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**THE LOST-BOYS PHENOMENON:
CASE STUDIES OF SAN DIEGO HIGH SCHOOL MALES**

by

RICHARD STAKELUM

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
University of San Diego

May 2010

Dissertation Committee

Robert Donmoyer, Ph.D.
Athena Perrakis, Ph.D.
Judith Kleinfeld, Ed.D.

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ABSTRACT

By most measures of success—e.g., academic Grade Point Average (GPA), graduation rates, participation in extracurricular and civic activities, and college enrollment—adolescent males are less successful than females. Young males are falling behind in reading and writing and are more likely to be involved in truancy, violence, crime, suicide, and substance abuse. While the nation mobilized to address historical gender discrimination issues for females since the 1970s, there has not been a similar effort mounted to assist adolescent males.

The trends alluded to in the previous paragraph have begun to be recognized by popular-press authors. Some have begun to refer to contemporary adolescent males as *lost boys*. To date, however, the academic literature on this topic has been limited. This study begins to systematically research the characteristics associated with the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the high school aged males themselves.

The purpose of the research was to begin to create grounded theory about the lost-boy phenomenon and identify the common characteristics and differences noted in a small sample of adolescent males who exhibit the syndrome. The study employed qualitative research methods to provide richness of detail. Case studies of eight high school males identified as underachievers by school teachers and administrators are presented.

The findings suggests the following: (a) the adolescent males in this study had few, if any, mentors, heroes, and people other than family and peers they ask for advice; (b) even in this study's small sample, there was variation in the quality and quantity of

male social relationships and this variation appeared to impact academic performance; (c) because of moving and other disruptions, supportive relationships often were difficult to establish; (d) some interviewees indicated that being asked introspective-oriented questions during interviews helped them improve their academic performance; (e) there were no programs to assist underachieving adolescent males identified in this study; (f) while ethnicity is factor in forming relationships, and therefore, may indirectly impact academic performance, this study's diverse (but admittedly small) sample suggests that there are common elements in the modern adolescent male experience that transcend ethnicity, socio-economic status, and familial influences.

DEDICATION

To the young men who so willingly shared their time and stories. In the short time we spent together, they put their trust in me to tell their stories honestly and eagerly added their voices to the growing body of knowledge about the lost-boys phenomenon. May they, and all the lost boys of their generation, come to realize how important it is to the future of our society that they overcome current challenges. I wish them great success in the future and hope they approve of the final product of our collective efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my family for their support throughout the years. I would like to thank my parents, Pat and Dolly Stakelum, who dedicated their lives to instilling in their children a love of literacy and education, and my siblings—Kathleen, Peggy, Pat, Mary, Rita, and Kevin—who have enriched my life by providing loving support throughout the years. Mostly, I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of my wife, Jody, and son, Derek, who put up with the years of study and work that have gone into this project. They have patiently listened to the emerging theories, provided substantive input and balance, and helped organize the data, concepts, and ideas.

I would also like to acknowledge the faculty and staff of the University of San Diego for their support of continuing education for working adults. Specifically: Dr. Terri Monroe for her exceptional work in group dynamics, Dr. Fred Galloway for his enthusiastic lessons in quantitative research and mentoring, and Dr. Mary Scherr for her introduction to qualitative research. I would also like to thank the School of Leadership and Educational Science administration including Dean Paula Cordeiro, Dr. Cheryl Getz, and their staffs for their patient support during this project. These caring professionals made learning enjoyable and provided curriculum that was relevant and directly translated into the work environment.

I would also like to acknowledge the extensive efforts of my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Robert Donmoyer, a leader in advanced qualitative research methodology, who mentored me through the process and helped develop the research; Dr.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, while conducting interviews of high school candidates for a leadership camp run by an international community service group, an interesting phenomenon became apparent. After numerous interviews with both male and female candidates, the male candidates appeared completely disenfranchised in comparison to their female counterparts. The public high school where the interviews were conducted was an experimental charter school for technology in the city of San Diego that attracts high achievers from different demographic groups throughout the city. The students were recommended by their teachers based on outstanding performance in a variety of academic, community service, and extracurricular activities. The majority of students who were interviewed were outstanding candidates with a myriad of accomplishments and a history of success. They were also, in most cases, female. The few male candidates barely met the minimum requirements for admission to the leadership camp and did not seem as motivated as the females. When asked about their mentors, the girls could list numerous people and organizations that were instrumental in their growth. The boys could not name anyone—some did not even know what a mentor was.

Background of the Problem

The literature suggests that the incident described above is not an isolated occurrence, but is indicative of a widespread trend that has come to define the modern young male experience. By most measures of success such as academic Grade Point Average (GPA), graduation rates, participation in extracurricular and civic activities, and college enrollment, boys as a demographic group are less successful than girls and are

falling further behind at an increasing rate (Conlin, 2003; Poe, 2004; Sommers, 2000a). A cover story in *Business Week* reported that a high school age male is “30% more likely to drop out, 85% more likely to commit murder, and four to six times more likely to kill himself, with boy [*sic* male] suicides tripling since 1970” than females in the same age group (Conlin, 2003, p. 2). Adolescent males are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, and are more likely to be involved in truancy, violence, crime, and substance abuse (Sommers, 2000b). Males are also less likely than females to enroll in post-secondary education, pursue advanced degrees, or persist until graduation if enrolled (Sum & Sullivan, 2002).

This study refers to the phenomenon captured by the statistics cited above as the lost-boys phenomenon. Other names have been given to the phenomenon including a general lack of: *engagement* (Sommers, 2000b), *commitment* (NCES, 1998), *attention* (Rabiner, Murray, Schmid, & Malone, 2004), and *connection* (Garbarino, 1999). Far from being localized, the trend has been noted in international research including: the United Kingdom, where the phenomenon is referred as *laddishness* (Jackson, 2002); Australia, where it is referred to as *boy troubles* (Mills, 2000; West, 2002); Hong Kong (McCall, Beach, & Lau, 2000); and in the West Indies where it is simply called *male underachievement* (Parry, 2001).

The term lost boys may elicit fond memories of Peter Pan and boys who simply refuse to grow up, but in this context it denotes the more insidious symptoms of what Evans (1996) described as “the disappointed, the disaffected, and the disappeared” (p. 2). The term *Lost Boys* was used as the title of a groundbreaking book on youth violence by James Garbarino (1999), but in the context of this study, youth violence is considered a

symptom of a more general phenomenon that can manifest itself in many ways. The term has also been used to describe the *Lost Boys of Sudan*, who survived extreme physical and emotional hardships during their country's civil war. But in this context it describes psychosocial conditions affecting young males in their daily lives. Thus, the term *lost* is used in this study to indicate otherwise normal boys who are underachieving in many facets of life and are being left out of current social and educational reform programs designed to improve achievement.

Studies highlighting this problem have focused on specific ethnic demographic groups such as African-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics. The trends depicted in Figure 1 indicate graphically that this phenomenon is present – albeit in differing degrees – in all ethnic groups.

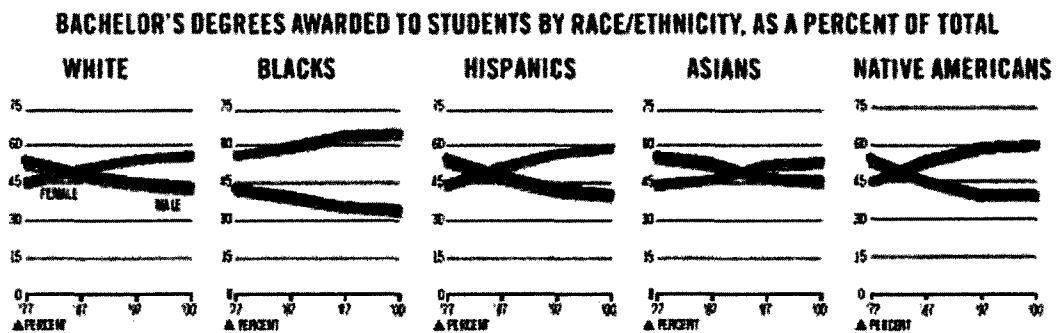


Figure 1. The Gender Gap in Higher Education: Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Attained by Females Exceed Male Attainment in all Ethnic Groups
Source: Business Week (2003)

The trends depicted in Figure 1 indicate the percentage of Bachelor's Degrees conferred to females exceed the percentage conferred to males in all ethnic groups—which is a complete reversal of trends present prior to the late 1970s and graphically illustrates that

this generation of young males may be facing new challenges not seen before by past generations.

Although the popular myth of the anti-female bias in schools remains, a review of the data indicates that as early as 1979, this was no longer the case. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company 1997 teacher-student survey concluded: “Contrary to the commonly held belief that boys are at an advantage over girls in school, girls appear to have an advantage over boys in terms of their future plans, teachers’ expectations, everyday experiences at school and interaction in the classroom” (Sommers, 2000a, p.4).

Recognition of the current negative trends in adolescent male psychosocial development and achievement is growing in the United States. A review of available data indicates that “boys, on average, are a year and a half behind girls in reading and writing; they are less committed to school and less likely to go to college” (Sommers, 2000b, p. 14). Former First Lady Laura Bush, a vocal proponent of education, remarked about the current cultural trends in an interview for Parade Magazine:

I think we need to pay more attention to boys. I think we’ve paid a lot of attention to girls for the last 30 years, and we have this idea in the United States that boys can take care of themselves. We’ve raised them to be totally self-reliant, starting really too early. They need the nurturing that all humans need. And I think there are a lot of life skills that we teach girls, but we don’t teach boys. We actually have neglected boys. (Winik, 2005, p. 5)

This recognition, however, has not generated widespread enthusiasm for change—possibly because of persistent contemporary views of male privilege in society.

Traditionally, men have been considered the dominant gender in both schools and the workplace (Sommers, 2000b). A century ago, some institutions refused to even admit women because they would conceivably waste precious resources (Conlin, 2003). Even as recently as thirty years ago, academia was male-dominated—particularly higher education in the fields of math, science, and economics. Due in part to the Feminist Movement, much progress has been made in providing equal opportunity for women (NARA, 2009). For example, since 1970 the number of women attending college increased by 136% and they now make up 56% of undergraduates (Poe, 2004). During the same time frame, the number of men attending college has risen only slightly to 40 percent, even though the economic rewards of higher education have increased significantly (Poe, 2004).

With Congressional passage of the Title IX Education Amendments in 1972, “equity for girls has earned a place on the nation’s education reform agenda” (Greenberg-Lake, 1991, p. 4). An often-quoted study on gender equality in schools commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) concluded:

Popular culture helps deflate girl’s self esteem by marginalizing women and stereotyping their roles. Unintentionally, schools collude in the process by systematically cheating girls of classroom attention, by stressing competitive—rather than cooperative—learning, by presenting texts and lessons devoid of women as role models, and by reinforcing negative stereotypes about girl’s abilities. (p. 5)

Due in part to these findings, nation-wide programs were instituted which included changes in pedagogy, increased mentoring for girls, and the creation of numerous organizations and government funded programs focusing on promoting women's issues.

The programs instituted in response to the AAUW finding were successful in erasing the gender gap in mathematics achievement, and closing the gap in science (NCES, 2000). The National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education conducts an ongoing study called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP report for the year 2000 indicates that at the seventeen year-old level, the performance gap between males and females in math and science was no longer statistically significant.

But while the AAUW study helped mobilize the nation to address problems of girls' underachievement in math and science, it did nothing to address the problems of boys' underachievement, specifically in reading and writing. Critics claim "the research commonly cited to support the claims of male privilege and sinfulness is riddled with errors" (Sommers, 2000b, p. 14) and the AAUW findings were "based on selective review of the research" with suppression of data that did not fit the group's political agenda (Kleinfeld, 1998, p. 3). One report declared "despite the critical importance of boosting future degree attainment among American males, little attention has been paid to this issue by either national and state education policymakers and administrators or by political leaders from both political parties" (Sum, Fogg, & Harrington, 2003, p. 39). In essence, there is no equivalent of the AAUW advocating for boys.

Impact of the Phenomenon

The lost-boys phenomenon could have serious economic, social, and policy implications for the future. While median annual earnings for high school graduates have declined 7% between 1979 and 1999 nationally, the median annual earnings for those with Master's or higher degrees increased by nearly 30% (Sum & Sullivan, 2002). In 2001, the median annual earnings for male high school graduates for all age groups were \$37,362, while those with Bachelor's Degrees were \$70,253 and Master's Degrees or higher were \$87,022 (Census, 2001). Estimates of American business losses of \$25-\$30 billion a year were identified due to decreased productivity, errors, and accidents caused by poor literacy in the work force (Cellis, 1993). The less educated are more likely to depend on government services and pay considerably less in state and federal taxes. One study notes: "The poorly educated impose a fiscal burden on the rest of society as well as an economic burden on themselves" (Sum & Sullivan, 2002, p. 20). As lost-boys decide to opt out or underachieve in high school and higher education, they are limiting future potential earnings and career opportunities in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The lost-boys phenomenon is likely to have a significant social impact in the future as well. People tend to marry spouses from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and educated women have already begun to feel the marriage squeeze due to the smaller pool of eligible partners with similar education levels (Sum & Sullivan, 2002). Besides the oft quoted marriage gap issue, "men are already dropping out of the labor force, walking out on fatherhood, and disconnecting from civic life in greater numbers" than ever before (Conlin, 2003, p. 3). Data clearly indicate that underachievement in school

leads to underachievement in other areas of life as chronic underachievers are less educated, have higher divorce rates, under perform at work, and change jobs more frequently than their peers (McCall, et al., 2000). While some underachievers recover and meet expectations by their early 30s, many never do as they continually fail to persist in the face of life's many challenges.

Albeit, the policy impacts of the lost-boys phenomenon have not yet been fully examined or researched. For instance, if the above statistics were cited for any other demographic group, there would be programs instituted to boost recruiting and retention in higher education, yet no institutional advocacy of equal opportunity exists for men. Sommers (2000a) found that "after so many years of hearing about silenced diminished girls, teachers do not take seriously the suggestion that boys are not doing as well as girls even if they see it with their own eyes in their own classrooms" (p. 6). Whitmire (2010) stated: "Given that boy troubles fall on the wrong side of political correctness, only brave and independent educators dare even probe the issue" (p. xiv).

While college administrators publicly embrace diversity, some do not consider the under-representation of men a policy problem—unless those men are part of under-represented ethnic groups. Other colleges have secretly instituted "stealth affirmative action" (Conlin, 2003, p. 3) to maintain gender ratios. Advocates who successfully fought for equal opportunity for women are hesitant to embrace male gender equity issues due to fears of backsliding in what many consider a zero sum equation. Some government agencies have gone further, with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights threatening legal action against colleges who attempt to mitigate the current 60/40 female to male admissions gender ratio by "discriminating against women to promote a more even

gender mix” (Matheson, 2009, p. 1). Thus, the total impact of the lost-boys phenomenon has yet to be fully realized.

Theoretical Explanations

Several general theories have been proposed in the popular literature about the causes of the lost-boys phenomenon. These theories invoke a range of ideas, everything from gender marginalization, to school bias, masculinity, biological differences, low societal expectations, and limitations of human capital investment. Five of these theories will be briefly discussed in the next few paragraphs of this section.

Feminization Theory

This theory purports that the Feminist Movement has been very successful at promoting the achievement of women—but a negative side effect may be the implied messages given to boys (Sommers, 2000b). In some feminist literature, men are viewed as oppressors and are implicated in the crime of sexism (Sommers, 2000a). Some have gone further, with one popular media author asking the question “Are Males Necessary” (Dowd, 2005), and others attacking traditional male symbols of authority through legislation and judicial review (GPO, 2009). Voicing the opinion of many of her generation, NOW President Kim Gandy recently wondered why worry about men since they still run the majority of corporations and government (Whitmire, 2010).

While supporting evidence of misogynistic oppression may exist for past generations of adult men, “a boy today, through no fault of his own, finds himself implicated in the social crime of shortchanging girls” (Sommers, 2000b, p. 43). In this view “that has prevailed in American education over the past decade, boys are resented, both as the unfairly privileged sex and as obstacles on the path to gender justice for girls”

(Sommers, 2000a, p. 2). Under this theory, misandrinistic gender marginalization is occurring as either an intended or unintended side effect of the movement to increase opportunities for women.

Pedagogical Theory

Another theory is that schools are not designed well for educating boys. Researchers who adhere to this theory believe that schools are biased against boys since “from kindergarten on, the education system rewards self-control, obedience, and concentration—qualities that any teacher can tell you, are much more common among girls than boys” (Poe, 2004, p. 2). While the AAUW study showed boys were more likely than girls to be called on in class, it failed to mention that the attention was much more likely to be negative (Sommers, 2000b). This negative attitude towards what is considered natural boy behavior may be a factor in the higher rates of male school dropouts, higher failure rates, lower grade point averages, and more boys categorized as learning-disabled (Sommers, 2000b).

Adherents to this theory have suggested separate classes for boys and assigning more male teachers for K-12 education. Some have openly called for the feminization of the classroom in order to reverse historical trends of gender bias. This has led to the deletion of traditional male classes such as shop and engineering, the reduction or elimination of recesses and physical education, and the change in focus of testing criteria from logic and reasoning in which boys excel to more subjective writing assignments that favors girls.

Masculinity Theory

A third general theory is that traditional definitions of masculinity and predefined male roles are causing boys to act inappropriately. Adherents to this theory believe that boys need to be rescued from their own masculinity. Characteristics once seen as positive masculine virtues such as heroism, independence, courage, strength, rationality, backbone, and virility are devalued and are now portrayed as vices such as abuse, destructive aggression, coldness, emotional inarticulacy, and detachment (Furedi, 1998). Under this theory, the changing definition of what it means to be a man has created no-win situations for many males who cannot measure up to the shifting and sometimes dangerous measures of masculinity.

Cultural Bias Theory

A fourth general theory is that current culture has propagated negative stereotyping of traditional male roles. Some researchers theorize that “boys are responding to cultural signals—downsized dads cast adrift in the New Economy, a dumb-and-dumber dude culture that demeans academic achievement, and the glamorization of all things gangster that makes school seem so uncool” (Conlin, 2003, p.4). This argument asserts that adolescent boys are responding to a *socially toxic environment* (Garbarino, 1995) that causes them to disassociate “by burying their feelings in silence and externalizing them through aggression and addiction” (p. 90). In this theory, boys are simply responding to a cultural war being waged on traditional male symbols, authority figures, familial roles, organizations, and bonding rituals promulgated in the popular media and echoed in cultural memes.

Economic Theory

A fifth general theory is that the opportunity cost of higher education is significantly higher for males than for females. This theory argues “men, in the years after high school, are attracted to job opportunities that on average pay more than those available to young women” (GAO, 2000, p. 10). This is particularly apparent in areas of the country where male-dominated industries such as manufacturing, construction, and farming jobs are prevalent (Jacob, 2002) and in the number of men who enter the armed forces (GAO, 2000). The availability of relatively high-paying jobs that do not require a college degree makes the economics of education less cost effective for males. Unlike women, who see education as a route to higher paying careers, men must balance not only the direct cost of education, but also the opportunity cost impact of lost wages over the time period that higher education is pursued.

Research Gap

Even if the above general theories are valid, what clearly stands out in the literature is the lack of an organized effort to systematically research the issue of male underachievement in the United States from the perspective of adolescent males themselves. In a landmark national quantitative study of the gender gap in higher education, Jacob (2002) concluded “while the gender gap in higher education has received increasing attention in recent years, it has gone largely unexplained in the empirical research literature” (p.17). In short, there is abundant literature documenting the symptoms of this phenomenon, but there is an absence of systematic research to holistically define the phenomenon and identify the precise factors that contribute to it from the perspective of the lost boys themselves.

Much of the literature available on this topic is contained in popular and best-seller books, which rely on unsystematically gathered evidence to make theoretical inferences (Garbarino, 1999; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Some studies focus on individual symptoms of the phenomenon, rather than taking a more holistic systems approach (Garbarino, 1999). These studies were conducted on pre-screened subjects who were selected based on referrals for counseling (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000) or were incarcerated for crimes (Garbarino, 1999). While the subjects of these studies certainly may exhibit symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon, they represent only the extreme end of a continuum.

Other researchers have concluded, “systematic broad-based, methodologically sophisticated research on underachievers per se is generally lacking, even on the most basic issues and parameters” (McCall et al., 2000, p. 785). Michele Rhee, the Chancellor of Public Schools in Washington DC, recently stated:

We have access to reams of research and best practices on how to teach children to read and write according to the individual needs and learning styles. But we do not definitely know why we are not doing it for boys across the country, and when it comes to children, it is always worth it to find out (Whitmire, 2010, p. xii).

In essence, a body of research exists which explains the “what” of this phenomenon, but what is really missing in the field is scientific research into the “why”.

Statement of the Problem

Growing recognition of the negative trends in adolescent male psychosocial development associated with the lost-boys phenomenon indicates a need for more research. Currently no generally accepted definition of the phenomenon exists, and therefore, identification of research subjects is problematic. One symptom that appears to be common in lost boys is academic underachievement. Research indicates the best way to identify boys who exhibit academic underachievement is to ask the people who come into contact with them every day (McCall, et al., 2000). Reluctance in both the identification and granting access to adolescents who exhibit the syndrome exists and there is hesitancy to participate by those thus identified. While numerous theories exist as to the causes of the lost-boys phenomenon, lack of basic research impedes the ability to holistically define the phenomenon and research the issue from the viewpoint of the lost boys themselves. Hence, there is a need to systematically explore adolescent male underachievement to identify the characteristics associated with the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the boys themselves.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to systematically research the characteristics associated with the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the boys themselves. Qualitative research methods were used for a preliminary investigation of high school aged adolescent male students to begin to define the lost-boys phenomenon and identify the common characteristics as well as some of the differences noted in a small sample of adolescent males who exhibited symptoms of the syndrome. This research focused on investigating the perceptions of the participants and identifying the issues they were

dealing with while making decisions about participation and achievement in a school environment while attempting to ascertain how the behavior is reflected in other life choices. This study examined the demographics and shared experiences of a small sample (n=8) of male adolescents identified by teachers and administrators as underachievers, and investigated their similarities and differences. It also establishes a baseline hypothesis for subsequent research with larger samples in multiple settings.

Research Questions

The following general questions guided this research:

- 1) What are the stories of selected adolescent males identified as underachievers?
- 2) What common themes can be identified and what differences can be noted in the experiences of the participants?
- 3) To what extent are the findings from this study consistent or inconsistent with the explanations of male underachievement contained in popular literature?

The Organization of this Dissertation

When viewed in groups, the following chapters correspond to the typical five-chapter dissertation format. The introduction consists of Chapters 1 and 2 and gives context and historical perspective to the lost-boys phenomenon. The second section consists of Chapters 3 through 6, providing a review of the literature including statistical indicators, theoretical constructs, research literature, and the popular literature. Section 3 includes the research methodology in Chapter 7. The individual case studies make up Section 4 in Chapters 8 through 15, providing the data upon which the dissertation is based. Findings and implication can be found in Chapters 16 through 19, completing Section 5.

Although the various chapters in this dissertation correspond to the traditional five-chapter format of a typical dissertation, there are obviously more than five chapters included in the document. The decision was made to expand the number of chapters because a single chapter containing all eight case studies would have been 90 pages long. It seemed logical to make each case its own chapter in part because of length concerns, but also because one goal of this study was to highlight the perspectives and stories of the individuals who participated. Once this was decided, it made sense to divide some of the other chapters as well, so that each chapter would be approximately the same length.

Gendered Terminology

The participants did not identify themselves as either boys or as men in the interviews. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, this identity gap between when males can be considered boys, and when they can legitimately be considered men has become a stage of life for males that has expanded and now roughly encompasses the years between the ages of 16 and 26, the age group of these participants. Since most descriptions of males in this age group (such as boy, teenager, adolescent, etc.) are pejorative, and in many cases have negative connotations, the decision was made to use the term male, young male, or adolescent male to describe them throughout this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL REVIEW

In order to understand the socio-economic aspects impacting young males today, it is important to review some of the larger historical economic and social movements that form the basis of current social constructs. This chapter will review some of the larger social movements of the 20th century in the United States and their impact on the culture, societal norms, and government policy. The chapter is divided into the following sections: The first section will look at the changing socio-economic environment of the last century, the second section will examine the changes in educational systems, the third section will review the changing social construct of masculinity, the fourth will examine the rise of the Women's Movement, and the fifth section will discuss the impact of these changes and movements on government policy.

