

HOW ADULTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSES DESCRIBE THEIR  
EDUCATIONAL LIFE EXPERIENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY  
EXAMINING WHETHER EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE READING ATTITUDES AND  
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

by

Ashley Reece Armour

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2017

HOW ADULTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSES DESCRIBE THEIR  
EDUCATIONAL LIFE EXPERIENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY  
EXAMINING WHETHER EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE READING ATTITUDES AND  
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

By Ashley Reece Armour

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2017

APPROVED BY:

Sarah Horne, EdD, Committee Chair

Christy Carter, EdD, Committee Member

Amanda Dunnagan, EdD, Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to explore the reading attitudes and decision-making skills of college freshmen enrolled in remedial language arts courses. The theoretical framework guiding this study is qualitative phenomenology explained by Baxter and Jack (2008). This specific type of research “provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts” and the findings help researchers evaluate program, design, and intervention methods, which is pertinent to the discovery of prevailing reading attitudes among struggling students and allows researchers to prevent, adjust, and improve these attitudes in future students (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). This phenomenological case study utilizes questionnaire, direct observation, and interviews to collect data about eleven college freshmen enrolled in developmental language arts courses in northeast Georgia; the information collected using multiple data sources is subjected to open-coding and two-tiered coding and is then free imaginative variation is used to interpret the information found in field notes, questionnaires, and interviews. The analysis of data showed that lack of parental involvement, poor K-12 learning experiences, misconception of the term “good reader,” a sense of loss or lack of direction, disinterest in reading, and reading as punishment were themes common across multiple cases. By examining the reading attitudes and experiences of these participants, parents and educators can better assess the best way to address reading motivation and decision-making problems and help future students become better readers and thereby, better learners.

*Keywords:* Adult literacy, developmental level, reading attitudes, remedial courses

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	9
Overview.....	9
Background.....	9
Situation to Self.....	11
The Problem Statement.....	11
Purpose Statement.....	13
Significance of Study.....	16
Research Questions.....	18
Definitions.....	20
Summary.....	21
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	23
Overview.....	23
Theoretical Framework.....	24
Related Literature.....	26
Summary.....	71
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	72
Overview.....	72
Design.....	72
Research Questions.....	73
Setting.....	74
Participants.....	74

Procedures .....	75
The Researcher’s Role .....	76
Data Collection .....	77
Data Analysis .....	81
Trustworthiness .....	83
Ethical Considerations .....	86
Summary .....	86
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	87
Overview .....	87
Participants .....	87
Results .....	93
Summary .....	122
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	123
Overview .....	123
Summary of Findings .....	123
Discussion .....	132
Implications .....	140
Delimitations and Limitations.....	145
Recommendations for Future Research .....	146
Summary .....	148
REFERENCES .....	150
APPENDICES .....	166
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form and Confidentiality Statement .....	166

Appendix B: Reading Attitudes Questionnaire.....	171
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	174
Appendix D: Questionnaire Response Data By Individual Question .....	176

**List of Figures**

Figure One: Responses to Questions 1-10.....	95
Figure Two: Responses to Questions 11-20... ..	95
Figure Three: Responses to Questions 21-30... ..	96
Figure Four: Responses to Questions 31-40... ..	96

**List of Tables**

Themes Emerging from Data Sources- Table 1 .....	97
--	----



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This research study examined how college freshmen in developmental reading courses describe their educational and life experiences. The purpose for this study was to determine whether life experiences play a role in developing the reading attitudes and decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education and if so, which ones. This first chapter introduces the study.

### **Background**

In times of economic downturns, enrollment in two-year technical/community colleges increases. There are many reasons for this increase: two-year schools are generally more affordable, trades are more easily transferred directly to the workforce, and the course types offered are more attractive to students returning to school from the displaced workforce (Ferguson, 2006; Kaniuka, 2009). Alternatively, while the enrollment rises, the need for remedial or developmental courses also increases dramatically (Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2007; Burak, 2014). Due to shifts in unemployment rates, many non-traditional students are filling up college classrooms in hopes of improving their current state of living or quality of life. However, many students returning to school as well as those graduating high school are coming to college underprepared to deal with upper-level coursework (Burak, 2014; Benson, 2010).

Students who struggle with reading comprehension and writing skills are at an immediate disadvantage upon entering the world of higher education. Due to this issue, the problem facing colleges is adequately remediating students in order to prepare them to face the rigors of a college level education, while considering the emotional, mental, and financial pressures

associated with requiring additional coursework (Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Perkins-Gough, 2008; Pinkerton, 2010).

The Sociocognitive Theory of Personality (STP) as well as the theory of Social Constructivist Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1999; Stake, 1995; Baxter and Jack, 2008) underpinned the current study. The key concept of STP, reciprocal determinism, suggests that people's behaviors are shaped by the environment in which they are raised but also that environments are shaped by the behaviors of people in that environment (Bandura, 1986). This idea of reciprocation informed the current study by allowing the researcher to look at reading attitudes and student behaviors from multiple perspectives rather than assuming motivations are always directly linked to environmental factors. Further, STP examines the way that people think about and adjust responses based on different social environments and situations (Bandura, 1999; Delpit, 2006). The precepts of this theory indicate that even though adults in remedial language arts courses may have been discouraged or struggled with reading in the past, they have the ability to overcome the challenges placed upon them and correct unhelpful behaviors rather than being mere victims of circumstance: "In the agentic sociocognitive view, people are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by external events. People have the power to influence their own actions to produce certain results" (Bandura, 1999, p. 2). In addition, constructivist (SCT) theorists suggest that as people experience more things and reflect upon each individual experience, their worldviews and schemata grow and are further constructed based on their interactions with other people (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Stake 1995; Dexter and Stacks, 2014; Burgess, 2004; Ghaith, 2003). It is logical to assume based on the theories that as students grow and learn, there are sociological reasons

that certain individuals overcome their academic deficiencies and go on to successfully complete college while others who grew up in similar academic environments do not persevere.

### **Situation to Self**

As a tenth-year instructor of remedial reading, English, and integrated reading and English courses, the researcher was particularly interested in discovering the reasons that the students in developmental reading and writing courses developed such poor reading attitudes throughout their lifetimes. To prevent any known or unknown biases that existed towards developmental reading students due to the frequent exposure to this type of student in daily life, the researcher bracketed out any thoughts, emotions, or assumptions about the participants in the field notes taken during the interviews and during the analysis and coding of the data collection. Better understanding any common reasons, environmental factors, and underlying motivation issues that persist among this population would allow the researcher and other educators to improve their pedagogical approach and interventions. Using rhetorical and axiological assumptions as a guide, the researcher focused on a pragmatic paradigm throughout the study. It is the researcher's hope that through this study, remedial language arts instruction can be reimagined and revitalized in order to make the process more beneficial for students long-term.

### **The Problem Statement**

The problem is an increasing number of college students in need of remediation in reading and English (Burak, 2014; Benson, 2010). The rising rate of enrollment in remedial courses is in part due to the fact that more incoming freshmen are failing portions of their entrance exams. A great deal of these freshmen are enrolled in developmental level or remedial English and reading courses because they have demonstrated low levels of reading comprehension on the entry exams (Willingham & Price, 2009; Schutte & Malouff, 2007). The

placement of some students in these courses can be attributed to bad days or testing anxiety, but the fact remains that the vast majority of students who fail the exams do so because they are poor readers (Willingham & Price, 2009; Lei, et al, 2006). The reasons behind the increase in low level readers has been studied by many educational specialists who have tried to determine whether K-12 instruction has diminished or what environmental or developmental factors could play a role in the repeated failures in the area of reading comprehension (Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Perkins-Gough 2008). While a wealth of research exists regarding the reading attitudes of young students (K-6), the older the students get, the less attention research shows to understanding the attitudes and reading behaviors (Kaniuka, 2009; Kazelskis, Thames, & Reeves, 2004; Kotaman, 2008; Lazarus & Callahan, 2000; Kelly & Daughtry, 2006; Kendall, 2008). A significant gap exists in the research regarding the reading attitudes and behaviors of college-aged students, despite that fact that so many college students are struggling because of reading deficiencies. Thereby, the purpose of this study was to help to fill that gap in the research by determining what attitudes college freshmen have towards reading, where those attitudes came from, and what personal or environmental factors contributed to the development of those specific attitudes. The researcher focused particularly on the population that seems to be most heavily impacted by negative reading attitudes- students in remedial language arts courses. By exploring different attitudes remedial readers have, educators can better assess the best way to address the problems and help these students become better readers and thereby better learners.

Being forced to take remedial courses costs students both time and money, but these courses are the only route two-year colleges, and some four-year universities, can take in order to ensure the students are prepared for college-level courses and prevent high rates of failure and

drop-outs. Increasing numbers of both traditional and non-traditional students in remedial courses leads to questions regarding the motivation to enroll in college despite having to begin with non-credit, remedial courses. The American government seems to believe that if a student can pass certain standardized tests throughout the course of the K-12 experience, he/she will be academically prepared for life beyond high school. Based on the volume of students entering college unprepared to effectively comprehend college-level texts, one would assume this ideal system is flawed (Howell, 2009; Hoyt & Sorensen, 2001; Lei, Rhinehart, Howard & Cho, 2006).

It now seems that more and more students leave high school only to underperform at the collegiate level. Is this due to flaws in the education system, teachers, materials, home life, social life, economic standing, or a combination of all of the above? Educators, psychologists, and other experts will continue to debate the causes and effects of poor reading attitudes, but by actually giving a voice to students that are currently in this situation, examining their lives, feelings, and situations, the researcher and the field of education had the chance to gain a new perspective on the problem as well as suggest possible new solutions. There is no research giving a voice to this particular subset of college students/adult learners.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to understand the reading attitudes and behaviors for students enrolled in learning support language arts courses at a college in north Georgia. For the purposes of this study, “reading attitudes” are generally defined as, “The system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation,” (Tunnell, Calder, Justen, & Phaup, 1991). The aim of this study was to help educators understand the prevailing attitudes that remedial students hold towards reading in order to better align pedagogical approaches in developmental language arts courses; the researcher hoped to find a

way to help teachers understand where the gaps in understanding and appreciation for reading occur in order to help instruction of these students to become more beneficial throughout college as well as in the real world post-college. The researcher wanted this study to give a voice to these students and determine what has caused them to fail in the area of reading development in order to prevent the recurrence in future generations. If students in remedial reading courses at the college level can learn to overcome and change poor reading attitudes, it is logical to conclude that this will directly impact the possibility of future success in academia. If students in developmental courses can cultivate more positive attitudes towards reading and learning, it is likely that they will become more intrinsically motivated to read more (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Benson, 2010; Chua, 2008; Davenport, Arnold, & Lassmann, 2004; Ghaith, 2003). Also, if educators can link reading with more positive feelings for these struggling learners while somehow still equipping them with the strategies to improve their levels of comprehension, these students could be more likely to gain a love for reading, which could significantly improve their quality of life academically, professionally, and personally (Gnaldi, Schagen, Twist, & Morrison, 2005; Logan & Rhona, 2009). Determining the causes and conditions that drive adult students to have poor reading attitudes and habits can empower educators to adjust curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and approaches offered to students in the future.

The theoretical framework that best takes into consideration the various internal and external factors that affect the study participants is The Social Cognitive Theory of Personality purported by Bandura in 1986. Bandura's theory suggests that people are not merely passive lumps of clay waiting around to be molded and shaped by environment and circumstances; rather, people are "sentient agents of experience" who have a say so in the decisions they make and therefore have the innate ability to improve their lots in life (1999, p. 4). Adult learners must

be approached with understanding of the experiences that they have been through, may still be going through, and the overwhelming wealth of external factors that are not traditionally present in younger students; however, as Bandura's theory suggests, people also have the innate ability to control themselves despite the circumstances they have been placed in. In the case of the current study, this theory indicates that even though adults in remedial language arts courses may have been discouraged or struggled with reading and academic situations in the past, they have the ability to overcome environmental and social challenges and correct negative behaviors rather than being mere victims of circumstance.

In order to examine the reading attitudes of struggling readers of incoming college freshmen, the data must be viewed with the understanding of existing sociocognitive differences in mind. Collegiate environments are comprised of more diverse groups of people who hail from different places and potentially have varying ranges of socioeconomic statuses. Because of the inherent diversity of the college classroom, teachers of students with learning support needs often struggle with overcoming the huge gaps in understanding that exist among the students themselves. Some remedial students refuse to do the work, some students do not recognize their need for remediation, and some students truly cannot comprehend material because of significant learning delays or disabilities. Similarly, some students entering college work full-time, some have children to care for and support, and some are freshly on the brink of independence and unable to cope with the more overwhelming aspects of college, namely the abundance of reading and writing. Focusing on sociocognitive theory helped the researcher in this study approach the needs of each learner more specifically and determine whether the majority of struggles are based on environmental or mental factors. Specific attitudes towards motivation or understanding discovered through this study, should allow educators and administrators involved with

collegiate learning support courses to be able to develop coursework and interventions to increase motivation, pleasure, and success in remedial language arts students.

## **Significance of Study**

### **Practical Significance**

Even in trade courses at a four-year university, the majority of coursework requires proficiency in reading comprehension in order to be academically successful. If non-traditional students struggle with reading, they will inevitably struggle with their coursework and continue to view reading negatively. Reading attitudes are developed at an early age, so it is vital that educators on all levels try to foster a love for reading in students (Gnaldi et al, 2005; Logan & Rhona, 2009). Reading attitudes and behaviors are learned and develop over a long period of time, but negative attitudes towards reading can be overcome through understanding and support of educators. The findings of the study are practically significant because if parents and educators can adjust their approaches to reading instruction, it may inspire more motivated readers and result in less need for remediation in reading. If practical adjustments are made based on the information gathered from this study, the next generation of students are likely to be more proficient readers with more positive reading attitudes. It can be assumed that they will perform better at the high school level and on college entrance exams, which will then eliminate or at the very least lessen the need for developmental education. Fewer hours spent on remediation equals less money being spent by students and parents and increases the probability of completing college degrees rather than dropping out due to frustrations.

### **Empirical Significance**



There is not an abundance of research on literacy rates at the adult level. There is a large body of research regarding reading rates and attitudes of students from pre-school to adolescence, but once students reach puberty, the majority of educators assume that students can read and move focus to other subject matters (Siah & Kwok, 2010; Theurer, 2010; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). While there is research including test scores that show that poor reading attitudes and achievement exist at the secondary level, there are many gaps in the research about the causes as well as potential solutions (McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Park, 2008; Reis et al, 2008; Sperling & Head, 2002). These gaps revolving around the reading attitudes and skills of adult learners indicate the need to look further into the mind of these students in order to determine the motivating factors and how educators can make adjustments in order to overcome these problems in the future.

### **Theoretical Significance**

Research indicates that reading attitudes plays a key role in the development of reading skills (Roberts & Wilson, 2006; Reis et al, 2007; Lei et al, 2006). Students who have positive attitudes towards reading tend to read more often and have higher levels of comprehension than those who have poor reading attitudes (Lei et al, 2006; Yang-Hansen, Rosen, & Gustafsson, 2006). More research needs to be done with students in remedial level reading courses in order to determine what life occurrences specifically led to the development of negative reading attitudes. The students in these courses were obviously motivated to better themselves by seeking higher education, but they still retain negative attitudes toward reading. The data collected by the researcher in regards to the reading attitudes of students can be used to support or negate sociocognitive theories that suggest individuals are capable of controlling their behaviors despite their environments (Badura, 1999; Stake 1995; Baxter and Jack, 2008).

By conducting this study, the researcher hoped to better inform the approach of reading and English instruction in personal practice, colleagues' practice, and the methods of developmental educators across the country; if educators are better able to understand the issues that exist, they will then be able to develop new instructional designs and theories to improve the attitudes and behaviors of remedial college students towards reading.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** How does placement into remedial courses affect college freshmen's self-efficacy as readers?

This guiding research question allowed the researcher to examine how much control the participants believed they exert over their own motivations, behaviors, and social environments in regards to being placed into developmental-level English courses (Billington et al, 2004; Chapman et al, 1995). To better understand the impact that placement into remedial courses has on the self-efficacy of students will better allow their needs to be met at home, at school, and in other social settings and further enable educators at the collegiate level to adjust developmental regulations and policies with student data in mind (Dexter and Stacks, 2014; Mulvoy, 2008). This question sought to understand how placement into lower-level courses affected students' motivation to attend college, choice of majors, and self-perception.

**RQ2:** How do college freshmen in developmental Language Arts courses describe their literacy experiences and to what extent do these experiences impact their decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education?

Based on Creswell's (2013) description of a phenomenological study as the shared experiences of a group of people, this question guided the research, sought to compile rich and complete depictions, and requested each student to describe the factors that influence their reading experiences guiding research question asked participants to describe the factors that influence their reading experiences. The shared experience was narrowed based on students' family life, grade-school experiences, and decision-making ability at the collegiate level. Also, based on the SCT and STP, this question tried to evaluate the extent to which students' personalities were shaped by or shaped their environments (Bandura, 1999; Baxter and Jack, 2008). Finally, this question sought to understand those factors that influence reading behaviors and attitudes as well as how said behaviors affected decision-making processes in relation to college experiences (Apple, 2001; Rueda et al, 2003).

**RQ3:** What are the reading for pleasure habits of college students in developmental English and what influences those habits?

This guiding question allowed the researcher to make a qualitative inquiry regarding how adults in developmental/remedial reading courses describe their educational and life experiences and habits. This gave these underrepresented students a voice in the field of education and allowed the researcher to discover ways in which life and educational experiences influence reading attitudes and decision-making processes related to seeking higher education (Bauerlein, 2011; Collins, 2008; Gnaldi et al 2005).

By conducting this study, the researcher hoped that students who struggle with reading would be given the opportunity to reflect upon environmental, emotional, educational, and personal experiences they have gone through that might have played a role in their academic development. Thus, the study was a phenomenological case study form of qualitative research

that allowed the participants to voice their personal experiences throughout their interactions with the researcher, and examining the findings of this study could shed much-needed light on improving the field education, especially related to adult literacy and reading attitudes. This study employed data collection via questionnaire and interview questions asked of twelve students enrolled in foundational level language arts courses at a college in north Georgia. The students used in the study were those on their first attempt in the course, as repeaters in the course may be unfairly biased towards the subject matter. Most students enrolled in this course are in their first semester of college.

### **Definitions**

1. *Attitude*- a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior; a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior; individuality and self-confidence as manifested by behavior or appearance (Bauerlein, 2011; Collins, 2008; Gnaldi et al 2005).
2. *Behavior*- the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others; the way in which an animal or person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus (Bandura, 1999; Burak, 2004; Coiro, 2003; Mokhtari et al, 2009).
3. *Developmental English Courses*- College courses with reference numbers of 0-999 that are designed to prepare students for collegiate level English and reading courses; these courses do not count for graduation credits nor towards overall student GPA (these are also called "remedial English courses" and "learning support courses" depending on the diction of the institution) (Attewall et al, 2006; Caboni and Adisa, 2005; Hoyt, 2001).

4. *Metacognition*- awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes; thinking about thinking (Benson, 2010; Keskia, 2013).
5. *Motivation*- reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way; the general desire or willingness of someone to do something (Baker and Scher, 2002; Knoester, 2009).
6. *Reading Comprehension*- Educators commonly refer to *reading comprehension* as the ability to read text, process it, and understand its meaning. K12.com succinctly describes reading comprehension as “the act of understanding what you are reading...an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during, and after a person reads a particular piece of writing” (“What is Reading,” 2016; Coiro, 2003).
7. *Self-Efficacy*- The American Psychological Association defines *self-efficacy* as reflect[ing] confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment (Billington et al, 2004; Chapman et al, 1995; Mulvoy, 2008).

### **Summary**

Chapter one described a research study that examined how college freshmen in developmental reading courses describe their educational and life experiences. Also, the researcher noted the significance that the results of the study will hold for both herself and the field of education. The researcher demonstrated that the purpose for this study was to determine whether life experiences play a role in developing the reading attitudes and decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education. This first chapter of this dissertation introduced the delimitations and limitations that impacted the completion of the study and how they were addressed during the course of the study itself. Finally, the researcher introduced the

reader to significant information and terminology that was used throughout the body of the study that he/she may be unfamiliar with.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Many college freshmen are placed in remedial reading and English courses based on their scores on college entry exams. Each year in America, over 1.7 million students begin college in remedial courses, and only one of every ten remedial students actually graduates college (Jones, 2014). According to the US Department of Education, placement in remedial courses is “the fate of 43 percent of students at two-year public colleges and 29 percent of students at four-year public colleges” (Bauerlein, 2001, p. 28). While the placement of some students in remedial level courses can be attributed to poor test-taking abilities, the majority of these students are truly struggling readers. Despite these struggles, some of these students will successfully complete the remediation courses, and a few remedial reading students will even successfully graduate college with a degree (Burak, 2014; Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Kaniuka, 2009). However, students with the drive and determination to overcome or work around reading deficiencies are few and far between. Various studies have proven that students with developmental reading courses will most likely either drop out of college completely or settle for a lower degree than they originally hoped to receive (Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Perkins-Gough 2008). For example, some students will enroll in college with the hopes to obtain a bachelor’s degree in psychology, and once they get experience with college courses, the degree of difficulty or repeated failures can influence them to drop down to an associate’s degree, leave four-year universities to attend technical schools, or drop out of college completely (Jones, 2014). With the number of students placed in remedial classes going up each year, educational specialists are left to wonder the reasons why. The increase in remedial reading courses indicates that students had poor reading instruction in K-12,

have a genuine learning disability, or, most likely, have acquired a poor attitude towards reading in general due to repeated failures in this area. (Burak, 2014; Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Kaniuka, 2009). It is the purpose of this study to examine the attitudes that college freshmen in remedial reading classes towards reading. By examining the different attitudes remedial readers have, educators can better assess the best way to address the problems and help these students become better readers and thereby better learners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

When attempting to decipher the motivations and behaviors of adult learners, it is important to acknowledge that the minds of adults are uniquely complex, which indicates the need for a multifaceted theoretical approach to analysis. The theoretical framework that best takes into consideration the various internal and external factors that affect the study participants is The Social Cognitive Theory of Personality (1986). According to Albert Bandura, “In social cognitive theory, people are agentic operators in their life course not just onlooking hosts of internal mechanisms orchestrated by environmental events. They are sentient agents of experiences rather than simply undergoers of experiences” (1999, p. 4). Adult learners must be approached with understanding of the experiences that they have been through, may still be going through, and the overwhelming wealth of external factors that are not traditionally present in younger students; however, as Bandura’s theory suggests, people also have the innate ability to control themselves despite the circumstances they have been placed in. In the case of the current study, this theory indicates that even though adults in remedial language arts courses may have been discouraged or struggled with reading in the past, they have the ability to overcome the challenges placed upon them and correct unhelpful behaviors rather than being mere victims of circumstance: “In the agentic sociocognitive view, people are self-organizing, proactive, self-



reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by external events. People have the power to influence their own actions to produce certain results”

(Bandura, 1999, p. 2). Logically, there must be a reason that some individuals overcome their academic deficiencies and go on to successfully complete college.

In examining the reading attitudes of struggling readers entering college, it is important to examine the data in light of the cognitive differences that exist. In the college environment, unlike most grade-school environments, students come from different places and have much more diverse socioeconomic statuses. Because of the inherent diversity of the college classroom, teachers of students with learning support needs often struggle with overcoming the huge gaps in understanding that exist among the students themselves. Some remedial students refuse to do the work, some students do not recognize their need for remediation, and some students truly cannot comprehend material because of significant learning delays or disabilities. Similarly, some students entering college work full-time, some have children to care for and support, and some are freshly on the brink of independence and unable to cope with the more overwhelming aspects of college, namely the abundance of reading and writing. Focusing on sociocognitive theory helped the researcher in this study approach the needs of each learner more specifically and determine whether the majority of struggles are based on environmental or mental factors: “Cognitive factors do quite well in accounting for variance in human behavior and guiding successful interventions. To make their way successfully through a complex world, people have to make sound judgments about their capabilities, anticipate the probable effects of different events and actions, ascertain sociostructural opportunities and constraints and regulate their behavior accordingly. These belief systems represent a working model of the world that enables people to achieve desired results and avoid untoward ones. Reflective and forethoughtful

capabilities are, therefore, vital for survival and progress” (Bandura, 1999, p. 4). Specific attitudes towards motivation or understanding discovered through this study, should allow educators and administrators involved with collegiate learning support courses to be able to develop coursework and interventions to increase motivation, pleasure, and success in remedial language arts students.

## **Related Literature**

### **Development of Reading Attitudes**

Reading is an essential part of modern life, and the relationship a person has with reading can have an impact on whether he/she is successful in life. As Lydia Burak points out:

Individuals read for many reasons: information acquisition, knowledge, self-reflection, practical application, as well as pleasure, enjoyment, and relaxation. The importance of reading contributes to many dimensions in the development of an educated individual.

Because reading is fundamental to learning in our schools, it can be assumed that college and university students are skilled readers, and that they enjoy reading. (Burak, 2004, p.1)

Burak points out that students in higher education are expected to not only be skilled at reading, but also enjoy reading; however, in reality, more and more students are entering college with poor reading skills and abhor reading in general. Burak also suggests that “aliteracy is an epidemic among college students” and defines aliteracy as “lack of the reading habit in capable readers” (2004, p. 1). This indicates that although college students *can* read, most of them are not reading and/or do not enjoy it. With the increasing availability of technological advances, the rate of reading for pleasure is diminishing among all Americans. According to the 2006 study performed by Roberts and Wilson, the percentage of adults who read for pleasure has dropped below fifty percent for the first time in modern history. This trend is most noticeable in younger

Americans, and those living in the southern United States are twenty percent less likely to read literature than those living in other regions (Roberts & Wilson, 2006). In the past, young adults tended to be those most likely to read for pleasure, and the gradual diminishing of this trait over the past two decades is a huge concern for educators: “The continuing difficulties students have with reading has caused the educational community to reevaluate how to teach basic and higher order reading skills” (Therrien, 2004, p. 252). As internet access, tablets, computers, smartphones, and other electronics become more easily accessed and affordable, children grow less likely to sit quietly with a book. Some kids will read what is assigned for school, mainly if parents monitor homework, but spare time is usually reserved for technology use or participation in organized sports. These children are growing into college students who do not read for pleasure; modern college students “spend the minimum time reading required assignments and even less time reading that which is not required” (Burak, 2004, p. 1). With the population that has traditionally been the most likely to read for pleasure dwindling, the job of educators at all levels becomes more daunting.

Research has indicated that the less time people spend reading, the less capable of reading they become. This leads to a society of people that are “less informed, active, and independent minded” (Roberts & Wilson, 2006, p. 64). Burlak (2004) notes, “The majority [of college students do] not read for leisure and rarely read their textbooks,” and cites the fact that 66 percent of college students report not enjoying reading and avoid it whenever possible (p. 1). Meanwhile, the purpose of public education in America has, in theory, always been to create well-informed, active, and independent democratic citizens. This is not to say that students are not being taught how to read. Most elementary students are capable of sounding out letters or identifying site words. The physical ability to view and pronounce words is present in most

modern students, but students struggle when it comes to understanding the meaning behind the words they are reading. In his meta-analysis on reading comprehension, Therrien (2004) indicates that poor readers spend so much time in the decoding process that they have difficulty retaining the information they have read (p. 252). Students who cannot retain the information that they have struggled to read become discouraged and thereby turn away from reading all together- even reading for pleasure. This is detrimental because “recreational reading has been found to improve literacy skills, academic performance, and course grades” (Burak, 2004, p. 1). When reading at school is a hassle, a struggle, or a long, drawn-out process, children choose activities that are easier and more exciting for pleasure. Reading is not instantly gratifying, so modern students do not see the long-term value of it. Thus, students choose to read when it is mandatory, do enough of it to get by, and save free time for activities that are deemed more fun. When students associate reading with stress or view it as a waste of time, negative reading attitudes and intentions develop.

