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MOTIVATING FACTORS: IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL LITERACY PRACTICES

By

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MOTIVATING FACTORS: IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, conducted in an urban high school, explored the motivational factors in 11 students' home and school literacy practices using expectancy-value theory as the framework. Each of the student participants was represented in an individual case study about in-school and out-of-school literacy activities. The within-case analysis was drawn from multiple sources of data gathered over a four-month investigative period. This study employed several different approaches to data collection commonly used in qualitative case study design – interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, cross-case analysis revealed recurring themes shared by many of the students. Results suggest students' value beliefs and self-efficacy for reading and writing activities is different in home and school environments. Students use home literacy activities to cope with stress in their lives and to imagine attainment of their goals. Adults, especially parents and teachers, play an active role in developing students' value beliefs for and participation in literacy activities. In school, students are primarily motivated by extrinsic factors related to earning good grades for future college and career plans. However, when students are granted some choice in their reading and writing activities at school, they are more intrinsically motivated to tackle challenging tasks.

To my husband and children who sacrificed much for me to continue my education.

"All the time

Where did all the time go?

It's too late to say goodnight

Time flies when you're having fun, yeah!

Time's up when you work like a dog

Salud"

– Green Day

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The status quo will only continue to teach kids to hate reading and to see education as irrelevant."

– Wolk, 2010, p. 10

Although many high school students enjoy reading and writing activities they self-select at home, they often are not motivated to participate in these activities at school when they are assigned as part of a class (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; McKool, 2007; Schultz, 2002). Low motivation is a problem teachers constantly struggle with as they face reluctant learners. In the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement, 66 percent of students reported being bored at least every day in class (Yazzie-Mintz, 2009). Motivated students engage in learning activities, and they perform better on assessments (Durik, Vida, & Eccles, 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). In short, they learn more. Yet, as schools face increased pressure to make Annual Yearly Progress within the requirements of No Child Left Behind, many students find school to be little more than preparation for state assessments. The current curriculum in schools focuses more on test preparation with shallow teaching and learning as teachers must "cover" material rather than teach it deeply (Gallagher, 2010). Disengagement has led to a high dropout rate nationwide; 25 percent of students do not graduate on time, and 21 percent in a recent study said they had considered dropping out at some point during high school (Yazzie-Mintz, 2009).

Some students do not see value in what they are required to do at school while others do not believe they have the ability to be successful in a school environment (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Eccles et al., 1983); in both situations, student motivation wanes. In citing reasons for their boredom, 81 percent of high school students noted instructional material was not interesting, and 42 percent mentioned no relevance in the material (Yazzie-Mintz, 2009). In terms of difficulty, 33 percent stated work was not challenging enough while 26 percent said it was too difficult (Yazzie-Mintz, 2009). Students' levels of motivation are influenced by their beliefs about the value of home and school activities and their self-efficacy for engaging in these tasks (Eccles et al., 1983). Students are more likely to participate in a literacy activity when it fulfills a personal need (Ivey, 1999). When students don't perceive value in school literacy tasks, they are less likely to be motivated. In a nationwide writing study, 48 percent of high school students reported that they enjoyed writing for personal goals, but they did not like school-related writing tasks (Addison & McGee, 2010). Additionally, only 13 percent indicated they did not like to write at all.

Rationale for the Study

Motivation is central to learning. By better understanding the different motivational factors involved in literacy experiences at home and school, teachers can tap into components of motivation that might benefit students academically.

Previous research has been more limited in scope. For example, many studies, (Yi, 2007; Pajares, 2007; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007) have focused solely on motivation related to home literacy activities or school practices, whereas this study examined students' motivation in both settings. In addition, students who may show great

self-efficacy for reading or writing at home often experience a different level of competency in a school environment (Yi, 2007). Fewer studies, such as Schultz (2002) and Smith & Wilhelm (2004), have reached across both settings. Parents, teachers, peers, and the school culture all work in shaping students' beliefs, values, and goal orientations related to literacy. Examining both home and school contexts in the same study offers additional insights for educational practice.

Previous studies examining self-efficacy and value beliefs related to motivation have primarily used quantitative methods. These studies have relied on self-reporting through multiple-choice surveys and ratings scales (Jacobs et al., 2002; Durik, Vida, Eccles, 2006; Wolters & Pintrich, 1998; Shell et al., 19995). Fewer studies, such as Smith and Wilhelm (2004) and Potter et al. (2001), have examined aspects of self-efficacy or value beliefs through qualitative approaches. This study seeks to extend the current research by looking at both competency beliefs and value beliefs through a qualitative approach in order to give voice to students and their varied experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how high school students' out-of-school literacy experiences compare with those in the classroom and the factors that influence motivation in both settings. I became interested in the topic of motivation in literacy practices because I frequently see students who appear disengaged from the learning process, including those who participate willingly in reading and writing activities in their leisure time. If students already intrinsically value these practices at home, why do they not value them at school? I interviewed a cross section of urban high school students about the reading and writing they choose to do at home as well as the

types of reading and writing they are required to do for school. I also observed students' literacy experiences in their English classes. The goal was to gain qualitative insights into various motivational factors, so teachers might be able to draw on these to engage reluctant learners.

Research Questions

The study was guided by a primary research question and an ancillary research question:

1. What types of literacy activities are students doing in and out of school? (supporting question)

2. How do student competency and value beliefs for out-of-school literacy practices compare with those for school-based experiences? (inquiry question)

Definition of Terms

1. *Out-of-school reading materials* are defined as novels, graphic novels, nonfiction, or poetry that students choose to read in their leisure time that are not associated with any school requirements. Although many students frequently read magazines, newspapers, email, and online text, this study is concerned with those reading materials that most closely mirror the types of texts encountered in school.

2. *School reading materials* are defined as any reading that students are assigned to complete as a requirement for their English class.

3. *Out-of-school writing* is defined as short stories, novels, essays, poetry, song lyrics, journals, blogs, or fan fiction (stories written by fans of an original work) that students choose to produce during their free time that is not associated with any school requirement. Students frequently write via text messages, email, and social networking

sites; however, this study only explores those structured forms (ie., narrative, expository, poetic) most often used in school.

4. *School writing* covers all writing that students are assigned to complete as part of the requirements for their English class.

Organization of the Study

Chapter Two highlights the current literature related to in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, theories of motivation relevant to the research question, and the theoretical framework that guides the study.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology used and details the steps that were taken throughout the study from planning and data collection to analysis of data. The study's limitations and the actions taken to ensure trustworthiness are also described.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study in two parts. The first section comprises 11 individual case studies of the student participants. They offer a detailed look at the literacy practices of a diverse group of learners. The second section consists of a cross-case analysis highlighting the common themes that existed among students. Organized around the two research questions, the section provides a more complete look at motivational factors in adolescent literacy.

Chapter Five offers a summary of the research findings and how they contribute to the existing literature in the field. The chapter ends with a look at the implications for practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"…little attention has been paid to the kinds of 'literary lives' teenagers lead and to how those lives connect or fail to connect with the learning of literature in English class."

– Vogel & Zancanella, 1991, p. 54

School Vs. Home Literacy Practices

For most students, there is a disconnect between home and school literacy practices. Researchers in one study found that students often had a passion for reading that did not extend to their coursework, noting, "they saw the reading that they had to do for school as uninspiring, dull, and painfully required" (Jolliffe & Harl, 2008, p. 611). Strommen and Mates (2004) also found students who resist school reading are, nonetheless, readers at home. Literacy activities experienced in school are more formal and varied by educational tracking of low, general, and honors classes (Gamoran & Carbonaro, 2002). Middle and high school students have few choices in the reading and writing assignments they receive (Gamoran & Carbonaro, 2002). Choice, however, is what students have consistently said motivates them the most (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Pitcher et al., 2007; Pflaum & Bishop, 2004). High school students report they do little of the required class reading, forcing themselves to only complete what they need to "get by" (Wolk, 2010). In addition, the reading is done quickly, without much thought to comprehension or critical thinking. In a study of college freshman, students rated the time they spent reading during their senior year of high school as "moderately low," equating

to less than eight hours a week with 70 percent being required for class (Jolliffe & Harl, 2008). Yet these same students reported having "regular, steady, full reading lives" with a variety of texts for their personal reading (p. 607). The 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement found that 45 percent of students spend two or more hours a week reading outside of class for themselves while just slightly more, 50 percent, report spending that much time reading or studying for their classes.

School Literacy

Classroom activities are often passive, involving listening to the teacher, answering questions, or taking tests (Oakes, 1985). Public high schools spend little class time devoted to writing, and students report less than two hours of English homework a week in general classes (Gamoran & Carbonaro, 2002). In the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement, 39 percent of students reported spending less than an hour a week on written assignments, and only 46 percent reported that completing written work was very important to them (Yazzie-Mintz, 2009). Some students who eagerly participate in writing in out-of-school contexts become reluctant writers at school because they do not expect to be successful (Schultz, 2002; Yi, 2007). Although many high school students report feeling challenged at least a couple of times a week in their English classes, they are often assigned fewer than eight (one page or more) writing assignments in a term with more emphasis being placed on literature study than writing (Gamoran & Carbonaro, 2002). Grammar also receives more attention in general than in honors English classes (Gamoran & Carbonaro, 2002).

Home Literacy

Many adolescents in middle and high school engage in literacy practices in their leisure time outside of school (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; McKool, 2007; Schultz, 2002). In a study of avid middle school readers, 80 percent reported reading more than 10 books in a year, while some in the study reported reading in excess of 100; a follow-up study in the same district with both avid and reluctant readers found that on average, students completed 18 books in the previous school year (Martin, 1991). Some students report rushing through required school reading in order to make time to read material of their own choosing (Jolliffe & Harl, 2008). While girls report reading for pleasure more often than boys, both genders, especially those who are reluctant readers, favor magazines, comics, and the Internet over books (McKool, 2007; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Outside activities, such as television and extracurricular activities, compete with time for reading, especially for reluctant readers; avid readers make time for reading despite other activities (McKool, 2007). Avid readers frequently begin reading independently in kindergarten or earlier (McKool, 2007), and they report enjoyment in reading (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; McKool, 2007). Conversely, reluctant readers are more likely to report struggles with reading ability (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Knoester, 2009) or self-concept (McKool, 2007) and value the importance of reading less than avid readers. In a study of urban high school students, Schultz (2002) found that many students were active writers of journals and poetry at home, but their images of themselves as writers did not transfer to writing in the classroom; their writing lives at home were separate and distinct from school. Just as reluctant readers express a lower self-concept of ability and value for reading (McKool,

2007), some adolescents who express pride and confidence in their home writing resist writing assigned at school because they do not expect to be successful in that context (Schultz, 2002).

Writing as a coping mechanism. A number of studies have examined how writing can serve as a coping behavior for adolescents and adults dealing with personal problems (Burt, 1994; Giannotta, Settanni, Kliewer, & Ciairano, 2009; Harvey, Orbuch, & Weber, 1990; McKinney, 1976; Park, 2010; Soliday, Garofalo, & Rogers, 2004; and Stino, 1995). Expressive writing, which is often used in therapy, involves individuals writing about highly stressful events in their lives by describing their thoughts and feelings. Researchers have found this type of writing improves psychological well being as the act of writing about problems or concerns helps people make meaning of stressful experiences (Park, 2010). In similar fashion, Harvey, Orbuch, and Weber (1990) suggest that "account-making," or people's explanations or interpretations of events, often occur in response to stressful situations or problems. In these "accounts," the writer includes him or herself and others in plots related to life events that are presented in story-like form with a central conflict, a beginning, middle, and end.

In one study, 32 percent of males and 73 percent of females reported they had kept a diary at some point in their lives, beginning at about age 15 (Burt, 1994). Diaries were used to describe life events as well as discuss thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Burt (1994) found that 54 percent of males and 72 percent of females believed writing down their emotional feelings helped them cope with their emotions, and a similar percentage agreed that reading over past diary entries about emotional reactions to past events helped them better cope with their ongoing feelings about the issues.

A study of Italian seventh grade boys and girls found similar results when participants were encouraged to write about their thoughts and feelings related to problems with peers (Giannotta, Settanni, Liewer, & Ciairano, 2009). Students in the study wrote about incidents of bullying, being rejected, and verbal and physical acts of aggression as well as interpersonal problems, such as arguments with parents and teachers. Researchers discovered that writing about traumatic events helped students find ways to solve their problems, especially for those feeling most victimized.

Additionally, a study of U.S. eighth graders involved writing for three days about either an emotional or neutral topic (Soliday, Garofalo, & Rogers, 2004). Students who wrote about emotional topics, such as problems related to school, peers, and family issues, had evaluation scores related to psychological distress decrease and positive disposition increase. The benefit of reduced distress scores continued two to six weeks after the writing intervention ended.

Writing as a coping mechanism has seen benefits with older adolescent and adult populations as well. In an earlier study, McKinney (1976) found free writing helped college students decrease their negative feelings about individuals or events and gave them a better perspective on the situation, which improved their attitude. Stino (1995) also found with incarcerated adults that creative writing is "therapeutic when it helps students explore and reflect on their own values and attain an outlet for stress" (p. 21).

Reading to escape. Greaney and Neuman (1983, 1990) conducted two international studies looking at the reasons elementary and middle school students choose to read. In both studies, three distinct reasons surfaced: enjoyment, utility, and escapism. Enjoyment refers to students finding reading intrinsically interesting. Utility relates to

how reading helps students with school success, life goals, or if parents think the activity is important. Finally, escapism offers a way for students to distract themselves from personal problems or relieve boredom when there was nothing else to do. In the first study, eighth grade students from the United States reported they were more likely to read for escapist reasons than the Irish students (1983). In the second study, the 13-year-old students in eighth grade most frequently cited a general learning function as a motivation for reading; interestingly, enjoyment was cited less often than with the 8-and 10-year-old students being surveyed (1990). Students from all 15 countries indicated a utility function for reading. Students in seven countries, including the United States, indicated reading for enjoyment, and students in eight countries, including the United States, reporting reading for escape (1990).

Motivation

Students' cognitions, including beliefs, values and goals, play a decisive role in their achievement motivation and performance (Bandura, 1993; Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994). Various theories have explored the link between cognition and motivation. Expectancy-value theory, which guides this study's central research question, is supported by the following constructs: 1) self-efficacy, 2) attribution theory, and 3) achievement goal theory. The developmental component involving parents, teachers, and peers follows.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Expectancy-value theory asserts students' expectancies for success and the value they have for succeeding at tasks are important factors in their motivation to engage in specific tasks (Eccles et al, 1983). Expectancies and values are influenced by a number of

factors, including ability beliefs and the perceived difficulty of specific tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002). These cognitive factors are impacted by perceptions of past experiences and various social influences.

Expectancies are defined as students' beliefs about how well they will perform on a specific future task. (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002). These are similar to self-efficacy beliefs, which also vary by domain (Bandura et al., 1996). Historically, expectancy-value theory centered expectancies on outcomes in which certain behaviors would result in particular outcomes; efficacy expectancies, on the other hand, related to an individual's belief about whether he or she could produce the outcome (Bandura, 1993). Although expectancy-value theory originally focused on outcome expectancies, Eccles' model currently aligns more closely with efficacy expectancies (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

The value of a task is governed by the nature of the task as well as the needs, goals, and values of the student (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Students are more likely to show higher value for activities that fulfill their needs and contribute to their future goals. Eccles and colleagues (1983) identified four categories of task values: *attainment value* in which tasks are important when they're linked to identity or sense of self; *intrinsic value* in which one experiences enjoyment from doing a task; *utility value* in which a task fits with future plans or goals (e.g., learning essay writing will help with college applications and courses); and *cost* in which people must weigh what they have to give up to do a task (e.g., miss a favorite TV show in order to read).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs about their ability to be successful in a given situation. When students possess a strong efficacy to regulate their

learning and perform well academically, their motivation and aspirations for success are much higher (Bandura, 1993). Students who have higher perceived levels of self-efficacy set higher goals for themselves and remain more steadfast in accomplishing them. Bandura noted, "Those who have a high sense of efficacy visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance. Those who doubt their efficacy visualize failure scenarios and dwell on the many things that can go wrong" (p. 118).

The way in which people construe ability affects their cognitive functioning and is pertinent to their level of efficacy (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Children who believe ability is hereditary are more likely to view their success or failure as a measure of their intellectual capacity (Bandura, 1993). If a task requires a great deal of effort, these students fear their intelligence may be questioned, so they are more likely to avoid challenging themselves for fear of appearing dumb in front of others. Low levels of efficacy can lead to feelings of futility, resulting in low levels of motivation (Bandura et al., 1996). Conversely, children who believe ability is malleable and can be increased by acquiring new knowledge and skills are more likely to set higher goals for themselves and embrace tougher academic challenges (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). They view errors as a natural part of the learning process rather than recognition of ignorance. Students with high efficacy are more likely to perceive poor task performance as a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability. Therefore, high levels of self-efficacy are related to students' effort and task persistence (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Attribution theory. Ability beliefs are also central tenets of attribution theory. Weiner (1994) outlines a taxonomy of causes related to ability and effort as the agents of

achievement success or failure. The causal properties are 1) locus, 2) controllability, and 3) stability and globality.

Locus refers to whether a causal property is internal or external in nature to an individual (Weiner, 1994). Students might attribute failure on a test to low ability or effort, bad luck, illness or even teacher bias. Whereas ability and effort are internal to the individual, bad luck, illness and teacher bias are external factors.

The second causal property, controllability, refers to the power or powerlessness an individual feels to change a situation (Weiner, 1994). Students may be able to control the amount effort they exert while preparing for a test, but their ability level is not within their realm of control. Therefore, if a student can attribute test failure to a lack of effort, he might be inclined to study harder before the next test. If he attributes test failure to lack of ability, he may give up because he does not feel he has the ability to succeed.

Finally, stability, or the generality of causal explanations over time and over situations, is considered an important causal property relating to ability and effort. Stability refers to the duration of a cause, be it constant or temporary (Weiner, 2000). For example, writing aptitude may be viewed as constant and global because the skill remains over time in multiple situations. However, the effort an individual is willing to put forth on a particular writing assignment may vary in different settings. A student may also rely on luck, which would also be an unstable and specific property (Weiner et al., 1974).

Table 1. *Causal Properties for Ability and Effort Related to Attribution (Weiner, 1994)*

Causal Dimensions	**Ability**	**Effort**
Locus of causality	internal	internal
Causal controllability	uncontrollable	controllable

Causal stability/globality	stable/global	unstable/specific

Various combinations of these causal properties impact student motivation for achievement success. If a cause is stable, students can expect the same outcomes whether they are successes or failures (Weiner, 2000). For example, a student who believes he has a low aptitude for reading will interpret that as a personal, uncontrollable factor that he cannot change. As a result, he is more likely to expect to continue to experience failure when reading is a central activity. A student who believes he failed a reading test because the teacher doesn't like him is also likely to feel a lack of control and anticipate the same result next time in that teacher's class. Weiner (2000) argues that these causal properties are significant because they lead into two major determinates of motivation – expectancy and value.

Achievement goal theory. The type of achievement goals students possess relates to both their value and competency beliefs. Researchers have examined the role various goal orientations play in student achievement behaviors (Grant & Dweck, 2003; Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006). As students work on a task, they are likely to compare their performance to their goal in order to gauge their progress (Schunk, 2003). This theory focuses "the person's reasons for choosing, performing, and persisting at various learning activities" (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006, p. 359). Although researchers do not all agree on the category names, they have generally used two classes of goals: learning or mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006).

Learning or mastery goals relate to obtaining new knowledge or skills. Students

focusing on this type of goal orientation wish to grow intellectually or master a task (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006). They are more likely to select challenging work and focus on their own performance rather than competing with others (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998).

With performance goals, students strive to validate their competence and avoid the appearance of low ability (Grant & Dweck, 2003). The focus in this goal orientation is on outcomes as a measure of ability, gaining recognition, and competing for grades or other honors (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006). Students worry more about appearing smart and outperforming peers than they do on mastery of skills; as a result, these students often opt for less challenging tasks when given a choice.

Different goal orientations have been related to motivational factors. Grant and Dweck (2003) found that performance goals were beneficial to performance only when students were experiencing success; they resulted in a decline in intrinsic motivation when students faced setbacks or task failure. On the other hand, learning goals were found to positively influence student intrinsic motivation and performance, even when students were faced with prolonged challenges or setbacks. In addition, learning goals resulted in effort-based explanations for failure rather than ability attributions. Goal progress feedback is also important for students to assess their progress accurately while they work toward their goal. Appropriate goal progress feedback "will raise self-efficacy and motivation when it conveys that learners are competent and can continue to improve by working diligently" (Schunk, 2003, p. 164).

Parent, Teacher, and Cultural Influences

Many researchers have explored the influence that outside forces have on student motivation (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Bandura, 1993, 1996; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998, Eccles et al., 1983; Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007). They have found that students' beliefs, values, and goals are guided by parents, teachers, and the culture of their communities and schools. Each plays a role in shaping student cognition.

Parents. Parents can begin to shape their children's motivation and attitude toward learning before they even enter school. Researchers have found that parents with higher academic self-efficacy convey the importance of school to their children and a sense of value for education (Bandura, 1993). They serve as role models when they engage in various behaviors at home, such as reading books for pleasure instead of watching television (Eccles et al., 1983). These activities send a message about what the family values and what the children should value as well. In a study of both urban and rural middle school students, adolescents reported family members encouraging them to read and recommending good books (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Another study of avid readers found that most students were taught to read by a parent, usually their mother, and they pointed to family members, including parents and siblings, as role models for reading (Martin, 1991). Parents also help prepare students for school and instill early beliefs about ability. Higher socio-economic status has been related to higher parental academic self-efficacy, which, in turn, has been related to higher levels of self-efficacy in children (Bandura et al., 1996). Parents with greater academic self-efficacy have also been found to be more involved in their children's education (Bandura, 1993). They may also indirectly influence student expectancies and values based on the types of

experiences they offer, such as the provision of role models, types of toys, leisure activities, and independence training children experience (Eccles et al., 1983). In a study of students in middle and high school, students reported the influence of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings in buying them books, sharing reading materials, and offering book recommendations (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Teachers/school environment. Teachers can impact student beliefs about competence and goal orientations by the way they establish their classroom environment (Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998). Classrooms might be structured as individualized, cooperative, or competitive. These different structures affect the types of achievement goals students develop for themselves. In an individualized structure, students work toward the learning target and are judged only on their own performance; the focus is on mastery and improving skills (1998). Cooperative structures allow students to work together to accomplish a goal, and they share in the rewards and punishments. Individualized and cooperative structures are more related to learning or mastery goals that encourage students to tackle challenging tasks (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). Finally, competitive structures rely on social comparison and make some students winners and others losers (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). Students in this type of a classroom environment are more likely to develop performance goals in which they work to validate their competence and avoid the appearance of low ability (Grant & Dweck, 2003). Researchers have also found that "adaptive classroom social environments enhance students' focus on mastery and feelings of efficacy and, in this way, facilitate engagement" (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007).

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs related to their teaching can positively or negatively impact students as well. Teachers with higher professional efficacy work harder to motivate students intrinsically while those with lower professional efficacy resort to more extrinsic forms of motivation (Bandura, 1993). Students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to have higher levels of achievement motivation and performance. In addition, teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy are also more likely to create classrooms that undermine the self-efficacy of students (Bandura, 1993). Secondary teachers have been found to have a lower sense of self-efficacy than elementary teachers (Eccles, 2004).

Teachers also influence students' achievement beliefs and competencies through the use of instructional practices. Students need specific and accurate feedback about their progress on skills, so they can develop realistic efficacy beliefs (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). For example, teachers need to avoid general comments, such as "Good job," on a student's paper and instead provide details about the aspects that were good and bad. Then teachers must show students how to improve and provide appropriate scaffolding to help them be successful. Teachers can assess student self-efficacy and competency beliefs through the answers students give to teacher questions, by the nature of students' questions, and the comments students make during class discussions (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). All of these strategies give teachers a snapshot of students' actual cognitive engagement. Teachers must also set high expectations for all students and avoid giving low ability students tasks that are too easy in order to build efficacy beliefs. All students must be given challenging tasks that can be accomplished with effort; easy tasks will hurt rather than help students' self-efficacy (Linnenbrink &

Pintrich, 2003). The attributions students give for their successes or failures can be shaped by teachers as well. Teachers can help students see that ability is changeable and controllable; if failing students believe their ability is stable, they will simply expect the same outcome the next time, regardless of the effort they expend (Weiner, 2000). Pitcher et al. (2007) found that teachers also influence student motivation for literacy practices by talking about books, modeling reading, and offering book recommendations. In addition, a teacher's enthusiasm for reading can impact students' reading attitudes and behaviors (2007).

Student transitions from elementary to secondary levels of schooling also impact student beliefs and attitudes about learning (Eccles, 2004). Middle and junior high schools are larger, and Eccles (2004) has suggested that these schools don't provide developmentally appropriate environments for children. Students have more teachers, so it is difficult to create meaningful bonds. Close relationships with teachers can provide support for students and increase motivation (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). Middle and junior high structures also use greater teacher control and discipline and offer less student autonomy (Eccles, 2004). Combined with lower teacher self-efficacy at the secondary level, teachers rely on more extrinsic motivation that "under certain conditions, the use of such rewards can undermine students' sense of control and autonomy over their achievement outcomes and reduce their intrinsic motivation" (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998, p. 96). Less research has been conducted regarding the transition to high school, but ability tracking is more prevalent (Eccles, 2004).

Peers. Peers can influence students both directly and indirectly. Students are more likely to join peer groups that have similar motivational orientations to their own, which reinforces existing beliefs (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodgriguez, 1998). Low achieving students who seek out other low achievers maintain lower levels of motivation for school (1998).

Literacy and Motivation

Competency beliefs are important for motivation and achievement in literacy activities (Schunk, 2003; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995). Researchers have concluded that "…self-efficacy judgments influence the choices students make, the effort they expend, the perseverance with which they approach new tasks, and the anxiety they experience" (Pajares & Johnson, 1996, p. 171). Durik, Vida, and Eccles (2006) found that 10th grade students' self-concepts of ability predicted the amount of time they spent reading for pleasure, the types of language arts courses they took, and the career goals they developed related to literacy. Those students with higher self-efficacy voluntarily engaged in more literacy practices and challenged themselves in their coursework.

Unfortunately, many students experience lower levels of self-efficacy for literacy work required at school, even though their competency beliefs may be strong for reading and writing activities at home (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Durik, Vida, & Eccles, 2006). Students who reported being avid readers cited a feeling of independence in their ability, or competence, as a motivating factor for engaging in the activity (Martin, 1991). Competence beliefs at school are influenced, in part, by teachers' judgments and feedback of student work (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). If feedback leads students to perceive success, their competency beliefs are strengthened. If feedback indicates failure,

their self-efficacy in new situations is reduced. Researchers in one study examined students in elementary, middle, and high school and found that girls not only reported stronger writing self-efficacy, but they were also judged by their teachers as better writers (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007). Smith and Wilhelm (2004) found that middle and high school boys from a cross section of ethnicities and social classes participated in literacy activities when they could experience feelings of competence, but they rejected those activities when their competency was called into question. The boys wanted "to achieve competence quickly. If they felt an activity was worthwhile and competence could eventually be achieved, then the activity was worth a long-term commitment" (p. 457). Repeated failure, however, often creates fixed ideas about competency in students' minds. Research has indicated that "once entrenched, negative perceptions of one's ability prove exceedingly resistant to change, and even subsequent academic success, however brought about, often fails to alter them" (Pajares & Johnson, 1996, p. 171). Yet, when the boys in Smith and Wilhelm's (2004) study felt supported by teachers in using appropriate learning strategies, their expectancies for success were much higher, and they voluntarily engaged in reading in and out of school. Strategy instruction that teaches students to think through reading and writing processes can increase students' self-efficacy (Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003). Students who have acquired more learning strategies can employ alternatives when an initial strategy is not successful, whereas those with fewer strategies are more likely to give up, believing tasks are beyond their ability (Walker, 2003).

Students form their self-efficacy beliefs about reading and writing tasks based on information obtained from four sources: (1) mastery experiences; (2) peer modeling; (3)

feedback; and (4) anxiety and stress (Pajares, 2003). Mastery experiences are students' previous performances on similar literacy activities. When students experience success, their belief about their competence strengthens, but when they experience failure, their self-efficacy wanes. Watching other people perform a task also shapes students' beliefs through social comparison (Pajares, 2003). Peer models offer students a measure by which to judge their own literacy skills. If they believe a reading or writing task is beyond their ability, they might not even attempt to complete it (Walker, 2003). In addition, feedback, which has been mentioned previously, can be powerful in shaping student self-efficacy whether it comes from teachers, parents, or peers (Pajares, 2003). Positive verbal responses help students understand their proficiency in various literacy tasks (Walker, 2003). Finally, anxiety and stress can also interfere with students' judgments of ability and lead to lower efficacy.

When examined across various grade levels, changes in self-efficacy beliefs related to literacy have varied. Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007) have reported higher levels of self-efficacy in writing tasks for elementary students than either middle or high school students. They found a decline in writing self-efficacy through elementary and middle school and then a leveling off in high school. However, in assessing writing self-efficacy in grades 4, 7, and 10, Shell, Colvin, and Bruning (1995) found that task self-efficacy continued to increase each year, but component self-efficacy remained the same. They suggested that while students continually improve their self-efficacy for reading a variety of materials and writing in different formats, their self-efficacy for specific literacy skills remains unchanged. Similarly, they found students' causal attribution beliefs and expectancies related to self-efficacy were stable and changed very little

through high school. They also noted that changes in beliefs about reading and writing competency were similar across grade levels, indicating a co-development of the beliefs (1995).

Durik, Vida, and Eccles (2006) studied how competency beliefs and task values informed students' achievement choices involving literacy. They examined students' self-concepts of ability as well as intrinsic value and importance of activity related to reading in 4th and 10th grade students. For the purpose of the study, the researchers defined "importance of activity" as including utility and attainment values (Eccles, et al., 1983), meaning students cared about performing well on a task and believed it would be useful for reaching their goals. They found that students' self-concepts of ability in reading predicted their academic and leisure choices. In terms of task values, however, intrinsic value only predicted the amount of time students' read for pleasure; not surprisingly, students did not enjoy their time spent reading in school as much as they did reading out of school. The researchers determined that utility and attainment values did not predict the amount of time 10th graders read for fun. Believing reading is useful and important was not related to how much time students devoted to reading for personal enjoyment. However, the importance students' placed on English predicted the classes they took and their career ambitions.

Choice, which is related to intrinsic motivation, has consistently been cited in studies as a motivating factor in reading (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Pitcher et al., 2007; Vogel & Zancanella, 1991). Students report more positive experiences with reading when they are given personal choice; conversely, they report their worst experiences with reading related to assigned material (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Pitcher et al. (2007) also

found students appreciated teachers who allowed them to select books to read, and they valued choice on assigned projects related to reading. In a study of high school juniors, students reported valuing out-of-school reading done for pleasure more than required reading for English class because their reading interests and viewpoints were often at odds with those valued by the teacher (Vogel & Zancanella, 1991).

Theoretical Framework: Value-Expectancy Theory

Motivation continues to be an important construct linked to student academic performance in school. Understanding how learners' cognitions affect their motivation is central to expectancy-value theory (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002), which offers a framework for examining achievement motivation. The theory has been recognized in the field for more than 50 years, originating with Atkinson (1957), and expanded by researchers in ensuing decades (Battle, 1965; Crandall, 1969; Feather, 1982). More recently Eccles and colleagues (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002) extended the theory into its current form.

Expectancy-value theory posits that students' expectancies for success and the value they have for succeeding are key factors in their motivation to engage in specific tasks. Eccles et al. (1983) identified critical motivational and attitudinal components that mediate achievement behaviors and studied these within the domain of mathematics education. Expectancies and values influence achievement choices, performance, effort, and persistence. In turn, expectancies and values are influenced by a number of factors, including ability beliefs and the perceived difficulty of specific tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002). These cognitive factors are impacted by perceptions of past experiences and

various social influences. Eccles et al. (1983) noted "the model itself is built on the assumption that it is not reality itself (i.e., past successes or failures) that most directly determines children's expectancies, values, and behavior, but rather the interpretation of that reality" (p. 81). Eccles' model proposed both a psychological component involving students' competency beliefs and subjective task values and a developmental component taking into account the impact of parents and teachers in the formation of these beliefs (Eccles et al., 1983).

Psychological Component

Competence beliefs. Students' perceptions of competence are central to many theories of motivation, including Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory, Dweck's perceptions of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and Weiner's (1974, 2000) attribution theory. Eccles and colleagues (1983) define competency beliefs as students' perceptions of their abilities in different areas. The terms "competency beliefs," "ability beliefs" and "self-concept of ability" have been used interchangeably by Eccles and her colleagues in many articles and book chapters (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). Definitions of expectancy in Wigfield and Eccles' (2000) model of expectancy-value theory differ from those explored in other constructs. Expectancies are closely linked with competence or ability beliefs, but they take on a future time element. Expectancies are students' beliefs about how well they will perform on an *upcoming* task or area. Students' expectancies for success are influenced in part by self-concept of ability. Beliefs about ability refer to students' assessments of performance on a broader scale, such as within a domain (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, 2002). For example, a student's expectancy for success on a

particular essay assignment may be low, but his or her overall self-concepts of ability might still be high for writing in general. Past interpretations of expectancy-value theory have focused on outcome expectancies rather than efficacy expectancies. Bandura (1993) noted that in expectancy-value theory, motivation is based on the belief that certain behaviors will result in certain outcomes while efficacy expectancies relate to an individual's belief about whether he or she can produce the outcome. The Eccles expectancy-value model is more similar to Bandura's concept of efficacy expectancies as it measures students' expectations for personal success rather than their outcome expectations (Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). However, expectancy-value theory takes into account both expectancies and the influence of subjective task values (Wigfield, 1994). Bandura's model focuses on efficacy beliefs alone. Given the connection of efficacy expectancies to Eccles' model, it is worth exploring literature related to issues of self-efficacy.