Century of Change

The 20th century was a time of transformational growth and change in the United States with the shift from a predominantly agrarian economy to an industrial one, to the post-industrial age indicated by the rise in the service industry and globalization of markets (BLS, 2001). Some of the major changes in socio-economic trends included: the shift from life-long employment to migratory work; the changing demographics of the workforce due to the inclusion of women, minorities, and immigrants and the reduction of child labor; major advances in technology requiring an increasing need for an educated workforce; and the increase in government intervention in the workplace to regulate minimum wage, the 40 hour work week, and workplace safety.

The major changes noted above created a shift in the type of jobs available in the United States from predominantly male-dominated manual labor in a blue-collar agricultural and industrial economy towards knowledge work in a predominantly white and pink collar service economy, with a corresponding shift in the need for a more highly educated workforce (BLS, 2001; PPIC, 2008) . The continuing trend of open trade and world-wide markets has increased the competition for manufacturing jobs with many manufacturing centers shifting overseas to developing countries where labor is less expensive and environmental controls less stringent.

Deindustrialization and the growth of the service economy in developed countries has been shown to be detrimental to earnings for both genders, but male earnings were impacted more as blue-collar work diminished and competition for services increased (Lorence, 1991). Economic downturns tended to affect males more as male dominated industries such as construction and manufacturing were more sensitive to economic upheaval than female dominated industries such as education and health care (BLS, 2001). In the 2008 recession, 80% of those who lost jobs were male, and by 2009 the majority of the work force was female (Mulligan, 2009). The elasticity of industrial and manufacturing jobs became more volatile as employees began to be treated as human capital—to be acquired during good economic times and discarded during bad.

For developed countries, a highly educated workforce has become a necessity for maintaining a competitive advantage and has continued to be a key toward securing high paying jobs. But the continued gap between the need for highly educated workers and the supply of those capable of filling those jobs is growing. For instance, in California by 2020, there is a projected gap between jobs requiring a college degree (41%) and the

number of workers achieving that goal (33%) due to the impending retirement of the Baby Boom generation (PPIC, 2008). The demand for jobs requiring a high school or less education will continue to be smaller than the supply of available workers with less than a college degree. Through supply and demand, the pay gap between high school or less educated workers and college educated workers will continue to grow.

The familial arrangements of Americans also went through a period of transition over the last century (Census, 2003). From the turn of the century concept of the nuclear family with married mother and father and children cohabitating, to the growing number of post-modern family arrangements including single parent households, blended and binuclear families, child-less marriages, and same sex marriages, the diversity of living arrangements has expanded the concept of family. From a high of 86 percent in 1970, the percentage of nuclear families has decreased to 68 percent, with the number of single parent and grandparent households increasing steadily.

Another factor affecting 20th century society was the impression of an increasingly mobile population. In contrast to the mass migrations of the 19th century, America at the beginning of the last century was characterized by relatively stable rural enclaves with few traveling far from their regional area of birth. After the events of World War I and II, geographic mobility, as measured by how many people moved since last year, reached a peak of 20% in 1947 (Census, 2009). In contrast to the commonly held belief of an increasingly mobile society, the geographic mobility rate has remained relatively stable and actually decreased to 14% by the end of the century. Most geographic mobility in the waning era of the last century was job related, as job markets became more dynamic with the demise of life-long employment opportunities.

Changes in Education

Societal and economic changes necessitated changes in the supporting educational system. The typical decentralized rural one-room classroom model of the 19th century was supplanted by the industrial age factory model of the 20th century (Goldin, 1999). Schools became institutionalized with larger school size, specialization of subjects, and stratification by year group. American educational institutions went through three main transformational changes during the last century: the first made elementary education the norm for majority of youths; the second made high school the norm; the third, still ongoing, made higher education the required norm. The below paragraphs will discuss these three periods of change.

During the middle of the 19th century, the movement for publically funded compulsory elementary education spread throughout the nation (Goldin, 1999). By the beginning of the 20th century, nearly all children attended elementary school in some form—both male and female. Initially females attended schools for more months than males due to the continued reliance on young males to work family farms and businesses, but by the middle of the century, the standardized school year became the norm. Since the 1970's, the major trends in elementary education have included: increased pre-school and special education programs; decreased classroom sizes; increased teacher professionalization and unionization; and increased and centralized school administration. These changes have led to a large increase in the per pupil cost of education and a rising call for quality measures such as standardized testing.

While elementary education became the norm in the mid 19th century, the percentage of high school graduates at the turn of century was only ten percent of the

youth population (Goldin, 1999). With the passage of state compulsory education laws, high school graduation rates climbed steadily throughout the 20th century to reach 73% by 1985—not including General Education Development (GED) graduates who boosted that percentage to 86%. Most of this progress was brought about by the passage of free education laws in all states and the increase in school building programs to support the urban industrial work force. In relation to the practically based curriculum taught earlier in the century, high school curriculum changed to become predominantly college-prep based by the end of the 20th century

As the need for a more educated work force became common in the late 20th century, a college education became the required norm for the majority of Americans (Goldin, 1999). While the Morrill Act of 1862 instituted the state college system, the large increase in the number of college graduates in the 20th century was due in part to numerous factors including: the increase in high school graduates; the GI Bill incentives for veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam; the establishment of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); and the formation of student loan programs. In the early part of the last century, males enrolled at four-year institutions in increasing numbers with the trend reaching a peak in the 1960's due to the Vietnam War draft deferments. Female attendance has increased significantly, and they have been the in the majority since the 1980's.

Male Role Changes

The societal changes of the twentieth century precipitated shifts in the roles that males were expected to fulfill in our society. From the founding of the country, the predominant male roles included: the genteel patriarch—landowners and gentlemen as

depicted by the founding fathers; and the heroic artisan—new world craftsmen as depicted by the blacksmith Paul Revere (Kimmel, 2006). Under these social constructs, being a man meant being independent, owning property, and being in control. Manhood was something earned through hard work in a socially accepted maturation process.

However, societal changes in the 19th century caused a change in the dominant male role with the introduction of mass immigration. The self-made man became the predominant male role as waves of immigrants arrived and settled, mainly in the cities as laborers. The predominant discourse of that century pitted the self-made man against the ‘Dandy’, an image of feminized refinement that epitomized the upper-class. The Great Depression brought about the demise of these constructs as the dominant male roles in the early twentieth century.

Between 1900 and 1920, the solitary cowboy defined masculinity for the majority of males (Cross, 2008). The western genre in books, movies, and television described the classic heroic struggle of good versus evil, the nostalgic return to the moral certainty of the previous century, and the cultural simplicity that was missing in the urbanized factory economy of the 20th century. The cowboy role continued well into the 1950’s as many of the Baby-Boom generation grew up watching Saturday matinees of their heroes Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Hop-a-long Cassidy, and The Lone Ranger. But these roles soon gave way to the buffoonish caricature of Buffalo Bob Smith and the Howdy Doody Show.

In the middle of the last century, the dominant male role became the father figure as men returned from World War II, married in large numbers, and began raising families. This role was reflected in media portrayals of fathers with television shows such

as *Father Knows Best* and *Make Room for Daddy* (Cross, 2008; Miller, 2010). In this role, men were the final authority in the family and society, and were respected for sound judgment, fairness, and virtue. This image of the benevolent provider was in stark opposition to the reality of life for many, including women and ethnic minorities in the 1950's, and became the punch line of sitcoms and driver of civil rights legislation in the 1960's and 1970's.

The 1960's brought about a change to the depiction of males in the media to include the bohemian lifestyle as projected by magazines such as *Playboy*, disaffected youth as depicted by James Dean, professionalized sports as a legitimate high paying career choice, and the rise of celebrity as an end rather than a means. These roles transformed the thought of earning success through hard work and perseverance that predominated the beginning of the century, to one of success without effort at the end of the century.

The latter part of the twentieth century saw the rise of the social construct of masculinity as the predominant male definition. Unlike manhood—which was an earned construct—masculinity was something that needed to be proven repeatedly in an ever shifting definition of manliness (Kimmel, 2006). The common masculinity stereotypes depicted in the media at the end of the century included: the joker, the jock, the strong silent type, the big shot, the action hero, and the buffoon (CN, 1999). As these roles clashed with the traditional definitions of manhood, many men escaped to what Kimmel (2006) described as the homo-social island hideaways of drugs and alcohol, anti-gay and anti-feminist fraternities, and hyper-male dominated sports.

At the end of the century, Children Now—“a non-partisan, independent voice for America’s children” (CN, 1999, p. ii)—held a Boys to Men conference to examine the issues facing young males. The final report identified three major myths driving the discourse over young men in society: boys will be boys; boys should be boys; and boys are toxic. They concluded that these discourses limited young males by forcing them into socially constructed stereotypes of aggression, violence, and unemotional detachment. Through national surveys, focus groups, and conference panels, the conference concluded:

Today’s boys navigate a perilous path towards manhood. Even if he is raised in a healthy, loving environment, a boy must sort out powerful societal messages that limit and restrict the definition of masculinity—the definition of who he should become. And he will hear and see these messages reinforced and amplified on television, in the movies, in music videos, and in video games—throughout his favorite sources of entertainment. Serious or subtle, the media’s role in defining manhood is significant. (p. 21)

By the beginning of the 21st century, many young males found themselves in a veritable no-man’s land in a period of development between being a boy and being a man. This period, basically covering the ages of 16 to 26, was highlighted by Cross (2008) as the “Men to Boys” period and dubbed “Guyland” by Kimmel (2008). During this developmental phase of life, males are too old to be considered boys, and yet are not mature enough to be considered men. Lacking legitimate roles to fulfill in this phase of

life, many young males have become mired in a life-stage where there is no hurry to complete their education, get jobs, or start families.

The Women's Movement

One of the larger social changes of the twentieth century impacting societal norms has been the rise of the Women's Movement and progress towards civil rights for women and minorities. Growing out of the Suffrage Movement of the 19th century, the Women's Movement made great progress towards gender equity in the last century. With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1919, women earned the right to vote and began to participate in civic activities in large numbers (NARA, 2009). During World Wars I and II, women entered the commercial work force in large numbers to support the war efforts, but returned to the home to raise families when the wars ended. In the 1960's, the Feminist Movement formed to deal with cultural and legal inequities and discrimination in education, the work place, and civic life—creating the political impetus for change.

Becoming impatient with the slow rate of progress and perceived government inaction, some leading feminists founded the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966 with the stated purpose of taking “action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men” (NOW, 2009). NOW has championed women's issues such as equal rights, equal pay, and gay rights through legislation at the local, state, and federal level and via the courts. NOW's influence in changing the

national consciousness to focus on gender equity was felt in the workplace and extended into the classroom.

The American Association of University Women (AAUW), formed in 1921 with the merger of two suffragette era associations, with the stated mission of “Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research” (AAUW, 2009). The AAUW pushed for the establishment of the U.S. Department of Education, which was created by Public Law 96-88 in 1980 as a cabinet level position in the executive department of the federal government with a mission to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (ED, 2009a). In 1991, the AAUW launched the Initiative for Educational Equity, commissioned research and released the groundbreaking report Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America (Greenberg-Lake, 1991) to increase the focus of education policy on female gender issues.

Policy Changes

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10980 establishing the President’s Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) charged with “developing recommendations for overcoming discriminations in government and private employment on the basis of sex” on the premise that “it is in the national interest to promote the economy, security, and national defense through the most efficient and effective utilization of the skills of all persons” (NARA, 1961). In 1964 Congress passed Public Law 88-352, commonly referred to as the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, color, religion, and national origin. It

also established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to implement and enforce the law (NARA, 1964).

Congress enacted USC 20 Section 1681 TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972 forbidding gender discrimination in educational programs. Commonly referred to simply as Title IX, the law states: "No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (DOJ, 2009). This law, and the lawsuits that followed, has been used to dictate gender equity in the classroom and on the sports field and has led to the growth of women's collegiate sports—arguably at the expense of more financially stable men's sports programs.

In response to the inequities identified in the AAUW research, The U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement has provided \$25 Million in appropriations since 2000 for grants under the Women's Education Equity Act to increase female participation in mathematics and science (ED, 2009a). Despite indications that gender equity has been achieved in science and mathematics (NCES, 2000), the Department of Education announced continuation grants for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 and provided \$1.8 Million funding of discretionary grants for continuation programs (ED, 2009b). No such laws, organization or programs exist to champion similar issues for males.

CHAPTER 3

STATISTICAL REVIEW

There has been much debate about whether the phenomenon of a male crisis truly exists or is just a popular media created concern (King, 2000; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). This chapter will investigate some statistical trends and indicators of male performance to determine if the available data support the thesis of the lost-boys phenomenon. The following sections will investigate government statistics of gender ratios, high school enrollment, GPA, college enrollment, degree attainment, dropout rates, crime statistics, voting rates, and other indicators to determine to what extent the lost-boys phenomenon truly exists.

Gender Ratios

The percentage of females (50.71%) in the total population of the United States is slightly higher than the percentage of males (49.29%) due to gender differentials in life expectancy (Census, 2007). But the percentage of males under the age of 18 (51.17%) is higher than the percentage of females (48.83%) of the same age group. The estimated population of males between the ages of 14 and 17 years is 8,815,798 and represents 51.23% of the population in that age group. The estimated population of males between the ages of 18 and 24 years is 15,193,353 and represents 51.52% of the population in that age group. Per the U.S. Census projections for 2007, males represent a majority of the school age population.

High School Enrollment

There are also a larger percentage of males enrolled in high school, with males accounting for 51.12% of total high school enrollment (Census, 2007). This is true for the

ethnic categories of white (51.19%) and black (51.08%), with only Hispanics having slightly fewer males than females (49.80%). As depicted in Figure 2, the trend of having more males in high school than females has been in effect since the 1970's, with the gender gap increasing since 1990 (with the noted exception of 2004).

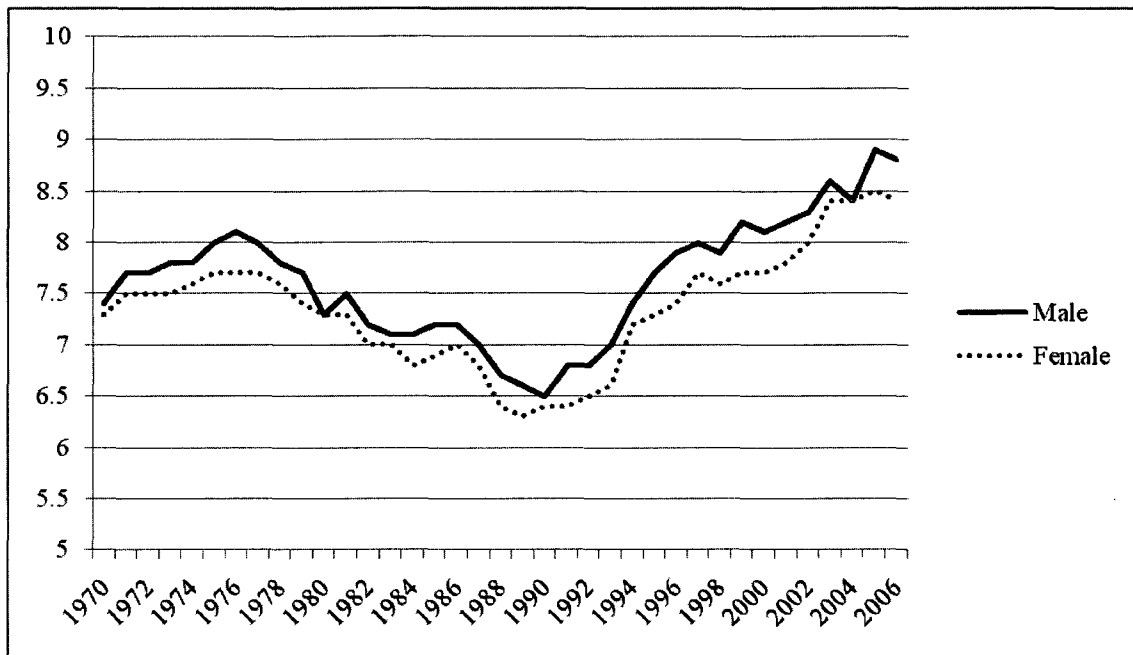


Figure 2. High School Enrollment in Millions by Gender
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Table 218

High School Grade Point Average (GPA)

While the U.S. Department of Education does not track GPA per se because of the differences in state rating scales used, they do track parent reported data of estimated overall student performance. As depicted in Figure 3, more females were reported to be carrying a GPA average of Mostly A (51% female, 36.4% male), while more males were reported carrying a GPA average of Mostly B (38.6% male, 35.3% female), Mostly C (19.8% male, 11.9% female), or Mostly D or F (5.2% male, 1.9% female), indicating the

male performance curve is actually shifted downward in comparison to the female performance curve (NCES, 2009).

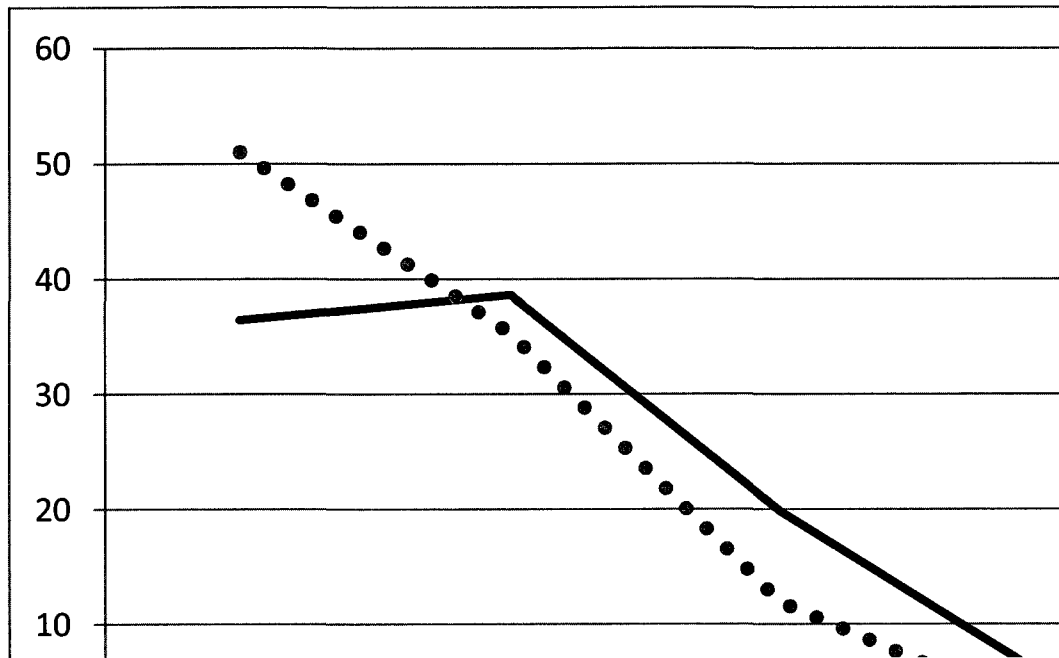


Figure 3. Percent of Parent Reported GPA by Gender
Source: NCES (2009)

Persistence

While there are more males than females of high school age enrolled in high schools, males drop out of school at a greater rate than females. High school drop-out rates are notoriously inexact, however, as school districts compute this figure differently. As depicted in Figure 4, national statistics indicate that both male and female high school drop-out rates have been decreasing since the late 1970's, but the male drop-out rate has been considerably higher than the female rate with short exceptions in 1992 and 1999 (Census, 2007). While this ratio is the same for White Males, there is a higher percentage of Black Female drop outs (4.3) than Black Males (3.2%), and more Hispanic

Female drop outs (6.6%) than Hispanic Males (6.3%), presumably due to higher underage pregnancy rates and single motherhood.

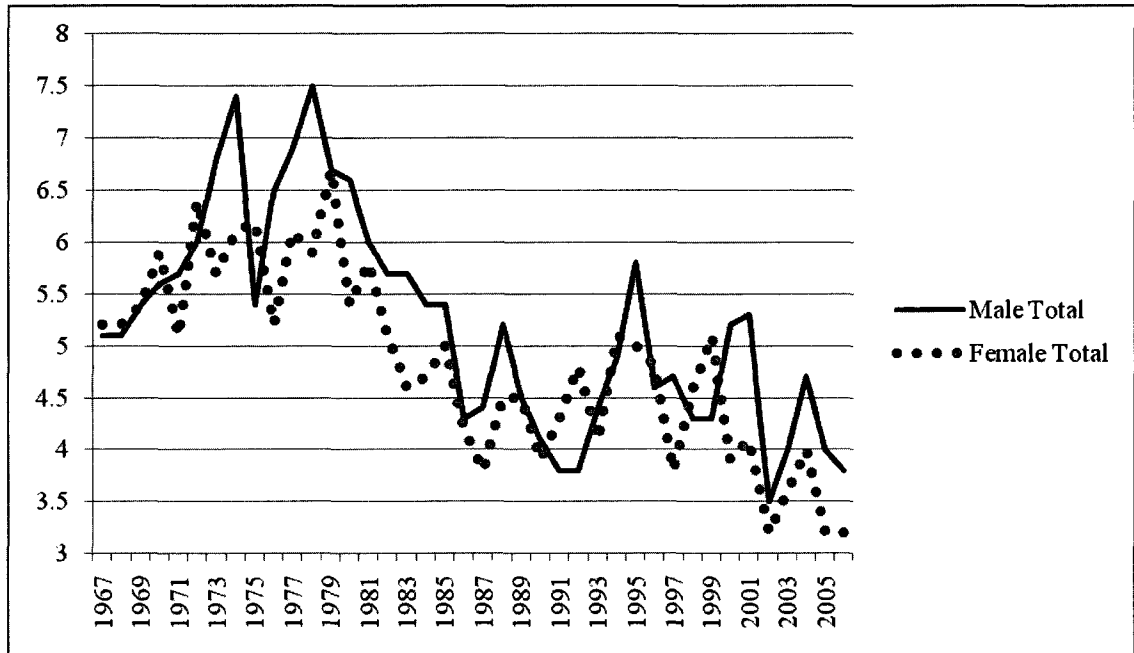


Figure 4. Percentage of High School Drop Outs by Gender
Source: U.S. Census Current Population Survey

College Attendance

As seen in high school trends, males are less likely to enroll in college immediately after high school and are less likely to persist until graduation if enrolled. Prior to the late 1970's males constituted the majority of students enrolled in college (*U.S. Census*, 2007). As depicted in Figure 5, college enrollment has increased for both males and females, but the rate of increase for females has been greater than for males. Since 1979 females have made up the majority of students enrolled in college, with the gender gap increasing since the mid 1990's. This gender gap is true for all races and economic groups, with the gap increasing in the lower economic groups.

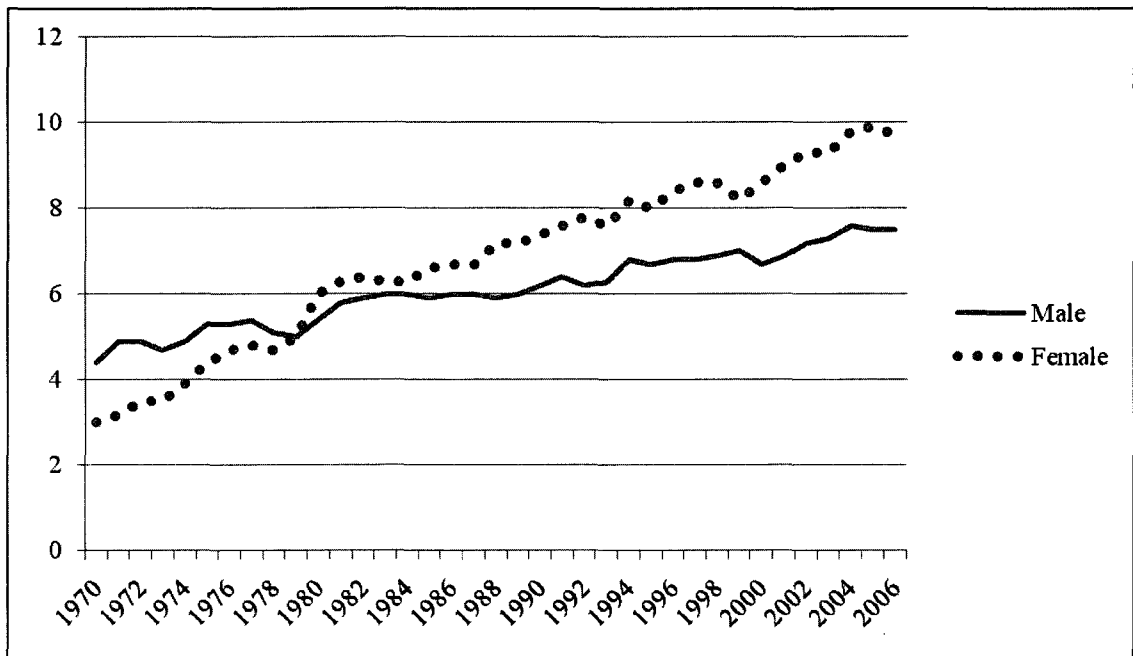


Figure 5. College Enrollment in Millions by Gender
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Table 218

Educational Attainment

Consequently, since there are more females attending college and persisting until graduation, the number of females graduating from college exceeds the number of males. As depicted in Figure 6, the percentage of Americans aged 25 to 29 with a Bachelor's degree was heavily weighted towards males from the beginning of the twentieth century until the mid-1980's. Since that time, while the percentage of females increased logarithmically, the percentage of males has stagnated—remaining in the 20-25% range. If current college enrollment numbers remain consistent, these trends are predicted to continue with a significantly increasing gender gap in degree attainment in the future.

