader and his or her understanding (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Kintsch, 1980).
Historically, an evolution of reading theory witnessed the Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Interactive approaches to reading instruction. Rosenblatt (1995) preferred to use the term *transactional* rather than *interactive* when describing the relationship between reader and text, suggesting a more meshed, reciprocal connection in a particular time and place. Literature forms a person’s philosophy and perceptions, thus leading to influence his or her actions in life. Teachers cannot make this happen; only readers can achieve a response to written text. A reader is similar to an actor, interpreting, questioning, analyzing, and depicting a passage as aesthetic, or personal, meaning is applied to efferent, or public, understanding (Rosenblatt, 1995; Rosenblatt, 2005). Rosenblatt’s theory supports an emphasis on reading motivation.

In a recent report, the National Reading Panel (2000) emphasized the five critical components of a reading curriculum (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension). Without an emphasis on all five reading components, students may lack critical instruction in an area that could affect reading success. The challenge to educators to provide highly effective instruction to all students while meeting local curriculum, state and national standards, and differentiating for each child is an impossible feat without the balance of literacy throughout classroom experiences. (Tompkins, 2010)

Currently, the topics of motivation and reading attitudes have received attention in raising reading achievement. The significant topics in the International Reading Association’s 14th and 15th annual “What’s Hot” articles (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2010; Cassidy & Loveless, 2011) list *scientific evidence-based reading research and instruction* as a topic not worth considering in comparison to adolescent literacy and
English as second language/English language learners. Two topics on the list, adolescent literacy and struggling/struggling readers in grade four and above, are both considered “hot” and “should be hot” topics in reading. Even more specifically, more than 50% of the respondents supported literacy and adolescent boys as “what’s not” but “should be hot.” Boys and girls vary in their interests of genres, instructional methods, and assessments. Motivational strategies for males are not always in alignment with educational standards and traditional approaches. Nor does motivational research appear regularly in reading research.

A challenge for many reading teachers is how to help students who are not interested. Motivation is not just about a student’s attitude, but it is also about a teacher’s instructional planning. "Learning normally depends not on effort but on the demonstrations, collaboration, engagement, and sensitivity..." (Smith, 2004, p. 302) He continues to say, "At best, motivation has the beneficial effect of putting learners into situations where demonstrations and collaboration are likely to be found." While even the most effective teaching methodology does not work for every child, a teacher’s best attempt is not in telling students to try harder, but in creating the best conditions possible in which students feel motivated to learn. In many cases, these conditions may be specific to boys or girls.

History of Reading Motivation

Reading research continues to grow as local, state, and national standards demand more of educational institutions. The areas, though, which receive the most attention are not always the topics most worthy of research. High-stakes testing and scripted programs
receive too much time, money, and attention. These topics do not meet the needs of those who are struggling most in literacy (Cassidy, Ortlieb, & Shettel, 2011; Cooter & Perkins, 2011). According to Cooter and Perkins (2011), reading researchers should focus their attention on the topics that will best serve reading teachers in the development of successful readers.

According to Pressley (1998), there are multiple facets that can affect a student’s motivation to read. Those factors include reading self-efficacy, reading challenge, reading curiosity, aesthetically enjoyable reading topics, importance of reading, reader recognition, reader grades, reading competition, social reasons for reading, compliance, and reading work avoidance. While Pressley encourages teachers to use choice, scaffolding, and social interaction, he discourages the use of grading and competition, which can negatively affect motivation. Many of Pressley’s findings come from teacher surveys administered by the National Reading Research Center in the early 1990s. Pressley states, “I never lose sleep over test scores” (1998, p. 254); however, what he does lose sleep over is the declining motivation of young readers.

The growth of recent research in the area of reading motivation is evident in the contents of the Handbook of Reading Research (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Rueda, 2011) and through the work by Gaffney and Anderson (2000), who calculated the percentage of articles containing words about motivation or interest in reading. The number of articles in Reading Research Quarterly was outnumbered by the articles in The Reading Teacher until 1996, when the percentage of articles more than doubled in less than a decade. Educational journals for practitioners included more articles containing words about reading motivation or reading interest than did the more
scholarly editions. These results imply that while practicing educators have recognized the need for reading motivation in the practice of teaching, reading researchers gave little attention to the topic for reading research.

In a recent issue of *The Reading Teacher*, the editors suggest that more research include the topics of professional development, academic literacy, English learner pedagogy, and oral language development and poverty (Cooter & Perkins, 2011). However, the topic that most supports the purpose of this project and perhaps encompasses each area of research is that of student engagement and motivation. According to Cooter and Perkins, “Motivation is a fundamental part of providing effective reading instruction and is among the most powerful determinants of students’ future reading achievement” (p. 564). When students are motivated, they read more; when they read more, they achieve more (Guthrie, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2009; Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). While culture and socioeconomic differences influence reading motivation, as Rueda (2011) details through a motivational framework highly correlating cultural and motivational processes, reading motivation has an even greater influence on a reader’s success than does socioeconomic status (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Unfortunately, reading motivation is lower among boys and declines throughout elementary and high school (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991).

**Theory Relevant to the Research Questions**

Education provides opportunities for students to achieve as independent learners, becoming successful citizens, capable of collaborating and thinking critically. The work
of early scholars has helped shape the most effective instructional settings to encompass more than academic services through rote memorization.

**Constructivism**

Early scholars offered much insight to teaching diverse students, such as those included in this study. Even before the United States population included such a pluralistic society, the works of early theorists applied to current classroom dynamics. Early in the 20th century a Soviet Constructivist, Lev Vygotsky, was writing about a social constructivist approach to teaching and learning; however, it was not until the 1960s that Vygotsky’s work was made available in English. Vygotsky proposed that students learn best through shared experiences, and that teachers must provide instructional opportunities for students in their zone of proximal development, the gap between completing a task alone and working with assistance. Effective scaffolding allows students to work to their potential through the practice of gradual release of responsibility, continually helping students achieve progressed levels of independence.

**Democratic Education**

At nearly the same time that Vygotsky was studying the effects of a constructivist approach, John Dewey, a liberal progressive reformer, was proposing a democratic approach to education that connected content learning to real life experiences (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). For the first time, content was not the most important part of education; the student was the priority. Both theorists saw the need for a student-centered environment that encouraged individual, authentic, collaborative learning; each of these characteristics describe the needs of male learners.
Pluralistic Education

The philosophies of John Dewey (1916) and Vygotsky (1978) offer only the foundation of what teachers must consider when planning for students in the 21st century. Once educators understand how students learn best, they can begin to apply new standards and expectations in a learner-centered manner; however, many factors must be considered when planning instruction. Characteristics that most affect a student’s differences in learning include socioeconomic status, culture, language, and gender. Although these may be considered outside characteristics unrelated to classroom experiences, they highly affect motivation and learning. Standardized tests attempt to address these differences as labeled subgroups on the student description. However, the labels provide nothing more than a disaggregation of data that falsely places blame on a student’s background as a reason for achievement or lack of. The attention placed on student differences is given at the stage of assessment rather than where it should be at the first stages of planning, presenting, and producing. If more attention were given to student differences when planning for instruction, fewer differences would be evident in the assessment results.

Although found to enhance the literacy experience, Cambourne’s conditions of learning (1988) also apply to the general learning environment. The conditions include immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectations, responsibility, approximations, employment, and response of learning. Teaching is more than instructing and telling. Opportunities for students to inquire, discover, construct, and collaborate must exist to encourage learning and individual progress. In spite of the educational research and theories proven effective, many classrooms do not witness evidence of these approaches.
The methods of effective instruction are not implemented without strategic and explicit instruction in many ways, as there are hidden rules of constructivism, differentiated instruction, and teaching to multiple intelligence. Students must be taught to work collaboratively and communicate effectively with their peers. Students must learn how to share experiences and learn from one another.

The historical literature significant to the research questions provides the background necessary in understanding current findings. The clarity provided from literature pertaining to origins of gender differences, reading research, and reading motivation build the foundation for current and future studies. An historical review of gender differences in education, reading research, and gender achievement differences provides new questions for inquiry.

**Current Literature Relevant to the Research Questions**

**High Stakes Assessment**

Gender differences in literacy achievement are derived from many current factors in education. Those factors begin with expectations from high-stakes assessments. In order to demonstrate learning achievement, Congress developed a policy “to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (NCLB, 2001). In perusal of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a reader will note that each of the highlighted sections states positive educational goals intended to improve academic achievement through high quality teachers, principals, and schools. The continuing development of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act of 1965 were enhanced to offer excellence in education for all
students. In order to measure results and hold educators accountable, standards and standardized testing were implemented. Contradictory to the goals of NCLB, students have been left behind, especially those students of minority and lower socioeconomic background. Schools are still struggling, and the funding is not solving the issues.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducts an assessment of 15-year-olds every three years (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010). This assessment, a component of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), measures reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy in students of 65 countries and educational systems. Although the PISA results exist before and after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, there is “no measurable difference between the average score of U.S. students in reading literacy” in 2000 and 2009 (Fleischman, et al., 2010). The public law has not proven to be effective for diverse students most at risk.

The students scoring below overall OECD reading literacy averages in U.S. 2009 results were primarily male, African American and Hispanic, and those who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Gender results were not unique to the U.S.; the female students outsored the male students in all of the participating countries and systems. When analyzing the scores of 2009, a correlation exists between school demographics and literacy achievement. As the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in a school increases, the literacy proficiency level of the students attending that school decreases (Fleischman, et al., 2010). The achievement gap is clearly in existence, yet laws and educational policies have not proven to assist in closing the gap. Contrary to
governmental intentions, current school reform policies may be working to widen rather than lessen the achievement gap between groups of students.

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) findings suggest that students in the United States rank below many other countries in reading, science, and math. Munson (2011) accuses the U.S. of having an “education obsession” focused on “standards and testing” (p. 12) rather than content. “While students in high-performing countries read literature, do chemistry experiments, make music, and delve into important historical topics, U.S. students spend countless hours preparing to take tests of their basic reading and math skills” (Munson, 2011, p. 13). High stakes assessments are emphasized more than high quality, challenging curriculum. The performance difference affects standardized test scores and motivation of reading, as standardized tests are not respectful of all students.

**Awareness of Diversity**

The Civil Rights Movement gradually led to recognition of inequalities in education according to race, ethnicity, disability, and poverty; however, changes in society, both in population and education, have influenced relationships between teacher and student. No longer does the teacher represent the majority of the learners in a given classroom. (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006) Although the population of America is increasingly more diverse, the majority of teachers are white, middle-class female. Specifically, males of minority background who speak English as a second language are at a disadvantage in the classroom. Multicultural education provides attempts to meet the needs of all learners,
but African American boys continue to lag behind others in literacy achievement (Tatum, 2005).

Dr. Alfred Tatum, Assistant Professor at University of Illinois at Chicago and author of *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males* (2005), encourages teachers to center attention on meeting academic and social needs of African American students by recognizing and appreciating the lives of the students rather than focusing on their test scores. Tatum’s curricular stance follows a century-old debate between Booker T. Washington (1895) and W.E.B. DuBois (1903). Washington and DuBois disagreed whether the outcome of American education should be to maintain racial status or to empower social, legal, and political equality. Schools are still allowing lower standards for black students in reaching acceptable test scores rather than achieving goals that will change society and provide equal opportunities. Tatum (2005) challenges schools to increase reading achievement and quality education for black males in order to provide greater opportunities and help escape low economic status. Tatum’s narrative style models the specific approach emphasized in the text to connect to the needs of individual readers. The achievement gap, according to Tatum, is more than a difference in test scores. It is a result of racial and cultural feelings and differences.

**The Gender Literacy Achievement Gap**

An attempt to help one gender overcome achievement differences is not a new challenge. The past few decades have seen the application of changes in schools to help girls overcome struggles in math and science. More writing and discussion helped meet the needs of girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2006). The scores of NAEP show that girls and
boys are now performing at the same rate in science (Taylor, 2004). The gap has shifted from girls in math and science, to boys and literacy.

Boys and girls perform differently in academics and are often the emphasis of specific subject areas, as with the recent attention of boys and reading. There is evidence that girls score higher in reading than do boys (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). The performance difference affects standardized test scores and motivation of reading, and the gap is widening (Taylor, 2004). Boys of all ages lack in literacy achievement; even by first grade, boys are falling behind girls in reading (Moore, Yin, Weaver, Lydell, & Logan, 2007; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Zambo, 2007). A recent review of literature by Weaver-Hightower (2003) organized the literature into four categories: 1) Popular-rhetorical, 2) Theoretically-oriented, 3) Practice-oriented, and 4) Feminist and pro-feminist, and found eight significant contributors to what he calls the “boy turn” in education. While the review did not focus specifically on literacy, the landmark studies were consistent with those of boys and reading.

Girls are more than a year ahead of boys in reading at all ages (Taylor, 2004). The years between 1998 and 2000 resulted in a widening of the literacy gap between boys and girls. This gap widens as students advance in years. By the time boys are teens, they often show signs of detachment from school (Zambo, 2007). Hundreds of studies in the United States and around the world show differences in literacy achievement between boys and girls.

Boys worldwide are facing challenges in literacy (Taylor, 2004), and the problems do not stop with reading difficulties. Boys, who lack in reading success, often lack in confidence as a result. Later, they show greater discipline problems, suspensions,
and dropouts (Taylor, 2004). Boys are underachieving, regardless of their geographic location or economic class. Boys are less likely to complete homework and more likely to earn D’s and F’s on report cards. They are over-represented in special education courses and diagnosed four times as often with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and speech impairments. Schools are more likely to suspend, retain, and report male students for disciplinary actions (Wiens, 2006; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). African American boys and boys in poverty are struggling more than boys of the dominant culture to achieve (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Tatum, 2005). Instead of finding fault in a gender group, the fault may be in the instructional setting. “Inequitable learning opportunities and discipline in schools can lead to underachievement and disengagement of learners” (Bloom, 2009, p. 117).

Boys are not only falling behind girls academically. Studies show that they feel less respected by teachers and less confident as students. According to the American Association of University Women survey of 1996, boys responded that being smart and feeling close to a teacher were not desirable (Wiens, 2006). A teacher’s response to a young boy could determine his literacy success; a lasting impression in the primary classroom may follow a child into adulthood. Male students receive more negative feedback from teachers than do female students (Bloom, 2009). As adolescents, boys who are retained are more likely to drop out of school (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007). Fewer males than females attend college (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Unless society makes changes, the future does not look hopeful for boys.
The argument.

Not everyone perceives the gender achievement gap with boys in mind. Some argue that focusing attention on the male learners will take away from the success of females in the classroom. There is also evidence that girls may not be excelling as well as reported. A qualitative study by Warrington and Younger (2000) provides evidence that girls are suffering too. Emphasis should not be placed on boys or girls as a gender, but on groups of students who are not achieving success. The research completed by Warrington and Younger found that girls still see science as a male subject. Through interviews and questionnaires, girls expressed their intimidation by a male-dominated classroom environment. Their complaints included disruptions and irritations from boys in the classroom as behavior problems.

This information challenges teachers to find a balance needed to ensure that boys and girls succeed in school. As stated by Wiens (2006), “We must not forget about girls; pendulum swings are dangerous and all too common in American schools. The pendulum must rest in a space where our schools and society are inspiring all of our nation’s children to learn and to contribute to our society in meaningful ways.” (p. 25) Advice from the Ontario Ministry of Education website (2004) reminds educators to maintain an awareness of differences between students as much or more than differences between gender.

Reasons for the gap.

Specific causes are not yet evident for the gender achievement gap, but theories include reasons of nature, nurture, and culture (Wiens, 2006). Neuroscience research now
shows specific gender differences that affect boys’ ability to process language and focus attention. Differences exist even in how boys see printed text and how they register certain colors. Boys hear certain sounds on different frequencies than girls and take longer to process those sounds (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Rather than seeing these differences as deficits, educators must recognize the need for differentiated instruction to serve these diverse male learners. Instead of changing the boys, schools can change the curriculum in respect of boys’ development. While no two students are alike, gender specific characteristics do exist. As the research continues in order to understand gender differences, educators must take the information and base professional decisions on what is best for all learners.

In order to help lessen the reading gender gap, the reasons for the difference in literacy achievement must first be determined. Moore, et al. (2007) claims that the motivation and competency of reading achievement is influenced by parents and teachers as they perceive greater success from girls than boys. Through discussion, boys shared that teachers rarely help them develop strategies for interpreting school text in the way they need (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). The teacher-student relationship has great influence on a male’s response to reading (Moore, et al., 2007; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

**Developmental Differences of Boys**

Age has a large influence on reading achievement (Lever-Chain, 2008). By using photographs and response stickers, researchers found approximately half of preschool boys’ reading perceptions to be negative, most of those responses to “school-related reading and the process of learning to read.” (Lever-Chain, p.88). Formal preschool
settings with a strong focus on literacy instruction had a more negative effect on boys’ reading attitudes than more playful settings. Boys interpreted reading to be something that they had to do rather than something pleasurable. Very young boys respond less positively to early literacy instruction, and the difference in attitudes becomes more significant with age. By the sixth grade, boys read half of what girls do (Lever-Chain, 2008, Merisuo-Storm, 2006).

Even before boys enter school, they fall behind girls in literacy. Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K) explains this advantage to literacy learning. Researchers found, not only that literacy skills of girls are stronger than boys at the beginning of kindergarten, but also that girls had more literacy growth than boys over the kindergarten year (Ready, LoGerfo, Burkam, & Lee, 2005). Upon entering kindergarten, boys are already behind girls in reading and writing by two years on average (Wiens, 2006). Teachers respond more favorably to girls’ behaviors, both socially and academically. In contrast, the least favorable scores were of boys.

Boys learn at different developmental rates than do girls. When boys learn to read, they depend on different phonological needs than do girls. Moore, et al., (2007) found that young males could not read as many words as girls at the same age. Boys also struggled with alphabet knowledge more than girls did. Early reading difficulties influence the students’ later literacy success. The pattern continued in both reading and writing. When assessing male and female students during teenage years, girls demonstrated stronger literacy skills than boys.
Even at the age of two and a half years, boys prefer books that include excitement, imagination, and adventure (Zambo, 2007). Preschool-aged boys show less interest in reading and early literacy skills. They would rather be physically active (Moore, et al., 2007). Allowing boys to journal and express themselves freely will open opportunities for teachers to listen and learn about their students’ development toward becoming men of nobility (Zambo, 2007). The use of drama, physical acting, and inquiry-based instruction are strategies in meeting boys’ needs for developing meaning in reading (Taylor, 2004). Programs such as the use of boys-only book clubs or boys-only reading classes offer opportunities for more masculine choices in books and gender-specific topics of discussion (Taylor, 2004; Zambo, 2007). Even a boys-only bookshelf or reading corner may provide an invitation for boys to read.