While self-efficacy and self-concept beliefs are similar, the latter are much more general. For example, a student's competency beliefs might relate to being a good reader, while his or her more specific self-efficacy beliefs might relate to being good at reading young adult literature but less proficient at reading 17th Century British literature (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). For that reason, the specificity in self-efficacy beliefs more accurately reflects student engagement and achievement. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that he can be successful in a given situation; therefore, students' self-efficacy beliefs vary by domain (Bandura et al., 1996). Children naturally differentiate their beliefs about ability; as they gain more experience in various domains, they develop an increased or decreased sense of competence (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). Although self-

efficacy is most often examined at a task-specific level rather than at a domain level, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) also measured students' efficacy for various academic subjects. Eccles and colleagues have primarily looked at ability and expectancy beliefs at the more general domain level (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Subjective task values. The value of a given task is determined by the nature of the task as well as the needs, goals, and values of the student (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Students attach more value to those activities that fulfill their needs and assist them in reaching their goals. Eccles and colleagues (1983) identified four components of achievement values: (1) attainment value, (2) intrinsic value, (3) utility value, and (4) cost. Attainment value relates to the importance of doing well on a task. It also connects with how a task may relate to a student's identity or sense of self, how it can offer a challenge, or whether it can fulfill an achievement or social need. For example, a successful student might find value in a task viewed as "challenging" because it could confirm her identity as a smart student who likes to tackle difficult work. Intrinsic value relates to student interest and the immediate enjoyment he or she gains from engaging in a task. For example, a student who loves creative writing might be thrilled at the prospect of writing a short story in class. Utility value or usefulness refers to how a given task may be important for a student's future goals. A student who dislikes writing may value a lesson on essay construction only because she knows the skill will be needed for college in a few years. Finally, cost refers to what a student must sacrifice in order to do a task and the amount of effort that must be

expended in order to be successful. For example, in order to complete a reading assignment, a student might have to forgo time watching television or talking to friends.

Competence beliefs and task values are positively linked (Jacobs et al., 2002); children are more likely to value tasks they feel competent performing. Specifically, researchers have found perceptions of competence are linked to intrinsic value and to utility value in adolescents (Wigfield, 1994; Jacobs et al., 2002). While young children often hold exaggerated competence beliefs that decline a bit to more realistic perceptions in elementary school, Jacobs et al. (2002) found that both perceptions of competence and subjective task values continued to decline across all domains as children moved into adolescence.

Developmental Component

Eccles' model also considers the impact of parents and teachers in shaping students' competency beliefs, expectancies, and task values. She looks at contributions of 1) role modeling, 2) communication of expectancies by parents and teachers, and 3) reinforcement and the provision of differential experiences (Eccles et al., 1983).

Children and adolescents often look to adults for standards of behavior they can emulate (Bandura, 1993; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Students' attitudes about education and about learning specific subjects can be influenced by the adults in their lives. For example, students whose parents read the newspaper daily and elect to read books for pleasure send a message about valuing reading to their children by modeling the behavior; in turn, these children are more likely to value reading as well.

Teachers who hold high expectancies for students are more likely to have students who form higher achievement expectancies for themselves (Eccles et al., 1983).

Similarly, children whose parents communicate their expectancies tend to have higher achievement motivation and performance. The type of feedback students receive – praise or criticism – about their performance on tasks also relates to their expectancies and competency beliefs (Brophy and Good, 1974, as cited in Eccles et al., 1983). The causal attributions that parents and teachers give in their feedback and that they model in their own behavior may also impact student expectancies. For example, students whose failure is attributed to lack of ability are more likely to have lower expectancies for success and drops in motivation than those where failure is attributed to low effort (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Grant & Dweck, 2003).

Finally, Eccles notes that parents and teachers may also indirectly influence student expectancies and values based on the types of experiences they offer, such as the provision of role models, types of toys, leisure activities, and independence training children experience (Eccles et al., 1983). While she was most concerned with the gender typing related to this influence, differential experiences are also likely to impact students of different ethnicities and socioeconomic levels as well. For example, students who have participated in more extracurricular activities and traveled extensively may have higher expectancies on tasks where this background knowledge and experience is needed.

Support for the Theory

In the last 50 years, the expectancy-value model has been established, tested, and refined by scholars in the field, making it an important theory in the field of motivation. The components of Eccles et al. (1983) model are related to a number of other established constructs, including self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993), achievement goals (Eccles et al.,

1983; Wigfield, 1994), attribution (Weiner, 1974, 2000), views of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and locus of control (Rotter, 1966 as cited in Weiner, 1974).

The expectancy-value model offers a comprehensive way to examine motivation within a cognitive framework. While self-efficacy focuses on competency beliefs, expectancy-value takes into consideration both beliefs about ability as well as the type of values students hold for various activities. It also considers the social influence of parents and teachers in forming student beliefs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts, and souls and by so doing give them new insights into themselves, their problems and their human condition."

– Seidman, 2006, p. 8

This study examined the literacy practices and motivations of urban high school students by employing qualitative case study methodology. The naturalistic approach utilized student interviews, classroom observations, and student writing samples as methods of data collection throughout the four-month investigative period. Individual units of data were identified and then classified into emerging categories using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method. Trustworthiness was established through a series of approaches outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Case Study

The case study affords researchers a meaningful way to investigate and represent complex social interactions. Merriam (1998) notes the advantages of case study research in education: "Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences" (p. 41). Researchers have been mixed in their recognition of case study as methodology, methodology and method, or purely method. Stake (2003) posits "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 134) yet he later states that it is "both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of

that inquiry" (p. 136). Creswell et al. (2007) and Patton (2002) view case study as both a methodology and a product of inquiry. Merriam (1998) concurs, but notes that the term case study has been misunderstood or misused by many researchers. She asserts that case studies can be defined as the process of conducting the research, the unit of analysis, and the final product at the end of an investigation. Most importantly for those in education, case study research allows for a close examination of various aspects of problems and processes that can "bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

My research question aligns with the use of case study design. Stake (2003) identifies two types of case study research that are relevant to my study: instrumental and collective. Instrumental case study design is employed when "a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue" (p. 137). In this type of study, the case is secondary to helping advance understanding of a larger issue. The researcher has an external interest beyond the mere facts of the specific case. For example, in my study, the cases provide insight into the literate lives of students both in and out of the classroom. Collective case studies are instrumental studies extended to multiple cases. My investigation involves an instrumental case study for each student participant that captures his or her literacy experiences through thick description. Merriam (1998) noted, "detailed description is also necessary for the reader to assess the evidence upon which the researcher's analysis is based" (p. 238). Additionally, cross-case analysis was used to reveal recurring themes shared by many of the students.

In the field of education, case study research is designed so that "specific issues and problems of practice can be identified and explained" (Merriam, 1998, p. 34). The

conceptual structure of case study research revolves around a small set of issue-related research questions that can be complex in nature (Stake, 2003). In addition, educational researchers often pull from other disciplines, including psychology and anthropology, to form theoretical orientations and design methods of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). This study was guided by issue questions about motivational factors related to in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and was shaped theoretically by expectancy-value theory from within the field of educational psychology. While case study research employs a variety of methods, including interviews, direct observation, participant observation, documents, and artifacts (Patton 2002; Creswell et al., 2007), the researcher is always the instrument in the naturalistic setting. This study employed several different approaches to data collection commonly used in qualitative case study design.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Truman West High School, one of five regular and alternative high schools in an urban midwestern school district (pseudonyms are used for the names of the school, district, and students). The Truman District serves 13,726 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade, according to the district's demographic reports. The city of Truman, with about 125,000 residents, had a median income of only $39,711 in 2008, according to Census data, which was reflected in the socioeconomics of the district as well. During the 2010-2011 school year, 75 percent of district students were economically disadvantaged as recognized through the federal free or reduced lunch program. Racially, the district is diverse, with 56 percent of students identifying as a minority (23% African American; 16% Hispanic; 10% multi-racial; 6% Native

American; 1% other). Truman West High School, which serves 1,071 students in 9th through 12th grades, is considered the most affluent of the three regular high schools with only 48 percent of students identified as economically disadvantaged. The school retains much of the diversity of the district with 37 percent of students identifying as nonwhite (16% African American; 7% Hispanic; 9% multi-racial; 4% Native American; and 1% other). The overall graduation rate for the district was 81 percent in 2010; the rate for Truman West was 89 percent.

Table 2. *District and School Demographics*

2010 data	**School District**	**Truman West High School**
Percentage of economically disadvantaged students	75%	48 %
Percentage of minority students	56%	37%
Graduation rate	81%	89%

The district, including Truman West High School, has placed tremendous emphasis on reading instruction since the inception of No Child Left Behind. As a result, 84 percent of Truman West students taking the state reading assessment in 11th grade scored proficient or higher in 2010, exceeding the state annual target of 81 percent. The focus on reading, however, resulted in less time dedicated to writing instruction in past years. During the 2009-2010 school year, the district created new guidelines making writing a top priority, and a new 6-12th grade English/language arts curriculum required more writing assignments for students in each grade. The most recent state writing assessments from 2009 show 67 percent of Truman West 11th grade students scored proficient or higher in writing. This was a 4 percent decrease from the previous test in

2007 and 9 percentage points below the state target of 76 percent proficient. The district now gives its own yearly writing exam each spring in grades 1st through 11th grade that is evaluated on a Six-Trait model. The assessment is evaluated by teachers from all subject areas in every school in the district.

This district and the school site were chosen for maximum accessibility; I am in my second year as an instructional coach at Truman West and my seventh year as a coach in the district. Trusted relationships were already established with school personnel, and familiarity with curriculum and school policies provided a richer background from which to discover more about student literacy practices. My position afforded me daily access to the site over a four-month period. I was able to build ongoing relationships with my student participants, and my frequent presence observing in classrooms was unobtrusive, allowing me to preserve a naturalistic setting.

Description of Selection Procedures

In designing this study, I sought to recruit 10 students who engaged in the literacy activities I wished to investigate. That number was selected to provide the maximum variation of the sample within the limitations of the study. Using purposive sampling allowed me to study information-rich cases in depth rather than use random sampling for statistical probability (Patton, 2002). I was interested in researching students who already actively engaged in literacy practices outside of class, so I needed to use intensity sampling, a subcategory or type of purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Intensity sampling involves using information-rich cases that "manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely" (Patton, 2002, p. 234). This is distinguished from extreme case sampling in which extreme or deviant cases are selected for being highly

unusual. For example, although many Truman West students read magazines and Facebook postings and wrote text messages and emails, these were not the types of literacy practices I wished to examine in my study. By using intensity sampling, I selectively targeted students who engaged in specific types of reading and writing activities at home that more closely mirrored the types utilized in their school setting.

Initially, I recruited 12 students who met my study requirements and agreed to participate; however, only 11 students returned the necessary consent forms and participated in interviews. Students were recruited in several ways: I made visits to nine English classes, using an IRB-approved script (see Appendix A) and distributed fliers (see Appendix B) to interested students. More than 60 fliers were circulated during these visits, yielding four participants. Upon hearing about the study, teachers and other staff in the school offered the names of potential participants as well, resulting in four additional students agreeing to participate. Finally, two participants volunteered after learning about the study from other students, and one participant was discovered while I conducted a classroom observation.

Table 3. *Participant Demographics*

Students	Gender	Age	Grade	Race	Literacy Activities
Jenna	Female	18	12th	Caucasian	writer
Izayah	Male	18	12th	Hispanic	reader/writer
Riley	Female	17	12th	Caucasian	reader/writer
Sarah	Female	16	11th	Caucasian	reader
Dave	Male	15	9th	African American	reader/writer
Lexie	Female	17	12th	Caucasian	reader/writer

Marcus	Male	14	9th	African American	reader
Brittany	Female	15	10th	Caucasian	writer
Simone	Female	16	11th	African American	reader/writer
Rakeesha	Female	17	12th	African American	reader/writer
Chad	Male	15	9th	Caucasian	reader/writer

The Participants

Although the only selection criteria related to students engaging in reading and/or writing practices outside of class, the list of study participants grew to be quite diverse, reflecting a mix of ages, grade levels, and races. [See Table 3] By gender, 63 percent of participants were female (seven students) to 37 percent male (four students). Ages ranged from 14 to 18, with the median age being 16.5 years. By race, 45 percent of students identified as minority (four African-American; one Hispanic) and 55 percent Caucasian (six students), closely mirroring the school's level of 37 percent minority. More students were upperclassmen (five seniors; two juniors) than lowerclassmen (three freshman; one sophomore). Their chosen literacy activities were well represented as well: seven students identified as both readers and writers; two students as readers only; and two students as writers only.

Table 4. *Participant Academic Statistics*

Students	State Assessment Reading Performance Levels	Semester GPA
Jenna	Meets standard	1.71
Izayah	Meets standard	2.62
Riley	Meets standard	1.71

Sarah	Exemplary	3.43
Dave	Exceeds standard	3.13
Lexie	Meets standard	Dropped out
Marcus	Meets standard	2.57
Brittany	Exceeds standard	1.38
Simone	Approaching standard	3.14
Rakeesha	Meets standard	3.75
Chad	Approaching standard	2.63

Jenna. Jenna, a senior, was an 18-year-old white female living with her boyfriend. She was an avid writer but reluctant reader. After I told her creative writing class about my study, she was the first student at my office door minutes after the bell rang to tell me she wanted to participate. While Jenna was a below-average student in school and disliked much of what she was asked to do in English class, she was passionate about writing stories that involved herself as the central character. Jenna hated the required reading in school, and she struggled to find books that interested her outside of school. She received a "meets standard" level in reading on her most recent state assessment, and she earned a 1.71 GPA during the semester she participated in the study. She hoped to be the first in her family to graduate from high school.

Izayah. Izayah, a senior, was an 18-year-old Hispanic male living with his mother and stepfather. He was an avid reader and sometimes writer. With spiked hair and several lip piercings, he was not afraid to assert his individuality. He planned to graduate at the semester and fulfill his dream of returning to California for an internship in the recording

industry. Throughout the study, he worked more than 40 hours a week after school and weekends to put money away for the big move, and he still managed to find an hour a day to feed his love of reading. School, however, often merited lower priority, resulting in late assignments and reduced credit. At progress report time, Izayah's grades dipped so low that he told me his stepfather threatened to kick him out of the house. He earned a 2.62 GPA during his final semester, and he achieved a "meets standard" level in reading on his most recent state assessment.

Riley. Riley, a senior, was a 17-year-old white female living with both parents. She was passionate about both reading and writing, spending many hours each week engaging in literacy activities. She wrote in a variety of forms, including poetry, short stories, journals, and fan fiction. As a reader, she loved many different genres, favoring mystery, fantasy, and romance books. Riley was not enrolled in an English class during the study, but she was scheduled to take Senior Composition the following semester. She was the only special education student in the study. Riley received "meets standard" in reading on her most recent state assessment, and she earned a 1.71 GPA during the semester.

Sarah. Sarah, a junior, was a 16-year-old white female living with her mother and stepfather. She developed her love of reading relatively late, at the end of middle school. When we first spoke early in the school year, she had just completed a number of books, but had yet to find a new one that interested her. Each time I checked in with Sarah, she still had not found a book she wanted to read. Finally, in early November, I loaned her a copy of a book I thought she would enjoy. That started a reading frenzy that took her through the end of the semester. When I returned from the National Council of Teachers

of English (NCTE) conference before Thanksgiving, I had an extensive new collection of Young Adult literature. I brought a bag of books for Sarah to borrow and was amazed at how she devoured them, often completing a 300 or 400 page book every couple of days. Sarah was the only student in the study to reach the "exemplary" level in reading on the state assessment, and she received a 3.43 GPA, the second highest of any student participant.

Dave. Dave, a freshman, was a 15-year-old African-American male living with his great aunt. He enjoyed both writing and reading. After his parents were arrested when he was 7 years old, he survived the foster care system before being adopted by an aunt. Dave, both loud and gregarious, freely participated in English class and did not hesitate to stop the teacher if he did not understand. Being successful in school was important to him. He had written journals and stories about his experiences in foster care and continued to write about issues in his life through journals, stories, poetry, and song lyrics. While he loved to read, he struggled sometimes to find a book that interested him. During the course of the study, I loaned him two YA novels from my personal library. He frequently stopped by my office to say hello or to grab a treat from my candy dish. Dave reached "exceeds standard" in reading on the state assessment, and he earned a 3.13 GPA for the semester.

Lexie. Lexie, a senior, was a 17-year-old white female living with foster parents. She was both a writer and reader outside of school. As a victim of sexual abuse, she resided in the foster care system when we first met at the start of the school year. She frequently wrote poetry and song lyrics related to the abuse. Lexie struggled to maintain a full load of classes, but she desperately wanted to be the first in her family to graduate

from high school and then complete training to be a certified nursing assistant in a retirement facility. In mid-November, she left the foster care system and returned home, necessitating a change in schools within the district. By early December, she had moved in with a new boyfriend and stopped attending classes, expressing her intent to drop out of school because she was failing too many classes to graduate on time. She reached the "meets standard" level in reading on her most recent state assessment.

Marcus. Marcus, a freshman, was a 14-year-old African-American male living with both parents. He had been an avid reader for many years, enjoying fantasy, science fiction, and adventure stories. Although he was quiet in class, he worked hard to get his work completed. He wanted to be a good student. Marcus earned the "meets standard" level in reading on the state assessment, and earned a 2.57 GPA for his first semester in high school.

Brittany. Brittany, a sophomore, was a 15-year-old white female living with both parents. She was an avid journal writer but a reluctant reader. She used journal writing to process issues in her life as a way to deal with problems. When it came to reading, however, she said she usually fell asleep. She often appeared bored and distracted during English class. Her grades continued to slip throughout the fall. Although she reached the "exceeds standard" level in reading on the state assessment, her GPA was only 1.38 for the semester. Right before finals, Brittany told me she had just been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and would soon start taking medication. She was also going to be tested for a learning disability.

Simone. Simone, a junior, was a 16-year-old African American female living with her mother. She was both a reader and a writer. She participated in school sports,

and a college sweatshirt and sweatpants were her usual attire. Simone decided to challenge herself with a pre-AP English class, but halfway through first semester, she began having doubts. She planned to stick with the class for the entire year, but often appeared bored in class, even falling asleep at times. Still, Simone opted to take two additional English classes as electives during the school year – Mythology and Creative Writing. She became a frequent visitor in my office during lunch and after school. Although she earned a 3.14 GPA for the semester, she only reached the "approaching standard" level in reading on her most recent state assessment.

Rakeesha. Rakeesha, a senior, was a 17-year-old African American female living with both parents. She was also a reader and a writer. She enrolled in two creative writing classes and had two poems published in the school's literary magazine the previous year. Rakeesha had been working her way through a list of classic literary novels she received in her pre-AP English class the year before. She worked hard to balance a challenging course load, cheerleading, peer mentoring, and an after school job. She was often up until 1 a.m. completing homework for her classes. Rakeesha earned a "meets standard" in reading on her state assessment, and she had a 3.75 GPA, the highest of any student participant.

Chad. Chad, a freshman, was a 15-year-old white male living with adoptive parents. He was both a reader and a writer outside of school. Chad admitted he had anger management problems, and he used journal writing as a way to record his feelings about people and events in his life instead of fighting. He was also an avid reader, preferring mysteries, love stories, and vampire tales. He juggled time spent reading and writing with enrollment in a Junior ROTC program at school, playing guitar in a band, and coaching

basketball in an out-of-school league. Chad was an average student, but he had no interest in attending college in the future. He reached the "approaching standard" level in reading on the state assessment, and he had a 2.63 GPA during his first semester in high school.

Researcher Perspective

Qualitative researchers adhere to a constructionist epistemology in which "meaning is not discovered, but constructed" (Crotty, 1998). The researcher is the instrument that shapes the process of qualitative research, and she brings her values and biases as well as tacit and explicit knowledge to any study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that naturalistic research draws on methods that are natural within human activities, involving listening, speaking and reading. These include, interviews, observations, and document analysis, which are all included in this study.

My background as an educator shaped my choice of topic for this study, and it provided the lens through which I observed classrooms and interpreted interactions with student participants. As an instructional coach, I have spent seven years working with teachers in the school district in which this study was conducted. I have observed hundreds of classrooms at the secondary level and been saddened by the number of students who disengage from the learning process. As a former high school English teacher, I have a personal interest in wanting all students to develop a love for reading and writing. The selection of my study site also stems from my knowledge of the school district and its demographics as an urban education center.

Data Collection

This study utilized three types of qualitative data collection: interviews, observations, and documents. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured

interviews; classroom observations and student writing samples provided supplemental data and support. Data collection spanned a four-month academic semester (September to December) at Truman West High School.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary method of data collection in order to reveal students' motivations for engaging in literacy activities both at home and at school. Patton (2002) states that the purpose of interviewing is "to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective…to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (p. 341). My initial in-depth interview with each student lasted 35 minutes to an hour and a half. The interview explored the types of reading and/or writing students were doing at home and at school. It also asked students to reflect on their reasons for participating in reading and/or writing experiences as well as their self-efficacy and competency beliefs associated with these skill-based activities. Interviews were video- and audio-recorded and transcribed soon after each session. Primary interviews all took place in my office or a room adjacent to my office before school, during study hall, or after school.

An interview guide was used to ensure continuity of subject matter across all interviews related to the research questions. This approach outlines specific topics that the researcher wishes to explore more deeply while still allowing for a conversational style (Patton, 2002). Within this qualitative framework, Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that the researcher must "respect how the participant frames and structures the responses…the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it" (p. 101). In this study, questions were open-ended, allowing students the freedom to offer a variety of different responses; these were followed by

more specific questions to explore new ideas surfaced by participants or to clarify meaning for the researcher. More directed questioning was used to elicit additional information from several participants who did not respond well to open-ended questions.

Initial interviews were followed by informal interviews at various times throughout the course of the semester while classroom observations were taking place. These interviews were often scheduled in advance or occasionally surfaced through impromptu conversations. As relationships developed with participants, a few students in the study stopped by my office regularly to chat, share writing, eat lunch, or "hang out." In the course of these conversations, notes were usually taken after, rather than during, the interaction, which is common in such interviews (Patton, 2002). Most students were only seen in more formal settings, such as during scheduled interviews and class observations. Some follow-up interviews were audio-recorded while others were simply captured through researcher notes. Follow-up interviews took place in my office as well as hallways and classrooms around the school at various times of the day. Patton (2002) calls informal conversational interviews a "major tool of fieldwork" because they allow "maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate" (p. 342).

Observations

A second form of data collection was classroom observations. Marshall and Rossman (2006) note "observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry…used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings" (p. 99). Patton (2002) outlines several advantages to incorporating naturalistic observations into qualitative research. Observations provide researchers with context and allow them

firsthand experience in a setting rather than relying on the report of others. In addition, researchers often see things others miss through their selective perception. In this study, each student participant enrolled in an English class was observed at least six times during the course of the semester in order to collect data on current classroom practice and student behavior in class. Observations were designed to add strength to the study rather than just relying on student reports of the types of activities that were used regularly in their classes or their self-reports of behavior. In two instances, students were enrolled in the same class during the same hour, so observations were conducted simultaneously. One important role of the observations was the generation of additional points of inquiry for informal follow-up interviews with students. Field notes were taken on yellow legal paper with a line drawn down the middle. On the right side, I recorded events as they unfolded in class related to instructional practice; on the left side, I recorded my participants' behavior in class in relation to ongoing activities. Researcher questions and perceptions were noted in brackets to be addressed later in follow-up interviews with participants.

Document Collection

A third form of data collection consisted of student writing samples and classroom assignments. Documents have been underused in qualitative research, yet they are often helpful in yielding a different type of data that is not impacted by the research process (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1998) posits that documents are "the product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world" (p. 126). Documents also offer information that remains stable; they capture some aspect of the past that can be re-examined over time without experiencing

change (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I collected and examined samples of student writing produced at home as well as at school. While the home writing reflected the values students held for engaging in the activity, the school papers illustrated the writing genres present in the school setting. Reviewing documents is a discreet form of data collection, but it is "rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 107). I also collected copies of assignments and took detailed notes about assignments given in English classes observed during fieldwork. The assignments offered a look at the expectations set for students in their English classes, leading to questions regarding both students' value and competency beliefs for the required school work.

Data Collection Management

Early in the research process, it became clear that managing the vast amounts of data from 11 student participants was going to require a detailed organization system. I created several forms to track student demographic information and collection of various types of data as well as to schedule and track more than 50 classroom observations over the course of a four-month semester.

• The Research Study Participant Code List (see Appendix D) identified participant names, codes, sample demographic (reader, writer or both), English class, gender, age, grade, and race.

• The Progress Chart (see Appendix E) listed students by code and left places to check off receipt of the consent form, completion of the in-depth interview, completion of interview transcription, collection of a writing sample, and completion of each of six observations.

• The Observation Dates Chart (see Appendix F) listed students by code and recorded dates for each of the six observations for each student; this helped me select when to observe students as I tried to space visits throughout the semester.

• The Observation Schedule (see Appendix G) provided a grid of class hours and English class(es) tracked for each student in order to determine when they could be observed during each class period of the day.

• An Observation Log (see Appendix H) was created for each student. It provided an overview synopsis of classroom observations. The form tracked dates and length of observations, and it provided comments highlighting activities observed during each visit. This provided me with a quick reference sheet for my extensive observation field notes.

Data Analysis

> *"The task of analysis, which makes interpretation possible, requires researchers first to determine how to organize their data and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under study and second, to tell readers what that portrait means" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 147).*

Informal data analysis continued throughout data collection. At the conclusion of each interview and class observation, salient points were jotted on Post-it Notes and saved in a folder. New notes were compared to old ones, offering hints at potential categories. Data collected during in-depth interviews included notes, audio and video recordings, and transcripts of the recordings. Additional thoughts emerging during transcription were also recorded on Post-its and added to the notes folder.

Formal data analysis began after initial interviews were completed. LeCompte (2000) describes five general stages for analysis in qualitative research. The five phases involve: 1) organization of data; 2) sifting data to look for frequency, omission and declaration; 3) creating data sets by assembling groups; 4) creating patterns by grouping sets meaningfully together; and 5) creating an overall description of the problem. In this study, data was organized by unitizing all interview transcripts and observation field notes. This involved identifying individual units of information and printing them on note cards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several thousand units of data were identified in this study. The units for each student were classified into emerging categories, some of which were reflected in ideas from the Post-it Notes folder. As each data unit was examined and given a category designation, other cards were placed in existing categories or new categories were created. Some categories were combined and others had to be broken into subcategories of related information. Cards that seemed irrelevant were placed in a miscellaneous pile for later review.

Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used to review and place cards into categories. Once the properties of each category were determined, rules were created to clarify relationships within and between categories. For example, a category tentatively labeled "therapy" related to one of the intrinsic values students had for engaging in writing outside of school. The rule created for this category became: Students use writing to cope with stressful events in their lives. Unitized notes that did not fit this rule were moved into other categories. Follow-up interviews with students were scheduled to fill in missing information and further develop specific categories. For example, several students initially mentioned using writing as a form of anger management to deal with their stress. This emerging theme was tested with

additional students and eventually became a subcategory of "therapy." The constant comparative method was used to analyze data from each of the 11 student participants. Many of the same categories surfaced among multiple students, while others were unique to specific students.

Once individual case studies were written for each of the students, the unitized cards were combined and reclassified into emerging categories revealing key findings from the full sample of participants. The constant comparative method was used again to review and categorize the cards. During this cross-case analysis, similar categories appeared across individual cases, developing into shared findings representing the full sample. These themes were organized around the research questions: 1) What types of literacy activities are students doing in and out of school? 2) How do student competency and value beliefs for out-of-school literacy practices compare with those for school-based experiences?

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that trustworthiness can be established through a series of approaches. In this study I utilized five approaches to establish trustworthiness: prolonged time in the field, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks. First, prolonged engagement in the field involves the researcher spending a sufficiently long time in the field to take into account misleading or false accounts that might surface in the data. Second, triangulation of data involves using multiple sources of data that can be compared for ambiguities. Third, peer debriefing probes the researcher's biases, and allows the researcher to test emerging ideas. Fourth, negative case analysis requires the researcher to seek cases until there are no exceptions

in the data. Finally, member checks involve testing data, categories, and interpretations with participants for accuracy.

Prolonged Engagement

Prolonged engagement is an important way a researcher establishes trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985),"…prolonged engagement is the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust" (p. 301). I was at the school daily throughout the four-month academic semester. During the course of the study period, I observed more than 50 classes, or an average of three a week. In addition to regular observations in classes, I had frequent encounters with my student participants in various settings at the school, both formal and informal. My presence in classrooms did not result in any distortions in the environment as students were used to seeing me observe classes in my role as an instructional coach. Several times when teachers addressed me while in front of the class, students turned around to look because they had not been aware of my presence in the classroom. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note, "It seems likely that unless the inquirer began as an accepted member of the group or agency being studied, distortions can never be overcome" (p. 302). My background as a member of the school community enabled me to ferret out misleading information that an outsider would not recognize.

Triangulation

Using multiple data sources tests for consistency in findings. Patton (2002) describes four kinds of triangulation that can contribute to validity of qualitative analysis: 1) methods triangulation, which checks consistency of different data collection methods;

2) triangulation of sources, which checks consistency of different data sources within the same method; 3) analyst triangulation, which relies on multiple researchers to review the findings; and 4) theory/perspective triangulation, which uses multiple theories to interpret the data. In this study, I used triangulation of qualitative data sources in order to compare the consistency of information within different qualitative methods. According to Patton (2002), "studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method" (p. 556). Three types of data collection – interviews, observations, and documents – provided a variety of data sources from which to examine student motivations for literacy activities. By using a combination of data collection methods, I was able to reduce the risks inherent in using only one method, and I was able to offer a more complete perspective of my participants and the issue under examination.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing exposes the researcher to probing questions from a trusted colleague who also serves as a devil's advocate to scrutinize emerging themes in the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note "if the inquirer cannot defend the direction in which his or her mind is taking him or her to a questioner, he or she may very well wish to reconsider that position" (p. 308). As themes surfaced from my interviews and observations, I shared my findings with a university colleague who served as my critical friend. She functioned as a sounding board for my developing ideas, asking questions and offering suggestions to further my thought process. She also debriefed my interviews, classroom observations, and final analysis of data.

Negative Case Analysis

Negative case analysis involves checking emerging categories and themes until there are no outliers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As themes emerged in the data, I sought out students from different demographic groups in search of disconfirming cases. For example, information from students with less involvement in school activities who were failing several classes was tested against data from students who were highly involved in extracurricular activities and enrolled in advanced placement classes. While Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledge that zero exceptions are a rigid criterion, they note that a fit of "some reasonable number of cases – even as low, say, as 60 percent…would seem to be substantial evidence of its acceptability" (p. 312).

Member Checks

Lincoln and Guba (1985) call member checks the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. Member checks allow participants to review collected data, interpretations, and conclusions to ensure consistency with what they intended to communicate. Both formal and informal member checks occurred continuously during the study, beginning with interviews. Throughout formal in-depth interviews, I verified information with students to confirm my understanding of the information they shared. Verification of observational data continued through follow-up interviews with students. Emerging themes were also checked with students throughout the semester.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

"We don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it…

or rather, we get educated out of it."

– Ken Robinson, 2010, TED Conference

This chapter reports the results of the investigation through the use of two types of analysis. First, each of the 11 student participants is represented in an individual case study about in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. The within-case analysis was drawn from multiple sources of data collected over the four-month investigative period. Second, cross-case analysis reveals the recurring themes or similarities that are shared by many of the students. Through the use of thick description, it is hoped that these research findings might be transferable to similar students and schools.

The first section examines the literacy practices and motivations of the 11 participating high school students. Each case includes sections on students' home reading and/or writing experiences, confidence as readers and/or writers at home, adult influences, competing activities, school reading, school writing, school literacy confidence, and valuing of school literacy. Additional sections specific to each student are also represented.

The second section explores common themes that exist across participants to provide a more complete representation of adolescent literacy. This section is structured around the study's supporting question about the types of reading and writing students are doing at home and school, and the central inquiry question regarding students'

competency and value beliefs for their literacy activities.

Within-Case Analysis: A Look at 11 Student Readers and Writers

Izayah

I first met Izayah in the freshman division office at school. He was seated in a cushioned bank of chairs to the left of the secretary's desk. I suspected he was in trouble and waiting to see the division principal, but I soon learned he was a senior and one of the office proctors. I unfairly identified Izayah as a kid in trouble because of his appearance: gelled spiky hair, black band T-shirt, two lip piercings, and slumped posture. As I told the secretary about a recent rock concert I attended, Izayah's attention piqued. We struck up a short conversation about the punk music scene in California, since Izayah had lived there and hoped to return after graduation. A few weeks later I saw Izayah again when I stopped by to chat with the secretary. As I told her about my research study, Izayah confided that he loved to read and write at home. He soon became part of my study.