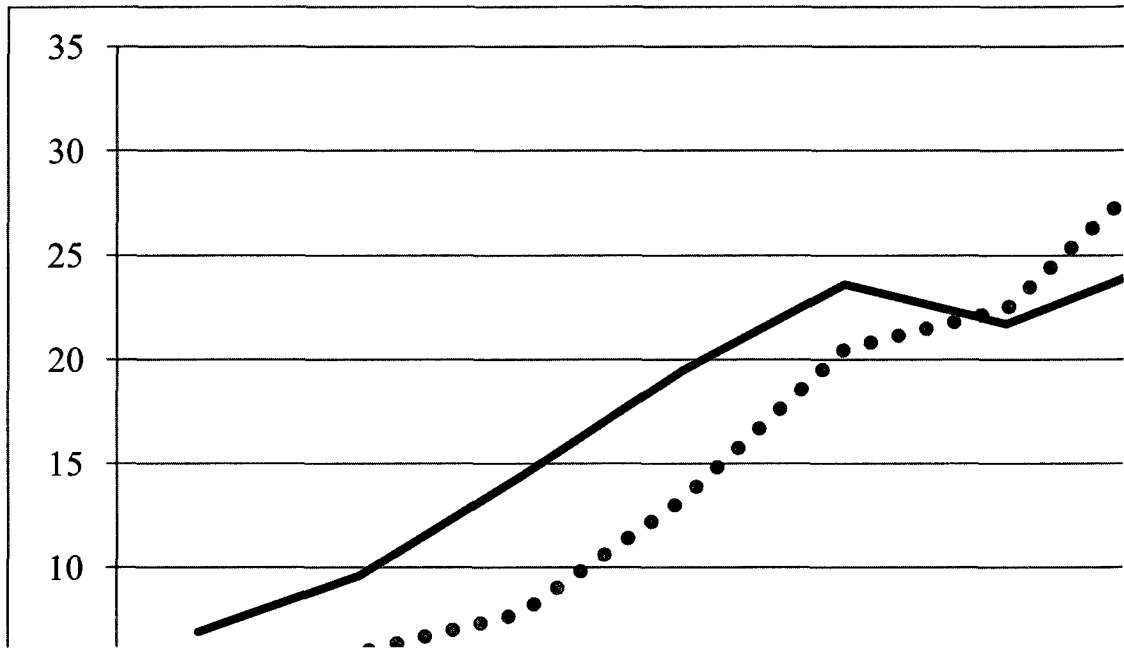


Figure 6. Percentage of Americans Aged 25 to 29 with a Bachelor's Degree
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey

Education Pipeline

The education pipeline depicted in Figure 7 illustrates the ratio of males to females at different flow points throughout the educational pipeline. While not a longitudinal study in that it does not track the same males throughout the school years, the below graph gives a visual indication of how many males are present at different flow points per 100 females at the same points in a given year, and gives a graphic indication of where males are being “lost” throughout the pipeline. Males are in the majority from birth to middle school, and then decrease in percentage of students who graduate from high school. Their percentage continues to wane in college enrollment and they achieve fewer degrees in the Associate, Bachelor, and Masters level, and only regain the majority in professional degrees.

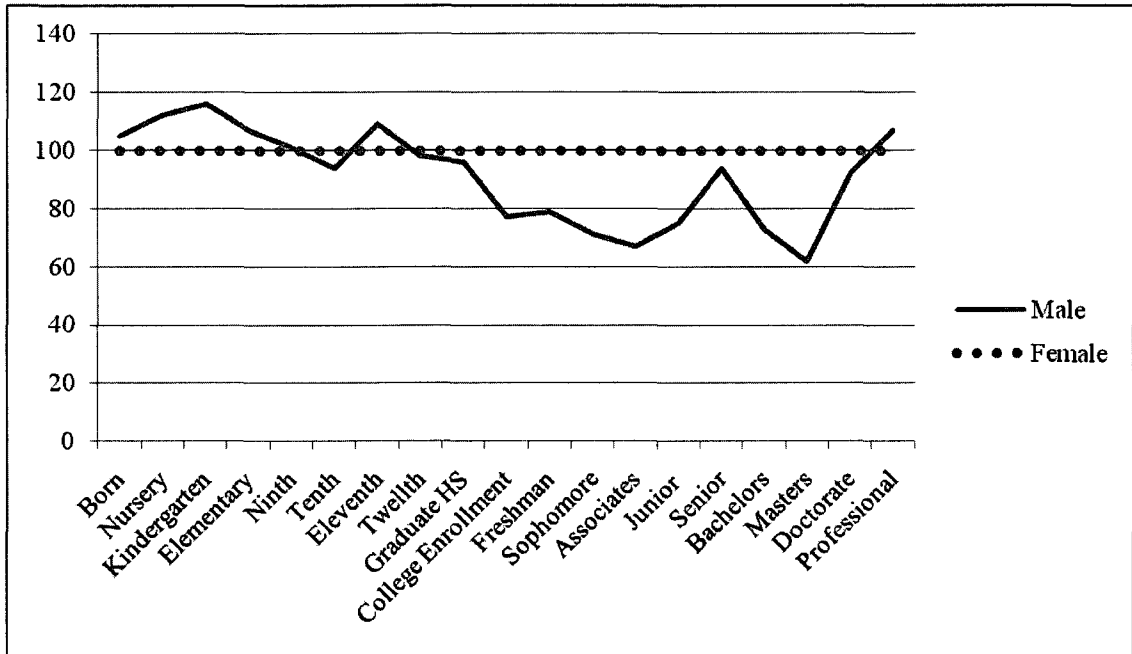


Figure 7. Males per 100 Females in Educational Pipeline
 Source: For Every Hundred Girls (Mortenson, 2006)

Crime

Although crime in the U.S. as a whole has been decreasing over the past few years (DOJ, 2007), youth violence has increased dramatically (Fox & Swatt, 2008). Homicides using guns has increased among offenders of all age ranges and races, with young black males increasing the victims (31% increase from 2002 to 2007) and perpetrators (43% increase) (Fox & Swatt, 2008). The recent increase in youth crime and violent homicides has been noted in every region of the country and is expected to worsen during difficult economic times. At-risk youths were especially vulnerable as funding for family support programs and local policing has diminished since the inception of Department of Homeland Security and the national focus on terrorism. In the years 2000-2005, the vast majority (76.7%) of juvenile offenders at school were male, with young males being 3.8 times more likely to be arrested than females (DOJ, 2007).

As depicted in Figure 8, there is a clear indication that the vast majority of school crime offenders were male, and while the number of female offenders was increasing slightly between 2000-2005, the gender gap between male and female offenders is large and growing.

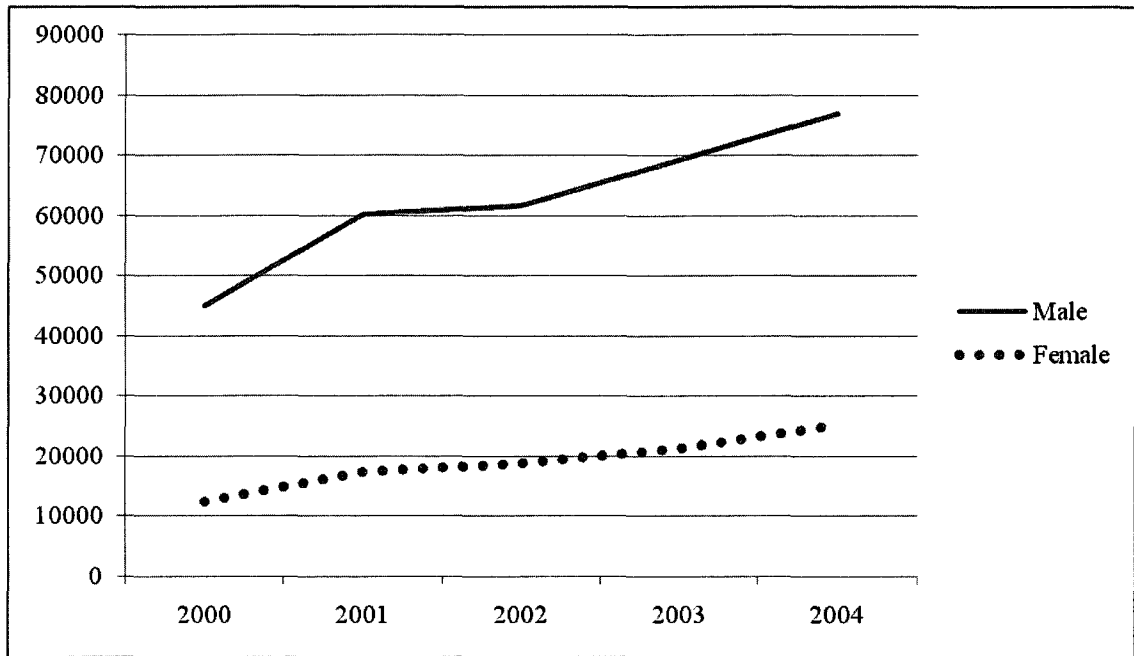


Figure 8. School Crime Offenders by Gender
Source: U.S. Department of Justice

Mortality

The second leading cause of death from 1999 to 2005 for males in the 15 to 24 year age group was homicide (36,372) (CDC, 2009). In 2005, the latest data available also indicates that homicide is the second leading cause of death for all males—second only to unintentional injury. As depicted in Figure 9, the number of male homicide deaths in the 15 to 24 year old age group is increasing and is significantly higher than the number of female deaths due to homicides, which is decreasing.

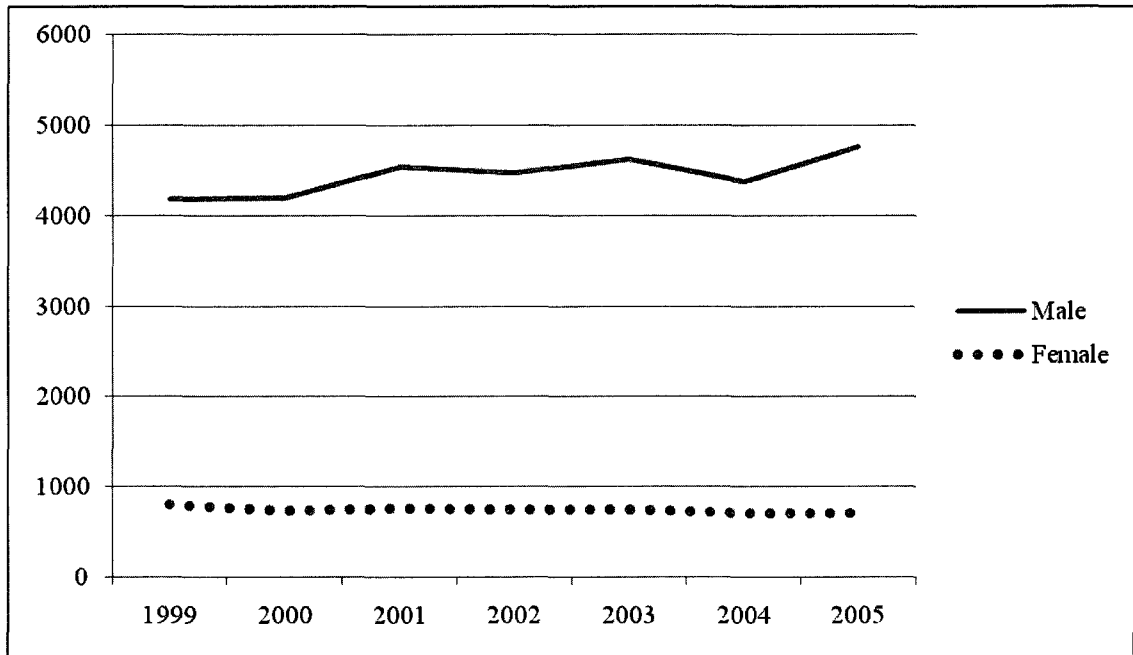


Figure 9. Homicide Deaths for Ages 15 to 24 by Gender
 Source: U.S. Center for Disease Control WISQARS Database

Suicide

The third leading cause of death from 1999 to 2005 for males age 15 to 24 was suicide (28,392) (CDC, 2009). In 2005, the latest data available indicates that suicide is also the third leading cause of death for all males—behind unintentional injury and homicide. As depicted in Figure 10, the number of male suicide deaths in the 15 to 24 year old age group is increasing and is significantly higher than the number of female deaths due to suicide. Although females report a higher incidence of suicidal thoughts (ED, 2007), young males are much more likely to actually commit suicide.

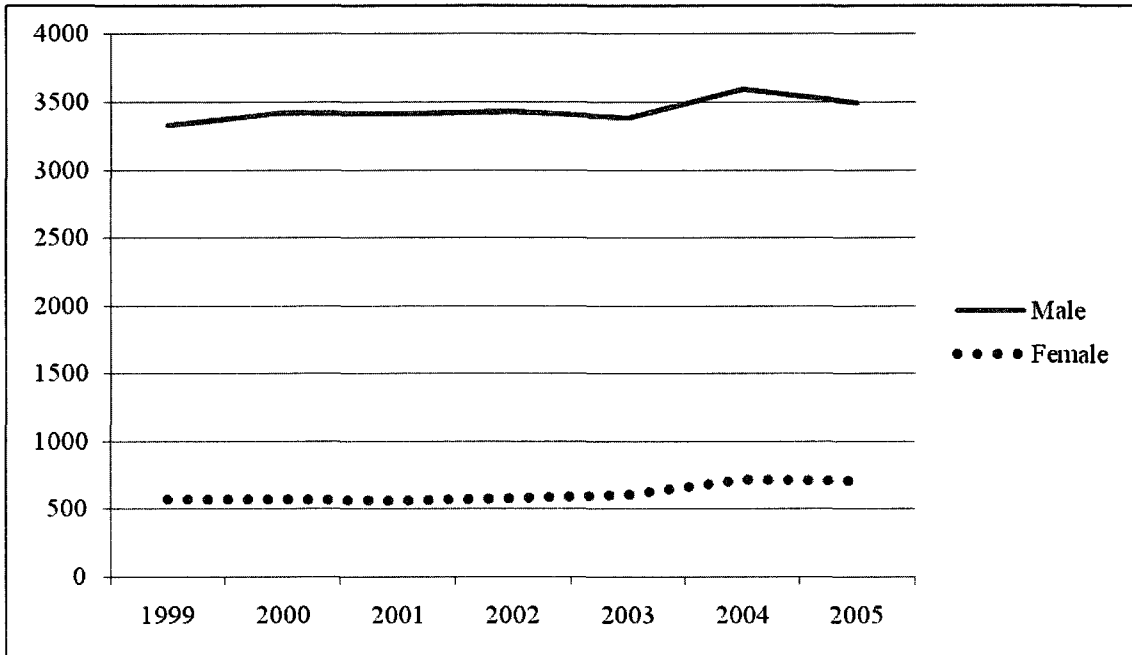


Figure 10. Suicide Deaths Ages 15 to 24 by Gender
 Source: U.S. Center for Disease Control WISQARS Database

School Massacres

There has been a marked increase in the incidence of mass shootings as typified by the Columbine High School massacre. While there are little reliable government statistics tracking the increasing incidence of these massacres, the publicity surrounding the events has kept them in the public consciousness. These types of events were virtually unheard of prior to 1966 when a lone gunman in a tower at the University of Texas at Austin catapulted into infamy. Since that time, the incidence and death toll from these events has increased as depicted in Figure 11. What stands out among all these events is that 100 percent of the incidents were perpetrated by males.

A study conducted by the U.S. Secret Service for the U.S. Department of Education Safe School Initiative identified ten findings pertaining to school massacres. Some of these findings include: “Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant

losses or personal failures. Moreover, many had considered or attempted suicide” and “Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack” (USSS, 2004). Although security changes have been implemented after each occurrence, the deadliest event to date occurred in 2007 at Virginia Tech University with 33 fatalities in a single day.

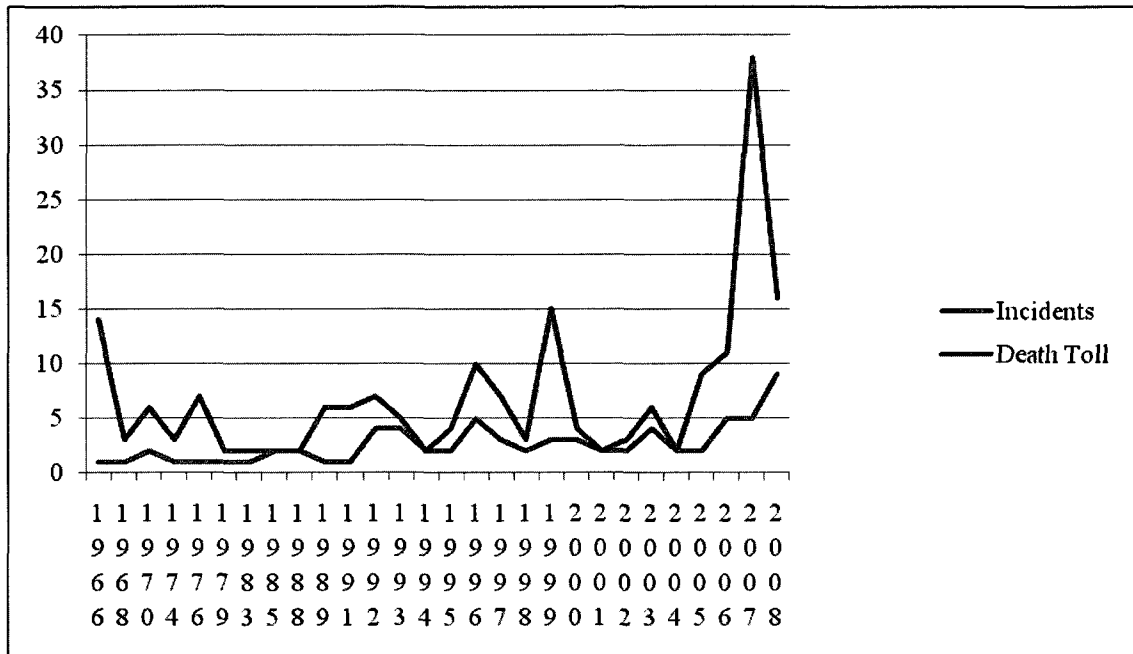


Figure 11. Number of School Massacre Incidents by Year and Death Toll
Source: Wikipedia “School Shootings” (AUG 2009)

Substance Abuse

The prevalence of substance abuse in school aged males is a measure of disengagement and alienation and may lead to disruption at school and be a precursor to other crimes. Substance abuse includes the use of illegal drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. Although reported overall substance abuse has decreased between 1999 and 2001, males were much more likely than females to engage in substance abuse behaviors such as: drug use (41.6% marijuana, cocaine 7.8%, hallucinogenic 9.5%, heroin 2.9%,

methamphetamine 4.6%, and ecstasy 6.7%) (ED, 2007); alcohol (49.2%); and cigarette use (29.2%) (NCES, 2005). While female substance abuse has been increasing, males are much more likely to be involved in substance abuse.

Learning Disabilities

Males age five to 17 are more likely to be referred for screening and diagnosed for Behavioral Difficulty (male 6.4%, female 3.9%), Learning Disabilities (male 10.4%, female 6%), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (male 11.3%, female 4.6%) (CDC, 2009). The diagnosis of ADHD has increased 3% annually since 1997 for children age six to 17 years old (Pastor & Reuben, 2008). As depicted in Figure 12, the gender gap in ADHD diagnosis is large and growing, with males more likely to be identified, diagnosed and prescribed medication to mitigate the effects of ADHD.

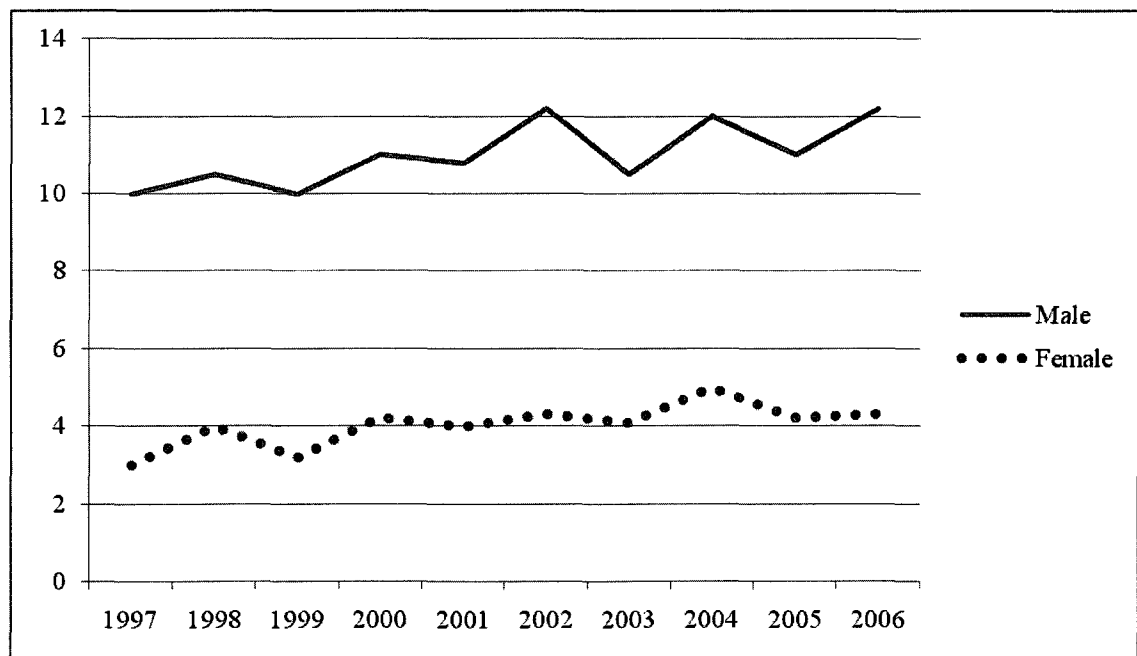


Figure 12. Percentage of 6 to 17 Year Olds Diagnosed with ADHD by Gender
 Source: U.S. Center for Disease Control WISQARS Database 2008

Engagement

Males are less likely to be engaged in school or school-based extracurricular activities, with participation rates decreasing significantly in the 1990's (NCES, 2005). Between 1980 and 2001, the percentage of high school senior males responding to surveys who reported that they didn't like school increased from 14% to 24%. In 2001, high school senior males were less likely to participate in: school newspapers and yearbooks (6% males, 13% females); music and performing arts (19% males, 31% females); academic clubs (12% males, 19% females); student council and government (8% male, 13% female); and other extracurricular activities (26% male, 44% female) (NCES, 2005). The only extracurricular activity reported where high school male participation remained strong was in athletics (45% male, 32% female) (ED, 2007).

Community Service

One indicator of engagement in civic life is the rate of volunteering service to the community. There was a decrease in volunteer rates for both males and females in 2007 (DOL, 2008), even though community service has become a standard high school requirement and is used for screening applicants for admission to universities. The overall male volunteer rate (22%) is significantly less than the female rate (29.3%) for all age groups. For youth volunteers aged 16 to 19, males exhibited a decrease in volunteer rate to 22.5%, while the female volunteer rate decreased to 26.6%. The majority of youth volunteer work was in educational youth service (30.8%) and religious organizations (29.9%) with very little in civic, political, or international organizations (3.9%).