Studies have continuously demonstrated that students begin to develop poor attitudes toward reading as well as reading less in intermediate grades, and educators are left to determine how to keep students interested in reading long enough for it to become a lifelong practice (Roberts & Wilson, 2006). Williams and Hall point out that, “Educators and caregivers of students of all age groups need to continually highlight the pleasure that reading can offer so students continue to read voluntarily beyond elementary school. [At the elementary age] more than half of the students said they read after school, and educators and parents should continue to encourage this practice, particularly as a form of entertainment and relaxation (2010, p. 35). Research has shown that students struggling with reading are more likely to drop out of high school: “Of the more than 51 million adults (approximately 23% of the U.S. adult population)

who have not completed high school or its equivalent, many are likely to have limited basic academic reading skills” (Lasater & Elliott, 2004). However, this lack of comprehension is not directly indicative of the desire of these students have to learn or attend college. The Office of Vocational and Adult Education reported that in 2003, almost 3 million adults enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) programs across the United States to increase their skills (p. 47). Many of these struggling students want to go to college or further their education, but a good deal of students fall behind in reading comprehension and simply never have the opportunity to get caught back up, which makes the pursuit of higher education seem like an impossible waste of time and money.

Roberts and Wilson point out that “the teaching of reading has two main goals: instill in students the necessary skills to read effectively and to develop a sense of enjoyment toward reading” (2006, p. 65). No matter what level they teach at, educators struggle to find ways to teach reading that will not create negative attitudes. Correlations made between time spent reading and reading ability show that when a person spends more time reading it greatly improves his/her ability to read a variety of texts (Roberts & Wilson, 2006). The implications of the analysis conducted by Therrien (2004) suggest that “repeated reading can be used effectively to improve students’ ability to read and understand a particular passage and as an intervention to improve students’ overall reading fluency and comprehension ability (p. 259). Positive reading attitudes, thereby, are directly linked to the amount of time spent reading (Roberts & Wilson, 2006).

Students learning to read devote the majority of the initial stages of reading skill development typically focusing on enhancing accurate responding. After the actual skill of reading is acquired, however, the goal of educators and students is often to increase fluency

(Haring & Eaton, 1978). In order to be a fluent reader (meaning the balance between comprehension and rate has been found), one must learn the skill of rapid and accurate reading. Because fluent reading takes less time, it is thought to require less effort than non-fluent reading (Billington, Skinner, Hutchins, & Malone, 2004). Researchers focusing on cognitive resource limitations (limitations of working memory) suggest a causal link between reading fluency and comprehension (Billington, Skinner, & Cruchon, 2004; Billington, Skinner, Hutchins, & Malone, 2004). People who read accurately but slowly may expend more of these limited cognitive resources attempting to read accurately, leaving fewer cognitive resources available to apply to comprehension (their brains are too tired from the act of reading accurately that they do not have the energy left to extend to comprehension). Researchers have found that when given the choice of two or more behaviors and all else is held constant, people will choose the behavior that requires the least effort (Billington, Skinner, & Cruchon, 2004; Billington, Skinner, Hutchins, & Malone, 2004). Thus, if all else is held constant, a fluent reader is more likely than a non-fluent reader to choose to read because it creates much less cognitive dissonance (Billington, Skinner, and Cruchon 2004). Fluent readers are more likely to choose to read, which in turn enhances their reading skills and further increases the probability of their choosing to read. However, because non-fluent readers are less likely to choose to read, their reading skills do not develop since they do not engage in activities (e.g., reading) that enhance reading skills (Skinner, 1998; Stanovich, 1986).

Therefore, students who develop negative attitudes towards reading will inevitably spend less time reading and thereby practically eliminate any further acquisition of reading skills. Most students understand that reading is an important skill and see “reading as a key to success, both in school and in life, often acknowledging reading as a way to enhance learning” (Williams and

Hall, 2010, p. 35); however, when students struggle in the area of reading, they also tend to develop poor self-esteem because they know they are missing a key element necessary to become successful. Furthermore, the article by Roberts and Wilson (2006) states, “If children do not like reading or they think that reading is boring, their negative attitude toward reading will hinder their reading improvement” (p. 66). Later on, when these students enter high school or college, they are unequipped with the skills necessary to comprehend complicated texts, and they end up being much less academically successful as a result.

### **Reading for Pleasure**

Students who read find pleasure in reading are more capable of excelling in both school and life. Bronwyn Williams (2004) notes in her study that many of the students she teaches do not obtain any pleasure at all from reading. There are students in almost every classroom in America with the attitude that reading and writing are not fun and merely another activity that must be endured while at school (Williams, 2004). In order to develop the reading and vocabulary skills necessary to perform well in school activities, however, students need to read a book that they enjoy for at least half an hour per day (Wuzt & Wedwick, 2005, p. 17). Students who have not found success with reading in the classroom are not likely to spend thirty minutes of their free time reading anything additional, especially in an era when smartphones, video games, and other interactive media is more exciting and easily accessible. Also, it is important to note students that struggle with reading are not the only ones who develop negative reading attitudes. Research has shown that gifted students find reading boring and would rather spend time on more interesting activities (Roberts & Wilson, 2006). Thus, even though a student may be capable of meeting the objectives of the course, he/she exudes no passion for the work and is merely going through the motions (Williams, 2004). Without focusing on the development of

positive reading attitudes, the vast amount of what is taught to them will be virtually ineffective as a result (Wutz & Wedwick, 2005).

Students who do report positive reading attitudes have many things in common. In a study of elementary aged students, researchers found various reasons for positive reading attitudes: reading for entertainment was the most common reason, more specifically reading stories, comics, and magazines (Cosgrove, 2003; Leroy 2000, McKool, 2007; Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004). Beyond reading for pleasure, students with positive reading attitudes also saw long-term possibilities as an extrinsic motivation to reading, stating that “they could use reading to achieve goals, such as completing school assignments, improving reading skills, and getting a job” (Cosgrove, 2003, p. 30). Similarly, Williams (2004) also explains in her study that students do find pleasure in finding meaning in texts in various formats outside the walls of the standard classroom. Students are actively engaged in the information they obtain from magazines, television, movies, or the Internet (Williams, 2004). In her study, Williams notes, “When students talk about engaging with and interpreting other forms of communication the boredom slides away, and they speak with insight and delight about what they know” (2004, p. 388). This observation proves that it is important that educators take into consideration the amount of pleasure students are getting from the information they are taught. Thus, as suggested by Davenport, Arnold, and Lassman (2004), the specific instruction employed by education professionals must be “designed to dramatically increase the amount of time children spend actively engaged in the process of reading” (p. 3). Getting students to read more will lead to higher level learning in all subject areas.

Student pleasure and entertainment are focused on extensively throughout literacy education in elementary schools in the form of games and play, but by the time students enter



middle school, there is a shift towards more serious and focused approaches to reading and writing (Williams, 2004). This is especially detrimental for students with disabilities who struggled with reading at the elementary level (Davenport, Arnold, & Lassman, 2004, p. 4-5). At the middle school level, reading and writing stop being about games and having fun and instead become all about work; this leads to the development of negative attitudes towards reading, especially by struggling students who are more likely to stop reading altogether at this point (Williams, 2004). When students enter high school or college, they often begin to completely dissociate pleasure from schooling altogether (Williams, 2004). Such poor development of positive reading attitudes in secondary students is significant because the amount of leisure reading done is also closely associated with education and affluence in adults (Bradshaw and Nichols, 2004, p. 46)

Students find more pleasure in activities that present a challenge that they feel they are capable of meeting. When students have more experience with reading, then they are more prepared and capable when faced with reading challenges; if students saw reading activities as challenges they could meet, they would be more likely to find pleasure in reading (Williams, 2004). Unfortunately, the same is true when students lack substantial experience with reading. The less exposure to reading a student has had, the more difficult and daunting reading tasks become (Williams, 2004). Davenport, Arnold and Lassmann (2004) conducted a study that used middle school aged students with reading difficulties to tutor kindergarten students in reading. In this study, the authors discovered that the tutoring effectively improved the reading attitudes of both the tutors and the tutees (p. 9-10). As students develop awareness of themselves as readers, the more positive their attitudes become as a result (Davenport, Arnold, & Lassmann, 2004, p.

10). The more a student is exposed to reading instruction, the more likely it is that he/she will develop positive attitudes towards reading and continue reading for pleasure.

### **Landscape of Reading in the US**

A principle focus of US federal and state educational legislation has been centered on improving students' reading proficiency. Research on instructional methods, interventions and approaches for preventing reading problems, and improving struggling students abound. It seems that modern students in the US are more likely to be found watching television, watching films, playing video games, or surfing the internet. Due to the fact that 96 percent of all U.S. households have at least one television, students are more comfortable with the medium of television no matter what culture or socioeconomic class they fall into (Williams, 2004). In contrast, many studies have shown that the closer families are to the poverty line, the less likely they are to own a variety of books (Williams, 2004). This means students that come from poorer families will have less exposure to reading material and are much less confident in their ability to read. Of course, students with low socioeconomic status have been shown to have more positive attitudes about reading when they have access to adult support (Williams & Hall, 2010, p. 36). The downside being that many students fall into the lower socioeconomic standing due to being raised by a single parent; when a family is surviving on one income and there is only one adult available to work, cook, and clean, the children naturally have less access to adult assistance than those in two parent homes. Williams and Hall also found that students from low socioeconomic homes "preferred being read to more often than other participants from other schools, stating that they learned more and shared the workload of comprehending text during this practice" (2010, p. 40). Many students who are unable to obtain extra help with reading from teachers, parents, grandparents, counselors, or other adults simply stop trying to read all together, not even for

pleasure. This is not only the case for students in K-12 schools; there has also been a decline in the amount of students reading for pleasure at the college level over the past thirty years (Kelly & Daughtry, 2006). If teachers can show students how to find pleasure in reading, students of all ages will begin to read more, which will lead to gains in confidence and ability level.

### **Influences on Reading**

**The teacher.** In a 2005 study on reading attitudes and achievement, Gnaldi, Schagen, Twist, and Morrison point out that students who like to read do so more often, “thus broadening their knowledge of text situations, expanding their literacy experiences, and improving their comprehension skills” (p. 104). One of the biggest influences on whether students view reading as pleasurable is whether or not their teachers portray a love for reading. In their 2009 research, McKool and Gespass assessed the correlation between teachers’ personal reading behaviors and the instructional techniques they employ in the classroom. The findings of this study indicate that most teachers feel reading is a pleasurable activity, but less than half of the teachers surveyed read for fun on a daily basis (McKool & Gespass, 2009). The time a teacher spends outside of the classroom reading for pleasure is directly correlated with that teacher’s ability in literacy instruction (McKool & Gespass, 2009). Other than parents, teachers are a child’s primary role models. If teachers model negative behaviors towards reading, students will pick up and mimic those same behaviors (McKool & Gespass, 2009). For example, one study asked students about independent reading during school and “embedded in some students’ responses was the connotation that independent reading was an activity to do when all ‘work’ was finished or as a transitional or ‘filler’ activity to keep them occupied and out of trouble” (Williams & Hall, 2010, p. 40). These student responses indicate that teachers may “inadvertently marginalize independent reading by relegating it to a few minutes...whenever the opportunity arises, but

student responses suggest they might view this as more reading ‘when the real work is done or there is nothing else to do,’” (Williams & Hall, 2010, p. 41). The students thought the teachers just threw in reading as busy work; therefore, they did not find any value in reading because it seemed to them as if reading was not a priority. If teachers want students to value reading, they have to do more than tell them how valuable it is; they have to show the students that reading is important by modeling good reading attitudes and behaviors.

On the other hand, if teachers share with students what they love to read and why, students will observe this behavior and respond by developing more positive attitudes about reading (McKool & Gespass, 2009). The results of this study purport that the personal reading practices of teachers have a profound impact on the way they approach reading instruction (McKool & Gespass, 2009). The personality of the teacher and the choices he/she makes about reading instruction have been found to impact students’ reading attitudes as well (Leroy, 2000). In one case study, a student being taught by a teacher she perceived as “fair” and “nice” held a more positive reading attitude as a result (Leroy, 2000). In a 2010 study conducted in several elementary schools, students indicated that the helpfulness of the teacher was their favorite part of reading instruction; students seemed to favor teachers who explained why students were taking test, why he/she was reading aloud, and why each learning strategy was important (Williams & Hall, p. 42). Teachers have a powerful influence on the reading attitudes students develop, so it should be the goal of educators to “seek the knowledge and ability necessary to teach reading and a love of reading (Williams & Hall, 2010, p. 42). The better attitude a student has towards reading leads to a greater self-confidence which translates to all areas of academia and life (Gnaldi et al, 2005). Thus, good reading attitudes modeled by teachers can garner more self-confidence in student populations. This fact should encourage teacher education programs to

incorporate more emphasis on reading for pleasure as well as influence school administrators to consider including teacher's personal reading values as part of the hiring process (McKool & Gespass, 2009).

**Parental influence.** Kotaman (2008) claims "reading is one of the most important skills in academic achievement" (p. 55). The most important influence on the reading attitude a child develops comes from those in the parental position. Kotaman's study suggests that all parents should strive to support the development of language skills and foster the development of positive reading attitudes for the well-being of their children (p. 55-56). Research has shown that students who learn to enjoy reading at an early age have better attitudes and achievement in reading. While students of all ages can become better readers, it is important that students develop positive reading attitudes early on in life; trying to correct poor attitudes later in academic careers is much more difficult.

Parents' attitudes toward reading in a family have a great influence on children's reading development (Swalander & Taube, 2007) and their thoughts about reading (Baker, Scher & Mackler 1997; Harris & Sipay 1980; Purcell-Gates 1996). Parents who ascribe great value to reading are more willing to create a rich home literacy environment. For example, they will provide fruitful educational resources at home (e.g., a variety of reading materials) and spend a lot of time on home literacy activities with their children (e.g., routine and frequent bedtime story and library visit), both of which have been found to be a significant predictor of emergent literacy skills (Purcell-Gates 1996) and later reading ability (Jacobson & Lundberg 2000; Rowe 1991). Parents' reading attitudes do not only lay the foundation for reading development, but home literacy environment also stimulates positive reading attitudes. In addition, parents who enjoy reading are more likely to pass the positive attitudes on to their

children as they are good models in home literacy activities, which in turn results in a greater reading ability (Park, 2008; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Swalander & Taube 2007).

According to research (Park, 2008; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Siah & Kwok, 2010; Sperling & Head, 2002; Swalander & Taube 2007), one can assume that parents who do not value reading, do not provide reading materials, and do not model reading regularly, are more likely to have children who develop poor reading habits, low ability levels, and negative attitudes toward reading. Additionally, family socioeconomic status (SES) is of great importance for academic achievement (Sirin 2005). In a large-scale international assessment, SES has been found to account for considerable individual differences in adolescents' reading achievement across countries and cultures (Chiu & McBride-Chang 2006). Children from low SES families have been shown to perform lower academically due to lack of and/or poor quality home resources and less parental investment in education (Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes & Benner, 2008). Children in these homes are far more prone to struggle with literacy (Lonigan, 2003; Nicholson, 2003). On the other hand, students raised in households with high SES benefit from exposure to higher quality resources and parents who are likely more educated; thus, said parents can afford more books, better books, technological stimulation, and to invest more time on assisting children with the development of reading skills. Research clearly indicates that the availability and quality of home educational resources play a direct role in the way children develop literacy skills and attitudes toward reading (Tse, Xiao, and Lam 2013).

When considering the differences between students with varied socioeconomic histories and its long-term ramifications, one must closely examine the potential impact of a person's home learning environment (HLE). According to Roberts, Jurgens, and Burchinal (2005), "HLE includes the experiences, attitudes, and materials related to literacy that a child experiences and

interacts with at home, which is the primary learning environment for children prior to formal schooling.” The home environment in which a child is raised is absolutely indicative of his/her future reading ability and attitude. Several studies draw direct correlations between a person’s home environment and eventual reading skill-level (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). Also, the environment a child is raised in has been shown to contribute more significantly to his/her reading ability than genetics. In 2005 Petrill, et al. conducted a large-scale study on twins and discovered that the quality of the household in which each twin was reared played a huge part in his/her learning outcomes, particularly in reading, which proves that the unique life experiences and human interactions that a child is privy to within the home learning environment plays a huge role in the development of reading attitudes.

Copious amounts of research have been devoted to determining strategies to help children avoid developing negative reading attitudes (Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Perkins-Gough, 2008; Pinkerton, 2010). For example, a great deal of early research focused on linking the frequency that parents read with a child as well as the quality of the parent-child interactions with the improvement of reading skills and attitudes (Dexter & Stacks, 2014, p. 395). However, the findings of more recent studies have determined that the children who are most in need of early reading interventions benefit little from parents incorporating dialogic reading strategies:

The limited efficacy of dialogic reading as an intervention program illustrates the need for deeper examination of the affective component of parent-child shared reading interactions. Given the known reading-related challenges faced by young children in high-risk populations, but the limited utility of intervention programs in said populations, it is obvious that much is still unknown regarding the complex process of shared reading

in low-income families, and its subsequent role in shaping at-risk children's reading trajectories. Traditionally, shared reading, whether being used as a conceptualization of the HLE or the target of an intervention program, has been examined as a predictor of children's literacy skills. However, due to its limited predictive ability and generalizability to all populations, as highlighted by many researchers, it may be beneficial for researchers to examine what processes affect shared reading quality, beginning prior to preschool. By gaining knowledge of some of the specific processes that impact shared reading, future research can begin to better understand the complex process of acquiring reading-related skills early in childhood. (Dexter and Stacks 2014, p. 397)

The newest research indicates that while the home situation is important in the development of reading skills and behaviors, parent-child reading time may not be the only factor that needs to be taken into consideration by educators and parents (Sperling & Head, 2002; McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Park, 2008; Reis et al, 2008). As Dexter and Stacks point out:

The overall quality of the parent-child relationship should be considered because a great deal of developmental research has documented the role that parenting plays in all domains of child development. Numerous studies have investigated the protective effects of sensitive, responsive, and nurturing parenting on social, emotional, cognitive, and language development and the negative effects that harsh and/or intrusive parenting can have on these domains of development. Much of the classic research in this area has focused primarily on children of preschool age and older despite the fact that many parents begin to read to their children in infancy and are reading daily to infants of 14 months. *What research has failed to assess are the potential correlates of frequency and*



*quality of parent-child shared reading at a very young age as it occurs in a high-risk context.* Some studies have documented the relationship between parent-child shared reading and language outcomes via self-report measures of shared reading quantity. (pp. 397-98)

The majority of the research in the area of parent-child relationship focuses on the frequency that parents read to a child or the number of books being read, but Dexter and Stacks researched the additional significance of the quality of the parent-child relationship in the development of reading behaviors. While their study sought to better understand the relationship between parenting quality and proposed that “different dimensions of parenting may support shared reading quality and instructing parents to increase shared reading frequency may not be an optimal intervention strategy; parents have to be able to read children’s cues, be responsive to their needs, and have skills related to teaching and encouraging to facilitate higher quality shared reading interactions,” the participants were preschool aged or lower (Dexter and Stacks 2014, pp. 397). The results of this study suggest that emphasis should be placed upon reading frequency as well as quality parent-child reading interactions:

Findings suggest not only that quantity and quality are distinct constructs, but also that when dyadic shared reading quality is measured observationally, frequency may not be all that predictive of child outcomes associated with emergent literacy. In terms of specific shared reading behaviors most closely associated with children’s receptive language development, the quality of parent and child behaviors reflective of promoting interactive reading and supporting comprehension (e.g., soliciting/responding to questions about the book and providing/responding to cues about book content)

demonstrated the strongest relationship with receptive language development. (Stacks 2014, pp. 407)

The findings of this study were significant, but the sample size was small and the focus of the study was interventions for very young children. There is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to examining adult reading habits, attitudes, and skills.

In a 2009 study by Susan Lutz Klauda entitled “A Preliminary Investigation of the Relationship Between Parenting, Parent-Child Shared Reading Practices, and Child Development in Low-Income Families, The Role of Parents in Adolescents’ Reading Motivation and Activity,” the author notes that

Parent support for reading is one of the many elements that may play a role in the development and sustainment of children’s reading motivation; to date, however, research has focused much more on the role that parents play in their preschool and primary-grade children’s reading than in their older children’s reading. . . How can parents help their children become lifelong readers? Much research has addressed this question by examining the role that parents play in helping preschool and primary grade children become interested and skilled in reading. . . Parent involvement in their children’s reading activities and their beliefs about reading both correlate with and have causal impact on reading motivation and achievement. Do these same positive effects occur at adolescence? Extant research concerning parent involvement in and encouragement of older children’s and adolescents’ reading motivation and activity suggests so, but this literature is limited in both quantity and methodology. (pp. 34-35)

Klauda is one of the few researchers focusing on the negative attitudes older adolescents hold towards reading. However, research shows that positive attitudes about reading actually seem to

increase the amount children and that children who read more frequently, either for school or for enjoyment, demonstrate better reading skills (Cunningham and Stanovich 1997; Guthrie et al. 2000; Taylor et al. 1990). Correlations between a learner's feelings about reading and actual reading achievement grow stronger with age, particularly during middle school years (Kush et al., 2005). Although a wealth of research supports the fact that reading more frequently results in higher achievement in reading, research also suggests that as children age in and through adolescence, the positive feelings they held towards reading dissipates, resulting in reading much less frequently and a decline in frequency leads to a decline in academic achievement (Baker & Scher, 2002; Kush and Watkins, 1996; McKenna et al. 1995). Overwhelmingly, research consistently proves that as students age, their reading motivation and positive attitude towards reading steadily decreases as well. Clearly, a significant problem exists, and early intervention strategies are only addressing part of the issue. In order to determine how to address and improve adult reading behaviors, researchers must first examine the true underlying causes as well as methods for correcting the issues in adulthood as well as better honing the preventive strategies being experimented with younger students.

### **Motivation and Attitude**

Before determining methods and strategies that can be used to improve reading motivation and attitudes, it is important to understand the distinction and significance of each in the development of lifelong literacy skills. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading motivation and reading attitude are uniquely different terms because *motivation* can include various reasons to actively read (or not) but *attitude* only indicates a like or dislike of reading itself. For many struggling readers, negative feelings about reading do not begin in early

childhood; for most, the negativity associated with reading begins during adolescence (middle and high school):

Adolescence is an interesting and important developmental period for which to examine parents' potential influence on their children's reading motivation and habits, in part because it is a time when parent (and teacher) support and involvement in both academic and nonacademic aspects of children's lives often decline, at least as perceived by adolescents. Furthermore, these declines are associated with negative effects on adolescents' achievement motivation. On the other hand, peers, especially close friends, come to play a more prominent role in children's lives during adolescence, with the potential for either positive or negative effects on their motivation. (Wigfield et al. 2006)

McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (2012) maintained that children's attitude toward reading is an important "affective construct" because it impacts their levels of reading ability through its influence on reading behavior. McKenna et al (2012) defined *reading attitude* essentially as "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation." Furthermore, they reported evidence for two distinct dimensions of reading attitudes: attitude toward recreational reading and attitude toward academic reading. Ultimately, *reading motivation* refers to intentions or reasons for reading while *reading attitude* involves the expression of feelings toward reading. These are key distinctions for readers to understand before moving forward in the discussion of literacy development.

According to McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth's (2012) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, there is a strong correlation between reading attitude and intrinsic reading motivation. For example:

The subscale for recreational reading involves questions such as “How do you feel about spending free time reading?” that have to be answered on a pictorial rating scale based on the cartoon character Garfield. Because of the conceptual overlap between measures of reading attitude and reading motivation, findings related to reading attitude are relevant in the present context. (p. 4)

Similarly, Chapman and Tunmer’s (1995) Reading Self-Concept Scale for elementary students also includes an attitude toward reading subscale. This scale defined *reading attitude* the same way as McKenna and Kear (1990), but it characterized “attitude toward reading” as the key component of reading self-concept and suggests that reading attitude is directly related to intrinsic reading motivation. Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) developed a reading attitude questionnaire for upper elementary students and identified three attitude factors. The first factor was labeled “reading enjoyment” (as expression of like or dislike), the second factor was categorized as “support for reading” (mainly in relation to a preference for reading with an adult), and the third factor measures the preference for non-book reading materials (e.g., comics, magazines). A majority of reading attitudes surveys that have been developed through research focus on the importance of the feelings, behaviors, and motivations a student has towards reading because these factors are the most telling in regards to potential reading abilities and achievements or lack thereof.

**Valuable Reading.** The model of achievement behavior developed by Durik, Vida, and Eccles (2006) observed task value beliefs and self-concept of reading ability as predictors of high school achievement choices related to literacy (e.g., number of language arts courses per year of high school). These researchers considered two forms of reading-related task values in their study: intrinsic value and importance; in this model, the researchers defined *intrinsic value* as

appreciating a reading task because it is enjoyable and engaging and *importance* as perception of how useful or practical reading can be and how reading well is important (Durik, Vida, and Eccles, 2006, pp. 384). The results of the study using this model suggested that students who believed in their reading abilities performed better academically and concluded that intrinsic value correlated with the time students spent reading for pleasure (p. 390-91). Similarly, Pitcher et al. (2007) also focus on the value students place upon reading. The tool used by these researchers assesses reading self-concept and value, or importance, of reading. Both of these reading scales seek to question students in regards to the concepts of reading attitude and intrinsic reading motivation. Research shows that the value that students place upon reading is linked to his/her reading behaviors and skills, whether directly or indirectly.

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.** While students are no doubt influenced by external factors like parents, teachers, and peers, the development of positive reading attitudes is also dependent on internal motivations. No matter the age of students, those who are interested in reading and intrinsically motivated are more successful than others (Tse et al, 2006). In a research study from 2006, the researchers prove that “positive self-concepts and attitudes are crucial components of intrinsic motivation and are important predictors of children’s success both in the beginning stages of reading and in the acquisition of higher-order reading skills” (Tse et al, 2006, p. 75).

Readers who are given material that they are interested in will read with more fervor than those who are uninterested in the material. For example, a 2009 study of the effects of book clubs on middle school students found that participation in these clubs helped students “realign their initial attitudes regarding the benefits of reading” (Whittingham & Huffman, p. 135). The more a student can identify with the material being read, the more intrinsically motivated he/she

becomes to engage fully in the text (Ghaith, 2003). Additionally, a 2009 report by Schiefele et al explains that “the distinction between dimensions of reading motivation should correspond to the various incentives that are attached to reading” and further adds that incentives to read ultimately depend on the perspective of the reader on what qualifies as a viable reason to read:

For example, a student may be motivated to read because of individual interest in a particular topic. Alternatively, the student’s reading motivation may derive from external incentives, such as the desire to get good grades in school. . . . *Intrinsic motivation to read is defined as the willingness to read because that activity is satisfying or rewarding in its own right. More specifically, intrinsic motivation to read can be either object or activity specific. In the case of object-specific intrinsic reading motivation, the person is motivated to read because of an interest in the topic of a text. In the case of activity-specific intrinsic reading motivation, the person is motivated to read because the activity of reading provides positive experiences, such as becoming absorbed by a story.*

(Schiefele et al, 2009)

But what about students who do not become absorbed in stories and find little satisfaction in reading about topics that interest them? Based on this research, it seems improving reading skills do not come from intrinsic motivation in cases where older students have long-held negative attitudes about reading. Moreover, students who have negative attitudes towards reading are much more likely to have comprehension problems and be unmotivated intrinsically (Ghaith, 2003). Thus, it is important for educators to evaluate the level of motivation to read in students and determine what external variables, like a variety of reading choices, can be used to help students become more confident and intrinsically motivated. In fact, Schiefele et al (2009) explain that extrinsic motivation to read revolves more around expected consequences or rewards

which give “reasons to read that are external to both the activity of reading and the topic of the text” like “praise from a teacher. . . desire for good grades or outperforming others.” While struggling readers often struggle to find intrinsic motivations to read, their reading habits and behaviors can still be influenced by extrinsic motivations to either receive positive rewards or avoid negative repercussions.

### **College Readers**

When students enter college in the United States, they are usually required to take an entrance exam. The scores on these exams determine whether the student needs to be placed in remedial or developmental level courses. One study found that, “about 40% of traditional undergraduates take at least one such [remedial or developmental] course, and remediation is even more common among older nontraditional students” (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Remedial reading courses are particularly necessary as fewer young adults are engaging in reading for pleasure and demonstrate poor reading comprehension skills as a result. Because of this, “community colleges continue to struggle to find pedagogical strategies that help unprepared students who are placed in developmental courses for remediation before or while beginning higher education coursework” (Prentice, 2009, p. 270).

If a student has struggled to read from middle school forward, the immensity of information in a college textbook itself can seem overwhelming. Many of these students feel that it is hopeless because they will never be able to read well enough to survive in college and drop out. Some research suggests that struggling readers take remediation courses in high school because students who do so are largely successful in their first year of college coursework (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). While less than half of students who begin college in developmental courses will complete the course and continue towards graduation (Prentice,



2009, p. 270), the rate of graduation from 2-year colleges for struggling readers does increase when they are enrolled in remedial courses than those who are not (Attewell et al, 2006).