**Physical and Cognitive Differences of Boys**

Schools must decide whether it is the boys or the schools that need to be changed. Even if a school decided to try to change the way boys learn, Gurian (Gurian & Stevens, 2006) would argue that it is already too late when a child enters school. He proves that gender is in the brain from the point of conception. The genomes at conception, chromosomes during gestation, and biological cues at birth all form a child’s gender development. A school does not determine how males will act or perform in comparison to females. The biological structure of the male brain is more spacial-mechanical than a female’s brain. It also favors physical rather than verbal ability. The child’s gender is then culturally socialized. Therefore, a school may not be able to and probably should not
attempt to change the boy into a different kind of learner. Instead, the school must change its approach to teach in a way that meets the learning style of each boy.

Since teachers have very little training in the neuroscience of the brain, educators may believe that there is no difference in how a boy or a girl learns, and classroom attitudes may not be meeting the needs of boys (Gurian & Stevens, 2006). Instead of seeking to change the boy or girl, Gurian suggests two goals for educators. First, the child should be encouraged to develop naturally. Second, if a disadvantage is evident for a child due to gender or environment, adaptations should be provided that fit his needs.

Strategies implemented into classrooms require little preparation. Simply by providing more wait time and speaking in a louder tone, teachers can help boys hear and process directions more effectively (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Gurian and Stevens (2004) recommend a nature-based approach that better meets gender differences. The environment of a nature-based classroom offers more personal space and opportunity for movement and noise. Boys may need to vary their seating throughout the day.

Douglass Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado adopted a more “boy-friendly” approach that successfully closed their significant gender literacy gap in just one year (King & Gurian, 2006). The teachers catered to boys’ assets and offered more kinesthetic and spatial opportunities. Teachers allowed choices for students about what they could read and write. Boys were not alone in their increased achievement, as the girls also improved.
Socioeconomic Factors

Many studies have found a strong correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and school performance. Studies exist to compare reading scores of students who are members of lower SES with those of higher levels, but there have been very few studies that consider both gender and SES (Zambo, 2007). A unique, quantitative study by Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (2007) of John Hopkins University explored how both SES and gender interact as variables in student achievement. When children enter first grade, boys’ and girls’ reading scores show slight variation. By the time these same students reach fifth grade, the gender achievement gap in reading results in lower reading scores for boys, especially those who receive meal subsidies or are of lower socioeconomic status.

The difference in reading scores is greatest for those students receiving meal subsidies. “Among children who were receiving meal subsidies, the scores of boys were significantly lower than those of girls.” (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007, p. 116) This study provides evidence that gender does affect reading achievement, especially among those students of lower SES. The authors encourage more studies to include multiple variables of gender and SES.

Another study by Foster and Miller (2007) found that the literacy gap changed in third grade. The gap of text comprehension replaced the phonics gap. Students in the lowest readiness groups had the highest amount of families living in poverty and the lowest amount of parent education.
Cultural Issues

Another factor that affects boys’ interest in reading is that of culture. Teachers must help boys develop self-understanding that connects challenging text to the lives of the readers. For African-American boys, the need is greater for texts that match the lives of the readers (Dunbar, 1999; Tatum, 2005; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). Boys want to read what is relevant to their lives, representative of their culture, skin color, and masculine behavior (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Since these particular reading materials are not always available or emphasized in school curriculum, boys may not have the opportunity to see various readings acknowledged as worthy for academic achievement.

The reading methods used in elementary classrooms are administered by mostly white, middle-class women (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006) to students who do not respond equally to the current instructional practices. Culturally responsive teaching includes more than just ethnic and racial differences. It takes into account gender, ability, and socioeconomic differences as well (Bloom, 2009). An educator must be prepared to appreciate and celebrate differences among all students. When teachers provide adaptations to support one student, others benefit. By changing curriculum and classroom environment to effectively motivate boys to read, other students will also find success.

Students will define literacy based on their cultural background. Kirkland and Jackson (2009) asked essential questions of African American males about how they related coolness to literacy. They found that the students often used symbolic patterns to connect to literacy. While the academic setting does not recognize the symbols, to the students, they are authentic expressions of literacy understanding.
Jenkins (2009) gained insight for teachers from a male African American student who struggled in reading. The student offered culturally relevant recommendations for helping students succeed in reading. None of the recommendations was an instructional approach, but rather pertained to the student’s life and authentic reading interest. The study proved that students are the most influential voice for meeting the needs of reading achievement.

Boys and Success

A boy’s success is a result of the amount of competence he feels in a subject area, but his self-efficacy does not transfer from one area to another. Boys who struggle in literacy achievement are excelling in video games, fine arts, and sports; however, they may not learn how to demonstrate efficacy in various areas of life. Boys like to be able to quickly achieve competence and have the ability to self-evaluate their success (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Educators must allow for self-concept development in literacy to encourage more success (Moore, et al., 2007).

Studies included in this review contradict the belief that boys find reading a feminine practice. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) found the belief to be a myth in their discussions with boys about reading. Boys expressed that it is not that they do not like reading; they resist the use of commonly used practices of literacy in school. Boys embrace literature when it meets their level of understanding. They wish to become fluent readers and admire other boys who have a passion for literacy and school achievement (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Zambo (2007) disagrees, stating that boys have beliefs about reading and its feminine qualities by the time they begin preschool.
Preferences of Male Readers

Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009), conducted a qualitative study of fifth grade boys at an urban school. Teacher education candidates corresponded electronically with the students to determine what motivated the male readers. The technological conversations proved to encourage literacy communication. Based on the electronic discussion, they identified the following six reading preferences. Male readers selected books that 1) had appealing covers, text, and length; 2) were by a favorite author; 3) featured realistic characters and sequels; 4) were factual with strong graphics and short passages; and 5) connected to read-alouds shared by teachers. The sixth finding about boys’ interests was the importance of support. Boys responded most favorably when they established relationships among reading partners.

Tatum (2005) used a reflective, narrative format to emphasize the importance of race and class as they pertain to gender differences. In reference to Smith and Wilhelm’s (2002) text, Tatum suggests that reading must be specific to black adolescent males, focusing more on empowering rather than functional literature. “Similar to the concept of motivating males to read by selecting texts that help them ‘fix their Chevys,’ black males can be motivated by curriculum orientations aimed at ‘fixing their lives’” (Tatum, 2005, p. 70).

Varying and conflicting studies prove the need for additional research in the area of boys and reading motivation. Brozo and Schmelzer (1997) propose ten archetypes that can motivate male readers through popular literature, and according to Zambo and Brozo (2009), boys prefer specific types of literature, suggesting that certain genres may influence reading motivation. These findings are not believed to be true among all
scholars. According to Applegate and Applegate (2010), genre of reading material and choice of activities may not be the most important ways to increase reading motivation for boys. Instead, they found when studying 443 elementary students that raising expectations and increasing higher level thinking influences motivation in a positive manner. The conflicting results necessitate additional research.

Academic achievement and high stakes testing are important in the area of reading research, but there is a wider spectrum of reading motivation. Students’ motivation to read decreases as grade level increases, especially for boys (Pressley, 1998; Scholastic, 2010). Unfortunately, increased research in the area of reading motivation usually targets the correlation between reading motivation and test scores or grades rather than motivation based on individual interests.

21st Century Reading

While reading motivation may be linked to various genres and even multiple types of literacies, the findings may be specific to gender and socioeconomic level. Not all students have access to technology nor do they read digitally outside of school. Culture and privilege influence digital understanding more than one’s generation of birth. Digital natives may more accurately describe white, middle-class adolescents with computers and Internet access at home. Yet, children of African-American and Hispanic background spend more time than white children viewing media (Hobbs, 2010). Without additional research, instructional technology could become another barrier of cross-cultural achievement (Mills, 2010).
Literacy is no longer limited to a printed traditional form (Sanford, 2005). Students read less with age and engage with technology more each year (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Scholastic, 2010). In both cases, boys’ behaviors are most extreme. They read less than girls and spend more hours daily with media, but even while playing video games, boys use expressive and receptive forms of literacy as they engage in playing or responding to games (Steinkuelher, 2010). New literacies include limitless opportunities as readers and writers develop technological and visual skills to explore and express meaning through media (Jacobs, 2010; Mills, 2010; Ranker, 2008; Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Struggling readers and writers benefit most from the use of new literacies and may be more willing to express their work through the creative variations of multimodal learning (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). In addition to struggling readers and writers, minority children, special education students, and juvenile offenders benefit from digital opportunities (Hobbs, 2010). Interestingly, boys dominate each of these subgroups. When compared to traditional books, digital reading increases engagement and comprehension (Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor & Lorimer, 2002). According to Smith and Wilhelm (2002), boys describe computer time as social connections with friends and recreation, but do not interpret the literacy connection to technology as real reading. Boys see technology as a relaxing, natural activity. When boys describe themselves as readers, they do not acknowledge technology as a form of reading, nor do they interpret magazines and other genres as real reading (Pitcher, et al., 2007).

Students must be given opportunities to read widely, including that of multiliteracies and electronic media (Duke & Carlisle, 2011). When students are given
choices and variety of texts, they are more engaged in reading. More engagement in reading results in longer times spent reading and stronger comprehension; hence, the need for more research in reading motivation.

**Male-Specific Reading Motivation**

Just as some areas of reading research receive too much consideration, others are in need of continuing study. According to at least 75% of the respondents in the International Reading Association’s 2011 and 2012 Results of “What’s Hot and What’s Not?” (Cassidy, et al, 2011; Cassidy & Loveless, 2011), motivation is an area of highest importance in reading research, yet the topic has not received nearly enough scholarly interest. The topic of male readers is not even included in the What’s Hot list; however, other topics of high importance, adolescent literacy, struggling readers, and English language learners, describe the group of male readers who struggle most in reading. The purpose of this project is to outline the topics of male readers and reading motivation and to explore how continued studies in these areas will support reading achievement.

Boys experience a heightened level of challenges in school and fall short in academic success across the world. Ethnic minority boys score lower on standardized tests than their female peers, even within the same minority group (Chatterji, 2006; Ready, LoGerfo, Burkam, & Lee, 2005). The reasons for the lower performance of male students include many factors. The majority of educators, especially in elementary school are white, middle-class females. Differences in interest of genres, and reading purpose between boys and girls influence academic literacy success. Logan and Johnston (2009) found that the difference between male and female readers’ motivational levels was
greater than the gender differences in reading ability. Regardless of their low academic performance, boys do not prove to be lacking in ability, yet they are less motivated in academic settings.

Reading attitudes may play a significant role in literacy achievement for boys, specifically boys of certain ethnic backgrounds. Kirkland and Jackson (2009) found that the functional, cultural, and contextual language of African American males widens the understanding of traditional literacy, as academic texts often differ from a student’s spoken language. Taylor and Graham (2007) found that in middle school, Latino and African American boys looked up to lower achieving same-gender peers. When using peer nomination procedures, elementary aged boys and girls selected peers who were mostly average to high achieving students. The middle-school aged girls continued to nominate same-gender high achieving students, while the boys chose lower achieving same-gender peers as they got older. More research is needed to determine why ethnic minority boys are less motivated by high academic achievement than girls.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) conducted a qualitative study involving four types of data to learn more about gender differences. The adolescent boys shared that teachers rarely help them develop strategies for interpreting school text in the way they need. They also indicated that their needs for challenge, control, and social interaction were not met appropriately in the classroom. The Crew, as named by the authors, expressed that it is not that they do not like reading; they resist the use of commonly used practices of literacy in school. The boys were also found to be very unique in their interests, reminding educators that gender is not always generalizable. Although this study was
very thorough and beneficial, a similar study with younger students could offer a new perspective on male reading motivation.

**Motivating Boys Through School Modifications**

It would be easy to blame the underachievement of boys on their many physical and cognitive differences; however, boys are not failing in all academic areas. By modifying lessons in the ways that help boys learn, teachers can help decrease the gender gap. From changing the classroom environment to offering more male role models, or adding a variety of literary choices, teachers can make instruction more effective for boys.

Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson propose that primary education should be “restructured to fit the profiles of all children.” (2007, p. 129). Education must attempt to recruit more male teachers, increase recess time, and instruct children in classroom procedures and routines. Narrowing the gap may not be out of reach. A child’s reading success depends on the examples in the home, especially those of the same gender; however, schools can enhance literacy and literature choices to help boys succeed in achievement. A father who is often engaged in reading will positively influence his son (Moore, et al., 2007). Male role models and guest speakers at school can become a part of gender-specific settings.

**Redefining literacy.**

Taylor (2004) challenges schools to redefine literacy. Boys are participating in literacy outside of school in a way that does not fit the success of the classroom. Boys lacking in literacy skills are reading technological and factual entries instead of fiction
and narratives. Discussion with boys showed that they see no correlation between the reading done personally and reading completed for language arts in school.

In some ways, boys may long to read more critically than schools allow, or interpret expression in a richer way than can be demonstrated in writing (Hall & Piazza, 2008, Ruttle, 2004). Teachers can begin by helping students develop meaningful reading and writing skills by first understanding their areas of interest (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Schools could begin by honoring informational and computer literacy that boys are already completing. By acknowledging varying learning styles and interests of boys, schools could enhance teaching of literacy (Taylor, 2004).

Many boys are already making the adaptations to meet their literacy interests. Blair and Sanford (2004) define the term *morphing of literacy*, derived from *metamorphosis*, to describe what boys are naturally doing during reading instruction. Their study showed how boys morph the literacy to make something “more personally fun, engaging, meaningful, humorous, active, and purposeful” (p. 453). Boys expressed a desire to allow for more uninterrupted time on one specific task. They often feel that teachers stop the flow of reading, while they would rather extend the time just as they do with video games (Blair & Sanford, 2004). All fluent readers need to have opportunities to build endurance to read for longer periods of time (Tompkins, 2010). Boys do not have difficulty reading and responding to texts within their interests; thus, when provided opportunities to read interesting texts and cartoons or to respond in a variety of ways, they exhibit more depth to the modified assignment. In addition to the morphing of time and assignment, boys also morph through social context. They may want to gather with
other boys to problem solve or converse about readings rather than sit quietly at a desk (Blair & Sanford, 2004).

**Redefining literature.**

Choice of literature is another way to make reading meaningful to boys. Various styles of text and content will help engage boys in reading (Taylor, 2004). School texts are often unrelated to boys’ life experiences (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Genre of text contributes to students’ reading achievement. The instructor who matches the text to the interest of the student will see greater success (Moore, et al., 2007). Even the use of joke books can help students develop fluency of reading (Ness, 2009). The implementation of Readers Theatre, comics, and informational texts will motivate boys to read in ways that are more appealing and relevant to them. The use of authentic reading will encourage boys in their areas of interest and strength (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

Many of the reading attitudes among boys are determined by interest. Boys prefer reading comics, humorous books, adventure books, and books in a series and prefer to write in a way that may differ from the traditional narrative story. Boys dislike reading aloud and are often not interested in the texts used in schools. They may not even know why they are reading and writing other than to satisfy the teacher (Merisuo-Storm, 2006; Ruttle, 2004; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

Literature needs to include a strong masculine image to appeal to boys. Zambo’s review (2007) of William Brozo proposes the inclusion of ten archetypes: the Healer, King, Lover, Magician, Patriarch, Pilgrim, Prophet, Trickster, Warrior, and Wildman. These archetypes allow boys to read about life-like male challenges and develop positive qualities of identity. Boys may choose to read challenging, statistical magazine articles
(Blair & Sanford, 2004) rather than narrative texts. To young male readers, reading is about life goals and development of self. When reading about characters similar to themselves, boys will be more engaged in reading (Moore, et al., 2007).

If Gurian and Stevens’ (2006) biological gender description is true, the gender differences of boys and girls are determined long before school begins. Still, the reading books’ depiction of gender in illustrations does little to encourage boys to become stronger readers. School readers have not changed much over the past five decades (Jackson & Gee, 2005). Students are looking at illustrations that convey white, middle class lifestyles. The stereotypical illustrations include men and boys in activities that occur outside school. Girls and women are the ones engaged in reading (Jackson & Gee, 2005).

Boys have a more difficult time learning how to interpret nonverbal cues and body language. Picture book illustrations may affect how a boy learns and understands how to form interpersonal relationships (Zambo, 2007). While girls read for understanding of relationships, boys read for new information and may analyze the text at a greater extent than girls. The emotional literacy of boys is not as developed as girls’ and must be taught. By connecting boys’ competencies with school texts and tasks, literacy can become engaging for boys (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004).

**Continuing Research**

Most reading research neglects to acknowledge reading attitudes, but instead focuses on reading skills and quantitative results. In order to meet the expectations of high-stakes testing and education standards, very little attention in literacy achievement is
given to motivation and pleasure of reading; yet, students with more positive attitudes
toward reading spend more time reading, and become more successful (Lever-Chain,
2008). The group of students falling behind most in reading performance is African
American and Hispanic students, male students, and those who attend schools with high
numbers of students qualifying for lunch subsidies (Fleischman, et al., 2010). Little
research in this country has included all of these factors of gender, race, and
socioeconomic status. The only way to meet the needs of those struggling most in reading
is to consider the targeted group of readers and the anticipated changes in future
classrooms.

The difference in literacy achievement between boys and girls is less significant
than the difference in boys’ and girls’ reading attitudes (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000;
Lever-Chain, 2008; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). Fewer boys than girls believe reading is
important or enjoyable. As students get older, they read less, and enjoy reading less,
especially boys (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Scholastic, 2010). Very little literacy research
includes factors of both boys and motivation. Most studies that consider gender as a
variable involve reading achievement rather than motivation. Motivation is also about a
teacher’s instructional planning. The most effective teaching methodology includes
demonstrations and collaboration, providing the best conditions possible in which
students feel motivated to learn (Smith, 2004).

Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2008) found boys to read with less quality than girls,
even when reading non-fiction texts; however, one of the assessment tools used in the
study was Accelerated Reader, multiple choice comprehension quizzes over the books. In
the few cases that do exist, most of the research involves adolescent males rather than
elementary aged boys. While the use of electronic responses in the study of Farris et al. (2009) may have been motivating to the boys, their responses to the questions at school may have influenced their open and honest preferences. By conducting interviews in a neutral setting outside of school, the triangulation of qualitative data will suggest how various literacy experiences may serve as motivational factors for male readers.

Research in a non-educational setting will support not only the topics of boys and reading motivation but also non-traditional literacies and their influence on reading motivation. In order to target those who represent the greatest disadvantage in literacy achievement, male participants should include those of minority background who qualify for free or reduced lunch subsidies in an urban public school setting.

Gambrell (1996) states that “in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers they must possess both the skill and the will to read” (p. 15). While research in the areas of comprehension, fluency, and word recognition are necessary, so too is attention toward reading motivation. For, without motivation, students will not have the will to read or achieve.

The gender gap in literacy performance is one of great attention in educational research; yet, discrepancy still exists between male and female students. Now that the origins have been unveiled, additional research is needed to further understand the barriers for boys in the classroom. Continued research in this area of interest will provide results that could influence the success of boys and girls in literacy performance.
Summary

There is a connection to gender and literacy achievement (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Fleischman, et al., 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). This review has included evidence of gender differences, the gender achievement gap in literacy performance, and the connection to reading motivation of boys. An awareness of the reasons and strategies for the differences in male and female performance can result in increased motivation for boys in reading.

Explicit, balanced, individualized reading instruction is the best method of addressing reading needs. However, the ability to reach individual students varies based on interests and motivation. The literacy achievement gap is not an issue to be helplessly ignored. Educators need more research pertaining to what motivates boys to read and how reading motivation may differ between academic and leisure settings (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe reading motivation from a boy’s perspective and in what ways his perceptions of reading differ in academic and leisure settings. Boys continue to be diagnosed with more disabilities, experience more grade level retentions, are over-represented in special education courses, and lag behind girls in all countries when reading and writing are measured on standardized tests (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Most reading research includes quantitative skills-based data with a strong focus on achievement scores, striving to meet the expectations of high-stakes assessments. Yet, the international recognition of gender differences in literacy achievement is outshone by an even more significant disparity.

The academic and behavioral issues of male learners are well-researched in educational publications. Even more significant but less recognized is the difference in reading motivation between boys and girls (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Lever-Chain, 2008; Merisuo-Storm, 2006), a possible origin to academic disparity. A recent increase in reading motivation research is evident by the amount of articles published in scholarly journals over the last decade (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000). Boys demonstrate lower levels of reading motivation and experience a decreasing attitude toward reading as they
get older (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Pitcher, et al., 2007); yet, reading motivation influences reader success even more than socioeconomic status (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Positive attitudes toward reading result in more successful reading outcomes (Lever-Chain, 2008), and there exists a direct correlation between engaged readers and reading achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000); thus, reading motivation is a topic of much-needed research, especially for a group of male readers who continually fall short in literacy achievement (Cooter & Perkins, 2011; Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

**Rationale**

Since the purpose of inquiry is to understand the phenomenon of reading perceptions of young boys, the nature of qualitative methodology is most fitting for this study. One of the leading criteria in selecting a qualitative approach is revealed in the nature of the research question (Creswell, 1998). Whether approaching the tradition of biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, or case study, the qualitative researcher desires to gain insight to the *hows* and *whys* of a social environment of learners in the most authentic form (Baumann & Duffy-Hester, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Mertler, 2009). The question guiding this research leads to an experience intended to make meaning from humans and understand them more deeply. A qualitative researcher believes “that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (Merriam, 2002, p.3). Qualitative research “is as much a social and psychological process as it is a systematic inquiry” (Merriam, 2002, p. 423), and the researcher
knowingly invests himself in a life-altering experience for the sake of exploring that inquisition.

Although there is an increase in literature pertaining to reading motivation, the research is limited when specific to a subgroup such as gender, race, or socioeconomic status (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Guthrie, Coddington, Wigfield, 2011). The limited findings state simply that a particular ethnic group, such as African American students, values reading to a lesser degree than Caucasian students do; however, the studies neglect to emphasize what does motivate readers.

Even fewer are the studies of qualitative design, most of which involve adolescents (Dunbar, 1999; Hamston & Love, 2005; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005). Qualitative studies including elementary-aged boys are rare (Blair & Sanford, 2004; Farris, et al., 2009), especially when another factor, such as race, is included (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). This study addresses the much-needed areas of qualitative research including reading motivation and elementary-aged male readers, as it takes a unique look at those who are failing to find success in reading.

**Research Design**

Reading research through the mid-1970s consisted of mostly quantitative methods, targeted at finding “the ’best’ teaching practices” (Hoffman, Maloch, & Sailors, 2011, p. 9) and measuring reading achievement. The following three decades led to an “increase in the quantity, quality and valuing of qualitative research” (p. 26), published in prominent research journals (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Hoffman, Maloch, & Sailors, 2011). According to Merriam (2002), the nature of qualitative research is “the idea that
meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). By using an interpretive qualitative theoretical stance, the phenomenological design of this study meets each of the four interpretive qualitative characteristics outlined by Merriam. Those characteristics include 1) making meaning of people and their experiences, 2) acknowledging “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis,” 3) processing understanding through an inductive rather than deductive manner, and 4) creating a “richly descriptive” product of research (p. 4-6).

The overarching theoretical stance of interpretive qualitative inquiry, as selected for this study, follows a similar process, regardless of the field or discipline. Most importantly, the research begins with the desire to understand a specific phenomenon. The question was formulated and a design selected, both with philosophical connection to the study. Phenomenological design focuses “on the essence or structure of an experience” (Merriam, 2002, p. 7), in this case, the essence of motivation in the experience of reading from the perspective of young boys. The setting, participants, and instruments are the cohesive components selected to explore the phenomenon of inquiry.

**Description of Setting**

The setting used for the study was a youth facility, an organization in a small Midwestern city, population of 30,418. A pseudonym, The Club, was given to the facility in order to sustain anonymity. The Club sits next to a railroad track just a block away from a dry cleaners, Penguin Point drive-in, Pizza King, local bar, and a former factory building, which has been vacant for nearly a decade. This residential area of town is distanced from merchant traffic. The same facility parking lot that sits empty during most
months of the year is overflowing with visitors on winter evenings during the community youth basketball league season. The building is attractive and well-maintained with a welcoming entrance. Just past the staffed desk, four hallways branch off in various directions. A game room/dining area and office lead to two gymnasiums, equipped with basketball courts, bleachers, and a concession stand. A library, teen room, and classroom are available for tutoring, socializing, and gathering. Upstairs is a weight room and boxing ring. All rooms remain locked unless in use.

The classroom houses tables, chairs, a computer, and large-screen television with a working video game box. The room’s bright primary colors offer a welcoming environment for tutoring and crafts. Across the hall, the wide open space of the teen room is favorable for adolescents to gather around a table or in overstuffed beanbags. The dining room is busy each evening during the school year when meals are served to the members on long cafeteria-style tables and benches. After dinner hours, members are found in the same area playing ping-pong or pinball.

Visitors are encouraged to keep all belongings with them or locked in a room. Even the library, used regularly for this study, remains locked when not in use. A staff member unlocked the room for the session, then locked up immediately following. The library is a comfortable space, carpeted and furnished with leather sofa and over-stuffed chair, artificial fireplace, and wall-lined bookshelves. The full bookshelves include hundreds of titles donated to the club, few of which are current or culturally relevant to the member population. The library collection includes many Bible-related stories, paperback trade books, and aged picture books. As with each room at the club, large interior windows give full view to those passing in the hallway on their way to the
gymnasium. Although nicely decorated and thoughtfully equipped, the library is nearly always locked, dark, and vacant.

The research setting was favorable to this study, primarily in three ways: location, purpose, and population. First, the research questions posed in this study necessitated a location outside of school where boys gathered regularly, addressing the epistemological assumption of credibility (Creswell, 1998). The more authentic the setting is to the participants, the stronger the role is of the investigator. If conducted at school, the data would have risked influence of academic expectations or “schoolish” notions. This setting was a location offering both academic and recreational activities, yet unaffiliated with any school.

The second factor of the setting that was beneficial to this study was its purpose; The Club offers both academic and recreational support to youth. Nationally, the non-profit organization offers mentoring and programs in social recreation, health and physical education, and personal and educational development. Over 4,000 U.S. facilities provide a safe, affordable community-centered environment for young people during non-school hours and during the summer. The local facility is clearly making a difference in the community. Youth willingly congregate after school and on weekends to receive athletic, academic, and mentoring support for a minimal membership fee of ten dollars per year. Dedicated staff members and local volunteers personally invest in the children who attend, providing a safe and affordable place with meals and activities. According to the facility website, 57% of the local alumni claim that the facility’s services saved their lives, while 60% of them expressed that the facility was the only place to go in their neighborhood after school. The club proudly states that 90% of their alumni have
graduated from high school. The members enjoy hanging out at the youth facility and consider it one of the best opportunities in their community. The youth center offered for the interviews a comfortable setting to congregate where the boys were already in daily attendance. Trained professionals work with the 4.2 million nationally served youth, who consist of 55% male, and 65% minority individuals. This leads to the final reason for selecting The Club for the setting.

The third way in which The Club seemed fitting for this study was by its membership population. The facility is unaffiliated with the local public school corporation, yet it serves as an extracurricular facility for over 800 members through regular activities and programs. The statistics at The Club, which is now in its 50th year serving the local county, differ slightly from the national percentages. Locally, 60% of the county members are male, and 73.2% are from minority background. Although 87% of the residents in the county are white, over 80% of the club members attend the county’s largest school corporation, where diversity is much higher. At the elementary school nearest to the club, only 36.8% of the students are white; yet, this number is still 10% greater than at the youth facility. That same elementary school has a free and reduced lunch rate of 82%, and only 40% of its students passed the standardized test for Language Arts and Math compared to the 67% state average. Over half of the members at the youth facility come from families who make less than $20,000 per year.

The Club hours during the school year were from 3:30-8:00 p.m., still not enough hours to serve all local students. Those reassigned to the alternative school for behavioral issues were dismissed at 11:30 a.m., thus waiting four hours before being able to enter The Club. Most members arrived between 3:30 and 4:30, depending on whether they
went home first or which school they attend. The Club was preferable for the study, mostly because of the individuals served. The youth facility met the criteria of the subgroups mentioned earlier in this chapter, elementary-aged ethnically diverse boys.

**Description of Participants**

Since the researcher sought perspective from a specific group of individuals, a purposeful sample of boys supported the questions of this qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). The sample desired included the characteristics of boys struggling most in reading. Standardized reading scores show the lowest performance for students of minority background, those who live in poverty, and those of male gender (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Fleischman, et al., 2010; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

To better understand the phenomenon of reading from the perspective of elementary-aged boys, members of male gender were preferred for participants in this study. In order to select the boys best suited for the study, the researcher met with the director at The Club. For the purpose of this study, all individuals have been given pseudonyms. The researcher worked closely with Jennifer, the facility director, to seek the participants who best met the criteria of those individuals lacking in reading motivation, as described in Chapter 2.

The researcher interviewed and observed five elementary-aged boys of minority background who attended public school, were eligible for lunch subsidies, and demonstrated a lack of reading motivation. Having no vested interest in the boys or the facility, the interviewer reduced the “values, biases, and understandings” (Creswell, 1998, p. 114) that might be present. Creswell cautions researchers to avoid conducting
studies in familiar sites or with previously known individuals. While most gender studies comprise adolescent participants, a purposeful sample of younger boys enhanced findings in the area of reading motivation. Each of the selection criteria was consistent with the descriptors of those boys found to be struggling most in reading performance (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Tatum, 2005).

All five of the participants attended the local public school that houses all fifth and sixth graders in the school district. The school is departmentalized, so the boys rotated among classes throughout the day, having different teachers for various subject areas.

Many of the members spend each day at The Club, only missing for school, illness, or doctor appointments as described by one member. The participants in the study, all living within twenty blocks of the facility, rarely left the local community. They either walked to The Club or were driven each day from school by family members or day care workers. During the months of interaction, no indication of leaving the city was mentioned other than a trip to the next small town for a wrestling match or to an adjacent county for a church-related event, both within 30 miles from The Club. Even just a few short weeks prior to the county-wide week of spring vacation, the boys were unaware of the upcoming break from school.

The qualitative researcher does not seek to answer a question by witnessing from a distance or by reading the writings of another, but conducts the study with vulnerability of inquiry to more fully understand and make meaning of a methodological question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002), in this case, through a focus group. Used as
early as pre-World War II for military intelligence (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005), focus groups are often used for politics and marketing research. Jonathan Kozol (1991) used focus groups to elicit an emancipating educative pedagogical instrument. Focus groups are used in qualitative research primarily for two purposes: “(a) capturing people’s response in real space and time in the context of face-to-face interactions and (b) strategically ‘focusing’ interview prompts based on themes that are generated in these face-to-face interactions and that are considered particularly important to the researchers” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 899). A focus group of boys, all experiencing the similar phenomenon of poor reading attitudes, provided empirical data of interview responses.

Focus groups range in size due to the purpose of the study. Although Kozol (1991) found that the ideal focus group consisted of six or seven individuals, the age of the participants was considered for this study. A focus group of five individuals allowed for natural conversation most resembling “everyday speech acts” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 887), while providing for a manageable setting. The small focus group allowed the boys to communicate with one another in an informal manner, as people are "more comfortable talking in a small group, as opposed to individually" (Mertler, 2009, p. 110) and “can be stimulating for respondents and so aid in recall” (Fontana & Frey, p. 705). Focus groups are beneficial when the participants are similar and more apt to converse in a group rather than a one-on-one (Creswell, 1998).

All names were given pseudonyms for the purpose of anonymity. Diante was a tall, dark-skinned boy. The confident, well-mannered youngster soon became the leader of the group, and attempted to hold the others accountable to the meetings. He lived with
both parents. His mother was employed at the food stamp and Medicaid office, while his father worked at a large warehouse. He had an “annoying” ten-year-old sister who also attended The Club and a four-year-old sister who was “actually not annoying.” Diante sang with a community male chorus. The spiritual group consisted of 18 men, singing in four part harmony. “Our oldest is I think in his seventies, and our youngest is (smiling) in his eilevens.”

Chaz, the most outgoing of the group, was a friend to nearly everyone at The Club. Despite his noticeable stutter and small stance, he was verbal and confident, especially when it came to basketball. Chaz had many siblings, in his words, “too many.” The many brothers and sisters lived in various locations. “Some live with my dad, some live with me. Well, one lives with me, my two brothers—one lives at my grandma’s, one lives with me. My sister, she just graduated from college, but she got two more things I guess. And then my other sisters—my other sister and brothers are in (nearby city).” He usually got a ride from school to The Club with several other members, then texted his mother at work notifying her of his safe arrival.

Leroy, a wiry energetic boy, often rushed through the sessions in order to get to his primary destination—the basketball court. Leroy lived with his mother, her live-in boyfriend, and their baby. Both his mother and her boyfriend worked at a local popcorn company. His estranged father was in and out of jail. At the time of this study, he did not know of his father’s whereabouts.

Elijah was a new member to The Club. His shy personality and quiet demeanor often led him to speak only when spoken to. He participated in most club activities but rarely mingled with peers.
Marcus lived with his parents and an older sister. His father was on disability, and his mother worked as a respiratory therapist at the local hospital. Marcus only participated in the first several sessions. His attendance at The Club stopped suddenly. His behavior at school reportedly resulted in a transfer to alternative school.

All five African American boys were members of The Club, qualified for meal subsidies, and were described by family as unmotivated readers. Each characteristic was significant to the purpose of this study.

**Description of Instrumentation and Measurement**

The interviewer is considered the primary instrument in a qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002); however, in order to strengthen the validity and reliability, a pre-assessed tool guided the inquiry. Several instruments were considered, but very few fulfilled the purpose and qualities of this unique study.

McKenna and Kear’s Reading Attitude Survey (1990) measures reading attitudes of elementary students through a series of questions, using a pictorial likert test. Similar to McKenna and Kear’s Reading Attitude Survey (1990) is The Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995), another quantitative reading motivation survey. Although appropriate to the theme and age of participants in this study, both surveys are quantitative in nature, not conducive to open-response from boys. Qualitative studies require meaningful experiences, an induction of analysis, and process involving rich description (Merriam, 2002). Each of the described characteristics is supported through open-ended questions without limitation of closed response.
**Motivation to Read Profile**

Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1995), designed the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), which measures both “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading”. The MRP allows for both quantitative and qualitative data collection through the administration of two tools, the Reading Survey and the Conversational Interview. The Reading Survey is a likert test, easily administered to a small group of individuals. The test includes a recoding of questions to increase validity of responses. The Conversational Interview is an individualized list of semi-structured questions with suggested prompts for narrative texts, informational texts, and general reading. The authors of the tool encourage the modifications specific to the administration in each research setting.

**Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile**

Pitcher, et al. (2007) adapted the MRP by Gambrell, et al. (1995) in order to use the tool with adolescents. The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) includes additional questions that consider technology and out-of-school literacies prevalent in the lives of adolescents. Questions from the AMRP determine what specific literacies motivate boys to engage in reading. Although the AMRP does include target teen participants rather than young children, the instrument invites opportunities to discuss varying perspectives of reading materials such as nontraditional texts and new literacies. The AMRP also includes an extension to the MRP emphasizing a comparison between school reading and home reading.

Both the AMRP Reading Survey (see Appendix A) and Conversational Interview (see Appendix B) were administered to analyze the boys’ reading attitudes (Pitcher, et al.,
2007). The Reading Survey includes a likert test, which was administered in the first visit individually with each participant. The Conversational Interview offers questions that allowed for open responses from the boys in a child-friendly manner. The researcher slightly revised the semistructured questions to meet the needs of this study and its participants, dividing the Conversational Interview into several phases for multiple interview sessions and allowing for elaboration within each section of questions. Additional questions were supplemented in response to the boys’ described reading selections, specific to the interview setting. Semistructured questions included a variation of structure in order to guide the interview process in a most authentic way (Merriam, 2002), encouraging elaboration and individual response.

Description of Procedures

Qualitative research is as much about the experience as it is the outcome (Merriam, 2002). Once a research design of choice has been determined, the sample is then selected, followed by data collection and analysis through an inductive methodological approach, during which the questions are refined. Phenomenological qualitative design follows the procedure of description, reduction, and interpretation (Wolff, 2002).