Voting Participation

Another indicator of engagement in civic life is voting participation. As indicated in Figure 13, voting rates have been falling for both males and females in the 18-24 year age group—but males are less likely to vote than females. In some Presidential election years, 2004 for example, the gap can be as much as 6.1 percentage points. In interim elections, such as 2006, the gap can narrow to as little as 2.6 percentage points. In the 2008 Presidential election, the 18-24 year old voters came out in large numbers due in part to the popularity of the candidates—but the gender gap of males (41.0%) to female voters (47.7) was the largest gap (6.7%) noted in record. This indicates that males are less likely to be engaged than females, even in activities outside of school.

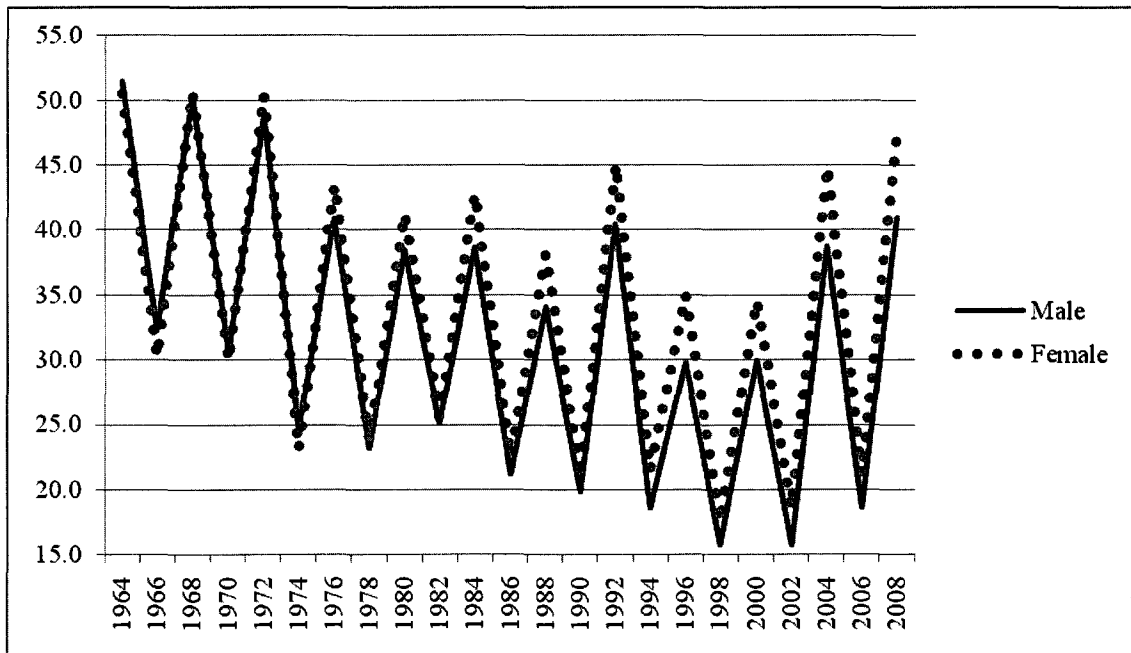


Figure 13. Percentage of Voters 18 to 24 Years Old by Gender
Source: U.S. Census (2009)

Failure to Launch

A recently identified phenomenon and subject of a popular movie is the topic of young males living at home after completing or dropping out of school. Commonly referred to as Failure to Launch, it is estimated that one in three males between the ages of 22 to 34 either remain at home or return home to live with their parents, and one in seven men between the ages of thirty and fifty-four are not working or looking for work (Sax, 2007). In Figure 14, the percentage of males in the United States 18 to 24 years of age who live at home has been decreasing since the early 1980's, but the gender gap in 2007 was 7.1 percentage points (*U.S. Census, 2007*). For the 25 to 34 year old age group, the percentage of males has remained virtually unchanged since the early 1980's, but the gender gap in 2007 was 4.9 percentage points. While in the past the impetus to stay at home was driven primarily by economics, social scientists have noted a lack of ambition and delay of maturation as the prime reasons behind the continuation of the failure to launch syndrome (Sax, 2007).

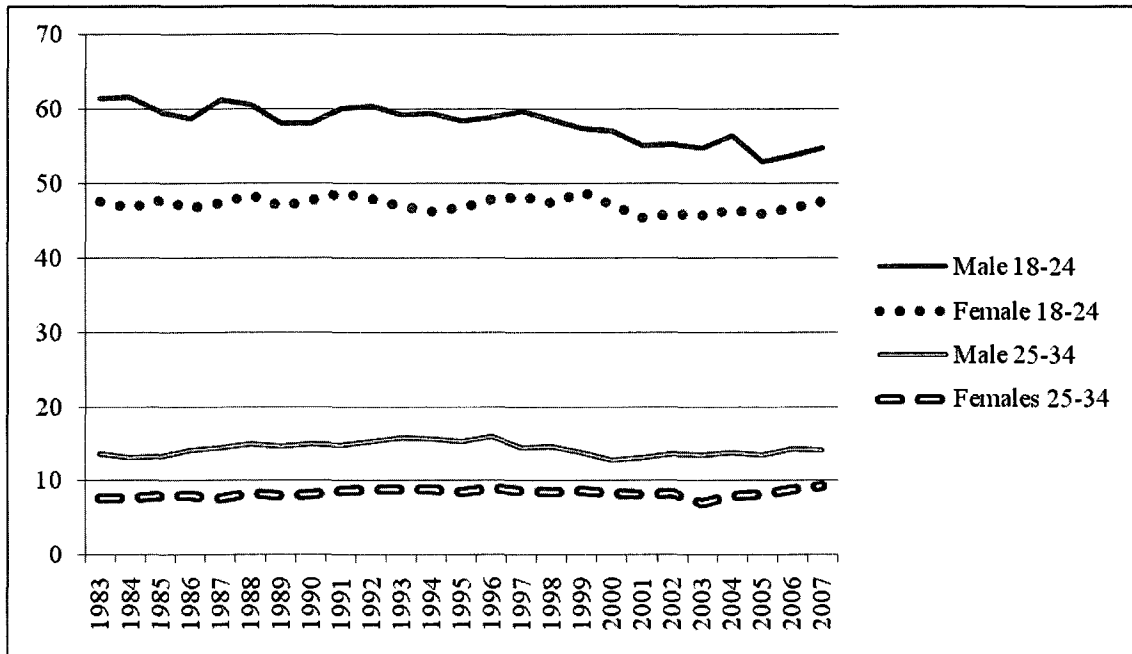


Figure 14. Percentage of Young Adults Living at Home by Gender
 Source: U.S. Census Current Population Survey (AD-1)

Homelessness

While government statistics on the homeless are difficult to obtain and unreliable, agencies that support the homeless estimate that homelessness has been increasing over the past 20 to 25 years (NCH, 2009). Singles make up the majority of homeless (76%) with single males much more likely to be homeless (67.5%). In 2004, 25% of homeless were in the 25 to 34 year age group (NLCHP, 2004). Surveys of the homeless indicate declining wages and increasing housing costs are a major reason for homelessness (NLIHC, 1998). Minimum wage workers would have to work 89 hours a week in order to afford housing in some inner-city housing markets.

Demographic Summary

Based on the above statistics, it would be hard not to conclude that the lost-boys phenomenon exists. The above data clearly suggests that the gender gap in education and

civic engagement is large and growing. While some have argued the need to examine demographic groups in more defined increments rather than in aggregate (King, 2000), they have, upon further study, refined their findings to conclude that there is a large and growing problem in all male demographic groups (King, 2006).

After looking at similar trends in Australia following a 2003 federal inquiry, the Australian Minister of Education Brendan Nelson stated: “Of course boys are having trouble in school. The trouble is not that girls are doing better than boys—it is, instead, that boys are not doing as well as they once did” (Whitmire, 2010, p. 153). Unabated, these trends may negatively impact the future economic competitiveness of our country as well as jeopardize our security and safety. As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, there are currently no government, educational, or social programs in the U.S. to counter this phenomenon. While the statistics clearly indicate the lost-boys phenomenon does exist, what they don’t tell is why—which is the basis for this research.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Understanding the nature of the lost-boys phenomenon requires synthesis from multiple fields of research. As psychosocial phenomena, it encompasses multiple facets of identity, culture, and behavior. Multiple theoretical frameworks must be employed to understand the aggregate affect of the numerous variables involved in the complex nature of human behavior. A firm understanding of the frameworks of these related fields of study is necessary in order to comprehend this very complex subject and attempt to provide holistic explanations for the phenomenon. The theoretical constructs that will be investigated as part of this chapter include: Developmental Theory, Identity Theory, Decision Theory, Group Theory, Integral Theory, and Systems Theory including the related fields of complexity and chaos. These general theories are summarized in the following sections.

Developmental Theory

The general consensus among social scientists is that humans develop identities and behavioral patterns through a series of life stages (Erickson, 1997). Our language is inculcated with verbiage that recognizes this cycle for men from infancy through boyhood to manhood. Numerous cyclical psychosocial development models were derived in the last century to refine the concept of staged development. Erickson (1997) defined the stages of the human generational life cycle and highlighted the competencies that must be mastered in each stage of development. In the early stages of development, the psychosocial crises that must be mastered include: *hope*— basic trust versus mistrust; *will*— autonomy versus shame and doubt; *purpose*—initiative versus guilt; *competence*—

industry versus inferiority; and *fidelity*—identity vs. identity confusion. These early stages are where people are programmed for success or failure as each step is grounded in the previous ones. Lacking mastery of the competencies of previous stages causes “semi-deliberate regression to the earliest developmental stage in order to regain—unless they lose it altogether—some fundamentals of early Hope from which to leap forward again” (p. 60).

Gilligan (1982) and Bergman (1991) refined Erickson’s model by identifying that men and women develop differently. Gilligan (1982) theorized that unlike girls—who remain connected to their mothers and develop a *basis of empathy*, boys must separate from mother at an early age and establish *individuation*. A key point is that unlike women who define their identity through relationships, in men “identity precedes intimacy” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 12). In other words, males need to establish identities before they can form relationships, and therefore identity issues are more critical to male development.

Bergman (1991) identified that boys are driven by the need to establish a masculine identity. This causes boys at a certain stage to psychologically separate from the feminine as represented by mother in an attempt to connect with maleness as represented by father. Since male relationships are typically characterized by competition, dominance, entitlement, and power-over relationships, male socialization is geared towards disconnection in which males never really learn the process of relationship. The dominant culture promotes male competitive activities and devalues male relational activities, which leads to a growing sense of incompetence in relational intimacy (Bergman, 1991).

Recent developments in brain scan technology have provided a biological argument supporting the theory of psychosocial developmental models (Gurian, 2001). Although brain capacity was once thought to be fixed at birth, new discoveries about the structure and function of the brain are being made through the use of scientific analysis using modern medical tools and techniques. Using new brain scan technology, researchers are able to observe brain activity as it occurs and determine how the brain functions during different activities. Major biological gender differences have been noted, including differences in brain structure and development, chemical, hormonal, and functional differences. These differences provide gender advantages and disadvantages to each sex based on evolutionary survival strategies which are reinforced by socialization and culture.

Identity Theory

Increasing emphasis has been placed on identity development research and many studies have highlighted the importance of identity issues in the development of adolescent males (Archer, Pratt, & Phillips, 2001; Bergman, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Parry, 2001). One of the more useful models for visualizing the complexity of identity is the Conceptual Model for Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000) depicted in Figure 15.

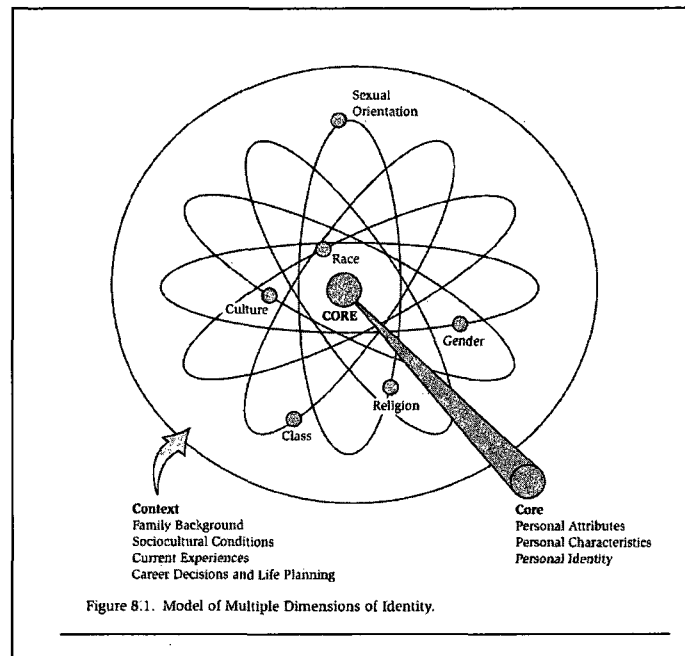


Figure 15. Multiple Dimensions of Identity Model
 Source: Jones & McEwen (2000)

At the center of the model is the *core* that people often describe as their “inner self”, and includes the personal attributes and characteristics that are guarded and kept closed to outside influences. The external characteristics are fluid and contextually aligned, and include: gender, race, religion, culture, class, sexual orientation and other characteristics that are identifiable by others. The orbit circles on which the external identities reside indicate the *relative salience* of the characteristics based on contextual situations. They intersect to indicate that no characteristic can be examined individually – only in relation to other characteristics.

The larger circle encompassing the entire model includes the environmental influences of *context* including family background, socio-cultural conditions, current experiences, career decisions, and life planning. The model is fluid and dynamic, which explains the multiple identities that people often experience depending on the context of

the present situation. Based on contextual issues of differentiation or integration, the characteristics align in conjunction or opposition to form what is perceived as *identity*.

Decision Theory

One widely used decision theory model in the military and business is the unpublished Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act (OODA) Loop Model (Boyd, 1996) depicted in Figure 16. In this model, observations from outside information, unfolding circumstances, guidance, and feedback from past actions are fed into the orientation box. Orientation defines how individuals process these observations, and based on previous experiences, cultural traditions, and genetic heritage, the new information is analyzed and a course of action synthesized. This information is used to make a decision based on a hypothesis, and an action is initiated. Feedback from the decisions and actions processes are fed back into the observations as lessons learned which could impact future iterations of the cycle, as modifications to decisions and actions.

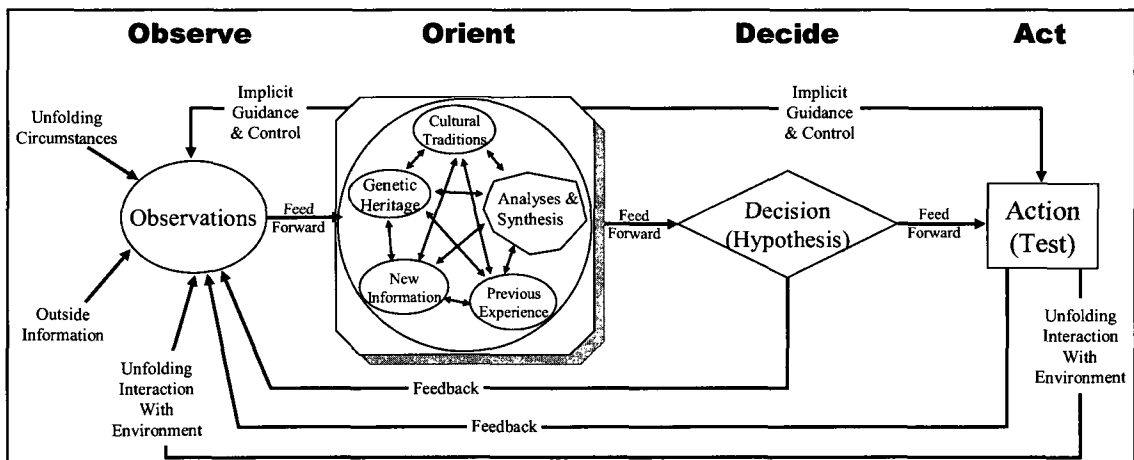


Figure 16. Boyd's OODA Loop
Source: U.S. Air Force Col. John Boyd's Unpublished Notes

The orientation section of the OODA loop is similar to the concept of self-created or socially constructed reality proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and refined by

Csikszentmihalyi (1993). Csikszentmihalyi theorized that reality is composed of socially constructed illusions passed down through generations via: *genes*—natural instincts passed down via genetics; *memes*—learned responses passed down via traditions and customs; and *self*—ego based on ideas and symbols (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). The OODA Loop model is useful in understanding the dynamics of the decision process and that observations are relative, contextually derived, and influenced by identity issues.

Group Theory

The lost-boys phenomenon does not occur in a vacuum—it occurs in relation to other people or groups. Group theory examines how people interact in groups and how they deal with the fundamental issues of differentiation and integration. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) defined differentiation as “the ability to free oneself from genetic and social determinism by developing control over one’s impulses and desires” (p. 160), while integration is “compassion, altruism, and finally a blending of one’s hard-won individuality with the harmony underlying the cosmos” (p. 161). In group situations, individuals are constantly vacillating between the two fundamental polarities of differentiation and integration, and based on context may align at either pole in different situations.

Much research has occurred in the field of group theory and multiple group developmental models have been devised. The models are generally categorized into linear and cyclical models based on whether regression to earlier stages is possible. The Integrative Model (Napier & Gershenfield, 2000) is a cyclical model that includes stages—but while the stages are linear and sequential, events can cause the group to remain in a stage or return to previous stages at any time. The stages of this model

include: *dependency and inclusion*; *counterdependency and flight*; *trust and structure*; *work*; and *termination*. Groups form and cycle sequentially through these stages as members interact with one another. Activities that may cause a group to remain in a certain stage or regress to earlier stages include the addition or deletion of members, assignment of new tasks, conflict, and changes in organizational structure.

Integral Theory

Wilber (2000) further refined group relations by overlaying several current concepts to formulate an integral theory. The integral theory describes a full spectrum approach to examining the multiple frames of reference used in dealing with individual and group identity, and the impact this has on performance and the perception of performance. The model includes four frames of reference called the *I*, the *IT*, the *WE*, and the *ITS* and describes how these frames of reference relate to: the *waves of consciousness*—the body, mind, soul, and spirit; and *streams of consciousness*—the affective, spiritual, interpersonal, moral, and cognitive.

In this model, individuals and groups evolve through *spiral development* of waves of existence and progress through sequential stages of consciousness. The nine stages of consciousness include: *survival*, *magical*, *power*, *mythic*, *scientific*, *sensitive self*, *integrative*, *holistic*, and *integral*. These stages are broken into first tier thinking in existential stages, and second tiered thinking in the higher transformative stages. The model also describes *paths*, which are the approaches through which people try to make sense of the complexity around them including the *right hand path*—using scientific thought, and the *left hand path*— using reasoned thought (Wilber, 2000).

Systems Theory

Much of the literature on symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon has centered on what occurs in the classroom (Gurian 2001, Poe 2004, Sommers 2000), but what is sometimes overlooked is that what happens outside the classroom has a large influence on perceptions and the effectiveness of classroom activities. In order to get a broader understanding of the multiple variables that influence the phenomena, a systems approach is necessary. A systems approach follows “a holistic frame of reference that will allow us to focus on the relevant issues and avoid the endless search for more details while drowning in proliferating useless information” (Gharajedaghi, 1999, p. XV). Social systems are exemplified by: a repetitive processes that “produce the same set of nonsolutions all over again” (p. 52); multivariate issues where a small change in one variable may result in a large change in the system; and “passive adaptation to a deteriorating environment” can be disastrous (p.54).

Social systems are considered *Information Bonded Systems*, which are “a voluntary association of purposeful members in which the bonding is achieved by a second-degree agreement, which is an agreement based on common perception” (Gharajedaghi, 1999, p.83). *Information bondedness* includes: the concept of culture—which acts as default decision systems; and social learning or shared learning. Social learning can be viewed as: *first order learning*—choosing from generally accepted assumptions; or *second order learning*—challenging assumptions and developing new sets of alternatives. By using systems theory and the holistic approach to analysis, one can begin to gain a fuller appreciation of the larger issues that impact the lost-boys phenomenon.

While some current sociological systems models are useful in examining static linear systems, the lost-boys phenomenon is more closely related to the dynamic theories of Complexity and Chaos. *Complexity* is defined as the combination of *differentiation* and *integration* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Complexity Theory is the study of complex systems that can be defined as “system(s) consisting of a large number of agents that interact with each other in various ways (Vriend, 1995, p. 205). In adaptive complex systems, agents may change their actions as a result of events in the iterative process.

Complexity Theory relates to the structure and order of organized systems that span the spectrum from total order to total chaos, including the related subjects of randomness and complexity at the edge of chaos. While much research in Complexity Theory has been done in the natural sciences, recent work has centered on applications in business and economics (Gharajedaghi, 1999; Phelan, 1995), and the social sciences (Keil & Elliott, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1993) proposed that the natural evolutionary progression of social systems is towards more complexity, but he cautions that complexity does not win out every time and “when people lack the skills to recognize more interesting opportunities, they tend to regress to simple and brutal choices” (p. 187).

Chaos is a subset of systems theory and is defined as the study of unstable aperiodic behavior in deterministic nonlinear dynamic systems (Kellert, 1993). Chaos Theory is useful in examining systems where “we are less likely to be able to explain the behavior of a complex whole by studying the behavior of the parts: contrarily, we are more likely to be able to explain the behavior of the parts by studying the behavior of the whole” (Gharajedaghi, 1999, p 51).

Chaotic systems exhibit no discernable pattern when observed over time, which makes predicting outcomes difficult. The agents that influence the outcome include: *point attractors* – activities that we are naturally drawn to or repelled from such as fear, love, hate, desire to share, or self-interests; *cyclical attractors* – activities in which we oscillate between two or more tendencies such as stability and change, security and freedom, and differentiation and integration; *torus attractors* – activities that are repetitive and organized such as justice, ethics, business processes, and organizational structures; and *strange attractors* – activities which are unpredictable complex patterns that emerge over time such as agenda, goals, and anything that involves choice. A key characteristic of the dynamic nature of Chaos is that small changes in a variable can have large impacts over time because of the exponential nature of the equations involved and the iterative nature of the processes.

Theoretical Synthesis

With an appreciation of the general theories described above, this section will discuss how these theories relate to the lost-boys phenomenon and provide an *a priori* general systems approach. The environment in which the phenomenon occurs is complex, chaotic, and dynamically changing as described in Chapter 2. As a complex system, it cannot be investigated microscopically by holding variables constant, but must be viewed as holistically connected (Geertz, 1973). The impact of culture on the development of identity was characterized by Berger & Luckman (1966) as the paradox of social order, and summarized by Pope John Paul II (1980) as: “Man creates culture and through culture creates himself.”

Identity is important to the lost-boys phenomenon because in males, identity proceeds intimacy (Bergman, 1991). The Jones and McEwen model of identity illustrates the dynamic nature of identity. Because the Jones and McEwen (2000) identity model was developed from interviews with college age women, it is missing several components that may be integral to the lost-boys phenomenon such as: age or stage of development or maturity; physical attributes such as size, complexion, and masculinity indicators such as brawniness, hirsuteness, and voice octave; and temperament such as bookish, athletic, or manic. The model, while perhaps incomplete, is useful in understanding the dynamic nature of identity and the complexity of dealing with identity issues and predicting reactions to external stimuli at any given time.

Identity affects decision making by impacting the observations of the environment through resonance or dissonance of salient issues. In the OODA loop model, observations impact decision making—which is a function of observation and orientation. Observations and past experience provide information; information drives decisions; decisions drive actions; and actions drive performance (Nissen, 2006). Group relations are impacted by performance, which in turn impact the development of the individual by affecting the meaning assigned to the results of actions. Armed with this complex systems approach to the lost-boys phenomenon, this research will attempt to develop a holistic systems theory of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 5

REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

According to Hart (1998), the purpose of a literature review is to describe what research has been done before, discover variables important to the topic, identify relationships, and establish context. This literature review will focus on the existing body of academic research about symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon, point out the key variables identified, and highlight gaps in the current body of knowledge. Much of the recent research in this field is contained in dissertations (Garcia, 2002; Perrakis, 2003; Daniels, D., 2004; Daniels, E., 2004; Osiris, 2005; Blanton, 2006; Holder, 2006; Contreras-Godfrey, 2009; Englund, 2009), and as such may be viewed as an evolving body of knowledge. This review is organized around key variables identified by researchers including: gender equity, underachievement, identity, masculinity, engagement, and persistence. These topics will be discussed in the following sections.