There are many reasons purported by researchers to explain the increasing need for college remediation. Most researchers believe that these students are unprepared for college-level coursework due to inadequate preparation at the high school level (Hoyt & Sorensen, 2001) The influx of unprepared students has led to an increase in the cost of college for students and the public, which is frustrating since these are educational skills students should have mastered in order to successfully complete high school (Hoyt & Sorensen, 2001). Part of the blame for this can be attributed to the shift of reading attitudes students present after leaving middle school. Researchers also indicate that high schools inflate grades, do not require rigorous coursework, and lack a proper transition plan for college bound students (Hoyt & Sorensen, 2001, p. 26). Studies indicate that there is a need to better prepare students for college, and while a great deal of this preparation lies in the K-12 school systems, this cannot account for the need for remediation in non-traditional students.

According to Tai and Rochford (2007), there is a growing problem concerning statistics that indicate more students in community colleges are dropping out than are actually graduating (p. 103). In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center reported that the six-year completion rate for all community college students is 39 percent (Juszkiewicz, 2015). While developmental or remedial courses are costly to students, they help to prepare students for the academic and social demands of college (Tai and Rochford, 2007, p. 104). Although many opponents of remediation claim that it is wasteful to provide remediation at the college level, Tai and Rochford believe that “remediation, if presented in a

manner consistent with college-level academic rigor, can improve the long-term prospects for students to complete 2- and 4-year college degrees” (p. 104).

Theurer (2010) views reading as a sociocognitive concept and explains that reading is more than process skills: reading is also social interaction skills (p. 63). In a case study involving a student enrolled in a remedial reading program at a community college, Theurer found that developing an initial love for reading might not be enough to substantiate successful reading skills at the college level (p. 64). Reading was not encouraged in this student’s home; she was the first of her family to attend college (p. 65). Throughout her academic career reading was often used as a punishment, yet she still developed healthy attitudes about reading and continued to read for pleasure even at the college level. Despite having beaten the odds and kept a healthy attitude towards reading, this student still struggled with academic reading at the college level and “was not able to articulate any specific reading strategies” (p. 65). Why would a student who struggles with reading and has no familial support persist through developmental reading courses? The findings of this case study as well as a 2003 study by Perin, Keselman, and Monopoli indicate that non-traditional students seek college education and require remediation because reading and writing are the two academic skills that most fully translate to the career field (Perin et al, 2003).

The information provided by the literature suggests that informational reading and writing present a challenge for large numbers of students entering college in the United States (Perin et al, 2003). There is a wealth of research about the reading attitudes and literacy rates at the elementary and middle school level, but there is a significant lack of research at the high school and college level. The reasons behind so many students entering college unprepared in the areas of reading and writing could stem from inadequate literacy preparation, lack of background

knowledge, biased reading materials, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors (p.36).

In a study of developmental education in community colleges, Kolajo (2004) states

Overall, it can be said that the developmental program at the College is largely serving underprepared students in the sense that they represented a sizable portion of the graduates. Over 61% of graduates took one or more developmental courses during the three-year period. This study shows that there is a link between number of developmental courses taken and time to graduation. Thus, accountability measures linked to retention, graduation rates, and federal student financial aid may disadvantage community colleges, especially because roughly two-thirds of community college students attend part-time and require remediation. (p. 369-370)

Taking remedial courses can be time-consuming and costly for students, but they can help prepare them for the rigors of college education that they will face. Because of the increase in enrollment of non-traditional students in remedial courses, the motivation factor behind the decision of these students to return to college comes into question. What has influenced the reading attitudes of these students? What factors impacted their development of reading skills? Were they exposed to reading as a child? What is the missing link in their lives that led them to lag behind their classmates in terms of reading level? Kim Pinkerton's (2010) "Readers on the Margin" notes:

When thinking about developmental reading students who just marginally place into a required developmental reading course, reading professionals sometimes fall victim to the notion that these students will persist in college after just a small amount of reading skill enhancement. After all, they just barely placed into a required developmental reading course. When thinking about college students

who just marginally place out of a required developmental reading course, college faculty and administrators often leave these students to their own devices and assume that they have the reading skills to persist. After all, the placement test scores must be accurate in terms of predicting an ability to succeed. (p.20)

If professors are relying on where a student is being placed via test scores, they may be neglecting to focus on reading skills in introductory courses because they mistakenly believe students who place directly into gateway courses are fully prepared for college-level reading. In reality, many students are barely placing out of learning support courses and would likely benefit from remediation as much as or more than those students who actually placed in developmental courses. Overall, the gaps in previous research regarding the reading attitudes and skills of adult learners indicate the need to look further into the mind of these students in order to determine the motivating factors and how educators can make adjustments in order to overcome these problems in the future. If students in remedial reading courses at the college level can gain more positive attitudes and become intrinsically motivated towards reading, they can become more academically successful throughout college.

Another concern raised about developmental education, reading specifically, is that it is not clear whether or not a small segment of those who place into developmental reading education would be just as successful without these additional reading courses. Oudenhoven (2002) says, "Although individual institutions may have definitive standards for identifying developmental students, 'the line' is not consistent throughout higher education" (p. 36). This is what leads to a "blurry" definition of who is and who is not developmental. In reality, it cannot be assumed that these two groups of students vary greatly in their reading abilities simply because one test score determined so. Something that is often overlooked is that there are

students, like those in this study, with scores that are very close together, but these students are often treated very differently in terms of their preparedness for college-level reading. Because of the statistical similarity in the scores of this small group in this study, comparison research can be conducted to see the effects of developmental education on groups of students who diverge in terms of the coursework required.

Previous research indicates that successful completion of a developmental reading course is distinctly related to a student's level of persistence (Cox et al., 2003). Researchers have yet to determine, however, whether the students who complete developmental reading courses show a higher or lower level of perseverance than those who begin in gateway courses. Kim Pinkerton (2010) purports that "research in elementary and secondary education has focused on these issues in relation to student success, and now it is time for college educators to follow suit," and quotes Burley et al (2001) as such: "[C]ommunity colleges need to know more about their developmental education students than just placement test scores" (p.779). In the foundation for developmental education in colleges throughout the United States (laid in 1949 by *The Student Personnel Point of View*), the author suggests that teaching practices become more beneficial when they meet the needs of a student as a whole person rather than just addressing his/her cognitive needs (American Council on Education, 1949). Additionally, Pinkerton (2010) suggests that through taking a developmental reading course, students gained the "additional affective, cognitive, and metacognitive skills" needed to help them persevere through the completion of their degrees; however, she also questions whether students who barely placed out of developmental courses missed are missing out on these needed skills and will be more prone to failure as a result. Because the students placing into developmental courses are so diverse in

terms of needs and skills, a more individualized approach to instruction is required, yet remediation in US colleges remains controversial across the board.

**Self-efficacy in Developmental Education.** Leading self-efficacy researchers such as Zimmerman (1990), suggest that differences in self-efficacy could be to blame when a group of students who placed into the developmental reading course but did not take it or did not successfully complete it. Pinkerton (2010) questions the reasons for this lack of self-efficacy in some developmental students:

Did these students view themselves as failures, thus propagating a self-fulfilling prophecy? In addition, further research should be conducted to determine whether or not this path of lack of persistence for these marginal readers is a consistent trend. Do the same results hold true for other placement tests and other developmental courses, like math and writing? This should be a high priority for colleges, as a large proportion of students do not find persistence success in developmental reading courses, even when completion was required.

Students who persist through developmental reading courses do often become successful, but the question becomes how to motivate students to persist through the extra coursework. Zimmerman (1990) suggested that additional tutorial programs be introduced to assist these students, but limited staff and economic resources makes this a difficult transition for many colleges, especially two-year community colleges. Another option being explored by colleges is linked developmental reading and reading intensive courses, an American initiative called: Just In-Time Remediation. In addition, many colleges have incorporated a First-Year Experience program to help address the whole student rather than the cognitive side (Johnson and Carpenter, 2000). As Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) found, the quality of faculty/student interaction had much more

strength in terms of persistence/dropout prediction than did that of peer interaction. Taking this idea further, Engstrom and Tinto (2008) state that "[Faculty and staff] have to collaborate in constructing coherent places of learning where students are connected not only to each other and the faculty but also to other support services on campus," (p. 50). The addition of tutorial services and First-Year Experience programs is merely a quick fix solution that does not address the long-term problems of struggling readers.

According to Carolyn Hutchens-Smith et al in the article entitled, "Perceptions of Struggling Readers Enrolled in a Developmental Reading Course," every year students graduate from high school without the skills and knowledge for collegiate success. Community colleges are especially affected by this fact: "As open-door institutions, community colleges have long had to educate students who are not prepared for college-level work" (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). For example, "Each year, the number of students enrolling in developmental level courses in postsecondary education increases" (Rao, 2005). Ausburn (2004) reports, "Higher education is facing dramatic shifts in its demographics and its instructional delivery strategies. The new demographics of higher education identify part-time adult learners now comprising more than 50% of the postsecondary student population and the fastest growing segment of the market."

Because the under-prepared traditional and non-traditional students lack the necessary reading skills to enroll in a four-year institution, their only recourse is to attend a community college. When students take the college placement test and are placed into developmental reading courses, it is typically an indicator that they are under prepared for academic work at the traditional collegiate level. Rao (2005) stated, "Almost 42 percent of all freshmen enrolled in public two-year colleges were enrolled in at least one developmental course" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Developmental/remedial courses are designed to meet the needs

of students who lack the necessary academic skills required for college. The primary purpose of a developmental/remedial reading course is to expand students' vocabulary skills and to increase their comprehension skills through planned, structured reading activities. Through these planned, structured learning activities, students will be given the opportunity to improve their overall reading skills.

Unfortunately, many students resent being placed in a developmental reading course. Because of their resentment, Rao (2005) says, "Developmental reading teachers need to consider their attitude toward developmental readers. In addition, developmental reading teachers need to let their students know that they bring a wealth of experience and insight to their work and to their peers" (p. 1). By doing this, developmental teachers are encouraging student participation during class discussions. During instruction, it is important for developmental teachers to use various teaching strategies that will foster learning. According to Bedenbaugh (2006), "Effective teachers are able to identify the strategies that will most benefit their students" (p. 8).

Several studies have addressed students' enrollment in developmental courses as a major concern for developmental educators. Bartholomay (1996) stated, "The number of students enrolling in developmental studies courses in the nation's colleges has grown to a percentage that merits the attention of educators" (p. 32). Reynolds and Werner (1993) furthered, "The improvement of college students' reading and study skills is a widespread concern for developmental educators, counselors, and college administrators in the U.S." (p. 4). Having students with long histories of reading failures is quite common within remedial college courses (Lesley, 2004). Because 20% of 963,000 first-time freshmen who entered a public community college took remedial reading (Boylan & Saxon, 1999, p. 1), relevant activities structured to increase the reading rate and comprehension skills should be incorporated into their curriculum.



Numerous national reports and studies indicate that American education has been, and continues to be, in crisis. In 1983 the widely publicized report, "A Nation at Risk," sounded the alarm about American "mediocre educational performance" (Mortenson, May 2003, p. 10). More than twenty years after the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's "Nation at Risk" report, requirements for high school graduation are frequently less than college and university first-year admissions standards (The Education Trust, 1999). In *A Nation at Risk after 20 Years: Continuing Implications for Higher Education*, Caboni and Adisu (2004) refer to Adelman (1999) who found, "half of first year beginning [college] students need to upgrade their math or English" (p. 166). According to the *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2004 Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance in Reading and Mathematics*, "the average reading score for 17 year-olds who indicated at least one parent had some education after high school was lower in 2004 than in any previous assessment year" (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005, p. vi). In addition, the same report points out that the average reading score for 17 year-olds with at least one parent who graduated from college was less than the average reading scores recorded in 1990, and 1984 (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005, p. vi). So the trend toward poor student performances on national, state, and local assessments continues. Caboni and Adisu (2004) explain, "there is a tendency to overlook the importance of preparing high school seniors for college-level education ... [with] the focus often placed on successful completion of the high school program" (p. 166).

According to the ACT 2005 report, *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work*, just 22 percent of the 1.2 million high school students who took the ACT test in 2005 demonstrated readiness for college coursework in all three core academic areas, i.e., English, mathematics, and science (p. 3). Approximately 50 percent of students were prepared in

two out of three curriculum areas (ACT, 2005, p. 3). The report claims, "We've made virtually no progress in the last ten years helping [students] to become ready [for college]" and makes the dismal prediction that, "from everything we've seen, it's not going to get better any time soon" (ACT, 2005, p. 1). College and university professors bemoan the current situation: a woeful lack of preparation on the part of an increasing number of students. In fact, a 2004- 2005 survey of 40,000 professors from both four-year and two-year California institutions conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles reported, "41 percent [of professors surveyed] agreed that 'most' of the students they teach lack the basic skills for college-level work"(Higher Education Research Institute, 2005, p. 1). Importantly, 56 percent of those professors surveyed indicated, "working with under-prepared students was a source of stress" (Higher Education Research Institute, 2005, p. 2). Historically, under-prepared students in higher education have been linked with the ideals of opportunity and access.

Along with socioeconomic status, the concept of cultural capital plays an important role in the need of a student to enroll in developmental courses. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) addressed the ways both family socialization and the educational system contribute to the reproduction of power relationships in a society. They argued that upper/middle class attitudes and behaviors are compatible with the expectations of school settings, whereas the attitudes and behaviors of the lower class are not so easily transferable. This situation leads to high expectations for upper and middle class children along with correspondingly higher rates of educational attainment. The concept of cultural capital is complicit in the reproduction of privilege for dominant groups and the subsequent exclusion from privilege of non-dominant group members (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is an

important theoretical foundation for further research in the area of family background as it relates to educational experiences and preparation for higher education.

Alternatively, Lisa Delpit (1995), author of *Other People's Children*, observes, "Some children come to school with more accoutrements of the culture of power already in place - 'cultural capital,' as some critical theorists refer to it - some with less" (p. 28). Arguing for explicit instruction in the specific codes of the "culture of power," Delpit (1995) explains how students who come to school without previous understanding of white, middle-class codes are behind in the educational race before they start. Also, Mortenson's (2004, May) data on the relationship of family income to college completion rates clearly reinforces Bourdieu's (1977) concept of cultural capital and social reproduction. In addition, reflecting on the New York State School Report Cards, Pedro Noguera (2005) comments, "We know that we could just as easily list schools by the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch and have identical rankings. Knowing the race and class make-up of the school predicts the academic outcomes" (p. 3). Essentially, the cultural capital value of a school's student body predicts the school's achievement scores and, by extension, the future possibilities of its students.

Research generally recognizes that students in under-performing schools are often low-income and minority. Many minority students are also immigrants and non-native speakers. In "Academic Instrumental Knowledge: Deconstructing Cultural Capital Theory for Strategic Intervention Approaches," Rueda, Monzo and Arzubiaga (2003) apply the concept of cultural capital to ethnographic research with Latino immigrant families. Rueda et al. use the term "academic instrumental knowledge" to mean "school-specific knowledge that can be seen as a specialized type of cultural capital" (p. 3). Rueda et al. (2003) emphasize the importance of communicating specific information about schools and educational practices to immigrant

parents. Although these families arrive with their own cultural capital, their familiar practices may not translate positively within the context of American schooling. Rueda et al.'s research (2003) underscores the value of school-specific cultural capital and the need for special services to promote the academic preparation and, ultimately, college readiness of low-income minority students. In addition, Rueda et al.'s (2003) emphasis of critical dialogue demonstrates a Freirean (2001) perspective on social change that reflects the philosophical roots of developmental education and informs effective program design and practice.

Not surprisingly, under-prepared students persist in higher education at a lower rate than their better prepared counterparts. J. K. Berger (2000) consulting editor for *Research in Higher Education*, points out higher education institutions have an interest in increasing their own capital, both cultural and economic. Underprepared students are often low-income and first generation; as a rule, they do not come to college with much personal capital. Moreover, Michael Apple's (2001) work, *Educating the 'Right' Way*, confronts the multiple linkages between knowledge and power and discusses the economic rationalization for education. With its concept of students as "human capital," Apple's work is a particularly important scaffold for research on the effects of college programs and policies regarding underprepared students. Indeed, any institutional investment in developmental courses and programs depends in large part on the assessed value assigned to this particular student population's *capital*. If these students are seen as deficient and at risk, it follows that their "human capital" would be devalued. Furthermore, in *Education and Power*, Michael Apple (1982) explores the complicated, and often contradictory, ways schools function within a society. Apple (1982) argues, "Schools play a fundamental role in assisting in the accumulation of cultural capital" and describes schooling as "both a system of production and reproduction" (p. 22).

It is important to note that minorities are over-represented in developmental education programs. There are many reasons for this explained in the literature, not least of which is the quality of elementary and secondary schools that many minorities attend. Pedro Noguera (2003) notes, "in many schools the students in the remedial classes are disproportionately Black and Brown" (p. 2). Referring to the connection between identity and achievement in school, Noguera (2003) asserts: In an era of increased accountability, standardized testing has become a key assessment of student achievement and potential. There are, however, multiple points of concern regarding the emphasis on high-stakes testing. Jones, Jones, and Hargrove (2003) observe that pressure to "teach to the test in the early grades often forces teachers to downplay art, music, science and social studies instruction (p. 34). Moreover, teachers feel pressure to adopt "back to basics" instructional methods in lieu of student-centered methods that "are more effective for complex goals that emphasize higher order thinking and problem-solving" (Jones et al., 2003, p. 39). Ironically, success in college-level coursework demands the very higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills that are often shortchanged by "teaching to the test." Increased focus on standardized testing has inordinate effects on special populations, e.g. minorities, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low-income backgrounds (Jones et al., 2003, p. 109). Jones et al. (2003) speak to the question of whose knowledge is important in the formulation of curriculum and standardized tests and observe, "The current testing movement has been accused of maintaining the power structure of the dominant culture" (p. 26). Jencks and Phillips (1998) argue that although standardized tests claim to measure academic potential, they actually measure academic achievement or developed ability. This penalizes students from low-income backgrounds who may not have enjoyed the same educational advantages as students

from more affluent circumstances. Jones et al. (2003) call this the "Volvo effect" and explain the positive correlation between standardized test performance and family socioeconomic status.

Scores on standardized tests are increasingly used to label students as high or low achieving. With high-stakes testing programs beginning in elementary school, ability judgments are made early in a student's educational career and, often, determine the level of instructional opportunities available. Ultimately, the level of academic preparation and subsequent performance on standardized tests decide whether a student is ready to enroll and succeed in higher education. Moreover, it is important to note that the special populations inordinately impacted by high-stakes testing tend to be over-represented in higher education programs for under-prepared students. In "The Influence of Personalization of Online Texts on Elementary School Students' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes Toward Reading" Ihsan Seyit Ertem asserts:

Technology is becoming more significant as a teaching and learning instrument both at home and in our schools. Classrooms today are different from the classrooms of 30 years ago, primarily because of the improved use of technology. The students are more skilled than ever before in using technology to explore for information, and to answer questions about various topics. Many students find technology mediated reading to be very motivating and interesting. Technology has the potential to significantly increase access to text, opportunities for self-selection, and social interaction about text. With technology on the increase it is important that teachers become more aware of positive impact technology can have on students' literacy engagement, motivation, and achievement (Gambrell, 2006). Literacy has been altered fundamentally by the development of computer-based and Internet technologies. The role of educators includes teaching

children to challenge with whole new set of texts and contexts for reading.

Comprehension is also developing new meanings and new prominences. Many texts in electronic environment have unique characteristics, many activities carried out in electronic environments are distinct, and each reader brings to the comprehension process experience with technology and reading (Duke, Schmar-Dobler, & Zhang, 2006). One of the unique characteristics of texts in electronic environment is personalization. (2013, p. 218)

**Personalization.** Personalization refers to understand individual needs, habits and lifestyle, attitudes, preferences, likes and dislikes of customers, and addressing customers' individual needs and preferences. Şimşek and Çakır (2009) defined personalization –as an educational meaning-embedding students' past experiences and interests into the educational content|| (p.278). Taylor and Adelman (1999) defined similarly the personalization as accounting for individual differences in both capacity and motivation. Personalization symbolizes an application of the principles of normalization and least intervention needed. Personalization can be treated as a psychological construct by viewing the learner's perception as a critical factor in defining whether the environment appropriately accounts for the learner's interests and abilities. In defining personalization as a psychological construct, learners' perceptions of how well teaching and learning environments match their interests and abilities become a basic assessment concern. Researchers claimed that appropriately designed and carried out, personalized programs reduce the need for remediation related to literacy. Maximizing motivation and matching developmental ability can be an adequate condition for learning among ordinary level students. Personalized programs also represent the type of program regular classrooms might implement in order to significantly improve the efficacy of inclusion. Teachers should know the importance of

designing interventions to be a good fit with the current potentials of their students (Taylor & Adelman, 1999).

If the customers of online text are students, educators need to consider their needs, attitudes, preferences, like and dislikes. Electronic books mostly focus on attractiveness, rich color, sound, animation, zoom, size, changeable font, moving graphics, feedback, interactive, headings, introduction, highlight, style, name, and encouragement as a common character. The discovered benefits of personalization are: Children's curiosity is enhanced; interests are maximized, and enhance a child's motivation to read. Personalization provides to the kid with an engaging and enjoyable experience, enhance the believability of characters, and personalization allow easy understand and remembering the story (DeMoulin, 2001). Miller and Kulhavy (as cited in Lopez, 1990) claimed that personalized representations develop. Motivation and attitude are important factors involved in comprehension process. Attitudes influence motivation and motivation influences our thinking about why we are successful or not. Reading failure frequently leads to negative attitudes toward reading. When children constantly experience reading difficulty, they may lose their eagerness and motivation for reading (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasized that —A less motivated reader spends less time reading, exerts lower cognitive effort, and is less dedicated to full comprehension than a highly motivated reader (p. 406).

Reading comprehension is also influenced by new technology. Utilizing the computer to text can aid children to improve their comprehension because technological features of the computer allow them to gain control of texts. Readers of computer-mediated texts (electronic texts) are able to easily gain word meanings. This feature can affect children to explore the meanings of words they find difficult. Comprehension can improve if the computer can reduce



the pressure and motivate students to be more active in monitoring their reading comprehension (Dotty, 1999). Multimodal, nonlinear, dynamic, and multilayered features of digital texts changed traditional conceptions of reading comprehension, online reading comprehension (Shinas, 2012).

In this research, online text refers to mean compositions for the computer screen, tablet, or mobile phone. Different textual formats present configure new spaces and possibilities so students may achieve a more level comprehension. Online texts make it possible to the reader the means and dynamic tools to actively construct knowledge representations (Alvarez, 2006). Online texts possess new characteristics that require different types of comprehension processes and a different set of instructional strategies. Online texts provide new supports as well as new challenges that can have a great impact on an individual's ability of reading comprehension (Coiro, 2003).

With the advancement of technology there is a controversy about the printed page being replaced by online text. Online texts are not meant to replace traditional texts, but to provide an alternate reading media. There are strengths and weaknesses of using an online text. The strengths of online text are that they are fresh and original works that readers often cannot find in a bookstore. Students can save costs, speed, and storage with online text. In addition, e-texts are the new wave because there is no waiting. They are updated and up to date, and there is no need for ink, paper. Some e-books even allow the children to add comments, notes, or post ideas. One of the greatest strengths of online texts are that they are faster, cheaper, and more searchable compared to paper texts (Alvarez, 2006; Coiro, 2003). Online text has some weaknesses. For example, reading on a screen can sometimes be a challenge, especially for students with disabilities. Children might lose their places in the text or need to shut down the computer/tablet

for other necessities. These are some of weaknesses we have to consider about electronic texts. Another weakness is that when a student searches Internet there are limited number of free online stories to read because of copyright issues, so the children cannot always easily access and read the story when they want.

The results of an attitude survey found that personalized online texts provided more positive attitudes (enjoyment, believability, interestingness and motivation) toward reading than non-personalized online texts except perception. Robb (2000) claimed that children's interest in reading for pleasure and motivation to read was being reduced. Personalized online texts can help these unmotivated and uninterested children. Personalization can make reading more enjoyable and interesting to students. The students in this study were highly motivated to read the personalized online texts and were on task continually, and the findings from Robb's study suggest that personalization of online text increased engagement of elementary students. These results support outcome of previous studies (Dwyer, 1996; Lopez, 1990; Anand & Ross, 1987). One possible reason for this result could be attributed to the fact that students were able to control and choose some of features of online texts such as picture, color, and font.

While students in developmental education might enjoy e-texts more, there are significant questions about the effectiveness of e-texts to address the needs of struggling readers through the use of traditional reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension is critical to student success at the college level. In a 2013 study, Keskin points out:

Reading is one of the most essential skills required for a quality education. Acquisition of this basic skill by students had been considered enough until the last quarter of the twentieth century. However, this understanding is not valid anymore today, because the basic reading skill is not regarded as adequate for the training of skilled individuals

(Akyol, 2008). It is emphasized in the literature that along with the basic reading skill the reader should also possess the fluent reading skill (Rasinski, 2010), knowledge of strategy in reading (Gelen, 2003; Karatay, 2009; Van Keer and Vanderlinde, 2010) and positive reading attitude (Ozbay and Uyar, 2009; McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995). All of these skills related to reading influence students' both academic achievement (Lazarus and Calla, 2000) and social life. (Harris and Sipay, 1990)

The use of strategy in reading facilitates students' achievement of their targets in the activity of reading.

Skilled readers are capable of making use of more than one strategies by selecting the required strategies according to the reading environment (Afflerbach and Cho, 2010). By pointing to the fact that metacognitive strategies are constructed on the basis of planning, arrangement and evaluation, students merely focus on the active execution of these strategies during reading, Akyol (2008), on the other hand, addresses these strategies in three main stages: before reading, during reading, and after reading:

In general, it is possible to state that these classifications carry similarities. The planning stage is the planning of the reading process and setting the target of reading before doing it; whereas the arrangement stage refers to the questioning and rearrangement of information received during reading; and the evaluation stage refers to the stage in which the reader constructs her own judgments, differentiates between the real and the fictional, that is, the stage in which she evaluates the status of accomplishment of her targets.

(Akyol, 2008)

It is during the evaluation stage that a student monitors whether comprehension has been achieved or not. At this stage, the reader makes her own decisions by monitoring this; this

practice leads to self-efficacy. Studies point to a significant correlation between the use of metacognitive strategies and comprehension (Katranci and Yangin, 2013; Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). The impact of metacognitive strategies is not limited only to comprehension, they are also influential in the development of independent reading behaviors (Aghaie and Zhang, 2012). Sustainability of these behaviors depends on the development of positive attitudes towards them (Hogg and Vaughan, 2011). For this reason, a closer examination is needed on the relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies in reading and the reading attitude, especially in college aged students enrolled in remedial English or reading courses.

Finally, the emotional health of a student is influential in the individual's formation of a positive or a negative attitude towards reading. Knowledge and utilization of metacognitive strategies contributes to individuals' success in their activities, and this success helps them acquire direct positive experiences related to that practice and develop positive attitudes towards it (Hogg and Vaughan, 2011; Bordens and Horowitz, 2002). Similarly, Akinbobola (2009) found that cooperative learning strategy positively affects students' attitudes towards the physics course. Katranci and Yangin (2013) determined that the teaching of metacognitive listening strategy is effective in developing positive attitudes towards listening. The same is also the case for the reading attitude. According to McKenna, et al. (1995), changes occur in individuals' beliefs and emotions regarding reading as a result of their reading experiences. This way, the positive nature of individuals' reading experiences help them develop positive attitudes towards reading (Lau and Chan, 2003). Gelen (2003) argues that students' cognitive awareness skills are enhanced, their comprehension success increases, and their attitudes towards the course change positively in the Turkish language course through the teaching of cognitive awareness skill. Reis, et al. (2007), in the experimental study they conducted using the Planned Enrichment Strategies,

found that the reading attitudes of students in the experimental group have improved. However, studies in the literature show that the reading attitude is not a structure that consists of only a single dimension. McKenna, et al. (1995) addressed this attitude through a purpose-based classification: academic and recreational. Ozbay and Uyar (2009), on the other hand, examined the reading attitude under four subdimensions: academic, free, book and general reading attitudes. It is seen in the literature that the academic reading attitude is addressed separately from other reading attitudes, which are addressed under the category of general reading attitude.