Future goals. I learned quickly that Izayah, 18, was a kid full of ambition. He intended to graduate at the end of the semester and return to California where his father lived. From previous trips to California, he had already arranged a paid two-year internship with a music manager at a recording studio and planned to attend community college to study music production. Izayah told me, "I'm hoping by the time I'm like 26, to be at Capitol Records…I plan to have my name everywhere…Like my goals are the biggest goals you'll ever see in your life. Like, I…by the time I'm 26, I want to be a multi-millionaire."

Izayah's drive and determination extended to completing his final semester of

school. In order to graduate mid-year, Izayah still needed an additional half-credit. He met the requirement through an independent study course in art history. As the bell rang each day signaling the end of regular classes, Izayah headed to the school's Extended Learning Center, an in-school tutoring and credit recovery program, for an additional 45 minutes of school time. Izayah admitted he was less committed as a student his freshman and sophomore years, but he said he now had a meaningful goal to keep him focused. He told me, "It shows me I know I've got to do something to be something. I mean, you can't skip school every day and expect to be a big-time producer just by ditching and going out to eat or going and partying or something. You have to actually work for what you want."

Despite a poor academic performance his first two years of high school, Izayah had since kept his grades at C-level or higher. In English class, he was particularly proud of earning A's and B's. He admitted, though, that he usually expected C's on his writing assignments, but frequently earned higher. "I didn't think [the teachers] would like my work," he said. Midway through the semester, however, Izayah began to experience problems in Senior Composition, a course involving extensive amounts of writing both in and out of class. Although he had no missing assignments, he had received D's on every graded essay up to that point. When first-quarter grades came out, Izayah was upset. He had A's and B's in his other classes, but maintained a D in composition. He told me, "Like I almost got kicked out yesterday 'cuz I brought home grades, and I had that D, and my dad's (stepdad) like, 'Well, you're about to get kicked out.' And I pleaded with him, and I was like, 'Dude, I'll get it up! I'll get it up!'" While he said his stepdad would be satisfied with a C, Izayah said it would take a B to make him personally happy. Even

when he was given assignments he did not like, he still completed them. “There’s always something in life that you’re not going to like, so why ruin your chances at succeeding in life because you don’t like something.”

A reader at home. Izayah made a concerted effort to fit reading into his busy schedule. After a full day of classes and an extra 45-minute independent study each day, Izayah headed to work for a 5 p.m. to midnight shift at a fast food chain. He said he needed to earn enough money to move to California, rent an apartment, and pay for school. Despite this schedule, Izayah reported that he read about an hour a day with 30 minutes squeezed in on his way to work and another 30 minutes during his break times.

Izayah preferred fantasy books because they offered “something you don’t see every day. Something you don’t hear about every day…in a fantasy book, people ride on dragons, you know, people casting spells on you or saying a word and a tree comes down and grabs you, and stuff like that.” He cited the *Eragon* series by Christopher Paolini as one of his favorites while he was currently reading *Artemis Fowl* by Eoin Colfer. He noted that if a book was good enough, he would reread it. “Like Eragon,” he said, “I’ve read that one like three times.” Occasionally he branched to different genres, naming *A Child Called “It”* by Dave Pelzer as a favorite and, “one of the saddest, the saddest book you’ll ever read in your life.” He confided that he only initially read the book because his mom had read it and told him he couldn’t read it. “After she was done, I found it in the basement, and I took it to my room, and I read it all that night,” he said. He went on to read two more books by the author. When selecting a new book, he said he started by looking at the cover and the title and then reading the back of the book for a plot synopsis. “If it sounds interesting, I’ll read it,” he said.

Reading as an escape. Izayah enjoyed fantasy books because they provided a different reality from that which he experienced every day. Between the ages of 12 and 16, he lived in California with his biological father, who was a truck driver. His father was gone for days or sometimes a week at a time, leaving Izayah home alone to take care of himself. During those years, Izayah turned to books for companionship. He said reading offered an escape from his current situation. "It was really depressing being alone," he said. "And books…it was like someone was there."

Home reading confidence. When selecting books for himself, Izayah had confidence in his ability to complete the reading, and he wasn't afraid to tackle challenging books if they interested him. He called himself a speed reader, noting he could complete a 300-page book in one day. If a book was complex, he slowed down, but if he was fully engaged, "I just want to know more, read more, and understand more. I'm like, 'what's next, what's next.'" Even when he once came across a very challenging book where "like every word was like 20 letters long," he continued reading and finished the book because he was "hooked" on the plot. But, he admitted, "I didn't understand half of it."

A writer at home. Izayah wrote both poetry and song lyrics about his life and "the outer worlds, like where I would go in my head if I could." He began writing poetry his freshman year, putting pen to paper on a daily basis. In the last year, however, life circumstances at home and the need to work more hours forced Izayah to scale back his writing time.

He categorized his poetry as "romantic" and "weird" with many inspirations for poetry and song lyrics coming from girlfriends, ex-girlfriends, or friends. Some of the

writing reflected anger, some happiness, and some sadness or loneliness. All of the topics stemmed from his personal experiences. He noted that inspiration often appeared at strange times, including in class. "[The teacher] would give us a lecture, and I would just be there listening to my music and ideas were floating into my head, and I'd just write a lot." He said he had hundreds of poems stuck in a notebook somewhere in his closet, but he had not pulled them out recently.

When he lived in California, he was lead singer and played guitar in a band, and he shared writing duties with the entire group. He said writing together was different, but it was better because people all had good ideas that grew with suggestions from others. He said, "Then another person is like, you know what would be good with that, this would. And then you're all like 'yeah, it really would.' And so it makes it like, a thousand times better whenever you get everyone else's ideas into it."

Writing as therapy. Writing provided Izayah with an outlet to express his emotions about people and situations in his life. He said, "If you have anger in you, then just write it down. You don't have to go around screaming to the world or shoot up a school or something to get your feelings out… I never had anyone to talk to…" Over the summer he wrote two songs at the urging of his girlfriend. He said one, a love song, was "about my life and what I've been through and everything, and how I'm inspired by my girl. She keeps telling me to go on, to keep doing what I want to do." The other song, about a girl from grade school, was written as a rap after he listened to Eminem. He described it this way:

> It was about this girl that always got picked on and…just this girl back in like fifth grade that I used to know. She was always getting picked on, and

finally, one day, a big dude stood up to one of the dudes that was picking on her and just…she just has had a different life ever since.

Home writing confidence. Izayah's confidence in his home writing was strong for poetry, but less secure for song lyrics, which he had not written as often. Feedback from others also affected his self-efficacy at times. He said he no longer showed his writing to his older sister or his cousins because of their previous negative comments. When considering his poetry, he said, "I like it. I mean – me, myself – I like it. If I have a feeling that someone is going to look at it and be like, 'No, this is terrible, you know, you're such a sap.' And then, you know, if I hear from them, it would kind of lower my confidence." Izayah told me he never really saw himself as an author because he did not write stories. When I asked why poetry did not count, he told me, "That's an artist. That's art. But an author is a true person who can sit down and write a lot all at once."

Izayah was especially low in confidence related to grammatical issues. His focus on grammar related to the most common type of feedback he received on his school papers in which mistakes were clearly marked in red pen. When I asked if he cared that much about grammar in his personal writing, he said, "In a way…sometimes. It really matters…if it causes you to not understand what's happening, then it really matters…" When I asked Izayah if he ever revised his poetry or songs, he said, "Sometimes, if I know myself that it will make it better, then yeah."

Sharing writing with others. Despite a track record of negative comments from family members, Izayah felt comfortable sharing his poetry with peers he trusted. In his former school he joined a poetry and music club called The Misfits of Society. He trusted them because, "I knew they wouldn't judge me. Like if people are going to judge me,

then there ain't no use talking to them." The group built a trusting relationship among members by sharing personal stories upfront. They were careful in offering constructive feedback for improvement rather than being overly critical, creating a safe environment for all members. Izayah explained:

> Whenever I told them my story, they were like, 'Oh my God. I never knew people could have it that bad and then make it so good.' And so pretty much whenever I wrote, they knew me. So I felt confident with them that they would give me the feedback I need to be a better person and be a better writer. And they really tried. They didn't do nothing like, 'This poem's terrible.' Every time they were like, 'This is a great poem, just do this and make it better.'

Although Izayah did not always take the advice offered by his peers, the sharing experience made him a more confident writer.

Adult influences. Izayah's parents played an important role in developing his love of reading through role modeling and providing regular access to books. His biological father encouraged him to read when he was only 5 or 6, but Izayah resisted. A few years later, however, his mother married someone who was an avid reader. Izayah became interested in reading the fantasy books his stepdad left around the house. The first book he secretly borrowed from his stepdad was too difficult for him and a staggering 800 pages in length. Izayah, who was only about 9 years old at the time, explained that it took him many months to read, "but I liked it a lot, and so I kept reading and kept sneaking [my stepdad's] books into my room." After two years, he had a shelf full of books he had read, which he finally revealed to his stepdad. His parents also

bought him books for his birthday and Christmas, which he added to his shelves. He noted that his favorite Christmas gift was a collector's edition of *Eragon*. He said, "Me and my stepdad, like, never really got along, but books and games we had in common."

A teacher sparked Izayah's interest in poetry when he started high school. After a poetry project was assigned in class, his English teacher offered positive feedback and encouraged him to continue. He said, "I challenged myself. I was like, well, mine is going to rhyme, and it has to be this and that. And so, I wrote it, and [the teacher] was just awestruck. And I was like, well, that was pretty fun. I should do more." Izayah discovered he had a talent, so he eagerly continued writing on his own outside of school.

Competing activities. Work and school claimed most of Izayah's waking hours, especially during the semester I spoke with him, so his available time to engage in leisure reading and writing activities was even more limited. When I met Izayah at the start of the school year, he managed to squeeze in an hour of reading every day and time for writing on occasion. By the end of the semester, however, he was working a 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift on his job, sleeping only three hours a night, and rarely finding time to read. In class, he guzzled Monster energy drinks to stay awake. He said, "I've been busy and working doubles hardcore, like nonstop working and school." Instead of reading during his breaks at work, he began to take naps. The previous school year, when his parents had lost their jobs, he supported the family for a short time by working long hours at a fast-food restaurant. He said, "We was in bad times, so I was paying bills for the family…I was providing. I ended up giving like $15,000, 'cuz I was working way too many hours than I should have."

Although television was never important to Izayah, he admitted to loving video

games, even though he rarely had time to play them. He was also passionate about drawing but rarely found time to do that, either. When he finally had some leisure time at home, his family pressured him to spend it with them. He said, "You know I'm never home, so my parents are always telling me, 'You need to spend time with the family. You're moving out in January. You don't love us no more…'"

School reading. During the course of his high school career, Izayah attended four schools in three states. He could not recall much of the reading he had been assigned during his first three years of high school because most of it did not interest him. He remembered reading Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, which he thought was "okay," and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which he called "mumbo jumbo." He noted that Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was "probably one of the best ones I read at school, " but he couldn't articulate why he liked the book. While in 10th grade at a school in Texas, he had the opportunity to read books and stories from his favorite genre – fantasy. He recalled especially enjoying the story "The World on the Turtle's Back," an Iroquois myth about creation. He was so captivated by the story that he sought out similar stories to read on his own. He said, "I'd never heard of [the myth], so it was really interesting. So I went on and kept reading all of these religious views on all of these cultures I never knew about…"

Rather than assign novels to complete at home, Izayah's teachers had students complete all reading during class. He noted the "popcorn" method as commonly used and particularly frustrating. This technique involves students reading small parts of the text aloud and then calling on others to read the following sections. Izayah said, "I hated that one. You always got mixed up. People would be doing weird voices on one part, and

other people, they'd be monotone on the other, and then another person, they'd be like quiet so you could barely hear what they're saying…" His biggest frustration, however, was the pace of the reading. As a speed reader, he found himself reading faster than his classmates and becoming confused. He explained, "You can hear them reading, but you're already past them, so like you're double reading. It gets confusing, so you just have to sit there and listen to what they say. Like I can't even open the book because I end up reading and then hear them read and…it's like, I can't do it." When he became particularly frustrated, he often asked his teacher if he could sit in the hallway and read by himself.

Currently in his senior year, Izayah was only required to take a semester of English. He chose a popular course, Senior Composition, which prepares students for the writing challenges they might encounter in college. Students are given short essays, news commentary, or poems to respond to in writing; in general, however, they are not assigned any reading in the class.

School writing. Writing was not frequently assigned in Izayah's English classes aside from his special elective course, Senior Composition. Despite attending high school in three different states, his experiences in English class were similar: Reading was the primary focus with occasional essays or poetry assigned. In Senior Composition, however, the majority of the 90-minute class periods were spent writing, responding in a journal to questions, articles or various topics.

On one day when I observed Izayah in class, students had 25 minutes to read and respond to an article the teacher had given them. After Izayah read the article, he flipped back through the reading several times as he wrote his response. The teacher led a

discussion about students' responses and then immediately gave students a new text to read and assigned another journal entry. This structure represented a typical class period in Senior Composition. Izayah also frequently had essays assigned as homework, but he admitted he never actually took them home to complete because of his busy work schedule. He said, "I either go and do it in that class and get it all done or go to my other classes and get it done."

Although students wrote daily, the teacher offered little actual writing instruction. At the end of the semester, Izayah told me he was still unsure of how to write a good essay. I told him that was what he was supposed to be learning in class. He said, "Yeah, kind of. He pretty much just tells us what to write about, but not how to write it." The teacher offered experiential activities rather than direct instruction to teach aspects of writing. For example, in one lesson students were seated back-to back and told to create miniature sculptures using seven toothpicks and seven pieces of gummy-type candy. One student built a structure and then had to talk the second student through the process verbally to create the same structure. When finished, the roles were reversed. The teacher discussed with students the difficulty in following the directions that were given when they were confusing or used vague language. This activity culminated with the assignment of a process paper in which students had to write step-by-step instructions explaining how to complete something. In another activity, students were given a photograph to describe in writing. After switching papers, they had to identify the photograph described in their peer's paper from those on display around the room. The photographs were all from the same landscape setting, so they were difficult to match. The lesson emphasized the importance of students adding more detail in their writing.

Izayah received little or no feedback on the writing he produced in Senior Composition. Mistakes were usually circled, and a few indecipherable words were often written in the margins. A grade out of a possible 100 points was written at the end of the paper. On several occasions, the teacher used a Six Traits rubric to score writing, but there were few, if any, personal comments written. When I asked Izayah why he didn't like writing essays, he told me he "sucked" at it; specifically, he told me his grammar was bad. He was unable to articulate specific areas of his writing that were weak. The teacher told students they could revise a few assignments, but they had to meet with him first to discuss the paper before or after school or during advisory time. The week before finals I entered the division office where Izayah was a proctor, and he said he had something to share. He was smiling broadly, so I knew it would be good news. He told me he received a 90 percent on his research paper for Senior Composition that was handed back that day. Just the week before, he had been concerned about failing the class, so he was very proud of his accomplishment. Later when I looked over his graded paper, I noticed there were no comments, good or bad, anywhere on the assignment. The teacher had circled some grammatical errors and written a 90/100 at the end. Izayah could not tell me why this paper was better than the earlier ones he had earned D's on.

School literacy confidence. Izayah felt confident about some of the work assigned in school, especially when it more closely mirrored the types of reading and writing he preferred at home. While he found most of the reading assigned in school boring, he said he did not have problems with comprehension. The exception, which he was quick to point out, was Shakespeare as he struggled with the sentence structure and wordplay. He said, "There is no confidence there. None at all." In writing, he was

confident at the start of the semester with poetry and with essays that allowed him to express his opinions on topics of interest, including books he enjoyed. Still, he did not think his writing was as strong as other students in Senior Composition when he compared his writing with theirs. He explained, "Because I hear all these other people using all these really cool words that I've never heard in my life, and so it's like I should have used that word, but what does it mean?" As the semester progressed, however, he continued to receive D's on his writing in Senior Composition. His confidence for essay writing declined as he explained his D in class later in the semester by saying, "I'm bad at essays. I can write music. I can write poems…but I can't write essays."

Valuing school literacy. Izayah's motivation in school was fueled by utility values; he believed success in school would help him with his larger life goals. He told me he always completed the reading assigned in class, with the exception of Shakespeare, because he wanted to succeed. He explained, "Like, I wanted to be better…well, that makes me feel bad. I was going to say I wanted to be better than my parents…that's what they always tell me, but that makes me feel bad. I want to be more successful and not have the same situations (with no money)." Izayah believed that completing assignments in class, even when he disliked them, would help him earn higher grades, which could lead to scholarships, better test scores, and acceptance to a more prestigious college. Specifically, he chose Senior Composition from a list of other possible English electives because he thought it would help him prepare for college. He did not enjoy any of the work he was asked to do in the class, but he said, "It has improved my writing skills. I can write essays better, so it's good in ways." When class time was wasted, however, or Izayah did not see value in a lesson or discussion, he disengaged by drawing, completing

other homework, texting on his phone, or talking with students seated near him.

Izayah cared about his progress in class. When papers were returned, he eagerly looked them over carefully before sliding them into his binder. During class discussions, he contributed on occasion, but he mostly listened. He tracked speakers by looking in their direction and chimed in with a joke or funny comment when appropriate. He actively participated in all activities and completed assignments given in class.

Marcus

Marcus, 14, was a quiet boy who almost seemed to be invisible in class. He worked very hard not to draw attention to himself in any way. Perhaps that was why he seemed surprised when I approached him about being in my study. A counselor at the school had told me Marcus had participated in a book group with her the previous year in middle school. I had visited Marcus' freshman English class to recruit students, but he did not volunteer to participate. However, when I spoke with him privately, he readily agreed to discuss his reading. He told me he was an avid reader, but he did not like to write at home. His voice was quiet and his answers very brief. I had to strain at times to hear him.

A reader at home. Marcus was open to reading just about any type of book, but he preferred fantasy, science fiction, and adventure stories. He rattled off several recent books he enjoyed: *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, *Raven's Gate* by Anthony Horowitz, and *Maximum Ride* by James Patterson He said he enjoyed the books because the plots kept him guessing from the start. He also liked the imagery that the books created through detailed description. He said, "It's more like when I read it, I can imagine what's going on, like if I get really good into the book, I can start thinking about what that

person is going through, start visualizing what they see."

Marcus was a regular reader, spending about an hour every other day with a book and regularly visiting the public library. He preferred going to the library because he did not have the money to buy books for himself. He usually finished his books within a month or two, but he was always looking for new books during weekly library trips. He said he asked for book suggestions from the librarians, although occasionally he also chose books recommended by friends. When selecting a book, Marcus said he started by looking at the front cover and the back of the book to see if the book interested him. If it looked promising, he started reading the first chapter. He noted that he did not like books that started too slowly and took a long time to get to the action. He said, "I just see if I can go to the library and check it out for a little while. If it doesn't grab me by the end of two weeks, it's just not the book for me."

Reading as an escape. Marcus enjoyed the peacefulness of reading that allowed him to "get away from it all." He preferred to read in his room so that he could completely focus on the stories. He said he liked that books were a type of escape from issues going on in his life. He explained, "You know like, there's like issues at school and stuff you don't really want to think about…just pick up a book and start reading."

Reading to learn. Marcus gained a sense of personal accomplishment through reading outside of class, and he believed it helped him academically. He saw a utility value to reading, attributing his higher grades in middle school directly to his additional time spent with books. He said, "I have to say reading really helped…it helped me in all my classes 'cuz when I got into the habit of reading a book, I felt more committed ….when I start it, I finish it." He also had an attainment value for reading, identifying

himself as a reader after a number of years of struggling in elementary school. He liked to challenge himself, and he felt a sense of pride every time he completed a book. He said, "If I really read the book, a real thick book, and get done with it, I feel like I'm the king of the world."

Adult influences. Both teachers and parents played a role in developing Marcus into a reader. In elementary school, he struggled with reading. He had difficulty staying focused, and he often fell asleep while reading. A teacher in fourth grade began keeping Marcus inside during lunch recess to work with him one-on-one. He said she kept him focused on his reading and asked him questions as he read to make sure he comprehended the text. When he read too quickly, she made him slow down and draw scenes from the books to help him remember what he read. She helped him get excited about reading, and she helped him identify books that interested him. After that, he became a regular reader.

Marcus had reading role models at home in both his mother and his older sister. He said watching his mom read frequently and become excited about books inspired him to read more often as well. "When you want to ask her a question, she's like, wait a minute, let me finish this [in a book]," he said with a laugh. His sister, who was an avid reader, also encouraged him to continue reading. Moreover, Marcus' mother told him reading could help him improve his grades, which were important to him. She provided access to good books through weekly family trips to the library for him and his two sisters.

Home reading confidence. When at home, Marcus felt confident as a reader most of the time because he could select his own books, and he had the authority to

abandon a book for any reason. He said vocabulary sometimes made a book too difficult, but he was more willing to stick with a challenging book if he liked it. He admitted to encountering books on his own that were too difficult to read. When I asked him what he usually did, he said, "I stop reading them and find a book more at my level."

Competing activities. The usual activities, such as homework and television, often interfered with time Marcus would have spent reading for leisure. Marcus was not involved in any school sports or clubs during the first semester of high school when I spoke with him. He said homework sometimes took up his time, but he also tried to complete it at school when he could. Although he did not spend a lot of time with television, he admitted watching certain shows several times a week. When asked about time with friends, he said, "I don't really hang out with friends that much." Marcus abandoned his reading during the summer due to his busy schedule with many activities centered on his church. When the school year started again, however, he resumed his reading.

School reading. Marcus somewhat enjoyed the reading he had been asked to do in his English classes in middle school and the start of high school. He said, "I like the fact that some of the stories were really interesting, and some of them were like historical books to remind you about the past and what happened back then." In middle school, however, Marcus said he never encountered any books that he thought were too difficult, and he was never required to take books home because all reading was completed in class. In ninth grade, he started the year reading short stories exclusively in class, but later in the semester, he was assigned to read parts of *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee as homework. Marcus said he enjoyed hearing the teacher read at times, but he

usually preferred to read to himself. He also appreciated the chance to take reading home to share with his family, especially his older sister, a senior at the school, because he could discuss the literature with them. He said, "When I take it home, I'm able to read it out loud to the family, and like when I get back, I'm able to say like this happened in this chapter, and that happened on that page."

Class discussions about the stories and the novel involved extensive teacher talk. Marcus' teacher attempted to hook students in one lesson about courage from *To Kill A Mockingbird* by asking students whom they knew who was courageous. Several students volunteered different occupations. The teacher went on to define courage in the novel and read a passage from the book. As the lecture dragged on for more than 30 minutes, the teacher had to stop several times to tell the class to quiet down. Marcus sat quietly during the discussion and did not participate.

School writing. Grammar instruction was a central component of Marcus' English class with daily grammar lessons lasting up to 30 minutes each period. Typical lessons involved the teacher putting a worksheet on the overhead projector with a new grammar topic. He discussed the relevant rules while students took notes, and then he went through several examples. Students were assigned the rest of the worksheet as homework. Lessons included parts of speech, sentence construction, punctuation, and context clues. At the start of the next class period, the teacher circulated the room checking students' worksheets for completion.

Students were often restless during the grammar lessons, but Marcus took notes in his binder as instructed and often continued working on the grammar homework long after the teacher had moved on to the rest of the day's lesson. Marcus sat quietly in his

seat in every class period in which he was observed. During one lesson on grammar, a girl in the front asked the teacher, “When are we ever going to use this in our lifetime?” The teacher responded, “Are you ever going to write?” The girl told him, “No.” The teacher said, “Then you’ll never use this in your lifetime.” Another day, when the grammar lesson ran long, the class began to get restless. The teacher told them, “I’ve got you for 15 more minutes.” A boy blurted out, “Mr. S, don’t torture us.” While many students seemed bored by the extensive grammar study, Marcus was more approving. He said, “It’s good. It is good. It like brings it back, and keeps you thinking, trying to remember the stuff you already know.”

Marcus completed most of his required work, but his class as a whole had a number of students in academic trouble. One day while I was observing, the teacher told me he was having a bit of a rebellion by some students who were failing. He warned me he might have to “deal with this” that day. Near the end of the semester, the teacher asked students to take out their compound/complex sentence worksheets to be checked. Marcus flipped through his notebook, looked over at the girl next to him to check which assignment it was, and then closed his binder. He did not have the assignment. After checking for student work, the teacher told students he was disappointed that so few of them had the assignment completed. During another class, the teacher noted that students had complained about their grades, but he held up the assignments he had just collected and told them he only had five out of a class of 24 students present. He gave them a speech about how high school demands rigor and a challenging curriculum. But he added, “There is still lots of opportunity out there [to bring up their grades].”

Although grammar instruction continued as a central focus in class, students

began writing more during the second half of the semester. While reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*, students were given a poem about courage and had to work with a partner to substitute names for characters in the novel to fit the metaphors and imagery in the poem. Also with the novel, students worked in groups to create a newscast for the time period, requiring the writing of several different types of news reports related to the plot. Students received ongoing instruction in Six Traits writing, and their book study of *To Kill A Mockingbird* culminated in a five-paragraph compare and contrast essay. The final writing of the semester involved a short four-paragraph essay discussing evidence presented in the movie *Twelve Angry Men*. When initial student drafts were not up to standard, the teacher took students through expectations in each body paragraph of a sample paper, showing the specific details that were included and pointing out transition words.

School literacy confidence. Marcus said he felt confident in his ability to complete the reading assigned in his English class. He said, "I feel like really good because I could remember more of the story. I guess it's more confident for me because I used to forget stuff, and now that I'm able to remember all that we read, it's really good." Successful completion of school assigned reading added to Marcus' competency beliefs that he could be successful in the future. Just as he did for home reading, Marcus said he felt like "king of the world" when he finished a book for school because "most of the books at school really don't grab you by the gut, so, once I've finished a book that's not really me…it makes me more confident about reading." Marcus also entered high school with confidence in his writing ability from a string of successful assignments in middle school. He said, "I got good grades on the writing. Real good…I had B's…"

Valuing school literacy. Marcus held intrinsic, attainment, and utility values for the literacy activities he participated in at school. He was motivated to complete school reading to earn a good grade, but more importantly, he was genuinely interested in the content. He said, "I want to know what happens in the end [of the book]. I really want to see what happens next." During class discussions about reading, however, Marcus remained silent. He did not participate, but he appeared to listen as he turned toward the teacher or students when they spoke. He never offered a comment or question in front of the class, but he was not afraid to speak with the teacher before or after class. He also did not socialize with other students in the class.

On writing assignments, Marcus focused on completing his work to earn good grades because he cared how other people viewed him as a student, including his mother. He said, "It really, really impresses other people that I know a lot….[and] to make my mom proud." When paired with other students in his class, Marcus worked hard to stay focused on the assignment even if others were off task. During one observation, Marcus worked in a group of four students to complete a poem related to *To Kill A Mockingbird.* He sat quietly in his desk, looking at the assignment sheet while members of his group continued to talk and joke around. A girl in his group combed a boy's hair; another boy read the school newspaper. Marcus kept his head down, writing. During another project, Marcus was assigned to a group with two students who rarely completed schoolwork. One boy banged his pencils like drum sticks on his desk while the girl in the group walked into class with only 20 minutes remaining. Marcus continued to work on the assignment alone. When he had questions, he frequently raised his hand to clarify with the teacher.

Brittany

As I was meeting with a teacher after class one day, Brittany, 15, asked if I was still looking for students who liked to write because she was interested in being part of my study. In an effort to recruit students, I had visited a number of English classes looking for avid readers and writers. Brittany heard the pitch twice – once in her sophomore English class and once in her elective creative writing class. She was a marginal student who was not involved in school activities, but she was eager to talk about her writing. When I asked her how she felt about school, she said, "I like coming and seeing all of my friends, but I don't like all my classes. Like, it's not necessarily the class, it's the work." Brittany struggled academically in most of her classes.

I had the opportunity to observe Brittany in both her regular sophomore English class and her elective creative writing class. In both classes, she seemed disinterested, even though she often told me otherwise. At the end of the semester, right before the start of finals, Brittany shared some news. Her mother suspected she might have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) after reading about some of the symptoms. She took Brittany to a psychologist, and he concurred; she was expected to start on medication during the winter break. She said the doctor told her she might have a learning disability as well. Brittany's mother was working with the school to have her tested the following semester. Brittany seemed untroubled by the diagnosis, hopeful that medication might help her focus more easily in school.

Future goals. Although Brittany was only a sophomore, she already had long-term goals for her future. More immediately, she wanted to complete high school, but then she hoped to continue her education at a local university in order to become a

registered nurse. Her plans were partly her own, but they were also heavily influenced by her parents. She explained:

> Well, like my parents have always pushed me, like, encouraged me to go to college and stuff because they want it to be easier for me when I get out to go get a job because my dad never completed high school because they had me when they were in high school, so my mom went and finished high school and then she went to college, and my dad never went…He was just never a school person, so they want me to be, like, interested in school and go to college and finish and make something of myself.

She said her parents sat her down to explain the difference a college education could make. They told her if they both lost their jobs, it would be easier for her mother, with a college degree, to find a new job than her father, without even a diploma. Her mother would have more opportunities and more choices. Despite disliking most of the academic aspects of school, Brittany said she understood why graduating was important for her future.

A writer at home. Brittany wrote poetry as well as entries in a diary about her feelings and the events happening in her life. She noted that she had always kept a diary "ever since I could write," beginning in second or third grade. It wasn't until seventh grade that she began writing poetry as well. She said of her poetry, "Some of them are about, like, love or whatever's on my mind at the time. Like…if I'm thinking about death, like of my grandparents or something, I'll put that into a poem somehow." She used her diary to process events when she was "stressed out." Brittany secured her writing in a big pink binder with dividers for her diary, poems, and drawings. In previous

years, Brittany had written every day for up to an hour. As life became more hectic this year, she lamented that she was writing much less often.

Writing as therapy. Although Brittany enjoyed writing, it served a practical purpose in her life as well. She used writing to process her problems related to school and home. She said, "It relieves me of my stress instead of like yelling or something. It's an easier way, like, out, kind of…when I get in fights with my parents and stuff." Writing also provided Brittany with a voice and an outlet when she couldn't talk to people about problems. For example, Brittany said she couldn't talk to her parents about the death of her grandfather, so she wrote about it in her journal. She said:

> When I was in eighth grade, my grandpa died, like a little bit before Halloween. And that was really hard because him and my dad really didn't get along well, so I really didn't see him much, so I was kind of like mad at my parents for not letting me go over there….He was a huge drug addict and stuff, but I was just irritated because I didn't get to spend more time with him before he died.

More recently, Brittany had been grounded for most of the semester for reasons she would not share. She sometimes wrote about her punishment in order to cope with the frustration and anger she felt toward her parents. She said, "Usually when I'm mad in my writing, you can tell I'm mad because it's just the words that I use and how big they are, and like the pressure that I put on the pencil, like really irritated."

Home writing confidence. While Brittany believed her writing was good, she was less confident in the judgments of others. She said she sometimes went through her writing binder to read old poems and diary entries, and she concluded, "I'm impressed

with myself." Although Brittany's friends had never judged her writing harshly, she was careful about showing her writing to others for fear of criticism. She said, "Sometimes I don't want to show people because like I think they'll think that's retarded or they don't like it or something, so I don't show a lot of people, except my close friends…I'm always afraid of what other people will think of me, like with anything."

Sharing writing with others. Brittany first showed her writing to her best friend in eighth grade. She said she later felt comfortable sharing with other close friends "because things I can't talk to my parents about, I can talk to them about, and like they understand and give me advice and stuff." Whereas talking about the problems might have been difficult, Brittany could share her concerns with her friends through writing. She said her friends liked her writing and were surprised she could write so well since she had never shown interest in reading, writing, or other school-related literacy activities.

On two occasions, Brittany shared several pieces of writing with her parents. The first time, in eighth grade, was a poem about the Holocaust she had written in school. She said her mom was impressed with her writing. She explained, "When she read mine, she was like really shocked because she didn't know that I wrote like that." In high school, she once shared an entry from her diary with her parents to help them better understand the feelings she could not convey verbally. She said:

> I showed my parents one entry I wrote in my diary because, like, they started accusing me of stuff of like, of like being rude, so I was like, you know what, I wrote this day, if you really think I don't care about something, well then…this is what I thought…It's easier for me to say things on paper than in person because my words get mixed up and stuff.

Competing activities. Brittany wrote daily last year, but she lamented that she no longer had the time to write that often. Over the summer, her 3-year-old cousin moved in with her family after his mother was arrested on drug charges; Brittany voluntarily took on the role of primary care giver during non-school hours. She explained, "I have to give him his snack, and then we play, we watch TV together, then I give him a bath and put him to bed, and then I usually take a bath and go to bed…I like doing it." Brittany was not involved in any extracurricular activities in or out of school. And because she was grounded, she was not socializing with friends beyond school hours.

Adult influences. Brittany's mother influenced her writing in several ways. At various times her mother bought her diaries, but Brittany said, "My mom didn't even know that I wrote poems or that I wrote a diary…I don't think she knew that I used them." In eighth grade, her mother expressed interest and encouraged her writing when Brittany shared a poem she had written at school. When Brittany started ninth grade, her mother showed her writing she had done in high school and had kept in a special book; this motivated Brittany to do the same. She said, "I want to keep all my stuff, so I can, like, show my kids."