Gender Equity

Numerous studies on the gender-related achievement gap in high school and higher education have been conducted, particularly with respect to underrepresented ethnic groups (Ford, 1996; Ford & Thomas, 1997; Hebert, 1998; Osborne, 1999; Ogbu, 2003; Schwartz, 2003). Prior to 1998, most of the research on the impact of gender on educational outcomes concentrated on the causes of inequity for women (Acker, 1988; Greenberg-Lake, 1991; AAUW, 1992; Love, 1993; MSU, 1996; Edge, 1997; Savitz, 1997). Since that time, the research has expanded to include a focus on males (Kleinfeld, 1998; Owens, 1998; Rojewski, 1998; Francis, 1999; Gorard., Rees, & Salisbuty, 1999; Kleinfeld, 1999; MyHill, 1999; Salisbury, Rees & Gorard, 1999; Flood, 2000; Gough,

2000; Fisher, 2002; Garcia, 2002; Hunsader, 2002; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Hubbard, 2005; Sanford, 2005; Perrakis, 2008; Kleinfeld, 2009b).

Researchers in other countries, for example, have noted the large and growing male gender gap in secondary and higher education and have been researching male underachievement extensively for at least the past ten years. Whitelaw, Milosevic, & Daniels (2000) examined factors that teachers identified as significant determinants of gendered differences in England including popularity, behavior, effort, mutual support, academic success, and punishment. David, Ball, Davies & Reay (2003), also in the UK, identified the relationship between parental involvement and perceptions on gender differences in higher education choices, and concluded that girls are more collaborative with their parents while boys tend to not want parental involvement in school activities. Mills (2000) explored the importance of male teachers on male student underachievement in Australia and found that while having male teachers as role models is important, it may exacerbate a masculine hegemony in which the boys feel powerless to achieve the ideal standard. Parry (2000) studied the performance of black males in the British West Indies (Jamaica, Barbados, St Vincent, and the Grenadines) and concluded that the macho male image in West Indian culture, at least, runs counter to educational interests.

Realization of the problem in the US had been slowed, however, purportedly by politicized research findings (Kleinfeld, 1998; Sommers, 2000b; Perrakis, 2008). As early as 1998, Kleinfeld (1998) found that advocacy groups had been waging a deceptive media campaign to promote women's issues and garner political support. Rojewski & Hill (1998) found that, despite the media portrayal, high school males were more discouraged than females about academic and career choices because of perceived

structural barriers to success and systemic gender bias in education. Kleinfeld (1999) proposed that, although males were more likely to be found at both ends of the performance spectrum, schools had overlooked the problem of boy's underachievement. Garcia (2002) found that, in contrast to previous studies that indicated gender bias against females, males were being marginalized in K-12 schools.

The pro-feminist response to these studies led to the “which boys” discussion as researchers attempted to differentiate the impact of race, Social Economic Status (SES), and gender on underachievement (Weaver-Hightower, 2003; AAUW, 2008). In a report of an American Council on Education (ACE) Center for Policy Analysis study based on NCES data, King (2000) challenged the whole notion that gender equity for males was even an issue. The report attempted to counter the popular literature indicating anti-male gender bias in education and warned against becoming distracted by a false crisis that was not supported by the data. The report concluded that gender per se was not the significant variable:

While women do earn the majority of degrees awarded each year, the gender gap is dwarfed by the educational chasms related to race/ethnicity and social class. Therein lies the “crisis.” Low-income and minority men have a particularly difficult time excelling academically, but their female counterparts continue to lag behind whites as well. (p.17)

But disaggregating the data (much of which is presented in Chapter 3) to such a degree obscured the obvious: that the academic success of males as a demographic group was lagging that of females—even as advocacy groups continued lobbying for government funding of female support programs.

Unlike previous zero-sum research which debated whether males or females were more disadvantaged, recent studies have centered on both genders facing contextually based advantages and disadvantages. Weaver-Hightower (2003) provided a wide ranging historical literature review in the field of the *Boy Turn* in gender equity literature and concluded that curriculum, policies, programs, and practices need to be developed that are supportive of both genders without negatively impacting the other, and called for more grounded research in educational environments to determine the actions required to overcome gendered results. Jacob (2002) concluded that differences in observable non-cognitive skills such as family background, disciplinary incidents, and high school achievement explain the majority of differences in male college attendance rates. Sanford (2005) found that expectation of teachers, parents, and administrators can either increase or decrease opportunities for both male and female students. Blanton (2006) found that both men and women perceived gender inequities in college classrooms. Corbett (2008) found that ethnicity and income level impacted both girls' and boys' achievement. Even the AAUW (2008) updated their research and concluded that girls successes over the past 35 years has not come at the expense of boys because, on average, both girls' and boys' academic performance had improved.

But these studies failed to explain the obvious performance gaps highlighted in the data presented in Chapter 3. Hubbard (2005), on the other hand, indicated that the culture in school, community, and family constructed gendered attitudes and perception about education that guided male behaviors both in and out of the educational environment. Perrakis (2008) found through regression analysis of community college survey data that while both genders were equally affected by persistence factors such as

race, age, GPA, and math skills, males were more likely to feel alienated on campus. In a review of existing literature, Kleinfeld (2009a) concluded that while neither gender is in crisis and both face gendered problems, the problems of boys were much more serious and have been neglected by policy makers.

Based on the growing public concern, King (2006) updated the 2000 ACE study and, in contrast to prior findings, suddenly discovered that the male gender gap in higher education was real and growing. The report highlighted three possible reasons for the gap: socioeconomic, school bias, and psycho-social factors. The study found:

Unfortunately, there is no consensus on the causes of the gender gap and little comprehensive empirical research upon which to base firm conclusions. However, the range of possible explanations suggests that this issue is complex and multidimensional. (p. 20)

King (2006) concluded that “The issue of male achievement in higher education is real and important” (p. 21). Based on available data provided in this and other research, it would be difficult to conclude otherwise.

Underachievement

Academic underachievement is a well recognized and often studied topic in which understanding has evolved over time. Gorard & Smith (2004) found underachievement to be the predominant discourse in educational research, but inconsistency in terminology often confused the issue. Because the term underachievement had been used variously to describe nations, sectors, institutions, and individuals, they caution that those who use the term in the context of gender discussions must strive for explicitness. In this section, the literature on underachievement will be explored, the explicit definitions of the term

underachievement will be examined, and factors identified as affecting underachievement will be identified.

Definition

Although there is much existing research in the field of individual underachievement, particularly academic underachievement, there is no universally accepted definition (Reis & McCoach, 2000). The most commonly used method to identify underachievers typically utilizes the difference between potential as reflected in standardized tests such as exit exams or SATs, and performance as reflected in grades or GPA (Leonoff, 1991). But Reis & McCoach (2000) found that defining academic underachievement by comparing standard measurements may simply reflect a mismatch between the student and the curriculum, or the student and the method of measurement. While quantitative methods may provide clarity and precision, they exclude more holistic definitions that reflect the complexity of human behavior and the broader issues of the lost-boys phenomenon. Ford (1996) purported that “broad, inclusive definitions of underachievement support the notion that underachievement is a multidimensional construct that cannot be assessed with unidimensional instruments” (p. 54). Consequently, defining academic underachievement quantitatively may be expedient, but may not be an effective strategy in the case of the lost-boys phenomenon.

Several multi-dimensional methods for defining academic underachievers operationally have been attempted with varying levels of success. Clooney (1998) utilized homework completion percentages, class participation percentages, overall grades, teacher anecdotal accounts, and student surveys. Thurman & Wolfe (1999) used documented teacher observations, student attitudinal surveys, test scores, and the

completion rate of student assignments. Lau & Chan (2000) compared multiple selection methods including the absolute split method, simple difference score method, regression method, and teacher nomination. Depending on the definition and selection methods used, different students could be identified as underachievers.

A broader general definition of academic underachievement, and the one that will be used in this research, defines academic underachievement as a “failure to develop or utilize latent potential without reference to other external criteria” (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 3). In psychological terms, this conception of underachievement can be viewed as a failure to self-actualize. This broader qualitative definition implies a much more subjective measure, but the definition takes into account research indicating that teachers, parents, and peers recognize and can readily identify underachievers through descriptions of their psychosocial characteristics such as disruptive behavior, isolation, and emotional adjustment. Therefore, the most effective way to identify underachievers—and coincidentally possible lost boys—may be to simply ask the people who come into contact with them every day.

Contributing Factors

Parents, teachers and school administrators may assume underachievement is caused by students who simply choose not to achieve (Bleuer & Walz, 2002). But Mandel & Marcus (1995) identified numerous reasons for underachievement including: procrastination, anxiety, identity issues, manipulation, depression, and defiance. Garber (2002) identified resistance to schooling as an additional possible reason for underachievement and highlighted commonalities including personal and family issues,

increased interference from extra-curricular activities and after school jobs, and student response to negative teacher attitudes as contributing factors.

There have been numerous other factors identified as affecting academic achievement in the research over the years. Some of the main factors identified include: psycho-social factors such as identity, self-concept, psychological factors, and ability perception (Ford & Thomas, 1997; Armstrong-Walker, 1998; Baker, Bridger, & Evans, 1998; Holland, 1998; Myhill, 1999; McCall et al., 2000; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Burns & Bracey, 2001); social and cultural influences (Ford & Thomas, 1997; Holland, 1998; Myhill, 1999; Osborne, 1999; Wolfe, 1991; Duffield, Allan, Turner, & Morris, 2000; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Reisberg, 2000; Ogbu, 2003); lack of parental support (Leonoff, 1993; Moorehead, 1996; McCall et al., 2000; Burns & Bracey, 2001; Peterson, 2001); dysfunctional family dynamics (Moorehead, 1996; Armstrong-Walker, 1998; Baker et al, 1998; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Hubbard, 2005); peer influences (Moorehead, 1996 Holland, 1998; Myhill, 1999; McCall et al., 2000; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Hubbard, 2005); family transitions such as divorce or moving (Peterson, 2001); teacher and school support (Moorehead, 1996; Baker et al, 1998; McCall et al., 2000; Peterson, 2001); community involvement (Armstrong-Walker, 1998; Hubbard, 2005); lack of role models (Armstrong-Walker, 1998; McCall et al., 2000); lack of career direction (Peterson, 2001); and school practices and pedagogy (Reis & McCoach, 2000; Hubbard, 2005).

Holder (2006) categorized the factors associated with African-American male success as societal, institutional, and personal influences. Van de Gaer, et al. (2006) identified teacher relationships and negative attitudes towards school as key components of male underachievement, and Balduf (2009) found that the ease of success in earlier

grades and not learning how to deal with challenges often negatively affected male college achievement. Smith, Wittman, & Folz (2000) identified metacognitive miscalibration—students believing they already knew the material—and Burns & Bracey (2001) found an individual's misperception of their own literacy level were factors in underachievement.

Scales & Roehlkepartain (2003) conducted longitudinal quantitative studies that indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between K-12 student GPA and what they termed *Developmental Assets*. The 40 identified assets are subdivided into external and internal components. The internal assets included: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. The external assets included: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Smith (2003) applied regression analysis to 30 identified variables, and found prior attainment, school attendance, student self-concept, free meal eligibility, quality of school attended, gender, family type, parental involvement, birth month, sibling order, and working mothers explained 83 percent of the variance in attainment differential.

Jackson (2005) identified the cultural influences on underachievement, particularly the impact of race in the African-American community. Armor (2006) pointed out that popular cultural devalues the family and intellectualism by promoting teen pregnancy, dropping out of high school, divorce, and uncaring parents. E. Daniels (2004) established the relationship between ethnic identity development, self esteem, locus of control, social support, emotional distress, daily life stressors, and grade level academic achievement. E. Daniels (2004) found that students relied on family and peer

relationships in adjusting to new school contexts, and teacher relationships heavily influenced male student motivation.

Interventions

There have been numerous interventions suggested over the years to combat underachievement. Younger, Warrington, & McLellan (2002) classified the approaches as organizational, individual, pedagogical, and socio-cultural. Holland (1998) proposed three steps to counter male underachievement: exposing the public to the problem—including teaching staff, parents, and other interested adults; being up front with underperforming students; and telling underperforming students what the criteria for success are while showing them how to achieve it. Thurman & Wolf (1999) suggested improving teacher-student interactions through a regimen of goal setting, unit organizing, and teaching social skills and higher-order thinking strategies. Bleuer & Walz (2002) proposed a five step intervention: individual, group, and family counseling; collaborating with students to create a list of assets and barriers to achievement; brainstorming ways to overcome barriers; preparing plans to accentuate assets; and rewarding success as students meet criteria in the plan.

DeKreyrel, Dernovish, Epperly, & McKay (2000) found that helping students get organized often mitigated underachievement while Burns & Bracey (2001) recommended mentoring and using literacy schemes (e.g., literacy classes or clubs for identified underachievers) to help males achieve better results. McCoach & Siegle (2003) suggested changing general academic self-perceptions and attitudes toward school and teachers. Bernard (2006) identified the foundations of academic achievement as confidence,

persistence, organization, getting along, and emotional resilience, and argued for the development of social and emotional competence to overcome underachievement.

Identity

Many studies have made the connection between student identity issues and academic performance. Using regression analysis, Bergstrom (2001) discovered the linear relationship between self-esteem and GPA. Price (2002) identified student attitudinal factors of underachievement including emotional, psychological, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social, and family interactions that permeate all aspects of a person's life. Levine (2003) referred to underachievement as an output failure and identified resiliency, mood, flexibility, adaptability, motivation, optimism, initiative, and distractibility as internal reasons for underachievement.

Barnett (2007) found that a student's feelings of integration were strong predictors of persistence, and that mentoring and faculty validation were indirectly related to that feeling of integration. Englund (2009) identified identity factors such as high level of internal challenge, constancy of stress, mismatch between individual thinking patterns and school structure, high Emotional Quotient / Intelligence Quotient (EQ/IQ) indicators, internal asynchrony, relative importance of sociability, intellectual skill gaps, resilience, coping mechanism development, and sub rosa functioning. Scales & Roehlkepartain (2003) concluded that "these new findings suggest that an emphasis on overall development ... may actually have as much or more positive impact on academic outcomes in the long run as more obvious and traditional strategies for boosting achievement" (p. 9).

Masculinity

One reason researchers have given for male underachievement is gendered hegemony surrounding male stereotypes and the roles males are allowed to fulfill in our culture. O'Neil (1981) found that males were more likely than females to internalize emotions and be overwhelmed by failures and setbacks, and pointed out the impact of restricted emotionality wherein males are acculturated to view expressing feelings, emotions, and vulnerabilities as an indication of weakness. Holland (1998) found that male underachievers were unrealistic about their performance and were locked into stereotypes that precluded working hard in school.

Others have focused on the social and cultural constraints that force males into restrictive gender-based roles. Nilan (2000) argued that masculinity is a socially constructed identity that is heavily influenced by culture. Harris & Harper (2008) investigated the phenomenon of Male Gender Role Conflict (MGRC) in Community College, which occurs when men find their authentic identities in conflict with the socially constructed idealization of masculinity. In this theory, idealized masculinity traits, such as strength, power, competition, and the avoidance of perceived femininity, are socialized through family and peer interactions, and reinforced in educational institutions. These social constructions limit the ability of males to achieve in situations requiring psycho-social maturity such as education.

One of the cultural factors affecting male performance may be the gendered attitudes about interpersonal relationships. O'Neil (1991) found that restricted emotionality limited genuine male bonding, and fears of failure and intense pressure to succeed were consequences of the male obsession with achievement and success. Moore

(1997) found that from early childhood, male relationships are limited by communication problems and inconsistent parenting practices, and that relationship disrupters such as moving to new schools during adolescence led to feelings of stress and isolation.

Lauderman (2004) found that stereotypical masculine norms often limit male peer interactions, and Harris & Harper (2008) found that men tend to compete in order to demonstrate their masculinity, and this competition can be expressed in sexual conquests, material possessions accumulation, and increasingly risky behaviors to obtain status within male peer groups.

Other studies, in fact, have indicated that male underachievement may be a rational choice decision strategy employed by adolescent males to preserve a sense of identity. Archer, Pratt, & Phillips (2001) examined working-class perceptions and found that non-participation was reasoned risk avoidance for preserving masculine self-identity. Jackson (2002) found laddishness was central to the issue of underachievement and identified procrastination, withdrawal of effort, rejection of academic work, avoiding the appearance of work and the appearance of effortless achievement, and disruptive behavior as male self-worth protection strategies.

Some, however, have argued that these masculinity discussions in education are just avenues for misdirection to mask what are clearly institutional failures. Baird (2004) found the discussions of male underachievement a thinly veiled attack on positive masculine values such as strength, achievement, and independence, and advocated holding adults liable for failing to develop opportunities for all students. Francis (2006) found that the *poor boys* discourse added to the demonization of males in the educational and social environments, and Abraham (2008) identified organizational differentiation

and the gender regime at schools as cultural accomplices in the marginalization of males. These studies, which reflect the impetus of the No Child Left Behind Act, express the belief that educational institutions should be held accountable for gendered differences in results achieved.

Engagement

One of the reasons noted for male underperformance is lack of engagement in education (Ogbu, 2003; Ladd, 2009; Lau, 2009). Ladd (2009) found that early childhood experiences were predictive of future engagement, and that engagement is related to academic progress. More specifically, the more engaged students are, the greater the scholastic growth. Lau (2009) categorized academic engagement types and identified the four main clusters as: enthusiastic, cooperative, resistive, and disaffected, with males and African-Americans making up the majority of resistive and disaffected groups.

There have been numerous studies to determine the components of engagement in the school environment. Zhu (2001) found the determinants of student engagement included teacher experiences, grade level, subject matter, and gender. Muir (2001) developed a theory for engaged learning that included environment, experience, motivation, and meaning making. Kanevsky (2003) found that students felt justified in disengaging from lessons when the curriculum was boring or did not match their experience and identified control, choice, challenge, complexity, and caring teachers as necessary components to engagement. Skinner (2008) suggested teacher support and student identity predicted engagement and identified indicators of motivational dynamics including social context, self-systems, and engagement.

Innovative solutions have been investigated to increase student engagement in education. Weissman (2003) compared teaching methodologies and found that students are engaged when teachers used collaborative learning techniques; students felt ownership in learning; course material was relevant to the real world; activities were used to evaluate learning; and learning objectives were used to create shared experiences. Harper (2009) pioneered the use of technology to provide digital feedback and found that students enjoyed class more and were more engaged when technology was employed. In contrast to popular opinion, Martin (2009) suggests that the common tactic of delaying school entry or holding students back a year provided no engagement or performance advantages.

Persistence

Nash & Kallenbach (2009) defined persistence as the sustained participation in education. In this study, persistence refers specifically to students staying in high school until graduation and continuing on to college the semester following graduation. Research in this area often deals with students considered at risk (Kaufman & Brady, 1992, Choy, 2002) and students who drop-out of high school before graduation (CRP, 2005; Bridgeland, Dijulio, & Morrison, 2006).

Bridgeland et al., (2006) concluded that there is a national epidemic of students dropping out of high school, and CRP (2005) indicated a drop-out crisis in California for ethnic minority students. Osiris (2005) identified the major themes of high school persistence for black males including: social support, spirituality, ability to deal with racism, systems knowledge, motivation, goal setting, leadership experiences, and participation in extracurricular programs. E. Daniels (2004) found that the primary

motivations for completing high school were future goals and financial stability. Knesting (2008) identified critical school environmental factors as listening, caring, dropout prevention programs, and involving the student. Somers (2004) found that developmental transition and close relationships with caring adults greatly affected persistence. Renzulli (2002) revealed that gifted students who dropped out were from predominantly low socioeconomic racial minority groups, and their decision was significantly related to educational aspirations, child-rearing, gender, and parental education.

Perrakis (2003) suggests that gender is a significant factor in persistence, and males, in particular, have a need to feel connected to the school environment in order to succeed. Barnett (2007) found that faculty validation was also a strong predictor of male persistence, and Dorn (1997) recommended that group dynamics be used to increase persistence by connecting students to mentors. But E. Daniels (2004) reported that only 40% of the subjects in her study of African-American males reported having a faculty member or counselor as a mentor. Somers (2004) described the benefits of caring adult relationships for increasing high school persistence, but McCall et al. (2000) warned that mentoring can backfire because it is sometimes perceived as another form of behavior control.

In a study of college enrollment the semester after high school, Horn (1997) identified what he called the pipeline to college as a five step process: aspiration, preparation, examination, application, and enrollment. Choy (2002) found that college enrollment is directly related to parent education level, and peer intentions regarding higher education. D. Daniels (2004) found that student internal motivation to persist is

greatly impacted by external factors such as past experiences, teacher interactions, and family expectations. Strom & Boster (2007) found that parent-child and student-teacher interactions can either reinforce or counteract student perceptions. Wells (2008) found that social and cultural capital strongly influenced persistence, and Terry (2008) found that peer influences also important in decisions concerning college attendance.

Academic Literature Summary

The research highlighted in this chapter indicates a growing body of knowledge about male adolescent underachievement. The breadth of the research literature is indicative of the complexity of the issue, and while perhaps appearing chaotic in nature, clearly indicates the multi-variant characteristic of the associated issues. While past studies have concentrated on particular variables that appear to be associated with the lost-boys phenomenon such as underachievement, engagement and persistence, what is missing is a holistic approach to the problem. These findings indicate a need for a holistic systems approach to the issues faced by the lost boys, and hence the need for the research that is being reported here. There also has been an emergent recognition of the need for more basic research on the topic, and some unifying theory to connect these significant and seemingly related topics.

CHAPTER 6

REVIEW OF THE POPULAR LITERATURE

Much of the investigation into the symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon is contained in popular-press literature. This chapter will review some of the current popular literature and summarize the key ideas that the authors indicate contribute to the lost-boys phenomenon. These ideas will be used in Chapter 17 to answer the third research question: “To what extent are the findings from this study consistent or inconsistent with the explanations of male underachievement contained in popular literature?” This chapter reviews selective literature that is representative of the bestselling authors in the lost-boys phenomenon genre including: *Real Boys* (Pollack, 1998); *Raising Cain*, (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999); *Boys Adrift* (Sax, 2007); *Trouble with Boys* (Tyre, 2008); and *The Purpose of Boys* (Gurian, 2009). The sections are organized around topics discussed in the literature and will focus on similarities and differences across authors.

Crisis or Myth?

Despite recent media attempts to discredit the lost-boy phenomenon as a myth, the selected authors agreed that there is an indisputable boy crises (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Pollack (1998) argues that young males are in “serious trouble” due to feelings of detachment, alienation, isolation, confusion, and despair and need to be rescued from the myths of boyhood (p. xxi). Kindlon & Thompson (1998) purport that we are “railroading boys into lives of isolation, shame, and anger” (p. xiii). Gurian (2009) asks “why so many boys in

culture-rich America are ‘disappearing’ from positive, motivated, and directed life paths” (p.14).

Sax (2007) points out that the reports questioning the validity of the crisis were noticeably biased. According to Sax, the oft-cited NAEP (2000) study—which the media heralded as indicating that the boy problem was a myth—used selective data to highlight minimal improvements in certain areas. The media focused on the reported reading improvements of nine year old males while completely ignoring that “one in four white boys with college-educated parents can’t read proficiently” (p. 39). Sax believes the data indicate that the changes in education over the last 30 years have caused boys to disengage from reading and education, and the media is complicit by misreporting the results.

As a member of the media, Tyre (2008) was surprised to find the extent of the problems and the apparent avoidance of addressing it by those in authority. She states that as a “grateful beneficiary of the feminist movement” she expected to find “how boys dominate classrooms at the expense of girls” (p. 3). What she found instead was just the opposite. She explained: “For several years, I didn’t see what was in front of my face: the myriad ways in which boys are not thriving in the classroom” (p. 3). She gradually began to understand that something had changed in our culture and schools, and the changes were marginalizing boys.

Cultural Factors

While there may not be total agreement on all the factors affecting the phenomenon, there is general agreement that the attitudes central to creating the lost-boys phenomenon are culturally transmitted (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax,

2007; Tyre, 2009; Gurian, 2009). Kindlon & Thompson (1999) believe that popular culture mis-educates boys and is destructive to their emotional well-being. According to the authors, traditional gender stereotypes cause us to treat boys differently, and this treatment is harmful because it inhibits the development of emotional maturity. Pollack (1998) states: “Confused by society’s mixed messages about what’s expected of them as boys, and later as men, many feel a sadness and disconnection they cannot even name” (p. xxi). This disconnection is purportedly due to the cultural squelching of natural human emotions starting at an early age, and continuing throughout life.