Teachers' guidance is of utmost importance in the development of the academic reading attitude. Students' likelihood to develop positive reading attitudes is increased as teachers become role models for them, stir curiosity, and direct them to researching (Harris and Sipay, 1990). In the formation of the general reading attitude, on the other hand, the home environment as well as school and other surroundings are influential. Students who take part in reading practices at home, at school and in the wider environment carry out more reading activities and develop positive attitudes towards reading as long as they undergo positive reading experiences (Burns, Roe and Ross, 1988).

In teaching environments, students are generally expected to have positive attitudes towards reading, mainly because of the positive correlation between reading attitude and reading success. Studies in the literature have obtained strong relevant findings (Martínez, Aricak and Jewell, 2008). However, the number of studies in which the relationship between reading attitude and school success is demonstrated is very limited. In fact, reading attitude is among the significant factors that influence students' general level of success (Lazarus and Calla, 2000), because students need to have strong reading skills in order to be able to learn and succeed in courses. Rowe (1991) found a positive correlation between independent reading activities

performed at home and reading attitude, and argued that this correlation positively affects students' school success. McKenna and Kear (1990) suggest that attitudes increase the volume of reading by improving motivation and this way they influence students' success. Harris and Sipay (1990), underlining that reading materials both at home and at school need to be carefully selected, argue that quality books are influential in attracting students' attention and arousing curiosity, because the reading activities that students perform in their free time help them develop positive reading attitudes.

Yet another finding produced by the research is the positive impact of reading attitude upon school success. The impact of academic reading attitude upon school success is lower than that of general reading. That is, general reading attitude better predicts school success. This finding is in parallel with that of Reis et al, because general reading attitude has more content and is more diverse, compared to academic reading attitude. In this respect, students gain access to a higher number and variety of publications through general reading attitude. This increases the volume of reading and provides a base for higher school success (McKenna and Kear, 1990). Similarly, Lazarus and Calla (2000) suggest that reading attitude has an impact upon general school success. In this respect, the finding of this study supports the findings of previous ones. Another relationship unveiled in this research is the direct impact of the use of metacognitive strategy in reading upon school success. Findings obtained from the model suggest that this impact is not direct, instead, it operates through reading attitudes. In other words, it is not sufficient for the student to have only the knowledge of strategies without developing positive attitudes towards reading to be able to succeed at school.

## Summary

More research needs to be done with students in remedial level reading courses in order to determine what instances specifically caused them to have negative reading attitudes. Though the students in developmental reading courses were motivated to seek higher education, they also retained a negative attitude towards reading (Sperling & Head, 2002; McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Park, 2008; Reis et al, 2008). Assuming reading may influence academic achievement, it may be useful to attempt to increase students' reading for pleasure as one means to improve academic achievement (Kelly & Daughtry, 2006). Most students would enjoy reading books that interest them, but most also have no time for this after struggling to get through the assignments for their courses. Because reading attitudes are developed early in life, it is important that educators of all levels focus on improving the reading attitudes of students. Reading behaviors are learned, and anything that is learned can be unlearned. Thus, students with negative attitudes towards reading can change when educators provide them with support, encouragement, and skills to succeed.

## **CHAPER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

In this study, the researcher takes a constructivist approach to qualitative, phenomenological case study by making inquiries regarding how adults in developmental reading courses describe their educational and life experiences and whether those experiences influence their reading attitudes and decision-making processes related to seeking higher education. From the review of the literature, the researcher determined that phenomenological studies are generally based on constructivist theory. Baxter and Jack (2008) state that “constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective,” (p. 546). Through this study, the researcher wants to give students with reading difficulties the opportunity to reflect upon what conditions they experience throughout their childhood and adult lives that might lead them to their current academic position. This study is designed as phenomenological case study form of qualitative research; this type of research allows the participants to express their own personal stories through interaction with the researcher. By allowing participants to express themselves in this way, the researcher better understands the reasons behind a participant’s actions (Stake, 1995). The researcher uses constructivist approach to qualitative research in accordance with the following methodology.

### **Design**

A phenomenological case study was chosen as the approach to best fit the needs of this research. Baxter & Jack (2008) reference Yin (2003) in regards to phenomenologies stating: “A case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon



under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context” (p. 552).

A phenomenological case study was chosen because the researcher is considering the phenomenon behind the attitudes and decision-making of developmental reading students, and the case could not be considered without also taking home and school settings into consideration. This is due to the fact that these settings influenced the decision-making skills and abilities of the participants. An accurate portrait of the why certain reading attitudes and decision making skills of these students developed could not be established without first considering them in the context of the students’ lives. Because the focus of this study was “to gain insight and understanding of a particular situation or phenomenon,” the researcher used “an instrumental case study to gain understanding” about the case in question (Baxter & Jack, 2008). By using an instrumental, phenomenological case study design, the researcher was able to determine whether or not the environs and experiences of students throughout their lives affect the ultimate attitudes and decision making processes that develop.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** How does being placed into remedial/developmental courses affect students' self-efficacy as readers?

**RQ2:** How do students in developmental language arts courses describe their literacy experiences and how did these experiences impact decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education?

**RQ3:** Why are students in developmental English courses reluctant to read for pleasure?

### **Setting**

The site was chosen because of the centrality of its location in Northeast Georgia. There are fifteen options for college education within a sixty-mile radius of the institution, so the findings of the study can be applied broadly to a vast number of institutions with similar student populations. As suggested by Baxter and Jack (2008), this study was bound by: time, place, activity, and context. This study was conducted in a during the fall semester of 2016, and the context examined was a developmental reading course at a college in northeast Georgia as well as the homes of the twelve study participants. The student population at the target school consists of a diverse ethnic population: 15% Hispanic, 40% African American, 30% Caucasian, and 15% Other (Asian, Native American, Interracial, etc.).

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were eleven students enrolled in developmental language arts as freshmen in a local community college. These participants were selected through convenience sampling because this type of sampling allows for ease of research, shortened period for data collection, and is most affordable possibility in relation to alternative sampling methods (Creswell, 2013). The researcher obtained permission to conduct research from IRB as well as the department head and instructor of developmental English courses at a community college neighboring the college for which the researcher is currently employed. This allowed for a convenience sample without the inconvenience of an authority bias. Once permission was obtained, the only two developmental reading courses for the semester were selected as population sample from which to select participants. The students in each class were introduced to the study by the researcher; research requirements, time requirements, confidentiality

agreements, and permission forms were then obtained from the students who chose to participate in the questionnaires and surveys.

Approximately, 42% of students enrolled as freshmen in the population sample courses are non-traditional students; most of these students were seeking a career change because of layoffs due to the recent economic downturn in the area. Additionally, according to the enrollment data from the previous semester, at least 45% of freshmen were enrolled in at least one developmental course. These participants were chosen from a developmental reading course in which students are placed due to low scores on the reading comprehension portion of the placement test taken by all entering freshmen, namely, the Accuplacer Test.

### **Procedures**

First, the researcher secured Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this study at a two-year college in Northeast Georgia. Information about securing IRB approval is provided: See Appendix A. Once approval from IRB was received, the researcher began to elicit participants for the study by contacting instructors of developmental language arts courses and determining which sections of the course would be best to include in the research based on time, enrollment numbers, location, etc. The researcher managed to select students for the study who were enrolled in two sections of developmental reading being taught by the same instructor using the same class formatting. The researcher met with both classes and explained the premise of the study and asked each student in the course whether or not he/she wished to participate in the study; those who agreed to participate and sign the consent form were then officially considered to be the participants which this study was based on. Once the participants were selected, the researcher began the study by having students respond to a questionnaire based on their reading attitudes and history. Next, the researcher conducted one-to-one and small-group

interviews with the students who agreed to be interviewed. The location of these interviews were determined by what worked best for the students involved.

### **The Researcher's Role**

My life revolves around reading and writing as means of communication with the world. I cannot remember a time in my life that I did not love to read, and I attribute that to the vast access to books given to me by my parents. My parents are high school educated farmers, so they did not necessarily spend a lot of time reading, to themselves or to me; however, my parents allowed me to have access to library books and bought me boxes full of paperback books that still fill boxes in my basement to this day because I cannot bring myself to part with them. I was not a struggling reader; reading was something that was and has always been easy for me. However, I have taught students who struggle with reading for the last nine years; my entire professional career has been focused on remediating secondary readers. I want to understand personally where these struggles come from as well as help develop means to avoid and/or correct these issues for future generations of students, parents, and educators.

I wanted to conduct this study to help myself, my colleagues, and the field of education better understand and address the needs of adults in developmental reading courses. As a parent, I hope this study will help myself other parents realize the importance of home literacy, determine what works and what does not, and adjust our own practices accordingly in hopes of improving future generations of college students. As an instructor of developmental reading and English courses at a neighboring, partnering institution, I chose this as the research site due the familiarity with the department, location, and students. At the university where I am currently employed, I am basically the entire Learning Support Language Arts department on campus; meaning the students in my courses know me well and if any students need to repeat a course, I

am the only option of instructor available to instruct them unless they wish to travel to another campus location. Therefore, I felt that this research will be more statistically relevant if it is not biased by my personal influence on the students. I do not want them to feel an obligation to participate or participate only in hopes of securing a better course average; I fear that my own students would be more likely to give the answers they think I want them to give rather than answering questions truthfully. The location of the research school is near seven other colleges and universities including the school with which I am currently employed, which means the student population is similar in terms of location, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Thus, the findings of this study would be especially relevant to colleges in Georgia that offer learning support courses. I teach a large number of struggling readers, and this study helped me to better understand the possible reasons behind the actions and behaviors of her adult students. The findings allowed the researcher to understand why and how these students became such poor readers. Knowing how they got to the place they are in and how they developed these attitudes will help the researcher as well as other reading teachers determine the best way to reach these students and help them overcome their difficulties.

### **Data Collection**

According to Yin (2003) and Creswell (2013), one of the most important components of a phenomenological case study is that the researcher employs multiple data sources because it lends to the credibility. Data collection approaches used for this study included: questionnaires, documentation, interviews, journals, and observations. This was done using documents that have been proven as effective tools in other research studies. The use of multiple data sources in case study research makes it preferable to other qualitative approaches due to the fact that information

from different sources can be integrated together as part of the analysis instead of taken individually. “Each data source is one piece of the ‘puzzle,’ with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case,” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). By collecting data from various resources, the researcher was able to gain a better understanding of what parts of the participants’ lives contributed to the big picture of their attitudes and/or educational deficiencies.

After obtaining permission and consent from the students, the classroom instructor, and IRB, the researcher examined the necessary documentation and distributed the reading questionnaire to students and lining up times for interviews. Each time that the researcher observed the students, no matter what the context, she used an audio recorder (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

### **Questionnaires**

At the beginning of the course, two classes were given a reading attitudes questionnaire that was approved by the Institutional Review Board for use in the current study (See Appendix B). Questionnaires were chosen because they are an affordable method for collecting qualitative information from students that ensures a greater anonymity than other methods. The questionnaire was designed to make logical sense to students; each question was worded in a way that was clear and easy to understand. Also, the sequencing of the questions was easy to follow as the questions about childhood reading experiences were grouped together and progressed to adult reading experiences and behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Creswell, 2013). The questionnaire consists of forty questions designed to elicit truthful student responses in regards to

reading habits, times, memories, desires, and struggles in order to build a comprehensive picture of student reading attitudes and behaviors.

### **Interviews**

One of the key aspects of a phenomenological case study is the interviews of the participants (Baxter, 2003; Stake, 1995; Theurer, 2010). The researcher conducted interviews with all twelve participants individually as well in small groups of three or four. During the interviews, the researcher asked questions (see Appendix C) that allowed the students reflect upon their lives academically, personally, and professionally in order to obtain a well-rounded view of the student's experiences with reading and higher education (Kolajo, 2004; Jones, 2014; Hoyt and Sorensen, 2001). The researcher conducted the interviews in a comfortable, agreed-upon setting outside of the classroom, so the students would feel more at ease with the environment around them and be more willing to contribute openly and honestly. During the interviews, the researcher used the open-ended questions that were reviewed and approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board to develop a rapport with the participants and guide the discussion with students. The researcher questioned participants in regards to their parents, spouses, and/or children in order to assess how the family construct contributed to the students' current situation and attitude. The questions allowed students to reflect upon their own motivations and actions in regard to higher education and reading. The researcher used an audio recorder and took notes as each interview was in progress (Yin, 2010). These notes and recordings were later revisited, transcribed, and incorporated into the coding of the research information. During the interview, the following questions were used to guide the discussion with students:

Questions one through three seek to understand the motivations behind the participants' desire to pursue degrees in higher education whether this be personal goals, parental goals, or if the goals were unknown at this point. These questions allowed students to describe themselves as college students and as learners; this gave the researcher insight on the students' level of confidence and ability to connect with and communicate personal goals in a logical way (Rueda et al, 2003; Creswell, 2009).

Questions four and five attempt to elicit student responses that construct each person's self-image in regards to reading. The way in which a student chose to interpret the request to "describe yourself as a reader" informed the researcher of the state of mind and perspective of each participant in regards to his/her questionnaire responses and placement into remedial reading courses (Bourdieu and Pass, 2002).

Questions six through eight allow students to paint comprehensive pictures of their childhood reading experiences both at home and at school without limiting the scope of the environment. These questions encouraged students to elaborate on early reading experiences that were significant to them personally rather than specifically to one educational or personal setting. Also, these questions allow students to divulge their earliest experiences with reading which could have served to inform their future struggles with reading. Finally, the questions sought to determine the level of importance that students place upon reading at this stage in their lives as struggling college readers (Berger, 2000; Delpit, 2006).

Questions nine through twelve ask students to think about their current reading habits and elaborate upon what specific genres of reading most appeal to them (Ghaith, 2003).



Questions thirteen through nineteen revolve around student motivations for reading. These questions attempt to elicit responses in regards to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to read (Dexter and Stacks, 2004). Students were asked to elaborate upon how reading makes them feel as adults and who or what motivates them to read when they choose to. Also, these questions make students assess themselves as either “good” or “bad” readers, which opens a discussion about what they believe constitutes good reading. These questions give students a way to voice any possible displeasure or dislike of reading as well as contemplate why that attitude might exist as well as evaluate the external factors involved with reading environments both at home and a work.

Questions twenty through twenty-two ask students to voice their experiences with reading and provide opinions about what specific aspects of their lives they feel helped or harmed their ability and desire to read. The open-ended nature of the final questions allows room for students to elaborate upon the areas of reading, life, and higher education they have the most issues with.

### **Data Analysis**

When a qualitative study is conducted, a researcher usually conducts data collection and analysis at the same time (Baxter, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). The researcher followed the steps outlined by Creswell (2013) for analyzing data in case studies:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis
2. Read through all the data. Gain a general sense of the information and reflect on the overall meaning.
3. Conduct analysis based on the specific theoretical approach and method (e.g. narrative, content, grounded theory, and analysis techniques). This often involves coding or organizing related segments of data into categories.

4. Generate a description of the setting or people and identify themes from the coding.

Search for theme connections.

5. Represent the data within a research report.

6. Interpret the larger meaning of the data.

Yin's findings (2013) suggest having multiple data sources is what makes the findings of a case study so rich, but it can also present an overwhelming amount of data for the researcher to analyze. For the current study, the researcher conducted data analysis throughout the course of the study in order to ensure the different sources were being compared and integrated together to build one comprehensive picture. To avoid getting lost in the amount of data collected in the study, the researcher used a database to help organize the data.

The advantage of using a database to accomplish this task is that raw data are available for independent inspection. Using a database improves the reliability of the case study as it enables the researcher to track and organize data sources including notes, key documents, tabular materials, narratives, photographs, and audio files can be stored in a database for easy retrieval at a later date. (Baxter, 2003)

**Coding.** After the researcher gathered all recorded data, “any meaningful patterns and categories in qualitative data as well as any explanatory/descriptive theories need to be identified and interpreted by the analyst” (Yin, 2013, p. 49). At this point, the researcher began open coding. The researcher did not use coding software for this process because of the technical difficulties that it can create as well as the detachment from the work that it could cause for the researcher. The researcher went through all of the transcription with different colored highlighters and coordinated what themes seemed to be recurrent. The researcher used pink to highlight

statements that reflected home situations, yellow for childhood stories, green for academic concerns or comments, etc. As the researcher went through this process, trends began developing that led to two-tiered coding in order to better draw a picture of the case (Saldana, 2013).

**Field Notes.** In order to accurately remember observations of settings and behaviors, the researcher took notes in each situation. This allowed the researcher to recall her own reactions, questions, or interpretations while analyzing the data later after the fact. “Exemplary case studies use field notes and databases to categorize and reference data so that it is readily available for subsequent reinterpretation. Field notes record feelings and intuitive hunches, pose questions, and document the work in progress. They record testimonies, stories, and illustrations which can be used in later reports. They may warn of impending bias because of the detailed exposure of the client to special attention, or give an early signal that a pattern is emerging. They assist in determining whether or not the inquiry needs to be reformulated or redefined based on what is being observed” (Yin, 2013, p. 52). It allowed the researcher to write down everything she observed or did throughout the course of the research. Field notes served to supplement the information gathered throughout the observations and interviews (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013).

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the study was determined by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The researcher also took additional measures to ensure the credibility of the research remained intact throughout the course of the study. This was essential to ensuring the dependability of a qualitative case study. These additional measures were: member checks, triangulation, and feedback.

### **Credibility**

To ensure the findings of the study would be credible, the researcher used random student volunteers, triangulated data collection methods, and consistently confirmed the confidentiality of the participants and data.

**Triangulation.** Phenomenological case studies are made more credible because of the use of triangulation of data collection methods (Baxter, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). By using multiple methods of data collection, the researcher took great precautions to ensure that the information gathered reflects an accurate depiction of the case and not merely a reflection from one researcher's aspect. By having students respond to both a questionnaire and interview, the themes that emerged could less likely be attributed to mere coincidence.

**Confidentiality.** The identity of the participants was kept anonymous. Each subject signed a confidentiality consent form before participating in the project; this consent form is included in the appendices and informs the students of their privacy rights, the nature of the study, and the measures taken to ensure anonymity. Pseudonyms were used rather than real names, and the specific name and location of the college will also remain anonymous to eliminate the chance of deductive identification. These measures will be taken in order to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality. Also, throughout each phase of the study, the researcher kept all data secure in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office and/or on a password protected document on my desktop computer, which is also always locked within my office and will ensure safety and security of the information.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

**Member Checks.** At the conclusion of the study, the researcher asked one of the participants to review the information and make sure that it looks like an accurate reflection of

the information he/she contributed. This will help eliminate any misconceptions within what the participants meant and what assumptions I made based upon that information (Creswell, 2013).

**Feedback.** To enhance the dependability of the study, the researcher went to two other professionals in the department of the college setting and ask for their feedback on the information. The researcher went to them as coding the data began in order to determine if they see similar or different themes emerging. This helped eliminate any bias the researcher may hold or have developed over the course of the semester (Yin, 2013).

### **Transferability**

Studies of this nature are categorically designed to deeply examine phenomenon specific to the group of people involved. In this study, the findings paint a picture of adults in developmental language arts courses in a college in northern Georgia, but it is ultimately up to the reader to decide if the lessons learned from the experiences and ideas of these students can be applied to students, parents, and educators in different context.

To ensure that the findings of this study would be more transferable to other contexts, the researcher became immersed with the information until “pure and thorough description of the phenomenon” was developed (Kleimen, 2004).

Because Yin (2003) and Creswell (2013) suggested that in order to lend credibility and confirmability to the study the researcher should use multiple data sources, or triangulation, data collection approaches used for this study included: questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and observations. The information from each source of data was examined individually but also as a small piece that contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon as a whole: “This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case,” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). While the

researcher tried to enhance the transferability of the study by meticulously describing the situation, setting, participants, and phenomenon, in qualitative research, the transferability or lack-thereof is ultimately the responsibility of the person trying to replicate or transfer the results to a new context.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations abound in any educational research, and the researcher approached this project with the utmost respect for such considerations. The IRB exists to help regulate research practices and protect the rights of those participating in the study; thus, obtaining IRB approval and permissions were critical before the present study could commence. The researcher took steps to avoid being an authority figure for the study's subjects, and the researcher used pseudonyms in the reporting in order to protect the identification and privacy of the college and students involved (Creswell, 2013). Also, the researcher took steps to password protect all electronic resources used throughout the study and lock all transcripts and coding documents in a secure location when not in use (Yin, 2013). Following the rules established and approved by the IRB allowed the researcher to ethically and successfully conduct this research. All documents and data related to the research study will be destroyed after three years of the completion date.

### **Summary**

In Chapter Three, the researcher has examined the research strategies employed in the present study on the reading attitudes and behaviors of adults in developmental education. To the best of her ability, the researcher explained the research questions she attempted to answer, described the setting and participants involved with the study, and laid out the procedures she followed while conducting this phenomenological case study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

As previously stated, the purpose of this phenomenological case study was to explore the reading attitudes of college freshmen enrolled in remedial language arts courses. This chapter will describe the participants in the study in more detail. Then the data collected during the questionnaire and interviews with the participants will be presented as it relates to and answers the study's three guiding research questions. Finally, new themes that appeared during data collection that did not necessarily directly answer the research questions but can still contribute to the study of reading and developmental education will be presented.

### **Participants**

#### **Administration**

After obtaining IRB approval to conduct the study, the researcher scheduled time with the instructor of three entry-level developmental reading courses at a local college at the beginning of fall semester 2016. One of the courses had low enrollment, so it was cancelled during the first week of the term, and the researcher was left with two reading class sections with which to work for her research. The researcher spoke with the English department head, Ms. Snider, and the reading course instructor, Ms. Smith, about the setup of the reading courses and what specifically the study would entail. The researcher observed and recorded the responses from these two ladies in regards to reading instruction and the specific courses being used for the study. Ms. Snider was serving her third year as English department head; she has a master's degree in English and has been teaching English to college students for fifteen years. During the semester that the research study commenced, Ms. Snider was teaching upper level English

composition courses. She explained that recently all of the reading courses at the school have been modularized in order to align with the new push from developmental education reform in America; in the new version of the courses, the students receive credit for attending class and working on lab modules via computers. The reading instructor for the courses being studied has a bachelor's degree in English Education and eighteen hours of upper level English coursework; she taught high school for sixteen years, and she has been teaching English and Reading at the learning support level for the last twelve years. Ms. Smith explained that as the instructor of this type of course, she has to approach the subject of reading differently than she has in the past in lecture-based reading courses. The students work silently online on most days, and when Ms. Smith notices trends in weaknesses on the online lab program, she will teach a short fifteen-minute lesson in order to address the areas of lack. On a normal day, she monitors the students, makes sure they are on task, and answers any questions they have as they work independently. The researcher asked Ms. Smith to give a brief summary of her expectations for the study before it began as well as offer any insight about the student body, to which she responded: "I would really like to see some of these students get to really think about their reading habits and realize how important reading will be for their lifelong goals. However, I do not foresee a lot of the students volunteering to participate in interviews because most of them are shy; they just want to come in, do their modules silently, get credit for attending, and go to work. They do not really socialize with each other very much. I do think you will have a few who may agree to participate though. There is hope." Ms. Smith provided the researcher with the class times and locations, and then on the days that the researcher was in the classroom, she introduced the researcher before excusing herself. The researcher did not speak again to Ms. Snider until after the conclusion of the research collection process.



## **Reading Attitude Questionnaire Participants**

When the researcher arrived to the class meetings, the students were a captive audience eager for a break from their online reading modules. All of the students in each of the course sections agreed to participate in the reading attitudes questionnaire, so they all signed the consent form approved by the IRB before participating in the questionnaires. After turning in their consent forms, students were given the reading attitudes questionnaire and asked to answer each question honestly. The researcher read each question aloud and asked students to respond on the Likert scale based on their own personal opinions, beliefs, and life experiences. At the conclusion of the questionnaires, the students were asked to volunteer for individual or group interview times. Contact information was collected for all students who signed up for interviews, and interview times and locations were set up afterwards.

The students who participated in the interviews also participated in reading attitude questionnaires; however, not every student who participated in the reading attitude questionnaires agreed to be interviewed due to their personal scheduling issues. Students enrolled in developmental reading courses at a two-year community college in Northeast Georgia, a total of 11, participated in a reading attitudes questionnaire. These students were enrolled in modular-based reading courses that meet once per week and are self-paced. The instructor for the courses assists students with any questions they have about their modules, but the majority of the grade for the course comes from the students' attendance and completion of the online reading remediation lab modules. The participants ranged in age from 18-45, 3 of the students were female, 7 were male, and 1 was a male transitioning into a female. Six of the students participating in the questionnaires work at least part time, three work full time. The classes overall were initially shy due to being faced with an unfamiliar person and situation;

however, they eventually opened up and were happy to be involved with a research study that might help other students like themselves in the future. These students were all placed into developmental level courses based on their placement test scores.

### **Interview Participants**

Of the students in the developmental reading courses, eleven agreed and found time to participate in both questionnaires and individual interviews. In order to ensure confidentiality, each student's name has been changed to a pseudonym in order to avoid any embarrassment or revelation of identity. Ensuring their anonymity allowed the students who may have felt scared or shy about sharing personal information to be more outgoing and honest about their personal beliefs, experiences, and attitudes. Each of the eleven students are described in more detail below with any possible identification factors altered as needed.

**Jokeem.** An 18-year-old African American male born and raised near the college he attends. He graduated high school 6 months before the interview. Jokeem is full of smiles and delightful jokes. He does not take himself or life too seriously. His classmates say he is always in a good mood and has a positive mindset. Jokeem has two younger sisters and still lives at home with his parents. Jokeem works part-time at the Boys and Girls Club.

**Janelle.** An 18-year-old African American female born and raised in Northeast Georgia. Janelle is independent and unique from the way she walks, dresses, and speaks to the things she does in her free time. She marches to the beat of her own drum, and she is unashamed of her differences. She is reserved not because she is shy, but because she reserves her comments for important moments. She has shortly cropped, black hair and wears camouflaged pants with combat boots. Her father and mother are divorced; her dad is a podiatrist and her mother is currently

unemployed. She lives with her aunt near campus and works in kitchen of a local Mexican restaurant.

**Tyler.** An 18-year-old white male with red hair and a long, red beard. Tyler is soft-spoken at first, but his voice raises with excitement and his eyes light up when he is talking about something that he loves. He loves money and his parents. Tyler is an only child born in Alabama but raised in Atlanta; he went to a large public high school and lived in a wealthy suburban subdivision. He is the first person in his family to attend college. His father owns his own business and his mother works at a pharmacy. He works helping his father and with a racing team.

**Steele.** A 19-year-old white male born and raised in North Carolina until the age of eight. His parents divorced when he was 8-years-old, so he moved with his father to live in southeastern Georgia. Steele attended a private, Christian school for the majority of his life. His father is a neurosurgeon, and his mother is a surgical nurse. He has one older sister and aspires to become a professional golfer.

**Yajaira.** A 25-year-old female who was born in Mexico but raised in the US since she was 11 years old. She is the single mom of a 7-year-old boy. She works full-time as an administrative assistant at a dental office during the day, and she attends school at night. She hopes to become a dental assistant so she can better provide for her son. She is warm and friendly but level-headed and hard-working, as a non-traditional student typically is; she is the type of student that others would happily welcome as part of a group for project.

**Edgar.** Another 18-year-old male fresh out of high school, Edgar is the first generation of his family to be born in America. The rest of his family are from Colombia or Mexico. He has a California accent and many west-coast mannerisms. He is a middle-child who makes a lot of

jokes. He did not want to share information about his family or how he was raised, but he did say that he has younger siblings that do not live in the state. He lives with three roommates and works for Firehouse Subs.

**David.** David is a reserved 18-year-old pursuing a degree in accounting. He is the first person in his family to attend college. His parents and older siblings were born in Mexico. He and his younger siblings were born in Texas and moved to Georgia when he was seven. He works part-time at Bed Bath and Beyond.

**Shawn.** An 18-year-old transgender person currently transitioning from a male to a female. She is exceptionally friendly and brutally honest. She lives with her grandmother because her parents were unaccepting of her life choices. Her grandmother pays her to help take care of her, clean the house, and take her to her doctor's appointments. She has an undeclared major.

**Kenneth.** Kenneth is an extremely tall, slender white male with dreadlocks eight inches long. He is 18 years old. He works as a model and travels all over the US and world to work as a model. He hopes to own his own agency someday. He has not declared a major yet. He was raised by his grandparents. His father is in prison for dealing drugs, and he has not heard from his mother in years.