The researcher gained permission from the non-profit organization administrator to conduct the research at the facility and request eligible male students and then met several times with the director, Jennifer, to discuss details. The researcher requested a list of five male students who are of a minority ethnic background and who qualify for free or reduced lunch, each being similar qualities of the individuals who struggle most in
reading achievement (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Five eligible male students were recruited for the study, and both parental consent and child assent were obtained (see Appendix C). If parents or staff had refused to allow a boy to participate, then a new boy would have been chosen, and the process would have been repeated until five eligible participants were located in that particular setting.

This qualitative descriptive study involved interviews in a focus group, located in a setting that is natural for the participants. As in Kirkland and Jackson’s study (2009), a personal setting encourages authentic “viewpoints, values, and voices” (p. 282). The researchers conducted an ethnographic study to examine “how literacy formed and functioned within the group, particularly among the cool kids” (p. 278). By conducting the research outside of school in a small group setting, the researcher of this study was able to encourage natural engagement and informal interaction during the semi-structured interviews while recording the data for later transcribing and analyzing.

The researcher planned to observe the boys during their tutoring sessions and during non-academic activities in order to learn how their behaviors differ in both academic and leisure settings. Triangulation of data collected through observations and interviews strengthened the study while maintaining the authenticity of the boys’ responses. While some focus groups involve open-ended interviews, that format would not be as beneficial with a group of children; open-ended interviews would be better suited for adults who are more willing to provide lengthier, detailed responses. (Mertler, 2009, p. 109-110)
Following the similar design of Smith and Wilhelm (2002) and using the measurement tool of Pitcher, et al. (2007) in order to learn what motivates boys to read, researchers will seek from authentic, firsthand experiences. It is the qualitative nature to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

The Initial Visit

Jennifer, the Director of Resource Development, assisted in getting five subjects fitting the description of the research. Since most of the members are at the club each evening for several hours, the meetings were scheduled between 4:00 and 4:30. The researcher planned to meet with the group of participants over the span of eight weeks to administer the Reading Survey and Conversational Interview. The sessions were to take place each Monday and/or Wednesday at the youth organization where the boys regularly attend after-school programs. The amount of time between meetings was dependent upon both the researcher and participant needs, though it was the goal of the researcher to conclude weekly meetings within a two-month period. The timeline of visits extended beyond the anticipated schedule, as noted in Table 1.

During the first visit, a young dark-skinned boy greeted the researcher and asked, “Are you the reading lady?” Jennifer later commented that he had been anxiously awaiting the visitor’s arrival. She heard him shout that a van had appeared in the parking lot, stating that “a white lady” was walking to the door. The researcher took a fruit tray and cupcakes to the first meeting, and Jennifer had ordered pizza for the special occasion.
The researcher developed a rapport and level of trust with the boys through casual discussion including questions about family and interests. The boys had very little to say about their families, having difficulty listing all of their siblings, some of whom lived in other cities. They were more interested in discussing the various types of fruit in the bowl and the basketball game that was going to take place after the meeting. Chaz refused to eat any of the pizza or cupcakes since he had a game. Elijah was quiet during the time together, only speaking when someone asked him a question.

The boys gave a tour of the club, pointing out the two gymnasiums, the classroom, library, and offices. They were eager to go upstairs to the boxing ring where they stopped to watch with admiration an older boy deeply involved in training. The boys introduced him as a Golden Glove champion, a title worthy of praise.

Toward the end of the tour, a receptionist announced the cancellation of all evening activities due to the inclement weather. The boys’ heads dropped at the news. The game they had looked forward to all day was no longer going to happen.

**Reading Survey**

During the second visit, the boys had the opportunity to play with the audio recorder and hear their voices. They introduced themselves, played it back, and listened to their voices. The second visit involved the administration of the AMRP Reading Survey individually with each of the participants. Although the researcher did not plan to use the pre-developed multiple-choice survey results, the responses enhanced the data analysis process, and the individual sessions allowed for further observation of each participant without the influence of his peers. Survey responses provided an additional
source of data to enhance the triangulation of the research as commonalities and trends of the survey responses were analyzed.

Table 1

*Timeline of Data Collection Procedures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>Focus or Purpose of Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Met participants, built rapport, club tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AMRP Reading Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introductions, Definitions of Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Emphasis on Narrative Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Emphasis on Informational Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Observation: Club Basketball Tournament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Emphasis on General Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Emphasis on School Reading and Home Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Emphasis on Reading Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>AMRP Conversational Interview: Continuation of Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Emphasis on Books by Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Emphasis on Nontraditional Texts and Magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Observation: Club Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Observation: Club Setting Classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Visits varied in duration and span, lasting approximately 25 to 45 minutes in length every 7 to 14 days.
Series of Visits: Conversational Interview

The next series of visits involved the administration of the AMRP Conversational Interview. During each of the interviews, the researcher asked questions in order to elicit responses regarding the research questions. The focus group interviews were used in a semi-formal format to gather data (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The interviewer took caution in being “flexible, objective, empathetic, persuasive, (and) a good listener” as recommended by Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 704). The researcher recorded each of the interviews on a digital audio recorder and transcribed them in written form. The interviews and observations throughout the twelve-week period provided information from male students pertaining to their academic and selected reading attitudes.

The AMRP Conversational Interview (See Appendix) provided a structure of general emphasis for each focus group. The general topics of narrative text, informational text, general reading, and school reading in comparison to home reading prompted the semi-structured interviews.

Although it was the researcher’s intent to establish rapport and ease into the interview questions, one participant’s immediate words were, “I like reading.” The boys initially responded in ways that seemed they were attempting to please the researcher or provide correct answers. In time, they gave more authentic responses. During each session, the conversation grew more comfortable as time passed.

The focus groups typically met in either the Library or the Teen Room of the facility. Both rooms are comfortable and familiar to the boys; however, their desired
rooms in the club are both gyms where they regularly play basketball with peers of all ages.

After each of the interviews, the digitally-recorded conversation was transcribed. A simultaneous collection and analysis of data through immediate self-transcribing of the conversations increased the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the documentation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The process of self-transcribing the data allowed for greater reliability. When transcribing the interviews, the researcher used a two-column format and included observational notes from the interviews that enhanced the analysis. Each set of transcribed notes was organized by the interview date, location, and audio file. The written documents and audio recordings from the interviews and observations were stored in the researcher’s office file cabinet. The recorded information was transferred to electronic files and used for further analysis.

Several complications interfered with the anticipated schedule. After the initial visit with the boys on January 25, the group met over the next several weeks. Toward the end of February, attendance became more sporadic. The end of the basketball league brought inconsistencies for three of the boys. It became more difficult to find all five of the boys at The Club at the same time. What had seemed to be an achievable goal to meet with the boys in a focus group each week was made more complicated during the remaining sessions. Even with flexible meeting times, personal phone calls made to the parents, and cooperation of the club staff, many factors added to the difficulty of meeting as a focus group.

A researcher in a phenomenological study is cautious about pre-determining the amount of interviews and the specific length of time for each interview. “The operative
distinction is between decision and recognition” (Wolff, 2002, p. 117). More important than the amount of interviews is the fact of recognizing the process of reduction or thematization occurring during the sessions. The researcher must determine the beginning and ending of reduction in order to select an appropriate duration of data collection.

The sparser attendance of a few of the boys resulted in more frequent visits by the researcher. The anticipated duration of eight weeks extended over twelve weeks to allow more full participation. Each of the interviews was 25 to 45 minutes in length, usually occurring weekly, sometimes with a lapse between. Although many interviews are much greater in length, the age of the participants was considered. The altered timeline gave valuable insight into phenomenological understanding as the boys met in smaller groups and even a few individual sessions. Over time, they grew comfortable with the researcher, looking forward to the regular visits and asking when the opportunity would come again.

When arriving at The Club, members sign in with an employee at the front desk. Some members arrive on foot, others are dropped off in the parking lot. During their time at The Club, they are free to roam among the gyms, game room, and any other unlocked areas. The upstairs boxing and exercise areas are sometimes limited to those individuals paying for organized clinics or lessons. The Club hosts many organized events, classes, and development groups. The participants in this study expressed their disinterest in many of the opportunities, but chose instead only to play basketball. All club volunteers, many of whom are students at the nearby private university, gain permission for service through an application and acceptance procedure. Many serve as student mentors during the academic year, while other adults volunteer to serve meals, tutor, and lead the
organized groups. The intercom system, heard throughout The Club, is used to make announcements and to gain the attention of individuals or groups of members. The members of all ages seem to get along well and play together as family. However, The Club does have its share of conflict. Siblings often quarrel, and players on the court have disagreements, during which staff members and volunteers intervene.

After nine visits with the focus group, one of the boys offered to read aloud after the others were gone. When the selection of books in the club library did not seem to interest the group, the researcher volunteered to bring books from the local library to the next visit. The limited supply of reading materials at The Club caused the researcher to consider an added approach to the focus group discussions. In addition to providing questions from the Conversational Interview, the researcher brought reading materials to the sessions, offering tangible samples to prompt discussion.

During the tenth visit, the researcher brought several books including those of the boys’ favorite titles, and other nonfiction selections about various athletes mentioned during previous sessions. Upon showing the books to the boys, the researcher received an enthusiastic response. Chaz yelled, “Oh, Muhammed Ali!” As Diante began looking through a basketball book, others soon gathered around. They read captions and headings in the book. They called out the names of athletes spotted in photographs and then shared facts known about that individual. A natural call and response dialogue erupted as the boys turned each page. They shared as much about what they already knew about the basketball players as any new information they read. Wanting more time to look at the book, Diante asked, “Can I have this book?” It seemed just as important to acquire a copy of the text as it was to read the book. Toward the end of the session, one of the boys
asked if the researcher could read one of the books aloud. As she read aloud from The Story of Muhammed Ali, the boys listened, occasionally stopping to ask questions or comment on the text.

In order to continue observing the boys’ reactions to various types of reading materials, the eleventh session involved nontraditional texts. The boys had commented in an earlier session about occasional magazine reading that they did. Although they did not subscribe to magazines at home, the boys eagerly described encounters of reading magazines at the grocery store. After an extended search to find the periodicals recognized by the boys, the researcher located several magazines that aligned to their interests. The magazines featured color, short articles, and photographs. The sports and wrestling magazines featured the athletes and sports shared during prior visits. The boys immediately sorted through the stack and asked if they could keep the magazines. On the day of the last session, a volunteer was sorting books in the club library, so the group met in the teen room.

**Observations**

On the court, captains typically chose teams by selecting one team member at a time. Team dynamics, player status, ability, and favoritism were often competitive in nature, changing daily. One of the participants of the study was being punished when the researcher arrived at The Club for a group session. He had been angry that he was not partners with his adult mentor during a game. When participating in a shoot-off to select partners, the young member lost by one shot. He got angry and quit playing until the next game when he was able to partner with his mentor. When asked how that went, he
responded, “We won.” A great deal of competitiveness and winning existed in the club environment.

The researcher made observations of the boys on various occasions within The Club. Even observations of the general environment offered insight to the lives of the participants and their peers. Police frequented the facility, often sitting in the parking lot and circling the club grounds. On one occasion, two police cars stopped an automobile in the parking lot as the driver pulled up to the club entrance. A second police car immediately arrived and blocked the automobile. Even in the midst of sirens and lights of two city police cars, three children got out of the stopped car and casually entered the building. The occurrence seemed less upsetting to the children than to the researcher also entering The Club. On another day, the focus group session had to be postponed due to a public school lockdown. The Club closed its doors for the evening after a bomb threat at the local high school, as one of the members was believed to have been involved. The participants of this study regularly experienced situations of unrest and injustice. These perceptions would influence their perceptions of school in later discussions.

Although the boys were nothing but respectful during the focus group sessions, the observations unveiled slightly different behaviors. Once two of the boys went upstairs to gather around the boxing mats. Chaz had a headgear and gloves on and was practicing hitting a young girl as she shouted, “1,2,3…4…1,2,3,4,5.” Members were watching. Soon, a club staff member arrived and told the kids to go downstairs unless they were there for lessons. This upset Diante, and he refused to leave. After being told several times to leave, the researcher encouraged him to walk downstairs.
The freedom of the club activities and the non-schoolish setting were positive factors in establishing this as the setting of the study. The researcher was able to gain permission to serve as a volunteer and was seen as a typical adult helper rather than a researcher or educator. This interpretive constructionist approach was used in the cultural arena of The Club to gain true perspectives and shared meanings of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A deeper relationship was formed between the boys and researcher than that of an interviewer and interviewee. The approach of responsive interviewing allowed the research to “generate depth of understanding, rather than breadth” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The attendance was especially high at The Club in January and February throughout the duration of the basketball league season. The boys were there daily in anticipation of each night’s competition. On game days, they proudly wore their uniforms, changing immediately from their school uniforms to the team attire. Although the game schedules for each gymnasium were posted on the club walls, the boys knew which teams were destined to meet on the court and their past statistics. The researcher used this opportunity to attend on evenings and Saturdays for five weeks to observe their presence during league hours. Even on the nights when they were not scheduled to play, the boys were present on the courts. They would take the court during time-outs and between games, shooting baskets with peers or walk between the gymnasiums taking seats as spectators. Yet, their moments of observing were short-lived.

The bleachers were filled with families, mostly adults, during each league game. During game times, the club was more diverse in population than any other time of the week. Unless a game was in session, the club attendance was predominantly African
American. On game days, a wide variation of automobiles filled the parking lot, and prominent public figures filled the facility. The club member participants quietly observed the foreign crowd.

Just before playing one evening, one of the boys asked the researcher if she was going to watch his game. He also asked a man on the bleachers, the only person cheering for him. The club members were some of the most dedicated and committed players in the league, and the ones with the fewest fans.

Cognizant of this study’s focus, a researcher would be remiss to fail an explanation for the detailed basketball commentary. Even during the focus group interviews, basketball consumed the conversation. The boys recalled details about particular games and calls made by referees. They referred to other peers by the team they represented or particular plays they made. Clothing was also a dominant descriptor of peers, especially one’s shoes or team shirt.

A sudden change in attendance occurred at the conclusion of the basketball league. They boys came more sporadically, dependent upon the weather and other factors. Rainy days kept some of the members away, as some of them walk to the club. Those who had attended for over four hours each evening during the basketball season were now sometimes present only one day each week.

Diante showed the most interest in meeting regularly. He even left a message on the researcher’s cell phone with the club director’s permission when he desired to meet. Usually the first to meet the researcher at the door of the facility, he was always willing to meet and often asked questions about the duration of the meetings, suggesting that the
researcher meet with sixth graders the following year so that he could continue to be a part of the group.

The Teen Room, Reading Room, and Classroom were usually vacant or occupied by only a few students, either early elementary students or small organized groups. Only once during the visits was one of the fifth grade participants in an active tutoring session. If in the Classroom, they were playing video games on the big screen television or playing the drum set.

**Data Analysis**

Twelve weeks of observations and interview sessions provided rich qualitative data that captured the boys’ reading attitudes. The use of two major sources of data collection, the Reading Survey and the Conversational Interview, strengthened the research through triangulation of data. Although “Objective reality can never be captured,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5) triangulation of data through interviews and the survey strengthened the study while maintaining the authenticity of the boys’ responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002).

In order to reduce the limitations and problems of the interview process, the interviewer avoided the domination of one individual’s conversation during the sessions by encouraging each participant to engage in the discussion (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The researcher followed a process of analysis that includes a familiarization of the data through recognition of patterns, clarification of ideas, coding of themes, categorizing and sorting of common units, and a final synthesis of concepts in response to the research questions (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). By having a sole researcher,
interviewer, and transcriber of the project, the level of familiarization was high, therefore increasing the variability and reliability of the findings.

Following Creswell’s (1998) spiral image contour, data collection led to data managing, a process simultaneously organized with data collection. Numerous readings of transcripts and memoing assisted in hearing the boys’ reading perceptions. Horizontalization of data involves the process of separating meaning units from overlapping statements. Acknowledging each statement with equal value made themes and meaning more evident (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994) The next step involved detailed descriptions, categorization of five or six themes or “families” as described by Creswell, and interpretations of the data. Emerging patterns assisted in developing a coding scheme to meet the trends of the data. The coded responses were categorized and sorted according to research questions, themes, and trends.

Continuing to follow the methodological design of the phenomenological tradition, the reporting of findings concluded the research. The researcher then began to interpret findings from the data analysis. Pseudonyms were used as the analyzed data was written in narrative form. The findings provided further understanding of what reading motivation means from the perspective of young male readers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore reading motivation from a boy’s perspective and in what ways his perceptions of reading differ in leisure and academic settings. Continued research in the area of gender-specific reading motivation is needed in order to address the gender achievement gap in literacy (Cooter & Perkins, 2011;
The research methodology of this phenomenological qualitative study allowed for response to the research questions in a manner that considers the natural, authentic perspectives of children. The researcher administered the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey and Conversational Interview, developed by Pitcher, et al. (2007) with a focus group of five ethnically diverse fifth grader boys to analyze the boys’ reading attitudes. A local youth facility provided a natural setting to engage with the boys. Methodological structures of data analysis strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings to determine what motivates boys to engage in literacy and how their perceptions of reading differ in academic and leisure settings. The setting, participants, and instruments are the cohesive components selected to explore this phenomenon of inquiry.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The nature of qualitative research is “the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). From an interpretive qualitative stance, a phenomenological design was used to explore gender-specific reading motivation from the perspective of five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys. A qualitative researcher’s interpretation during data analysis comes from Dey’s use of three “I’s”—“insight, intuition, and impression” (as cited in Creswell, 1998). Each was applied to the data analysis of this study. The results of this study are organized by the research questions and then according to the themes and patterns unveiled through the data analysis.

Restatement of Research Questions

Principal Question

What motivates boys to engage in literacy?

Subordinate Question

In what ways does motivation differ for boys in the areas of academic reading and pleasure reading?
Results

What Motivates Boys to Engage in Literacy?

The tool used to consider what motivates boys to engage in literacy was the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). Adapted from the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) includes both a Reading Survey and Conversational Interview designed to understand more about what motivates teens to read (Pitcher, et al., 2007). Although the participants of this study are fifth grade preteens, the AMRP includes adapted questions about electronic resources and the reading students do on their own, topics that support the purpose of this study.

The Reading Survey.