Cultural expectations and support are different for girls and women according to Tyre (2008). She professes that “as a community and a country, we are unequivocal: We want girls to reach their full potential” (p. 244). But when it comes to boys, the only message regularly received is that we want them to do well in sports. Boys soon get the cultural message loud and clear that there is no way for males to gain the respect of teachers, parents, and peers through academic achievement and are put in no-win situations that devalue their natural masculine tendencies. She concludes: “If we want to change the behavior of boys,... we need to change the negative, self-destructive, and contradictory messages we give them” (p. 251).

Kindlon & Thompson (1998) proposed that the gendered acculturation process harms boys by forcing them to deny their true feelings and behaviors. They explain: “Our culture co-opts some of the most impressive qualities a boy can possess—their physical energy, boldness, curiosity, and action orientation—and distorts them into a punishing, dangerous definition of masculinity” (p. 15). Despite the stereotypical impressions of

masculinity, they believe that males have the innate need to connect with one another, with females, and with caring adults and to be accepted in our culture.

According to Gurian (2009), young males have lost a sense of social and cultural purpose, and need help to become purposeful men. Unlike females who are born with an innate sense of purpose (i.e. procreation), males must create purpose in their own lives.

Gurian explains:

Our sons are not only losing a sense of educational purpose in school and college. They are also losing a sense of social purpose in their behavior—filling our juvenile justice system and prisons. They are losing a sense of purpose in their hearts and souls—committing suicide and harming others at alarming rates. In each of these areas, they are increasingly falling behind or failing at life. (p. 17)

Masculinity

The authors agree that the traditional social constructions of masculinity are having a negative impact on male development (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Pollack (1998) correlates the main factor in male disconnection as a socially proliferated “Mask of Masculinity” wherein males are taught to hide their true emotions and feelings (p. 11). In this model, societal memes promote male disconnection via the use of shame to toughen and control males and the continued forced emotional separation—prematurely from mothers in childhood and from their own emotions in adolescence and adulthood.

While perhaps not voiced directly by the culture, according to the authors, these negative messages are transmitted subtly and continuously in how boys—and later

adolescents and adult males—are treated in everyday situations. Males are more likely to be disciplined, bullied, and ridiculed for minor infractions and imperfections (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Tyre, 2008). Often, the result of this treatment is what Pollack (1998) referred to as the “silence of lost boys” in which males are acculturated to suffer in silence or appear weak in front of their peers (p. 13).

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) believe that when dealing with males, people are more likely to resort to the use of power and coercion to try to control behavior. According to them, parents, teachers, and others in authority presume that harsh discipline—physical, verbal, and emotional—will help boys mature into men. By utilizing harsh discipline, we purportedly impose a “tyranny of toughness” on males that perpetuates a culture of cruelty throughout their lives (p. 54). The authors believe that the constant and consistent use of harsh discipline causes males to respond more aggressively and to act out more often—reaffirming our prejudices and legitimizing the application of even more rigorous discipline.

According to Sax (2007), there has recently been a constant devaluation of masculinity in our society as depicted in the popular media. The typical male role model in popular culture has shifted from that of a caring and responsible male, to a buffoonish caricature. Sax explains:

Forty years ago, if a young man were told to “grow up!” he knew what that meant. It meant acting like the characters portrayed by MacMurry and Young in *My Three Sons* and *Father Knows Best*, or Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, or Jimmy Stewart in *It’s a Wonderful Life* or by Sydney Poitier in *In the Heat of the Night*. But if you ask a boy today to “grow up!” what

does that mean? Who is he supposed to act like? Homer Simpson?
Michael Jackson? Rambo? Akon? Mel Gibson? What does it mean today
to be a man? (p. 179-180)

Sax proposes that these toxic cultural influences have caused role confusion and produced a generation of unmotivated young males.

Developmental Factors

According to several popular press authors, males also develop differently today due to biological and biochemical differences (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). New technologies and recent advances in neurobiology have allowed researchers a glimpse into brain functions and are leading to new models of brain development. Utilizing results from psychological and medical research studies, Gurian (2009) reports that unlike the once widely accepted model of intelligence being fixed at birth, the new imaging scans have shown that brain development is much more dynamic, and that male brains develop differently and at different rates than female brains. Tyre (2008) reports that the boy brain is “astonishingly plastic and is shaped by the experiences and attitudes that he’s immersed in” (p. 179). Because of these difference, the authors believe that engaging the male brain requires different strategies than engaging the female brain as it responds more to environmental factors and does not reach full maturity until age 30.

Some authors purport that male psychology is not just culturally socialized—but is actually hardwired into the male brain (Tyre, 2007; Gurian, 2009). According to Gurian (2009), the male brain compartmentalizes brain activity which causes males to be more focused, but also less capable of multi-tasking. According to the author, males are also biochemically different than females, specifically males have: more testosterone,

which affects risk-taking and aggression; less serotonin, which calms impulsiveness; and less oxytocin, which affects the ability to bond with others. Gurian (2009) believes that because of these biological differences, “boys need to be led to motivation by role models before they become motivated to carve out an identity for themselves” (p. 33).

Sax (2007) believes there has also been a noticeable extension of the male developmental cycle in the past few years with delayed maturation, purportedly due to environmental endocrine disrupters. Environmental studies in Washington, Idaho, Florida, Great Lakes, Alaska, and England have documented the increasing presence of endocrine disruptors in drinking water due, in part, to the use of hormones in beef, phalates in clear plastic bottles, and estrogens caused by the wide-spread use of birth control pills. Sax claims these disrupters are causing developmental issues in both males and females, but seem to have a disproportionate effect on male development—including brain development, bone and muscular tissues, and reproductive organs. While the research is still being conducted, medical practitioners have noted that males today have lower testosterone levels than their fathers, and male infertility, ADHD, and obesity are on the rise in comparison to past generations. Sax believes this is indicative of a biological component to what many believe is predominantly a psychosocial issue.

Pedagogy

The authors claim that schools have changed over the last 30 years and do not recognize or are not empathetic to the male model of learning caused by biological and developmental differences, and have, in fact, become inhospitable to males (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). According to Kindlon & Thompson (1999), early education has become a feminized environment that

perpetuates negative male stereotypes and disadvantages boys. Sax (2007) purports that schools have changed dramatically over the years to the detriment of the males who, for the most part, are not normally as developmentally ready as girls to attend school in the early years. Kindergarten, for example, has changed from painting, socialization, and motor skill development into reading, writing and rote memorization.

Tyre (2008) pointed out that beginning in pre-school and early elementary school, educators have been pushing curriculum further down in the age groups in order to better prepare kids for standardized testing. But this early learning model may not be synchronous with male development—particularly brain development. Reducing play time and expecting boys to sit still in class and pay attention to topics that are more appropriate for girls is unnatural, according to Tyre. The additional move to zero tolerance on pretend play that includes violent themes doesn't allow boys to develop the admirable traits expected of males such as courage, bravery, and loyalty.

Because of gendered developmental differences, Sax (2007) argues that boys have a harder time adjusting to early education, and this pattern shapes their entire educational careers. Tyre (2008) believes that in many ways, males are taught that no matter what they do, they just don't measure up to others' expectations. Kindlon & Thompson (1999) add that because of these negative messages, "often by third grade, [males] have already disengaged their energy from the task of learning, tuned out of school, and written it off as a place they can't do anything right" (p. 26).

Tyre (2008) claims that most early educators are females who are uncomfortable with natural boy behaviors and "simply do not know enough about boys to devise a classroom environment that engages them" (p. 69). National Association of Educators

(NEA) data indicates that the number of male teachers is at its lowest point in 40 years, and Tyre believes the lack of male teachers as role models creates the image of school as a feminine place that real men don't value. Tyre (2008) argues that schools should "reflect, at least to some degree, the ethnic and gender makeup of their students" (p. 131). While educators recognize the need for ethnic diversity, she believes they are not as supportive when it comes to gender.

But does teacher gender affect student performance? According to some authors, the answer is definitely yes (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008). Citing a study based on National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) data (Dee, 2006) that found female teachers helped raise the achievement of girls and lowered the achievement of boys while male teachers increased the achievement of boys, Tyre (2008) concludes that in the case of academic achievement—teacher gender matters.

Tyre (2008) believes that male educational experiences are greatly shaped by relationships with teachers—both positively, but more often negatively as teachers may take their male students' apparent underachievement personally. Sax (2007) states that males quickly learn that, in the school environment, they are considered by teachers and peers to be part of the Dumb Group—a moniker that tends to follow them throughout their school experience. He believes this disadvantage is reflected in teacher attitudes and expectations, and is transmitted to males as "the teacher doesn't like me" (p.19).

While boys do equally well in intelligence tests, the authors believe the evaluations of students are often biased towards neatness, promptness, and non-competitive participation—which are not normal boy behaviors (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008). Some of these evaluations don't take into

account the many facets of male intelligence and innovation. Tyre (2008) believes teacher evaluations of students are inherently biased against boys by “prizing organization, handwriting, collaboration, and rule following over intellectual growth” (p. 239). By utilizing these criteria, “poor organization—which may be rooted in neurological maturity—becomes synonymous with underachievement” (p. 234). She believes that boys pick up on teacher attitudes, and these constant negative messages soon condemn them to failure.

Based on NCES data, the authors point out one well-documented area where boys are significantly lagging behind girls is literacy (Sax 2007; Tyre 2008; Gurian, 2009). Literacy is essential not only for doing well in school and college, but also for economic success and survival. Tyre (2008) found that “boys do worse in reading and writing the longer they stay in school” (p. 135). Boys are more affected by the kinds of books selected for reading, with the choice of action and adventure being high on their preferred list. She believes that the move to more feminine literature in education solidifies male impressions that literacy is a female activity. Although it is clear that “boys from every socio-economic background and every racial group underperform their female counterparts” (p. 141) in literacy, there are no programs designed to close this gap.

The authors propose that if we really want males to be engaged in education, then there is a need for pedagogy change to match the male model of learning (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Unlike females who learn through verbal communication and written text, males learn more through hands-on trial and error. Gurian (2009) recommends: matching pedagogy to the male brain; building learning communities in which teachers bond with boys and become a “second

or third family” (p.159); and “making schools an environment of relevance and purpose for boys and young men” (p. 160).

Relationships

Despite the cultural pressures on males to remain disconnected and the stereotypical image of adolescent detachment, the authors observe that males continually attempt to form meaningful relationships with family, friends, and other caring adults (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1998; Gurian, 2009). Gurian (2009) suggests that most boys (and arguably men) try to maintain their “inner wellspring of emotional connectedness” as demonstrated by special male bonding rituals such as sports. Pollack (1998) declares that adolescent males have a “hidden yearning for relationship” with peers and adults, “despite society’s traumatizing pressure on boys to disconnect from their vulnerable selves” (p. 18). Kindlon & Thompson (1998) profess that male behavior is shaped more by these relationships than by nature, and because of the difficulty forming and maintaining appropriate male relationships, anything that disrupts these relationships increases male disconnection—which can have devastating results.

Mentors, Heroes, and Role Models

The difference between males who successfully learn to overcome emotional adversity and those that do not depends on the amount and quality of resources males have available to help them cope (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999). A number of the authors argue that males need mentors, heroes, and role models, along with maturation rituals and group learning activities in order to help them overcome emotional adversity. Gurian (2009) explained:

Boys don't have as much inner access as girls do to sensorial information, memory, or feelings. In order to gain complete empathetic development, boys will often need cultural and social maps and rigorous rituals to make connections between their senses, important memories, and important feelings. They will need, in other words, parents, mentors, and other people to help guide them toward a plan, an objective, or a sacred text in which they feel their emotions are useful, purposeful, and meaningful. (p. 35)

Kindlon & Thompson (1998) point out that parents and teachers are important role models for emotional literacy (i.e. the ability to demonstrate empathy, and authentic emotional expression) and the maturity to deal with emotional issues. But Pollack (1999) and Tyre (2008) add that other caring adults are also required to overcome years of negative feedback and unhealthy learned behaviors. Unlike the media portrayed mythical stoic male, Gurian (2009) asserts that males have an innate need for social acceptance, a need to be accepted and respected in the larger community, and to belong to "communities of purpose" (p. 153). According to the authors, young males need mentors to help them traverse the often confusing world of masculine identity in the ever-changing current culture.

Gurian (2009) believes that young males also have an innate need to feel heroic, and have a natural preference "to *do* something rather than *talk* about it" (p. 34). They tend to daydream more about heroic activities and need to find meaningful projects that help build a sense of purpose in their lives. According to Gurian, males learn how to find purpose in their lives through emulation of heroes and role models, and the role of

“seeker-warrior” is an important one that helps young males find a sense of identity (p. 46).

Disruptors

Several authors point out that males are significantly impacted by relationship disruptors because they have a harder time connecting with adults and peers (Pollack, 1998; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008). One extreme relationship disrupter identified by Pollack (1998) is divorce, which may cause disconnection from parents and sometimes other important social relationships. This is often accompanied by the feeling of shame and the masking of emotion to cover the sense of loss. Because the mother usually gets custody of the children in most divorces, male children often are physically and emotionally detached from their fathers during divorce. Sax believes this can have a disproportionate affect on males due to the cultural straightjacket restricting emotional displays.

Being unsuccessful in school and socially disconnected often feeds into another relationship disrupter—attachment to video gaming as an escape mechanism (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008). Sax argues that males have an innate need for mastery of skills and what Nietzsche termed a “will to power” (p.56). Video games give boys a feeling of power and being in control, things they have little of in real life. While some may argue that video gaming makes today’s generation smarter (Johnson, 2005), what Sax (2007) believes is clear is “the more time your child spends playing video games, the less likely he is to do better in school” (p. 63). This negative correlation has been shown to have a causal affect on disengagement and violent behavior, and displaces other social activities that help males develop empathy.

Tyre (2008), in fact, identifies electronic distraction as a key factor in male underperformance. The proliferation of violent video games and the number of hours boys spend playing them (nearly twice as much as girls) negatively affect their ability to concentrate on other things. Some males have acquired an addiction that has replaced social interaction, school work, and family life. The time spent playing video games decreases “boys’ involvement in out-of-school activities that support learning, improve socialization, and promote community” (p. 199). The negative effects of video gaming and other electronic distracters appears to be dose related, so setting limits is important.

Another factor identified as a relationship disrupter is the increasing use of prescription drugs to modify male behavior (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008). What was once considered natural boy behavior—e.g., the sort of behavior described in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 1876), is now often considered Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The increasing diagnosis of ADD and ADHD has also led to an increase in the use of medication to mitigate these behaviors. Besides helping boys focus and behave, the medications prescribed have been shown to cause depression and to have lasting negative effects on brain development (Sax, 2007).

Risky Behaviors

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) believe that isolation and solitude become a reflexive behavior to harsh treatment received by the time boys reach adolescence because males have learned to hide their emotions and disguise their true feelings. They are intimidated by the culture of cruelty and constant threat of humiliation, and rationally decide to withdraw emotionally rather than continue to experience the pain. The authors

claim this learned behavior continues throughout life, and perpetuates the male stereotype of stoicism and silence in emotional situations.

Often, the result of this male disconnection is depression, suicide, and violence (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999). Cultural memes against males demonstrating emotion causes them to internalize sadness—which often leads to depression, and ultimately suicide. Tyre (2008) declares that the only culturally acceptable male emotion is anger, which is the result when males are shamed, and when anger builds, it eventually leads to violence. Pollack (1998) points out that this violence can be expressed against oneself, against others, and in the extreme—against society. In essence, according to the authors, violence is due to the innate male bias for action combined with pent up emotional anger over perceived transgressions.

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) propose that males often resort to risky behaviors as a coping mechanism. They explain: “The emotional turmoil a boy feels—shame, anger, sadness—and his difficulty expressing those feelings may contribute to high activity and impulsiveness” (p. 40). Sax (2007) purports that the descent into self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse and risky sex is often an outwardly visible side effect of the depression caused by constant emotional turmoil. Kindlon & Thompson (1991) theorize that emotionally isolated boys are also more likely to resort to scapegoating and violence. The trouble signs include “a darker mood that persists, a withdrawal from friends, declining grades” and these “red flags” should trigger action from caring adults (p. 145). Stoicism may indicate a self-contempt that is cultivated from within, and may presage acts of hostility and violence.

Popular Literature Summary

As stated in the introduction, this chapter contains a review of the contemporary representative popular literature. Although the authors do not agree on everything, one thing they all tend to agree on is that the male crisis is large and growing, and will continue to do so without some intervention. While some believe there are biological and physiological contributing factors (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009), they are in agreement that social and cultural factors impact the psychological and emotional growth of young males. Another area of general agreement is that schools, because they are embedded in the culture, contribute—both positively and negatively—to the psychosocial development of young males. They claim that the education system has changed over the past 30 years, that current practices are not male friendly, and that schools may have become a hostile environment for the majority of young males. These claims will be investigated further in the findings in Chapter 17.

CHAPTER 7

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of the lost-boys phenomenon research including: general design, methodological issues, site selection, sample selection, data collection, and analysis techniques used in this research. The chapter will also discuss some early attempts to identify subjects for the research and the implications of the failure to attract participants using normal solicitation methodology. In addition, the chapter will discuss the questions asked in the interviews and describe the rationale behind each question. The chapter will conclude with a step-by-step description of each phase of the research project.

Research Design

Qualitative research methods were used to conduct this research because of the emergent nature of the issues and the need for basic information about the phenomenon. Patton (2002) affirms that a holistic or naturalistic approach is the appropriate form of research when “studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally” (p. 40). The holistic approach is called for when “the whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts” (p. 41). An a priori assumption of this research is that the lost-boys phenomenon is a psycho-social construct, and, therefore, meaning and reality are socially constructed from larger contextual factors (Merriam, 2002). The design of this research was based on these general characteristics and was shaped by the stated assumptions from Chapter 4.

Case studies were conducted because they are “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events,

and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). Unlike the single case study methodology defended by Donmoyer (1990), this research will use multiple case studies to provide a cross case analysis to increase the validity of findings. If nothing else, this research is designed to provide a collection of rich descriptive case studies that give voice to the perspectives of young males who are embedded in the culture of male underachievement.

The unit of analysis for this research is the young males themselves. Interviews were used to allow participants to provide meaning to the issues (Patton, 2002). The open-ended nature of the interview questions as well as the technique of utilizing multiple interviews asking the same questions repeatedly, were designed not only to assess consistency but also to prompt for reflexivity. Reflexivity involves “self-questioning and self-understanding” (p.64) on the part of the participant. Through this method, the researcher hoped the participants would become self-aware of the environment in which they were acculturated and, therefore, perhaps achieve some measure of self-actualization.

Site Selection

The assumption that the lost-boys phenomenon is present throughout modern society indicates that site selection is not as important as other aspects of the research design. If the thesis that this phenomenon is widespread throughout modern society is valid, the phenomenon should be found in any population of young males. This does not indicate that the phenomenon will play out the same in different contexts, as shall be discussed in following sections, but at the small number of sites the research was attempted, this thesis proved correct. Teachers, administrators, parents, and peers could

and did readily identify many possible candidates. Based on anecdotal evidence from the parents of boys and accounts contained in popular literature, eligible candidates appear to be plentiful in any grouping of young males. Because this research is not a study of school efficacy, any site would suffice and, therefore, the researcher chose sites based on convenience and accessibility. Indeed, the only reason for selecting the high school population as a candidate pool is because that is where large numbers of young males can be found in an environment where they are closely observed and evaluated.

The site selected for this study was a public charter high school in the San Diego, California area that was atypical of high schools in the San Diego Unified School District. The school is located in a predominantly Caucasian affluent neighborhood of San Diego and attracts students of all ethnic and socio-economic groups from different parts of the city and county. The site is considered atypical in that it is a small (516 students) charter school that attracts high achievers throughout the San Diego area, but does not accept everyone who applies. The school screens applicants for probability of success in project-based education and then conducts a lottery to select students from the list of approved candidates. Because of the selection process, the school has a mixture of students from different socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicity.

With a teacher-to-student ratio of 23:1, the school prides itself on teacher involvement with students and personalized support and planning. Rather than hiring primarily education majors as teachers, the school attracts industry specialists into the field of education and tries to bridge the career-classroom chasm of traditional educational environments. Because of the stringent admissions process, it is also assumed that parental involvement will be higher than at a normal high school. Since the school

specializes in a team approach to education, the teacher-parent-student bond is closer than at a typical school.

Site Demographics

Since this is a single site study, the demographics and achievement data are included in the following tables to allow future researchers to determine exportability of the findings. The demographics were obtained from readily accessible on-line reports provided by the State of California Department of Education. The one year dropout rate for the selected site was reported as 0% for the 2006-2007 school year, and the graduation rate was reported as 96.3% (SARC, 2007). The completion rate for meeting California high school graduation requirements was reported at 100% for all demographic groups. The ethnic make-up of the school is given as a percentage of the total student population in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected Site School Demographics

Group	Percent of Total
African-American	12.6%
Asian	8.14%
Caucasian	43.6%
Filipino	9.49%
Latino	24.81%

Native American	.58%
Pacific Islander	.78%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	20%
English As Second Language Learners	2.12%
Students with Disabilities	9%

Source: SARC, 2007

Site CST Results

The results of the California Standards Test (CST) is a measure of percentage of students in grades 9, 10, and 11 who meet or exceed California state standards for English, math, science, and History. Scores for groups with less than ten students tested were not provided; these groups include Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and English as Second Language Learners. The CST results for the selected site are listed in Table 2. The percentage of males meeting CST standards surpasses those of females in all subjects but English, where males lag females by 2%. Caucasians lead other ethnic groups in English, math, and history competency, while Asians lead in Science. The socioeconomically disadvantaged and students with disabilities lag competencies in all categories.

Table 2. Percentage of Students Meeting CST Standards

Group	English	Math	Science	History
Male	72%	34%	40%	60%
Female	74%	29%	31%	43%
African-American	57%	20%	21%	28%
Asian	78%	44%	36%	57%
Caucasian	85%	36%	50%	65%
Latino	59%	29%	29%	42%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	56%	22%	4%	23%
Students with Disabilities	47%	18%	9%	31%

Source: SARC, 2007

Site CAHSEE Results

The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) is a graduation requirement for California high school seniors testing proficiency in English and Math. The CAHSEE results for the selected site are included in Table 3. As stated previously, this site is atypical in that it is a high performing charter school as indicated by the CAHSEE results. The percentage of students achieving the proficient or advanced level in English was 82.6% for the site selected in comparison to 47% for the district and 48.6% for the state.

The percentage of students achieving the proficient or advanced level in Math was 80.3% for the site selected in comparison to 49.9% for the district and 49.9% for the state.

The demographic breakdown of those not proficient on the selected site CAHSEE results is indicative of the lost-boys phenomenon. The percentage of males testing not proficient in English was 20.6% compared to females 14.1%, and in math 19.1% for males compared to 20.3% for females. This indicates that males in this school are lagging females in English proficiency by 6.5%, while females lag males in math by just 1.2%.

As for ethnic ranking, not proficient in English: Asian (0%), Caucasian (8.6%), Latino (28.6%), and African-American (40%); not proficient in math: Asian (0%), Caucasian (8.5%), Latino (29.4%), and African-American (60%). Of note is that those identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and students with disabilities were not proficient at a higher rate than other students.

Table 3. Selected Site CAHSEE Results

Group	English Not Pro	English Pro	English Adv	Math Not Pro	Math Pro	Math Adv
All Students	17.4%	29.5%	53%	19.7%	19.7%	30.3%
Male	20.6%	30.9%	48.5%	19.1%	45.6%	35.3%
Female	14.1%	28.1%	57.8%	20.3%	54.7%	25%
African-American	40%	33.3%	26.7%	60%	20%	20%
Asian	0	54.5%	45.5%	0	45.5%	54.5%
Caucasian	8.6%	17.2%	74.1%	8.5%	59.3%	32.2%

Latino	28.6%	34.3%	37.1%	29.4%	50%	20.6%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	41.7%	37.5%	20.8%	41.7%	41.7%	16.7%
Students with Disabilities	50%	50%	0	57.1%	35.7%	7.1%

Source: SARC, 2007

Site API Index

The Academic Performance Index (API) is a single number index indicating school academic performance. It is an annual measure used to compare school performance across the state and includes a rank (1 to 10) and score (200 to 1,000) with a statewide goal of a score of 800. The selected site was ranked 9 out of 10 in 2006, meaning the school's academic performance was better than at least 80% of the 100 similar schools. The API Score Change and API score for the school is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Selected Site API Change and Score

Group	API Change 2006-2007	API Score 2007
All Students	-2	807
Caucasian	17	859
Latino	-17	756
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged		715

Source: SARC, 2007

Sample Selection

This research utilized purposeful sampling of small number (n=8) of male students in a series of interviews designed to generate the required richness of data. Purposeful sampling was used to provide “information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling involves selecting candidates for the research that match a certain profile (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Typical Case sampling was used to select participants who a teacher at the selected site considered to be not achieving their potential. Several issues with purposeful sampling for this research are discussed in the following sections.