**Jasmine.** Jasmine is a non-traditional African American female student, aged 32, who was born and raised in Georgia. She does not have children, but she is married and hopes to have children some day after she gets started in her career. She has worked as a medical assistant at a local nursing home for the last 10 years, but she is unhappy with the position and the pay. She wants to become a nurse so that she can make more money and provide for her future family.

**Toni.** Toni is an 18-year-old female with an Indian mother and a white father. She was raised in Northeast Georgia. She lives with her boyfriend at an apartment complex near campus and works

as a waitress at a local pizzeria. She has had a lifetime struggle with reading and writing, and her life-story in regards to this struggle was enlightening. Toni was brought to tears during her interview, but she fought through them in order to finish.

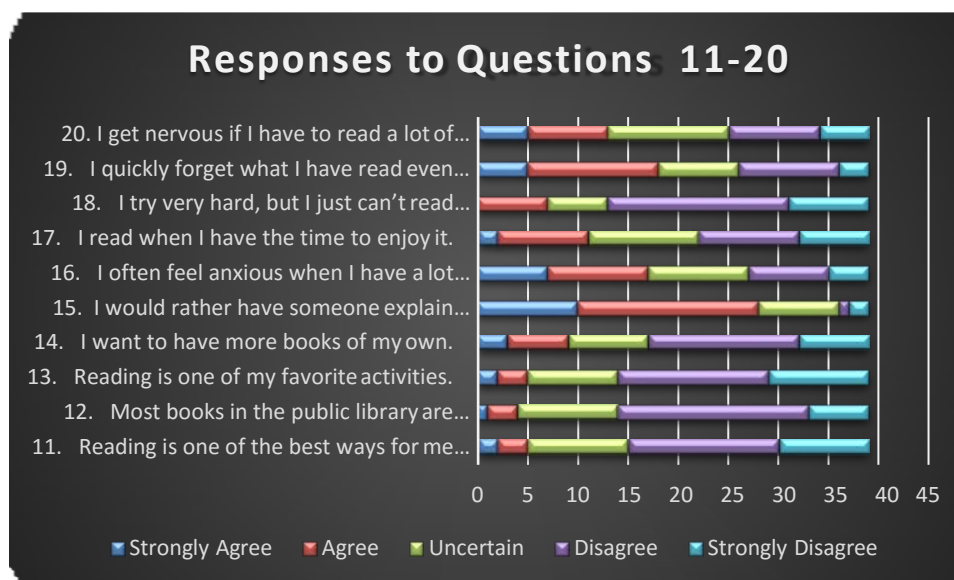
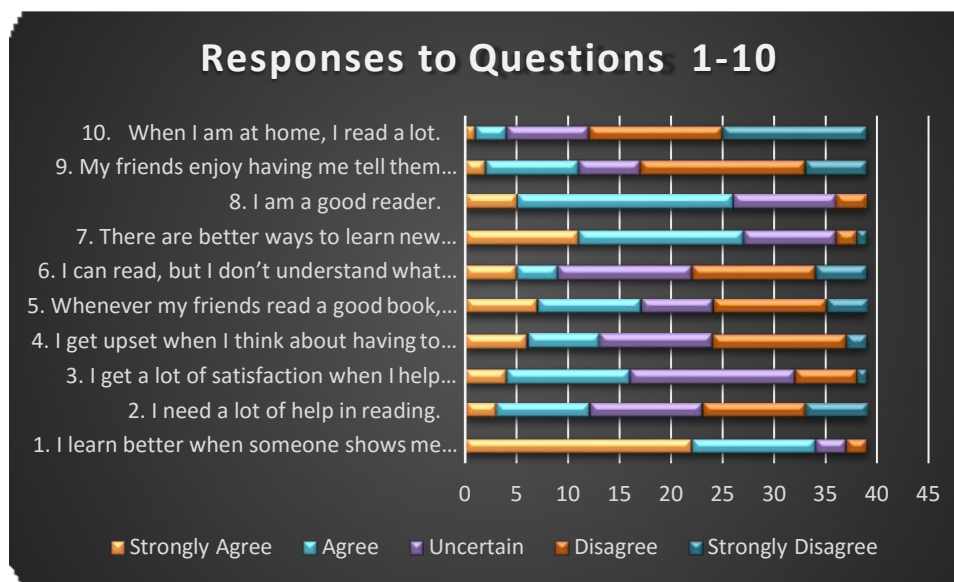
## **Results**

First of all, the researcher scheduled meetings via email with the Reading instructor, Ms. Smith, at the participating college. During this meeting, the researcher discussed with her in depth about the research study and the information Ms. Smith hoped would be obtained from it. Then Ms. Smith described her classes and pointed out a few struggling students whom she hoped would agree to be interviewed. The researcher, the instructor, and the English department chair reviewed both the questionnaire and the interview questions together to ensure the possibility of the best responses based on the specific population of students. Both the questionnaire statements and the interview questions were submitted to IRB, where the wording was edited and adjusted multiple times in order to meet all IRB standards; the IRB deemed all of the questions reliable and valid questions for this study. The reading questionnaire was adapted from a survey previously validated by McKenna and Kear (1990). During the two weeks prior to Thanksgiving break, the researcher was able to meet with each of her classes to discuss the purpose of the studies and ask for volunteers to participate in the research. Every student enrolled in the classes was willing to sign the consent forms (see appendix A) and participate in the Reading Attitudes Questionnaire (see appendix B). As the students turned in their questionnaires, they were asked if they wanted to participate further in the study by allowing themselves to be interviewed by the researcher (see appendix C for interview questions). Fifteen students signed up to be interviewed, but only eleven students actually showed up for their interview

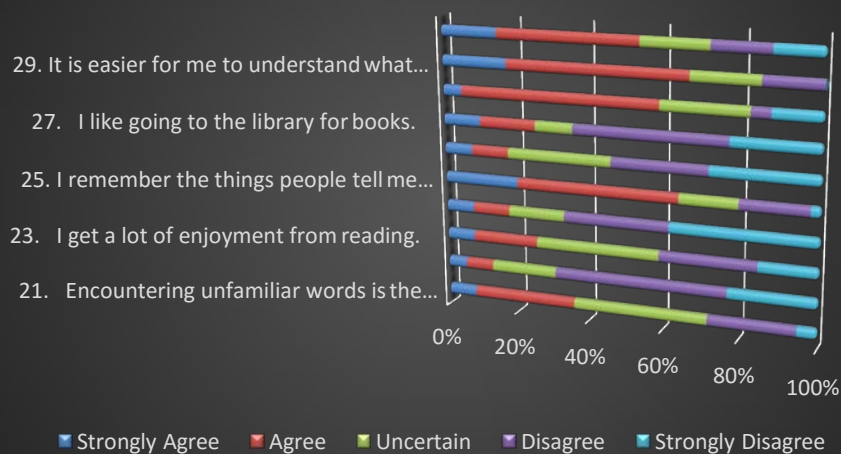
appointments with the researcher. The researcher recorded the interviews and took field notes in regards to her observations during both the administration of the reading attitudes questionnaire and each of the individual and group interview sessions.

Once all of the questionnaires and interviews had been completed, the researcher reviewed all information three times and double-checked the informal coding of the questionnaire data. She then typed transcripts of the interviews for further analysis. Next, the researcher asked Janelle, one of the questionnaire and interview participants, to look over the data transcribed and attributed to her to ensure that the information recorded was an accurate depiction of her true thoughts and feelings. She approved of the information without changes, and the researcher then started analyzing the results of the questionnaires by looking for similarities in responses and determining which themes link this information together. As the themes developed and were initially recorded, the researcher chose to conduct follow-up interviews for clarification with three of the students: Jokeem, Steele, and Jasmine. The information from these additional sessions was then incorporated into the data, and the researcher took the information back to the department chair and reading instructor for feedback on whether or not they believed the same themes and ideas were developing from the information that was gathered. Both of these professionals agreed with the themes generated by the interview and questionnaire data, and the researcher depicted this information below using narrative theory.

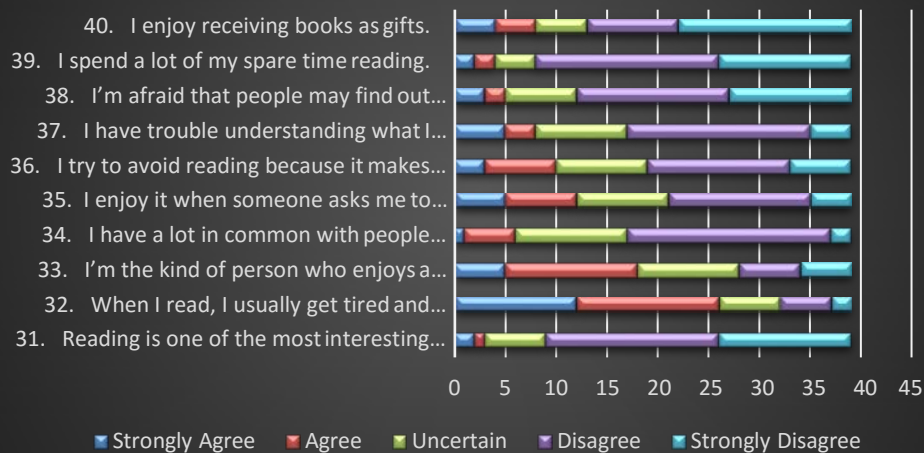
Figures 1-4: Reading Attitudes Questionnaire Results (see also Appendix B and D)



## Responses to Questions 21-30



## Responses to Questions 31-40



## Themes

After all of the questionnaires were collected and all interviews had been conducted, I began the process of continuous immersion in all data that had been collected. I listened to each interview multiple times to type up a transcript of each. After a working transcript was created for each interview, I went back through the field notes that I had written during each interview session and coded those notes on the bottom of each transcript sheet. Next, I added the



questionnaire data for each participant at the bottom of the document. As I read, listened, reread, and double-checked, several themes began to emerge in the data: (a) Level of Parental Involvement, (b) K-12 Schooling Experiences, (c) Misconceptions about “Good Reading”, (d) Sense of Wandering or Loss, (e) Degree of Disinterest in Reading, and (f) Punitive Reading.

Table 1, below, shows how each theme occurred in the students’ responses.

**Themes Emerging from Data Sources- Table 1**

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Level of Parental Involvement</b>	<b>K-12 School Experiences</b>	<b>Misconceptions About “Good Reading”</b>	<b>Sense of Wandering or Loss</b>	<b>Degree of Disinterest in Reading</b>	<b>Punitive Reading</b>
Jokeem	Y	Z	Y	Z	X	Y
Janelle	Z	Z	Z		Y	Y
Tyler	Y	Z	Y	Y	Z	
Steele	Z	Z	Y	Z	Z	
Yajaira	Y	Y	Z		Z	
Edgar	Z	Y	X	Z	Z	
David	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Y
Shawn	Z	Y	Z	Y	Z	Y
Kenneth	Y	Z	Z		Z	Y
Jasmine	Z	Y		Y	Z	
Toni	Z	Z		Y	Z	Z

**Table 1 Key:**

X= theme emerged in participant’s questionnaire responses only

Y= theme emerged in participant’s interview responses only

Z= theme emerged in participant’s questionnaire *and* interview responses

**Level of Parental Involvement.**

As discussed in the literature review, research has proven that parental involvement significantly impacts the ability of a child to read as well as whether he/she has positive or negative feelings associated with reading (Baker, Scher & Mackler 1997; Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Dexter & Stacks, 2014; Harris & Sipay 1980; Kotaman 2008; Levy, Gong,

Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Park, 2008; Perkins-Gough, 2008; Petrill et al 2005; Pinkerton, 2010; Purcell-Gates 1996; Reis et al, 2008; Sperling & Head, 2002; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). However, the impact of parental involvement with reading impacts a child through adulthood, and parental involvement and/or support with the education process is critical through all stages of a child's schooling. During interviews, students from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds described parental involvement with their reading habits and skills as a key factor in the attitudes they hold toward reading. While these students had vastly different background stories and experiences, a common thread that appeared in every interview was the level of parental involvement with reading and schooling. For example, one of the most basic questions asked during the interview was: "Do you read often? If not, explain why you think that might be?" which was not a question designed to elicit a response in regards to parenting, but Shawn's response was, "I don't read because it takes forever and it's boring. I'd rather just watch a movie or something. My mom used to make me read a LOT when I was little, so I think I am just sick of it now. She just wanted me to be smart or something, so she'd take me to the library and get me all these books and then make me read them all...and I hated it. So that's probably why I don't read often or at all really." Additionally, when asked about why she decided to attend college, she once again referenced her mom: "My mom told me that I need to go to college. So I can get a good job. My major is undecided. I am probably going to transfer to a different college with an architecture degree. My mom went to college but that is it for my family." While Shawn did credit her mother as the reason she is attending college, she blamed her hatred of reading on her mom forcing her to read as a child: "My earliest memory is probably when I was little and my mom made me go to the library and get all those books and made me read them all . . . my parents did

not read to me when I was a child because I hated it. I hated when my mom read to me as a kid because she wanted me to be smart or something. She always read things really in depth, and I hated it. So I just read to myself instead. And I'm not having kids, and I'm not reading to anybody else's kids either."

When students were asked about how they make decisions about college, why they chose this specific college, and why they decided to attend college in the first place, almost every student's response included statements regarding his/her relationship with parents or lack thereof. Jokeem said he came to college because, "My mom always told me it's good to go to college" while Tyler elaborated a bit further upon the role his parents played in his decision to attend college:

I am the first person in my family to attend college. I decided that looking at the world today you need a college degree to make any money and further yourself enough to make any money. So I thought it'd be good to get a business degree so I could start my own business and help my dad with his business. My dad didn't really care either way.

Obviously he wanted me to go but said he'd be fine either way. You can find something else if you don't want to go that route. You can succeed in business without a college degree. My mom didn't really care either way. You've got to have a college degree. It's just a different world. Like my mom might lose her job right now because she doesn't have a college degree. It is scary.

Similarly, Edgar indicated that his sole desire to attend college stems from the fact that no one in his family has ever attended college before, and he added, "My mom doesn't really care about the classes that I take. She is more concerned with how much money I am going to be able to make with my major. She is like, 'Oh is there going to be a job when you leave?'" Meanwhile,

Kenneth, Yajaira, Jasmine, and David also stated that one of their main reasons for attending college was because they were the first person in their family to attend, but unlike Edgar, they cited other reasons for attending as well, such as to “better” themselves or “make a lot of money” or “improve life”.

Also, interview data suggested that parental involvement or lack thereof in regards to how students make decisions about their education is a recurrent theme. David explained, “My parents just want me to go through with college in general. They don’t really care what I do as long as I stay focused and go through with it without giving up. I decide on my own what I like to do,” and Steele states, “I picked classes based on the rigor. I mean I know I am in learning support so it’s not like this is much of a challenge, but it shouldn’t be as challenging. I feel like if you want to be successful you have to face things head on that could push you back a little bit. Because in life after this college if you are too scared to face challenges then you are going to veer off and never get anywhere. My parents help me somewhat. My mom knows all of the classes and my stepdad knows the pathway I should be going. They suggest what I should do because they know. I trust them as much as anybody else.” Also, Toni says her dad is the reason she is even at college right now, so she goes to him when she needs help making decisions about school, but Jasmine says, “My parents encourage me to go, but I figure things out on my own. I am the first child, so I am kind of just figuring things out on my own.” Of the eleven students interviewed, four lived with parents, one with an aunt, and two with grandparents; the remaining four lived with roommates or spouses. However, seven out of the eleven students claimed they rely on parental advice when making decisions about college.

Finally, a striking lack of parental involvement was reported for a staggering nine of eleven students interviewed when asked: “Did your parents read to you as a child? Do you read to your own children or do you plan to? Why?” For example, Janelle responded positively:

Yes, my dad used to read to me, but it was like complex books and I didn’t understand it. I don’t know why he wanted to do that. I read to my nephew sometimes. He likes Harry Potter. I personally do not like Harry Potter. I was reading to him and he was reading to me, so it helped me learn about it, too. No kids. If I have kids, I plan to read to them; reading is very important. You learn a lot from sitting down and reading stuff.

Similarly, Steele suggested his parents read to him as a child as well: “Yeah. My parents read to me. I mean because both of my parents have gone pretty far with academics...because they always wanted to make sure I did well in school and make good grades and things like that. I thankfully do not have kids now, but if I have kids, I’ll probably read to them. I want my kids to be as smart as they possibly can and that [reading] enhances their ability to be smart I think.” The remainder of the interviewees responded negatively to the question. Jasmine seemed upset that her parents never read to her as a child and emphatically exclaimed, “No! They never read to me, and I feel like I missed out on so much because of it! Yes, I will definitely read to my kids because I know how it feels that my parents didn’t read to me, and I want them to be smarter than me.” Both Edgar and David acted as if it was not a big deal that their parents did not read to them, almost as if it was a strange question for the researcher to even ask; they did not understand the relevance of their parents reading to them as children to their current lives. Edgar answered:

No. My mom never read to me when I was a little kid. I don’t know why. I guess she just didn’t have the time to or she was working or something. I work at the Boys and Girls

Club, so I read to little kids a lot. As on planning to read to my own kids, it depends. I'm going to teach them HOW to read, so I might have to read to them a little bit doing that. But as they grow up, they'll have to figure out how to read on their own. So it'll be more of a learning experience type thing with them rather than just reading to them for them to listen.

And David said, "No. I just like read by myself. No kids. If I have some, I guess I will read to them if they don't understand something. Just to help them out. Not like on a daily basis or anything though." To the same question, Jokeem jokingly answered, "She made ME read. She didn't read to me. She'd get mad if I didn't pronounce things right. Probably not [read to my kids]. I think it is something you should do as a parent, but I honestly probably won't."

On the other hand, Tyler was hesitant to say anything he believed could be perceived as negative towards his parents, but eventually, he answered with, "My parents may have read some to me as a child, but I don't think they did. I guess I plan to. I don't have kids right now. Just because I can see what I went through and what my cousins are going through. I am really close to my little cousins, and they're read to nearly every day. And they are SO smart. So much smarter than I was. No, they didn't read to me, so I think I will read to my kids because I know how it feels to not be read to and then struggle with reading later on. So I'd like to prevent that for my own kids." Alternatively, Kenneth seems embarrassed to have to honestly answer this question, but said, "My parents didn't read to me. I don't think I will read to my kids. I would like to say yes, but I don't think so." Lastly, Toni, for whom reading has been a lifelong struggle, sadly explained, "No my dad died when I was little, and my mom didn't have time to read to me. No, I won't read to my kids, but I will make my husband read to them. I am such a horrible reader, so I probably won't ever read to them. . . I did a thing in high school where I went to

work with first graders and tried to read out loud to them. But I am such a slow reader that they noticed, and they commented on it saying things like, ‘Oh you read like us!’ So no. I’ll never read to my kids. It is too embarrassing.”

When asked who motivates them to read, only Steele included a parent in his reply, “My dad motivates me because he is still smarter than me. It is competitive for me. He reads tons of books and seeing how smart he is makes me want to be like that.”

Voluntarily including information about the level of involvement their parents had or have in their lives regarding education was a recurrent theme in all of the interviews.

### **K-12 School Experiences.**

Another prevalent theme in the course of interviews with developmental reading students was the impact that K-12 school experiences had on the students’ current attitudes about reading. Students described teachers, parents, principals, tests, and other elements and events of school in elementary, middle, and high school that impacted their attitudes about reading and education in general. Since most of their parents did not read to them when they were children, the majority of their earliest memories of reading came from listening to a teacher read to them in preschool or elementary school, citing Berenstain Bears books, *Where the Wild Things Are*, or Dr. Seuss books as the first book they remember hearing. Also, Jokeem said that he tested poorly in reading in middle school, which made him feel bad about himself in Language Arts from then on. This was remarkably similar to Toni’s tear-filled story:

I have always had problems with both reading and writing. When I was in first grade, my teacher took me to the principal’s office because I could not read a book aloud to her. She thought I was just refusing to read to her, but I literally couldn’t read it. Then the principal told me that if I could not read a book out loud to HER by the end of the year, I

was not going to be allowed to go on to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with the rest of my classmates. I was devastated and embarrassed because I couldn't read as well as the other people in my classes, and I was heartbroken by how mean the teacher and principal were to me. But my mom got me a tutor, who was patient and kind, and by the end of the year, I was able to read the book out loud to the principal. My mom pulled me out of that school after that and moved me to a private school. I have had anxiety about reading and writing ever since that one experience because I know that I am no good at it. I just feel like if the adults at that school had acted differently towards me about it, I maybe wouldn't have had such a poor self-image all of this time or hated reading so much. It will always be an area I struggle with, which sucks because reading and writing are important in SO many areas of life. It is like I am doomed to always struggled. But I also learned that adults can affect a child's life positively by interacting with my tutor, so I think that helped me stay motivated some, too.

Another interviewee, Janelle, who admittedly has the highest average in her current developmental reading course, also suggested that her dislike of reading came from negative feedback from teachers based on standardized test scores. When asked, "What events or experiences in your life do you believe could have shifted your feelings about reading and/or your ability to read well?" Janelle said, "Hmm. Interesting question. I mean, when I was in elementary school we took this aptitude test about how well we read. I think it was in like second grade. I remember that, and it told me I read like a kindergartener. And it kinda made me mad so I kinda just gave up all together. I wasn't on the same level as my friends, so I got mad and shut down."



Yajaira did not elaborate as much when asked the same question but still describes a similar experience, “I felt degraded when I learned what level I read at in middle school, so I didn’t want to try any more. There didn’t seem to be a point. I feel like teachers should advise and guide rather than make people feel bad about the level they are on.” She also stated that she stopped reading in middle school because she lost interest.

David, Jokeem, Kenneth, and Edgar all stated that they enjoyed reading more in elementary school because: the teachers read to the students more, the books were more interesting back then, and there were rewards for reading. All four of these boys suggested that middle school was when they started to dislike reading because they felt more forced to do it, the books were not as “fun” to read, and the teachers did not read out loud to them anymore. These issues became more prominent as students progressed into high school, and they all admitted to reading less as they progressed each year past middle school.

Conversely, Tyler and Jasmine said that they both read more in middle school than at any other time because they were allowed to read in groups, which made reading materials “easier to understand.” They both said they, “Never read in high school. It was not required.” They also both said they were shocked when they reached college and were expected to read on their own with very little guidance or review.

Shawn and Steele said they did not read when they were children because they had better things to do like: play video games, watch tv, swim, play sports, or hang out with friends. They just found ways to get by throughout middle and high school by relying on summaries and friends to help them pass. Steele wishes his teachers had pushed him to read more in middle and high school, but Shawn is glad that her teachers did not push her to read more because she got enough of that from her mother as a child. Both Shawn and Steele cited the increased social

activities available in middle and high school as the main reason they felt most kids stopped reading.

A recurrent theme in all of the interviews was the feeling that the exposure and experiences they had during K-12 did not adequately prepare them for college, especially where reading and writing are concerned. Most suggested that they spent more time in school learning about math and science or were pushed through graduation because of who their parents were or because they received special treatment as athletes.

### **Misconceptions About “Good Reading.”**

Ironically, the vast majority of these students who clearly have issues with reading based on grades, test scores, and/or personal admission, still considered themselves to be “good readers.” Only Toni and Jasmine described themselves as anything other than “good readers,” calling themselves “horrible” and “ok” readers, respectively. All of the interviewees were asked to describe themselves as readers. Initially, some students seemed to misunderstand the question or give answers they thought they were supposed to say rather than giving genuine or honest descriptions. Some students seemed to answer in regards only to their ability to read out loud when asked. After a bit of explaining and redirecting, David described himself as, “Lazy. I can probably read three pages before I get bored and can’t read any more, but I’d still call myself a good reader.” When asked for additional clarification, he stated, “I am a good reader, but I don’t comprehend it. I’m too lazy to take the time to comprehend it.” Edgar portrayed his reading style as, “laid-back” and when prodded for further explanation, went on to say, “I mean, I’m a good reader, I guess. I know how to read. When I say laid-back, I mean I am a decent reader. I can read the words. I just zone out all of the time.”

Along with those claiming to merely be “good readers” who are unmotivated, there were the “good readers” who only read what is necessary or read in relation to time. For instance, Yajaira honestly laid out how she reads, “I am a good reader, but I just read what I need to in order to do well in my classes, and if I don’t really need to analyze it or reread it for a specific purpose, I won’t bother because I feel like that is a waste of time. If I enjoy it, I’ll keep reading it as much as possible, but that doesn’t happen very often. Especially with work, my kid, school, and life. There is just no time. It’s not something I force myself to do. It seems pointless.” On the same note, Kenneth admitted, “I am a good reader, but sitting down and reading a book, I can’t do that. I’m too hyper. I’m ADHD. I read all the time on Twitter, IG, Facebook. I just don’t read books. I never read books anymore. I suppose because of time management. I used to love to read. The last book I read was *Mice of Men*, but with college life and work, I don’t take time to read for myself so...I’m not really a reader right now. I read when I need to for my classes, but not even that much. I don’t take notes or anything when I read. I just read it to get it done.”

Others described themselves as “good readers” as long as they got to read materials of choice rather than materials chosen by a teacher or family member. Jokeem explained, “If I am interested in it, I can read well, but if I am not, I can’t understand it. If it is an interesting read, I’ll do it more.” Janelle described herself similarly as a reader: “I am a good reader. I don’t like to do any assigned reading though. I’ll read on my own. I can read a book in like two days, but it has to be my interest not just because I’ve been told to do it. I get bored easily, but I am an independent reader.” Finally, Tyler’s self-description followed the same vein but was much more upbeat: “I would say I am a good reader. I don’t like to read fiction books or about things that are not real. I’m reading this book right now about money. I am really big into the stock market, and the book is about stocks. I like stuff like that. I’m just reading about how money is put out in the

world. I like books that give me information about stuff. That's the thing. Self-help kind of books, not the books that teachers want you to read. I enjoy reading when I choose the book. If a teacher gives me a book, I dread it. So I guess to sum up, I'd say I enjoy reading books of my choice. I am a good reader. I am not into sci-fi, but I can read other things well."

Unlike the others, Steele seemed to be the only interviewee who genuinely enjoys reading. His answer to the description question was the most in line with the idea of definition that the researcher initially had in mind: "I am a much better reader than I used to be, so I'd say I am a good reader now. I went from never reading at all my entire life until I was 17, and now I read every day. I think it is important for my brain. I spend more time reading for personal enjoyment than I do for my classes, but I do read enough and what I am supposed to in order to make a good grade though. Usually I read the headings first and if it seems crucial or like information I need to retain, I will go somewhere quiet and read it, like the library. I normally only have to read things once in order to remember them. But for like novels and stuff, obviously, I read the covers and the back, sometimes the preface."

Shawn could not have had a more different perspective on reading than Steele; she hated reading the most. Shawn has the most negative attitude towards reading: "I just hate reading a book. Like even if people say that it is really good, I usually just think it's boring . . . but I like reading other stuff if it is interesting. Like something that's cool, not like reading a book. I like reading about famous people. I don't usually read the whole thing; I just skim it and skip to the good part and that's about it. *I am a good reader though.* I read a lot of articles online. If they are too long, I just look for the good parts and that's all I really need to know. I usually don't remember anything I read. That is why I hate reading. I can read short articles, that's pretty much it."

Lastly, the only two students who were not self-proclaimed, “good readers,” were Jasmine and Toni. Jasmine did not appear to be the type of person who would outrightly speak negatively about anyone, not even herself. She said, “I’m an ok reader, I guess. It takes me forever to read even easy things. I like to read, but like, if I read for too long, I get tired of it or start to drift off.” Unfortunately, Toni had such a poor self-image about reading, she had no problem criticizing herself as a reader: “I don’t read. The last time I fully read a book was in middle school. I suck at reading. I skim through what I need or research it online. I have a disability that makes it so I can’t comprehend what I read, and it just takes me SO long that I just give up.”