School reading. Despite looking bored in class, Brittany spoke favorably about much of the reading that was assigned in high school English. She recalled reading Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* her freshman year, all of which she enjoyed. This year in sophomore English, however, she gave mixed reviews. She thought Shakespeare's *MacBeth* was just "okay," but she liked the more contemporary young adult novel *Ironman* by Chris Crutcher. Brittany said she thought most of the books were interesting,

and “I don’t read books if I don’t like them, but if I find a book that I like, I can sit down and read it.” When I asked her why she frequently looked bored in class, she said, “I get so tired when I read.” She also admitted that she was bored sometimes in English. All of the stories, plays, and novels were read together in her class this year, and students were not allowed to take books home. When she was absent from class, however, Brittany said she did not always finish the required reading. She was never asked to select an outside reading book during the course of the semester.

Brittany’s teacher had a predictable class schedule while students were reading *MacBeth* and *Ironman*. The teacher would spend the beginning of class reviewing what had been read the previous period by asking students directed questions and providing commentary to fill in more detail. Then students would volunteer to read aloud. It was difficult to hear some of them. A few were good readers, but many were not. The teacher would stop frequently, especially during the reading of *MacBeth*, to describe what was happening to make sure students understood the plot. Brittany usually sat quietly and listened during the reading and discussion, but she rarely volunteered to read or contribute to the review. When the teacher’s commentary dragged on too long, Brittany often turned to a student near her to talk or joke around. Many students in the class were off-task during each class period. The “discussion” involved the teacher summarizing and interpreting the text while the students listened; only low-level factual questions were asked of students. When the designated chapter or scene was completed, the teacher distributed study questions that students had to complete before the next class. When Brittany did not complete the reading due to an absence, I asked her how she completed the assignment. She said, “[The teacher] always gave us a summary of them, so we pretty

much always knew what happened."

School writing. Although Brittany was required to write frequently in Creative Writing, her elective English class, she wrote much less often in sophomore English. She did not enjoy most of the writing assigned in her required class, noting that the work consisted primarily of "just read this book and do the worksheet." She was assigned several essays during the semester related to major reading assignments. One compared stories from the literature anthology, one related to *MacBeth*, and one to *Ironman*. The remaining writing assignments were study questions for each piece of literature. Brittany noted that the writing assignments might have been more exciting if students had been given more choice and opportunity to be creative, including the incorporation of more creative types of writing into units rather than just responding to study questions. She described her English class experience in this way: "This year she'll like put stuff up on the board, and we'll have to answer questions, and then we'd read a story, and then we'd have to answer questions about that. It's just not interesting to me…I get to the point where I'm just like, 'I don't want to do this.'"

Brittany was also not clear about how she could improve her writing in class. She earned a C on her first essay, but a D- on her *MacBeth* essay, which she said she turned in late. When I asked if that was why she had a D, she replied, "[The teacher] said it needed to be more developed." When I asked her if she knew what that meant, she said, "I probably needed to write more, but I didn't know what else to write."

Prior to starting the narrative essay, the teacher presented a computer slideshow presentation about the particulars of writing in that format. The slides were filled with text that the teacher read directly from the screen. Students were instructed to take notes

on certain slides. As the information continued, students began to lose interest, and most started staring into space, doodling, texting, and playing games at their tables. The teacher "covered" the facts, but she did not actually model how to write a narrative. Brittany took notes as instructed, she but often rested her head on her desk between slides, dug through her purse, or socialized with the girl sitting next to her. Several times the teacher stopped lecturing and threatened students with repeating the class next year if they failed.

In addition to her required English class, Brittany opted to take Creative Writing as one of her electives. She said she decided to take the class because, "I figured if I liked writing at home, and I know I can do it, then why not get a grade for it." She was not disappointed. As the semester continued, Brittany reported it was one of her favorite classes because the teacher made it fun. She enjoyed writing stories, even though she had never explored this genre on her own at home. During each 90-minute class, students spent the majority of the period writing two to three different journal entries based on prompts from the teacher. Writing included various types of stories, narratives, and poems.

School literacy confidence. Brittany felt moderately confident in her ability to complete the reading and writing assignments given in her English class. In describing herself as a student in English, she said, "I'm not terrible, but I'm not great. I'm kind of like in the middle." Her self-efficacy varied depending on the type of text and the parameters of the assignment. She struggled more when reading Shakespeare, and she was not surprised at receiving a D- on that essay. For her narrative, however, she was given more choice in topic, and she decided to write about the death of her grandparents.

On that assignment, she was quite confident and said, "I think I'll get an A."

In Creative Writing, she compared her writing with that of her peers when they shared in front of the class, and she noted that sometimes her writing was as good as other people's. But, she said, "If somebody is like really, really good, like if they wrote something really, really good, I'm like, I don't want to go after that person." Brittany admitted that she didn't complete assignments when she was confused or frustrated by the work. She explained, "If I look at a paper, and I don't understand it, I just don't try…Like I do the worksheets, but if I don't know some of the answers, I just leave them blank." That attitude was echoed later in the semester as she looked over her grades on the computer. She had almost all F's, with a D in Creative Writing and an F in sophomore English. She said, "If I don't know something, I guess I just don't do it."

Despite her failing grades throughout the semester, Brittany remained confident that she could pass her English class by the end of the semester, and several of her friends even turned to her for help in writing. When I stopped by to talk to her a week before finals, she was sitting at a computer preparing to type a friend's English paper, a personal narrative connected with the study of *Ironman*. I asked her why she was typing it for her friend, and she said she had helped her friend write it, but her friend couldn't read her writing in order to type it. I examined the paper and discovered Brittany's handwriting consisted of more than half the narrative. When I asked if she had her own paper finished, she minimized the document she was typing and opened the one with her assignment. She said she just had one more paragraph to add. The paper was due later that day, but she said she would get both done in time.

Valuing school literacy. Brittany was intrinsically motivated by Creative Writing

because it more closely aligned with the types of writing she enjoyed doing. Even when she was earning a D, she still reported it as her favorite class. In sophomore English, however, when intrinsic value was lacking, utility value played a role in keeping Brittany focused. She told me she made an effort to complete her work in class to avoid failure because she wanted to attend college. When asked why that was important, she said, "'Cuz I don't want to be a loser." Brittany's parents had emphasized the importance of getting an education because her father did not graduate from high school. She knew success in school would be necessary for a good career and job security later in life.

Sarah

I first met Sarah, 16, more than four years ago when I worked at a middle school in the district. Her father was assistant principal, and she was a student. I didn't recognize her when she first agreed to join my study. Sarah had grown up in the years since I had last seen her. She was more reserved in class and more serious about her studies. Being the daughter of a principal and a teacher, she was well known by adults in the building, many of whom watched her grow up. She had a close association with her junior English teacher, who was a personal friend of the family. Although many of my student participants were avid readers, I was amazed at the pace at which Sarah could devour books.

A reader at home. Sarah enjoyed reading a variety of different books, but she particularly loved fantasy because the genre included people, places, and events that were beyond her own world. She was also a self-described diehard *Twilight* fan, having read the first and last books in the series eight times each, and the second and third books seven times each. Although she first became more interested in books during eighth

grade, she credited the *Twilight* series, which she started her freshman year, with igniting her passion for reading. She said, "Whenever I can find a good book I can read it real fast…I kind of get sold on it, and I just…I can't stop…through [the *Twilight* series] I just kind of progressively started reading more and more…I really started getting into it."

When Sarah found a book she liked, she completely immersed herself in the experience. She would read it daily, including before school, in between classes, during free time in classes, and after school, racking up several hours a day or up to four hours straight on weekends. She said, "I'm usually reading it constantly." She selected her books by looking at the cover and then the plot summary on the back or inside flap. Even when she did not love a book at the start, she stuck with it. She explained, "If I'm bored, and I can't find any other books to read, I usually just keep reading the same book, even though it is kind of boring 'cuz usually by the end I've enjoyed it, and I found it entertaining…I guess I usually just stick with them to be able to read something."

Reading as an escape. One aspect of reading Sarah most enjoyed was the escapism a good book provided. She could forget her problems when she was engrossed in a book. She said she liked "being able to just kind of zone out in a way, I guess, and just kind of forget things that are going on in the outside, and just be able to go into this other world, but like, just be able to read and just have this whole other story thing going on in your head, and forget about the things that are going on outside." When Sarah became an avid reader her freshman year, she had entered a transitional time with her peer group. Her friends dispersed into different cliques, and Sarah had more time alone. She explained, "I just found my comfort in reading and reading those [*Twilight*] books … I guess you could say it kind of helped get me through some difficult times, like when I

didn't have as much to do, I would just sit and read those over and over again. I always found something different in it." As a fast reader, Sarah was excited about discovering the surprises at the end of books, but she was also sad to see the stories end. She said, "I don't want them to be done…then I have nothing else."

Finding and accessing books. Sarah was an avid reader, but she struggled to find books that interested her. Looking back, she said, "I just…I didn't know what I liked." As a result, Sarah often reread books she loved multiple times. When I first spoke with her in September, she told me she had read eight books over the summer, including a six-book James Patterson series. Since then, however, she had stopped reading because she could not find a book that sounded good. Sarah said she had experienced breaks in her reading before, including when she completed the *Twilight* series. She said, "After I finished the series, I kind of was like, I didn't know what exactly I liked 'cuz I'd read the teenage books, you know, like the summer flings and all those kind of books, but then after *Twilight*, I was like, I don't know where to go now or what to read, so that was kind of quite a long break between that and reading again."

Sarah preferred to find books in retail stores because she did not like the time restrictions linked to checking out books from the library. She said she often waited a week and reread a book if she really liked it. She also did not like how books were so "covered up" in the library. Instead, she preferred the open displays at stores like Barnes and Noble with book covers facing out, which made selecting a book much easier.

When I reconnected with Sarah in early November, she was still looking for a book to read. She had found one she thought she might like at a bookstore, but she could not afford it. At that point, Sarah had not read a book for pleasure in more than two

months. I loaned her a copy of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins because I thought it sounded like the kind of book she would enjoy. A week later when I observed her in class, she pulled out a book and began reading. This was the first time I had seen her read voluntarily before class started. I noticed the book was not the one I had given her, but *Mockingjay*, the third in the *Hunger Games* trilogy. When I asked her about it later, she told me she had read the book I loaned her in two days and borrowed the second book from her sister. After finishing that one in a day and a half, her mother bought her the third book, which she later completed in three days. When I asked Sarah if she was reading anything else now that she had finished the trilogy, she said she didn't know what to read. I had recently returned from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference with 68 pounds of new young adult literature. I filled a bag with books and brought them to Sarah at school. Her eyes lit up with excitement when she saw the choices. She worked her way through the entire bag, reporting back to me about the ones she enjoyed the most. In the final two months of the semester, Sarah completed nearly a dozen books.

Adult influences. As an avid reader, Sarah's mother served as a role model, and she encouraged her daughter's reading habit by providing access to books. Sarah developed a passion for James Patterson novels because her mother always had them around the house. Sarah noted, "My mom is a humongous James Patterson fan…She has just about every book, so anyone that she thinks I would like, she usually gives to me." Sarah said she frequently read her mother's books, which gave her easy access to new reading materials. Her mother also bought her new books that they could both read as well as giving her books as gifts for Christmas and birthdays. She noted that her mother

usually tried to find her books that were part of a series, so she would not finish too quickly and then become bored. Sarah said, "My mom usually picks them out for me since I have read all the ones off my authors that I like…so she usually just tries to pick them out."

Home reading confidence. Sarah was confident in her ability to complete the reading she did at home, and extremely long books did not intimidate her. She did not consider herself a fast reader, and she liked being able set her own reading pace, taking her time to really comprehend the stories. But, she admitted, "I can really get into them, [and] easily read, you now, 400-500 pages in easily two days, two to three days." When Sarah was extremely interested in a book, she believed she could read faster and still "get everything out of it." She could not recall any books she had encountered that were too difficult to finish.

Competing activities. Although Sarah made reading a priority, she was also involved in a number of activities both in and out of school that competed for her free time. She was a member of her high school's dance team, played varsity volleyball, and took studio dance classes. At home she focused on homework and chores, and she earned extra money through regular babysitting jobs. Sarah said, "When I get my homework done, I usually just sit down, and I read. I don't watch TV a bunch…so I'm just in my bedroom, and I read all night…When I am reading a good book, I make sure I find time whether that's staying up late, I make sure I find time to actually read the book and finish the book."

School reading. Sarah did not particularly enjoy any of the reading she was assigned in class. She said, "I find it boring compared to the things we could be reading, I

guess... [The books] don't, like, pull me in and make me want to read it." She could remember very little about the reading she had been assigned in her freshman and sophomore years because she said it did not really interest her that much. Junior English started with a mix of short stories, such as "Sinners at the Hands of an Angry God" and "Young Goodman Brown," from a literature anthology. Students watched the movie *The Crucible* rather than reading the actual play by Arthur Miller, and the teacher told the class about Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, but they didn't actually read the novel because of a lack of time. Sarah ended the semester reading Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which she found more interesting than anything else she had been required to read for class. The teacher started the unit by presenting a 50-minute slideshow of notes over the plot of the novel. The presentation was sleep inducing, and several students had their heads on their desks. Sarah took notes, but occasionally she rested her head on her desk.

When novels were assigned, Sarah said students were given some in-class time to read, but they were also expected to complete the reading as homework. Sarah's English teacher gave students multiple days to read *Huck Finn* in class or to use the time to work on study questions related to the book. Some students read, but others talked, slept, listened to iPods, or played with their phones. Sarah used her class time to work, but she also listened to her iPod sometimes while reading.

Perhaps because her parents were both educators, Sarah said she believed books were chosen by English teachers to impart specific lessons, such as morals. However, she did not think the subject matter appealed to most teenagers. She said, "It's just…us, as teenagers, we can't really get into…I don't think I'm the only one that can't really get

into, like, books from the past and stuff." Specifically she noted units related to the Puritans, early America, and slavery. She did not feel these topics from the past were made relevant for students today. She said, "I like being able to connect with the book. If I can't, it's…just…there's nothing there."

Although Sarah liked her English teacher, she hoped to change classes the following semester because so few students actively participated in lessons. Sarah's English teacher was often discouraged by students' lack of interest and participation in class. In one lesson when students would not discuss the Declaration of Independence, he asked the class, "What do you want to talk about?" Several boys responded with ESPN and basketball. The teacher attempted to take those examples and connect them back to the Declaration of Independence with the basketball players "declaring independence" from their teams. Unfortunately, he failed to excite the students into a conversation. Sarah sat quietly with her eyes on her folder but did not offer any comments. On another occasion, the teacher tried to jumpstart the discussion by connecting the day's lesson to musicians, mentioning Michael Jackson. The teacher's rambling monologues were similar at times to a standup comedy act. Sarah and other students laughed at times, but they did not generate any relevant discussion related to literature.

School writing. During the course of the semester, Sarah was required to write journal entries, chapter study questions, a compare/contrast essay, timed writing responses, and a short research paper. Most writing assignments culminated in the completion of a unit or a book being studied. Sarah most enjoyed journals in which she could make a personal connection with stories from her own life. She said, "I can connect to it, and I know what's going on, and I know the details. I know what happened, so I

know what I'm writing." She was less enthusiastic about timed writing assignments that were completed in class, although she noted most assigned writing was completed during class time. She said, "Just about every essay or paper we wrote [sophomore year] we had to be done in that class period, and that really, for me, kind of messes me up because I like going through and writing down kind of like a structure…and doing a rough draft, and then going into it…I never got it done." During her junior year, the research paper, a about an author, required two sources and had to be 3-5 pages typed. The work for this was done primarily outside of class time.

School literacy confidence. Sarah was not as confident about the reading assigned in class compared to the reading she completed at home. She noted the differences between books in school and books she selected for herself at home:

> [They're] harder to read, I guess you could say…the way things are phrased, rather than the books I read…they're easier to understand, not dumbed down books, but usually, like, the books that the teachers choose are actual English novels from this time period or like they're written back in the 1800s, so I think it was kind of written differently, just the different ways things are written from the things that I choose myself.

She said some of the books in school also had more challenging vocabulary and phrasing, such as *Huck Finn*, that frustrated her as she read, but she added, "sometimes I just don't care enough to stop and try to actually figure it out."

In writing, Sarah also acknowledged a lack of confidence. She usually received B's and C's on her papers, but she expected her grades to be as low as C's and D's. She said, "I never can really get what I'm saying down on paper…I'm not very confident in

what I write." One noted exception, however, was the research paper Sarah wrote about the author Edna St. Vincent Millay for her junior English class. Although she procrastinated in the writing, staying up until 3 a.m. the day it was due to finish, she felt positive about the results. She said, "I felt pretty confident about it. It was crazy hard."

Valuing school literacy. Sarah made a concerted effort to complete the work she was assigned in her English classes, even though she was not intrinsically motivated by the content. Instead, she held utility values, working hard for a good grade because she believed it was necessary in order to go to college. She also believed some of the skills she was learning, such as essay writing, might benefit her later. She said, "I imagine in the long run that's why we're doing it, to help us…to help me be able to write those different things."

Lexie

I became acquainted with Lexie, 17, when she overheard me talking about my study. She told me later that she was an avid writer, and she also loved to read. Lexie was quiet and hesitant to reveal too much about herself when we first met. She disliked socializing with people and preferred to sit quietly in class, seemingly invisible to peers and teachers. Over time, though, she began to trust me, and she disclosed details about her troubled high school years and the role reading and writing played in her life.

Lexie was in her third stint in foster care when I met her. She hated the system and was desperately seeking a way out before her 18th birthday. She confided that her parents were drug users, and she and her sister entered foster care after their father sexually abused them. Once a happy and motivated student in elementary and middle school, Lexie became a troubled rebellious adolescent who skipped more days her

freshman year than she spent in class. Still, she made time for literacy activities at home. Now in her senior year, she worked hard to earn missing credits in order to graduate on time. Unfortunately, before the study ended, Lexie exited the foster care system and was returned to the custody of her mother; as a result, she transferred back to another high school in the district. A month later, she dropped out of school when she realized she was failing too many classes to graduate in May.

Future goals. As a senior, Lexie had already given some thought to her future plans. She wanted to be a certified nursing assistant and eventually a home health aide. When she was 13, her mother worked at a nursing home as a housekeeper, and Lexie spent some time visiting her there. She said, "Me and her were talking, and I was like, well, I'm going to be better than you. I'm going to actually be one of the nurses there, and so, I guess I kind of just stuck to it." Lexie had worked in food service at an area nursing home, and she enjoyed interacting with the elderly residents. She considered attending college to become a registered nurse, but she did not have the money.

Lexie's goals were threatened, however, when at progress report time, she was failing six of the classes she needed for graduation. She explained that she had missed a lot of school because of appointments and meetings related to foster care. As a result, she did not understand the homework she was assigned. As the semester continued, she continued to fall further behind.

Despite her academic problems, Lexie made personal reading goals for herself that were beyond the expectations of school. She pledged to read three novels during the school year and six more over the summer like she had done the previous year. When I asked her why she set personal reading goals for herself, she said, "'Cause I really don't

have any other goals to look forward to." Lexie desired a sense of accomplishment in an area of her life where she felt successful and in control.

A reader at home. Lexie enjoyed reading from a variety of genres: mysteries based on real cases, romance, science fiction, and fantasy. She also liked poems that used rhyme schemes to create rhythm. She cited the *Twilight* saga as one of her favorite series, and she enjoyed Stephenie Meyer's novel, *The Host*. She said, "I think she's my favorite author…like when you're reading it, it kind of gives you an adrenaline rush 'cause you're like really excited about what's coming up…" Lexie was critical, however, of other books that tried to profit from *Twilight's* success with a vampire romance theme, and she was bored by books that used the same formulas. When I asked her what she enjoyed about reading for pleasure versus reading for school, she said, "Reading for school is boring because you *have* to read it. And like, when I choose a book that I don't have to read, I can enjoy it, and I have all the time in the world to read it."

Lexie usually selected her books from bookstores by examining the cover and then reading the synopsis on the back. If the story interested her, she started reading to get a sense for the way it was written. She said, "I'll read the first page that's in the book, and like, if it catches my eye, then I'll keep reading." Lexie said she would read up to half of a book she did not particularly like before abandoning it. She was hesitant at first when she began reading *The Host*, and she considered stopping, but she wanted to find out how the story ended. She said, "I don't like starting a book, and like getting halfway through it, and then, like quitting it because what was the point in reading the first half?"

Reading as an escape. Lexie enjoyed reading fantasy books because they made her think about the different ways the world could be beyond her own experiences. She

viewed that type of reading as an escape from the problems in her life. When she did not want to think about bad situations, she simply picked up a book to live vicariously through the characters. She said, "In a way, you kind of want it to be real." She also noted that books gave her "something to look forward to."

Peer pressure. Among Lexie's peers, students who did well in school or liked to read were branded "nerds." Lexie said she was always on the honor roll through elementary and middle school and was teased for being smart. She enjoyed reading and carried a book with her to read during free time at school. When she transitioned to high school, most of her friends moved to different schools, so fewer students knew her. At that point, she decided to leave her "nerdy" image behind. She said, "I started hanging out with the wrong people, and they were like considered, not really the cool kids of the school, but the bad cool kids, and I started hanging out with them. I guess it all…the image of me just changed…nobody really knew me, so I could have had any image that I wanted." With her new persona, she could not admit to reading for pleasure, and she could not be seen carrying a book to class. She was even careful about the types of books she selected in case someone saw her and passed judgment. She said, "I guess now when I choose a book, like, I choose wisely what people would think of me, so I guess I'm not really that confident when I'm choosing a book."

Home reading confidence. Most of the time, Lexie was a confident reader with the books she selected on her own. She was careful to choose books that she thought were at her reading level. Occasionally she challenged herself with novels a little more difficult, but she confessed that she often gave up if she became too confused by the story. One of her most recent books, *The Host*, confused her from the beginning, but she

continued to read because the plot captivated her. She said:

> When I first started reading it, like, I didn't comprehend the beginning of the story, and then once I got towards the middle, I started getting it…It sounded really good when I first read it, and then I started reading it and the first page sounded good, the way it described it and everything, and I got into like maybe a fourth of the book, and I….started to hate it because…I was confused about where the story was going because it kept going back and forth between two people, and it was confusing me, and I didn't want to read any more.

Lexie stuck with the book, despite problems with comprehension, partly because she found the book interesting and partly because she wanted to fulfill her personal reading goal for the year.

A writer at home. Although Lexie was once an avid journal writer, she now mainly wrote poetry along with the occasional song or story. She recounted aspects of her life in her poetry, including the people and events that surrounded her. When I first spoke with Lexie, she had written several poems about being in foster care and about being sexually abused by her father. She was excited about a new application on her boyfriend's iPhone that allowed her to type in her poems and hear them performed as raps. She was proud of the way her "songs" sounded, and she sometimes collaborated with her boyfriend in writing lyrics. Lexie acknowledged that her poetry and song lyrics were often sad. She said, "Sometimes I can write about happy things, but most of the time I write about depressing things 'cuz my life is depressing."

Lexie began keeping a journal when she was 13 years old, writing about "guys

and stuff like that." Over time, she began to reveal more about the events happening in her life, writing in the journal every day after school and before she went to bed. She kept the same journal until she was 16 and entered foster care; the journal remained at her father's house, so she never retrieved it.

Once she entered foster care, Lexie also had less time to write, in part because she could find few places that were quiet and offered some degree of privacy. Still she tried to write a couple of times a week for about 45 minutes each time. She explained:

> I can't write at my foster mom's house because….I got a new foster sister, and she's 15, and she has a baby already, and well, that baby and her moved into my bedroom, so I can't write down there. And anywhere else in the house you got three little 4-year-old boys running around the house screaming, you have a 13-year-old that sits there and complains….so I have no time to concentrate.

Lexie often escaped to friends' homes to find a peaceful place to reflect and write. When her boyfriend was busy helping his disabled mother, Lexie sat by herself in his basement and wrote until he was finished. Other days, she visited a friend who worked nights as a certified nursing assistant; while her friend slept, Lexie found the quiet she needed to concentrate on her poetry. The brief periods she found to write were not always enough to complete a poem, but Lexie always found time to finish it later. She explained her creative process in this way:

> Usually when I write I'm sitting there for a few minutes until something pops into my head. Then I have to write it down. And like, it's not really put together all that well, but I write down thoughts in my head that I get

that would sound good in a poem, and then I put it together, and that would take me about an hour, so usually I don't really get to finish a poem, but as long as I'm writing, I don't really care.

Writing as therapy. Lexie used writing as a way to cope with the problems she faced. She began writing to chronicle the actual people and events in her life, but eventually she turned to expressing her feelings more directly with poetry. She said, "If I write about what happened, then I feel like it's …I don't know how to describe…I feel like it's leaving me, and it's on paper, and I don't have to think about it any more." Lexie wrote about her father, who she called emotionally, physically, and verbally abusive, and her stepmother, whom she hated. She said, "They both smoke too much pot, so she can't get a job, so they sell, and [one journal] was about that." Lexie also wrote about her relationship with her little brother and her stepmother's young son. She said, "I wrote in there about how [her half brother] calls me mommy and everything because his mom's not ever there for him…I practically raised him since he was born, and it was like…it was about him and how his mother doesn't care about her kids and stuff like that …" Since entering foster care, Lexie had not been allowed to see either of the boys in more than nine months. She said she liked to write down her experiences because they were her memories, and she wanted to remember them even if they were not all happy.

Sometimes her stories added a fictional twist, including one she developed with her younger sister. She explained, "Me and my sister have this little story that my dad picked [my stepmom] up off of Sixth Street, and ended up getting her knocked up, so that's why they stayed together. And because my dad didn't want to pay child support, and she didn't want to pay child support, so they stayed together."

During an earlier stay in foster care, Lexie had the chance to meet a visiting author who shared his poetry about growing up in the foster care system. He inspired her to write a poem about her experiences. She said:

> The whole story behind this poem is my dad was beating me and my sister and touching us and all this other stuff, and I wrote it about telling…it was something like, 'You think I'm lying, well, I'm going to be confident. I'm going to break out of this shell. I'm taking you back to where you came from behind bars and stuff like that.' 'Cuz my dad wasn't there for half my life because he was in prison for indecent liberties with a 15-year-old…when he got out of prison he started touching me and my sister, and we went to court, and we were in foster care, and they put us back in his house, and then we went to court again, and we were in foster care, and they put us back in his house, and now I'm in foster care again because of what he was doing.

Although Lexie was often shy about sharing her writing, she posted the poem about her father on her Facebook page. She said she did not care who read her poem or her other journal entries because she was speaking the truth about her life.

Writing offered Lexie a way to express her feelings safely, without fear of reprisal. She said, "It helped me express my anger and hatred toward [my father and stepmother] and my love for my little brothers and everything, and since I couldn't express it emotionally because if I did, I would be shut down or I would get beat or something, I would just write it in there, and like, I could let my feelings out." Lexie believed she could not reveal her true self at school, at work, or at home; she even felt

like she had to "put on a front" with her friends. She said, "But in my writing, I can express myself as who I want to be or what I am, but nobody sees me."

Home writing confidence. Lexie's view of herself as a writer was a dichotomy between her personal feelings and the perceived judgments of others. Although she thought she was a better writer than her boyfriend and her best friend, she was usually hesitant to share her writing, even with them, because she feared they would be critical. She said, "I don't want them to make fun of me for what I'm writing 'cause I think, like, these days people are very judgmental, even if you've known them forever. They still judge you." When I asked her how her friends judged her, she said, "Like they'll make fun of me, like, if something doesn't sound right, they'll make fun of me…" Although Lexie did not want criticism from others, she wasn't shy about admitting her own weaknesses as a writer. She noted that she often revised, especially when she thought something sounded confusing or ill-thought-out. Most of the time, though, she was happy with the writing she produced. She said, "I'm pretty confident about it besides letting other people see it. When I reread my writing, it makes me feel happy because knowing that I've accomplished something and knowing that I actually have somewhere to express myself and say how I feel."

Adult influences. Adults in Lexie's life directly and indirectly furthered her literacy practices. When she was about 13, Lexie saw her stepmother reading a romance book from the Harlequin series. Lexie read the plot summary on the back of the book, and she thought it sounded interesting. She said, "After she was done reading it, she gave it to me and told me I could read it, and I read it. I thought it was really good. Like it was pretty detailed, but I thought it was really good." After that, Lexie was hooked. She

began to read other romance novels her stepmother had in the house. Later, her grandmother introduced her to the Hard Case Crime series of murder mystery books that she was reading, which sparked Lexie's interest in the true crime genre.

Lexie's interest in poetry developed after she attended a foster care program that featured a guest author who wrote about his own experiences in the system. She liked the stories he shared about his own struggles, and she enjoyed the rhythm in his poems. His writing prompted her to begin writing poetry for herself. She said, "I really liked it, and I don't know, it was kind of an inspiration to start writing."

Competing activities. A number of circumstances limited Lexie's available time to engage in literacy activities. Although she read nearly every night in the summer, she scaled back her reading time to a couple of hours about two nights a week during the school year because of other commitments. In past years, Lexie noted she had read every day after school, even before starting her homework; she had also found time to write up to twice a day. This year, however, she faced greater homework demands, which took more of her time. She also had chores to complete in her foster home, she was actively looking for a part-time job, and she tried to make time to spend with her boyfriend and female friends. Lexie was not involved in any school activities and did not enjoy watching television. Besides reading and writing, her other creative passion was drawing, which she also tried to find time for in her busy schedule.

School reading. Lexie was not enrolled in an English class at the time of the study. She was scheduled to take three English courses the following semester, two of which were repeat classes due to failures during her sophomore and junior years.

Although Lexie recalled a number of books assigned in past English classes,

including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, she believed the required class reading was boring and pointless. The topics did not interest her, and she could not remember much of the plots of the novels or the purpose of the reading. She said reading was assigned as homework on a regular basis, but she rarely completed it. She usually read just enough to "get by" in order to complete assignments in class. She said, "I skim through the chapter of like…which chapters we're talking about and everything, but then I'd get online and get the details." She admitted to completing all of the reading for *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald because it sounded interesting. Once she read further into the book, however, she changed her mind. She said, "It wasn't really interesting. It was retarded, but I had to finish reading it." Much like in her personal reading, Lexie felt compelled to finish a book once she had gotten at least halfway through. She said she would be more likely to complete assigned reading if she was given some choice in book selection.

School writing. Writing was not a priority in Lexie's previous English classes. When I asked her about the types of writing she had done, she said, "I don't know. We really didn't do writing in my English classes…Most of the time it was just filling out a sheet that was asking questions about a book we were reading." She also recalled writing regular journal entries in her junior English class that were based on a question the teacher posed. The only essay she clearly remembered in 10th grade English was the yearly district writing assessment given each spring. In 11th grade, she recalled a research-based paper over an author that she actually enjoyed writing. She had choice in the selection of author and the information she chose to include in her paper. She earned a B on that paper when she usually earned C's on writing she completed in school. She

was satisfied with her grade, even though she had expected to do even better. Teachers' opinions of her writing were not important. She said, "I don't really care what teachers think because they're old, and their word doesn't really mean anything to me…It's more or less your friends that you have to worry about than everyone else around you."

Lexie managed to fake her way through assignments, even when she did not complete the necessary reading. She admitted to searching websites for answers. She explained, "Sometimes they give us like…instead of reading a whole chapter for one question, they'll give us like, on the website, it will give me a paragraph that I'll have to read, and then it gives me the answer in the paragraph. It doesn't give me the answer, but it's in the paragraph." She rationalized that it was an easy way to earn a C on most of her written work.

School literacy confidence. Lexie's confidence for school reading was dramatically lower than for the books she selected on her own. She said, "In class, like English class, you have a certain time to read a certain amount, and I guess, I don't know, the books we read in school are confusing, and I don't want to try to focus on what we're reading in school." She cited *Huck Finn* as the most challenging reading because of the character dialect in the book. When she did not understand the reading, she did not complete the assignments. She noted that was the reason she was repeating a semester of junior English.

Lexie's confidence in the writing she completed at school was also much lower than for the writing she did independently at home. She even experienced stress responding to the daily journal questions that were posed by her junior English teacher. She said, "I was embarrassed 'cuz like I didn't know how to answer the questions. The

questions are more complicated, and then when you got to write it down, and you read your answer that you wrote down, it just makes you feel embarrassed because that's not even close to the question…the answer is not even close to what the question was asking." On the research paper that she enjoyed, her confidence level was much higher. She correlated her interest in the writing topic with her self-efficacy for the assignment. She explained:

> I loved that assignment. If I like the assignment, I have total confidence in myself, but if I hate the assignment, then I'm like, I'm not going to do it, so I do a crappy job, and when we turn it in, I don't know, sometimes I feel embarrassed when I turn in my work…because I don't like other people seeing my work…I don't know why. I just don't like it.

Additionally, Lexie experienced trepidation about repeating sophomore and junior English while also taking Senior Composition in the upcoming semester. She admitted she was scared that she would fail all of them and not graduate. A friend who was already taking Senior Composition had warned her about the heavy workload. Lexie said, "I like writing. I just have to like what I'm writing about."

Valuing school literacy. Lexie saw so little value in school assigned reading and writing that she questioned the requirement of English as a core course. She frequently did not complete school reading because, she said, "I feel it's a waste of my time." She posited that she did not need to improve her reading because she had met the standard on the state reading assessment. She said, "I don't like English class….I don't. I like reading stuff that I want to read, and writing stuff that I want to write. I don't like reading in any classes, period."

Lexie was solely motivated by the utility value she saw in performing well enough in order to graduate. Neither of Lexie's parents graduated from high school, and she was excited about the prospect of being the first in her family to accomplish that feat. She said she completed the written assignments given because doing so helped her reach her goal. She said, "'Cuz it's worth a grade, and I need the credits to graduate, and I'm tired of school, so I figure if I get the work done, the sooner it will be over." Once she graduated, she hoped to attend an area technical school to receive training as a certified nursing attendant. She used her post-high school plans as an excuse for not working harder and achieving more in school. When I noted that she used to be an honor roll student when she was younger and could be again, she disagreed, saying, "I don't put forth that much effort because school's not worth that much. As long as I have a C average when I graduate, it doesn't matter because I'm not going to college…All I have to do is have my high school diploma."