The Reading Survey (see Appendix A) measures a participant’s “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading” through a series of twenty questions, 10 questions of each category. It can be administered in a whole group setting, taking approximately ten minutes. For the purpose of this study, the surveys were completed individually.

On the second day at The Club, the researcher invited each boy into the Teen Room to individually administer the AMRP Reading Survey (See Appendix A). As in the MRP (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), each survey statement of the AMRP included four responses in a likert scale fashion, each representing 1 to 4 points. The 4-point scale elicits more accurate responses from elementary students who might be confused by 5-point scale or who might mark a neutral response from a 3-point scale. In order to avoid marking the same response for each question, the survey responses are
listed in varied order from positive to negative and from negative to positive, then recoded to measure the score.

As advised by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996), the researcher read the survey statements aloud rather than instructing the students to read the survey independently. Motivational reading surveys often elicit higher responses from more proficient readers; however, these results may be inaccurate, as less proficient readers may get frustrated with the survey questions. By reading the survey aloud, the researcher allowed reliable results from readers of varied proficiency. The researcher took time to explain that the scores would not be graded or shared with others. The boys were encouraged to listen to each choice and provide honest responses. Each survey session was approximately 15 minutes in length.

When responding to the sample question about ethnicity, Elijah asked which one meant “black.” The term African American was not easily recognizable by any of the boys, especially when accompanied by descriptions including Asian/Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic. The language of the survey did not seem culturally relevant to the participants. The adjectives used in the survey were not consistent to the adjectives used by the boys during the interviews. For example, the word “poor” was used in the survey to describe a less proficient reader, yet the boys did not use the word poor in that context. The words very good, interesting, and ok were not consistent with the language used by the boys in the interviews. The only form of literacy used in the survey is a book, which limits the interpretation to traditional reading of texts. Had the survey been written in a more compatible style, the participants might have
responded differently. No survey is completely void of bias. In this research setting, some of the vocabulary of the survey was unfamiliar or inauthentic to the boys.

Diante was the first to complete his survey. He wanted to linger and eat the watermelon made available during the session. After only the second meeting, he was already comfortable and could easily hold a conversation with the researcher. While Diante’s self-concept was the highest of the group, he had the greatest discrepancy between the “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading” (see Table 1). Diante’s attendance was the most reliable of the group.

Chaz was the most talkative of the group, regardless of his stutter. He discussed each of the survey responses and made comments of explanation throughout the survey. His comments were mostly positive, even when he noted that he enjoyed being in a quiet library because he rarely heard people screaming there. Chaz’s day care provider picked him up from school and dropped him off at the club each day. He was proud of his basketball moves and his cousin who played for Detroit. After completing the survey, he brought a ball to the classroom to show his athletic ability, then returned again with Leroy to talk and get more fruit. Chaz demonstrated self-confidence and a desire to learn. Chaz was the only participant whose survey results demonstrated a higher “Value of reading” than “Self-concept as a reader”.

Marcus was doing homework in another room when he was called in for the survey. He was wearing headphones, which he removed once he got settled. He was very quiet and polite. Marcus responded with 3 points on 13 of the 20 questions, which indicated rather neutral responses. Marcus’s attendance at The Club tapered off during
the semester, eventually ceasing. About the same time that he stopped attending The Club, he was placed in the alternative classroom at school due to behavior.

Elijah was the most resistant to leave the gym. Although he seemed hesitant about meeting and felt that he needed to continue with practice, he slowly warmed up during the survey, smiling and talking a little when the survey was complete. He was most comfortable when all of the boys met together and needed encouragement to speak in the group. He had the lowest “Value of reading” score in the group.

Leroy arrived at the club later than the others. He was anxious for his game and somewhat hurriedly finished his survey. Scoring equally in both “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading”, Leroy scored the lowest of the five in “Self-concept as a reader” and in the Full Survey results; yet, he responded with nothing less than two points on any given survey question.

The boys’ scores varied in the area of “Self-concept as a reader.” Marcus, Elijah, and Chaz all had a raw score of 31 out of 40 in that category. Leroy demonstrated the lowest self-concept of reading with 27 out of 40, and Diante scored the highest self-concept with a 40 out of 40. These scores were later representative of the perceptions evident during the focus group discussions.

None of the boys preferred to read out loud rather than to self, in most cases recording reading to self with a higher score than reading out loud. The boys responded that knowing how to read well was very important or important; yet, they responded that people who read a lot are interesting rather than very interesting.

Elijah had 2 responses scored at only 1 point, never telling friends about good books he reads and stating that as an adult he will spend none of his time reading. Both
questions were in the subcategory of “Value of reading,” resulting in the lowest value of the group. Diante and Chaz each had a single response scored as a 1, Diante’s in “Value of reading,” describing libraries as a boring place to spend time and Chaz’s in “Self-concept as a reader,” worrying about what other kids think about his reading every day.

The individual survey sessions allowed for interaction between the researcher and each participant while providing insight of what was to come from the focus group discussions. During the time with each participant, the researcher continued to build rapport. Just as cited in a similar study with adolescents (Pitcher, et al., 2007), discrepancies existed between the reading survey and the conversational interview and are addressed in the results.

Table 2

*Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Self-Concept Score</th>
<th>Value of Reading Score</th>
<th>Full Survey Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaz</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diante</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scores indicate raw data

**The Conversational Interview.**

The second part of the AMRP, the Conversational Interview (see Appendix B), was used to design and organize the focus group discussions. The Conversational Interview was designed to be used as an individual interview between a teacher and
student (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), but for the purpose of this study, was modified for ongoing focus group sessions. The sections of the AMRP Conversational Interview focus on Narrative Text, Informational Text, and General Reading, as originated from the MRP (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). An additional set of questions, School Reading in Comparison to Home Reading, were added to the AMRP (Pitcher, et al., 2007) to elicit a clearer understanding about multiliteracies used both in and out of school. The AMRP includes revised language and additional questions that inquire about the expansion of reading experiences. For instance, questions were added about magazines, emails, and Internet usage. The semi-structured format of interviewing allows for authentic responses and elaboration of topics closely related to the research questions.

The Conversational Interview was expanded from its original design, allowing for elaboration of responses in the focus group sessions. During each of the ten sessions, a specific area of reading was explored. The Conversational Interview questions were used as a guide, and the interviewer included deeper questioning strategies throughout the sessions in order to encourage natural discussion.

The sessions often began with a series of consistent questions including “What did you read today?” and “What have you been reading lately?” Soon understanding that the conversations all focused on reading, one particular boy often began the focus group with a positive statement about reading such as, “I like reading,” or “Reading is fun.” This is evidence that the boys were not always genuine in their responses. Chaz, although he spoke positively about reading, rarely acknowledged that he was reading.
On two different occasions, when asked to share about something they were reading, the boys burst into laughter, looking at one another. Diante admitted somewhat apologetically, “I really haven’t been reading.” He then followed with a summary of the last book he had read, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Often when asked about reading or reading interests, the boys would provide a summary of a text. Instead of sharing why they liked a book or making connections, they responded as one might on a reading assessment. They emphasized story elements such as names of characters and sequential happenings of the story, all on a literal level. The boys’ descriptions of reading neglected to include reader factors demonstrative of any aesthetic stance.

On one occasion, when asked whether anyone had read at school that day, Diante replied proudly, “Yes, I actually did. That same book I was telling you about last time. We had a test on it. Kind of.” Reading at school seemed to be associated with assignments, assessments, and scores.

By the fifth visit, the question about what they had been reading brought an interesting response. Elijah complained that he had already answered that question, adding that it had not changed. Chaz quickly interrupted that he had been reading all kinds of books. When asked to share more about those books, he laughed, looked at his peers, and replied, “Um, I forget.” After coughing, he added, “I have something stuck in my throat. Um, I read, um, this book. I forget the name of it. I forget.” When asked what it was about, he said, “I didn’t read it all. I read 2 pages, because I didn’t have enough time.” When in a larger group, the boys seemed cautious about sharing what they were reading; however, on occasion when one individual arrived early to a session or met
casually for a short time with the researcher, more specific responses were provided including book titles or verbal summaries.

The boys provided more detail about what they had been reading when in individual conversations with the researcher than when in the focus group. When in a group of peers, the boys often avoided the topic of personal reading or found humor in discussing their own reading. The coolness in their group responses about reading may mirror their reading attitudes in school settings where larger groups of peers are present. Boys may be less apt to share reading responses in larger groups of peers.

During the tenth session, the researcher again asked the boys what they had been reading lately. After the initial response of laughter, Chaz added that he had been reading. “I read something. I read Ralph and the Motorcycle. I mean, Run-wait…R-R-Runaway Ralph.” He described the book as “just crazy. It was adventurous and stuff.” The entire class read the book and “had to do a poster on it.”

When the boys gathered in a focus group, less attention was given to provide detail about individual reading. When one-on-one with an adult, each boy was more apt to talk about his daily reading. In either case, the reading was nearly always referenced to a school setting. Diante said that most school reading was done in Social Studies where, according to Chaz, they read about “old people and stuff.” They shared that most of the reading was done from a textbook. Although most of the reading was completed in Social Studies class, it was more difficult in Language Arts. They had more difficulty describing the types of reading done in Language Arts. “She just teaches us, like, I don’t know how it works. She just makes us come up with new words…and other stuff,” a more outcome-based response from Chaz.
When discussing reading done from school textbooks, the boys demonstrated the least engagement. All textbook reading was described as a chore, and the boys used the fewest words when responding to the topic of the reading. Although research says that boys prefer nonfiction texts, this study did not find that nonfiction textbooks engaged male readers.

Chaz described a recent reading engagement. “The last book I read is in my backpack, and I forget the title, ‘cause I-I didn’t read the title. I just grabbed the book so I could hurry up and sit down ‘cause my legs was hurtin’. So I hurried up and got the book. It’s a good book. I-I’m glad I grabbed that one. It’s a good book…I only read to like page 5.” The boys claimed reading pleasure only by default. When haphazardly grabbing a book, Chaz enjoyed reading the text. However, he claimed the enjoyment from reading only the first five pages of a short novel. The boys all admitted to starting books and not finishing them. Yet, they spoke with pride of the books they had begun and those that they carried or acquired.

**Reading Defined.**

During one of the initial sessions, the boys were asked to define reading. Diante quickly responded, “Fun and important.” Chaz added that reading is “words in a book.” Their short responses included little depth; however, with some encouragement they elaborated in their definitions.

According to Diante, “Where you learn a lot of words is from reading, so if you can’t read, then basically you can’t speak if you think about it.” Chaz added that reading was similar to talking, “‘cause you’re like, talking and stuff in reading. Some of the words in the book, are actually what you are saying.”
One’s involvement in reading can be described simply in Diante’s words. “You just, like, look at the book and sound out the words and talk.” When a reader comes to an unfamiliar word, his advice is as follows. “If you come across a word you don’t know, take your time and sound it out and your vocabulary gets bigger and bigger. That’s how I read.”

A structural theme emerged in the focus group as the boys described their definitions of reading. The group demonstrated a basic understanding of reading and its relationship to the other language arts of speaking, listening, and writing. Oral language communication of speaking and listening is highly influential to becoming readers and writers (Duke & Carlisle, 2011). Additionally, the boys defined reading as a process of decoding words, reading with accuracy, and developing vocabulary. They used strong literacy components such as *vocabulary*, *writing*, and *spelling* when describing the importance of reading. In fact, their definition of reading aligned rather closely with three of the National Reading Panel’s five components of reading instruction: phonics, fluency, and vocabulary (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

With fewer than six years of formal public elementary education, the youngsters spoke with terminology acknowledged by reading experts.

The boys’ reading definitions were accurate; yet, most significant is perhaps what was not included. The boys lacked any interactive stance of reading comprehension when defining reading. When asked about reading, the boys nearly always responded that reading is fun and important, but never used terms that demonstrated any connections with what they were reading. They checked out books from the school library, stated popular titles, and sometimes summarized a book, but they never shared what they really
liked about a book. The boys shared little or no aesthetic stance to reading (Rosenblatt, 1995). Instead, reading was described only in efferent form. The boys read for fulfilling expectations or for learning, but not for engaging with the text in an emotional way.

As defined in Chapter 1, reading is much more than decoding and vocabulary development. According to Smith (2004), reading is thinking while having control over experiences. Reading is more about the relationship between the reader and the writer. Duke and Carlisle’s (2011) definition of reading comprehension, “the act of constructing meaning with oral or written text” (p. 200), is far different from that of the boys.

Elijah said that a negative aspect of reading “sometimes is whatcha’ reading about and like, if you don’t have very good eyes, the print, how big the print is, the font size and uh, there’s not much else that’s bad about reading.” Although the boys defined reading in positive ways and responded to prompted questions pertaining to reading with words like “fun” and “important” and comments such as “I like reading,” those phrases contradicted the tone of literacy in other statements. They were unable to provide evidence of enjoyment through connections with text when defining reading.

Value of Reading.

Diante likes reading, because “when you read you learn a lot of stuff and like, your vocabulary expands and you get to like, things you’ve never seen before and get to see a whole bunch of pictures.” Chaz added his thoughts about the value of reading and learning. “They can help you in life later.”

Diante plans to attend Ohio State “’cause it’s close to home and they have good academics supposedly, and I think it’s true, and their sports program is always good, so…” His desire is to become a lawyer “that defends the good person, not the bad
person.” He learned about lawyers on the television show, Judge Judy. “For the NFL, though, you have to do all kinds of stuff. You have to be good at football, you have to have a good background, you have to have an education, ‘cause everybody in the NFL had to go to college to play football to be in the NFL.”

The boys give credit to various individuals in their reading ability. Parents, teachers, and daycare teachers served primary roles in reading instruction. When asked how they would achieve their goals for adulthood, the boys replied that one must stay in school and get good grades. A value of education was evident in the discussion of future goals. The boys have dreams of pursuing higher education and careers. Each of the boys was able to verbalize the importance of school and reading to one’s future. Of course, they connected the discussion topic to the importance of academic achievement and sports.

Yet, school is not just a place to achieve academic growth. When asked about the best things at school, Chaz stated that it is a place to “hang out wit’cha friends every day.” When asked how he feels at school, Chaz responded, “like, good, safe.” The value of reading and academics is associated with the feeling of community. In addition to future success, school also offers safety and security.

When asked about reading goals, Chaz expressed a desire to do “super better ‘cause it gonna’ be harder and stuff.” His other goal was to get in the high ability class like his older brother. Chaz listed the things he knew he had to do. “Like, get all A’s, um, study hard, and a whole bunch of other stuff.” According to Chaz, one’s high ability status was transferred to other areas. “’Cause if you do good in that, then that’s
something they will put you in like groups in basketball and other stuff. And, uh, you’ll pass the grades. You’ll get A’s and B’s, and all that other stuff.” By Chaz’s description, once an individual was defined as high ability, he or she would be entitled to a successful outcome. Chaz went on to convince the group that he was intelligent enough and capable of doing the work in high ability class.

**Themes Emerge**

Throughout the process of analysis, a familiarization of the data led to recognition of patterns, clarification of ideas, coding of themes, categorizing and sorting of common units, and a final synthesis of concepts in response to the research questions (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The sole researcher, who was also the sole interviewer and sole transcriber of the project, experienced a high level of familiarization, therefore increasing the variability and reliability of the findings. The following sections represent the “families” or themes that emerged through the coded responses and data analysis (Creswell, 1998). The themes, meaning units gained from horizontalization of data, were sorted according to the research trends.

In addition to understanding more about the boys’ definitions of reading and value of reading, the data analysis revealed two prominent themes in response to the principal question of this study. The first theme that motivates boys to engage in literacy is measured success through competition and acquisition of reading materials. The second theme was in the familiarity of language and topics as a motivational influence in literacy engagement. Both themes are described in the following sections.
**Measured success.**

Diante described a program called Read 180 as a place only for poor readers or “if you have, like, problems reading.” He followed that comment with a quick response. “I’ve never been in there—I don’t know what it is.” In another session, he quipped, “Last time that I was tested on reading, I was like on the level Z or something.” The boys were well aware of what happens when a student’s scores are below the expected range and were quick to defend their own performance. Competence of measured success was important to motivating their interaction with literacy.

According to the focus group discussions, reading was a goal to be mastered and measured with success. Comparable to an athlete’s perception of a game, the player, in this case the reader, must have the equipment and then focus all attention on winning. A reader must have the book, visualize the goal, and finish as a winner. Little attention was given to the process of enjoying the text or reading with an aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1995). Consistent with the research of Smith and Wilhelm (2002), male readers desire competence over anything else. They want to be good at reading. Measured success was supported in two primary areas, those of competition and of acquisition of reading materials. The following sections describe the two areas of measured success in greater length.

**Competition.**

“(He) ain’t got no talent.”

“I just don’t want to make you feel bad.”
“Not in basketball! You know how many times I beat you? Last time I beat you 21 to 2!”

“I wasn’t even playing. I was letting you shoot.”

“I wasn’t even shooting. I was doing lay-ups.”

Whether discussing academic challenges or those on the basketball court, the boys demonstrated competition during the focus group discussions. While this sample dialogue has nothing to do with reading motivation or engagement with literacy, it is representative of the competitive culture of the boys. They compared shoes, behaviors, game scores, and athletic ability. Their conversations with one another resembled arguments as they bickered about talent.

The participants spend many of their after school hours at The Club, where teams and opponents are significant to club activities. “They just put you against people in your (boxing) class. Like, if you suck, then they’ll put you up against sucky people. Now if you’re good, then they’ll put you up with a good person.” Upstairs in the boxing ring, opponents are assigned to those of similar ability. On the basketball court, team captains often select team players, one player at a time. A strong awareness of competition and one’s ranking or status existed among the group. Although these examples are purely sports-related, similar responses were given to describe academic situations.

Diante and Chaz both stood out in the group as verbal individuals, especially competitive in nature. “You get in trouble more than I do here,” stated one. “Nu-uh. They be sayin’, ‘(Diante)’, every time he does something bad. They are like, come sit at the front desk.” They often made comments to each other about athletic ability, but the competitive nature was evident in behavior as well. The members had a keen awareness
of any issues among the club community. When an announcement was made about a student needing to report to the front desk, the boys stopped to banter about past offenses.

One individual knew that his score on the language arts Acuity test was one point away from improvement from the previous assessment. “It was 85 (%) this time, ‘cause, if I would have got 28, it would have been 89. There are 32 questions, so 3% for each question you get right.” Sports and behaviors are not the only areas in which competition was evident. When asked about recent readings, the boys shared their reading level or recent statistical achievement score, comparing their own scores to their past scores. The boys defined reading as a competition of scores, assignments, and assessments.