Overall, nine out of eleven student participants identified themselves as “good readers”; however, their additional responses and behaviors did not seem to correlate with those of a “good reader.” Seven students on the questionnaires agreed that they “feel anxious when [they] have a lot reading to do,” and seven students agreed that they “quickly forget what [they] have read even if [they] have just read it.” An overwhelming nine students agree that “when [they] read, [they] usually get tired and sleepy,” but at the same time seven disagreed that they “have a lot in common with people who are poor readers.” On any question that hinted that the student might be anything less than a “good reader,” he/she quickly responded in the extreme by strongly agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. However, ten of students questionnaire participants agree that they would “rather have someone explain something to [them] than to try to learn it from a book” and eight disagreed that they would “rather read what to do than to have someone tell [them] what to do.” Finally, all eleven students agreed that they “learn better when someone shows [them] what to do that if [they] just read what to do.” Agreeing and disagreeing to such statements did not seem to align with the level of confidence they feel in their reading abilities,

and it created an interesting dichotomy between perceived ability versus actual application of skills.

### **Sense of Wandering or Loss.**

Another theme that arose in interviews with developmental students was the fact that many of them portray a sense of wandering or aimlessness in regards to college and life itself. When questioned about the reasons they decided to attend college or chose the specific school in which they are enrolled, the students seemed to largely have no concrete and specific goals in mind at all. None of the students seemed overly confident in the pathway they are choosing to pursue, stating they were attending college because “it is the next step” or “there was nothing else to do” or they “were forced to” or they “can’t hope to make any money without getting a degree” or that they “just had nothing better to do.” The majority of students interviewed seemed to have chosen majors based on potential monetary gains, not based on actual applicable skills or passion for the career pathway or topic. Of the eleven students interviewed, only three have actually declared majors. A few others had a couple of general ideas of what major they might wish to pursue, but they had not officially declared yet for various reasons, mostly time management issues. Janelle, for example, stated that she wanted to be something in the healthcare industry because that is what the majority of her family members do, but she was not certain which area of the healthcare industry peaks her interest yet. She intended to wait it out for a while in order to see what she likes as she goes along in her core courses. As a non-traditional student, Jasmine seemed to be more clear about what she wanted to become because of her experience in the workforce; however, she planned to become a nurse so that she can earn more money, not because she enjoys working in healthcare. She noticeably hated her job, yet she was willing to work a similar job for the rest of her life as long as it will pay her more money. Yajaira

wants to be a dental assistant because she heard that it was an easy program to get through, and she wants to do something that will be easy. She stated that she has no love of teeth, health-care, or customer service and portrays no exceptional aptitude for science.

While most of the female interviewees had at least chosen career pathways or have some idea about a life they are working for while in college, Toni, Shaun, and the male interviewees had little to no realistic vision or plans for their futures, and perhaps even more surprising, they were quite apathetic when questioned about their decisions regarding higher education, almost as if they just do as they have been told, they will be handed a degree and career that they love all tied up in a bow without even having to so much as put a single thought into it. Steele, who at first said that “in modern society if you don’t have a college education beside your name, you are going to have a hard time making a living for yourself” later seemed to contradict that statement when explaining his major, “Well, I want to be a professional golfer. I never played golf before the last few months, but I am really good at it. I think that will be a good career path for me. I like to play golf so far, so I am just biding my time in college until I can get going with that. I am a political science major right now, I think, but I am thinking of changing it to...I have no idea. It really doesn’t matter since I have decided to become a golfer anyway.” Other than “to make money,” the males threw out statements like, “I want to make something out of myself” or “I want to go into business” or “I want people to work for me” when asked why they are in college or what career path they are pursuing.

Overall, a general sense of wandering, obscure non-commitment seemed to accurately described the attitude that pervaded the interviewees in regards to life choices and decisions about higher education.

### **Degree of Disinterest in Reading.**

Because I have over a decade of experience with developmental reading and writing students, I went into the data collection process with a certain amount of understanding that this specific group of students was not going to proclaim a deep love for avidly reading classic literature. I was unpleasantly surprised, however, at the extreme level of disregard these students expressed about reading. While all eleven of the students interviewed responded with a resounding “yes” when asked if they believe reading is valuable and important and most of the students generally expressed a common thought that reading helps people “get smarter,” the answers given to other interview and questionnaire items indicated that in reality reading has no legitimate place in their lives. In fact, it seemed that other than completing the bare minimum of the readings assigned for school, the students read very little, if ever. While the majority of students on questionnaires agreed that reading is important, only four of eleven students agreed that “reading is one of the best ways to learn things,” only five agreed that “reading is one of [their] favorite things to do,” only 4 “read a lot when at home,” seven out of eleven believe “there are better ways to learn something than by reading a book,” only four say reading is the best way they learn things, only five questionnaire participants agree that they and their friends “often discuss the books [they] have read,” a mere three state that “reading is one of the most interesting things I do,” only four claim to “spend a lot of spare time reading,” and a staggering nine out of eleven disagree that they would like to receive books as gifts.

In the interviews, I tried to elicit clarity on the reasons behind the apparent lack of attention and time spent on reading. I asked students, “Do you read often? If you don’t read often, explain what you think the cause of this might be.” The responses were negative across the board. Even Steele, who said he liked to read in his free time and has a lot of free time,



undercutted that by saying, “What’s often? I guess I’d say I pick that book up at least three days out of the week, but I kind of have to force it into my life. I don’t have to read much for school yet. I only have English, Math, and Film. My study skills class doesn’t have a book or class meetings, so I don’t need to read much at all. Yeah, I guess I could say I read some, but honestly, I am in college, so I spend more time on my phone or with my friends or watching tv.” David went on to affirm Steele’s statement by explaining, “I don’t read...that often. Only when they tell me to read, but not other than that. Not on my own. Not when I am bored. I would rather watch tv or play video games. I don’t have time for reading.” When asked what she does instead of reading, Janelle replied with, “I mean, I guess all of a sudden with Netflix, tv is suddenly is just more interesting to me. I’ll pick up a book every once in a while if I want to, but no, I don’t read much.”

The idea of electronics being a more exciting option was prevalent among the interviewees. Shawn reads the least of the group, and she did not hold back her answers or hesitate about answering completely truthfully, as some of her peers seemed to: “I don’t read because it takes forever and it’s boring. I’d rather just watch a movie or something. Reading burns my nose and makes my eyes hurt. - I know it makes you smarter so you should read, but I just think it is boring. Sometimes you read it wrong and it makes no sense. You can’t see anything and have to imagine, and I’d rather just be able to see it.” Likewise, Jokeem advised: I don’t read a whole lot right now, but I honestly think it is just our generation. We all look at like our phones to read things off of electronics like Twitter. Like books, I guess, used to be more relevant, but now it’s not because we have technology to back that up.”

Kenneth tried to further explain away the need to read books: “I like to read poems or stuff that is interesting. Posts online. Short stuff like that keeps my attention and does not require

much work on my part. Plus, it is easier to access at any time of the day no matter where you are- your phone is in your pocket. I don't read often because it makes me sleepy. I guess I am just used to seeing short texts for a short period of time and keep moving in my life."

Edgar said he does not read often "because of time management. After this I have to go straight to work, so and after work I have to go home and go to bed. The most I read is a Facebook post, honestly, and some of them are getting too long these days." Jasmine and Tyler both concurred that they feel no sense of urgency for trying to fit reading into their busy schedules.

Interestingly, four of the eleven students interviewed suggested that the reason they do not read often is due to their personal reading comprehension struggles. Tyler said he does not read often: "I guess because I just zone out and have to keep rereading it." Toni accepted her reading struggles matter-of-factly: "No. I don't comprehend it. Besides, they'll make the book a movie soon, and I'll just go see the movie. Books are made into movies almost as soon as they are released these days, so there is really no need to read them anyway." David simply asserted: "I don't comprehend it, so no, I don't read often." Unlike some of the students who displayed an air of "reading is too uncool for me," Yajaira responded with what comes across as the legitimate sigh of an exhausted mother as she says, "I don't read books often because I have no time to read. I am a slow reader. I used to read a lot, but I am just super busy these days between work and school and my son, and it is easier to just sit and watch tv. I am just not interested in reading by the time I get everything finished that I need to do each day. I'll fall asleep if I try."

A unanimous concept that the students kept reiterating was the fact that they "have no time to read" and also that they "have a life" or "have better things to do". The theme of expressed value versus application value is crucial to presenting this data clearly. Continuously,

the students said they think something is important (college, education, reading), yet their actions did not suggest these to be facts in practice.

### **The Unexpected: Punitive Reading.**

A few unexpected items popped up during the data collection process. The most prevalent unexpected theme was several of the students associate their distaste for reading with punishments related to reading given to them by their parents or teachers. As previously discussed, Shawn attributed her hatred of reading to her mother's overbearing insistence that she read all the time as a child. Similarly, Edgar's mother, "would always get annoyed by [him] running around in the house, so she'd say stop doing that and go read a book. So if [he] read for 30 minutes, she'd give me something. If [he] didn't read for 30 minutes, he'd get a spanking." Jokeem also had experience with reading being used as a punishment: "My mom would force me to read as a punishment any time I would talk back or get into a fight with one of my sisters, she'd send me to my room to read or make me sit on the couch beside her and read until she thought I had served my time and could get up."

Also, Toni, David, Jokeem, and Kenneth all commented to the effect that reading was used as a punishment by their elementary school teachers more than once. Jokeem explains, "When the class would get into trouble for being too loud or rowdy, they'd make us sit and be quiet and read as a punishment. It started to feel like a chore after that."

While not necessarily a "punishment" per se, eight of the eleven interviewees complained that they loathe reading that is "forced upon them by teachers" rather than being allowed to read a selection of their own. The participants indicated that teachers in middle school, high school, and college all assigned books that were boring, lame, uninteresting, or pointless.

### Answers to Research Questions

1) How does placement into remedial courses affect students' self-efficacy as readers?

There has been much debate about whether developmental students are placed into learning support because of their lack of self-efficacy or if being placed into learning support courses causes a lack of self-efficacy. In this case, almost every single developmental student included in the study stated a belief that he/she was a good reader, claiming not to identify with the traits of poor readers. The questionnaire responses indicated that most of the students feel at least borderline confident of their reading abilities. Only twelve of the students questioned admitted that they “need a lot of help in reading,” only seven admit to “worrying about their reading,” and only nine agree that they “can read, but don’t understand what [they’ve] read.” Out of eleven students questioned, only four agreed that “most of the books in the public library are too difficult for me,” Considering the population being sampled, those numbers were significant. Almost all of the students interviewed described themselves as “good readers,” and only six students were willing to admit that they “cannot read very well despite making a concerted effort.” The results of these questionnaires and interviews suggested that the majority of these students in developmental reading were either unaware that they struggle with reading, in denial about their reading struggles, or less likely, have been somehow misplaced due to poor performance on SAT/ACT, placement test, or high school GPA. Also, this data indicated the “believing in yourself” part of self-efficacy is completely above average in these students; however, part of self-efficacy involves applying that sense self-confidence as part of an intrinsic motivation to set and accomplish tasks and goals. This application of stated confidence is what seemed to be lacking in this particular

groups of people. A third option would be that students who are capable of reading well but extract no joy or pleasure from reading results in an unmotivated student-body. Only five of the students questioned “want more books of their own,” and only four say “reading is one of [their] favorite activities.” A mere five students agreed that they “often discuss books we have read” with friends, ten students agreed to “getting a lot of enjoyment from reading,” and only two agree that “reading is one of the most interesting things I do,” and only four agree that they “spend a lot their spare time reading.” While students were hesitant to admit that they struggle with reading, they were also quick to agree that they do not find reading enjoyable, cannot focus on reading, and find reading to be a waste of time. The lack of pleasure these students experience while reading seemed to directly correlate with their level of motivation to read and thus inhibiting their self-efficacies.

During the interviews, students indicated that they initially felt the learning support course was a waste of time and money, but now that they are nearing the end of their semester in the class, they can see that they were in need of some “extra guidance” and “support” in the area of reading. However, this realization has started to sink in too late in the semester to be of motivational value to the students; because they did not initially believe they “deserved” to be placed in learning support, they did not take the course seriously or put in any concerted effort into the work required. Many of the students questioned were currently in danger of failing the course and moving forward into collegiate level reading courses. Of the students interviewed, only six were confident that they were going to successfully complete the reading course this semester. The other six students were unsure of their current status in the course or reported “knowing that they were going to have to repeat the course next semester.”

- 2) How do students in developmental Language Arts courses describe their literacy experiences and to what extent do these experiences impact their decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education?

Students in developmental Language Arts courses described their literacy experiences as trying, boring, laborious, and pointless. They agreed that reading is valuable, but they also agreed that they specifically do not have the mindset for it. They were not motivated to read because they believed they can get the same information from other sources. They perceived words printed on paper as part of a dying medium, and they admitted that their attention spans were insufficient for most reading at the college level and justified this as “just part of how our generation is.” Furthermore, the students attributed their poor reading behaviors as adults to negative experiences with reading in their childhood or early adolescence. Noting negative experiences with teachers, poor test scores, parental pressure to “be smarter,” and lack of sufficient supportive teacher and parental (adult) involvement with reading, the interviewees clearly recognized the importance of childhood occurrences on their adult lives.

The majority of students had parents who did not read with or to them as children, and some students indicated that despite their parents not reading to them, which could have created positive attitudes and behaviors towards reading, their parents often used reading as a punishment for misbehavior, which further reinforced the negative or at the very least apathetic attitudes towards reading. These students placed a heavy emphasis on parental support when making decisions in regards to higher education. Several students credited their parents for the reason they are attending college, and most of the students reported asking parents for advice about which career/major to choose, which classes to choose, or which school to choose. Because they place such high value on any parental attention, it seemed to be even more

unfortunate that their parents did not have time or take time to read to them as children. The students seemed afraid to make the wrong decision in regards to their careers, so they were killing time and waiting for someone to give them step-by-step instructions on how to be an adult rather than diving in, taking risks, and learning from their mistakes. They preferred to hear and see things explained to them or for someone to show them how to do something rather than to have to try to figure things out for themselves, yet they suggested if their teachers in middle and high school had just pushed them to read more, they might like it more today. Similarly, students suggested the “amount of mandatory reading” they were subjected to K-12 made them see reading as boring, pointless, busywork. Their lack of ambition and initiative in regards to even the most simplistic tasks was staggering. When they have a problem, they ignored it and hoped it goes away, always looking on the bright side. While this is a healthy mindset in some situations and one would never suggest poor self-esteem is beneficial, there does appear to be a distorted sense of confidence in abilities. They were kind and humorous individuals, but the lack of drive and resilience demonstrated in the majority could make it difficult for them to successfully function in a democratic, capitalist nation.

3. What are the reading for pleasure habits of students in developmental English and what influences those habits?

Most significantly, the data from questionnaires and interviews found that students in developmental English did not read for pleasure. Two out of eleven students interviewed stated that they have EVER read for pleasure; all eleven admitted that they “mostly just read for school,” but eight of them said they “don’t really have to read anything for college yet”. A miniscule one student questioned said they read for enjoyment. Ever. Some students admit that they did read other things for pleasure: articles from online, entertainment news, BuzzFeed

questionnaires, clickbait, social media posts, and user comments were the top of the things they read for fun. A majority of the students in this study would not even admit to reading text messages or memes for fun. Nearly every association that they make with reading is negative other than agreeing that it is important and makes people smarter. Apparently, these developmental Language Art students only concede that reading is valuable and important for other people and because despite acknowledging its importance, they still insist that they are far too busy doing things “much more fun” than reading. When the researcher asked students to elaborate upon the reasons WHY they feel reading is important, students were at a loss for words. Kenneth stammered a response, “It is valuable because...it helps you expand your vocabulary and learning new stuff like disorders and stuff [in regards to reading a psychology textbook].” After Janelle admits that she does not read often, she states, “It is important to know how to read because that is what you are going to be doing for the rest of your life.” David vaguely conjectures, “I think it is important...because it is important.” Yajaira thought for a few moments before answering, “I think it is both. Valuable because you gain knowledge. Important because you can help yourself out and learn a lot of new things. Like sometimes you can learn a lot more from a book that you could learn in a classroom.” Last but not least, the ever-blunt Shawn elaborated, “Well, reading a book- no that’s not too valuable. I say there are other ways that you can read stuff. It’s not going to be the same as in back in the days. Books don’t matter anymore. \*laughs\*. I don’t know. I just don’t have the mentality to do it. I think you have to be more like motivated. I’m not motivated to read, and I am perfectly fine with that.”

Three of the males interviewed suggested that they would be willing to read more books if they were “not so long. If they could all be super short, that would be better. We’d read them then. Length of the book MATTERS.” When asked if length matters more than substance or



quality, they answered with a resounding, “YES!” To further explain their dislike of reading, Shawn explained, “Books always take forever and they’re really long. They have too many details. They are boring. I hate reading. You have to read halfway through a book to get to the climax. It’s just like nah I just want to get to the point. I get that the background stuff matters, but I hate trying to sit through it all,” and Jokeem echoed, “Yeah, I dislike the time that you have to sit and spend trying to understand reading. Like I watch movies and in books it takes too long to get to the good parts.” From the interviews and the questionnaires, the data showed that students do not read for pleasure at home or work, they do not read in their spare time, they do not want books as gifts, they do not regularly visit the library (most did not know where it was located), do not “get a lot of enjoyment from reading,” and they overwhelmingly believed that there are MUCH better ways to learn things than through a book.

The biggest influence on reading habits seems to be easier access to smartphones, laptops, and social media. Streaming movie and television services offer easier access to visual entertainment on the go, which is appealing to students who “don’t want to take the time to have to imagine everything in their heads” and “just want to see what it looks like without having to sit through pages of descriptions.” Because the generation is prone to instant gratification, they are also prone to anxiety and behavior disorders which hinder students’ ability to perform in the traditional classroom setting. Also, in the age of insta-celebrity status, the value of education has been watered down to the point where the phrase “everybody’s doing it” applies. The students merely see education as a means to an end, and so they view reading from the perspective that they will simply do the minimum amount to get by with a passing grade to earn a degree to get a job and make money. Their schedules are so packed full of activities, some voluntary and some required, that they are too exhausted to add even more work or anything that needs a significant

time commitment, like reading. Also, the internet allows them another pathway for excuses as it gives easy access to Sparknotes, summaries, YouTube How-To Videos, essay-writing services, homework services, etc. In order to improve the reading for pleasure mindset of these students, the interviewees suggest that educators find ways to integrate reading in a way that can be easily accessed via phone or tablet. The idea of eBooks and audiobooks were both met with about 50/50 agreement; some students say they cannot look at their telephone for an extended amount of time while others “detest hearing books read aloud,” but there are some who prefer the idea of reading a book on their iPad and using commute time to work on improving their vocabulary and brain by listening to audiobooks. Unfortunately, the students who interviewed seemed to accept their fates as people who hate reading or struggle with reading, but they hope that parents will hear their stories and spend more time reading to their children, that parents who use reading as a punishment will instead find ways to show their kids that reading is a fun way to spend time together, and that elementary, middle, and high school educators will find a more cohesive method for ensuring all students are reading consistently through all stages of K-12 and are provided with positive adult role models that encourage them to read at their own pace rather than making them feel inferior based on standardized test scores.

### **Summary**

In Chapter Four, the researcher described the participants that took questionnaires and participated in interviews. She then presented the data that was collected during reading attitude questionnaires and interviews with these developmental level students in light of themes that presented themselves throughout the responses. Also, the data was presented in terms of how it answered the research questions. The data presented in this chapter and the appendices will be analyzed further during Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading attitudes that remedial students hold towards reading in order to allow educators to better serve these students pedagogically in developmental language arts courses and provide a voice for an often-overlooked group of students. In this chapter, the researcher summarized the data gathered during from students participating in the reading attitudes questionnaires and interviews that as described in Chapter Four. Then findings are discussed in light of relevant empirical and theoretical literature as outline in Chapter Two. The researcher highlights how this study corroborates and adds to other literature as well as delineating the specific contributions this study can add to the field of education as a whole. Next, the researcher examined the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study and give recommendations to administrators, teachers, and parents. Additionally, the researcher outlined the delimitations and limitations of the study and critically analyzed the work as well as offered recommendations for future applications, adjustments, and research. Finally, the researcher summarized the study as a whole and the two most important take-aways from the research.

### **Summary of Findings**

In order to analyze the data, the researcher was required to become totally immersed with the information “as long as it is needed in order to ensure both a pure and a thorough description of the phenomenon,” which adds to the transferability of the study’s findings (Kleimen, 2004). Because Yin (2003) and Creswell (2013) suggested that in order to lend credibility and confirmability to the study the researcher should use multiple data sources, or triangulation, data collection approaches used for this study included: questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and

observations. Also, the researcher used multiple data sources in this qualitative approach because information from different sources can be integrated together as part of the analysis instead of taken individually (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2013). The information from each source of data was examined individually but also as a puzzle piece contributing to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon as a whole: "This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case," (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). By collecting data from different resources, the researcher gained a better understanding of what parts of the participants' lives contributed to the big picture of their reading attitudes and academic behaviors. Additionally, the researcher conducted data analysis throughout the course of the study, comparing and integrating information from the different sources in order to build one comprehensive picture of the students' attitudes and behaviors.

According to the phenomenological analysis method outlined by Giorgi (2012), Freeman (2014), and Englander (2012), the researcher read the interview transcripts as well as observation and field notes multiple times in order to get both a global sense of the findings as a whole and divide the information into meaningful units. Once all meaningful units were established, the researcher integrated the units with similar focus into separate, logically related categories. Next, the researcher subjected the integrated categories to free imaginative variation (Creswell 2010) and revisited the raw data in order to justify the interpretation of the general meanings and the general structure justify of the accuracy of findings. After all recorded data was gathered and categorized, "any meaningful patterns and categories in qualitative data as well as any explanatory/descriptive theories need to be identified and interpreted by the analyst" (Yin, 2013, p. 49). At this point, the researcher began open coding by going through the transcriptions of student interviews with different colored highlighters and coordinated what themes seemed to be

recurrent. The researcher used pink to highlight statements that reflected home situations, yellow for childhood stories, green for academic concerns, and blue for any unexpected themes. The trends that developed through this process led to two-tiered coding in order to better draw a picture of the case (Saldana, 2013). In order to accurately remember observations of settings and behaviors and add to the study's trustworthiness, the researcher took notes in each situation and interaction with the participants and the data itself, which allowed the researcher to recall personal reactions, questions, or interpretations later during analysis and added reflexivity to the study (Yin, 2013; Creswell, 2010). The field notes recorded by the researcher while observing throughout the course of the research served to supplement the information gathered through the questionnaires and interviews (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013).

### **Answers to Research Questions**

The major reoccurring themes found within the data were parental involvement, K-12 learning experiences, perception of the meaning of "good reading," an overall sense of wondering or loss, and varying degrees of disinterest in reading. An unexpected theme also reappeared throughout the data: reading as a punishment. The research questions were answered through the findings of the study as follows:

- 1) How does placement into remedial courses affect students' self-efficacy as readers?

The majority of the students who participated indicated that they felt at least semi-confident in their reading abilities, despite clear evidence to the contrary. The data suggests that the majority of students in developmental reading are unaware of how serious their low-level of reading comprehension is or are simply in denial about their abilities. On one hand, the students do know that they have been placed in developmental reading courses, so one would assume they

also understand that they have reading comprehension issues or poor reading skills at the very least. However, the data shows otherwise. These developmental reading students do NOT see themselves as poor readers, no matter what their grades, course placement, GPAs, or test scores show. On the contrary, they are extraordinarily high in the “confidence” part of self-efficacy, but there seems to be a disconnect when it comes to applying that self-belief to accomplishing real-life learning tasks and goals. Interestingly, while evidence clearly shows that these students struggle with reading, they do not admit to struggling with reading and instead attribute the poor performance to the fact that they “hate” reading, lack focus, or feel reading itself is a “waste of time.” The lack of pleasure these students experience while reading seems to directly correlate with their level of motivation to read and thus inhibiting their self-efficacies. The data does not indicate that the placement into remedial level courses in itself directly impacts the students’ self-efficacy at all. The students interviewed said they understood why they were placed into these courses as well as the purpose of the courses themselves, but they did not feel that the course made them more confident or in control over their abilities as readers. Instead, it seems that despite placement into the lowest level courses offered, they have high levels of confidence in their abilities as readers. Half of the students interviewed were resolute that they would have to repeat their current reading course next semester, but this fact did not seem to deter their self-confidence whatsoever. The same students in danger of failing the course also indicated that they felt placement into developmental reading was unfair. The other six students were either unaware or unsure of their current status in the course, and they seemed rather unconcerned one way or another. Most of them just seemed insouciant and accepting as if whatever happens in life is going to happen with or without their input or effort in any way.

- 2) How do students in developmental Language Arts courses describe their literacy experiences and to what extent do these experiences impact their decision-making processes related to the pursuit of higher education?

Based on the data collected in this study, the majority of students in developmental Language Arts courses describe their literacy experiences as unfair, uninteresting, painful, or irrelevant. Conversely, every developmental student questioned agreed with the claim that *reading is important*, but when interviewed, they could not really elaborate why they feel this way. They seem to believe reading is important because that is something that they have always been told by school, parents, society, etc., but they all also agree that while reading is important, it is not something they place a priority upon in their own lives. They seem to agree that overall in a general sense of the country or world as a whole, yes, reading matters, but for them, community college students in Georgia, reading is wholly insignificant other than its role in preventing them from obtaining a degree they want. Some of the students admit that they simply do not have the mindset for reading, meaning they can read but have little to no motivation to do it, even if it is necessary. When questioned about how they believe they can be successful in life without improving their reading skills, they suggest that there is no point putting in the effort required for reading because they can find easier ways to obtain the same information through media resources such as the internet (videos, summaries, homework help sites, cheating sites, etc.). Several interviewees advised that reading on paper is a lost cause that teachers should give up on it because today's generation is too distracted or too busy to do it. Instead, they suggest that teachers should embrace the idea of classes without reading and instead include more videos, games, and apps.

Additionally, these reading students tend to blame their poor reading skills on everyone in life other than themselves. They attribute their poor reading behaviors and low achievement as adults to negative experiences in their childhood or adolescence inflicted upon them by evil parents, teachers, administrators, or standardized test results. Specifically citing controversial interactions with teachers, poor test scores, parental pressure to be smarter, and lack of sufficient supportive teacher and parental (or adult) involvement with reading, the students obviously understand the connection between childhood experiences and adult behaviors. However, the refusal of the large majority of the students to accept any measure of personal responsibility for their poor performance, attitudes, or behaviors is astounding. None of the students suggested that they should have worked harder or that they should try harder now to bring their reading skills up to par, and when the researcher asked questions that hinted towards this type of thinking, students were quick to brush it off as inconceivable or impossible. Most of these students are under the impression that they *can* read well if they *wanted* to try or put forth the effort, but they just *choose* not to because they have better, more important things to do. This mindset reflects a desire for at least a perceived sense of control, and in reality, they would rather not try, fail, and blame it on others than to actually put forth the effort to try their best and then risk the embarrassment or blow to their self-esteem that truthfully failing could potentially cause.

Alternatively, these developmental reading students perceive their relationships with their parents positively for the most part, despite largely blaming their parents at least partially for their academic difficulties. For instance, almost all of the students interviewed either had parents who never read to them or parents who used reading as a form of punishment for them as a child. Only two students suggested that they ever witnessed their parents reading for pleasure throughout their entire lives, and several students noted strained relationships with their parents



in regards to school, education, and personal life choices. A few students stated that they could have become better readers and students if their parents had been more involved and/or supportive of them during K-12. Still, the same students place a heavy emphasis on parental support when making decisions in regards to higher education, many of the students crediting their parents for the main reason they are attending college. Six students said they ask their parents for advice in regards to all decisions about higher education, but the other five said they do not ask anyone for advice and choose to figure things out on their own or with friends instead.

Additionally, the students seem to overwhelmingly lack ambition or drive. Many of them are attending college because it is what they were told to do, so they are wandering aimlessly through an education they find pointless, apparently until someone tells them what they are passionate about or what they are supposed to do next. The biggest hindrance to the ability of these students to succeed seems to be their inability to approach and tackle difficult tasks or learn from their mistakes and persevere past disappointments. This reluctance to figure things out on their own could potentially stem from poor comprehension skills overall, but the students adamantly insist that they perform poorly just because they do not *want* to do any better. The majority reported a preference for having things shown or explained to them rather than any independent study. The same majority suggested if adults in their lives had challenged them to read more frequently as a child, they could be better at it or enjoy it more today, but at the same time, students suggested that they were subjected to a large amount of unwanted, boring mandatory reading during their K-12 experience. Their lack of ambition and initiative in regards to even the most simplistic tasks is staggering. When they have a problem, they ignore it and hope it goes away, always looking on the bright side. While this is a healthy mindset in some situations and one would never suggest poor self-esteem is beneficial, there does appear to be a

distorted sense of confidence in abilities. They are kind, lively, humorous individuals, but the lack of drive and resilience demonstrated in the majority could make it difficult for them to successfully function in a democratic, capitalist nation.