Sampling Issues

Currently there is no holistic definition of the lost-boys phenomenon, and hence no way to easily identify the subjects of research. Some general characteristics noted in the literature include: lack of engagement in school, hesitancy to participate in extracurricular activities, reluctance to confide in adults, lack of attachment, social isolationism, inattention, and a tendency to act out through disruptive behavior, violence, and substance abuse. One common symptom mentioned, and one in which there is much existing research, is academic underachievement, as discussed in Chapter 5. While academic underachievement is not synonymous with the lost-boys phenomenon, and certainly not all academic underachievers are necessarily lost boys, one symptom that all lost boys seem to exhibit is academic underachievement. Therefore, using academic underachievement as one indicator of possible *lost-ness* offered an opportunity for identifying subjects of the research and gaining entree into the world of the lost boys themselves.

But as stated in Chapter 5, there is also no universally accepted definition of underachievement. The definition used in this research is a “failure to develop or utilize latent potential without reference to other external criteria” (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 3). The definition takes into account research indicating that teachers, parents, and peers recognize and can identify underachievers through descriptions of their psychosocial characteristics such as disruptive behavior, isolation, and emotional adjustment (McCall et al., 2000). Therefore, the most effective way to identify underachievers—and coincidentally possible lost boys—may be to simply ask the people who come into contact with them every day. That is what was done in this study, a detailed discussion of the actual procedures used to do this will be provided in the Research Phases section.

Typical Case Issues

In selecting the candidates to be interviewed, there were two types of typical case issues that had to be overcome. The first was using an overly broad definition of underachievement, which may cause the inclusion of students who may be underachieving for reasons other than the lost-boys phenomenon. This would include students who are learning disabled and those that come from disadvantaged backgrounds for which there are identifiable causes of underachievement. The second is using an overly narrow definition, which may increase failure to include people who fit the definition, but were excluded for other reasons. This would include underachievers who have already dropped out of school, those who do not choose to participate, parent and teacher reluctance to identify subjects, or subjects who are willing and identified but could not be accommodated.

Due to the decision to use the Typical Case selection methodology discussed in the above sampling issues section and described in detail in the Phase 2 section below, the researcher relied on the judgment of the selected site teacher in selecting cases. Depending on his perception of the research topic, the typical case issues of using an overly broad definition described above may have come into play in that some recommended participants may have not fit the holistic definition of the lost-boy phenomenon. The researcher decided to include all participants identified by the teacher with the belief that valuable information would be excluded if a secondary case screening methodology was employed.

Ethnic Balance Issue

Although this research was not initially planned to be ethnically balanced, ethnic balance later became an issue at the site because of the thesis that this phenomenon is present in all ethnic groups—and not all ethnic groups were represented in the sample selected by the school. The selection of cases was delegated to a single teacher-advisor who is an African-American male. For whatever reason, no African-American males were selected in the initial grouping of six males selected as candidates for the research. After the initial interviews were completed, the researcher asked the teacher to provide several African-American candidates, which he did. These were the final two participants interviewed who added significantly to the richness of data collected. The procedures employed for subject selection will be discussed in detail in the Research Phases section.

Reactivity Issue

An issue arguably present in all research is internal validity due to reactivity. Patton (2002) defines reactivity as producing “artificial results because respondents are

affected by the process” (p. 191). Reactivity results from errors being inadvertently injected by the respondents due to their interpretation of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified the causes of reactivity as: participant knowledge that they are involved in a study; participant role selection based on their interpretation of the intent of the research; measurement itself as change agent; and erroneous responses given by participants to try to please the researcher.

While it is impossible to completely control for reactivity in qualitative research, this project used several different techniques to minimize the impact. First, while the participants were given the questions in advance, the topic of the research was not divulged. The researcher did not mention the lost-boys phenomenon or discuss variables identified in the literature review. Second, while the questions in the interview guide provided in Appendix A were open-ended to allow participant interpretation, the underlying questions were asked indirectly as discussed in the interview questions section later in this chapter. Lastly, the cross-case analysis was designed to control for individual measurement error. While an individual participant may react to the measurement in a certain way, the impact of individual reactivity is reduced as the number of participants is increased. By using these three methods the impact of reactivity was reduced, thereby increasing the internal validity of the data.

Researcher Role

A key characteristic of qualitative research is that “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). As a Caucasian middle-aged male of the baby-boomer generation who is a doctoral candidate, retired military officer, father of a young male, and businessman, the research was shaped by

cultural influences and researcher understanding of the issues involved. The importance of building trust and rapport between the researcher and the informants could not be overstated, and the decision to include multiple interviews of each participant and asking the same questions was designed to build this trust and rapport.

In this study the interviews were conducted in the *observer as participant* mode. Glesne (1999) describes this mode as the “the researcher remains primarily an observer but has some interaction with study participants” (p. 44). In this role, the researcher used the *etic* perspective of the outsider in conducting the interviews. While the outsider observer role was used in questioning key informant perceptions of the issues and probing for related details, it is conceivable that the subject of research, the gender and demeanor of the researcher, and the interview guide questions themselves may have affected the informant responses and willingness to participate.

Because the researcher is the primary instrument and, therefore, the filter through which the data are collected, it would be deceptive to assume the case studies reflected holistic images of the complexity of participant thoughts and behavior. The research is designed to reduce researcher bias by utilizing independent researcher reviews and data audits, which will be explained in detail in the Research Phases section. But in reading the case studies, the reader is cautioned to remember that the answers given were driven by the prepared questions and may not fully reflect the participant’s thoughts. As discussed in Chapter 3, identity issues are “in relation to”—in this case, in relation to what the interviewer represented to the participant, and may have affected the participants’ reactions due to the participant perceptions of the researcher’s race, gender, age, and role (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Interview Questions

The questions in the Interview Guide (Appendix A) were designed to illicit open ended responses from the participants, and to try to get them to discuss the issues they dealt with on a daily basis. These questions were based on Gilligan's (1982) central assumptions that "the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act" (p. 2). The paragraphs below include a summary of the questions asked and the reasoning for asking specific questions or series of questions.

The question "*Could you describe yourself to me*" was asked at the beginning of each interview. The question was designed to illicit initial demographic information about the participant such as age, ethnic origin, and school year. But the deeper purpose of the question was to allow the participant to reveal their identity and identity issues while attempting to define themselves.

The request, "*Please tell me about your family and describe some of your early childhood experiences,*" was used to illicit familial structure and relationships, to determine underlying family issues, and to ascertain participant perceptions of familial support, both in general and for education.

When asking, "*What can you tell me about your friends?*", "*Do you know anyone that you would consider to be underachieving in school?*", and "*Are you or any of your friends planning on going to college?*", the researcher was attempting to illicit information about the size and scope of the participant's social network, to determine depth of personal relationships, and to determine the extent of peer influences. They were also used to investigate group relations, participant roles, and perceived peer groupings.

The questions, “*Who in your life would you consider to be a mentor?*”, “*Who are your heroes?*”, and “*Who do you admire and look to for advice?*” were used to illicit information about external influences that affect the participants. The questions on mentors and advice were used to determine to what extent there were caring adults in the lives of the participants, while the question on heroes was used to determine popular cultural influences and their possible impact on the participants.

The questions, “*Can you describe your educational background?*”, “*What kind of kids do better in school?*”, and “*Do you think you are doing your best in school?*” were used to probe perceptions about the school environment and the impact on the participant’s attitudes towards school. These were also used to determine if there were perceived issues surrounding pedagogy and teacher gender.

The question, “*Can you describe how you see yourself in the future?*” was used to determine the participant’s future plans and goals. The question was also meant to determine participant maturity level and ability to set realistic goals.

Finally, the participants were asked “*If you were involved in researching male perspectives on achievement, what questions would you ask?*” This query was used to determine what the participants thought were the key issues to consider in investigating this phenomenon. The question asks the participants to put themselves in the role of the investigator and identify what salient questions should be asked in future research.

Research Phases

The research was conducted in the following phases: gaining access, locating participants, data collection, data analysis, data integrity, and reporting the findings.

These phases will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Phase 1: Gaining Access

Gaining access to the site and participants was a key issue in this study because the researcher is not an educator and does not come into contact with possible participants on a daily basis. There were multiple layers of approval required in order to even begin to conduct the research including: gaining approval from the Dissertation Committee; passing the university Institutional Review Board (IRB); gaining approval from the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to conduct research in the district; gaining approval of the selected site school principal and staff; passing a law enforcement background check; gaining parental approval; and finally—and most importantly—gaining the approval of participants themselves. The difficulties of completing this phase of the project were seriously underestimated by the researcher and took over a year to accomplish.

Phase 2: Locating Participants

Candidates for the research were identified as underachievers by a teacher. The initial attempt to solicit participation failed and may provide insight into some of the symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon, as well as explain the lack of data described in Chapter 1. Follow on attempts were successful, however, and also may indicate a key characteristic for future use in investigating the phenomenon.

Initial attempt

At the first site selected, a typical large public high school in an affluent section of San Diego, the principal was very supportive because she recognized the problem of male underachievement. She assigned the head counselor to work with the researcher to identify participants. The counselor sent an e-mail to all the teachers at the school

soliciting names of males who were underachieving. The teachers provided 65 names of possible candidates including several who were identified by multiple teachers as underachieving in several subjects.

Following the IRB specified methodology, the researcher provided 65 envelopes to the school counselor containing the Solicitation Letter in English and Spanish, the Letter of Assent, and a return addressed stamped envelope. The school administration addressed the envelopes and mailed them to the guardians of record for the candidates seeking parental approval to contact their sons. Of the 65 solicitations, only one father positively responded by returning the signed Letter of Assent and provided the return address for contacting his son. The researcher sent a Letter of Consent to the candidate with contact information for scheduling the research—no response was received. This failed attempt highlights the difficulty in locating subjects for this type of research and may be indicative of a symptom of the phenomenon—reluctance to volunteer.

Secondary Site

At the second and final site selected, an atypical small charter school in the same affluent neighborhood of San Diego, the methodology for gaining participant approval was changed based on a recommendation from the school Chief Academic Officer (CAO). As described in the Site Selection section of this chapter, the school prided itself for being more hands-on and viewed education as a partnership between faculty, students, parents, and community. The school was also had a professional relationship with the University of San Diego and was renowned for support of educational research. The CAO assigned a popular teacher to work with the researcher, solicit participants, and

coordinate logistics of the interviews. The participants of the research came from this selection methodology.

Participant Approval

The teacher at the selected school arranged a group meeting with six initial prospective participants during their lunch period. The researcher provided pizza and presented a synopsis of the research topic and a package including the Interview Guide (Appendix A), Cover Letter (Appendix B), Informed Assent form (Appendix C), and Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The participants were asked not to divulge illegal activities or information they did not think was pertinent to the research. They were notified of confidentiality issues, were told participation was voluntary, and informed of their right to terminate their participation if desired. All six participants agreed to participate and set up the initial interviews.

As discussed in the Sample Selection section, a second group of two participants was included to provide ethnic balance to the study. The candidate approval methodology was the same for these two participants, but the selection process was limited to African-American males. The same teacher at the school arranged a group meeting with the two prospective participants during their lunch period. Both candidates agreed to participate and set up the initial interviews, but these interviews occurred the semester following the one in which the initial group interviews were completed.

Parental Approval

Gaining parental approval at the secondary site was made easier by several factors: first, the participants were asking their parents or guardians for permission to participate instead of the parents trying to convince their sons to participate; second,

parents are presumably more involved at this charter school than at a typical high school. The participants were required to obtain parental approval and provide a signed copy of the Informed Assent and Informed Consent forms. All parents or guardians signed the forms and gave their approval for the participation of their sons; the participants provided the signed forms at the first interview.

Phase 3: Data Collection

Interviews were the primary data collection method used in the study, with publically available information used only to characterize the selected site demographics. The interviews were conducted as a series of one-on-one interviews in private rooms at the selected site and were audio recorded for transcription and analysis using the interview guide approach. The initial interview guide (Appendix A) consisted of 10 semi-structured questions. These questions were loosely choreographed to allow for probing and variation depending on the responses of the informants. The questions were used repetitively during the series of interviews to allow the participants to reflect on their answers and refine their perspectives.

Participants had full knowledge of the general topic and questions prior to the interviews. This was intended to allow the participants to perform self-examination and provide richer responses to the questions. The interviews were as informal as possible to try to illicit accurate and open-ended responses. Each participant was asked the same general questions in all interviews, but the probes changed from interview to interview depending on the responses. It has been noted in earlier research that adolescent males are sometimes reluctant to reveal their inner thoughts and feelings due to posturing and

identity issues. A series of interviews was conducted to gain trust and provide a validity check of earlier answers.

The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Field notes were kept to record impressions and to provide contextual clues needed for analysis. Public knowledge documents were also gathered during the course of research including: school demographics information; aggregate performance characteristics including drop-out rates, graduation rates, and other available data considered important in characterizing the culture and climate of the selected site. This characterization may provide some measure of generalizability of the findings during possible follow-on research.

Phase 4: Data Analysis

The transcribed data was coded and analyzed using thematic coding developed initially during the literature review, and modified during the research phase. The audio tapes were reviewed and transcribed verbatim after each interview to provide content analysis and the addition of non-verbal clues. Subjective observations were embedded as notes in the transcripts after initial coding was completed.

Coding Schema

The initial coding schema was adapted from the theoretical framework developed during the theoretical review in Chapter 4. The theoretical framework was based on a multi-disciplinary study of existing identity theory, group theory, decision theory, complexity theory, and systems theory. While the coding schema evolved as the research progressed, the following coding categories were initially used:

- Demographic Information (DI) – This code highlighted information used to differentiate cases by demographic groups.
- Background Information (BI) – This code is based on the Social Constructionist Model (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) in which reality is socially constructed based on past experiences and interaction with society.
- Identity Theory Issues (IT) – This code is based on the Conceptual Model for Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000) in which issues of class, culture, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and core values impact personal identity.
- Group Theory Issues (GT) – This code is based on the integrative Model of Group Dynamics (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2000) in which groups transit sequential stages of development including dependency and inclusion, counter-dependency and flight, trust and structure, work, and termination.
- Decision Theory Issues (DT) – This code is based on the Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act (OODA) Loop Model (Boyd, 1996) in which decisions and actions are based on observations and orientation.
- Complexity Theory Issues (CT) – This code is based on the complexity and chaos theory (Gharajedaghi, 1999) in which large numbers of agents interact with each other and are adaptive in nature. The agents fall into four general categories that include: *point attractors*, *cyclical attractors*, *torus attractors*; and *strange attractors*.
- Systems Theory Issues (ST) – This code is based on the Information Bonded Systems Model (Gharajedaghi, 1999) in which a holistic approach to analysis is

used and where cultures act as a default decision system. Actions in this model are differentiated by either: first order learning—selecting from generally accepted assumptions; or second order learning—challenging assumptions and developing new sets of alternatives.

- Cultural Memes Issues (CM) - This code is based on the concept that reality is socially constructed illusions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993) that include: *genes*—natural instincts that have been passed down through generations via genetics; *memes*—learned responses passed down through generations via traditions and customs; and *self*—ego based on ideas and symbols.

Interview transcripts were evaluated as individual case studies using thematic coding shortly after the series of interviews were completed. The field notes and audio tapes were reviewed to add contextual information to the transcript. Lessons learned, adaptations, and plans for improving questions and technique were noted and implemented in the following interviews. Thematic coding was reviewed and other coding categories emerged during the research and were added to the coding schema. Some categories were added, some combined, and some dropped altogether based on the results of the code review. Once data were analyzed, coded, and case studies developed, follow-up interviews were conducted for member checks of validity. This entailed taking the findings back to the participants for comment on the interpretation with the results reported in the epilogue section of each case study.

Cross Case Analysis

A cross-case analysis was conducted once all the interviews were completed. The cross case analysis included construction of a multi-source matrix of findings noting

similarities and differences in the individual case study findings. The cross-case analysis matrix constructed from the case study data is contained in Appendix E.

Phase 5: Data Integrity

Follow-up interviews were conducted to provide member checks, to redirect questions that arose during analysis, and to get the required richness of detailed data from the participants. Member checking involves “sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately” (Glesne, 1999, p. 32). Member checks were used to promote trustworthiness by ensuring correctness of the transcription, to help develop concepts and derive meaning from the data, and to provide the respondents a chance to highlight possible sensitive information that should not be made public. The results of the follow-up interviews are recorded in the Epilogue sections of each case study.

An external data audit was also conducted to: ensure dependability of the case studies, reduce researcher bias, ensure data integrity, and validate reported findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit was conducted by an independent third party experienced teacher and qualitative field researcher who was not part of the Dissertation Committee or connected to either the school or participants. The auditor was also purposely selected to be the opposite gender (female) of the researcher to decrease gender bias in the results reporting. The audit consisted of the auditor reviewing the transcripts to ensure the case studies correctly reflected the data provided by the participants, that important facts were not overlooked, and unimportant facts were not overly highlighted in the findings. A Data Audit Matrix was constructed highlighting the data auditor’s

comments, and the researcher's responses to those comments. A copy of the Data Audit Matrix is included in Appendix G.

Phase 6: Report of Findings

This phase consisted of regular meetings with the Academic Advisor and reporting the results of the study in an oral presentation to the Dissertation Committee. As part of the dissertation process, regular meetings were held between the researcher and the Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor was assigned in accordance with the USD School of Leadership and Education Sciences Handbook (USD, 2006). Because the Academic Advisor is a USD Professor of Leadership Studies, a renowned leader in the field of qualitative research, and an experienced education research practitioner, the discussions held during the regular meetings in the research phase shaped the concepts and ideas reported in the findings of the research as reported in Chapters 16 and 17.

This dissertation is the written report of the study including case studies for each participant, a cross-case analysis, findings, grounded theory, a holistic definition of the lost-boys phenomenon, and recommendations for follow-on research. The findings will also be provided in a MS Power Point synopsis for oral presentation.

The oral defense consisted of a Dissertation Proposal Defense, and a Dissertation Defense in front of the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee consisted of: the chair who is the Academic Advisor mentioned in the above paragraph and a middle-aged Caucasian male; a young Caucasian female USD Associate Professor in Leadership Studies who has conducted similar research on male gender equity in education; and a middle-aged Caucasian female University of Alaska Fairbanks psychology professor who is a leader in research on male issues and the head of The Boy Project, a collaborative

effort to support unbiased gendered studies. The unique makeup of the committee was designed to ensure diversity of ideas and balanced reporting of findings.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research design, there are several limitations to this study. The most significant limitation is that it was conducted at a single site with a small number of participants ($n = 8$) which impacts the generalizability of the findings. There is significant support for the importance of even a single case study in qualitative research (Donmoyer, 1990), as these studies usually exchange generalizability for richness of data and thickness of descriptions. Rich description often results in the formation of a more sophisticated cognitive schema with which to make sense of a phenomenon, and may provide a degree of generalization. Beyond this potential benefit, however, it should be noted that the findings from this study are similar to other current studies being conducted in other locations, and therefore, a cogent argument could be made for generalizability.

The validity of the data must also be addressed. It has been noted that because of the multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000), the responses of boys may change depending on the demographics of the interviewer and environmental factors. Other researchers have noted that boys are much less likely to understand and express their feelings and emotions than girls (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Boys often answer questions with monosyllabic responses that do not reflect the richness of their emotions due to a lack of the emotional language that is part of male cultural memes (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). This limitation was minimized through the use of effective interview

techniques, repeated probes of incomplete answers, multiple interviews for gaining participant confidence, and member checking of previously provided answers.

Delimitations

First, this study focused on a single site high school located in an affluent neighborhood in San Diego, California. It is a public charter high school that provided project based education and is a unique environment that may not be reproducible in other research. The school attracts students from other sections of the city to attend the high school due to the successful achievement record the school has maintained. School demographics and achievement results were provided in Chapter 5.

Second, this study focused on the males at the high school level. While other studies have focused on the elementary, junior high, and college level, this study focused on an area where there is little data. The difficulties in gaining approval and access, finding willing participants, and conducting the research may explain the dearth of active research in this area. Whatever the reason, most research in this area is empirically derived from secondary sources, while this was primary research of high school aged males.

Third, this study focused solely on adolescent males. While females may exhibit the same symptoms, and some researchers purport that girls are starting to emulate boy behavior in certain negative trends, this study focused on males. While there appears to be much effort focused on females with funding for studies and support groups promoting women's issues, very little attention has been focused on male issues and there are few—if any, support groups for male issues identified.

Fourth, this is not a study of the school environment, pedagogy, school practices, or school policies. While some educational issues were identified, the research focused on male psychosocial behavior with the purpose of defining the phenomenon. The participants just happen to be located, for the most part, in school. Schools offer a regimented environment in which underachievement is observable and identifiable, and in the case of the site selected for this study, the school was very supportive of research efforts to improve student performance.

Finally, this is not a study of a single ethnic group. While other studies have focused on underachievement in individual ethnic groups, all candidates who met the specified criteria were included in the study. Ethnic balance, while not a centerpiece of the research, was included to increase validity of the findings. But this research was not meant to investigate ethnic issues or differences, except to highlight that the lost-boys phenomenon is present in all ethnic groups.

Summary of Research Methodology

This research was conducted using Qualitative research methodologies because of the emergent nature of the issues and the desire to obtain richness of data. The site selected for the research was a local charter high school that was convenient for the researcher. The unit of analysis was high school aged males identified by a teacher at the selected site for not achieving to their potential. The researcher interviewed each participant multiple times at the school using the Interview Guide approach, and the interviews were audio taped for follow-on analysis. The audio tapes were transcribed verbatim and coded using the schema developed during the literature review.

Case studies were developed to summarize the participants' responses to the interview questions. A final interview was used to provide member-checking of the data accuracy. A cross-case analysis was conducted to highlight similarities and differences, and to compare the findings with the popular-press literature. A data audit was conducted to ensure reliability of the data provided in the case studies. The case studies derived from the interviews is provided in the following chapters and constitutes the data collected using this methodology.

CHAPTER 8

PRODUCER

Producer is a Hispanic male who was 17 years old at the time of the interviews and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Producer because he expressed an interest in producing music videos. At the time of the interviews, he lived with both parents in a predominantly working class section of San Diego. Producer was the second born of four children, with an older and two younger sisters who lived at home and attended local schools. At the time of the study he was a sophomore attending a charter high school in an affluent area of the San Diego. He did not participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or organized sports.

Producer decided to participate in the study when he was told the topic of the research. He was the first of the initial group to volunteer at the organizational meeting and eagerly set up our first interview for the very next day. I met Producer on three consecutive Wednesdays during his lunch period. I provided food and drink of his choosing as compensation. As described in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The location was visible to the public, but secluded enough to conduct the interviews without interruption. The interviews were voice recorded and notes were taken while Producer discussed the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized in the following sections.

Identity

Producer described himself as a “young male Mexican” with “black hair, light brown [*sic* skin], and brown eyes” who was approximately five foot six inches tall and “weighs like one--thirty, around there.” When asked what he meant by the term “young”, he stated “not old” with old meaning “when they stop seeing you as a boy or like a kid.” He felt mature for his age and indicated that “fourteen is the age that separates [boys and men], because at fifteen you’re already like old, but at thirteen you’re still a little kid.” He attributed his maturity to the fact that the majority of his friends had been older. He believed age fourteen is when males start looking at things differently than females do. When you are younger “they’re teaching you not to fight and stuff, to agree with each other, and when you are fourteen you start thinking more differently—you’re not going to agree with him or her all the time.”

Producer considered himself a “Mexican living here” [United States] because his parents were born in Mexico, he was born in the US, and they lived in Tijuana when he was young. He remembers coming to San Diego to live with his grandmother and going to school here, but he also lived for periods of time at his aunt’s house in Tijuana. He recalled, “It was weird – like half the time we lived there [Tijuana] and half the time here [San Diego].” Because of this experience, Producer stated that he felt comfortable in both cultures, but considered himself a Mexican—not an American, Hispanic, or a Mexican-American.