When asked about something that a teacher had done to make reading enjoyable, one of the boys was quick to share about a game to practice spelling. Being one of the lengthiest responses during that session, he shared all of the procedures of the game. He went on to share his team’s score and details from his own performance. “We had 59 points. I misspelled fiddle. I said one d…and there was supposed to be 2.” Although the game was not directly associated with reading, it demonstrated the importance of games and competition in a school setting. At the time of that session, much of the school day was spent in preparation for the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP). With an increase in time spent on standardized assessments, the boys welcomed a change in routine, especially one of competitive nature.

In attempt to measure their own reading success, competition and scores motivated the fifth grade group of boys. Competition is a natural part of the boys’ daily life, one that comfortably connected reading to authentic experiences.
More books are better.

Diante was angry that he did not yet have *Cabin Fever*, the latest book in the Wimpy Kid series. He usually gets the books as gifts or borrows them from friends, but he is most satisfied when he acquires his own copy. “I only own, like, three of them.” When sharing various book titles of interest, the boys also included whether the book was owned or borrowed. They were quick to point out when a book was borrowed from the library or owned by a friend. It was clearly not as impressive as when one owned the book. The sense of competition in reading was more than an academic ranking and one’s reading level. A reader’s status could be judged by book acquisition.

“I read the whole entire thing. It was a chapter book. It had (pause) five chapters in it.” Diante’s inclusion of length in his description of a book he read was similar to most of the book discussions. Before describing any content details or plot summary, the boys shared the length of the book or how much had been read thus far. In addition to whether or not a book is owned, another significant detail when discussing books was the length of the text. Once the boys established whether they owned the text and the length of the text, further book descriptions could be included.

Since acquiring books helped define one’s status as a reader, the researcher often inquired about the contents of the boys’ backpacks. Seemingly used as more of an accessory, empty backpacks traveled to and from school daily. Helping explain the trend, Leroy shared, “because you don’t know if you might have, like, a bunch of homework or if you might not have any.”
The familiar.

“It’s all stuff I already know…I could learn something I didn’t know. Most of the time I already know some—most of this. (mumbles) This is boring.” Diante preferred to read about topics that were familiar, choosing the reading that he described in the quoted statement. When given a choice, the boys selected reading materials that pertained to familiar topics. A similar attitude of familiarity was evident when selecting club activities to attend. When asked about an upcoming summer camp offered free of charge at The Club, Diante responded, “I really don’t care. I’m not coming.” Although he planned to attend The Club each day, he had no interest in the said camp. “I’m not doing camp. ‘Cause I dunno’ what it is. If it’s not basketball or football, I don’t really care about it.”

The most natural flow of conversation existed when the group discussed topics familiar to them. Similarly, the books and subjects the boys were most engaged to read were topics that were familiar to them. They chose to talk more about books they had already read rather than what they were currently reading. Rereading books and reading books in a series were preferred to beginning something new. More specifically within familiarity are two areas of language and topics, more clearly described in the following sections.

Familiar language.

During the eleventh session, Diante arrived later than the others. Chaz greeted him, asking, “D-d-did you just get here? You’re sweatin’, ya know.”
Diante answered, “Cause I was playin’ basketball at my house. I was playing basketball at my house ‘cause my grandpa was getting his haircut, so I had to wait. So, I was just playing basketball while he was getting his haircut.”

Chaz responded rhythmically, “Grandpa hadda’ getta’ fresh CUT!”

When speaking with one another, the boys often repeated their own words or what the other had said, adding emphasis to a word or phrase in a lyrical manner. This call-response pattern occurred when they communicated with one another, but not with the researcher. When responding to interview questions, the boys answered more formally, speaking in complete sentences.

During another session, two boys chatted casually with one another as in the following conversation.

“What size shoe do you wear?”

“What size shoe do you wear?”

“I’ll buy those off’a you.”

“What?”

“’em shoes.”

“What size shoe you wear?”

“8”

“Too bad, I wear a 6 and 7s.”

“Hey, you got small feet!”

“You land like this, Boy!”

“No, I don’t want that, no.”
Rather than greeting one another with a “Hello,” the boys frequently used a quick exchange of conversation following a particular topic, in this case shoes. The boys were very aware of shoes—types, color, style. When referring to a particular individual, they often asked about the color of his or her shoes as an identifiable characteristic. Representative of their common dialogue, this example demonstrates the short phrases in quick exchange used when speaking with peers. Never did the boys use the common dialogue structure when talking about reading. Reading was reserved as a more formal topic of discussion.

Changes in language usage were evident during various times of the interviews. When answering questions, the boys typically responded in Standard English. As discussion became more active, the language gained more speed and slang, common to the African American culture. When discussing familiar topics such as sports, the boys would often use even more African American Ebonics and call-and-response format to their conversation. A clear distinction of language usage was evident on the audio recordings dependent upon the topic of discussion. On one particular day, an African American adult mentor stepped into the Teen Room. The language changed immediately to one that was incomprehensible to the Caucasian interviewer.

The dialogue and natural language of the participants is significant when considering what motivates the individuals as readers. Many of the reading materials listed during the focus group sessions were not representative of the language most authentic to the boys’ everyday lives. Textbooks, library books, and the books on the shelves of the library at The Club include little if any of the common language spoken on the basketball court or in the boys’ homes. Uncharacteristic to the grades and test scores
of these individuals is a deep multi-cultural evidence of language that extends beyond Standard English. The boys in this study are able to switch to and from one dialect to another, communicating in multiple ways with unique groups of people. The boys are equipped with linguistic abilities unrepresented in academic settings and unaccounted for in standardized assessments. While able to shift from one dialect to another, the boys’ reading motivation is surely influenced by the natural flow of one’s prominent oral language, rarely used in printed text.

**Familiar topics.**

The boys described reading differently than they described other activities. Each time the focus group met, the researcher asked about what they had been doing. They were usually in the gym playing basketball and often brought a ball to the room when the group gathered. While dribbling, basketball was a popular discussion topic.

When asked about reading and what it really is, Chaz began talking about Little Debbie Cosmic Brownies. On another occasion, he left the room to check on something. Many times when given a challenging request, such as to define reading, someone changed the subject to one of more familiarity. When the researcher gradually directed the conversation back to reading, discussion often slowed or diminished. Connections were made through discussions about playing basketball and playing computer games, but not about reading.

Sports was a highlight in each of the boy’s lives. Any discussion point tended to move in the direction of sports. Sports even impacted the data collection, as the weekly sessions with the boys went well until the club-sponsored basketball ended. Then,
attendance became more sporadic. They were disappointed when the basketball league ended. As Elijah described, “It’s really all I had to do.”

The Club hosts boxing clinics for interested members. One of the staff is a former boxer and involved the members in attending occasional local boxing matches by providing club transportation. During the data collection of this study, several of the club fighters won and advanced to the championship round of the Golden Gloves. Boxing serves as a form of discipline and athletic training, but is unique to the club members. Other youth in the community are more involved in school-related sports such as soccer, basketball, baseball, golf, and football. The local newspaper features team and player results from the school events, but rarely celebrates the success of this nationally recognized sport. Only once during the span of this study were the boxers included in the sports section of the newspaper.

Another unique interest among the club members is World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), a televised program, which according to the boys is, “fake stuff.” They were able to name all of the lead wrestlers and clearly describe the events of particular matches. They were astounded to find that the researcher did not regularly watch WWE on television. One of the boys was proud to share that he was attending a WWE match in a nearby town within the county.

The conversation often shifted from sports, to reading, and back again to sports. Interestingly, books pertaining to the familiar topics like boxing and wrestling were not represented in the reading materials provided in the club setting. Mostly including fiction, the library in the facility was not well-matched to the participants of this study. Taking it on herself to explore the shelves of the community public library, the researcher sought
reading materials that would support the familiar interests of the boys. If they were motivated to engage in verbal discussion within the familiar topics, maybe their reading motivation would be influenced in a similar manner.

“Oh, there’s Wilt Chamberlain!”
“I know. That’s the dude who scored 100 points in the game.”
“That’s Wilt Chamberlain.”
“That’s the best NBA player ever. He way better than Marcus Jordan.”
“Yeah, he scored 100 points in one game--100.”

When provided books both from the club library and from the individually selected books on topic from the public library, the boys chose the latter. Most interested in reading about what they already knew, the boys chose books with covers of athletes they recognized. Naturally sharing a book with a peer, they proceeded to talk about the pictures, stating information they knew from watching sports channels on television. Social reading within a familiar topic provided rich opportunity to make reading connections.

**In What Ways Does Motivation Differ for Boys in the Areas of Academic Reading and Pleasure Reading?**

In order to explore the differences of motivation in the areas of academic and pleasure reading, the researcher analyzed the data from the Reading Survey and Conversational Interview in addition to making observations at The Club. Reading and rereading of transcripts helps in recognizing key phrases and concepts. The results revealed two main themes. The first way motivation differed for the boys in academic
and pleasure reading was dependent upon the setting, as literacy was a situational practice dependent upon various settings such as The Club, home, and school. In addition to setting, the results showed the significance of style of literacy to reading engagement. Several styles of literacy included are textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and media and technology. Each of these themes will be described in the following sections.

**Significance of setting.**

Reading motivation varied according to setting. The following sections outline how three settings of The Club, home, and school influenced the boys’ reading motivation. The boys referred to reading as a situational practice, mostly done at school. Through extended focus group sessions, insight was provided to how the boys perceived reading in two non-academic settings of home and The Club as well as at school.

**Reading at The Club.**

A strong sense of community was evident at The Club, resembling that of no other. Even in a facility mostly populated by children, discipline and understanding existed. The culture of the club members involved a vocabulary unfamiliar to and disrespected in the public school setting. Most members, predominantly an ethnicity of African Americans, spoke in a dialect that differed from Standard English. The language was not vulgar or inappropriate, but it differed from that in other settings. Those qualities common within the club community varied from the outside community. Just as the primary sports of WWE and boxing were unique to The Club members, the vocabulary also varied when communicating about those sports. Using terms such as *sparring*, a term used to describe the small blows in boxing, was common in the culture of The Club.
The reading materials available at the facility seemed out of place and were not culturally relevant to the regular attendees at The Club. The books on the shelves in the club library targeted white, middle-class readers; the topics and characters represented the white, middle-class culture. Non-existent were books about boxing or wrestling entertainment or books featuring African American individuals. Even talking about reading in such a setting seemed to conflict with the purpose of those present. The students joined as club members to have a safe place in the summers and evenings after school to get a hot meal, socialize with others, and gain academic support. They could read at school and expressed that reading was something they only did at school.

In nearly twenty visits to The Club, the researcher saw a participant reading only once outside of the focus group sessions. Marcus was in a tutoring session during one of the afternoons when the group met, reading homework from school. When initiated by the researcher, the boys read on occasion during the group sessions. Otherwise, during each visit, the boys were engaged only in recreational activities, including video games, boxing, and mostly basketball. Even while talking about reading during the interviews, one of the youngsters typically dribbled a ball.

**Reading at home.**

When asked whether they read at home, some boys agreed that they read at home and others denied ever reading at home. When asked to include a list of evening events, the list included such activities as watching television, showering, eating supper, and going to bed. Reading was never included. When reading at home was mentioned in a response, it was nearly always initiated by the interviewer.
At home, Diante has a shelf full of books, including Little Bill books. He sometimes lay on his sister’s bed at night to read. However, he specifically added that he read only if she had reading homework. Diante shared that his family subscribed to the local newspaper and that he regularly read the newspaper. However, in a later session he admitted that he had not read the newspaper for at least two weeks. At home, the boys saw their parents read on Facebook or read the Bible. Otherwise, they perceived reading at home only as something required when one has homework.

When asked whether their parents read at work, the boys first answered that they did not. Although several parents have jobs that require them to spend time on the computer at work, the boys did not perceive that as reading. The jobs of the boys’ parents include a clinic receptionist, a merchandise warehouse line inspector, and an employee at the welfare office. None of these positions require reading, according to the boys. Their perceptions suggest that real reading does not occur while working at a desk or in a factory. Their connections to reading at home were mostly with books and academics.

Thus, the relationship to reading at home was limited to school assignments, newspaper and Bible reading, and online social networking.

Reading at school.

The boys knew their level of reading, their Acuity scores, and that poor readers attend READ 180; however, they were unable to describe aesthetic characteristics of readers (Rosenblatt, 1995) or connections resulting in comprehension. Never were descriptions used that implied comprehension or enjoyment of academic reading.
The boys claimed to do most of their reading at school in the classroom and the school library and preferred to read both alone and socially, depending on the situation. They seek advice from peers on what to read but dislike reading with others who are slow and having others correct their reading. The boys described school in terms of outcomes, social interactions, and injustices.

*School: A place of outcomes.*

School is a place to measure success and failure. At the beginning of each session, the researcher asked the boys about their day. Their responses summed up a day’s learning with minimal words or even an acronym. “We took Acuity.” “ISTEP.” When asked to elaborate, they added, “It was like, it was easy,” or “I got 28 out of 35.” They shared their statistical scores in detail, recalling the percentage correct and how many questions were missed. Instead of sharing anything that they had read or learned, they expressed only outcomes of grades and test scores. The assessments were not strongly disliked by the boys. “I kinda’ enjoy it ‘cause if we get done we can play games on the computer.” The assessments consume a great deal of school time, which takes away from reading and other school activities.

The assessments and outcomes the boys described were equivalent to the accomplishments in the school setting. More important than any activities, projects, or experiences school might have offered, the boys only remembered their quantitative rankings, failures, and achievements. Reading motivation is highly influenced by one’s feeling of community in a particular setting. According to this group of boys, the school community is a place of tasks that must be accomplished prior to engaging with peers.
The boys described academic and social communities as separate components in a single school setting. The activities of the academic or reading community are those to finish in order to engage in the activities of the separate social community. Thus, reading was perceived as something that was completed before social relationships could be encountered.

When asked about places outside of school that he enjoys reading, Diante’s response had a sense of resentment toward out-of-school reading experiences. He responded, “One time I was in daycare and we had to read a book every day,” then added, “Last time that I was tested on reading, I was like on the level Z or something.” Two statements, seemingly unrelated, express the boy’s need to validate his dislike of reading to his reading success in school.

Chaz’s desire for reading success was to earn high ability status. He believed that he was capable of joining the high ability class and looked forward to the exclusive opportunities of that group. The high ability rank had more to do with one’s status than academic gains. Chaz recognized and described the privileges of extra-curricular activities dependent upon one’s academic standing.

Grades were a way that the boys described reading at school. While most of the boys earned average to above average grades, they spent little time on academic pursuits outside of school. Most class assignments were completed at school, and perceived as something to finish prior to moving on to other life events. They had a strong awareness of how they performed on assignments and tests, and expressed displeasure when grades were lower than anticipated, yet when asked if they studied, the response was the same: “No, I don’t study.”
Another opening question at each session was about what they were reading at school. Commonly, the boys responded not with what they were reading or enthusiasm about a specific title; instead they more often shared their latest scores on reading tests or described what they “had” to do in reading class, or how quickly they finished the assignment. They described reading at school as a task required for completion.

When admitting that they did not read at school or did not witness others reading, the boys were quick to justify a reason for their responses. The excuses varied from week to week, sometimes due to testing; at other times, they claimed that they did not read as much when there was an altered schedule or just before a break from school.

*School: A place for social interactions.*

As stated by Diante, “You pretty much read everything, a lot of stuff.” The boys discussed the reading they did at the community pool concession stand, Bible reading at church, and on signs and menus. “You read at school obviously. Everybody knows you read at school. Ugh.” Which was their favorite setting in which to read? “School reading, because you can do it by yourself or with friends. That’s where you get most of your friends is from school.”

Self-proclaimed as one of the smartest kids in the class, Diante spent time at school figuring out how to complete all of the assignments as quickly as possible. He proudly explained the daily procedure. “We look up on the whiteboard and see what our assignment is…and start working.” The work was completed in a collaborative format. “We’ll go to each others’ table, ‘cause he (teacher) doesn’t mind if we work with our friends. Then we’ll go to each others’ table and like, work, you know, work around with
each other. That’s how we do it.” This efficient daily routine allowed the students to complete all of the necessary tasks at school in order to participate in what they desired, social interaction with technology. The boys viewed school as a series of tasks to accomplish in order to socialize with peers.

Once the students finished with their required work for the class, they gathered to play Primary Games and Dune Buggy on the computer. “Sometimes like when I die on the level or something, while my partner is playing, I’ll be doing homework. We all do it like that. Two people’ll be playing, and two people’ll be doing their homework. And they’ll die. Other two people will start on their homework, and we’ll be playing.” Diante admitted that they still worked on school assignments while others took a turn at the game.

When asked how reading might be more enjoyable at school, the responses followed the theme of social reading. Diante expressed his pleasure in getting to move around the room to sit near friends while reading.

Once redirected to the topic of reading at school, the boys admitted that they liked to read in groups too. They preferred sitting together during the class’s weekly visits at the school library. They talked about the library visit in synchronicity with physical education class. In both situations, they attempted to stay together. At the school library each week, the students have the opportunity to read and check out books. During statewide standardized testing week, however, they watched a movie instead. Diante thought it was probably due to the testing. “She (the librarian) knew we had been doing that, so she just probably wanted to let us off easy.” Outside of school, the boys never
visited a library. Even free reading during library time was seen as something rather challenging.

While the boys enjoyed social reading, there were times they did not prefer reading with peers, such as when the peer was a poor reader. “A lot of times I like to read by myself ‘cause I don’t like to wait on people that can’t read good. I’m not trying to be mean or anything, that’s just how I am.” When reading with others, it is important to Chaz that the readers have “the same book.” He does not welcome having someone correct his reading, stating, “I don’t want them to say it. I want myself to sound it out.” Diante also prefers reading alone, “because if they aren’t a very good reader, if it takes them a long time to read,” he feels hindered by that experience.

The boys responded contradictorily to literacy engagement. When given the choice of reading with someone or reading alone, the boys claimed to desire reading alone; yet, when giving voluntary responses to literacy engagement, most involved social encounters. While social reading and the combination of friends and reading seemed to be important to the group, the relationship between reading and friends existed only at school. When asked whether they talked with their friends about what they read outside of school, they said that did not happen. As explained by Diante, “’cause when I hang out with my friends, we’re usually playing sports and we’re usually not thinking about school. Like, to me, like school, like (pause), sometimes you talk about school in school. Like, when I get out of school, I’m just regular. (pause) Time to play.”
School: A place of injustice.