3. What are the reading for pleasure habits of students in developmental English and what influences those habits?

The data collected by the researcher overwhelmingly illustrates that most developmental students do not read for pleasure. Only two of the students interviewed admitted to ever having read for pleasure, and only seven percent of students questioned said they read for enjoyment. Ninety-three percent of those questioned indicated that they do not read for pleasure or for school, citing the only time they do read is when it is absolutely necessary or when it is something they find entertaining or interesting like a text message or social media. Some students admit that they do read on social media for pleasure, but even then, they prefer watching videos or looking at photos to reading posts. Surprisingly, most of the students in this study would not even admit to reading text messages or memes for fun, and the only positive association they attribute to reading is the fact that it's important and makes people smarter. Despite conceding that reading is valuable, students nonetheless refuse to do it because they are too busy doing other, fun things instead. When asked to elaborate upon why specifically they believe reading is valuable, the interviewees were at a loss for words, which led the researcher to believe they were just regurgitating clichés about reading that they have heard throughout their lives. The repeated disconnects represented by these students indicates that their metacognition is low in addition to their poor reading habits.

Limited attention spans also seem to prevent these students from reading for pleasure or for school. The students suggested that they would read more books if they were short and did

not require such a time commitment, stating that in the case of books, length matters more than substance. Also, many participants prefer to watch movies because it takes much less time to learn the same amount of information. After combining information from the questionnaires and the interviews, the data clearly shows that developmental reading students do not read for school, work, or pleasure, nor do they purchase books or visit local bookstores or libraries. The subjects almost unanimously agreed that there are better ways to learn something than through reading about it. Most of the subjects attribute these beliefs and behaviors to the invention of and increased access to smartphone, tablet, and computer technologies. In the past, students may have suggested they were distracted by television, hobbies, or hanging out with friends, but now that an abundance of film, television, and gaming can be easily streamed for free from practically anywhere, there is practically no socioeconomic barriers to all students being constantly able to escape from reality and disconnect from other types of communication or learning. This type of entertainment is especially appealing to students who are impatient with the reading process and would rather quickly see or hear about something than sit through pages and pages of descriptions in order to get to the point. Because this generation of students have been raised in an era of instant gratification, they suffer from co-existing anxiety and behavior disorders which inhibit performance in the traditional classroom setting. Many of these students would prefer online courses to face-to-face courses, but their poor reading comprehension and lack of intrinsic motivation make this a frustrating impossibility as well. As far as higher education is concerned, the students place little value in it other than the fact that it's just what you do or you have to have a degree to get a decent job anymore. They do not see college as a privilege or opportunity rather as an obstacle standing in the way of a more exciting adult life. The students merely see

education as a means to an end, and so they view reading from the perspective that they will simply do the minimum amount in order to scrape by.

Despite having positive outlooks overall, the students interviewed have largely acclimated to the idea that they will never like to read, but they hope that parents will hear their stories and spend more time reading to their children, that parents who use reading as a punishment will instead find ways to show their kids that reading is a fun way to spend time together, and that elementary, middle, and high school educators will find a more cohesive method for ensuring all students are reading consistently through all stages of K-12 and are provided with positive adult role models that encourage them to read at their own pace rather than making them feel inferior based on standardized test scores.

## **Discussion**

### **School and Life Experiences**

Because this study investigated the attitudes and behaviors of adults, the researcher approached the subjects with the understanding that adult minds are uniquely complicated. Adults have had years of life to learn how to lie well or disguise their true motivations, actions, and behaviors. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, "People are agentic operators in their life course not just on-looking hosts of internal mechanisms orchestrated by environmental events. They are sentient agents of experiences rather than simply undergoers of experiences" (1999, p. 4). People are more than just victims of circumstance; they are active participants in the experience process. According to this theory, people are capable of change, self-control, and perseverance. The researcher approached the adult students in this study with the understanding that their minds would inevitably be built or burdened by the experiences that they have been through, may still be going through, and the overwhelming wealth of external

factors that are not traditionally present in younger students. Adult students, especially those in this largely rural area filled with a wealth of immigrants, tend to have obligations and responsibilities and life expectations that would not weigh as heavily on the minds of younger students. However, as Bandura's theory suggests, people also possess the innate ability to control themselves despite the circumstances they have been placed in. In the case of the current study, however, this was not the case at all. Social Cognitive Theory indicates that even though these students in developmental reading courses have been discouraged and struggled with reading in the past, they should still have the ability to overcome the challenges placed upon them and correct unhelpful behaviors: "In the agentic sociocognitive view, people are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by external events. People have the power to influence their own actions to produce certain results" (Bandura, 1999, p. 2). However, the students in this study fell into direct opposition of this theory; they did behave as reactive organisms who are victims of circumstance rather than proactive, self-regulating individuals. This type of sociocognitive dissonance was found to be the key issue hampering the success of the developmental learners in this study. It is precisely an inability to self-regulate and lack of self-organizing and proactive capabilities that the data show is prevalent in all of the developmental learners participating in this research.

### **Misconceptions About Capabilities**

Throughout the study, the researcher attempted to approach each participant specifically and determine whether the majority of his/her struggles with reading were based more on environmental or mental factors in light of sociocognitive theory, but the researcher discovered instead that the biggest consistent problem occurring in this group was their inability "to make their way successfully through a complex world. . . to make sound judgments about their

capabilities, anticipate the probable effects of different events and actions, ascertain sociostructural opportunities and constraints and regulate their behavior accordingly” (Bandura, 1999, p. 4). Instead, the students wholly make unsound judgments about their capabilities, did not have the foresight to anticipate cause and effects of their actions or lack thereof, and thereby are finding it extremely difficult to make their way in the world successfully. As Bandura (1999) explained, “These belief systems represent a working model of the world that enables people to achieve desired results and avoid untoward ones. Reflective and forethoughtful capabilities are, therefore, vital for survival and progress” (p. 5), so it can logically be inferred that these students were either not raised in a world that enabled them to achieve desired results or avoid disadvantageous ones or their cognitive abilities to reflect and use foresight are somehow inherently flawed (or missing) or both.

Because these struggling readers are freshmen adults in college, the researcher was aware that cognitive differences would definitely exist in any standard college classroom environment. Unlike a majority of K-12 schooling environments, college students come from different geographic locations, have a more diverse background, and have much more diverse socioeconomic statuses. Also, most students entering college in this area work part-time or full-time, some have children to care for and support, and almost all are new to the sense of independence and more overwhelming aspects of college, especially the financial struggles and the abundance of reading and writing involved with each course. In addition to those differences facing any typical college student, students placing into developmental courses can also range from those whose entrance test scores are barely existent to those who barely fall below the cut-off level for gateway courses, which creates a huge gap in understanding among students attempting to function within the same classroom. From assessing the data collected, it is clear

that some students do not completely recognize their need for remediation, some find the placement in developmental level courses “unfair,” a small proportion of students struggle because of significant learning disabilities, but a majority of the students simply do not care enough or are motivated enough to even attempt to do any work because they do not personally find value in reading or in putting in the effort necessary to improve their academic performances.

### **Disinterest in Reading**

Despite an overwhelming distaste for reading, the study participants all indicated that they do find pleasure in other activities. This corroborates Williams’s (2004) study that stated, “Students do find pleasure in other mediums outside of school” (340). Students cited movies, television shows, and streaming series that capture and hold their attention more easily than books and bring them more joy. This could be due to the fact that they associate reading with school or punishment, which gives it a negative connotation in their minds. Also, the participants exhibit clear signs of the college epidemic Burak (2004) calls “aliteracy. . . [which is] lack of the reading habit in capable readers” (p. 1). Most of these students are capable of reading, but they simply choose not to because they do not find pleasure in it or lack the self-discipline to focus on written words without accompanying visual images. Roberts and Wilson pointed out that these students are not alone in their avoidance of reading; in 2006 the percentage of adults who read for pleasure dropped below 50 percent for the first time in history. However, the segment of the adult population who are reading the least are 18-24 year-old adults, particularly those in the Southeastern Region of the United States- the exact category that the majority of the study participants fall into. Yes, the rapid evolution of technology over the past twenty years does account for part of the decline, but there is access to technology nationwide.

So what is it that causes students in the Southeast to read less than those in other parts of the country? The data from the students that participated in the study corroborate these claims.

Roberts and Wilson (2006) suggested that because adults are reading less, it has led to a society of people who are “less informed, active, and independent minded” (p. 64). The behaviors and attitudes expressed by the study participants clearly supports the idea that people are becoming less active and independent-minded. One of the key struggles discussed by these students was the lack of drive and motivation to do things on their own rather than simply have someone else explain things to them. As alleged by Burak (2004), these modern college students merely “spend the minimum time reading required assignments and even less time reading that which is not required” (p. 1). The students involved in this study went even further to claim that they do not even read for college, at least not thus far, which is telling since they are all currently enrolled in a course entitled: Reading. Participants said that their professors do not really require them to read anything; the professors might assign reading from a textbook, but they also provide the same information during class lectures and PowerPoints. The students do not see the point of reading from a textbook to supplement what is learned in class if they can save time and energy by simply attending class two days per week and still pass the tests. Furthermore, the data collected in this study further supports the studies that have suggested that 66 percent of all college students report not enjoying reading and avoid it whenever possible, do not read for leisure, and rarely even read their textbooks (Burak, 2006, p. 2).

### **K-12 School Experiences**

According to Roberts and Wilson (2006), studies have continuously demonstrated that students begin to read less and develop poor attitudes toward reading in intermediate grades, which is significant in light of the data from the current study. Student responses from this case



study largely indicated that developmental reading students stopped reading for different reasons at different ages, but four of the eleven students interviewed specifically noted that they stopped reading between eighth and eleventh grades. All but one student interviewed stated that they “read nothing in high school,” “didn’t read any more in high school than they do in college,” or “weren’t expected to read on [their] own in high school- [they] read everything together.” Since “positive reading attitudes are directly linked to the amount of time spent reading” (Roberts & Wilson, 2006), one could at least partially attribute the poor reading attitudes of this student population as adults to the lack of exposure to reading at the high school level, not necessarily the intermediate level. Three students recalled fond memories of reading books while in middle school, and only one suggested that the middle school teachers made reading “too much like busywork” for them to enjoy it. Additionally, 100 percent of the students in this study vocally admitted to understanding that reading is “valuable” but could not elaborate upon why specifically and also overwhelmingly believed that they could become successful in college and in life without ever really improving their reading skills. This is contrary to the findings of Williams and Hall (2010) which stated that college students as a whole admit to viewing “reading as a key to success, both in school and in life, often acknowledging reading as a way to enhance learning” (p. 35). Developmental reading students, it seems, are prone to disagree with this statement. Williams and Hall also suggest that struggling readers develop poor self-esteem because they know they are missing a key element necessary to become successful, but the students in the current study do not feel that reading is a key to success, do not acknowledge or accept the fact that they are “poor readers,” and do not seem to have poor self-esteem as a result. Only one of the students, Toni, seems to be self-conscious about her reading skills based on a traumatic childhood experience, but she is also the only student in developmental reading with a

documented language learning disability. Her self-esteem in regards to the rest of life outside reading seemed higher than average.

The current data elaborates upon the findings that state, “If children do not like reading or they think that reading is boring, their negative attitude toward reading will hinder their reading improvement” (Roberts and Wilson, 2006, p. 66). At some point between the time they first learned how to read until the time they graduated high school, every student included in this study decided that reading was boring and unlikeable, at least in relation to other more visually or physically stimulating activities. Because they felt negatively about reading, they no longer tried to improve or practice their reading skills, so they entered college unequipped with the skills necessary to comprehend complicated texts, which caused them to end up being much less academically successful as a result. Once a student starts to exhibit negative behaviors about reading and/or stops reading because it is uninteresting, a downward spiral quickly begins and is markedly difficult to escape from as an adult. When a student starts feeling negatively about reading, the less time he/she then spends reading, and consequently, “the less exposure to reading a student has had, the more difficult and daunting reading tasks become” (Williams, 2004), which in turn leads to even poorer reading habits which leads to even worse skills and so forth. Nevertheless, some research indicates that “the better attitude a student has towards reading leads to a greater self-confidence which translates to all areas of academia and life” (Gnaldi et al, 2005). The major issue, then, becomes how to take an adult student who has potentially spent a lifetime in the cycle of poor reading attitudes, behaviors, and skills and somehow break the cycle. The struggle of those trying to educate these students in developmental courses and somehow prepare them for higher education and life lies in finding a

way to somehow change the negative feelings the students hold towards reading that are also coupled with an utter lack of internal motivation and misguided self-concept.

### **Level of Parental Involvement**

When looking at the data found in the current study, one must also consider the impact that home life plays in the development of struggling adult readers. Williams (2004) suggested that a lack of access to a variety of books at home contributed to the struggling readers from poorer families, but the current study finds that even students from poorer homes that do lack a variety of books still have access to a wealth of reading material via the internet and public and school libraries. Although some did say there were no books or magazines in their homes, the majority of students in the study reported that they have no lack of access to reading materials, yet they still find themselves lacking the initiative or inclination to actually read any of said materials. Kotaman (2008) claims “reading is one of the most important skills in academic achievement” (p. 55), but the students in the present study do not believe reading is a skill that is essential to their academic success. They believe reading is merely one way towards achieving a goal that can be reached by alternate, easier means. These students believe that the same information that can be obtained through reading can now be gleaned second-hand through films, television, YouTube videos, or online study sites in a more streamlined and efficient manner, at least from their current point-of-view as freshmen in college. Research clearly states that the availability and quality of home educational resources plays a direct role in the way children develop literacy skills and attitudes toward reading (Tse, Xiao, and Lam 2013; Kotaman 2008), and while the importance of the home situation on the well-being of children cannot be denied, it is somewhat shortsighted to believe that additional parent-child reading time can by itself change the reading behaviors and attitudes of the current generation of students (Dexter and Stacks

2014; Sperling & Head, 2002; McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Park, 2008; Reis et al, 2008). Some of the students in the current study had parents who read to them as children, some of them had parents who insisted they read, and most of them had parents that consistently reinforced the idea that reading is important. However, only two of the students who were interviewed mentioned actually witnessing their parents reading for pleasure on a regular basis, and interestingly, those two were the students most adamantly averse to reading. The majority of the research on how the parent-child relationship influences reading habits focuses on the frequency that parents read to a child or the number of books being read, but Dexter and Stacks (2014) found that the quality of the parent-child relationship was more important than the actual frequency in the development of reading behaviors. Perhaps the participants in the current study were not exposed to enough quality parent-child reading experiences as small children, but there is no way to retroactively examine those experiences. There is no way to identify at birth a child that is going to grow up to become a poor reader and somehow track every parental interaction over the course of its entire childhood. Instead, educators must try to incorporate new methods of prevention via parents and schools and discover better ways to help correct the issues that exist after-the-fact.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical Implications**

One item that almost every piece of research can agree upon is the fact that parents' attitudes toward reading in a family does have a great influence on children's reading development (Swalander & Taube 2007) and their thoughts about reading (Baker, Scher & Mackler 1997; Harris & Sipay 1980; Purcell-Gates 1996), and according to research (Park, 2008; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Siah & Kwok, 2010; Sperling & Head, 2002;

Swalander & Taube 2007), one can assume that parents who do not value reading, do not provide reading materials, and do not model reading regularly, are more likely to have children who develop poor reading habits, low ability levels, and negative attitudes toward reading. Several studies draw direct correlations between a person's home environment and eventual reading skill-level (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). These are practically indisputable facts at this point.

However, in reality, it is never going to be possible to ensure that every child experiences the same quality of home-life. It is never going to be possible to somehow force parents to read to their children more. As the current generation of students who admittedly do not read for work or for pleasure continue into their adulthoods and spawn a new generation of learners, the likelihood of ensuring quality parent-child interactions drops dramatically. The students themselves know that reading is important and the idea has been instilled in them that parents should read to their children; however, many of them still do not plan to read to their own children someday. Moreover, because they do not value reading as a means of learning and growing or enjoy reading for pleasure, their children will likely never see their parents model healthy reading behaviors and the cycle will continue. Were the students' claims that "reading is dead" and admonitions to "just give up on hoping people will read printed text already" correct?

On the other hand, some of the students like Jasmine, Tyler, and Steele said that they would read to their children. Some of the students did seem to recognize that they were missing out on something by not reading; those students were able to pinpoint the precise instances that led them to stop reading or start feeling negatively about reading, and they seemed as if they wanted to save their future children from going through the same struggles with reading that they have encountered. Unfortunately, these students were in the minority of the group, and each of

them were the outliers of the group who fell at the higher end of the placement spectrum. Does their higher level of reading comprehension skills allow them to more easily realize and accept the fact that not reading is detrimental to their life's ambitions?

### **Empirical Implications**

All of the students interviewed agreed that if the teachers and adults they interacted with in their lives modeled more excitement towards reading it would increase their likelihood to want to read. However, many of the students believed that people who expressed joy from reading or who regularly read for pleasure were “nerds”- something they would never want to be considered personally. Reading is not cool to them. Their friends do not read. They do not text their friends about what they are currently reading or tweet about the new novel they picked up. They do not post on Facebook about how a book changed their lives. They do not join chatrooms and comment on blogs about books. Movies, music, and television shows can elicit all of these responses from them because these mediums are considered “cool” while reading is not. Teachers want students to value reading, they have to do more than tell them how valuable it is; they have to show the students that reading is important by modeling good reading attitudes and behaviors. If a celebrity they like publishes a book or if a book promises to help them earn more money, they might decide to pick it up and peruse it, but these moments of literary inspiration are few and far between and not nearly enough to sustain a lifetime of good reading behaviors and attitudes.

The good news is that many students are still modeling their attitudes and behaviors off of those with whom they spend a great deal of time with. Attitudes are contagious; therefore, the attitudes of parents and teachers about reading can infect the students with whom they come into contact with. It is clearly not enough for teachers and parents to merely tell students that

reading is important. The students in this study have heard those phrases all of their lives, yet they have no idea how it applies to their real lives. Instead, parents and teachers have to show excitement about books. They have to allow students to see them reading for pleasure on a regular basis. They have to allow students to see them be “nerdy” and get excited about books in the same way that they get excited about sporting events or award shows. It is not enough to simply keep telling them that reading is important; they have to show them how reading is important and how it impacts their lives. Parents and teachers must find ways to either incorporate technology in a way that encourages better reading habits and attitudes or decipher what it will take to get students to disconnect from the instant-gratification culture of the internet and reawaken the underutilized parts of their brains. Teachers in every discipline, not just language arts, need to be regularly promoting, encouraging, and modeling reading for the sake of students. These facts should encourage teacher education programs to incorporate more emphasis on reading for pleasure as well as influence school administrators to consider including teacher’s personal reading values as part of the hiring process (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nist & Olejnik, 1995). An added literacy component must be incorporated, emphasized, and appreciated by educators across the board. The focus on reading cannot waver after fifth grade. As the participants pointed out, middle and high school students get distracted by growing interests in social lives, sports, and hobbies, and their teachers and parents did not redirect their attention away from these things and back towards reading. If students are going to enter college prepared for success, they need to be taught to read independently and critically and practice those skills consistently throughout their years in middle and high school. “I never had to read a book” cannot be a claim that students can continue to make about a single year of their middle or high school experience. Also, students need to be assessed on their reading attitudes, beliefs, and

behaviors regularly throughout their K-12 experience in order for teachers, administrators, and parents to take action to correct poor attitudes and help prevent or correct any struggles students have with reading.

### **Practical Implications**

Copious amounts of research have been devoted to determining strategies to help children avoid developing negative reading attitudes (Perin, Keselman, & Monopoli, 2003; Perkins-Gough, 2008; Pinkerton, 2010). Teaching students about the negative repercussions of poor reading attitudes and habits at an earlier age could aid with the misconceptions that reading does not matter anymore. Educating parents, administrators, and politicians about the need for more focus on literacy across the board could help influence and prevent the level of poor readers from growing exponentially in the future. However, the purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and habits of college freshmen in developmental reading courses. All the prevention in the world is not going to help the current generation of college students who are struggling to survive in an arena in which they are grossly underprepared. The key discovery in this study was not necessarily the poor habits or attitudes exhibited by the participants in regards to reading, but the underlying lack of intrinsic motivation, self-discipline, and cognitive dissonance present. Students in this position who do not value reading or want to read better is much more disconcerting than students who are merely struggling to overcome reading difficulties. Gaps in understanding can eventually be overcome by students who are willing to put in the time and effort necessary to learn, but students who lack enough work ethic, direction, and self-concept to even attempt self-improvement in regards to reading are much harder to understand and more difficult to educate. How can college instructors help students become better readers when they do not accept the fact that they are poor readers? How can colleges remediate students in areas in



which the students refuse to acknowledge are essential to success in school and life? One overwhelming agreement was discovered in this research: students feel too much pressure to perform well on standardized tests and one poor performance on a test, even at a very young age, can be scarring and detrimental to the development of strong academic behaviors.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The researcher took every precaution to limit any threats to the credibility of this phenomenological case study; nonetheless, in any research conducted by humans, there are certain limitations that should be taken into consideration. Participants were volunteers, meaning there is no way to know the specific reasons that they decided to take part in the questionnaire or whether those reasons set them apart from the non-participants in some way. Both the reading attitudes questionnaire and the interviews were collected using self-report; the students' responses were given without the researcher interfering or guiding. If students did not understand a question or were misinterpreting the information being asked of them, the researcher clarified, but the possibility still exists that the participants exaggerated or minimized the severity of their responses. Also, because the study asked about feelings and behaviors, the students might have recounted the events inaccurately, adjusted their answers for what they felt the researcher would want them to say, or felt too embarrassed to share information of a personal nature. The participants were asked to recall memories and events from childhood through to adulthood, so there is a chance that they simply forgot some of the details or the act of remembering shifted the nature of the stories. To counteract the self-report bias and improve the validity of the study, the researcher used concurrent validity, asking the same subjects to self-report in two different mediums- questionnaires and interviews. In addition, the researcher avoided asking any questions that could lead the participants and instead opted for open-ended

questions, which allowed responses to be explained, expanded, and elaborated. Similarly, by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, the subjects felt more free to report truthful information.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

One of the most significant findings of this study was that the students who struggle the most with collegiate level work are those who value the field of education the least. These students seem to have been bottle-fed throughout their lives and are unable to wean themselves when they are abruptly thrown into the lion's den that is higher education and left to sink or swim on their own. Remediation in developmental courses can help with students who sincerely struggle with reading or writing and need additional support in that area, but many of the students questioned seem to struggle more with motivation and effort than they do with learning abilities. This could be attributed to the fact that a lot of the students in developmental courses have undecided majors and are not sure why they are even attending college yet, so they do not want to fully commit to a venture in which they have no emotional investment. The students merely see education as a means to an end, and so they view reading from the perspective that they will simply do the minimum amount to get by with a passing grade to earn a degree to get a job and make money. Future research should be conducted to determine how to better motivate students who have not chosen their life pathways. Also, there are many questions that could be examined further in regards to the metacognition of developmental students. Additionally, almost all of these students had schedules that were unbelievably full for eighteen year-olds attempting to attend college. Their schedules are so packed full of activities, some voluntary and some required, that many are too exhausted to add even more work or anything that needs a significant time commitment, like reading. New research should investigate whether this occurs more frequently for students in the area or if the nation as a whole is producing teenagers incapable of

successfully achieving in any area because they are stretched so thin trying to do everything at once. Also, there is something to be said for the pleas of the students that the experience of reading is just not the same for the new generation of students. Yes, the internet allows them endless pathways for excuses as it gives easy access to Sparknotes, summaries, YouTube How-To Videos, essay-writing services, homework services, etc. Further research needs to be conducted to determine to what extent the internet helps and to what extent it hinders the education of new college students, especially in regards to reading and literacy acquisition. A qualitative study that describes the new reality of students with an entire world of information within reach could help shed light on the perspective of this new breed of learners.

In order to improve the reading-for-pleasure mindset of the students in developmental reading courses, the interviewees suggest that educators find ways to integrate reading in a way that can be easily accessed via phone or tablet. Data collection in regards to the use of apps, eBooks, audiobooks, and other text-replacement software in college classrooms would be useful in comparison with classrooms that use a more traditional approach and attempt to disconnect students from technology as much as possible. Inclusion of new studies on the prevalence of technology addictions in college freshmen would also help paint a more comprehensive picture of the needs to these students.

Unfortunately, the students who interviewed seemed to accept their fates as people who hate reading or struggle with reading, but they hope that parents will hear their stories and spend more time reading to their children, that parents who use reading as a punishment will instead find ways to show their kids that reading is a fun way to spend time together, and that elementary, middle, and high school educators will find a more cohesive method for ensuring all students are reading consistently through all stages of K-12 and are provided with positive adult role models

that encourage them to read at their own pace rather than making them feel inferior based on standardized test scores.

### **Summary**

The specific attitudes towards reading, motivations to read, and understanding of the importance of education that were discovered through this phenomenological case study were both expected yet surprising. Many of the ideas that have been commonly attributed to poor readers throughout research were proven to be true, but listening to these experiences firsthand had a profound effect on the researcher. Hearing students explain that a test they took in second grade made them believe they were too dumb to learn anything was heartbreaking. Also, the dichotomy that exists of students who are both simultaneously lazy and yet seemed to be under extreme amounts of pressure was staggering. Most surprisingly was the high level of confidence exuded by the study's participants regardless of their course placement, personal struggles, or academic backgrounds. What they lacked in reading skills, they somehow made up for in compassion, tolerance, and humor. The saddest part of the findings was the fact that the students do not feel that higher education has a purpose or that it will help them in any way. Students who attend college should be filled with hope and wonder. They should be ready to meet challenges head-on and work hard to overcome struggles and grow themselves academically and personally. The fact that this group sees no need to overcome or grow is somewhat frightening, and it is the lack of intrinsic motivation combined with the overconfidence in abilities that are deficient which proves to be the true issue that needs remediation. More than working on reading comprehension skills and study strategies, these students need to work on self-reflection, perseverance, goal-setting, time management, and prioritization. The focus of developmental education has to shift to accommodate students who

struggle with reading because they refuse to put forth any effort into any life experience in which they do not find pleasure or entertainment value. It is the hope of the researcher that administrators involved with collegiate learning support courses will be able to develop coursework and interventions to increase motivation, pleasure, and success in remedial language arts courses.