Dave

One day while I was in a division office telling a student more about the study, a voice from behind a closed door said faintly, "I like to read and write." I ignored it at the time; the secretary told me the boy in the room had been sent out of class by his teacher and was waiting to see the principal. After school, Dave, the boy from behind the door, showed up at my office, asking to be in my study. I knew he was determined since he had asked several people, including the secretary and the principal, who I was and where my office was located. As a freshman, everything at the school was new to Dave, yet he managed to find me in a completely different building on campus.

Dave was a kid with lots of energy. He entered the foster care system at the age of

7 after his parents were arrested on drug charges. When he was 11 years old, he and his younger brothers were adopted by a great aunt. Dave struggled to be a good student, but his ADHD often left him bouncing off the walls in class. When I asked one of his teachers if I could speak to him at the start of class for a moment, she rolled her eyes and said, "Please, keep him as long as you want." Dave tried to stay on his medication, but sometimes his family could not afford the prescription, so there were unavoidable lapses that caused fluctuations in Dave's behavior.

Future goals. More than anything, Dave wanted to be successful at school and in life. He admitted his behavior in middle school was often bad; he talked too much in class and goofed around with this friends. He longed to be in honors classes, but he blamed his playing around and not doing homework in sixth and seventh grade for the lack of opportunities he had now in terms of class placements. Dave's father was African American and his mother was white, but Dave identified as African American rather than mixed race. He said learning about slavery and the past racial injustices of African Americans motivated him to want to do better for himself. He did not want to make excuses for why he could not be successful; rather, he wanted to prove to the world that he could make something of himself despite his race and his childhood years spent in foster care. He explained:

> And my mom, my adoptive mom….she always says to do what's right. Don't walk…don't leave this house if it's dark outside because that's when things happen because you're a young black male and people expect bad from you. And I said, well, I don't want that happening, now do I? So, I expect the best from myself.

A reader at home. Dave read different types of books, but he especially enjoyed adventure and fantasy novels. When I asked what he was currently reading, he unzipped his book bag and pulled out two books. The first, *Endurance: Shakleton's Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing, was recommended by his English teacher. He was more excited about the second one, *Maximum Ride* by James Patterson. He said, "If it has anything to do with someone trying to get through something that's very dangerous, it could take their lives, it's very interesting to me. I like books like that." He also read his Bible regularly, noting "It's kind of cool how all the stories are in there, and how these people were tortured and put to death, and they still loved God." Recommendations from friends were one way Dave found new books to read. After a number of girls sold him on the *Twilight* series, he decided to give it a try. He read the first two chapters before deciding it was not for him.

Reading became a regular part of Dave's life in seventh grade. After watching a Discovery Channel series on wolves, he became fascinated with the animal. Then he found the novel *Wolf Brother*, part of the *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* series by Michelle Paver, at a school book fair. He worked his way through the series, and his love of reading took off. This year, however, high school demands had already cut into Dave's time for reading at home. He said he only read once or twice a week for an hour or so. When he was grounded or during days off from school, he read more often.

Finding and accessing good books. Dave admitted to not reading over the summer because he was busy, but he also had trouble accessing books. He owed a $20 fine to the public library that he could not afford to pay, and he had no access to a school library during the summer months. Once school started, he immediately checked out

several books and began reading again. One day when we spoke, he told me about the book, *Stuck in Neutral* by Terry Trueman, that the school librarian had mentioned during a book talk event. He said it sounded really interesting, but a classmate had checked it out before he could claim it. When I told him I had a copy of the book, he immediately asked if he could borrow it. I also loaned him another adventure book, *Peak* by Roland Smith. He reported back later that he enjoyed them both.

Reading to learn. Dave preferred books in which the protagonist had great obstacles to overcome, much like his own life. When I asked him why he liked reading those types of books, he said, "It gets me thinking…about what it would be like if everything changed that way….When I read books like that, it basically tells me what other people are thinking." Dave loved the excitement adventure books offered, but he also seemed to gain insight and inspiration in dealing with life problems by reading about the plights of the characters in his books.

Home reading confidence. As a strong reader, Dave liked to brag that he was 100 percent confident in his ability to read any book he selected. He said, "I've never really had any problem understanding books…If I pick it out, I read it." He noted that the only difficulties he ever encountered were occasional vocabulary words he did not know, but he used context clues to comprehend the meaning of larger sections of the text rather than worrying about particular words. He explained, "There's like maybe one or two words in a book that I can't read, but I'm like so quick on it that I just basically skip over the word, and I get what the book is saying by the next couple of sentences."

A writer at home. Middle school was also the time that Dave developed his love of writing. He wrote stories, poetry, and song lyrics. He began writing stories to chronicle

his experiences in foster care, but recently, he focused more on poetry and especially songs. Both his poetry and his song lyrics were about aspects of his life and the world he lived in, exploring global warming, pollution, and world hunger. Although he occasionally revised his songs, he usually left his poetry and stories in their originally crafted form, mistakes and all. He collected his writing in a folder to keep, he said, "If I think it's good enough." Dave was also in choir, and he enjoyed singing his lyrics after he wrote them. When I asked him why, he said, "To see if I can actually make it feel like what I was…to make it sound like what I was wanting it to feel like."

While visiting my office one day, Dave told me he had just written a song, and he pulled out a folded up piece of notebook paper from his jean pocket. In the song, he wrote:

It is a family
one that always argues
and they never get along
the children don't do what is right
and the brothers always fight

He said a recent fight with his brothers at home inspired the song. He explained: "The family always argues. When I go home, there's probably going to be an argument. The argument probably won't be between me. It will probably be between my brothers, my mom and my brothers, my aunt (his adopted mother's sister) and my brothers."

Last year Dave wrote for a couple of hours most days after school and additional times when his schedule allowed. When he was inspired, he felt compelled to write. He said, "If I ever thought of something really quick, I'd be like, I've got to write this

down…just go somewhere and write it down real quick." He continued to write profusely throughout the summer, but as high school started, his time was more limited due to homework and other obligations. He often sneaked in writing time during class when he completed his work early.

Dave was very open about allowing other people to see his writing, and he often showed it to close friends. He said, "I would share it all if everyone asked me because I have nothing to hide." He noted that his autobiographical stories, which were often doleful, had a dramatic impact on people who read them. He said, "They start to cry a little. I'm like, 'Why are you crying?' [They say], 'Oh, it's so sad.'"

Writing as therapy. Writing helped Dave cope with his problems and imagine the limitless possibilities of his future. It was also a form of escape. He said, "It's kind of the time I get to do something by myself…that's kind of my time to get away from the world." When Dave often reread his stories about his foster care experiences, they reflected a part of his life that had greatly changed. He said, "I tend to think, 'Who's that? Is that really me?'" Dave's future writing allowed him to imagine how he hoped to be later in life. In his semi-fictional stories, he wrote about his character going to college, owning a business, and playing major league baseball. His future writing allowed him to keep his goals in the forefront and helped keep him focused when he faced problems in his daily life. He explained: "It's basically something I have to live up to. I have to be better than this…But every time I write about something, I'm like wow, that's someone everyone's going to look up to. I've got to be better."

Writing to inspire. Dave also saw his writing as an opportunity to inspire others who have had difficult experiences in their lives. He wanted to become a role model for

younger students through his actions and accomplishments. He said, "I want to be that person who people want to be like. You know, like, when you're in elementary school, they ask the kids, the students, to write about their role model. I want to be that person." He believed writing about his experiences in foster care might later help other kids in the same situation. He explained, "I believe that someday somebody might need it, need the help, who thinks that, oh, they have the worst life, but there's always somebody who has it worse than you. And so I write about that to show people that even though I came from a hard childhood, I still came out a great person, and I'm not finished being better yet."

Home writing confidence. Dave felt very confident about what he wrote, but he was less confident in how it was written. He judged himself harshly on his writing conventions. He said, "When I look back, I say, I spelled that wrong, I spelled that wrong…I forget periods, commas and all that, but I still get across what I want to say." Dave also experienced a sense of pride in the writing he produced, but his focus on conventions related to the feedback he had previously received on writing in school. He now perceived that to be his greatest weakness. He said:

> That's the part I have the most trouble on. Teachers, when they read my writing, say, wow, and then they usually give it back with comments and stuff. But then I notice, that's where I lost my points, right there. I spelled that wrong, and that wrong. I should have put a comma there. So that's usually where I lose my points if I lose points because of my grammar and spelling.

Adult influences. Dave learned to read late at the age of 7. He recalled foster care workers trying to get him interested in books by telling him part of a story and then

offering the book for him to finish. He said, "I never wanted to read it, but I wanted to know the end of the story." His parents never read to him, and by the time he was adopted, he said he was too old for bedtime stories. Instead, his aunt restricted television time and suggested he read instead. Now he said, "No one tells me to read. I just do it."

Competing activities. During the school year, Dave's time was mainly limited by homework and chores at home. He also watched some television and enjoyed playing video games with friends when he was not in trouble. He studied violin at school and was learning to play the piano. Additionally, he was active in his church and played baseball in the spring and summer. He joked, "I can't be writing 24-7…I'm a fun person."

School reading. Dave did not like most of the stories and novels he was assigned to read in English class because the subject matter did not interest him. He recalled enjoying the story "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell because it was an adventure tale, which was his favorite genre. The central novel study of the semester, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, received poor reviews from Dave. He said he "kind of" liked it, but "It wasn't really that interesting."

Dave admitted he did not always finish the required reading if it did not interest him. However, he was careful to read enough to answer the assigned study questions for each chapter. He said, "I skim through it, and I'm like, they're asking what this word means, so I look for that word, but like, if the class is reading it together or it's a big book, I do finish it because [the teacher] asks questions over the whole thing."

Literature discussions in Dave's freshman English class were teacher directed with minimal participation by students. On lecture and discussion days, the teacher stood behind a small podium she placed on her desk, which created a barrier between her and

the students. As she spoke, she wrote notes on the whiteboard behind her. She instructed students about key plot points and themes in the stories and novels, writing these on the board for students to copy directly. She tried to provide students with examples that connected with their lives, but her discussions consisted of a series of low-level questions that few students bothered to answer. Students were frequently talking and off-task. During most lessons, Dave took notes when directed and followed along in his book when the class read together. During independent reading times, he read quietly, despite constant distractions around him from fellow students. He was quick to ask questions and blurt out responses when he knew an answer. As the class reviewed the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* before a quiz, Dave blurted out, "We've read almost this whole book, and I still don't get the title." Several students in the class offered their interpretation. The teacher jumped in to add further commentary. Finally, Dave said, "I get it!"

School writing. When we first spoke, Dave had not had many opportunities to write in his English class. As the semester progressed, however, he was assigned more writing as all English teachers had a prescribed list of writing assignments from the district that had to be given to students at different points in the year. The assignments were part of a new curriculum being implemented to improve writing scores. Dave started the year with a narrative writing assignment that had to be completed in class. He enjoyed the assignment because he had a choice of topics, allowing him to once again write about a subject that was meaningful to him – his entry into the foster care system. Dave said, "I enjoy when we get to choose what we're writing, when we're not limited in our topics, but we get to choose everything completely."

Questions related to stories and novels were the most common writing assigned in

class. Following each set of chapters in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, students were given worksheets with vocabulary and study questions to answer. During one class observation, the teacher had students pull questions related to *To Kill A Mockingbird* from an envelope. She told students to respond to the question they selected and be prepared to present their answer in front of the class. The slips contained close-ended factual questions that required a word or a phrase to answer. When students presented their responses orally, the teacher added extended commentary related to that section of the book. During another visit, students worked in groups of four to answer more questions related to the same novel. Dave talked loudly off-topic with his group, and at times, listened to his iPod while pretending to work. After about 10 minutes, he settled in to focus on the assignment. At one point, seeing me sitting across the room, he held up his paper, smiled, and said, "I'm done."

School literacy confidence. Although Dave was fairly confident about the reading assigned in class, he often made excuses for why he could not complete the work. He said, "Sometimes when I just don't want to do it….I'm going to tell the truth here…I say, this is hard, but it's not really. I just don't want to do it." Dave had a difficult time discerning between his self-efficacy and his interest in what he was learning. The lines sometimes blurred in his own mind.

Writing at school also offered challenges for Dave because he lacked confidence in conventions, and he did not like being graded on his work. Still, he believed in his ability to be successful with writing at school, and he was confident he could garner top grades in English class. Dave expected an A on his assignments, and he frequently received A's or B's on his work. He said, "I always say to myself, expect the worst

because if you expect the worst, the only way you can go is better." Dave was adamant that an A was the "worst," the lowest grade he would accept; he aspired to earn A+ grades on his work. When I noted that his expectations were quite high, he said, "They have to be high because if I think…if I say I expect to be right here, that's what I'm going to get. I can't expect that. I have to expect better."

Valuing school literacy. Dave's strong attainment and utility values helped keep him motivated in class. He believed, as an African-American male, that he had a responsibility to represent his racial group in a positive light, working harder than others to prove success was possible. Dave's sense of his identity was linked to being a successful student and a role model for others. He explained:

> Most kids, no offense, but African Americans, they take advantage of what our forefathers did so we could get an education. I don't want to do that. I don't want to be like everyone else….'cuz they all say, 'Oh, well, I'll just make it up, and they get bad grades. They fail classes. And I try to tell them, there are people who died for you, so you can get an education. I'm going to use that to my advantage.

Even when he wasn't intrinsically motivated, Dave said he completed his assignments in English in order to earn a good grade and make his future goal of college a reality. He said, "I'm graduating. I'm not going to fall behind. I'm going to do my best."

Jenna

Jenna, 18, was passionate about writing and eager to share her experiences with me. Aside from her boyfriend, she had few people in her life with whom she could discuss her interest. Her creative writing class was the first I visited to recruit participants

for the study. Minutes after class ended, Jenna stood at the doorway of my office asking for a consent form.

Due to conflicts with her mother, Jenna's home situation was a little unconventional; she lived with her boyfriend and his family. Her grades were low, and she missed a lot of school due to illness. When I spoke with her after the first month of school, she had already missed five days.

Future goals. Jenna was unsure of her post high school plans, which were just a semester away. She vacillated between attending college and enlisting in the military. With a cumulative GPA under 2.0, her college options were limited. She wanted to earn a criminal justice degree to prepare for a career in law enforcement, but days before Christmas, she had yet to apply to any schools or speak with a recruiter about her military options. Her intentions were good, but she did not always follow through with action in terms of completing her schoolwork or planning for her future.

A writer at home. Jenna was brimming with excitement about discussing her writing. She said, "I like writing. It's awesome!" When she first started writing in sixth grade, she dedicated time at least three days a week. Now as a senior, Jenna made writing a priority, spending up to an hour every day working on her stories. She said she never liked the idea of keeping a journal, so her writing took the form of stories based on real people and real events in her life. She explained:

> It's real information. It's like real stuff that's happening, but the characters are not real, so you know, they're fictional, and I don't know…but it's basically the character is me, just a whole other name, usually. It's like, 'I'm so mad today,' and it starts out kind of like a journal, and then

somehow it turns into a story.

As she had written more in the last few years, she believed the quality of her writing had improved. She noted her stories had become longer and more developed, and her grammar was better. And, she added, "I think they're more interesting, too, especially the one I'm writing now. It just…intrigues me." Sometimes Jenna wrote shorter stories, only a page or two, that she completed in one sitting. Other times, she wrote longer pieces that required days to complete. She said she preferred to be left alone when she entered the writing zone. She said, "Sometimes, like, [the story] will just come into my head, and I won't stop because if I stop, I'll lose my idea."

Jenna saved all of her writing until a fire in her apartment three years ago destroyed everything. Since then, she had taken more precautions to keep her work safe. She kept her stories in a folder that she hid in a drawer under her clothes. When she deemed a story particularly worthy, and "It's one of the best ones I've written," she typed it in order to have two copies. The second copy she kept under her bed. In the event of a fire or other disaster, she figured she would be able to save some of her writing.

When I first met Jenna, she was focused on writing mystery stories, and she was working on a special one to enter in an online contest. She said, "I am so excited! I get pretty excited [about stories], but I'm just way too excited for this one. It's ridiculous. I've never been that excited." Although her contest story was fiction, the main character sounded very much like Jenna. She described her this way: "She's 18, and she goes to high school. She's like a senior in high school, and she gets along with everybody…you know, she has a lot of friends, but most of them have kind of moved on…" The contest, through a gaming web site that her boyfriend joined, was the first time Jenna had

submitted her work in a competition or posted it for public viewing. When I spoke with Jenna months later, she told me she had entered the contest, but she was disappointed in the final product because she did not feel like the story was really finished.

By the end of the semester, Jenna had changed her focus from writing stories to writing poems. She credited her newfound love of poetry to her Creative Writing teacher, who had students read and write various poetic forms. Like her prose, Jenna's poems discussed important people in her life, such as her family and friends, and the problems she faced.

Writing as therapy. Writing served as an outlet for Jenna's feelings about people and events in her life. She used writing as an escape from dealing with problems she did not want to face. She said, "When I want to get something off my mind, I like to just write it, and then it usually turns into a story." She said that putting her thoughts on paper sometimes helped her feel better, but she noted that other times she was still angry.

Writing also gave Jenna a way to visualize how she wanted her life to be in the future. She said, "It's like, 'Ah, I wish I could be like this,' and then I just kind of write it. I'm like, 'Ahhh…that *could* be me!'" Through fictional stories, she gave her characters attributes or life situations that were superior to her own. She admitted that sometimes her characters were more like goals that she aspired to become. In explaining one story, Jenna changed from describing the character in past tense to present tense, keeping the character as a role model for herself:

> I wrote one where, this one wasn't actually better than me, it was actually kind of like, she wasn't very smart and then she kind of became better than me. She worked up to where she was now or is now, I guess you

> could say. She … had straight A's, you know, in high school, and she goes to school all the time, and she doesn't miss any school unless it's absolutely necessary…she never gets in trouble, you know, that kind of thing…

Jenna said she related stories to herself, something she wanted to be, or something she wanted the world to become. She crafted new worlds for herself that enabled her to achieve her goals and leave her problems behind. She said, "And it's like it's real when I'm writing it, and then I come back to the real world, and it's not so cool. I think my world is so awesome."

Home writing confidence. Jenna was extremely confident in her ability to write at home. She frequently edited her writing and believed she had the ability to continually improve the quality of her work. She said:

> And then I read it, and I'm like, that's pretty good, but I think I need to change this here to make it more….make it make more sense cause sometimes I'll be writing so much I think I write too fast for my thinking or the other way sometimes, and it makes no sense, and I'm like, I know what I'm saying, but I don't think anybody else will…I think what I like is when I'm done, and I'm completely done changing it and everything, I read it, and I'm like, 'I like it.'

When she reread her writing months or even years later, she was still pleased with herself. She said, "I'm like, I remember that moment. That was awesome. I still love it."

Even though Jenna felt good about her writing, she was reluctant to share it with others, fearing negative criticism or false praise. She trusted a teacher in middle school

who had helped her with her writing, and she felt comfortable sharing her writing with her boyfriend because he did not judge her harshly. She said:

> He's not going to be mean to me. He'll tell me if it's bad or if it's good. He's not going to tell me it's good when it's bad. …I just don't like people telling me '[Jenna] I love it,' but in their head they're thinking, 'Oh, that's so awful. That's just awful.' Yeah. I think that's the only thing that bothers me is that I don't want to hear that. I don't want them to lie to me that it's good when it's really not, so I'm just like, 'I think I'll keep that to myself.'

On the flip side, Jenna appreciated receiving positive feedback when it was honest and sincere. On the rare occasions when she showed her writing to friends, their affirmations boosted her confidence as a writer. She said, "It makes me feel good. It makes me feel awesome." She felt safe submitting a story to an online writing competition because only her username, not her real name, would be included in the submission. She was eager to hear comments from readers, but she was also afraid. She said, "I told [my boyfriend] you have to tell me what they say…I'll be too scared. I'm like, I don't want to see. I'm like, tell me if it's good, and if it is, I'll run over there and look."

Finding and accessing good books. Jenna told me she was not a reader, but then she mentioned a handful of books that she had read at home and greatly enjoyed. When I pressed her further, she acknowledged that she enjoyed reading, but she could not find books that piqued her interest. She said, "Yeah, readings not really the problem. It's just I can't find a book that's for me. It's really, really hard for me to find something that I actually like." She loved the book *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, and she started *The Last Apprentice* series by Joseph Delaney, but she could not afford to purchase the

rest of the books in the series. When I asked about checking books out from the public library, she said, " I really would have crazy amounts of late charges if I went to the library and got the books. I really would because I'm always busy." She preferred to set her own reading timelines for books. She also loved Edgar Allen Poe's creepy works, and *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. She noted, "But that's pretty much it. I have to find the perfect one. If I start reading it, and it doesn't catch me like the first chapter, I'm like, I don't like it." Jenna noted supernatural, mystery, and crime books were her favorite genres.

Jenna made attempts to improve her access to new books. She became a library proctor at school, which exposed her to many books she had not seen before. She said, "I think ever since I started working there, I've started reading a little bit more." Jenna also took an elective Graphic Novel class offered at school, even though it did not fulfill a specific requirement for graduation. She thought the class was okay, and she enjoyed some of the reading. She added, "I like graphic novels, but they have to be interesting, too. Like, even though they have pictures, it still won't interest me."

Adult influences. Jenna was encouraged to write by several role models in her life. Her older brother, whom she admired greatly, first gave her the idea to record her thoughts on paper. She explained, "Ever since I was like eight, I've had really bad dreams and everything, and my mom and I don't really get along, and so my brother was like, 'Why don't you try writing stuff down and then hide it so nobody can see it,' and I'm like, 'Oh, okay, I can do that.' And then I do it, and then it eventually all started turning into stories…" Later, while in middle school, her English teacher took an interest in her writing, encouraging her to continue and offering her extra credit. While she didn't care

about the bonus points, she was buoyed by the praise her teacher lavished on her.

Competing activities. Regardless of her schedule, Jenna always made time to write daily, even pushing aside homework to complete the writing that mattered to her. She had daily chores that included extensive housework while she lived with her boyfriend's family. Although she rarely watched television, she made time to play video games or hang out with her boyfriend when he was not busy.

School reading. As a senior, Jenna was not required to take a specific English class, but she could select English electives from a list that included classes emphasizing either writing or literature. Jenna had received a "meets standard" performance level in reading on her last state assessment, but her grades in English classes were usually C's and D's.

Jenna summed up the books she was asked to read in English class in one word – boring. She recalled being assigned *Animal Farm* by George Orwell her sophomore year, and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain her junior year. She did not complete the reading for any of the books. She said, "*Huckleberry Finn*, I couldn't even read that. I couldn't touch it. It bored me to tears. I thought I was going to die. Okay, and then *The Great Gatsby*, which also bored me to tears that I thought I was going to die." In her elective class, Graphic Novels, she actually liked the reading but not the accompanying work. She said, "I loved it until he started making us write papers and do worksheets on what we were reading…it's like, let me enjoy what I want to enjoy. Don't make me do things."

Over time, Jenna discovered ways to complete assignments without actually having to read the books. She learned to pay better attention in class and skim enough of

the novels to complete the assignments. She explained:

> We had to do notes. And you know what I learned to do was…I'm sneaky like that, and I would never read the book. Never read books, okay, that they give me…And they always discuss it in class, so it's like I'm super nerd or something because I can listen to all of the notes that they're talking about, and write them down in my own words to where he doesn't…to where my teachers won't even know that I did it…And then, when the test comes, I usually get like a B or a C on it because I listen, and I remember it.

School writing. Although Jenna thoroughly enjoyed assignments in her elective creative writing class, she was less enthusiastic with the required writing in her regular English classes. Jenna was offered few choices in topics or types of writing, which frustrated her. She said, "I hate being told what exactly to write. I don't like that. Like, you have to write about what you did this summer. I hate those. I did nothing this summer but sit at home, and then I have to come up with the rest of the page. I'm like, okay. This isn't cool." One aspect of class writing she did enjoy was journal writing because she was often given a chance to select her own topic, especially in junior English. She said:

> If you didn't want to write that one day that he gave you a topic, you just write on the top of the page 'off topic' and write whatever you want, and he'll read it. And you don't have a limit of how long it has to be or anything. He gave you like 20 or 30 minutes to write, and I'm like that's not too bad. Like, if you're having a bad day, you just write down your

bad day, and I'm like, I like that.

Jenna also enjoyed a research paper she was assigned her junior year because students were given a choice of authors, allowing her to pick Edgar Allen Poe, one of her favorites. She was enthusiastic, and as a result, she earned an A, when she usually earned lower grades on writing in class.

Jenna reported rarely having writing homework in her regular English classes. She noted that aside from a few essays, she did little writing her freshman and sophomore years as teachers focused more on reading than writing. Last year, however, she said her teacher had students write nearly every class. Most of the writing was done at school rather than assigned as homework.

Creative Writing offered Jenna choice, but it also forced her to try new types of writing that pushed her out of her comfort zone. She gushed, "Great class. Awesome. Love it!" But she added, "I was skeptical at first." When I spoke with her earlier in the semester, she told me she had been required to write a couple of poems. She said, "I'm okay at it, but I think I'm better with stories. Yeah. I think I'm way better with stories." By the end of the class, however, Jenna changed her tune. She had reduced her story writing and began focusing on poems almost exclusively.

Jenna was an eager participant in Creative Writing, often diving into assignments while the teacher was still offering an explanation or examples. After a few minutes, Jenna would pause to think, occasionally erased something, and then began writing again. Once the teacher assigned a prompt, students were given between 10 and 25 minutes to write. The class would grow quiet and only the pinging sound of the radiator could be heard through the room. After each writing session, the teacher initiated discussion and

encouraged students to share what they had written. Jenna listened to classmates read and sometimes returned to her own writing to add a little more, but she never volunteered to share her own work. Discussion often became animated with a variety of students joining in and voices raised. Students excitedly talked over one another, and the teacher would sometimes play devil's advocate to fuel the arguments. During one class observation, students were asked to share modern day Haikus about life, which had been assigned as homework. The teacher worked his way around the room, requiring students to share five of their 10 poems. Many students did not complete the homework. When the teacher reached Jenna, she told him she had not written any. She offered no excuse or explanation, and the teacher moved on to the next student. In reality, Jenna had completed part of the assignment, but she did not want to share with the class.

School literacy confidence. Jenna was less confident about the writing required for class than she was for the writing done at home. She noted that school writing had time and length requirements as well as specific topics, which Jenna did not like. Grades also caused additional pressure to produce writing that appeased the teacher. Jenna said, "I want to try to make it work for them, but at the same time, I want to throw in my own stuff. Kind of like, 'I don't want that. I want this, but I can't have it.'" Although Jenna was open to an honest critique of her papers, she admitted that she did not always agree with teachers' comments. She said, "I don't usually get mad or anything. I mean, sometimes I kind of look at it like, 'Man, that was that bad? Like that's kind of a bummer, you know.' Sometimes I'll get a little upset about it, but I'm like, it makes sense, you know." She generally expected a C on her papers, but often she was surprised with an A or B. In Creative Writing, I asked Jenna if she ever shared her writing aloud on

days when I wasn't observing her class, but she replied, "No. I get nervous."

Jenna's confidence in her ability to complete assigned reading in class was also lower than when she found books she liked on her own. Although she usually did not fully complete reading for her classes because she found it boring, she attempted to skim the books in order to complete assigned work. She noted that the dialect in *Huck Finn* was difficult because she was not used to it. While *The Great Gatsby* was not necessarily too challenging, she said the story did not interest her, so it was painfully slow to read. Jenna's interest in a book impacted the degree to which she would challenge herself to complete reading for class.

Valuing school literacy. Although Jenna did not intrinsically value most of the work she was assigned in her English classes, she generally made an attempt to complete the work because of its utility value – she wanted to earn a good enough grade to pass the class and graduate. All three of Jenna's older siblings dropped out of high school as did her parents. She said, "I want to be the first one to graduate, so I'm excited, 'cuz I'm going to be…My dad is really, really proud of me that I made it all this way. I'm scared, but excited."

On writing assignments, Jenna was also motivated by attainment values as she enjoyed challenging herself to be successful. She said, "I think I finish it to see what I know or what I can really do if it turns out good…I want to see how far I can actually go. I want to see if I can actually do the assignment and actually do more than I just do at home." This was also one of the reasons Jenna enjoyed Creative Writing so much.

Riley

I approached Riley, 17, about participating in my study when a staff member in

the school gave me her name. As a special education student, she was designated as emotionally disturbed. Her grade point average was low, but her performance level on the state reading assessment indicated she met the standard. Both an avid reader and writer, she was eager to discuss her love of both. Riley seemed to enjoy the one-on-one attention she received during our interviews. She smiled and laughed at times, and expressed herself in great detail.

A reader at home. Riley remembered always loving books, but when she was younger, she struggled with reading. When she turned 10, "everything just started to click," and reading became easier. She loved many genres of books and called her choices "eclectic." She was drawn to mysteries, fantasy, romance, and historical fiction. Vampire books interested her, especially those by Anne Rice and Charlaine Harris. She favored Casey Michaels romance novels as well as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, the *Cirque du Freak* series by Darren Shan, and the *Harry Potter* books by J. K. Rowling. She also cited Edgar Allen Poe as one of her favorite authors for his dark story telling.

A prolific reader, Riley usually read for more than an hour every single day. She carried a book with her to school, reading during free time in class or when she was not engaged in the lesson. She joked, "If I have a book that I really love, I will not put it down. I mean, teachers will be like, 'Put that book down, you're going to get acid all over it' if I'm in Chemistry or something." A self-described slow reader, Riley said books with exciting plots seemed to make reading go faster.

Finding books was not difficult for Riley. She checked out books at the school and public libraries and bought books at local bookstores. She explained, "Sometimes I'll

just pick a book out at random at Barnes and Noble and go, well, I haven't heard of this author yet, and then I flip over and read the back cover and the inside panel, and it's like if this author recommends this other author, maybe then I should read it." Riley preferred purchasing her books when she could afford it. She wanted to be able to reread books when she enjoyed them, and she did not like time limitations on checkouts when another patron wanted the same book. When we first spoke in September, she wanted to read Charlaine Harris' latest Sookie Stackhouse novel, but there were 30 people ahead of her on the library waiting list. She was eager to borrow my personal copy when I told her I had already finished it.

Reading as an escape. Riley loved to immerse herself in books as a way to escape from the realities of her own life that made her unhappy. She said, "Whether it's historical fiction or nonfiction, it's taking me to a whole different time or place. It's just different…it's kind of an escape, well, from anything basically, from the harsh reality to the fantasy world that everyone seems to live in except for you." When I asked Riley why she liked to escape through books, she replied with a nervous laugh, "Because sometimes reality hurts."

Peer pressure. Although Riley carried a book with her to school, she preferred to read at home for fear of taunts from peers in her classes. Some students had labeled her a "bookworm" for her penchant for reading at school, and she was not happy about the nickname. She said, "Reading at home just makes you feel more safe in a way than if you were reading at school because you're not going to get labeled as a bookworm or something to that effect."

Home reading confidence. Riley was confident in her ability to read the books

she selected on her own. Even when they were challenging, she stuck with them if the story interested her. When she was younger, she recalled struggling to read *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice, which her mother had not wanted her to read because of her age. Riley could not comprehend all of the story or the graphic descriptions, but she still managed to complete the books. She was particularly proud when she finished any book, but especially the challenging ones. She said, "I feel very confident after I've finally gotten to the last word and the last period and then the end. I feel very happy, and if I like the book so much, and if there's a sequel or it's a trilogy or something like that, then I'm just like, 'Gotta get the next one. Gotta get the next one!"

A writer at home. Riley described writing as an extension of herself, and she spent at least two hours daily on her craft. She wrote in a variety of genres: short stories, poetry, journals, critical essays, and fan fiction. Her writing often explored issues that were going on in her own life, even when it took a somewhat fictional turn. Riley particularly enjoyed fan fiction, which she had been involved with for about three years, because she had an audience to view her work. Fan fiction allows would-be writers to develop their own storylines for existing novels, televisions shows, and movies and post their creations online for other members of the writing community to read. Riley participated in sites connected to literature, movies, and television shows she enjoyed. She often inserted herself into the stories, creating new characters that represented her personality. She said she relied on her muses – her mother, sister, and brother – to inspire her work. When an idea struck her, she said, "I just have to write it down immediately or else I feel like I lost it." Later, however, she would revise her work to make it more polished.

Riley was proud of her writing and tried to keep copies of everything she wrote. She typed the pieces she thought were best and kept them stored on a flash drive, printing some out for other people to read. She noted that her handwriting was difficult to read, so typing was almost a necessity when she wanted to share her writing with others. She had writing saved from as far back as fifth grade, more than seven years ago.

Writing as therapy. Writing helped Riley cope with problems and stress. Much like with reading, she viewed writing as an integral part of her life. She said, "It's a release. It's an entity of myself, so it makes it more…it makes this life more livable, I guess." Riley wrote at home, but she also wrote at school to help make it through the day and express how she was feeling. She said, "I write for myself, so I can make sense of why I'm even at school. I mean, it's like, trying to remind myself why I'm here, and why I'm trying to be educated…it's just complicated, and school's tough. Whenever I get like a really bad grade on a quiz or something, I just go…hmmm…write, write, write." At home, she used writing to deal with the recent death of her uncle, penning personal narratives and poetry, which helped her feel better. She said, "When my dad told me and my sister [that our uncle had died], she was the one that was crying, and I didn't. I was just angry. And basically, I don't know, I just started writing…my first poem that I wrote was 'All Cried Out.' That was the title."