“School’s boring! It just is. The teachers always yell at you every day. ‘Cause whenever they lose somethin’, they think the kids do it…They be thinkin’ that everybody is doin’ stuff. But then they all, like the one time, me and wait-no…My teacher lost her purse and her phone, and she thought the kids stole it, and it was inside of her desk. She didn’t even say sorry or nothing! She thinks kids are thieves! But she need to be checkin’ her own house before she think it’s the kids.”

Chaz’s description of school included no academic vocabulary, but was a passionate statement about the relationship between teachers and students. When asked about school that day, he launched into an outspoken depiction of this scenario. Diante avoided the conversation, humming while Chaz paced and vocalized his response. The discussion shifted to a new subject, then Chaz asked if he could go play basketball.

The feelings of injustice in a setting that encompasses a young boy’s reading experiences must have an impact on his reading motivation. Even if the teacher has the students reading about social justice and empowerment, the lesson is lost with one personal encounter of distrust. In the lives of these participants, the feeling of community and the actions of individuals prevail over any instructional method. The boys described school as the safe-haven, the place where they strive for success and recognition; yet, after just one negative circumstance, the school setting became a place of injustice in the midst of the the most influential relationship—that of teacher and student.
Style of literacy: efferent vs. aesthetic.

In order to further explore what motivates boys to engage in literacy, one must consider the physical setting of the reading and the style of literacy in that particular setting. Each interview session began with questions about what the boys had read since the last meeting. When prompted, the boys listed readings from school and titles from library books checked out from school during the assigned library time.

Several questions pertained to the weekly library visits during school and what books the boys chose to borrow. Chaz proudly announced that he had a chapter book but he did not remember the title. Diante enjoys both fiction and nonfiction, usually checking out books from the library that are humorous or selecting biographies about sports heroes. A few of the most popular titles mentioned included *Diary of a Wimpy Kid, In the Land of the Lawn Weenies and Other Warped and Creepy Tales*, and *Captain Underpants*. When asked about the *In the Land of the Lawn Weenies*, Diante replied with a smile, “Ah, that book doesn’t just even have just one story. It just has like different stories about longs and hot dogs. It’s dumb. I will never read that book again. It’s just dumb.” The boys often discredited their favorite titles or dismissed the reading as though it was not worthwhile.

In addition to reading books that are funny, the boys in this study enjoyed mysteries that left them in suspense and books about real crimes. One book in particular was a book assigned at school. The teacher gave the students a choice between four different books, a favored approach to reading. The boys appreciated being able to choose a title to read. When asked how they learned about the books they read, the boys
claimed to be most influenced by what they saw on television and movies. Books that were released as movies were popular among the group.

Another book summarized during one of the sessions was about an actual police rescue. The boy’s explicit detail verbalized in the retell of the short chapter book included rich vocabulary such as fragmentation grenades, or “frag bombs.” When asked how he knew so much about frag bombs, he responded, “Video games—MW3 Mighty Warfare 3—it’s an army game…I play that game at home.”

Textbooks.

Dianté’s favorite subjects are language arts and physical education, because “language is easier and P.E. is just fun.” He describes the reading textbook in the following way. “It’s talking about stuff that is not very interesting.” He wished that the book was instead, “something that teaches you about stuff you didn’t know, something that’s interesting, just funny to read, and like just different types.”

The Conversational Interview includes questions of various genres of text. During the informational portion when asked about something that they had recently learned by reading, Chaz shared about a basketball book, and Diante recalled a passage from school about the Great Wall of China. They included more detail in their descriptions of the informational text than in their descriptions pertaining to fictional texts. The boys seemed to enjoy telling what they had learned, often including numerical details such as dates and length of time spent building the Great Wall. When asked more specifically about the readings, one replied that the reading was from a school textbook. The other boy recalled the facts from a library book, interestingly, from months before.
Newspapers.

In order to challenge the boys to think of other types of literacy engagement, the researcher asked the boys what materials they read other than traditional books. After mentioning newspapers and magazines, they added that their favorite sections of the newspaper were the police blotter, sports section, the front page, comics, and church news. One boy preferred the Hi and Lois comic.

When asked why each section was preferred, Diante explained why the front page was so engaging. “If it’s on the front page, it’s like the best thing or the worst thing that’s happening in (the city).” After a short pause, he added, “but most of the time it’s the worst.” Each boy had specific sports teams that he followed in the newspaper. They were particularly interested in the sports teams from the private university in town, as each of them had a student mentor from the university. Interestingly, the police blotter in the newspaper provided information about real life, according to the boys. They liked to “see what kinds of crimes are going on.” Interests in the particular sections of the newspaper supported the community connection to reading mentioned earlier. The participants wanted to read about what was familiar and what was really happening in their lives.

On the same day as the last focus group session, the local newspaper published an article featuring The Club and its boxing program. The photograph accompanying the article included one of the participants from this study with the boxing coach. Although Diante received the local newspaper at home, he was unaware that his friend was featured in that day’s issue. Even Chaz did not know about his own picture until he was at school. He heard from the school administrator about the article. “The person who works at my school, like, he works with the discipline and stuff, and he saw me in the hallway and he
said that he saw me in there.” Then, Chaz saw the article for the first time when he arrived at The Club later that afternoon.

**Magazines.**

The boys’ families did not subscribe to magazines or have them delivered to their homes. However, Diante responded that he did read magazines stating, “The only magazines I read are WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) magazines.” When asked where he read the magazines, he did not suggest home or school, but casually named a locally owned grocery store. The boy sought out reading material in a place of retail during family shopping trips. This pursuit of nontraditional reading led to a slight modification to the next focus group session.

In order to explore levels of engagement with non-traditional texts, the researcher traveled to various grocery stores in the community before locating the WWE magazine. She brought several magazines to the eleventh visit.

The boys’ responses of “Oh!” “Oooh, I want this!” and “Dude!” were some of the most enthusiastic expressions of all of the sessions combined. They welcomed the issues of *Sports Illustrated*, *WWE Magazine*, and *UFC Magazine* with great enthusiasm. The boys huddled together around a magazine, pointing out pictures and sharing in amazement the athletic feats of those photographed. Although they had read magazines before, they were unfamiliar with what a subscription was and how often issues were published. They argued over whether the information was current. When Elijah stated that the sports statistics were probably outdated, one of his peers pointed to the issue date of the magazine.
Again, Diante was in awe that everyone did not share his passion for World Wrestling Entertainment. “I can’t believe you (researcher) never watch wrestling… You know it’s fake, don’t you? Do you know that it’s not touching? (pointing to photograph) But doesn’t that look so real? Like some of it is real, ‘cause I watched the, uh thing where it was telling how it was fake, but they say it was more um, it was wrestling secrets. It said that a lot of it was fake, but more of it was real.”

When asked what made magazine reading different from book reading, Chaz answered, “You gotta’ lot more stuff in this and plus it’s more entertaining.” Diante repeated, “yeah, more entertaining.” When describing the process of reading magazines, the boys commented on their pleasure of “flipping around” in the text rather than reading each page in sequence, as in most books. They claimed that the pictures enticed them to read about the athletes. Admittedly, not all magazines were entertaining. When asked if they would like to explore cooking magazines, they explained that more important than the magazine layout was the topic or theme of a magazine. Only those about sports, specific sports, interested them. However, even the excitement about magazines was short lived.

The following week, when asked about their experiences with the magazines, the boys said that they had read and enjoyed them, learning more about sports. When asked if they had shared it with anyone, Chaz was quick to respond, “That’s mine forever.” Diante said that he read the entire magazine and learned a little. “I actually read at my house this time.” When asked if he has a favorite place at home to read, he replied, “Yeah, my room. That’s the only place.”
“Nah, not today. I’m not, I’m not, I’m not even done reading my other one.”

When asked if Chaz would like to take another magazine home to read, he did not see any reason to do so. He already had one copy, which seemed like enough. “Well, we all see that this magazine is boring, so I don’t want it. But I do like the poster. How ‘bout this? How ‘bout I take the poster out and I take that (other magazine)?” One week before, this particular group was especially enthralled with the idea of taking a magazine home to read. Now, they asked to keep a poster, exhibiting the importance of acquiring the magazines as much as a desire to read the articles. Even sports magazines were less enticing than the week before. Yet, the posters were still important.

*Media and technology.*

*Out of school.*

When outside of school, the boys learned from various forms of literacy such as SpongeBob movies, video games, and WWE magazines. The boys often got ideas for new reading material from their friends or from media. Yet, the boys initiated very little discussion about technology. When asked about whether they had computers at home, the boys listed various forms of technology; however, not all had access to the Internet. The Club had computers and video games accessible to the members, but only once did the researcher arrive to find the boys playing video games. Several of the other members regularly used the computer in the classroom for social networking. Other than viewing over another individual’s shoulder, the active involvement did not seem to engage the participants of this study.
Chaz had an iPod that allowed him to learn about motorcycle safety. He watched YouTube videos that read to him about how to be safe. He spent time learning about basketball on his iPod, but confused the meaning of websites and search engines when sharing about his technology experience. When asked to explain the steps to follow on the Internet, Chaz replied, “I would say, ‘What, you know how to spell and read!’ I would say type in Google and type in anything you want.” Diante added that one must “type www dot whatever website you want to get on dot com.”

When asked about sending and receiving email messages, Diante denied any regular involvement with email, stating, “I don’t know what I’m doing about that stuff.” Another participant added, “I don’t know how to do it and I don’t have an email address.” The boys did not all participate in social networking, such as Facebook.

When asked how reading is different on the computer, the boys claimed that the Internet has a lot more to offer than books. One boy stated that he preferred reading on the Internet to reading traditional books. Another claimed that he would rather read hardcopy materials, because there was too much to read on the Internet. The games, though, are an added attraction to the Internet. Again, as when describing books, the accumulation or ownership of technology seemed to be as important as the active involvement with the materials. The boys were quick to share if they owned an Xbox, iPod, iPad, or in some cases, multiple items. When asked how they used the technology, they responded that they played games, went on YouTube, and looked at pictures.
In school.

During scheduled weekly visits to the school library, students had access to approximately 30 electronic readers, specifically Kindles. The boys wished that e-readers were also provided for regular in-class use. Their reason is simple. “It’s more fun because it’s using technology, and technology is always fun.” They like the assistive features on an e-reader that make reading easier. An e-reader allows the reader to have words sounded out. A reader also has the option of hearing the text aloud by the touch of a button. Although the students had no downloading capabilities at school, they scrolled through titles to find one that sounded interesting.

One of the boy’s favorite video games at school was available on a website, Primary Games. When asked whether he reads while playing, he shook his head and responded, “You just use arrow keys.” While describing how he learned to play, his surprised expression was, “It’s reading!” He was quick to add that the reading is only at the beginning. Once a player understands the game, he no longer needs to read. Several sessions later, he was no longer intrigued by the game. “I beat it too many times, so I don’t want to play anymore.” The familiar is important, but the boys still welcome a comfortable challenge.

The school computer lab is a place, described by the boys, to go “on games.” They did not perceive technology in relationship to reading. They spent computer time playing games and advancing to new levels rather than surfing the Internet or exploring websites. Computer games and YouTube videos were popular among the group of boys in this study. When prompted, they acknowledged that they read when on the computer, but they felt that the reading was different than how they read books.
Evidence of interest.

It was after the eighth visit that one of the boys asked if I would like to hear him read. After stating that he wanted a book that he felt was not too easy, he selected Great Bible Stories from the shelf in the club library. He stalled several times before reading aloud. First, he admitted his nervousness. Then he searched for a new book once he realized that the binding was coming apart and pages were coming loose. He asked for help from the researcher requesting, “You pick a book that would be, that you think would be my level, ‘cause I don’t know.” The researcher found an Amelia Bedelia book to read. After just a few pages, he stopped. “Like, how many pages are in this?” he asked and then counted 56 pages.

He put that book aside and began reading a Shaquille O’Neal book. His oral reading was fluent, and his expression demonstrated evidence of his confidence and ability to comprehend. As he turned the page, he suddenly interjected, “Holy, good gracious alive! Oh my God!” Instead of reading the words on that page, he described what was happening in the picture. He moved to sit closer to the researcher and read about the athlete pulling down the backboard while dunking a basketball. When asked how tall the player was, Diante was quick to find the answer in the text. He continued through the book, reading the captions accompanying pictures and looking at each photograph. More memorable than his oral reading was the discussion he had about the pictures and additional information learned from the regularly televised program on the NBA channel where O’Neal is a sports analyst.
The Farewell Visit

After the focus sessions had ended, the researcher saw Diante during a chance visit to The Club. In conversation she asked, “What will you read this summer?”

He replied, “Uh, magazines.”

When asked what the last day of school would be like, Diante stated simply, “Boring. It will probably be fun, though, ‘cause the last day of school…” He quickly turned the conversation back to the magazine he was holding, pointing out the latest feats of John Cena and World Wrestling Entertainment. It was back to the familiar, back to a comfortable topic.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to explore reading motivation from the perspective of five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys. The secondary focus of the study was to examine how the boys’ perceptions of reading differ in academic and leisure settings. Most gender-specific reading research is limited to quantitative skills-based data, focused primarily on achievement scores in order to meet the expectations of high-stakes assessments. The findings show that boys are lagging behind girls in all countries when reading and writing are measured on standardized tests (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Zambo & Brozo, 2009). Yet, there exists an even more significant disparity than reading performance.

In addition to the well-researched educational publications of academic issues of male learners, are the more significant but less recognized differences in reading motivation between boys and girls (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Lever-Chain, 2008; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). An increase in reading motivation research published in scholarly journals over the last decade has found reading motivation to be an origin to academic success (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Lever-Chain, 2008). The
influence of reading motivation is especially significant for boys. The male gender demonstrates lower levels of reading motivation and experiences a decreasing attitude toward reading as they get older (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Pitcher, et al., 2007). Reading motivation influences reader success even more than socioeconomic status (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Reading motivation is a topic of much-needed research, especially for ethnically diverse boys who continually fall short in literacy achievement (Cooter & Perkins, 2011; Gaffney & Anderson, 2000; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

**Principal Question**

What motivates boys to engage in literacy?

**Subordinate Question**

In what ways does motivation differ for boys in the areas of academic reading and pleasure reading?

**Methodology**

In order to best explore the principal and subordinate questions, both pertaining to the phenomenon of reading motivation, an interpretive qualitative theoretical stance was a natural fit for this study. The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) was used as a data collection tool. In addition to the two AMRP components, the Reading Survey and Conversational Interview, observations were conducted. Five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys served as participants for study in the authentic setting, a youth facility of which they were all members. The setting, participants, and instruments were all cohesive components selected to explore the phenomenon of inquiry.
Major Findings

In response to the principal question, “What motivates boys to engage in literacy?” the following findings emerged from the survey, interviews, and observations. These findings are specific to the five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys.

- Competitiveness is a motivational factor in reading.
  - Measured success is a motivating factor in reading.
  - Measured outcomes of reading are competitive goals.
  - Acquisition of personal reading materials helps readers define success.

- Reading is about making real connections.
  - Reading materials most familiar to the reader are motivating.
  - Familiar language may be a motivating factor when selecting reading materials.
  - Familiar topics of interest are motivating.

Having explored the subordinate question, “In what ways does motivation differ for boys in the areas of academic reading and pleasure reading?” several findings became evident. Each statement comes from the data analysis of five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys.

- Varied selections motivate readers.
  - Reading is a situational practice, influenced by a particular setting.
  - Social reading is preferred in most situations.
  - A textbook is not a preferred form of reading material.
o Authentic texts such as local news and topic-specific magazines motivate readers.

Discussion

As stated in Chapter 2, motivation is a “fundamental part of providing effective reading instruction and is among the most powerful determinants of students’ future reading achievement” (Cooter & Perkins, 2011, p. 564). Unfortunately, reading motivation is lower for boys than girls, decreasing throughout elementary and high school (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991). Most reading research in the area of motivation explores the perceptions of adolescents (Dunbar, 1999; Hamston & Love, 2005; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005). This study gave attention to a younger group of participants, fifth grade boys. Considerations are given in this section to consistencies and inconsistencies with those implications reported in the review of literature. Three major findings are included in this section.

Competitiveness as a Motivational Factor

In response to the principal question, one of two major findings in this qualitative study was the influence of competition as a motivational factor in reading. Three examples of competition emerged including measured success, measured outcomes, and acquisition of personal reading materials. The boys consistently referred to reading as scores and grades, which according to Pressley (1998) can have a negative effect on reading motivation. While Pressley encourages teachers to use choice, scaffolding, and social interaction, he discourages the use of grading and competition. Of the facets found to affect reading motivation, some can have a positive effect, while others have a
negative effect. The boys measured their own reading success by reading outcomes through grades, test scores, and reading levels. While the success was a motivating factor in reading, the motivation did not carry over into other settings outside of school. The motivation was one to succeed at school rather than to read for pleasure.

A characteristic of a motivated reader, according to the participants of this study, can be determined somewhat by what he is reading and by the amount of reading materials that he owns and has in his possession. Although the acquisition of books was not found to be a prominent factor of reading motivation in the review of literature, it was a consistent finding in the author’s previous research. Although not directly related, there may be a connection to earlier publications.

In the case of this study, the boys were particularly interested in the current *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book series. They expressed a desire to own all of the books, even if they had already read one or more of the titles. Instead of sharing their favorite parts of the text, they instead stated how many of the books they owned. Similar to a collection of trading cards, the boys often shared discussions about sets of books that they owned. Farris et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative study of fifth grade boys at an urban school, using electronic communication between teacher education candidates and students to explore reading motivation. Based on the electronic discussion, six reading preferences were identified; one preference claimed a gender-specific interest for sequels and books in a series (Farris et al., 2009). If boys prefer books in series and sequels, there may be a relationship between reading a series of books and collecting the entire set.
Reading is Making Real Connections

The second major finding in response to the principal question was the need for real connections when reading. Familiar reading materials, familiar language, and familiar topics of interest all influence a reader’s motivation. The boys appeared motivated to read when reading materials pertained to their personal lives. Several texts such as local newspapers and topic-specific magazines appealed to the boys. The participants expressed interest in reading several sections of the local newspaper. The police blotter was of particular interest, a section of the newspaper that often included geographic locations familiar to the boys. Other sections of the paper especially interesting to the boys were the comics, church news, sports sections, and the front page headlines. As Dianté stated, the headlines are the “best thing or the worst thing that’s happening in (the city), but most of the time it’s the worst.”