## REFERENCES

- Al-Homoud, F. & Schmitt, N. (2009). Extensive reading in a challenging environment: A comparison of extensive and intensive reading approaches in Saudi Arabia. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(4), 383-401. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809341508>
- Anderson, Rosemarie. (2000) "Intuitive Inquiry: Interpreting Objective and Subjective Data." *ReVision*, 31;4(31). Academic OneFile, Accessed 9 Mar. 2016.
- Attewell, P., Lavin, D., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2006). New evidence on college remediation. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(5), 886-924. doi: 10.1353/jhe.2006.0037
- Baker, L., Scher, D., & Mackler, K. (1997). Home and family influences on motivations for reading. *Educational psychologist*, 32(2), 69-82. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3202\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3202_2)
- Baker, L., & Scher, D. (2002). Beginning reader's motivation for reading in relation to parental beliefs and home reading experiences. *Reading Psychology*, 23, 239–269. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713775283>
- Bandura, A. (1999). A social cognitive theory of personality. In L. Pervin & O. John (Ed.), *Handbook of personality* (2nd ed., pp. 154-196). New York: Guilford Publications. (Reprinted in D. Cervone & Y. Shoda [Eds.], *The coherence of personality*. New York: Guilford Press.)
- Bartholomay, A. (1996). Students and teachers as partners in the classroom community: A study of classroom social environment. *VCCA Journal*, 10(1), 32-38.
- Bauerlein, M. (2011). Too dumb for complex texts? *Teaching Screenagers*, 68(5). 28-33. doi 10.1215/15314200-3158701

- Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4). 544-559. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2>
- Baxter, P. (2003). *The development of nurse decision making: A case study of a four year baccalaureate nursing programme*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON. Retrieved from [digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/opensdissertations/1363/](http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/opensdissertations/1363/)
- Benson, S. (2010). Negotiating literacy identity in the face of perceived illiteracy: What counts as being literate as an adult and who decides? *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 4(3), 131-139. doi:10.1029/2011EO500004
- Billington, E. J., Skinner, C. H., & Cruchon, N. M. (2004). Improving sixth-grade students' perceptions of high-effort assignments by assigning more work: Interaction of additive interspersal and assignment effort on assignment choice. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42(6), 477-490. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2004.08.003
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (Vol. 4). Sage. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305006780140109>
- Bradshaw, T., & Nichols, B. (2004). Reading at risk: A survey of literary reading in America. Research Division Report# 46. *National Endowment for the Arts*.
- Burak, Lydia. (2004). Examining and predicting college students' reading intentions and behaviors: An application of the theory of reasoned action. *Reading Horizon*, 45(2), 139-153. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0011000007301670>
- Burgess, S. R., Hecht, S. A., & Lonigan, C. J. (2002). Relations of the home literacy environment (HLE) to the development of reading-related abilities: A one-year

- longitudinal study. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(4), 408-426. doi:  
10.1080/10888438.2016.1213266
- Caboni, T. C., & Adisu, M. (2004). A Nation at Risk after 20 years: Continuing implications for higher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 79(1), 164-176. doi:  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327930pje7901\\_8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327930pje7901_8)
- Calcagno, J. C., Crosta, P., Bailey, T., Jenkins, D. (2007, November). Stepping stones to a degree: The impact of enrollment pathways and milestones on community college student outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(7), 775-801. doi: 10.1007/s11162-007-9053-8
- Camiciottoli, B. C., (2001). Extensive reading in English: Habits and attitudes of a group of Italian University EFL students. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 24(2), 135-153. doi:  
10.1111/1467-9817.00137
- Chapman, J. W., & Tunmer, W. E. (1995). Development of young children's reading self-concepts: An examination of emerging subcomponents and their relationship with reading achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87(1), 154. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.87.1.154
- Chiu, M. M., & McBride-Chang, C. (2006). Gender, context, and reading: A comparison of students in 43 countries. *Scientific studies of reading*, 10(4), 331-362. doi:  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr1004\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr1004_1)
- Chua, S. P. (2008, March/April). The effects of the sustained silent reading program on cultivating students' habits and attitudes in reading books for leisure. *The Clearing House*, 81(4), 180-185. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/TCHS.81.4.180-184>



- Coiro, J. (2003). Exploring literacy on the internet: Reading comprehension on the internet: Expanding our understanding of reading comprehension to encompass new literacies. *The reading teacher*, 56(5), 458-464. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20205224>
- Collins, K. M. T., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Jiao, Q. G. (2008). Reading ability and computer-related attitudes among African American graduate students. *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 11(3), 347-350. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2007.0074
- Cosgrove, M. (2003). Students' views on the purposes of reading from three perspectives – students, teachers, and parents. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 39(3), 28-36. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED454493>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later. *Developmental psychology*, 33(6), 934. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.33.6.934>
- Davenport, S. V., Arnold, M., & Lassmann, M. E. (2004). The impact of cross-age tutoring on reading attitudes and reading achievement. *Reading Improvement*, 41, 3-12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083710371441>
- Delpit, L. D. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. The New Press. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17504971311312636>
- Dexter, C. A. and A. Stacks. (July 2014) A preliminary investigation of the relationship between parenting, parent-child shared reading practices, and child development in low-income families. *The Free Library*. doi: 10.1080/02568543.2014.913278

- Durik, A.M., Vida, M., Eccles, J. S. (2006, May). Task values and ability beliefs as predictors of high school literacy choices: A developmental analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(2), 382-393. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.98.2.382
- Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology 43* (1):13-35. doi: 10.1163/156916212X632943
- Engstrom, C., & Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not opportunity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 40*(1), 46-50. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.40.1.46-50>
- Ertem, I. S. (2013). The influence of personalization of online texts on elementary school students' reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 9*(3), 218-228. Retrieved from <http://anadiliegitimi.com/ijpe/issue/26322/277392>
- Ferguson, M. (2006). Creating common ground: Common reading and the first year of college. *Peer Review, 8*-12. doi: 10.1.1.523.1151
- Flippo, R. F. (2011, March). Transcending the divide: Where college and secondary reading and study research coincide. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 54*(6), 396-401. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.54.6.1
- Freeman, L. (2014). Toward a phenomenology of mood. *Southern Journal of Philosophy, 52* (4):445-476. doi: 10.1111/sjp.12089
- Ghaith, G. (2003). Relationship between reading attitudes, achievement, and learners' perception of their Jigsaw II Cooperative Learning Experience. *Reading Psychology, 24*(2), 1. doi: 10.1017/S0261444800008351

- Giorgi, A. (2012). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 43 (1):3-12. doi: 10.1163/156916212X632934
- Gnaldi, M., Schagen, I., Twist, L., & Morrison, J. (2005, June). Attitude items and low ability students: The need for a cautious approach to interpretation. *Educational Studies*, 31(2), 103-113. doi: 10.1080/03055690500095241
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & VonSecker, C. (2000). Effects of integrated instruction on motivation and strategy use in reading. *Journal of educational psychology*, 92(2), 331. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.92.2.331
- Harris, A. J. & Sipay, E. R. (1980). *How to Increase Reading Ability*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc. 7. doi: 10.1086/618424
- Howell, J. S., (2009, May/June). What influences students' need for remediation in college? Evidence from California. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 82(3), 292-316. doi: 10.2307/29789522
- Hoyt, J. E. & Sorensen, C. T. (2001). High school preparation, placement testing, and college remediation. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 25(2), 26-34. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2012.754730>
- Hitchens-Smith, C. E., Ortlieb, E. T., & Cheek Jr, E. H. (2011). Perceptions of struggling readers enrolled in a developmental reading course. *Global Education Journal*, (1).
- Jacobson, C., & Lundberg, I. (2000). Early prediction of individual growth in reading. *Reading and Writing*, 13(3), 273-296. doi:10.1023/A:1026476712452
- Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (1998). America's next achievement test: Closing the Black-White test score gap. *American Prospect*, 44-53. doi:10.1177/0044118X13506720

- Jones, S. (2014). Four-year myth: Make college more affordable. Restore the promise of graduating on time. *Complete College America*. Indianapolis, IN.  
doi:10.1177/0044118X13506720
- Johnson, L. L., & Carpenter, K. (2000). College reading programs. In R. F. Flippo & D. C. Caverly (Eds.), *Handbook of college reading and study strategy research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 321-363.
- Juskiewicz, J. (2015, March). Trends in community college enrollment and completion data. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Kagan Keskin, H. (2013). Impacts of reading metacognitive strategies and reading attitudes on school success. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 5(5), 312-317. doi: 10.7813/2075-4124.2013/5-5/B.48
- Kaniuka, T. S. (2009). Reading achievement, attitude toward reading, and reading self-esteem of historically low achieving students. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 37(2), 184-188. doi: 10.5897/ERR2015.2285
- Kazelskis, R., Thames, D., & Reeves, C. (2004). The elementary reading attitude survey: Factor invariance across gender and race. *Reading Psychology*, 25, 111-120. doi: 10.1080/02702710490435682
- Kelly, W. E. & Daughtry, D. (2006). Pursuit of leisure reading and interest in watching the night-sky: Relationship between reading for pleasure and noctcaelador. *Reading Improvement*, 43(2), 59-63.
- Kendall, A. (2008, November). Playing and resisting: rethinking young people's reading cultures. *Literacy*, 42(3), 123-130. doi:10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00485.x

- Keskin, H. K. (2013). Impacts of reading metacognitive strategies and reading attitudes on school success. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 5(5), 312-317. doi: 10.7813/2075-4124.2013/5-5/B.48
- Klauda, S. L. (2009). The role of parents in adolescents' reading motivation and activity. *Educational Psychology Review*, (4). 325. doi: 10.1007/s10648-009-9112-0
- Kleiman, S. (2004) Phenomenology: to wonder and search for meanings. *Nurse Researcher* 11(4): 7-19. doi: 10.7748/nr2004.07.11.4.7.c6211
- Knoester, M. (2009, May). Inquiry into urban adolescent independent reading habits: Can Gee's Theory of Discourses provide insight? *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(8), 676-685. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.52.8.3
- Knudson, R. E., Zitzer-Comfort, C., Quirk, M., & Alexander, P. (2008, May/June). The California State University Early Assessment Program. *The Clearing House*, 81(5), 227-231. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/TCHS.81.5.227-231>
- Kolajo, E. F. (2004). From developmental education to graduation: A community college experience. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 365-371. doi: 10.1080/10668920490424078
- Kotaman, H. (2008, June 22). Impacts of dialogical storybook reading on young children's reading attitudes and vocabulary development. *Reading Improvement*, 55-61.
- Kush, J. C., Watkins, M. W., & Brookhart, S. M. (2005). The temporal-interactive influence of reading achievement and reading attitude. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 11(1), 29-44. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13803610500110141>

- Kush, J. C., & Watkins, M. W. (1996). Long-term stability of children's attitudes toward reading. *The Journal of Educational Research, 89*(5), 315-319. doi: 10.1080/00220671.1996.9941333
- Lazarus, B. D. & Callahan, T. (2000). Attitudes toward reading expressed by elementary school students diagnosed with learning disabilities. *Reading Psychology, 21*, 271-282. doi: 10.1002/pits.20348
- Lei, S. A., Rhinehart, P. J., Howard, H. A., & Cho, J. K. (2006). Strategies for improving reading comprehension among college students. *Reading Improvement, 30*-42. doi: 10.1353/jhe.2006.0037
- Levy, B. A., Gong, Z., Hessels, S., Evans, M. A., & Jared, D. (2006). Understanding print: Early reading development and the contributions of home literacy experiences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 93*(1), 63-93. doi: 10.1016/j.jecp.2005.07.003
- Logan, S. & Rhona, J. (2009). Gender differences in reading ability and attitude: Examining where these differences lie. *Journal of Research in Reading, 32*(2), 199-224. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9817.2008.01389.x
- Lonigan, C. J. (2003). Development and promotion of emergent literacy skills in children at-risk of reading difficulties. *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties: Bringing science to scale, 23*-50. doi: 10.1016/j.jecp.2005.08.002
- Martinez, R., Aricak, O., & Jewell, J. (2008). Influence of reading attitude on reading achievement: A test of the temporal-interaction model. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(10). doi: 10.1002/pits.20348
- McCabe, R. H. (2000). No one to waste: A report to public decision-makers and community college leaders. Washington, DC: Community College Press.

- McKenna, M. C., Kear, D. J., & Ellsworth, R. A. (1995). Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey. *Reading research quarterly*, 934-956. doi: 10.2307/748205
- Mistry, R. S., Biesanz, J. C., Chien, N., Howes, C., & Benner, A. D. (2008). Socioeconomic status, parental investments, and the cognitive and behavioral outcomes of low-income children from immigrant and native households. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(2), 193-212. doi: 10.1002/imhj.21477
- Mokhtari, K., Reichard, C. A., & Gardner, A. (2009, April). The impact of the internet and television use on the reading habits and practices of college students. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(7). Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20468414>
- McKool, S., & Gespass, S. (2009). Does Johnny's reading teacher love to read? How teachers' personal reading habits affect instructional practices. *Literacy Research & Instruction*, 48(3), 264-276. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19388070802443700>
- Mulvey, M. E. (2008). Under-prepared students-A continuing challenge for higher education. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 24(2), 77-87. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42802312>
- Nicholson, T. (2003). Risk factors in learning to read. *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties: Bringing science to scale*, 165-193. Baltimore, MD: York Press. doi: 10.1111/1540-5826.00075
- Oudenhoven, B. (2002). Remediation at the community college: Pressing issues, uncertain solutions. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 117(35-44). doi: 10.1002/cc.51

- Park, H. (2008, December). Home literacy environments and children's reading performance: A comparative study of 25 countries. *Education Research and Evaluation, 14*(6), 489-505. doi: 10.1080/13803610802576734
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1980). Predicting freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *The Journal of Higher Education, 51*(1), 60-75. doi: 10.1007/BF00979592. 389
- Paulson, E. J. & Armstrong, S. L. (2011, April). Mountains and pit bulls: Students' metaphors for college transitional reading and writing. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 54*(7), 494-503. doi: 10.1598/RRQ.31.3.4.
- Perin, D., Keselman, A., & Monopoli, M. (2003). The academic writing of community college remedial students: Text and learner variables. *Higher Education, 45*, 19-42. doi: 10.1177/0091552113484057
- Petrill, S. A., Deater-Deckard, K., Schatschneider, C., & Davis, C. (2005). Measured environmental influences on early reading: Evidence from an adoption study. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 9*(3), 237-259. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr0903\\_4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr0903_4)
- Perkins-Gough, D. (2008, November). Unprepared for college. *Educational Leadership, 66* (3) 88-89.
- Pinkerton, K. (2010). College persistence of readers on the margin: A population overlooked. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education, 27*(1), 20-31. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42802357>
- Pitcher, S. M., Albright, L. K., DeLaney, C. J., Walker, N. T., Seunariningsingh, K., Mogge, S., et al. (2007). Assessing adolescents' motivation to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 50*(5), 378-396. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.50.5.5



- Prentice, M. (2009). Service-learning's impact on developmental reading/writing and student life skills courses. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 33, 270-282. doi: 10.1080/10668920802580523
- Purcell-Gates, V. (1996). Stories, coupons, and the TV Guide: Relationships between home literacy experiences and emergent literacy knowledge. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31, 406-428. doi: 10.1598/RRQ.31.4.4
- Rao, D. (2005). What can we learn from developmental reading research in postsecondary education. *Research to Practice Brief*, (2).
- Rasinski, T. V., & Padak, N. (2004). *Effective reading strategies: Teaching children who find reading difficult*. Prentice Hall.
- Reis, S. M., Eckert, R. D., McCoach, D. B., Jacobs, J. K., & Coyne, M. (2008, May/June). Using enrichment reading practices to increase reading fluency, comprehension, and attitude. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 10(5), 299-314. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/JOER.101.5.299-315>
- Reis, S. M., McCoach, D. B., Coyne, M., Schreiber, F. J., Eckert, R. D., & Gubbins, E. J. (2007). Using planned enrichment strategies with direct instruction to improve reading fluency, comprehension, and attitude toward reading: An evidence-based study. *The Elementary School Journal*, 108(1).
- Roberts, J., Jurgens, J., & Burchinal, M. (2005). The role of home literacy practices in preschool children's language and emergent literacy skills. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 48, 345-359. doi:10.1044/1092-4388

- Roberts, M., & Wilson, J. (2006). Reading attitudes and instructional methodology: How might achievement become affected? *Reading Improvement*, 43(2), 64-69. Retrieved from HighBeam Research: <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-148856037.html>
- Rowe, K. J. (1991). The influence of reading activity at home on students' attitudes towards reading, classroom attentiveness and reading achievement: An application of structural equation modeling. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 61(1), 19-35. doi: 10.2307/1511288
- Rueda, R., Monzó, L. D., & Arzubia, A. (2003). Academic instrumental knowledge: Deconstructing cultural capital theory for strategic intervention approaches. *Current Issues in Education*, 6.
- Sainsbury, M., & Schagen, I. (2004). Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27(4), 373-386. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9817.2004.00240.x
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schiefele, U., Schaffner, E., Möller, J., & Wigfield, A. (2012). Dimensions of reading motivation and their relation to reading behavior and competence. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(4), 427-463. doi: 10.1002/RRQ.030
- Schutte, N. S. & Malouff, J. M. (2007). Dimensions of reading motivation: Development of an adult reading motivation scale. *Reading Psychology*, 28, 469-489. doi: 10.1080/02702710701568991
- Siah, P. & Kwok, W. (2010). The value of reading and the effectiveness of silent sustained reading. *The Clearing House*, 83, 168-174. doi: 10.1080/00098650903505340

- Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 417-453.
- Sperling, R.A. & Head, D. M. (2002). Reading attitudes and literacy skills in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29*(4). doi: 10.1023/A:1015129623552
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strickland, K. & Walker, A. (2004). Re-valuing reading: Assessing attitude and providing appropriate reading support. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 20*, 401-418. doi: 10.1080/10573560490489955
- Swalander, L, & Taube, K. (2007). Influences of family based prerequisites, reading attitude, and self-regulation on reading ability. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 32* :206–230. doi: 10.1186/2196-0739-1-3
- Tai, E. & Rochford, R. A. (2007). Getting down to basics in western civilization: It's about time. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 31*, 103-116. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10668920500441648>
- Taylor, B. M., Frye, B. J., & Maruyama, G. M. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. *American Educational Research Journal, 27*(2), 351-362. doi: 10.3102/00028312027002351
- Therrien, W. J. (2004). Fluency and comprehension gains as a result of repeated reading: A meta-analysis. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*(4), 252-261. doi: 10.1177/07419325040250040801
- Theurer, J. L. (2010, March 1). Retrospective miscue analysis and the socialization of one young adult reader. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 37*(1), 63-70.

- Tse, S., Lam, R., Lam, J., Chan, Y., & Loh, E. (2006). Attitudes and attainment: A comparison of Hong Kong, Singaporean and English students' reading. *Research in Education*, (76), 74-87. doi: 10.7227/RIE.76.7
- Tunnell, M. O., Calder, J. E., Justen III, J. E., & Phaup, E. S. (1991). Attitudes of young readers. *Reading Improvement*, (25), 237-43.
- Weigel, D. J., Martin, S. S., & Bennett, K. K. (2006). Contributions of the home literacy environment to preschool-aged children's emerging literacy and language skills. *Early Child Development and Care*, 176(3-4), 357-378. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03004430500063747>
- Whittingham, J. & Huffman, S. (2009). The effects of book clubs on the reading attitudes of middle school students. *Reading Improvement*, 46(3), 130-136. doi: 10.1007/s10583-012-9164-5
- Williams, B. (2004). Are we having fun yet? Students, social class, and the pleasures of literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48(4), 338-342. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.48.4.6
- Willingham, D. & Price, D. (2009). Theory to practice: Vocabulary instruction in community college developmental education reading classes: What research tells us. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 40 (1), 91-105. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10790195.2009.10850326>
- Wutz, J. A. & Wedwick, L. (2005, September). Bookmatch: Scaffolding book selection for independent reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(1), 16-32. doi: 10.1598/RT.59.1.3
- Yang-Hansen, K., Rosen, M., & Gustafsson, J. (2006, October). Measures of self-reported reading resources, attitudes, and activities based on latent variable modeling.

*International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 29(2), 221-237. doi:  
10.1186/2196-0739-1-3

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:  
Sage.

Zimmerman, B. J. & Martinez-Pons, M. (1990). Student differences in self-regulated learning.  
*Journal of Educational Psychology*, (82), 51–59. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.82.1.51>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Informed Consent Form and Confidentiality Statement

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 10/18/2016 to 10/17/2017 Protocol # 2611.101816

#### CONSENT FORM

How Adults in Developmental Reading Courses Describe Their Educational Life Experiences: A Phenomenological Case Study Examining Which Experiences Influence Reading Attitudes and Decision-Making Processes

Ashley Reece Armour

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the life experiences and reading attitudes of adults enrolled in developmental reading courses. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently enrolled in a developmental reading course at the university level. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Ashley Reece Armour, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to determine how placement into a developmental language arts course affects students' self-efficacy as readers, how students in

these courses describe their literacy experiences and decision-making processes, and whether and to what extent students in developmental reading courses read for pleasure.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a confidential questionnaire regarding your reading habits and life experiences by October 24th, 2016. Completion of this questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes of your time.
2. Meet with me during the week of October 30th for 20-30 minutes to answer some interview questions related to your educational life experiences, personal reading habits, and decision-making processes regarding your pursuit for higher education. You will be recorded, but the identifiable information obtained during these interviews will be kept confidential.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study, but the information gathered will be very beneficial to society. By exploring different attitudes remedial readers have, educators can better assess the best way to address the problems and help these students become better readers and thereby better learners. Reading attitudes and issues can be addressed at earlier ages, educators and parents can avoid pitfalls that inhibit reading skills or pleasure, and colleges can find new and more effective/efficient ways of assisting developmental learners in the future.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from  
10/18/2016 to 10/17/2017 Protocol # 2611.101816



We may share the data we collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if we share the data that we collect about you, we will remove any information that could identify you before we share it. All questionnaires and interview notes will be locked in a filing cabinet in my office, which can be accessed by my key card only. Once the data is coded electronically, the electronic records will be password protected as well on a secured computer. After three years, both the physical and electronic records will be disposed of using data destruction services.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Lanier Technical College. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Ashley Reece Armour. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 678-717-3696 or aarmour@ung.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Sarah Horne, at sehome@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

## Appendix B: Reading Attitudes Questionnaire

### READING ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

#### DIRECTIONS:

The statements in this questionnaire are concerned with the way you feel about reading.

**THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS** because people have different opinions and feelings about reading. For example, if I say, "Reading is a source of pleasure for me," I'm sure many people would say that this statement is not true for them. Therefore, it is important that you indicate how **YOU** really feel.

Please read each of the statements carefully. After you read each statement, decide if you agree or disagree with the statement.

Following each statement is a scale from 5 to 1:

Circle 5 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement.

Circle 4 if you **AGREE** with the statement.

Circle 3 if you are **UNCERTAIN** how you feel about the statement.

Circle 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement.

Circle 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement.

**THERE ARE 40 STATEMENTS. PLEASE RESPOND TO EACH ONE.**

Use a pencil to mark your answers. Please

respond to all of the items.

-----

This portion will be detached so you will not be identified.

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Education:

\_\_\_\_\_

	SA	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	SD
1. I learn better when someone shows me what to do than if I just read what to do.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I need a lot of help in reading.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I get a lot of satisfaction when I help other people with their reading problems, or when I read to others.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I get upset when I think about having to read.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Whenever my friends read a good book, they usually tell me about it.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I can read but I don't understand what I've read.	5	4	3	2	1
7. There are better ways to learn new things than by reading a book.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I am a good reader.	5	4	3	2	1
9. My friends enjoy having me tell them about the books that I read.	5	4	3	2	1
10. When I am at home I read a lot.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Reading is one of the best ways for me to learn things.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Most books in the public library are too difficult for me.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Reading is one of my favorite activities.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I want to have more books of my own.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I would rather have someone explain something to me than to try to learn it from a book.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I often feel anxious when I have a lot of reading to do.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I read when I have the time to enjoy it.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I try very hard, but I just can't read very well.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I quickly forget what I have read even if I have just read it.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I get nervous if I have to read a lot of information for my job or for some social activity.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Encountering unfamiliar words is the hardest part of reading.	5	4	3	2	1
22. My friends and I often discuss the books we have read.	5	4	3	2	1

	<b>SA</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>SD</b>
23. I get a lot of enjoyment from reading.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I would rather read what to do than to have someone tell me what to do.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I remember the things people tell me better than the things I read.	5	4	3	2	1
26. I worry a lot about my reading.	5	4	3	2	1
27. I like going to the library for books.	5	4	3	2	1
28. When I read an interesting book, story, or article I like to tell my friends about it.	5	4	3	2	1
29. It is easier for me to understand what I am reading if pictures, charts, and diagrams are included.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I like to listen to other people talk about the books they have read.	5	4	3	2	1
31. Reading is one of the most interesting things which I do.	5	4	3	2	1
32. When I read I usually get tired and sleepy.	5	4	3	2	1
33. I'm the kind of person who enjoys a good book.	5	4	3	2	1
34. I have a lot in common with people who are poor readers.	5	4	3	2	1
35. I enjoy it when someone asks me to explain unfamiliar words or ideas to them.	5	4	3	2	1
36. I try to avoid reading because it makes me feel anxious.	5	4	3	2	1
37. I have trouble understanding what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
38. I'm afraid that people may find out what a poor reader I am.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I spend a lot of my spare time reading.	5	4	3	2	1
40. I enjoy receiving books as gifts.	5	4	3	2	1

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

During the interview, the following questions were used to guide the discussion with students.

- 1) Why did you decide to attend college?
- 2) Tell me about the factors that you considered when deciding to attend this school. What was most important and why?
- 3) How do you make decisions in regards to higher education?
- 4) Do you consider yourself a lifelong learner?
- 5) Describe yourself as a reader.
- 6) Do you read often? If you don't read often, explain what you think the cause of this might be.
- 7) What is your earliest memory of reading?
- 8) Did you read more as a child?
- 9) Did your parents read to you as a child? Do you read to your own children or do you plan to? Why?
- 10) Of the things you do read, what types of reading materials are your favorite? The easiest for you? The most interesting?
- 11) What have you read lately?
- 12) How did you make the choice to read this selection?
- 13) What are some books you'd like to read? How did you find out about these books?
- 14) What or who motivates you to read? How does that person motivate you to read? Why is this person or thing such a motivation for you?
- 15) How do you feel about reading? Why do you feel like this about reading?

- 16) Do you think you are a good reader? Why do you feel this way?
- 17) Do you read books for fun at home? Why or why not?
- 18) What do you dislike about reading specifically? Why?
- 19) Do you think reading is valuable or important?
- 20) Do you have access to reading materials in your home or at work? If so, what types?
- 21) What events or experiences in your life do you believe could have shifted your feelings about reading and/or your ability to read well?
- 22) How do you feel about being in a developmental student?
- 23) Do you read for pleasure or just for school? What additional life experiences, school experiences, or reading experiences would you like to discuss or describe that significantly stick out in your memory? Do you have a job? Tell me about your upbringing and/or family. (Anything else we didn't cover yet seemed relevant based on student responses to other questions.)

### Appendix D: Questionnaire Response Data By Individual Question

Question	Strongly				Strongly
	Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Disagree
1. I learn better when someone shows me what to do than if I just read what to do.	22	12	3	2	0
2. I need a lot of help in reading.	3	9	11	10	6
3. I get a lot of satisfaction when I help other people with their reading problems or when I read to others.	4	12	16	6	1
4. I get upset when I think about having to read.	6	7	11	13	2
5. Whenever my friends read a good book, they usually tell me about it.	7	10	7	11	4
6. I can read, but I don't understand what I've read.	5	4	13	12	5



7. There are better ways to learn new things than by reading a book.	11	16	9	2	1
8. I am a good reader.	5	21	10	3	0
9. My friends enjoy having me tell them about the books that I read.	2	9	6	16	6
10. When I am at home, I read a lot.	1	3	8	13	14
11. Reading is one of the best ways for me to learn things.	2	3	10	15	9
12. Most books in the public library are too difficult for me.	1	3	10	19	6
13. Reading is one of my favorite activities.	2	3	9	15	10
14. I want to have more books of my own.	3	6	8	15	7
15. I would rather have someone explain something to me than to try to learn it from a book.	10	18	8	1	2

16. I often feel anxious when I have a lot of reading to do.	7	10	10	8	4
17. I read when I have the time to enjoy it.	2	9	11	10	7
18. I try very hard, but I just can't read very well.	0	7	6	18	8
19. I quickly forget what I have read even if I have just read it.	5	13	8	10	3
20. I get nervous if I have to read a lot of information for my job or for some social activity.	5	8	12	9	5
21. Encountering unfamiliar words is the hardest part of reading.	3	11	14	9	2
22. My friends and I often discuss the books we have read.	2	3	7	18	9
23. I get a lot of enjoyment from reading.	3	7	13	10	6

24. I would rather read what to do than to have someone tell me what to do.	3	4	6	11	15
25. I remember the things people tell me better than the things I read.	8	17	6	7	1
26. I worry a lot about my reading.	3	4	11	10	11
27. I like going to the library for books.	4	6	4	16	9
28. When I read an interesting book, story, or article, I like to tell my friends about it.	2	21	9	2	5
29. It is easier for me to understand what I am reading if pictures, charts, and diagrams are included.	7	19	7	6	0
30. I like to listen to other people talk about the books they have read.	6	15	7	6	5

31. Reading is one of the most interesting things I do.	2	1	6	17	13
32. When I read, I usually get tired and sleepy.	12	14	6	5	2
33. I'm the kind of person who enjoys a good book.	5	13	10	6	5
34. I have a lot in common with people who are poor readers.	1	5	11	20	2
35. I enjoy it when someone asks me to explain unfamiliar words or ideas to them.	5	7	9	14	4
36. I try to avoid reading because it makes me feel anxious.	3	7	9	14	6
37. I have trouble understanding what I read.	5	3	9	18	4
38. I'm afraid that people may find out what a poor reader I am.	3	2	7	15	12
39. I spend a lot of my spare time reading.	2	2	4	18	13

40. I enjoy receiving books as gifts.	4	4	5	9	17
--	---	---	---	---	----