Riley could also express her feelings more freely through writing. She battled depression, which affected the tone of her writing. In past years, she had written about dark topics influenced by one of her favorite authors, Edgar Allen Poe. She explained:

> It was more like the darkness within my soul, you know, the emptiness, the void, the way I felt back then, because I felt like I didn't have very

> many friends…so I felt like a loner, kind of in a way. So it was more a release, you could say, for me to write for myself, and sometimes I just wish I could be heard because it's really difficult to be heard at a high school without addressing the whole school and having straight A's or being a jock or a cheerleader or you know, and I don't fit into any of those stereotypical groups...

More recently, Riley wrote stories that reflected an idealized version of herself and the life she wanted to lead. In her "future writing," she could alter her appearance, personality, or social status. She said, "If I'm writing something that includes, like I wish I could be more popular, then yeah, I'll write something to that effect. I'll try to give myself a more outgoing personality or I'll try to get myself to be more Facebook friendly." Writing about her dreams and goals also helped them become more real in her mind. She explained, "If you want dreams to come true, if you want stuff like that to actually happen, it has to become tangible enough to, you know, be there…it's almost like written proof that you are there."

Home writing confidence. Riley was extremely confident in the writing she produced at home, although she felt stronger about her poetry than her short stories. She frequently shared her writing with her parents, and she occasionally shared with select teachers and friends. The positive feedback she received from these groups raised her self-efficacy as a writer. She described her parents as her support system, and she routinely showed them everything she wrote. One teacher, who Riley particularly trusted, became a source of affirmation that made her feel good about her writing. When I asked her why she felt comfortable with that particular teacher, she said, "Well, because she

understands me better than a lot of other teachers. She understands my disability, and she's just like, 'This is really good. I can't believe you didn't come up with this idea sooner. I can't believe nobody has come up with this idea.'" After posting a poem on Facebook, her friends told her they did not know she was such a good writer.

Adult influences. Many adults in Riley's life inspired her current literacy practices. As a reading teacher, Riley's mother was supportive of her daughter's literary interests and provided opportunities to find good books. Riley developed her love of mysteries when her mother, a mystery reader herself, encouraged her to try that genre. She developed her interest in the *Harry Potter* series, after her grandmother gave her the first book before she was even old enough to read it herself. She explained, "I was still really little, and I didn't know how to read very well at that point, but my mom read to me a lot from that…I'm like, 'This is so cool!' So I really got into it thanks to my grandmother and my mom." She also had plans to start a book club with her mother that would focus on a different author every year, starting with Jane Austin. She was eager to reread *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, two of her favorites.

Family members also ignited Riley's passion for writing. Before she was old enough to write, her grandfather brought her imaginative stories to life by recording them as she narrated. She said:

> I dictated to him, and he would just write out all of these stories I came up with, like, when I was on a swing or something I would go, 'I can almost touch the moon, I swear, and I can almost touch it,' and we did this whole astronaut thing, and Mr. Chipmunk and stuff like that. It was really fun...I've always loved writing and telling stories and being kind of a

storyteller.

Riley began writing regularly when she discovered an old diary that belonged to her mother from high school. It contained poems and other types of writing that inspired Riley. After reading it she said, "Now that's what I want to do!"

Competing activities. Few activities competed for Riley's time. She made reading and writing a priority in her life, even ahead of completing homework, and she did not participate in school activities. She admitted to watching television occasionally for a total of three to five hours a week. She also enjoyed drawing. When ranking her activities, she said writing came first, followed closely by reading.

School reading. Riley was not enrolled in an English class at the time of the study. She was scheduled to take one English course, Senior Composition, the following semester, which she selected from a list of choices.

Riley liked some of the required reading for past English classes, but she was frustrated that so much of the literature was written many years ago by male authors. She recalled reading two to three larger texts a year, including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Odyssey* by Homer, *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and several plays by William Shakespeare. She said, "If you don't enjoy what you're reading, then it's kind of difficult to do the assignment, and you put it off, and then it's like procrastinating, and then it's…it gets rather difficult to hand in an empty assignment."

During her high school years, Riley had to read some novels in class while others were primarily assigned as homework. She disliked in-class reading when it was done aloud, especially using the "popcorn" method. This technique involves students reading

small parts of the text aloud and then calling on others to read the following sections. She noted that students always selected their friends to read, making the process a popularity contest. She said, "It makes me feel kind of irritated, especially when you have barely any friends in the class." She said she preferred to read silently in class and ask the teacher if she had difficulty with a passage.

School writing. Riley enjoyed extended writing assignments in class, but she was frustrated by worksheets that she viewed as "busy work." In most of her English courses, she had been assigned writing several times a month, sometimes to be completed inside of class and sometimes to be completed as homework. The writing usually related to a piece of literature being studied. Riley particularly enjoyed assignments in which she could express an opinion or be given some degree of choice. She noted, "Well, if I could do that a lot more, I'd say I'd be really happy, and I'd get better grades." She had enrolled in Creative Writing as an elective twice in the past.

School literacy confidence. Riley's confidence in her ability to complete reading at school was significantly lower than the confidence she had for books she self-selected. She struggled to complete the assigned reading, but she was more likely to work harder when a book interested her. She said, "I complete a lot of the books, but there's some of them that I barely got through because I didn't either like the subject matter or it just didn't make sense to me, and I couldn't continue reading it because I didn't understand, and then sometimes I'm afraid to ask for help in how to read this." When Riley's frustration level became too much, she simply stopped reading. She enjoyed *The Great Gatsby* and felt confident about her comprehension, but she agonized over the plot and dialect in *Huck Finn*. She said, "I was like, okay, I can't understand what Huck's saying.

I can't understand what Jim's saying. I can't understand what anybody's saying…I finished it, but I didn't really understand a lot of it."

Riley's confidence level as a writer was also lower for school assignments. She noted that she was more critical of her work when she wrote for school and less connected to the subject matter. She said, "If I don't understand it, then I don't understand the subject and it's more like, how am I supposed to do this when I don't even have an opinion on the matter…I'm apathetic towards the matter." Riley had difficulty judging the quality of the work she produced for class. She figured she would either earn an A or an F because she did not know what to expect in the grading. On most assignments, she said she earned a B- or a C. Grades only affected her confidence when she did poorly in an area that she viewed as a strength, such as writing a narrative or a poem. She said, "I take that a little more personal because I'm very good at those, and sometimes it's kind of…if I get a bad grade on it, I'm like, okay, did I do something wrong? Are my emotions in check or what?"

Valuing school literacy. Although Riley did not always intrinsically value the reading and writing assigned in her English classes, she held both attainment values and utility values that motivated her to work harder. She appreciated being challenged by new literature in school, and it added to her self-efficacy as a reader. When asked why she completed difficult texts, she explained, "Because it's a relief that I'm actually done reading it. Or, if I enjoyed reading it, them I'm like, yes, I completed it, yeah…you have to just challenge yourself enough to make you read something that's outside your comfort zone." Riley believed that some of the skills she was developing, such as analyzing literature, would help her later in college. She said, "It makes you feel more empowered

to read something and understand what they wrote." She also tried to complete most of her assigned work in class because grades were important for her future plans, which included community college.

Rakeesha

Rakeesha, 17, strove to be successful academically and socially at school. With a big smile and a friendly personality, she was highly respected among teachers and fellow students. She challenged herself by enrolling in advanced classes, and she represented the school as a cheerleader and a peer mentor. I approached Rakeesha about my study after a teacher mentioned her name at lunch. Rakeesha returned her consent form within a few days, but her schedule was so hectic, we didn't meet until a month later. With cheerleading practice, a job, and homework, Rakeesha was lucky to get a few hours of sleep, and she often looked tired by seventh hour Senior Composition.

Future goals. Future success was very important to Rakeesha. As I spoke with her throughout the fall, she was busy preparing scholarship applications for college. She had applied to several state universities but was undecided about which she would attend. Rakeesha's goal was to major in pharmacy because she wanted to help people. She said, "I figure one of the best ways to do that would be to find something in the sciences I can get involved in."

A reader at home. Rakeesha had been an occasional reader during middle school and the start of high school. During her junior year, however, she received a list of high-quality classic literature from her Pre-AP English teacher. She identified about 20 books on the sheet that interested her and began working her way through the list. When we spoke, she was reading *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane. She said of the

list, “A lot of the books talk about what used to happen in the past…history…how people think, the nature of human beings. They talk about savage –type stuff and just a lot of really interesting stuff that I really, really like.” Rakeesha had an interest in psychology, and she drew connections to the books she read. She also enjoyed reading the Bible. She tried to squeeze in several hours of reading every few days, depending on her schedule. But, she added, “If I have absolutely nothing to do, I will read for hours, two to three hours nonstop reading.”

Reading as an escape. Reading offered Rakeesha an escape from the stress of her busy life. She could fully immerse herself in a good book and forget her other responsibilities and problems. She explained, “I kind of think that once I get into my reading, it’s like nothing else matters. It’s like I can just sit there and read a book, and be so into a book that, you know, my phone goes off, my phone’s ringing or my cell phone text messages, or something, or I’ll just be too into the book to answer them….I really…I like it that much.”

Reading to learn. Rakeesha also valued reading that could teach her something about life. She wanted to learn lessons from literature, much as she could from the Bible. She explained, “I just really like the morals…what I can learn from the book. I don’t really want to read something where I won’t get anything out of it. I think it’s not useful to read something that’s just something to read…unless it’s interesting or it’s just for entertainment, but other than that, I like to read something to get a moral or lesson out of it.” Rakeesha noted that novels expanded her worldview and her opinion on a number of issues, helping her become more educated and well rounded. She said:

Like, say, for instance, if the book was talking about abortion, and I’m

> usually with it, hey, do what you want to do, but if there was a book that talked about it, and talked about the other viewpoint, then I would be like, 'Oh, I never really thought about it that way,' you know. Just to open my eyes to different opinions, and what people really think, and I can actually learn something from these people that are writing these books because they've been through life…

Rakeesha also noted that she could learn how to better deal with her own personal problems by reading how various characters dealt with similar issues. She said, "Some of the characters in the books that I read have went through the same struggles that I have, and when I read about what they did about their struggles, it helped me to realize that maybe I could have tried something different instead of going about my own way…"

Finding and accessing books. Although Rakeesha read occasionally when she was younger, the list of literature books provided by her junior English teacher opened a door of new possibilities. She noted that she sometimes checked out Christian fiction books from the library, and she read her Bible. Other than that, she wasn't sure what to select. She explained, "Before, I really didn't do much reading because I didn't really know what reading I wanted to do. Like a lot of the stuff that I was reading I wasn't really too interested in, and I asked myself, I was like, I wish I had, you know, a list of books I could just…that I know are going to be good." Rakeesha felt confident about the list she received from her English teacher because she respected him, and she knew he would only recommend quality books.

Home reading confidence. Because Rakeesha opted to read classic literature from a teacher-provided list, her confidence in her ability to complete the reading was

about the same as for reading assigned in class. She explained, "I look at the blurb, and I read it, and I'm like, I don't know. I don't know if I can do this, but I still challenge myself to do it. Like, I at least try to read it and try to understand it…" Rakeesha noted a number of factors that lowered her self-efficacy for reading the books she selected. She struggled to comprehend character dialect and word usage from earlier centuries as well as difficult or obscure vocabulary. She said:

> I really like to challenge myself. A lot of the books that are on the list are really, really hard books, so I would have to read a couple of sentences, and then if I come across a word that I don't know, I would take and whip out the dictionary and read it and figure out what the sentence is talking about…I'm used to challenging myself. I always …I've always been in at least one or two honors classes throughout my high school career…

A writer at home. Rakeesha had been a journal writer in the past, but now she focused on poetry. In her journal, she wrote about autobiographical topics, including people and events in her life. Her poetry discussed issues in her life, but it also included topics about nature and the world around her. She said, "Whenever I think about something that's really touching to me, like if I see a mother and her child or something drastic that really happens, I'll write it down, and then I'll make a poem out of it." Rakeesha noted that when she used to ride the city bus, she would look around and observe people, collecting ideas that would later become poems. Her twin brother, whom she loved and admired greatly, also appeared in her writing. In one poem that was accepted in the school literary magazine, she wrote about watching him audition for the school's singing group. She said, "Me and my brother have been through so much…I

wanted to write about something that I felt really, really good about, and that I had a really deep emotion about. I didn't want to just write something that just sounded cool…I just wanted to write something that I could relate to."

Rakeesha was inspired by her friends to start writing poetry when she was 12 years old. Their interest in creative writing led her to try different types of writing for herself. Without extracurricular activities or a job to worry about, Rakeesha wrote frequently in her spare time. She did not share her journal with friends because she did not want to directly reveal her feelings. However, she said she enjoyed writing poetry because she could express her emotions to other people in a different way, creating imagery through the use of metaphors. She said, "I like being creative. I like writing so that when people read it, they get the image in their head or they feel the emotion that I'm feeling when I write it." Rakeesha noted she now wrote less often because of time limitations and a lack of inspiration. She explained, "Because a lot of the struggles that other people have been through, I don't really see any more because I'm not struggling myself, so…I don't really see it much any more."

Writing as therapy. When she younger, Rakeesha kept a journal to help her process the issues she struggled with in her life. She started writing in seventh grade but stopped her sophomore year when she didn't feel she needed it any more. She noted, "Yeah, it definitely helped. I think writing about stuff, writing things down on paper, actually helps you get rid of the feeling, so that way, like, you might still feel angry after you write about it, but you know, a couple of days go by, and you're like, whatever, I'm done, but it really helps. It's kind of like therapy, writing about feelings." By her sophomore year, she had more friends she talked with about problems, and she

discovered counseling support at school. In addition, she said her reading helped her as she learned new ways to cope with issues through the characters in her books. Sometimes Rakeesha also used her journal for "future writing." She recorded goals she had for herself and how she wanted her life to be. It made her goals seem more accessible and tangible.

Home writing confidence. Rakeesha had mixed feelings about her confidence as a writer. She enrolled in Creative Writing I her freshman year and Creative Writing II her junior year, and she compared the poetry she wrote at home with the writing produced by students in class. She evaluated herself honestly, noting that she wasn't the best writer but that some of her poetry was good. She said:

> I never really thought that I was really amazing at it, but I think that when I write something down, and I can read it, and it makes sense, and it flows smoothly, then I feel really good about it…but other than that, if I read something, I'm like, ugh…that doesn't' sound so good. I'll rewrite it or I'll just, you know, discard it or something like that.

After sharing so often in class, Rakeesha felt comfortable showing her writing to most people. She submitted writing to the school literary magazine several times before having two poems accepted for publication. A great deal of her confidence as a writer hinged on the feedback she received from others. She still remembered feedback she received in middle school about a poem she wrote. She said, "Some people have said that I was really good…I remember in seventh grade I wrote a poem, and I wrote it for somebody's funeral, and they used it and really liked it."

Adult influences. A teacher inspired Rakeesha's love of reading. She could not

recall her parents encouraging her to read, and she never saw them read for pleasure. Her junior English teacher, however, assigned a project that required selecting a novel from a list of quality classics. To aid students in their book selection, he discussed each novel, telling students a little about the stories. Rakeesha found a number of books that interested her and marked each with a star. While she was unable to find books that she liked in the past, with the list, she suddenly had 20 titles she wanted to read. She said, "Since he gave us that list, I knew they were good because, you know, he's an English teacher, so he knows what he's talking about."

Competing activities. Rakeesha was limited in the amount of time she had for leisure reading and writing activities because of her busy schedule. She was enrolled in a full academic load, including two advanced classes, which left her with extensive amounts of homework. Every day after school she attended cheerleading practice and performed at Friday football games. She worked 20 hours a week at a pizza chain from 5 to 9 p.m., and then tackled hours of homework that kept her up until midnight or 1 a.m. Her weekends were frequently filled with church activities, including choir practice and youth meetings on Saturdays and church services and volunteer work on Sundays. Still, Rakeesha made time for reading because "I really enjoy it."

School reading. During the study, Rakeesha was enrolled in Senior Composition, a writing class, with plans to take World Literature the following semester. As a result, she was assigned little reading during the semester. She was not required to read more than short articles or essays related to writing assignments, and she missed not reading any books in class. She said, "That's really the only thing I don't like about Senior Comp…I'm always like, 'Are we reading a novel today?' and [the teacher's] like, 'No,

we're learning how to write."

Literature was Rakeesha's favorite part of English class. She enjoyed most of the books she was required to read during her freshman, sophomore, and junior years. She recalled reading *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Old Man and the Sea* by John Steinbeck, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. All of Rakeesha's English classes in high school were at the honors or Advanced Placement level, so she was subjected to more rigorous reading and writing assignments than students in regular classes. She noted that teachers often gave some reading time in class, but she also spent about four hours a week outside of class completing her assigned reading. Rakeesha particularly enjoyed the level of discussion her classes generated. She said:

> We would discuss what's going on in the book, and people would, you know, it would become a debate class. I really like that kind of stuff. So, I like watching people present their opinions and stuff…I never really said anything. I just kept my opinions to myself because a lot of the times…somebody would already say what I was going to say, so I would just watch and see what other ideas people had.

School writing. Rakeesha noticed a distinct difference between writing in her freshman and sophomore English classes and writing in her junior and senior classes. Although she took honors-level English courses throughout high school, she recalled a heavy emphasis on grammar and an abundance of worksheets assigned in her freshman

and sophomore years. She said, "I learned a couple of things…the basics…adjectives, nouns…that's really what we talked about, and I mean, [the teacher] refreshed our memory in Honors Junior English, but we didn't really talk about it. …But 9th and 10th grade it was more nouns and adjectives and adverbs and other stuff." Rakeesha recalled writing several essays as an underclassman, but the expectations were much higher her junior year. She saw her junior English class as a turning point in learning how to write good academic papers. She explained:

> We learned how to write an essay the 'right' way because …we were taught the basics [in other classes], but they didn't teach us that there needs to be a thesis statement in the beginning, you know what I'm saying? They didn't teach us that. Since I've learned that, I've always gone through my writing and said, 'Is this an essay or is this a basic sixth grade essay, your introductory, your three body, and then your conclusion'…So that was helpful.

Formal writing was assigned as homework, and Rakeesha recalled writing at least five essays her junior year. She said she spent two to three hours completing a paper.

This year in Senior Composition, Rakeesha wrote journal entries, personal narratives, a resume, a research paper, and multiple essays. The majority of the 90-minute class periods were spent writing, responding to questions, articles, or topics in a journal. During one observation, the teacher assigned students to read two articles and then respond with their opinion in their journal. The room quieted down quickly as students began reading. About 12 minutes later, about a third of the students began writing, but Rakeesha continued reading. After about 25 minutes, many students were finished and

beginning to talk loudly, but Rakeesha continued to write. The teacher began a class discussion over the articles and student responses, but Rakeesha continued to write for a while longer before stopping and listening to the conversation. She did not offer any opinions from her own journal. During another visit, the teacher conducted a lesson to teach students the importance of questioning the validity of sources prior to starting a research paper. They were given a fake article about Mozart and asked to respond. It contained many difficult vocabulary words and lots of falsified information. The teacher asked students to share their journals about what they thought of the article, and then he revealed the truth of the assignment.

"Are you all just a bunch of sheep and believe this?" the teacher asked students.

The room buzzed with comments. One girl asked, "So we shouldn't trust you?"

"Don't trust anyone. Question everything!" the teacher replied. "You have to question this stuff and think for yourself a little bit."

Rakeesha sat quietly during the heated discussion, listening but not adding any opinions. She wrote quietly in her journal, but she never volunteered to share anything she wrote.

Rakeesha preferred the writing she was asked to do in elective English classes – Creative Writing and Senior Composition – because students were given more choice in topics. She noted that aside from journal entries, she was given few choices about writing in her required English classes. Rakeesha enjoyed assignments more when she had some degree of control, and she said choice was important because "you don't feel so pressured because it's something you get to choose."

School literacy confidence. Rakeesha's confidence in her ability to complete reading for class was the same as for her reading at home since she was self-selecting

books from a school list. She recalled struggling a bit while reading Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in 9th grade. She said, "Since I was younger, I didn't really understand what a lot of the stuff was talking about…the teacher that I had freshman year did explain, you know, some of the stuff that a lot of people were confused about, but it was still confusing, like almost every line was like, 'What are you saying?'" Rakeesha also struggled with the dialect in *Huck Finn* and often relied on help from her teacher. She said, "I understood it once we came back and talked about it. Like if I had a question about something, I would just ask him. Like even on a day I didn't have the class, I would come in and say, 'Hey, what does this mean or what is he talking about here? And he would explain it."

Rakeesha's confidence in her school writing was also mixed. She felt more comfortable with personal narratives in which she could write about her own experiences, but she felt less confident with literary essays. Her self-efficacy was high for the writing assigned in Senior Composition this year because students wrote journals daily in response to various types of prompts and not all writing was graded. She also had the benefit of experience from her rigorous Pre-AP class from the previous year. In that class, Rakeesha had experienced doubts about her abilities, but she overcame her fears through the support of her teacher. She explained:

> A lot of the time I didn't feel too confident because you know, it was an honors class, and I was like, I don't know, 'cause we didn't do much writing before, so I was really iffy about it, but after he would grade them and tell me this is why you got this grade, this is why I marked this wrong, or whatever, I was able to take it back and make it better, and then he

sometimes gave us time to take our essays back and revise them after he graded them, and then turn them back in for a different grade.

Rakeesha also had a track record of solid performances in her English classes, earning mostly A's and B's on assignments and the same for her semester grades. She often judged herself harder, however, expecting a C or worse on some papers.

Valuing school literacy. Rakeesha was motivated by intrinsic values, attainment values, and utility values at various times in her English classes. She enjoyed much of the reading she was assigned, even selecting books from a school-provided list for her pleasure reading. She was not afraid of difficult books because she welcomed the challenge of reading materials beyond her comfort level, even when it required frequent referencing of a dictionary for unknown vocabulary words. Part of her personal identity was wrapped up in being a good student and a school leader. Teachers respected her, and she wanted to make them proud. Rakeesha also worked hard to reach her future goal of a career as a pharmacist. She desired good grades for college admission and for scholarships she needed to pay for tuition. She also believed the reading and writing skills she was learning in her advanced English classes would prepare her for the rigors of college. She said, "Last year I learned a lot that I did not know. I learned how to write an essay. I learned lessons from the stories. I learned quite a bit." When I asked her why she completed her work, she said, "Mostly because it was a requirement because some of the books, like, I did like most of them, like *The Red Badge of Courage,* that was a really, really good book, but I didn't really like *The Old Man and the Sea* too much, but I completed it because it was a requirement…because I want to make good grades…to get into college."

Simone

I first saw Simone, 16, in her oversized hoodie and sweatpants talking to a friend outside my office door. As she waited to speak with the coordinator of the Peer Mentoring program, we struck up a conversation about her favorite university, which was displayed on her sweatshirt, and I shamelessly promoted my alma mater. I gave her a few pencils and a sticker with the university mascot before she left. After several weeks of coincidental meetings, I discovered Simone was an avid reader and writer and recruited her for my study. In the months that followed, she became a regular fixture in my office, visiting during break time, lunch, and even after school before heading to basketball practice.

Future goals. Simone tried to balance school sports with academics, hoping to earn an athletic scholarship to pay for college. After a rocky start her freshman year, she was working hard to earn good grades and transform herself into a model student. She explained:

> I was just bad. I didn't listen. My first semester I just got really bad grades…and then my sophomore year I came back and got really good grades. I don't know…in my freshman year I just didn't do anything…I just didn't like a lot of my teachers, and they didn't care for me, so I just…when I went in there, I just didn't do it….nothing…

Simone said she realized her sophomore year that she wanted to go to college, so she stopped talking back to teachers and started working harder in her classes. When I asked her why college was important, she said, "'Cause I want to be somebody."

A reader at home. Simone enjoyed a variety of books, but she preferred realistic

fiction because she felt she could better relate to the characters and situations. She mentioned *The Lost Boy* by Dave Pelzer and *Not My Daughter* by Barbara Delinsky as recent reads. Previously she had been a big *Harry Potter* fan, but she grew tired of the story over time. She also read most of the *Twilight* series, but they were not her favorite books.

Simone was a voracious reader, devouring several books a week. Although she noted that she had always liked to read since she was little, she stepped up her reading habit in fifth grade through an Accelerated Reader program at school. Now, as a junior in high school, Simone said she read "all the time." She carried a book with her to school and read whenever she completed her work or if she did not understand an assignment and had to wait for the teacher to help her. In the evenings she read for several hours, often doing pleasure reading before required school reading. On weekends, Simone also read for many hours at a time, and she completed books quickly, usually within just a few days. She even admitted carrying a book to the gym and to track meets to read while waiting to compete. Summer was an especially busy reading time for Simone; she read more than 100 books the last two summers. She explained, "I started off with 12 [books a week], and then my mom got mad at me, and she told me to stop checking out all of those books because she didn't think I was going to read them, but I was reading them."

Finding books was not usually a problem for Simone. She visited the school and public library and frequented area bookstores. She looked at book covers, read the synopsis on the back, and often took recommendations from friends. When Simone thought a book sounded promising, she was patient, and she tried to stick with it once she selected it. She said, "Sometimes the story is so drawn out that you have to wait until you

get to like, into the 70s [pages] to really get into the story, and sometimes I'll force myself to read books like that since I started it, but sometimes I don't."

Reading as an escape. Simone often turned to reading when she did not want to think about problems or concerns in her life, providing a needed distraction. She called reading an escape. She said, "I don't know. It takes my mind off stuff when I don't want to think about certain things…like if I have a lot on my plate or drama or stuff like that…or I just have too much on my mind, and I don't want to think about it or deal with it, so I just read."

Home reading confidence. As an avid reader, Simone was extremely confident in her ability to complete the books she selected. She liked to push herself, particularly in the summer, to exceed her previous reading totals. She said, "I like to challenge myself to see if I can do it." Sometimes Simone also selected books that were more difficult for her, especially those with unfamiliar vocabulary. She said, "I think it gets easier the more books I read…. Like there's some words I don't know, but I can say them, and there's some words that I do know, but I can't say them…"

A writer at home. Simone wrote journals about the people and events in her life. She used writing to express her frustrations and to process problems her friends shared with her about their own lives. She said, "I like to write about stuff like that's said to me. Like if my friends come to me complaining of something to me, and it gets stuck in my head, I just write about it…or if I see something." Simone used to write daily, but now she only wrote once or twice a week. She frequently showed her friends the sections she wrote about them. She explained, "A lot of people ask to read it. Or a lot of people ask me do I write any more, and do I write about them and stuff like that, but I don't know…I

guess I just show it to them if it's about them or if I like it, and I think they're going to like it, and they can relate to it, then I show it to them." Simone started writing regularly in sixth grade, keeping her writing in a journal. She said she made several friends cry when she showed them passages she wrote about them. In one instance, she wrote about a friend who cut herself, and in the other, she wrote about the death of that friend's parent. She explained:

> Her dad passed away, and I was close to her parents when he passed away, and I just felt like when he was alive, [my friend] was going down a wrong road, and then once he passed away, I thought it would get worse, and I was right. And that's just what I wrote down, basically. And, I don't know…I think I put in there, like, I hope he's able to watch over her from up there, and keep her on the right path…

Writing as therapy. Simone used writing to cope with her personal problems as well as those of her friends. She said, "Writing just helps me get out my feelings better than talking about it...It just is a way of calming myself down when I'm mad." Sometimes she brought her journal to school to write in class when she was upset. She started writing in sixth grade because of the pressures that she faced. She said, "All the drama in middle school…When I just felt the need to talk about it or get it off my chest, I just write it down." In one entry this year, Simone wrote about being mad at everything and everyone in her life. She said, "I just feel over pressured sometimes. I'm a leader, and I have to be a role model, and I can't get in trouble…I was just frustrated. Sometimes even just writing about it makes me mad." Simone had also written about people's expectations of her and issues with her friends, noting, "Writing does make me feel

better." Several times she wrote about a friend whose life seemed to spiral out of control. Her friend cut herself, became sexually promiscuous, and then tried to kill herself. Writing helped Simone process her feelings about her friend's actions. She said, "That's my way of getting it out without telling them. I never told nobody. I write it down and let them read it. I try to be as honest as I can." She said that when her friends confided in her or complained about their relationships or problems, she tried to capture their concerns from her point of view. Instead of telling them how she felt, she expressed herself in writing. She said, "I write to say how I feel if I don't know how to say it out loud."

Over time, Simone began relying on writing less often, finding new ways to deal with her stress. Later in the semester when we spoke, she reported that being a peer mentor helped her become better at expressing herself verbally. While she used to write daily, now she only wrote a few times a month. She also talked regularly with the school social worker who headed the mentor program. Simone said, "I used to write every day, 'cuz there was always something that either gets on my nerves or gets brought to my attention because a lot of my friends like to talk to me about their problems….so…I don't know…it used to be every day, but I don't write as much any more…There's just no need to write it down."

Home writing confidence. Simone felt good about the writing she produced at home. She said it was different from school writing because she did not worry about grammar or punctuation, and she did not bother to revise her work. When she showed her writing to close friends, they gave her positive feedback about how she captured their situation well, and they often asked for a copy. She said, "Not ultra-confident, but I know if I put my mind to something, and I wanted to write about it in detail… I can do it."

Adult influences. Several adults influenced Simone's literacy practices. Her mother served as a reading role model and provided her with access to books. She read at home, and she encouraged Simone to do the same. She also took Simone to the public library and to Barnes and Noble to purchase books. Simone's seventh grade English teacher encouraged her writing. Because of their strong relationship, the teacher was one of the first people with whom Simone shared her writing.

Competing activities. Although Simone had a busy schedule, she always made time for reading. She was a member of the basketball and track teams, and she served as a peer mentor at school. She did not spend much time watching television, but she had several hours of homework each night. When I asked her how she fit in reading time during her sports seasons, she said she took her books with her to the gym. She noted, "People think I'm weird, but…my coaches tell me that. They say, what person brings a book to the gym?...Like we…sometimes we get there early, and we used to have to wait on people, so I usually just read then. And then we used to have a two-a-day [practice], so we had to stay up here, and we'd have a two-hour break…and I just read then, too."

School reading. Simone disliked the reading she was required to complete for school. She said, "There's been a couple of pieces that we read that I, like, understood them, but nothing I would read outside of school." During the semester we spoke, Simone was enrolled in junior Pre-AP English as a required class and Mythology as an elective. She had taken honors English her ninth grade year but had not been successful. Simone blamed her bad attitude and lack of effort for her poor grade, but she chose advanced English again this year because she thought it would be a good idea for college. Her class read a number of short stories, including "The Minister's Black Veil" and

"Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne as well as the novella *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* by Herman Melville. They also read lengthier texts, including the autobiographical *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. After one observation of her Pre-AP class, Simone told me, "It was so boring. I was trying to stay awake." When I asked her why she had not participated in the class discussion of the reading, she replied, "It was so boring. I had nothing to say." During another class visit, Simone had her eyes closed and her head on her desk during discussion. She told me later she was not sleeping, and she heard everything the teacher said. Later, she doodled to stay awake.

Discussions in Simone's English class were teacher dominated, and she rarely participated in discussions over assigned readings. On one day, students spent 90 minutes reading and discussing packets of Emily Dickinson poems. The teacher had students begin by examining the poems line by line before transitioning to looking at the poems as a whole. After each line, the teacher asked several low level questions followed by his own analysis. Simone read along in her packet of poems, but she did not volunteer to answer any questions or offer any comments. As class progressed, the teacher continued to read poems, adding extensive commentary but rarely involving students. By the fourth packet of poems, Simone's head was on her desk, but she continued to flip pages in her packet when directed. Most students were listening quietly, but they appeared disengaged through their body language and lack of response.

Simone had to read about an hour and a half every day for her junior honors English class even though the teacher gave some time in class to complete required readings. Because the stories and novels usually did not interest her, she often saved

school reading for last. She explained, "Sometimes I'll read the book I want to read, and then I'll try to do the homework, and if I just can't make myself read the story, I just wait before I go to bed, so I just turn off my TV, and I make myself read it." She admitted she did not complete *Huck Finn* due to time limitations, but the teacher went over the story in class, and she paid careful attention. She called the book "boring," but received an 89 percent on her final exam over the novel.

School writing. Students in 11th grade Pre-AP English wrote journal entries, study questions, personal narratives, research papers, and essays. Simone enjoyed opportunities to incorporate her home writing with her school writing. She said she liked "when they ask us to write about stuff that happens in our life that we can relate to the story." Students frequently wrote journal entries in class, but formal writing was always assigned as homework. Simone reported spending a couple of hours a week, on average, completing written work for class.

School literacy confidence. Simone's confidence in her ability to complete required school reading was much lower than for self-selected reading. She noted she could manage, but "I just think some of it is boring and makes no sense." Simone struggled with the poems read in class, and she believed all of the students understood them except for her. She admitted, "I didn't even understand them until he explained them and not always even then." She spoke similarly of her confidence for reading assigned short stories and novels. Although she understood them when the teacher offered an explanation, she said she probably could not make sense of them without that extra support. During one observation, Simone had her head on her desk the entire class and her eyes closed. When I asked her about it, she said she had been up until 1 a.m.

doing homework on Sunday night. She explained, "I did most of my homework early…just the stuff I didn't understand (including English), I didn't do."