Readers are more motivated to read when they have aesthetically enjoyable reading topics (Pressley, 1998), yet what one reader considers aesthetically enjoyable may differ from another reader, depending upon his or her interests and connections to the text (Rosenblatt, 1995; Rosenblatt, 2005). According to Rosenblatt, only the reader himself or herself can achieve a true interaction with the text. As he or she reads, a reader interprets, questions, and analyzes a written text. Rosenblatt’s (1995) theory of reading was evident throughout the findings of this study. Consistent with the theories of reading motivation and connections to one’s personal life, this study found the works of Pressley and Rosenblatt to be true. The boys chose to read about what was relatable to their lives.

Reading materials compatible to the five ethnically diverse boys’ cultural language were nonexistent in the club library. Even when the researcher visited the public
library to gather resources, few books included language typical to the spoken dialogue at The Club. Had more materials been available to the readers that were representative of their authentic language, they might have expressed more motivation to read. Attention to one’s language and familiar reading materials are two components that may influence reading motivation.

When given a choice of books, the boys selected the titles with sports themes and those that gave information about the lives of real individuals. A few specific titles preferred among the focus group members were informational books about basketball and biographical texts about sports heroes such as Muhammed Ali, Micheal Jordan, and Wilt Chamberlain, all of whom happen to have a similar ethnicity as the participants. When familiar factors existed, such as interests and ethnicity, the young readers were more motivated to read. The boys longed to read from texts that respected their background. One of the most influential studies in the area of boys and reading motivation was Smith and Wilhelm’s (2002) research with adolescent male participants, named by the authors as The Crew. They found texts motivated boys when the selections helped them solve a problem or achieve a personal goal. According to Smith and Wilhelm, reading must be purposeful. Tatum (2005) narrowed the study with male adolescents, focusing entirely on African American individuals. He found that reading must be specific to the African American reader, primarily on empowering the reader. Functional literature was not enough to motivate readers who needed to learn from reading that is aimed at “fixing their lives” (p. 70).
Varied Selections Motivate Readers

The subordinate question led to one major finding: Varied selections motivate readers. Variations significant to reading pertain to situation, social interaction, and genre or style of reading materials. Reading is situational, influenced by a particular setting. When discussing reading at school, the boys spoke mostly about textbooks and assigned readings. Out of school, the boys referenced very little reading. The reading in out of school settings included minor occasions of magazine, newspaper, and media literacy.

Students in the 21st century spend more time on the computer each year (Ridout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Scholastic, 2010). Most boys spend less time reading and more time engaged with technology when compared with girls of the same age (Steinkuelher, 2010). Yet, those statistics may not be true of all students, and they may vary in the technology sites visited. As Hobbs (2010) found to be true, African American and Hispanic children spend more time than white children viewing media; however, they may not all have access to Internet usage. Such was the case with the five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys in this study. They did not all have access to Internet usage at home and did not all have Facebook accounts; yet, they spent time in and out of school playing games on the computer and viewing media.

Computer games and YouTube videos were popular among the group of boys in this study. They spent computer time playing games and viewing videos rather than surfing the Internet or exploring websites. When prompted, they acknowledged that they read when on the computer, but they felt that the reading was different from what they did when they read books. Consistent to the participants in studies of Smith and Wilhelm (2002) and Pitcher et al. (2007), the boys did not perceive technology as a form of
reading or literacy. Instead, they perceived their time engaged with technology as a relaxing and social activity. Culture and privilege influence one’s accessibility to media, and therefore, affect whether or not one may perceive digital literacy as a form of reading.

The five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys often preferred social reading to independent or silent reading. When at school, the boys finished assignments in order to gather in a group to work and read together. In the school library, the boys sat with peers for social reading. At The Club, the boys huddled around one book reading and conversing synchronously. Opportunities to read socially may motivate readers.

When given the opportunity to read from magazines rather than traditional books, the boys enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity, claiming that the magazines were more entertaining. Of course, the magazines were representative of the boys’ interests in sports, particularly World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). The inviting text structure offered short articles and a format that allowed the boys to read out of sequence. They particularly appreciated the colorful photographs, which enticed the boys to read about the familiar information and the athletes’ lives.

Consistent to the findings of Pressley (1998) and Farris et al. (2009), the boys’ reading motivation was affected by selections with appealing covers and aesthetically enjoyable reading topics. The magazines included many of the factors described in the earlier research. As a contrast to textbooks and other books traditionally used in school, magazines are thinner, include short articles, and have a large amount of colorful graphic text support. A textbook is not a preferred form of reading material; thus, authentic reading materials may motivate readers more than textbooks.
The titles mentioned during the focus sessions mirrored findings of earlier research. In a similar study involving fifth grade boys, Farris et al. (2009) identified reading preferences which included books in a series, books by favorite authors, factual books, and those short in length. Both titles, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Captain Underpants*, are from a series of related books. Another book mentioned, *In the Land of the Lawn Weenies and Other Warped and Creepy Tales*, is a series of short stories. Other selections mentioned during the focus groups included nonfiction texts, newspapers, and magazines. Each of these readings is consistent with the reading preferences as cited in the study. Boys prefer reading comics and humorous books (Merisu-Storm, 2006; Ruttle, 2004; Wigfield & Asher, 1984), selections consistent to the findings of this study.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This study explored reading motivation from the perspectives of five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys. As with all research studies, the results and findings of the study lead to additional areas of inquiry. Such is the case with this study. Rather than answering the principal and subordinate questions, the results and findings lead to areas of query for further examination. Additional questions remain within the area of reading motivation.

Future studies require the development and testing of effective tools more fitting to diverse populations. The instruments used for this study were not fully representative of the population in participation. The language and vocabulary of the survey must be compatible to the population surveyed. Revised questions could result in more validity of honest response and cultural relevance.
As described in the limitations of Chapter 3, the group of participants was small and consisted of specific descriptors such as gender, ethnic background, socio-economic level, and motivational level. The carefully selected group satisfied the purpose of this study; however, additional studies are needed to explore the different motivational reading perspectives of boys in various demographic locations. The participants of this study were all members of an urban setting. Excluded were boys from rural and suburban settings. Additional studies are needed to more closely examine the motivation in literacy engagement of those living in various geographical areas and those of varying background.

This particular setting was beneficial to the purpose of the study, allowing the researcher to meet with the participants in a regularly attended location outside of school. To further explore the research implications, a more direct comparison of academic and leisure reading motivation is needed. A replication of this study with an added focus group within a school setting could provide a comparison of results. The use of two focus groups would provide a greater range of perspectives.

Further qualitative studies in the area of reading motivation are needed. As stated by Cooter and Perkins (2011), “Motivation is a fundamental part of providing effective reading instruction and is among the most powerful determinants of students’ future reading achievement” (p. 564). Reading motivation leads to more reading, and copious reading leads to advanced reading achievement (Guthrie, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2009; Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Reading research specific to motivation may be the most direct path to a literate population.
This study was a step toward eliminating the gender achievement gap in literacy. Although there is a recent increase in research pertaining to reading motivation, the research is limited when specific to subgroups such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Guthrie, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2011). Even fewer are the studies of qualitative design, most of which include adolescents (Dunbar, 1999; Hamston & Love, 2005; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005). This study addressed the much needed areas of qualitative research including reading motivation and elementary-aged male readers. Rather than further examining those who are less motivated to engage in literacy, the journey of exploration must continue to seek what motivates the unmotivated.

**Final Summary**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore reading motivation from the perspective of five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys and to examine how the boys’ perceptions of reading differ in academic and leisure settings. In order to best explore the principal and subordinate questions, both pertaining to the phenomenon of reading motivation, the researcher used an interpretive qualitative theoretical stance. Using both the Reading Survey and the Conversational Interview from the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP), the researcher conducted focus groups with five African American boys, all fifth graders, and made observations in an authentic setting, a youth facility where they all regularly attended as members. The setting, participants, and instruments were all cohesive components selected to explore the phenomenon of inquiry.
Three major findings were unveiled through the data analysis of this study: 1) Competitiveness is a motivational reading factor, 2) Motivated readers must make real connections with text, and 3) Varied selections motivate readers. Within each major finding are encompassed several implications unique to this study.

The first major finding of competition includes three primary ways that competition influences reading motivation. Measured success such as grades, reading levels, and test scores are motivating factors in reading. Those measured outcomes of reading are competitive goals for male readers in this study. In addition to measured success and reading outcomes, the acquisition of reading materials helps define reading success. Since the outcomes and measured success of reading influences a reader’s motivation, reading is portrayed as an academic task. While competition may motivate a reader, the motivation is to achieve a goal rather than a motivation to read.

The second major finding recognizes the need for real connections when selecting reading materials. Reading materials will influence one’s reading motivation when they are familiar to the reader, are compatible to the reader’s language, and are of familiar topics of interest. Familiarity is unique to each reader and his purpose to read. One study can only provide results unique to that particular setting, participants, and methods. In order to generalize the findings of this study, one would neglect one of the major findings, which is to recognize the individual differences that influence one’s literacy engagement. Although reading materials such as World Wrestling Entertainment magazines may not engage all readers, not even all male readers, the results indicate that familiar interests and reading motivation are related. In the case of boys who are
enthralled with wrestling entertainment, the topic of wrestling may motivate those readers. For others, the motivating topics will differ.

The third finding acknowledges variations of setting, reading structure, and reading materials. Reading is a situational practice unique to each academic or leisure setting. Social reading is preferred among the five ethnically diverse fifth grade boys of this study, and authentic and nontraditional texts are preferred over textbooks when considering what motivates the readers. In order to motivate readers in academic and leisure settings, opportunities must exist to respect varying reading structures, genres, and types of literacy. Whether nonfiction texts, media literacy, or social reading, a varied selection will motivate male readers. When students are motivated to read, they read more extensively; when they read more extensively, they are more successful readers. Motivation does lead to success.

It is the intention of this study that the interests and the lives of individuals be the primary influence when selecting reading materials and planning reading instruction. Reading motivation will be influenced only by recognizing the motivational factors of each individual reader. Readers are motivated when reading is real and a natural part of their lives.

“Like when I get out of school, I’m just regular. Time to play.”

-Diante
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**Children’s Literature Mentioned**


**Magazines Mentioned**

*Sports Illustrated*

*World Wrestling Entertainment Magazine*
# Appendix A

## Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey

![Survey Image]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Sample 1:** I am in  
- [ ] Sixth grade  
- [ ] Seventh grade  
- [ ] Eighth grade  
- [ ] Ninth grade  
- [ ] Tenth grade  
- [ ] Eleventh grade  
- [ ] Twelfth grade

**Sample 2:** I am a  
- [ ] Female  
- [ ] Male

**Sample 3:** My race/ethnicity is:  
- [ ] African-American  
- [ ] Asian/Asian American  
- [ ] Caucasian  
- [ ] Hispanic  
- [ ] Native American  
- [ ] Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic  
- [ ] Other. Please specify __________________________

**4. My best friends think reading is:**  
- [ ] really fun  
- [ ] fun  
- [ ] OK to do  
- [ ] no fun at all

**5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can:**  
- [ ] almost always figure it out  
- [ ] sometimes figure it out  
- [ ] almost never figure it out  
- [ ] never figure it out

**6. I tell my friends about good books I read:**  
- [ ] I never do this  
- [ ] I almost never do this  
- [ ] I do this some of the time  
- [ ] I do this a lot

**7. When I am reading by myself, I understand:**  
- [ ] almost everything I read  
- [ ] some of what I read  
- [ ] almost none of what I read  
- [ ] none of what I read

**8. People who read a lot are:**  
- [ ] very interesting  
- [ ] interesting  
- [ ] not very interesting  
- [ ] boring

**9. I am:**  
- [ ] a poor reader  
- [ ] an OK reader  
- [ ] a good reader  
- [ ] a very good reader

* (Continued on next page)
Figure 1 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________________

10. I think libraries are ___________________________
   - a great place to spend time
   - an interesting place to spend time
   - an OK place to spend time
   - a boring place to spend time

16. As an adult, I will spend ___________________________
   - none of my time reading
   - very little time reading
   - some of my time reading
   - a lot of my time reading

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading ___________________________
   - every day
   - almost every day
   - once in a while
   - never

17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I talk about ___________________________
   - almost never talk about my ideas
   - sometimes talk about my ideas
   - almost always talk about my ideas
   - always talk about my ideas

12. Knowing how to read well is ___________________________
   - not very important
   - sort of important
   - important
   - very important

18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes ___________________________
   - every day
   - almost every day
   - once in a while
   - never

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ___________________________
   - can never think of an answer
   - have trouble thinking of an answer
   - sometimes think of an answer
   - always think of an answer

19. When I read out loud, I am a ___________________________
   - poor reader
   - OK reader
   - good reader
   - very good reader

14. I think reading is ___________________________
   - a boring way to spend time
   - an OK way to spend time
   - an interesting way to spend time
   - a great way to spend time

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel ___________________________
   - very happy
   - sort of happy
   - sort of unhappy
   - unhappy

15. Reading is ___________________________
   - very easy for me
   - kind of easy for me
   - kind of hard for me
   - very hard for me

Note: Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Carnabell, Palmer, Codling, & Marzoni, 1996)
**Figure 6**

**MRP reading survey scoring sheet**

Student name

Grade

Teacher

Administration date

Recording scale

1-4

2-3

3-2

4-1

Self-concept as a reader

Value of reading

*recode

1. __________ 2. __________

3. __________ *recode 4. __________

5. __________ 6. __________

7. __________ *recode 8. __________

9. __________ *recode 10. __________

11. __________ 12. __________

13. __________ 14. __________

*recode

15. __________ 16. __________

17. __________ *recode 18. __________

19. __________ *recode 20. __________

SC raw score: _______ / 40  
V raw score: _______ / 40

Full survey raw score (Self-concept & Value): _______ / 80

Percentage scores

Self-concept

Value

Full survey

Comments:

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*Note: Reprinted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Colling, & Matzoni, 1996)*
Appendix B

Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Conversational Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Figure 2</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversational interview</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Name**

A. Emphasis: Narrative text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): I have been reading a good book. I was talking with... about it last night. I enjoy talking about what I am reading with my friends and family. Today, I would like to hear about what you have been reading and if you share it.

1. Tell me about the most interesting story or book you have read recently. Take a few minutes to think about it (wait time). Now, tell me about the book.

   Probe: What else can you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this book?

   (Some possible responses: assigned, chosen, in school, out of school)

3. Why was this story interesting to you?

   - Why?

B. Emphasis: Informational text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): Often we read to find out or learn about something that interests us. For example, a student I recently worked with enjoyed reading about his favorite sports teams on the Internet. I am going to ask you some questions about what you like to read to learn about:

1. Think about something important that you learned recently, not from your teacher and not from television, but from something you have read. What did you read about? (Wait time.) Tell me about what you learned.

   Probe: What else could you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about reading material on this?

   (Some possible responses: assigned, chosen, in school, out of school)

(continued)
Figure 2 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

3. Why was reading this important to you?

C. Emphasis: General reading

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? What?

2. Do you have anything at school (in your desk, locker, or book bag) today that you are reading?

Tell me about them.

3. Tell me about your favorite author.

4. What do you think you have to learn to be a better reader?

5. Do you know about any books right now that you’d like to read?

Tell me about them.

6. How did you find out about these books?

7. What are some things that get you really excited about reading?

Tell me about...
Figure 2 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

8. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading?
   Tell me more about what they do.

9. Do you have a computer in your home?
   If they answer yes, ask the following questions:
   How much time do you spend on the computer a day?
   What do you usually do?
   What do you like to read when you are on the Internet?
   If they answer no, ask the following questions:
   If you did have a computer in your home, what would you like to do with it?
   Is there anything on the Internet that you would like to be able to read?

D. Emphasis: School reading in comparison to home reading

1. In what class do you most like to read?
   Why?

2. In what class do you feel the reading is the most difficult?
   Why?
3. Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you really enjoyed?

Could you explain some of what was done?

4. Do you share and discuss books, magazines, or other reading materials with your friends outside of school?

What?

How often?

Where?

5. Do you write letters or email to friends or family?

How often?

6. Do you share any of the following reading materials with members of your family: newspapers, magazines, religious materials, games?

With whom?

How often?

7. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations for which you read and write?

Could you explain what kind of reading it is?

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrill, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)
Appendix C

Consent Form

Gender-Specific Reading Motivation:

Considering Reading From the Perspective of Five Ethnically Diverse Fifth Grade Boys

The purpose of this study is to determine what motivates boys to engage in literacy and how their perceptions of reading differ in and out of school settings. Most reading research focuses on reading skills through analysis of achievement scores in effort to meet high-stakes expectations. This study focuses on reading motivation and elementary-aged male readers, as it takes a unique look at those who are failing to find success in reading. Instead of analyzing standardized test scores or evaluating effectiveness of instructional programs, the data used for this qualitative study comes from a series of interview sessions. Findings from this research may help teachers understand how to increase boys’ reading attitudes.

As part of your son’s regular time at the , your child will be asked to complete a series of questions about reading. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete each interview. The researcher will observe and interview your child 1-2 times each week for 8 weeks.

If you grant permission for your son to participate, your permission will allow the researcher to access information on file with the , including race, free and reduced lunch status, identified special needs, and his standardized reading scores from
the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+). For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. All data will be maintained as confidential, and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data. Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for three years and then be shredded. The audiotapes will be transcribed and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the researcher. There is no anticipated risk from participating in this study. One benefit your child may gain from participating in this study is a better understanding about his attitudes toward reading. He may quit the study at any time. Please feel free to ask any questions of the researcher before signing this Parental Permission form and at any time during the study.

For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.
Parental Consent

I give permission for my son to participate in this research project entitled, “Gender-Specific Reading Motivation: Considering Reading from the Perspective of Five Ethnically Diverse Fifth Grade Boys.” I have had the study explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my permission for my child to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

__________________________  ________________
Parent’s Signature                  Date

Child Assent

The research project has been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand what I am being asked to do as a participant. I agree to participate in the research.

__________________________  ________________
Child’s Signature                  Date

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