Not surprising, Simone's confidence in her ability to successfully complete school writing was also lower than for the writing she engaged in at home. Simone struggled to revise her work, noting that it was not a skill she had ever learned in school. Particularly, her confidence level for grammar and punctuation was extremely low. She believed these were critical areas that teachers valued in writing. She said, "You had to do the right grammar and stuff like that, and that's where I always mess up, the grammar." Her English teacher allowed students to rewrite certain papers within a specified amount of time. Simone turned in a paper analyzing Emily Dickinson poems, but she did not do well on it and planned to revise. When I spoke with Simone one day in early December, she had met with her teacher before school to get help on the paper. She said her essay structure and thesis were not done correctly, so the teacher helped her improve these. I asked her if she understood what she needed to do now, and she said, "A little bit… Not really." Later, she did not have her paper on *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* completed, but her teacher allowed her an extra day with no late penalty because she had gone to see him for additional help. Simone expected to earn no lower than a C on her papers, but her first paper this year had been a D, which further reduced her confidence.

Valuing school literacy. Simone was motivated to succeed in school because of attainment and utility values. After rebounding from a troubled freshman year, she viewed herself as a school leader through the Peer Mentoring program, and she identified as a good student, enrolling in advanced classes to prepare for college. She worked hard to complete all of her assigned reading, even though she thought most of it was boring,

because she wanted to do well on her tests and papers in order to earn good grades. She said, "We have tests over it, and then if you don't read it, you don't know what to do on tests…it affects my grade…I want to have a good grade point average. I got to make up for the lost year my freshman year, so I 'm trying to get really good grades." Once Simone decided she wanted to attend college, she was willing to work harder in school in order to reach her goal.

Chad

As a freshman, Chad, 15, was trying to find his niche in high school. He cut his hair short to join the school's JROTC unit, and he worked hard to keep his anger management issues under control. I first saw Chad while I was observing another student, Dave, in a ninth grade English class. Chad was seated in front of me, and I watched as he wrote furiously in a notebook the entire class, pausing only to reread what he had written. After class I asked Chad about his writing, and he confirmed it was a journal for himself, not work for school. Chad was happy to talk to me about the writing and reading he pursued outside of school.

A reader at home. Chad enjoyed reading poetry and books from a variety of different genres, though he favored love stories, vampire tales, and mysteries. Recently, he had read all but the final book in the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyers, and a similar book, *The Silver Kiss* by Annette Curtis Klause. His mystery reading included the *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* series by Max Allan Collins and the *NCIS* series by Mel Odom. He said, "I love reading books about how things turn out, like someone kills somebody and the murder and stuff like that. That always gets me interested." When we first met, Chad was reading a book from the *Cirque de Freak* series by Darren Shan,

which he really enjoyed. Once he selected a book, Chad could tell early on if he was going to like it and keep reading. He said, "The first chapter explains what's going on, what's going to happen, and stuff like that. That always gets me interested. If I don't see anything wrong with the book, I'll go to the second chapter, and if I see, like, it's kind of becoming dumb or something, I won't read it."

Despite a fairly busy schedule, Chad tried to find time to read every day for an hour or two. He often carried a book with him in his backpack to read when he had extra time. During the summer, he read five books when he was not outside swimming or at the lake with friends. He observed that "a lot of people don't like reading books like I do."

Reading to learn. Chad believed through reading he could learn, not just new information, but ways to solve problems he encountered in life. He said that books offered life lessons about dealing with people and situations. He explained:

> I think it's a way to calm me down and think about the problems because in some of the books, you have problems, but there's a resolution to the problem…and when I read books, I realized maybe I have a problem, and I need to fix it somehow, and so that's maybe why I read books because I can find resolutions to them.

A confident reader. Chad was confident in his ability to complete the books he selected. Although he was proud that he had been tested and could read 200 words a minute, he admitted that he usually only comprehended half of the material when he read that quickly. He often selected books that were a little above his reading level because he enjoyed the challenge, and it forced him to slow down his reading and work harder at comprehension. He noted, "If it's a good book, I'll finish it within two days."

A writer at home. Although Chad composed song lyrics for his band and old-fashioned letters to friends, he most frequently wrote entries in a journal he kept. All of his writing related to people and events that impacted his life. He began writing his diary, or journal, three years ago, using it to process his feelings. He often wrote daily at home or during class when something was bothering him. When I asked him about the day I saw him writing in English class, he said, "I wrote a lot because I was just getting used to classes and stuff and getting used to friends and stuff, and it was really hard for me." When he wrote songs, he usually collaborated with two or three of his best friends from his band. He said, "Song writing helps, too, when you're dealing with stuff." Chad felt comfortable sharing his writing with a small trusted circle of people. He occasionally showed his parents some of his writing because he said, "My parents don't know some of the things that I'm going through."

Writing as therapy. Writing offered Chad a way to cope with his anger management problems and relieve his stress. He explained that his biological mother had been abusive to him when he was very young, coming home drunk and then beating him. One song he wrote, which was self-titled, dealt with the abuse he experienced. He noted he began writing because he frequently fought with his adoptive mother. He explained:

> When you're adopted you don't know…your parents don't know your background sometimes, and being how I am, I'm a very nice person towards everybody, but no one knows my dark side…I just write it down to help me realize that I don't need to yell at them. I just need to write it down on paper…I get mad at people out of nothing, and start fighting with people, and I thought it would help me if I just started writing a journal

about what's going on that day or what I'm going to do…

Chad said that writing had helped him change his behavior and feel less anger toward people. He also thought his writing could help other people who had troubled lives. He befriended a football player at coaching camp who saw him writing in his journal. The player told him his life was messed up as well, but he was having more problems dealing with it. Chad said, "My perspective is that you need to move on. It will still be there, but you can move on and help someone who really needs it, who has the same kind of problem you do."

When Chad felt stressed, he wrote daily; when he felt happy and life was going well, he only wrote every few weeks. He said, "It makes me feel better to get my emotions on paper than having to show it through physical fighting." As the semester progressed, however, Chad told me he was writing less frequently. He became settled into a routine in high school, and he began relying more on friends to help him deal with his problems.

Home writing confidence. Chad was extremely confident in the writing he completed at home. When he reread his journals and songs, he felt good about his efforts. His self-efficacy, however, was higher for journal writing than song writing. He preferred to have the assistance of a friend when writing lyrics. He said, "I like to have someone else's opinion, like Denny [best friend], because Denny is a good songwriter along with me, so I would like someone's opinion." Chad's high confidence was also related to the positive feedback he received about his work. He said, "A lot of people go, 'Wow, that is messed up.'"

Adult influences. Both of Chad's adoptive parents contributed to his love of

reading. He credited his father with teaching him how to read and sharing books and comics with him when he was young. When he was in third grade, Chad began reading more on his own, and his mother helped him tackle increasingly challenging books. He said both of his parents loved to read and encouraged him to read. He explained, "My parents say if you can't do anything else, read a book. If you walk into my house on a regular night, you'll probably see my mom or dad reading a book or studying in a book."

Competing activities. Chad was involved in a mix of activities both in and out of school that often took time away from his reading and writing. He was involved with JROTC at school, and he coached football and basketball through the YMCA. In addition, he played in a band with friends, enjoyed drawing, and played video games with his brother. He also had chores to complete at home. When I asked him about homework, he whispered, "I don't do homework."

School reading. During the semester, Chad's ninth grade English class read a number of short stories from their literature anthology and the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Chad spoke favorably about the assigned reading, noting he enjoyed the book and many of the stories. He saw lessons that could be learned from all of the texts that were relevant to his life.

Chad did not have to complete much reading outside of class. Short stories were read aloud or listened to on tape, and students were given multiple class periods to silently read the novel. If they did not complete the assigned chapters, they were expected to finish the reading at home. Chad rarely took work home, completing his reading in class. He noted, "We have, like, three or four chapters we read, and it's not hard for me to read three or four chapters."

During one class observation, students finished the story "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan by listening to the audio recording and following along in their books. When they finished, the teacher tried to engage the class in a discussion by relating the story to their own lives with questions about parental expectations. Students sat quietly without responding. When her questions became close-ended, more students responded by raising their hands. When she asked how many of them had parents who had expectations for them, Chad raised his hand. The teacher conducted the discussion standing behind her desk with a podium, creating a barrier between her and the students. About 10 minutes into the discussion, side conversations sprang up around the room, and Chad began socializing with the boys at his table. When the teacher wrote notes on the whiteboard, however, Chad stopped talking and copied down the notes.

School writing. During the first half of the semester, Chad was not assigned much writing in his English class, aside from worksheets and study questions. As the semester continued, however, he was assigned more papers per a list of required writing from the district that had to be given to students at different times of the year. The writing was part of a new curriculum being implemented to improve district writing scores. Chad said he did not enjoy most of the writing he was assigned in English class this year or last. He started the year with a narrative writing assignment that had to be completed during class time. He thought the assignment was okay, and he earned an A- on his paper. He was equally successful on an essay over *To Kill A Mockingbird*, earning a B. In past years, Chad was given the opportunity to write poetry, which he said was okay, and he enjoyed an opportunity last year to write about an interesting event in his life. He was able to write about football, which he loved. Chad appreciated choice in writing

assignments and opportunities to write about personal experiences. At the end of the semester, Chad's grades dropped to D's in three classes, but he maintained a B in English.

School literacy confidence. Although Chad had high self-efficacy for reading, he admitted the required texts were sometimes difficult. He particularly struggled with character dialects, such as those in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. He said, "Some of the language is kind of like, 'What are they saying?'"

Chad was even more confident in the writing he produced in class. He noted that he wrote at home more often than he read, so he expected to perform better. His self-efficacy was boosted by the positive feedback and high grades he received on written assignments in class.

Valuing school literacy. Although English class occasionally held intrinsic value for Chad, he was particularly driven to work hard by utility values. He noted, "When she explains it, it's …oh, I want to read this book. But sometimes, I go, I don't really want to read it, but it's a class thing, so I have to do it." Chad completed most of the reading and writing assigned in class because he wanted to earn good grades. As a freshman, he was focused more on short-term benefits rather than long-term advantages of doing well in school. He hoped to earn high enough grades to receive a JROTC promotion and to get permission for a part-time job. He said, "I think if I get my work done, and I get A's, I can get promoted, or get a 4.0 GPA, which is good, which is a good smart grade…my parents want certain grades out of me, so in order for me to get a job, I've got to have A's and B's." Chad had no interest in college, but he considered joining the military or working with his hands as a repairman.

Cross-Case Analysis

Interviews and observations conducted during this study have focused on two research questions: 1) What types of literacy activities are students doing in and out of school? and 2) How do student competency and value beliefs for out-of school literacy practices compare with those for school-based experiences? This section addresses these questions as well as related emergent themes that appeared across multiple student cases.

What types of literacy activities are students doing in and out of school?

Reading at home. Students reported reading books from a variety of genres in their leisure time. Fantasy was the most popular genre with eight of the nine regular readers naming that as one of their favorites. More than half the students had also read Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series and several tried her newest book, *The Host*. Students also enjoyed mysteries, science fiction, romance and some realistic fiction. Popular titles were the *Cirque de Freak* series by Darren Shan, the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, and *Maximum Ride* by James Patterson. In addition, several students reported reading poetry, The Bible, and anything by Edgar Allen Poe.

Writing at home. Students wrote poetry, song lyrics, journal entries, short stories, and fan fiction outside of school. Although some students occasionally wrote fiction, they all reported writing about the people and events in their own lives using a variety of genres. For example, Lexie had written several poems about being in foster care and about being sexually abused by her father. She said, "Sometimes I can write about happy things, but most of the time I write about depressing things 'cuz my life is depressing." Another student, Jenna, wrote about her own life in the form of short stories. She explained, "It's real information. It's like real stuff that's happening, but the

characters are not real, so you know, they're fictional, and I don't know…but it's basically the character is me, just a whole other name." Izayah wrote poetry and song lyrics about girlfriends, ex-girlfriends, and friends. Some of the writing reflected anger, some happiness, and some sadness or loneliness. Overall, poetry was the most common writing form with eight of nine students selecting it. Rakeesha wrote poetry that expressed her emotions, creating imagery through the use of metaphors. She said, "I like being creative. I like writing so that when people read it, they get the image in their head or they feel the emotion that I'm feeling when I write it." Journal or diary writing was also popular with six students reporting they had engaged in that type of writing at some point in their lives. As high school progressed, some students noted they no longer felt the need to record aspects of their lives in a journal.

Reading at school. Students at Truman West High School read a mix of novels, plays, short stories, and poetry throughout their four years of high school. Junior and senior level classes often read more texts than freshman and sophomore classes, giving upperclassmen a greater homework load. Honors and Advanced Placement classes also assigned a greater quantity of reading as well as additional texts not given to students in regular classes. Students in regular classes were assigned two to four novels, a play, and a collection of short stories and poems during the school year. At all levels, some reading was completed in class and some was assigned as homework. In-class reading involved the teacher reading aloud, the "popcorn method" with students reading aloud, audio recordings where students listened to stories on tape, and silent reading.

Aside from the contemporary Young Adult novel *Ironman* by Chris Crutcher, which was used in regular sophomore English, all novels and plays were drawn from the

traditional canon. These included: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, *Romeo and Juliet* and *MacBeth* by William Shakespeare, *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Odyssey* by Homer, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. Short stories were selected from each grade's literature anthology.

Writing at school. Students experienced a mix of study questions, journal topics, and formal papers that were assigned at all grade levels. Writing requirements increased this year as teachers were given a scope and sequence list of assignments from the district to be given at different times during the year. The assignments were part of a new curriculum being implemented to improve district writing scores. In most cases, honors and Advanced Placement classes exceeded the minimum standards set forth by the district. Students in 9th grade English were required to write seven formal papers ranging from 250 to 500 words that were literary analyses, a personal narrative, a persuasive essay, a technical paper, a research paper, and one piece of creative writing. In 10th grade, students were assigned eight formal papers with one at 250 words, four at 500 words, and three at 1,000 words. Formats were literary response, persuasive and expository essays, personal narrative, technical writing, and a research paper. Students in 11th grade were required to write seven papers with lengths mirroring 10th grade students. Formats were persuasive, expository, and narrative essays; technical writing; a research paper; and one piece of creative writing. Seniors selected semester-long classes from a list of choices

that included Senior Composition, World Literature, Creative Writing, and Mythology. Requirements for these classes varied, depending on the course.

At all levels, some writing was completed in class and some was assigned as homework. Students were often given time at school to research or gather information for papers as well as time to begin the writing process. Aside from timed essays, most formal papers had to be completed at home with a final typed copy.

Worksheets were also a significant type of writing assigned in most classes. Students in freshman English experienced a heavy emphasis on grammar instruction through practice worksheets. Study questions were assigned regularly in all English classes observed, although they were used more frequently in regular classes than honors or Advanced Placement classes.

How do student competency and value beliefs for out-of-school literacy practices compare with those for school-based experiences?

Value beliefs. The type of value students placed on their literacy activities at home was different from the value they assigned to their work at school. Students engaged in reading and writing in their leisure time because it held intrinsic value for them. They didn't participate in the activities merely for fun; the literacy experiences helped students deal with troubling aspects in their lives. Students attached more value to those activities because they fulfilled their specific needs. Although the intrinsic value for reading and writing at school was reduced, the utility and attainment values for the tasks were higher. Students perceived various literacy activities as necessary for obtaining their future goals and for fulfilling certain achievement and social needs.

Reading as an escape. Most of the students viewed reading as an escape from

their daily problems or circumstances. When they were immersed in a good book, they could forget the realities of their own lives and focus on the imaginary world of a novel's characters. Seven of the nine students who identified as avid readers perceived books as a form of escapism. Izayah enjoyed fantasy stories because they offered an alternative reality. He said fantasy was "something you don't see every day. Something you don't hear about every day…in a fantasy book, people ride on dragons, you know, people casting spells on you or saying a word and a tree comes down and grabs you, and stuff like that." Marcus turned to books to "get away from it all." When Sarah faced a transitional time with her peer group, she found comfort in reading. She liked "being able to just kind of zone out in a way, I guess, and just kind of forget things that are going on in the outside, and just be able to go into this other world." Simone also saw books as a happy distraction from her problems. She said, "I just have too much on my mind, and I don't want to think about it or deal with it, so I just read." Lexie said that books gave her something to look forward to, but "in a way, you kind of want it to be real." Reading served a practical purpose in the lives of the students.

Reading to learn. Books offered some students life lessons that they could apply to their own lives. For example, Dave enjoyed reading books in which the protagonist faced great obstacles, just as he had in his own life. He seemed to gain insight by reading about how characters overcame their problems. Rakeesha also saw aspects of her own life in books. She wanted novels to have a moral or lesson that she could learn from. She said, "Some of the characters in the books that I read have went through the same struggles that I have, and when I read about what they did about their struggles, it helped me to realize that maybe I could have tried something different instead of going my own

way." Similarly, Chad believed he could fix his problems by reading. He said, "That's maybe why I read books because I can find resolutions to them."

Writing as therapy. Writing gave students an outlet for their stress in coping with difficult situations. All nine students who wrote in their leisure time used writing to process their problems and express their emotions. Izayah said, "If you have anger in you, then just write it down. You don't have to go around screaming to the world or shoot up a school or something to get your feelings out." Chad also used writing to cope with his anger management problems, and the abuse he experienced when he was younger. He said, "It makes me feel better to get my emotions on paper than having to show it through physical fighting." Expressions of anger were common topics for students, especially as they dealt with fights with friends and parents. Brittany said, "It relieves me of my stress instead of like yelling or something. It's an easier way, like, out, kind of…when I get in fights with my parents and stuff." The students all acknowledged that they felt better as a result of processing their emotions through their writing. Simone said, "Writing just helps me get out my feelings better than talking about it...It just is a way of calming myself down when I'm mad." Rakeesha said, "I think writing about stuff, writing things down on paper, actually helps you get rid of the feeling, so that way, like, you might still feel angry after you write it, but you know, a couple of days go by, and you're like, whatever, I'm done, but it really helps. It's kind of like therapy, writing about feelings." Riley, who suffered from depression, viewed writing as an integral part of her daily life. She said, "It's a release. It's an entity of myself, so it makes it more…it makes this life more livable, I guess."

Many students believed they could express themselves better through writing than

talking about issues in their lives. Writing gave Brittany a voice to share her feelings. She explained, "It's a way to get what I have to say out if I can't talk to anybody." Lexie also believed she could only reveal her true self through her writing. Poetry offered her a way to express her feelings safely as she wrote about the verbal and sexual abuse she suffered before entering foster care. She said, "It helped me express my anger and hatred toward [my father and stepmother] and my love for my little brothers and everything, and since I couldn't express it emotionally because if I did, I would be shut down or I would get beat or something, I would just write it in there, and like, I could let my feelings out." When Simone's friends confided in her or complained about their relationships or problems, she tried to reflect their concerns from her point of view. Instead of telling them how she felt, she expressed herself in writing. She explained, "I write to say how I feel if I don't know how to say it out loud." Writing provided students with a voice to share their feelings when they could not express themselves verbally.

Students also used writing as a means to visualize their ideal selves and their goals for the future. Riley wrote stories about the life she wanted to lead, even changing her appearance, personality, and social status. She said, "If I'm writing something that includes, like, I wish I could be more popular, then yeah, I'll write something to that effect. I'll try to give myself a more outgoing personality or I'll try to get myself to be more Facebook friendly." Jenna also used writing to visualize a better life. She penned fictional stories in which her characters had attributes superior to her own. She admitted that sometimes she created characters that represented who she aspired to become. She said, "It's like, 'Ah, I wish I could be like this,' and then I just kind of write it. I'm like, 'Ahhh…that *could* be me!'" Dave also wrote semi-fictional stories about going to

college, owning a business, and playing major league baseball. He explained: "It's basically something I have to live up to. I have to be better than this…But every time I write about something, I'm like wow, that's someone everyone's going to look up to. I've got to be better." Rakeesha and Lexie expressed their goals more directly, openly describing how they wanted their lives to be. For all of the students, writing about their dreams helped them believe their goals were attainable. Riley explained, "If you want dreams to come true, if you want stuff like that to actually happen, it has to become tangible enough to, you know, be there…it's almost like written proof that you are there."

Reaching future goals (utility value). Most of the students made an effort to be successful in school because of their future school and career goals. They completed their assignments in order to earn good grades, which they perceived as necessary for college admission and future employment. For example, Izayah completed his assignments in English, even when he disliked them, because he believed higher grades could lead to scholarships and acceptance at a better college. He selected Senior Composition from a list of other choices because he thought learning to write essays would help him prepare for college. Sarah also thought the writing skills she was learning in class might benefit her later, even though she did not intrinsically value the content. She said, "I imagine in the long run that's why we're doing it, to help us…to help me be able to write those different things." Rakeesha hoped the skills she learned in advanced English would prepare her for the rigors of college. She said, "Last year I learned a lot that I did not know. I learned how to write an essay. I learned lessons from the stories. I learned quite a bit." As a senior, she was focused on college and had dreams of a career as a pharmacist. She wanted to earn good grades for college admission and for scholarship opportunities.

Even Dave, a freshman, was serious about completing his work in order to make his future goal of college a possibility. He said, "I'm graduating. I'm not going to fall behind. I'm going to do my best."

For some students, being the first in their family to graduate from high school was a strong motivating factor. Neither of Lexie's parents graduated, and although she did not like school, she wanted to do well enough to graduate. Earning a diploma was also important to Jenna, whose parents and three older siblings dropped out. She said, "I want to be the first one to graduate, so I'm excited, 'cuz I'm going to be…My dad is really, really proud of me that I made it all this way. I'm scared, but excited." Failure also frightened Brittany, who said, "I don't want to be a loser." Her parents stressed the importance of school because her father did not graduate. As Brittany and the others focused on validating their competence through graduation and college acceptance, they demonstrated a performance goal orientation. The students were more focused on grades and avoiding the appearance of low ability than they were on learning new skills.

Meeting challenges (attainment value). Some students worked hard because they enjoyed being challenged, while others also perceived school success as central to their identities as school role models. For example, Dave, an African-American male, believed he had a responsibility to represent his racial group in a positive light, working harder than others to prove himself. His sense of his identity was linked to being a good student and a role model for others. He explained:

> Most kids, no offense, but African Americans, they take advantage of what our forefathers did so we could get an education. I don't want to do that. I don't want to be like everyone else….'cuz they all say, 'Oh, well,

> I'll just make it up,' and they get bad grades. They fail classes. And I try to tell them, there are people who died for you, so you can get an education. I'm going to use that to my advantage.

Simone also felt pressured to maintain high grades and stay out of trouble in order to set a good example as a peer mentor to 9th grade students. Similarly, part of Rakeesha's personal identity was also related to being a strong student and a school leader. She had a reputation as a role model, and teachers respected her academic work. Even when reading for pleasure, Rakeesha liked to challenge herself with difficult books that pushed her beyond her comfort level. Both Lexie and Simone set personal reading goals for the number of books they wanted to read outside of school. Simone liked to set personal goals because reaching them made her feel proud. For Lexie, the goals were something she knew she could attain. She said, "I really don't have any other goals to look forward to." Lexie desired a sense of accomplishment in an area of her life where she felt successful and in control. In school, Jenna enjoyed challenging herself on writing assignments. She said, "I think I finish it to see what I know or what I can really do if it turns out good…I want to see how far I can actually go. I want to see if I can actually do the assignment and actually do more than I just do at home." Students affirmed their identities and engendered feelings of competence through the challenges they set for themselves. They demonstrated mastery goal orientation in their desire to challenge themselves for their own benefit.

Seeking choice (intrinsic value). Students were more motivated when given some choice in their reading and writing activities. They stayed more engaged, reported higher self-efficacy, and performed better on assignments. Brittany, for example, disliked most

of the writing required in English class. When she was assigned a personal narrative, however, she had choice in her topic, allowing her to write about the death of her grandparents. She was confident in the assignment, expecting for the first time that semester to earn an A. Sarah also had her doubts about most papers she wrote in class, noting, "I never can really get what I'm saying down on paper…I'm not very confident in what I write." The exception, however, was the research paper on an author Sarah was assigned during the semester. It was the first paper in which she had a choice in topics. Although she thought the project was difficult, she said, "I felt pretty confident about it." Lexie and Jenna also reported enjoying that same assignment as juniors because they had choice in author and the information they included in their papers. They both selected one of their favorite authors, Edgar Allen Poe. While Lexie usually earned C's on her writing, her author paper earned her a B. Jenna, who usually earned C's on her writing, earned an A on her paper. Lexie said she was also more likely to finish assigned reading if there was some choice in the selection of books. Likewise, Riley relished the opportunity to express her opinions through some degree of choice in assignments. She noted, "Well, if I could do that a lot more, I'd say I'd be really happy, and I'd get better grades." Dave started the school year with a personal narrative that allowed him a choice of topics. He wrote about his entry into foster care, which was a significant event in his life. He said, "I enjoy when we get to choose what we're writing, when we're not limited in our topics, but we get to choose everything completely."

Elective English classes were popular with students because they offered more choices. Rakeesha took both Creative Writing and Senior Composition because of the greater opportunities for choice. Rakeesha preferred assignments in which she had some

degree of control, and she said choice was important because "you don't feel so pressured because it's something you get to choose." Jenna also elected to take Creative Writing after growing frustrated with the rigidity of her regular English classes. She said, "I hate being told what exactly to write. I don't like that." Brittany called Creative Writing one of her favorite classes. When given choice and some control over their assignments, students were motivated to work harder.

Competing activities. Despite their busy schedules, students made time to engage in reading and writing outside of school because they valued the activities. Students juggled homework, jobs, chores, sports, extracurricular activities, and free time with friends. They read during breaks at work, during down time at school, and even while waiting around during sports practice. A few prioritized their home reading and writing activities ahead of their homework. No matter how busy they became, they always found time for the activities they valued most. Sarah, an avid reader, said, "When I get my homework done, I usually just sit down and I read. I don't watch TV a bunch…so I'm just in my bedroom, and I read all night…When I am reading a good book, I make sure I find time whether that's staying up late, I make sure I find time to actually read the book and finish the book."

"Getting by": Although students wanted to be successful in school, they often found ways to cut corners, exerting the minimum effort needed to meet their goals. For example, Lexie admitted that she completed just enough of the assigned reading to finish the assignments. She also turned to the Internet for answers. She said, "I skim through the chapter of like…which chapters we're talking about and everything, but then I'd get online and get the details." Lexie could "fake" her way through assignments without

completing the necessary reading. This was a common point for students. Dave also said he did not always complete the reading, relying on skimming or reading together in class. Jenna discovered she could pay better attention in class, take copious notes, and skim just enough of the reading to do her assignments. She explained:

> And you know what I learned to do was…I'm sneaky like that, and I would never read the book. Never read books, okay, that they give me…And they always discuss it in class, so it's like I'm super nerd or something because I can listen to all of the notes that they're talking about, and write them down in my own words to where he doesn't…to where my teachers won't even know that I did it…And then, when the test comes, I usually get like a B or a C on it because I listen, and I remember it.

Other students also relied on teacher summaries provided in class. Simone, who was enrolled in a pre-AP English class, admitted she did not complete *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by the deadline. However, she said the teacher went over the story in class, and she paid careful attention. Despite not finishing the novel, she received an 89 percent on her exam. Students demonstrated a performance goal orientation in their effort to "get by" without completing all of their work. They valued the required tasks only because they cared about their grades.

Competency beliefs. Students' beliefs about their ability to be successful readers and writers was higher for the activities they self-selected at home than for the work assigned at school. For example, when speaking of her home writing, Lexie said, "I'm pretty confident about it besides letting other people see it. When I reread my writing, it makes me feel happy, knowing that I've accomplished something." She expressed less

confidence in the work she produced for school. Similarly, Simone, a voracious reader, confidently selected books to read at home. Her self-efficacy for reading in her pre-AP English class, however, was much lower. She struggled with Emily Dickinson poems read in class, and she believed she was the only student who did not understand them. She admitted, "I didn't even understand them until he explained them and not always even then." Her self-efficacy was also lower for assigned short stories and novels in class. Although she understood them after the teacher offered an explanation, she said she probably could not make sense of them without that extra support. All but one student expressed significantly lower self-efficacy for school-assigned reading and writing. The only exception was Rakeesha, who selected her home reading from a list of classic literature given to her by her English teacher. In her case, her expectancies for success in reading were the same in both settings.

Success breeds confidence. When students experienced school success, they felt more confident about their ability to do well in the future. For example, Marcus transformed himself from a struggling reader in elementary school to a more confident reader in middle and high school. When he finished a challenging book at school, his self-efficacy for reading was high, and he believed he could be equally successful on his next assignment. He said he felt like "king of the world" when he finished a book because "most of the books at school really don't grab you by the gut, so, once I've finished a book that's not really me…It makes me more confident about reading." Rakeesha was also buoyed by her school success. She had enrolled in all honors and advanced English classes in high school, and she had earned a solid record of A's and B's. Although she often judged herself more harshly on individual assignments, she never

doubted she could be successful in her classes. Conversely, several students experienced a decrease in self-efficacy during the course of the semester due to poor performance. Simone expected at least a C on her English papers, but her first paper of the year earned a D, which reduced her confidence for being successful in an honors-level course. Similarly, Izayah entered Senior Composition also expecting to earn at least a C on his assignments, but he received a string of D's during first quarter that left him less confident.

Self-efficacy and control. Students' self-efficacy for home reading and writing practices was higher because they had more control over the process. They could select the genres they liked, the difficulty of the text, and the timeline for completion; they could even choose to stop reading or writing if they lost interest. For example, Sarah liked setting her own reading pace, so she could take her time with more difficult books and still comprehend the text. But, she admitted, "I can really get into them, [and] easily read, you now, 400-500 pages in easily two days, two to three days." When Sarah was really interested in a book, she could read faster and still "get everything out of it." Lexie added, "In class, like English class, you have a certain time to read a certain amount." Marcus also expressed higher self-efficacy for his home reading because he could select his own books, and he had the authority to abandon a book for any reason. In writing, Jenna did not like the time and length requirements or required topics. She also felt pressure to produce writing that pleased the teacher, not herself as the writer, in order to earn a good grade. She was unhappy about losing control over her creative direction. Jenna said, "I want to try to make it work for them, but at the same time, I want to throw in my own stuff. Kind of like, 'I don't want that. I want this, but I can't have it.'"

Self-efficacy and choice. Students' self-efficacy for school reading and writing tasks was higher when they were given choices or when the assignments were similar to their literacy activities outside of school. For example, Brittany felt extremely confident in her personal narrative, and she expected to earn an A when her grades had otherwise been C's. She was able to write about the death of her grandparents – a topic that interested her and that she had written about previously at home. Similarly, when Dave was assigned a personal narrative at the start of the year, he was also excited to write about a familiar topic, his entry into foster care, because he had previously explored the topic in his home writing. Izayah also had more confidence in schoolwork when the assignments closely mirrored the types of writing he preferred at home. He was confident at the start of the semester when writing poetry, since that was a genre with which he had the most experience. His self-efficacy for writing essays was highest at the start of the semester of Senior Composition when he could express his opinions on topics of interest, including books he enjoyed. Moreover, Lexie's interest in a writing topic influenced her self-efficacy in the assignment. When she was given choice on a research paper, she was enthusiastic and assured. She said, "I loved that assignment. If I like the assignment, I have total confidence in myself, but if I hate the assignment, then I'm like, I'm not going to do it, so I do a crappy job, and when we turn it in, I don't know, sometimes I feel embarrassed when I turn in my work."

Intrinsic value and challenges. Students had higher self-efficacy for the task of reading and were more willing to tackle challenging texts when they enjoyed the books. For example, Riley admitted she sometimes struggled with school reading, but she said she worked harder to finish books that interested her. She said, "I complete a lot of the

books, but there's some of them that I barely got through because I didn't either like the subject matter or it just didn't make sense to me." Similarly, Riley said she stuck with difficult books if she liked them. When she was younger, she tackled *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice. She could not comprehend all of the stories, but she managed to complete the books. She said, "I feel very confident after I've finally gotten to the last word and the last period and then the end. I feel very happy, and if I like the book so much, and if there's a sequel or it's a trilogy or something like that, then I'm just like, 'Gotta get the next one. Gotta get the next one!'" Izayah also recalled reading a difficult book where "like every word was like 20 letters long," but he finished it because he was "hooked" on the plot. On the other hand, students were more likely to abandon difficult books they did not enjoy. Sarah noted that books with challenging vocabulary and phrasing, such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, frustrated her. She said, "Sometimes I just don't care enough to stop and try to actually figure it out." Similarly, Jenna's interest in a text impacted her willingness to challenge herself to complete the reading. She said that *The Great Gatsby* did not interest her, so it was painfully slow to read.

Value and task difficulty. When students did not sufficiently value the reading or writing tasks they were given, and the tasks were too difficult, they often gave up out of frustration. For example, when Riley encountered books that were too difficult, she simply stopped reading. Similarly, Brittany admitted that she did not finish assignments when she was confused. She said, "If I look at a paper, and I don't understand it, I just don't try…Like I do the worksheets, but if I don't know some of the answers, I just leave them blank." Later in the semester, when she noticed she was failing a number of classes,

including English, she reiterated that point, explaining, "If I don't know something, I guess I just don't do it." Although Dave was not easily frustrated, he made excuses about why he did not complete some of his work. He said, "Sometimes when I just don't want to do it….I'm going to tell the truth here…I say, this is hard, but it's not really. I just don't want to do it." Dave used frustration as an excuse for not finishing his work when he did not see sufficient value in the assignment.

Feedback and writing self-efficacy. Feedback from others influenced student self-efficacy for various writing tasks. Negative comments, or the fear of criticism, made some students too afraid to share their writing. Students who had experienced praise from friends, family, or teachers expressed greater confidence in their writing. For example, Lexie's view of herself as a writer was shaped by the perceived judgments of others. She was hesitant to share her writing because she feared people would be critical. She said, "I don't want them to make fun of me for what I'm writing 'cause I think, like, these days people are very judgmental, even if you've known them forever. They still judge you." Similarly, Brittany feared the possibility of negative feedback. Although her friends had never judged her writing harshly, she still had doubts. She said, "Sometimes I don't want to show people because I think they'll think that's retarded or they don't like it or something, so I don't show a lot of people, except my close friends…I'm always afraid of what other people will think of me, like with anything." Those who had received positive feedback felt a boost in confidence. Jenna said, "It makes me feel good. It makes me feel awesome." Rakeesha's writing confidence also hinged on the opinions of others. She recalled feedback she received about a middle school poem that still gave her a sense of pride five years later. She said, "Some people have said that I was really good…I

remember in seventh grade I wrote a poem, and I wrote it for somebody's funeral, and they used it and really liked it." Grades, another form of feedback, also impacted students' beliefs about themselves as writers. For example, after receiving D's on most of his writing in Senior Composition, Izayah's confidence for essay writing declined. He said, "I'm bad at essays. I can write music. I can write poems…but I can't write essays." Conversely, Marcus, who earned good grades on his writing in middle school, entered high school with confidence in his writing ability. Chad's self-efficacy for writing was also boosted by the positive responses and high grades he had received on class assignments.

Finding and accessing books. Motivation to read at home was affected by students' inability to identify and obtain high-interest books. For example, Dave read less during the summer when he did not have access to his school's library. He owed a $20 fine to the public library that he could not afford to pay, so he had nowhere to turn for books during the summer months. When school started, he immediately checked out several books and began reading again. Other students, like Sarah, had difficulty locating books that appealed to their interests. When I first spoke with her in September, she had completed a six-book series during the summer, but she had not found anything new to read since school started. In November, Sarah was still without a book. She had located one that looked promising at a bookstore, but she could not afford to purchase it. I began loaning Sarah young adult books from my personal library that I thought she might enjoy. She devoured each book in a matter of days. I began bringing books by the bag full, so she didn't have lulls in her reading over winter break. During the last two months of the semester, Sarah read nearly a dozen books. Looking back at her reading lapses, she

explained, “I just…I didn’t know what I liked.” Similarly, Rakeesha read only sporadically until a teacher gave her a list of high-quality literature books and took the time to describe each one. She marked the books she was interested in and began working her way through the list. She said, “Before, I really didn’t do much reading because I didn’t really know what reading I wanted to do. Like a lot of the stuff that I was reading I wasn’t really too interested in, and I asked myself, I was like, I wish I had, you know, a list of books I could just…that I know are going to be good.” Unlike Rakeesha, Jenna was still looking for books that she could enjoy. She called herself a nonreader, but she listed a number of books that she had read in the past and really liked. She said, “It’s just I can’t find a book that’s for me. It’s really, really hard for me to find something that I actually like.” When students could find and access books that interested them, they read prodigiously in their free time.

Adult Influences: Both families and teachers contributed directly and indirectly to the literacy practices of students. Adults served as role models by engaging in literacy practices themselves, and they provided experiences and access to materials to support students in their activities.

Families and reading. Most of the students who were avid readers had at least one parent who also read regularly at home. For example, Izayah developed his love of reading after borrowing a fantasy book his stepfather left around the house. He said, “I liked it a lot, and so I kept reading and kept sneaking [my stepdad’s] books into my room…Me and my stepdad, like, never really got along, but books and games we had in common.” Marcus, Sarah, and Simone all saw their mothers reading, which inspired them to read more often as well. Lexie’s stepmother regularly read Harlequin romance novels,

and her grandmother read mystery books; Lexie developed a passion for both genres. Riley's mother, a reading teacher, loved mysteries and encouraged her daughter to try that genre. Together, they planned to form a book club that focused on a new author each year, starting with Jane Austin. Both of Chad's parents were readers and contributed to his love of reading. He explained, "My parents say if you can't do anything else, read a book. If you walk into my house on a regular night, you'll probably see my mom or dad reading a book or studying in a book." In each of these cases, adults, usually parents, served as reading role models for students, initiating or encouraging the same behavior in their children.

Providing access to books: Students read more often when they had a steady supply of high-interest books available to them. Family members directly and indirectly encouraged reading by keeping books in their homes, making trips to the local library, and purchasing books for their children. For example, Sarah's mother was a James Patterson fan, and she instilled that love in Sarah by loaning her books. Her mother also bought her new books that they could both read together, and she purchased additional books for Sarah as birthday and Christmas gifts. As a reader, Izayah's stepfather had books in the house, and both of his parents also bought him books for his birthday and Christmas. Lexie began by reading romance books her stepmother left around the house. She said, "After she was done reading it, she gave it to me and told me I could read it, and I read it. I thought it was really good." Lexie's grandmother also passed along books to her from a murder mystery series, sparking her interest in true crime novels. Riley's mother provided her with opportunities to find good books, and her grandmother started her off in the *Harry Potter* series by buying her the first book. Simone's mother took her

to the public library and to Barnes and Noble to purchase books. Marcus's mother took him to the library every week to check out new books. The students attributed their parents' actions with developing their appreciation for reading.

Teachers also played a role in challenging students to become better readers and helping them find good books. Marcus struggled as a reader in elementary school until his fourth-grade teacher began working with him one-on-one. She sparked his interest in reading by helping him find books that interested him. Rakeesha's high school English teacher inspired her love of reading by giving her a list of high-quality classic novels. Rakeesha had struggled to find books that appealed to her in the past, but she was excited by her teacher's recommendations. She said, "Since he gave us that list, I knew they were good because, you know, he's an English teacher, so he knows what he's talking about."

Families and writing: Adults provided words of encouragement and served as role models, which inspired students to write. For example, Riley's passion for writing started before she could even spell. She recited stories to her grandfather who recorded them. She said, "I dictated to him, and he would just write out all of these stories I came up with….I've always loved writing and telling stories and being kind of a storyteller." When Riley was older, she discovered her mother's old diary from high school that contained poems and stories. After reading it, she said, "Now that's what I want to do!" Brittany's mother also encouraged her to write by buying her diaries. When Brittany showed her a poem she had written, her mother gave her positive feedback, which inspired her to keep writing. She later showed Brittany writing she had done in high school and kept in a special journal, motivating Brittany to do the same. Brittany said, "I want to keep all my stuff, so I can, like, show my kids." Similarly, Jenna's older brother,

who she viewed as a role model, convinced her to write about her feelings. She explained, "Ever since I was like eight, I've had really bad dreams and everything, and my mom and I don't really get along, and so my brother was like, 'Why don't you try writing stuff down and then hide it so nobody can see it,' and I'm like, 'Oh, okay, I can do that.'" For many students, adult figures inspired their decision to write or encouraged them by responding positively.

Teachers also influenced students' love of writing through the type of feedback and encouragement they offered. Their comments raised students' self-efficacy for writing, motivating them to continue the activity. For example, Izayah's interest in poetry began with a project in his English class and positive feedback from his teacher. He said, "I wrote it, and [the teacher] was just awestruck. And I was like, well, that was pretty fun. I should do more." Once he realized he had a talent for poetry, he continued writing on his own outside of school. Similarly, in middle school, both Jenna's and Simone's English teachers provided positive praise about their writing and encouraged them to continue. They both felt confident as writers to continue writing at home. Simone also felt comfortable sharing her writing with her teacher because of their strong relationship.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

"If we want to nurture lifelong readers and thinkers,

to cultivate social responsibility, to make reading relevant to the 21st century,

and to bring joy to reading, then the status quo will not suffice."

– Wolk, 2010, p. 10

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the factors that motivated students' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Both within-case and cross-case analyses were conducted using student interviews, class observations, and writing samples. Students participated in an initial in-depth interview followed by informal follow-up interviews throughout the four-month study. Those students currently enrolled in an English class were observed at least six times during the semester, and samples of work were collected from students who were writers outside of school. The student participants were avid readers and/or writers attending an urban high school. This chapter will summarize and discuss the results of the study, identify implications for educators, and explore opportunities for future research.

Student Reading and Writing

Question 1: What types of literacy activities are students doing in and out of school?

Students' reading and writing practices at home are generally far removed from those at school. While students self-selected a mix of young adult and contemporary fiction, school reading consisted primarily of classic works from the established canon in which students did not have any choice. This is consistent with Gamoran and

Carbonaro's (2002) findings that found most high school students are not given choices in their reading selections, and Ivey's (1999) assertion that school reading often does not match the interests of students. The disparity of interests between student and teacher selected texts is further illustrated by genre. Students favored fantasy and mystery genres while school reading focused on realistic fiction.

Additionally, students' home writing consisted of journaling, poetry, song lyrics, and short stories that focused on issues in their lives; school writing centered more on academic discourse often related to literature. These findings support a study by Schultz (2002) that concluded students' writing lives at home were separate from school. Written work at school also involved worksheets, study questions, and grammar reviews. This was consistent with the findings in a national survey of writing by Kiuhara, Graham, and Hawken (2009) that worksheets and short answer responses to homework were some of the most frequently assigned types of writing in English class.

Student Value and Competency Beliefs

Question 2: How do student competency and value beliefs for out-of-school literacy practices compare with those for school-based experiences?

Reading as an escape. Students value reading because it helps them mentally escape from problems and concerns in their lives. When students were reading a book that interested them, they became fully immersed in the story and characters. One student noted that reading allowed him to "get away from it all," while another said she liked being able to "zone out." Reading kept boredom at bay, served as a comforting friend, and offered students a respite from unpleasant aspects of their lives. The chance to enter a different world and live vicariously through the adventures of the characters was a refuge

from reality. This is consistent with a Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) study of urban middle school students in which 16 percent of students reported reading as an escape. Additionally, 47 percent of students in that study found reading relaxing, which also encompassed the definition of escape for high school students in the current study. These findings also align with two international studies by Greaney and Neuman (1983, 1990) in which eighth graders in eight countries, including the United States, reported reading to escape – to distract themselves from personal problems or relieve boredom.

Reading to learn. Students also use books to learn morals and lessons they can apply to their own lives. By watching characters overcome obstacles, students discovered new ways to deal with their own problems. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007), in an urban study of fifth through eighth graders, found that 48 percent of students reported reading in order to learn. Greanery and Neuman (1983, 1990) also found in two international studies that students read to learn in order to help themselves with school success and life goals. These studies did not specifically address learning life lessons or morals, but they related to the general function of reading to learn.

Writing as therapy. The results of this study also suggest that students use writing as a way of coping with concerns or problems in their lives. Writing offers students a way to process their thoughts and emotions in a safe environment. Many students can express themselves better in writing than they can verbally. Writing provides them with a way to voice their feelings when they do not feel comfortable sharing with other people. These findings are consistent with many studies that have examined how writing functions as a coping behavior for students dealing with problems (Burt, 1994; Giannotta, Settanni, Kliewer, & Ciairano, 2009; Harvey, Orbuch, & Weber, 1990;

McKinney, 1976; Park, 2010; Soliday, Garofalo, & Rogers, 2004; and Stino, 1995). For example, in a study of urban high school students, Schultz (2002) found that students used home writing as a way to make sense of their lives. Similarly, students in Tatum and Gue's (2010) study used writing to work through internal conflicts and developed a sense of power over their lives. Harvey, Orbuch, and Weber (1990) discovered that people often relay their interpretations of stressful events in story-like form.

Results from the current study also suggest that students generally feel better when they express their concerns in writing. Students used writing to help regulate their emotions. Specifically, their anger, confusion, or unhappiness was greatly diminished through the act of writing. This is consistent with Park's (2010) assertion that writing about feelings related to stressful life events improved people's psychological well-being. Additionally, McKinney (1976) found free writing helped college students improve their attitudes and decrease their negative feelings about people and events in their lives.

Finally, students use writing as a way to visualize their ideal selves and their goals. "Future writing" enables them to describe how they want their lives to be, and it gives them a tangible goal to work toward. Students conceived of themselves as more outgoing, better students, star athletes, and successful professionals. This is consistent with the findings of Burt (1994) in which male students often used diaries to write about future events. Other researchers (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992) have examined people's use of a "possible selves" construct in which future-oriented representations of the self impacted motivation. Students in this study found envisioning themselves with better lives helped them stay focused on their goals.

Goals (utility). Even though students are not intrinsically motivated, they put forth effort in English class in order to reach their future goals. They are driven by the utility value of completing reading and writing assignments in class in order to receive passing grades. Additionally, they wish to be accepted to college and/or secure future employment in their areas of interest. They place importance on doing well in English on how it will be useful for reaching their personal goals. These findings support Potter, McCormick, and Busching's (20001) study showing the importance of grades on students' motivation in English class. The researchers found that student writers completed assignments in order to fulfill the requirements set by their teachers with grades as their primary goal.

Challenges (attainment). Students work harder when they perceive school success as central to their identity as a "good student" or role model. Students in this study believed they must be academically successful in order to maintain their reputations and set good examples for others. This is consistent with Eccles and colleagues' (1983) findings associated with attainment value, which relates to the importance of doing well on a task. They asserted that identity was one task value that contributed to student motivation.

Additionally, it appears some students are willing to put forth more effort because they enjoy challenging themselves. They set personal goals and work harder just to see if they can accomplish their goals. As one student said, "I want to see how far I can actually go." This is also consistent with findings related to attainment value in which students may be motivated by tasks that offer a challenge (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This finding in the current study also reflects a mastery goal orientation by

students. These students choose to challenge themselves to grow intellectually or master a task for their own sense of accomplishment (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998).

Competency beliefs. Students have higher self-efficacy for reading and writing activities they self-select at home than for work assigned at school. This finding is consistent with a number of different studies. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) and Durik, Vida, and Eccles (2006) found that students experienced lower levels of competence for literacy work at school, even though they had high self-efficacy for the reading and writing tasks they completed at home. Additionally, Schultz (2002) and Yi (2007) discovered that student writers who were confident at home often showed reluctance to produce work at school because they did not expect to be successful in that setting.

Confidence with success. Students feel more confident about their ability to do well on future literacy tasks when they have experienced previous academic success. Similarly, their self-efficacy suffers when they experience repeated instances of poor performance. This is consistent with Pajares' (2003) study that asserts mastery experiences, or students' previous performances on similar literacy activities, are one of the ways students form their self-efficacy beliefs. Successful completion of literacy tasks strengthens competence and repeated failures cause self-efficacy to diminish.

Self-efficacy with control. Students have higher self-efficacy for their home literacy practices because they have more control over those activities. They feel empowered not only to select book titles but also the difficulty of the reading material. They can set their own reading pace and abandon books for any reason. This is consistent with the research on attribution theory (Weiner, 1994). Students' locus of control was

internal, meaning students felt powerful. They could control their situation in order to be successful in their reading and writing activities at home.

Self-efficacy with choice. Students exhibit higher self-efficacy for school literacy practices when they are given choice or when the assignments are similar to their reading and writing outside of school. Higher self-efficacy related to choice is also consistent with attribution theory (Weiner, 1994) in that students feel more empowered and in control when they are allowed some choice in the selection of books and writing topics at school. Additionally, when class assignments reflect students' home literacy activities, they draw on their previous success in shaping their beliefs about their competence in the new, similar tasks at school. This is consistent with the research by Pajares (2003) on how students form their self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy with intrinsic value. When students enjoy books, they are more amenable to challenging themselves with more difficult texts, and they have higher self-efficacy for reading. This is consistent with cognitive evaluation theory (CET), which is a subtheory in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985 in Ryan & Deci, 2000). CET looks at factors related to variability in intrinsic motivation. People who intrinsically value an activity have more interest and confidence in the task represented by increased persistence (Deci and Ryan, 1991 in Ryan & Deci, 2000). Additionally, students in the current study were more likely to abandon difficult books they did not like reading. This is also consistent with Walker (2003) who found that students who believe a reading or writing task is beyond their ability might not even attempt to complete it.

Task difficulty and value. Students are less likely to persist in difficult reading and writing tasks when they do not value the activities. When students in the study

became overly frustrated with literacy tasks, they often gave up. This is consistent with Pajares and Johnson's (1996) findings that self-efficacy impacts the amount of effort individuals will expend and their perseverance on new assignments. Additionally, Eccles et al. (1983) found that students' expectancies and values impacted student effort and persistence at tasks.

Writing self-efficacy. Findings show that feedback from others can influence student self-efficacy for writing tasks. Students in the study who had received positive reactions to their writing expressed greater confidence in their ability; conversely, the fear of potential criticism made some students afraid to share their work. This is consistent with current research related to competence beliefs. Pajares (2003) found that feedback from teachers, parents, and peers could be powerful in shaping student self-efficacy. In addition, Pajares and Johnson (1996) found that teachers' judgments of student work impacted student competence beliefs. Self-efficacy was increased when feedback was positive in tone and decreased when feedback indicated deficiencies.

Getting by. Students only exert the minimum effort needed in their English classes to reach their goals. They desire successful end results, but they do not want to work harder than necessary. This may be attributed to their lack of intrinsic valuing for most reading and writing assignments in their English classes, and their hectic schedules outside of school. Students in the study balanced busy lives with school, work, extracurricular activities, and chores at home. These findings are consistent with a performance goal orientation in which students are more concerned with grades than actually mastering material (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006). Wolk (2010) reported that high school students completed little of the required reading, forcing themselves to do

what was necessary to "get by." As a result, students often read quickly without truly comprehending or thinking critically. This is also consistent with Gamoran and Carbonaro's (2002) report that students spend little time on homework.

Choice (intrinsic). The results of this study also reveal that motivation increases when students are given choice in their reading and writing activities. This is an area much documented in the literature. Choice raises both intrinsic value and self-efficacy for various tasks, including more challenging work. Gamoran and Carbonaro (2002) found that middle and high school students have very few choices in their reading and writing assignments. In studies by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) and Pitcher et al. (2007), students reported they were motivated when given choices by their teachers. Specifically, the middle school students in Ivey and Broaddus' (2001) study noted they wanted the freedom to read books that interested them. Students in the current study were often disengaged by the reading they were required to do for school, yet they were avid readers at home when they had the chance to select books on their own. In addition, Pflaum and Bishop (2004) also found adolescents preferred choice in their selection of reading.

Adult influences (developmental). Adults play an important role in motivating students to engage in literacy activities. Particularly, family members serve as role models, encourage through praise, and provide access to needed materials. They also communicate to students formally and informally what they view as important and worth valuing. This is consistent with a number of research studies (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Martin, 1991; McKool, 2007; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Pitcher et al., 2007). McKool (2007) found that students who read at home often had parents who modeled reading for recreation, recommended good books to them, and discussed books at home. Strommen

and Mates (2004) also found that family members influenced adolescent readers by showing them that reading could be a worthwhile activity. Ivey and Broaddus (2001), in a study of both urban and rural middle school students, found that family members encouraged adolescents to read and recommended good books. Similarly, a study of students in middle and high school, showed the influence of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings in buying books, sharing reading materials, and offering book recommendations (Pitcher et al., 2007).

In addition, teachers play an important role in influencing student literacy activities. Teacher feedback and encouragement raised students' self-efficacy for reading and writing tasks. Students who received positive feedback from teachers were more encouraged to continue writing and to experiment with new genres; those who received particularly harsh feedback, through comments or grades, lost confidence in their academic writing ability. In a study by Daisey (2009), teacher candidates reported their own middle and high school teachers were positive influences on their writing by encouraging them, modeling good practice, and offering praise. Similarly, Pajares and Johnson (1996) found that teachers' judgments and feedback influenced students' competence beliefs at school. In reading, teachers also helped students identify books at the appropriate reading level that interested them.

Finding and accessing books. Even avid readers abstain from reading when they cannot identify or access texts that interest them. When books are readily available, such as in classrooms or school libraries, students are more likely to read. In addition, when students have help finding books that appeal to their interests, they read more often. This is consistent with the findings of Ramos and Krashen (1998). They discovered

elementary students read more when they were given increased library access and a wide range of reading materials from which to select. Similarly, in a study of middle school readers, Ivey and Broaddus (2001), found students were motivated to read when they could find good texts.

Conclusions

Students' value beliefs and self-efficacy for literacy practices vary in home and school environments. Motivation is stronger for the reading and writing students engage in at home because they value the activities intrinsically, and their expectancies for success are higher. Conversely, in the school setting, students' value beliefs are based on extrinsic rewards, and their expectancies for success are lower. The detailed analysis of student behaviors and motivations in this study resulted in some specific conclusions that are outlined in this section.

First, family members and teachers play an important role in developing students' value for and participation in literacy activities. Students who are avid readers and/or writers often have parents, grandparents, or siblings who model literacy practices, encourage reading or writing, and provide access to reading materials. Teachers affect students' love of reading and writing through the selection of literacy activities in class and the encouragement of student efforts.

Second, feedback from teachers and peers affects students' self-efficacy for writing tasks. Students fear critical comments from others, and when they receive disparaging remarks, they feel less confident about themselves as writers. Additionally, the feedback teachers give students verbally and in writing on their papers also impacts student self-efficacy for future writing tasks.

Third, choice is a powerful motivating factor for students' literacy activities at home and school. Students work harder, take on greater challenges, and enjoy literacy tasks more when they are given choices in reading and writing. Home literacy practices enable students to control the selection of books and writing tasks that fit their interest and ability level. As a result, students' learning goals are mastery-based, and they are invested in their work. On school literacy tasks, however, students hold performance-goal orientations and give up much sooner in the face of challenges.

Fourth, students use their home reading and writing activities to cope with stress in their lives. Reading offers an escape from problems or unhappiness by allowing students to focus on the experiences of the characters in novels. Writing provides an outlet for students to process important issues and deal with their anger as well as imagine attainment of future goals.

Fifth, students are primarily motivated in school by extrinsic factors related to their future. They put forth just enough effort to earn the grades they believe are necessary to achieve their goals related to college and career. They are also motivated when they believe certain literacy skills will help them be more successful in reaching their goals.

Finally, in applying expectancy-value theory as the theoretical framework for this study, one aberration surfaced. Students' value beliefs for their home literacy experiences were consistent with Eccles' (1983) intrinsic value component. Students were motivated by reading and writing tasks they self-selected because those activities were pleasurable; they were not seeking external rewards or goals. However, this component, as described by Eccles et al. (1983), does not take into account any type of further classification for

intrinsic valuing. The results of this study suggest that students not only intrinsically value literacy activities because they enjoy them, but more importantly, the activities serve a useful purpose in improving their mental health. The intrinsic value component might benefit from extended classification that recognizes an activity that is pleasurable as well as one that provides a measure of usefulness. Utility value relates to how a task will be important for students' future goals. While this component focuses on extrinsic motives, it is most similar to the missing piece in the intrinsic value component.

Limitations

While I believe this study was carefully constructed and implemented and the data thoroughly analyzed, there are no doubt limitations that need to be addressed. Specifically, I have identified potential limitations related to sampling, study design, and researcher bias.

First, interpretations of the data were shaped by the research sample. I used purposive sampling in which I recruited students already engaged in literacy practices outside of school. This decreased the generalizability of my findings. However, through the use of thick description in my case studies, I hoped to increase the transferability of my findings. Merriam (1998) described thick description as "providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (p. 211). In addition, a disproportionate number of my participants were female and upperclassmen (juniors and seniors). These factors may have skewed the motivational influences noted in the greater sample. Still, the sample yielded a surprising diversity of participants ranging from 14 to 18 years old in 9th through 12th grades. There was also a higher than

expected percentage of students identifying as nonwhite (45 percent). One pronounced advantage of older students was their ability to reflect more deeply on their current and previous literacy practices and draw on two to three previous years of high school reading and writing experiences. Overall, the sample was representative of the school and the district population.

Second, the design of the study had several potential shortcomings. It was solely qualitative and might have benefited from a mixed methods approach. For example, students could have been given a survey at the completion of each in-class writing or reading assignment allowing them to rate their level of competence and value orientation on a Likert scale. This would have given students a chance to more fully reflect "in the moment" rather than waiting to discuss these points days or weeks after the event. In addition, the study was only designed to include interviews with students. In order to capture the role of adults in participants' lives, especially since students reported a significant influence regarding reading, it would have been beneficial to widen the interview pool to include teachers and parents. Unfortunately, this would have necessitated a longer data collection period and/or a smaller sample size to keep the study manageable.

Finally, qualitative studies must always contend with the threat of researcher bias. As an instructional coach, my interest is always centered on taking teachers' perspectives in order to partner with them to make changes in their classes. As a result, there is potential bias when observing lessons and listening to student stories through the lens of an educator. This threat was balanced, however, by triangulation of data and prolonged exposure in the field. As an observer in the back of classrooms, I began to

experience school from a student's perspective, becoming so caught up in good lessons that I wanted to raise my hand to participate and so bored by bad lessons that I struggled to stay awake. I found myself emerging as an advocate for students rather than teachers.

Implications for Practice

High school students who are avid readers or writers at home are not always equally engaged in the literacy activities they are assigned in their English classes. By better understanding how students value literacy activities and their beliefs about their ability, teachers can help students become more engaged and confident in their academic studies. Having a clearer picture of the types of reading and writing students willingly participate in can help teachers better gauge student experience and proficiency in these areas. Understanding the cognitive beliefs and values that impact student motivation can guide teachers in planning lessons and differentiating instruction to better meet the needs of all learners. If competency beliefs are low, teachers can examine their own expectations for students and the type of classroom climate they create that can impact these learner beliefs. The findings of this study, which examined the motivational factors guiding students' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, have several implications for high school English teachers.

Students value choice in their reading and writing activities, and they have higher self-efficacy for tasks in which they can exert some control. Teachers can increase students' intrinsic value for schoolwork by providing some degree of choice in the work students are assigned. For example, students could choose from several similarly themed novels or be allowed to select a writing topic within teacher-designated parameters set for an essay. The results of this study suggest that students will work harder and be more

engaged when they are interested in their work. Additionally, students are more likely to persist in reading difficult texts when they are personally invested in the books. Teachers should continue to challenge students with high quality literature; however, texts should be selected from more recent selections as well as the time-honored canon. Offering a mix of traditional and current literature, as well as providing some degree of choice, will motivate more students to complete school-assigned reading and result in increased enjoyment from the experience.

When high school students have long-term academic and career goals, they are more likely to complete assignments that they see as relevant to their future plans. Teachers could help students set or further develop their academic and professional goals and refer to them throughout the year. Additionally, teachers could more clearly explain the purpose of assignments in order to help students see the relevance to their lives. McCrudden, Magliano, and Shaw (2010) found that students were willing to spend more time reading texts the teacher identified as relevant. The issue of relevance impacted students' goals and strategies in class.

Students need help identifying books that interest them, and they need ready access to a large selection of high-interest literature. Teachers must keep current on young adult literature from a variety of genres in order to recommend books to students. They should consider conducting short book talks to help students identify reading materials and post a book recommendation wall where students can offer suggestions to their peers. The teachers could also allow time at school for students to read their self-selected books and talk about what they are reading with classmates. Additionally, they should develop and maintain a library of young adult books in their own classrooms to

loan to students as well as provide regular access to the school library. By encouraging students and modeling good reading practices, teachers become influential in creating avid readers among their students.

Students frequently write about aspects of their own lives outside of class, and they are more confident in school writing when it resembles the work they do at home. Teachers should provide more opportunities at the start of the school year for students to engage in personal narrative writing and journal writing before moving on to more academic formats. Beginning with a familiar genre would increase student self-efficacy and intrinsic value for school writing. Teachers should also provide opportunities throughout the school year for students to write creatively in various formats, including short stories and poetry.

Future Research

Previous research related to motivation, including expectancy-value theory, has focused primarily on quantitative or limited mixed method approaches. There is a need to further explore various aspects of literacy motivation from a qualitative perspective in order to capture the complexity of human behavior in a naturalistic setting. Qualitative research provides richer results by capturing expressive data through people's words and actions. For example, a survey would not have captured Marcus' sense of pride in finishing a challenging book with his words, "I feel like I'm the king of the world." It also would not have discovered Sarah's difficulty in finding high-interest reading material, and her excitement at discovering new novels.

Research findings indicated that feedback from teachers, parents, and peers impacted student self-efficacy for writing. Positive feedback inspired students to write

more while criticism, or fear of criticism, impacted students' writing self-efficacy. For example, Izayah began writing poetry in high school after an English teacher praised his work and encouraged him to continue writing. Future research could examine how various types of teacher feedback on writing assignments affects both students' self-efficacy and value beliefs on future writing tasks. This could have implications for the type of feedback teachers give students in order to motivate them as writers.

Additional research could also be conducted on the changing nature of out-of-school literacy practices. As students progress through high school, their time becomes even more limited. They obtain drivers' licenses, find jobs, and often participate in even more extracurricular activities. Time once spent on writing or reading practices must compete with even more distractions. It would be valuable to conduct a longitudinal study to examine student literacy practices from 9th to 12th grade. Researchers could examine how out-of-school literacy practices evolve and the role value beliefs and self-efficacy play in the process. If some students continue to make time for reading and writing, why do they make this a priority? How does school play a role in students' changing out-of-school practices or motivations?

Another area of investigation could include "future writing" in which students write about reaching their goals. Research findings indicate that students use this type of writing to visualize their future selves and make their goals more concrete and tangible. This type of writing helped students imagine an idealized self and a better quality of life. Additional research could examine how this construct impacts student success and motivation over time.

Finally, researchers could further explore teachers' roles in influencing reading outside of school. The current study indicates that teachers impact literacy practices by providing reading assistance, offering encouragement, and identifying high-interest books. More research is needed to explore how teachers' efforts affect the amount of reading students engage in outside of school as well as how these interventions impact student value beliefs and self-efficacy for reading.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script for Classes

My name is Stacy Cohen, and I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Kansas. I am here to tell you about a research study being conducted at Truman West High School this semester to see if you might be interested in participating.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how the reading and writing you do at home compares with what you do in English class. I want to see how these experiences affect your motivation for what you do in class. The goal is to gain a better understanding of what teachers might be able to change to make class more interesting and more relevant to you.

The study would involve interviewing you at school for approximately an hour about your reading and writing practices and then observing you in your English class. The interview would be audio and video recorded. I'm looking to study students who are avid readers and/or writers at home. Reading can involve any books, stories, poetry, etc., in print or online. Writing can be anything from a journal, blog, poetry, and song lyrics to stories, online fan fiction, and letters. I would also ask you to share with me several samples of your home and school writing.

If this is something you think you might be interested in participating in, you can e-mail me at the address on the flier or call me at the number listed. You can also tell your English teacher, Mrs./Mr. _____, and she/he will let me know. In order to participate, you will need to sign a consent form and have your parents sign as well if you are under 18 years old. Thank you!

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Motivational Factors: In-School and Out-of-School Literacy Practices

Questions relating to home literacy practices

1. What types of reading do you do at home?
2. Why do you spend time reading __(genre)_____?
3. What do you enjoy most about reading at home?
4. How often do you read at home and for how long?
5. What types of activities compete with your reading time?
6. How confident do you feel in your ability to complete the reading you do at home? Why?
7. What types of writing do you do at home?
8. Why do you spend time writing _(genre)_____?
9. What do you enjoy most about writing at home?
10. How often do you write at home? How much time do you spend writing each week?
11. What types of activities compete with your writing time?
12. How confident do you feel about the types of writing you do at home? Why?

Questions relating to school literacy practices

1. What types of reading do you do for English?
2. How often do you read for English and for how long?
3. How confident do you feel about your ability to complete reading assigned in English? Why?
4. Why do you complete the reading assigned for class?
5. What do you enjoy most about reading done for English?
6. What types of writing do you do for English?
7. How often do you write for English class and how much time do you spend?
8. How confident do you feel about your ability to fulfill writing assigned in English? Why?
9. Why do you complete the writing assigned in class?
10. What do you enjoy most about writing done for English?

Appendix D: Research Study Participant Code List

Research Study Participant Code List

Name	Code	Gender	Age	Grade	Sample	Race
Student 1						
Student 2						
Student 3						
Student 4						
Student 5						
Student 6						
Student 7						
Student 8						
Student 9						
Student 10						
Student 11						

Appendix E: Progress Chart

Progress Chart

Students	Consent form	Interview completed	Interview transcribed	Observations completed	Writing samples
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				No English class this semester	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				No English class this semester	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	

Appendix F: Observation Dates Chart

Observation Dates Chart

Students	**Obs. 1**	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**	**Obs. 4**	**Obs. 5**	**Obs. 6**	**Obs. 7**
Student code	9/15						
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							
Student code							

Appendix G: Observation Schedule

Participant Observation Schedule

Students	Hour 1	Hour 2	Hour 3	Hour 4	Hour 5	Hour 6	Hour 7	Hour 8
Student 1 code number						Creative Writing		
Student 2 code number				Senior Comp.				
Student 3 code number								
Student 4 code number		English 11						
Student 5 code number	English 9							
Student 6 code number								
Student 7 code number				English 9				
Student 8 code number							Senior Comp	
Student 9 code number	English 9							
Student 10 code number					Pre-AP English			
Student 11 code number					English 10	Creative Writing		

Appendix H: Observation Log

Observation Log

Student: _____

Teacher: _____ Hour: _____

Date	Comments	Time