Family

Producer described his family as “close” since they did lots of things together when he was younger. His father was a construction worker at the time of the interview,

and his mother a stay-at-home mom—neither parent was a college graduate. His parents were born in Mexico and moved from Tijuana to San Diego when Producer was a child. Originally, they lived in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood of San Diego, but had moved to a nearby working class neighborhood several years ago.

Producer described his father as having “brown eyes, black hair, and mustache – he’s pretty tall.” His relationship with his father was described as respectful, but Producer noted, “We don’t go out and do things on the weekend together – but we do talk.” He remembers when he was a little kid and his father would take him shopping, out to eat on Sundays, and other places, but their relationship had changed as he got older. When his father came home from work in construction, he was too tired to do anything and Producer did not like going places such as the park or the beach with his father anymore.

Producer described his mother as having “black hair, she wears glasses, and is kind of short.” Producer’s relationship with his mother was described as “almost the same [as his relationship with his father], but I talk to her a little more.” He occasionally accompanied his mother on shopping trips, and she was the one who picked him up from school.

Producer’s relationship with his sisters was described as “not that close” with most of their time spent fighting or doing separate activities because they didn’t have much in common. His older sister was 16 years old at the time of the study, attended high school on the same campus but in a different school, and was an A student. He described her as having “long black hair and is shorter than me”; she liked computers, going to parties, and going to the movies with friends. His younger sister was in fourth grade and was an A+ honor roll student described as “dark brown, pretty tall for her age, and a little

overweight.” His youngest sister was in third grade, was a B or C student, and was described as having “black hair also ... they say she looks like me.”

Childhood Memories

Producer described his childhood as happy growing up with his older cousin—until both moved to different neighborhoods. He and his cousin lived next door to each other, walked to school together, and played together in an empty lot near their homes. They still saw each other weekly, or at least several times a month, but since the older cousin worked during the week they did not see each other as often as before. He remembered playing with toys such as GI Joes, cars, and action figures as a child. He also stated, “I used to like playing video games, but my X-Box broke and I stopped playing it, and now it’s not really interesting.”

Educational Background

Producer did not attend pre-school — his first experience with school was in kindergarten. He didn’t remember the name of the first school he went to, but in first grade he attended Perkins Elementary School. He attended King/Chavez Preparatory School from second grade until he graduated from eighth grade, and then entered his current high school. He described himself as an A student until fifth grade with his grades sliding progressively as he advanced further through his school years. In sixth grade he starting getting B’s and by high school he was getting a C in Humanities and an F in Physics. His favorite classes included Computer Graphics Design—in which he got a B, and Engineering. He stated, “I just don’t like math” although he used to, but found it increasingly difficult—even though he was receiving tutoring at the time of the interview.

When asked about his teacher gender preferences, he replied “I’ve always had female teachers until last year when I had my first male teacher—it just really depends on the person.” His male Physics teacher was “all right,” while his female Humanities teacher “goes up and down” depending on the day. His favorite teacher was his male Engineering teacher because “he doesn’t like scream at you or anything” and seems to be, according to Producer, truly interested in his students.

Friends and Peer Influences

Producer’s closest childhood friend was his older cousin because they used to live next door to each other as previously discussed. They both moved to other neighborhoods at an early age, but still saw each other at the time of the study—although infrequently due to his 18 year old cousin having a job. His best friend at school had just been expelled at the time of the interviews, and he had few other close friends. He considered a friend to be “someone [who] is almost like me, like thinks like me and stuff.” He didn’t have any friends who lived in his new neighborhood, and felt most comfortable around people with similar backgrounds to his own—blue-collar working class Mexicans.

When asked how many close friends he had at school, Producer stated, “I don’t know anymore ... I used to have some in my old school, but I don’t talk to them anymore.” This was his first year at his current school and he estimated he had five or six friends, but didn’t consider them good friends because “if someone got in trouble, they may turn on me.” His closest school friend that year was another participant in the study who moved to San Diego from Los Angeles and was also of Mexican descent. He stated it was relatively easy to make friends with people, but because the school year had just started at the time of the interviews, he didn’t know many people very well. He

considered himself a friendly person, but not “too friendly” – meaning someone who will do anything to be liked by other people like “laughing when someone punches you.”

During the previous years the majority of his friends were Mexican males, but during the year of the interview he had more female friends who were almost exclusively Latina. He had not made many male friends that year because, he said, “I can tell they are not interested in what I have to say.” Producer believed this was because “they come from different places, they think different, they act different, they like different stuff—so there’s nothing really we can talk about.” He didn’t open up to people when first meeting them, and could usually tell if someone was going to like him as soon as he told them his name—which clearly identified his ethnicity. He didn’t like people who asked too many questions or talked about themselves too much, preferring to slowly reveal his thoughts and feelings. He explained: “I talk to people and I let little by little out” over time, so it takes a while to get to know new people.

Producer knew people he considered as not meeting their potential. For example, he had a good friend who was recently expelled who he believed was really smart, but had not gotten good grades because “he never really did anything.” When asked to explain what made him think his friend was smart, he stated:

Because I used to sometimes go around asking for something and people didn’t know what it was, and I asked him and he would be like, ‘Yeah, I know what that is,’ and he would help me out. I did a project with him once, and I thought we were going to get an F because I wasn’t going to put in that much work, and I thought he wasn’t. He actually did everything and said that I did some of it.

Producer believed his friend's grades did not truly reflect his abilities because he was disruptive in class and would be "daydreaming even more than me." He believed that the students who did better in school were the ones that paid attention. They got good grades because "they participate and then they remember that they asked a question and then they remember the answer, which means they get a good grade."

Future Plans

Producer planned to graduate from high school, spend a year "just doing nothing," and then plans to join the Marines. The year after high school was envisioned as a time to "go to parties and hang with friends." After the Marines, Producer planned to come back to San Diego and get a job producing movies or music videos.

Producer didn't know if he wanted to go to college, but recognized that this may change. His stated reason for not wanting to go to college was "because they say you need four years to get a degree, and that's a long time when I could be working and stuff." He stated he was 100% against going to college last year, but had changed his mind and was 55% sure he wanted to go to college at the time of the interviews. All of his friends said they wanted to go to college, but Producer was not sure that they would. His sisters were planning on going to college, but he did not know if or how they would accomplish this goal due to family financial issues.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

When asked about his mentors, Producer's first response was: "What's a mentor?" Once the term was explained to him, he listed his dad, mom, and cousin (i.e., the person who is also his closest friend and who does not see too much of in recent years) as possible mentors. His father advised him to stay in school; his mother and

cousin told him not to do certain things like “if you ever get in a fight—don’t run. Stay there even if you know you’re going to get beat up.” His heroes included his dad and mom because of the things they did for him like caring for him and making sure he got opportunities and a good education. Celebrities he admires included LL Cool J, because he wanted to be physically large like him, and Tupac for his rap music—but he doesn’t “want to live his life...because he’s dead.”

If Producer sought advice, it was from his parents and cousin—although he stated, “I don’t really ask for advice from people, I try to look for my own answers.” He did not belong to any clubs or play organized sports, is not aware of any clubs designed to attract and mentor boys his age, and did not believe his school has programs designed to improve performance or self-esteem for boys. When asked if there is anyone at school he looked to for advice and counseling, he stated that his Engineering teacher had helped him—although he has only known him for two months.

In describing his relationship with his engineering teacher, his first male teacher and the one who recommended him for the study, he explained:

He’s cool; he’s not like other teachers. He talks to you like he’s known you a long time. Not like with any big words and stuff or getting you in trouble for no reason. If you do something wrong, he tells you not to do it again. He doesn’t say anything to somebody else do they can tell you. He does it himself.

Attitude

Producer recognized that he wasn’t really doing his best in school. In Humanities he was sure he could do better, but founds Physics “boring” and stated, “I don’t like it, so

I go off topic and start daydreaming or something.” When daydreaming, Producer liked to create movies and music videos in his head. He stated, “I’ll put in some characters from other things and put them in another scenario with more characters from a different movie.” When asked if he had written any of these ideas down in a journal, he responded that he only daydreamed when he was “bored and lazy” and didn’t record anything.

He indicated that in school he did the assigned homework when he remembered, but sometimes had trouble completing the Physics homework because he didn’t understand it due to not paying attention in class. He explained: “Sometimes I don’t get it, and I try to do it, but I can’t even do the first thing—so then I just don’t do it.” He recognized that the daydreaming in class caused him to not pay attention, and that lack of attention affected his grades.

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Producer would ask other students if he were conducting the research, he said that he does not talk about school outside of the classroom environment, so he would not ask anyone about achievement.

Epilogue

In the final meeting Producer suggested the need to modify the above information in a number of ways due to the four month passage of time between the last interview and the final meeting. Producer reported that he, at the time of the final meeting, had approximately 12 friends at school and felt more comfortable fitting in at the school. He reported that the relationship with his Engineering teacher had soured because of his continued behavioral problems. During the interview, he was apprehensive about the possibility of being expelled for being habitually late to class. He explained that he was

late coming back from lunch to his Physics class almost every day because of the long walk to and from a local grocery store. The school had him sign a contract that if he was late again, he would be expelled. A week after our final meeting, Producer was permanently expelled from school for behavioral issues.

CHAPTER 9

BASKETBALL PLAYER

Basketball Player is a Hispanic male who was 15 years old at the time of the interviews and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Basketball Player because he was a huge Michael Jordan fan—even wearing a Michael Jordan earring—and was an avid basketball player. Basketball Player lived with both biological parents in a predominantly Hispanic working class section of San Diego. He was the youngest of four children, with two older brothers and an older sister. During the interview period, Basketball Player was a sophomore in a charter high school in an affluent section of the city. He did not participate in extracurricular activities or clubs, but played on a YMCA traveling basketball team.

Basketball Player decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended it and his friend Producer was also participating. He was reluctant to participate at first, but volunteered and set up our first interview for the day following his friend's interview. I met Basketball Player on three consecutive Thursdays during his lunch period, and provided food and drink of his choosing as compensation for his time. As described in Chapter 3, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The location was visible to the public, but secluded enough to conduct the interviews without interruption. The interviews were voice recorded and notes were taken while Basketball Player discussed the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the interviews are summarized below.

Identity

Basketball Player described himself as a “here and there a nice person” who liked to “play basketball” and other sports, and liked to “meet new people and ... try to explore the world.” He enjoyed traveling to “visit colleges and universities, the big universities” and was planning to “go around the world” and visit far-away places. Unlike his friend Producer, he did not self-identify as Mexican or Hispanic during the interviews and seemed comfortable in a multi-cultural environment.

Basketball Player stated that he had his moods, but generally considered himself a nice person. When asked about his moods, he explained that sometimes his dad woke him up late and he would be in a bad mood all day. Sometimes his father pushed him too hard, but at the same time, he understood “he’s just trying to make it best” for him. Basketball Player indicated that he tended to hold his anger inside because he respected his father and knew his father was trying to help him be successful.

Family

Basketball Player described his family as “all Mexican,” very close and fun loving. He said of the members of his family: “There’s times where they get to work and get their stuff done...[but] they like to have a lot of fun.” His parents were born in Mexico and moved to Los Angeles before Basketball Player was born. Before moving to San Diego four years prior to the interviews, the family lived in a predominantly Hispanic working class section of Los Angeles. His family had moved to San Diego because of better job opportunities and to escape the violence of their prior neighborhood.

His father was described as “kind of strict–well to me,” but Basketball Player respected that because the strictness helped keep him on track. His father was a house

painter who had graduated from college in Mexico and also expected his children to attend college. Because his father wanted his son to follow in his footsteps and get a college education, he pushed Basketball Player to do his best in school and make the right choices.

Basketball Player's mother worked for a ship building company in San Diego.

When describing his mother, Basketball Player stated:

I love her so much and I show her a lot of love. Here and there I try to do favors for her, mostly around the house. Mostly I'm not in the house, you know, doing school or playing sports. I try to help out in the house and she's really nice to me. She's the same as my dad and tries to push me to education. She's just trying to have me finish my education and then go to a university if I want.

Basketball Player described his relationship with his brothers as a loving relationship. His oldest brother was 26 years old, lived in Los Angeles, and was described as educated and hard working. "My oldest brother is the one who always works, always has a job, and goes to school at the same time," Basketball Player told me. His second oldest brother was 23 years old, lived with Basketball Player, and worked with their father in the painting business. He was described as "taking the wrong footsteps" when he was younger, getting involved in gangs and hanging out in the streets of Los Angeles. But as he grew older, Basketball Player noted, his brother realized the error of his ways and came to understand that this was not how things should be. This brother pushed Basketball Player not to make the same mistakes, to work hard, and "he always pushes me to do good in school and get an education like my dad."

Basketball Player's older sister was 23 years old at the time of the interview and also lived with the family. She was a single mother with a daughter and was described as a "hard worker and smart." She was going to school at night to become a pharmacist and was considered a good student by her brother.

Childhood Memories

Basketball Player described his childhood as "somewhere in between happy and unhappy." He explained:

I grew up in the Los Angeles area, Lincoln Heights. Right there in that area there was a lot of gang violence and everything. But to me, I wasn't really into that. I was in school, I was into my homework. But ... around my house there would always be gang violence, shootings ... but I would never pay attention to that. I was involved in sports and having fun.

Although unhappy about moving away from old friends, Basketball Player found this new location in San Diego to be a better environment for his family. He explained, "I've made a lot of friends here, I like it in San Diego. It's cool, it's fresh, and it's not that dangerous."

Educational Background

Basketball Player did not attend pre-school—his first experience with school was in kindergarten. He attended public elementary school in Los Angeles until the family moved to San Diego when he was in fifth grade. He completed elementary school at a working class neighborhood public school, and transferred to a college prep charter middle school. He credits his interest in travel and attending universities to his positive experiences at the prep school, where they took trips to Boston and New York, and

visited major universities including Harvard. While at the prep school, Basketball Player attended a presentation on his current charter high school which piqued his interest. He subsequently applied and was admitted to the school. He has had positive experiences in high school up to the time of the interviews, stating “its been good, it’s been helping me a lot with computers especially.”

When asked about grades, Basketball Player sated that when he moved to San Diego, his grades were B’s and C’s. He went on to state, “I came to Logan and that’s when everything changed.” His grades slipped and he began failing at school. He attributed this drop in performance to a poor attitude caused by teachers: “They didn’t talk to me,” he stated, “and they hated me.” In sixth grade, he stopped trying to do the work and stopped doing homework. Once he got into junior high, the school tried to help him get his grades back up, and he was able to raise his grades to C’s. In his current classes, he didn’t know what his grade was in humanities, but he had a C in math and an F in advanced math. When asked how he felt he was doing, he explained:

I realize sometimes that I need to raise up my grades, I need to do good in school, and I think about what my dad says—I want to make my family proud. Sometimes I set my mind to it and I get my work done.

While he realized that he needed help in math, he stated: “I could say I enjoy it because I learned a lot.”

Basketball Player’s favorite subject was writing. “[I enjoy] writing about stuff I have visited or experienced or what I’ve been through—that’s what really interests me,” He said during one of the interviews, however, that he did not always do the school’s

required work because he got frustrated when he didn't understand the subject. He would have liked to get to know his teachers better so they could have helped him learn new things and make the right choices, but didn't like it when teachers tried to "hound" him about subjects he didn't understand. He believed that his attitude about school was an important key to school success—once he realized that education was not a "joke," he started getting better grades. He was not sure what caused his positive change in attitude, but believed it was related to how he was being treated by the teachers and fellow students at this school.

Basketball Player considered himself an average student, but would have liked to have raised his grades to a B average. He explained:

There are times where my grades go down a little. Sometimes I pay attention, but it's hard for me to sometimes to understand. I tell the teacher that I need help, and they help me sometimes and I get it. I get it when they are explaining it to me... but when I try to do it by myself...I don't get it. When they come and they're next to me, I feel more confident doing it. I'm not that confident as an individual, I have to have someone there helping me in order for me to get it.

He did well in Humanities because it involved essay writing and projects—which he enjoyed and was confident of passing—but did not do well in math. He stated, "Ever since I was a little kid, math has always been hard for me." In order to get an A, he believed he would have to pay more attention in class, ask questions when he didn't understand, stay after school to get help with homework, and study before tests and quizzes. In essence, he believed that putting in the extra effort would improve his grades.

Friends and Peer Influences

Basketball Player had what he considered a lot of friends—both in Los Angeles and in San Diego. He stated “I find it easy to be friends, to actually have a friend, to be friends with someone else” wherever he went. While the move from Los Angeles had been hard on him since he had never experienced moving before, he had made a lot of friends in San Diego in the four years he had been living in the city. He still went back to visit friends and family in Los Angeles periodically. His closest friend was from his elementary school days in Los Angeles. When asked to define the term close friend, he responded: “Close friends, real friends tell me straight up—no funny stuff, never lie.”

Although he didn’t have many close friends at his current school at the time of the interview—which was more than a year after he started attending the school—Basketball Player and one friend, the previously discussed Producer, hung out together quite a bit together at school. Basketball Player did not hang out with school friends after school hours, however, because the school’s students lived in different areas of the city. He and his school friends stayed in contact by computer, but did not visit each other on the weekends.

Basketball Player also had friends in his neighborhood who did not go to Basketball Player’s high school. He explained: “I have a lot of kinds of friends—I have friends that they’re not involved with good things, I have friends that are there for me but are not involved with good things, and I have friends that are good, educational, and play sports.” He didn’t like it when kids told jokes that he considered dumb such as “this weekend, should I take out my two front teeth?” or said other things that he didn’t agree with. He did not befriend people he considered obnoxious.

Basketball Player didn't believe many people in his neighborhood planned to go to college. He explained:

I have bad friends that get involved in that gang violence and all that, but at the same time they have good grades. I have friends that are gangsters from L.A. and they have good grades. I say that's good, but they are still taking the wrong footsteps at the same time. But its good they have good grades and they're doing good in school.

He believed, however, that most of the kids in his high school planned on going to college since expectations were higher for students in this school. His friends at school wanted to be probation or parole officers, doctors, and lawyers and he assumed that most of them would go on to college. His best friend in Los Angeles was also planning to go to college and was expecting to get a scholarship because he was doing so well in sports and getting good grades. His friend wanted to be a probation officer, to help kids in the old neighborhood, and realized he needed an education to reach that goal. This friend used to be "bad, a troublemaker" but had turned his life around and planned on attending USC after graduation.

There were many people in Basketball Player's neighborhood that he considered to be not reaching their potential. He described them as "gangsters." Although in many ways they were just like him, they also were different from him because "sometimes they say that trouble comes to them." But, according to Basketball Player, they respected him for wanting to do well in school and sports, and he feels that their lifestyle was due to past experiences and the environment they grew up in.

His best friend from Los Angeles also used to struggle in school, but has changed due to playing sports. Basketball Player explained: “When the first time I heard that from his mom, I didn’t really believe it; as time passed and I went to go visit his school, and, yeah, he stepped it up a lot, and well he’s playing sports, and I’m really proud of him.” Basketball player tried to encourage his friend to stay out of trouble by telling him “that’s good for you, you made good progress since we were little kids.”

When describing people who did well in school, Basketball Player suggested that success was based on trying to put in your best effort. He noted that most kids at his current school were trying to do their best—which is different from previous schools. He attributed that to the relatively small size of his current school, as well as small class size and greater teacher involvement. At other schools, he noted, teachers “don’t give you that much; Well they do, but they don’t really, like, come close to you and help you when you need help.” He felt that the teachers at his current school created a more nurturing environment, which promoted learning and a sense of belonging.

Future Plans

With respect to the future, Basketball Player confided, “I’m confused sometimes when I think of it.” He wanted to play basketball professionally, but at the same time recognized that education was important. Sometimes he saw himself getting a regular job that required a good education, but he indicated that he would prefer to play in the NBA. Still, he would have liked to get good grades, be the first of his siblings to graduate from college, and make his parents proud of him. He was aware of the advantages he had: “I always think of it too, like all those kids in Africa and everywhere that don’t get the same things and want an education.” Basketball Player summed up his plans for the future as

follows: “[I want to] play sports and I want to get an education first, and after that do whatever.”

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisers

When asked about his mentors, Basketball Player’s response was, “what do you mean *mentor*?” Once the term was explained to him, he named one of his brothers and his best friend in Los Angeles. He explained:

I would consider that [his mentor] as my youngest brother [of his older brothers] who is living with me. Every time I’m about trouble, or I have something—if I have problems, my brother comes and talks to me and says he is open for everything; that I am his brother and I can talk to him whenever I want to. He’s always supporting me and always tries to lead me to the right footsteps. He told me he doesn’t want me to do anything wrong and take the wrong footsteps like he did when he was young.

His heroes include one of his teachers in junior high school who “always involved me in sports, but [told me] also not only to focus on education, but go out and have fun and play— but at the same time get back to your education.” She was the one who got Basketball Player interested in travel and visiting college campuses. He didn’t have any heroes, but admired Michael Jordan for his basketball abilities and Kobe Bryant for being able to go straight from high school to the NBA. When he needs advice, Basketball Player asks his mother and brother in that order. His mother advises him on behavior and educational issues, while his brother advises him on staying out of trouble. He also calls his best friend in Los Angeles sometimes to ask advice on what he should do in certain situations.

Attitude

Basketball Player recognized that he wasn't doing his best in school at the time of the interview, but stated: "I'm trying to do my best—I'm trying to do my work, doing my work, doing my homework, trying to ignore people talking to me when I do my work." He sometimes feels that although he is doing the work, he is not doing his best work. When asked about this he stated: "Sometimes I'm doing my work but I'm not trying my best because I just want to get done with it to move on to other homework and I really want to get done with it." He discussed this lack of effort with his mother and promised to try to do his best during the year of the interview, to complete his work, to do his homework, and participate in class. If he needed help, he knew he could stay after school and get tutoring, but had not taken advantage of that opportunity.

Basketball Player had noticed that he was much more of a visual learner than an auditory one. He discovered that his mind wandered in class if someone was telling him something like "if we were working with algebra and they told me about a fraction," but found it easier to pay attention and learn "if they were to give me a cup and they said, 'Oh this is a half in the cup,' I think that would really help me."

Salient Questions

If Basketball Player were doing this research, he would ask other males "what are their plans to do in life; right now, what are they thinking of being; what do you do at home; how do you talk to your parents—do you respect your parents; who do you hang out with; do you make the right choices?" He also would ask "what are your dreams; what are you thinking of being; what do you think you're going to be in the future; do

you make good choices; how do you get along with your family; do you have respect for your elders?" In our third interview, he added the question "Who is there for you and who's not?"

Epilogue

In our final meeting which occurred four months after the initial round of interviews, Basketball Player identified several changes in his life since we first met. Basketball Player reported that he had made many more new friends at school and felt more comfortable in that environment. He reported that he had spoken to his male teachers about his grades and was receiving one-on-one tutoring after school. He had raised his grades in Humanities and Math to a B and a C respectively and was hoping to have all B's by the end of the year. He also reported that he had met with the Chief Education Officer [principal] and was on good terms with him. He was pleased with the supportive atmosphere of the school and was optimistic about his future.

CHAPTER 10

FENCER

Fencer is a Caucasian male who was a 15 years old at the time of the interviews and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Fencer because he liked to fence as an after-school sport. At the time of the interviews, he lived with both parents in a predominantly Caucasian middle class section of San Diego. Fencer was the middle child of three--he had an older and younger brother who both lived at home. Fencer was a sophomore in a charter high school in an affluent area of the city during the time of the interviews. Fencer did not participate in extracurricular school activities or clubs, but indicated he enjoyed fencing, motocross, paintball, robotics, and improvisational comedy in his spare time.

Fencer decided to participate in the study after a teacher at the school recommended him. We set up our first interview for later in the same week that he agreed to be a study participant. I met Fencer on three Fridays after school in a school meeting room and provided food and drink of his choosing. Several times the school administrators had to search to locate Fencer to remind him of the appointment, and one appointment had to be rescheduled because Fencer had completely forgotten and gone home. Once he was located and the interviews began, though, Fencer was not at all reluctant to share his experiences and seemed to enjoy participating. The interviews were voice recorded and notes were taken while listening to Fencer's responses to the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized in the following sections:

Identity

Fencer described himself as “nice” and “a very easy-going person” with “a very short attention span.” He liked to have fun with his friends, and considered himself pretty funny, adding that sometimes he talked too much. Fencer claimed to be a calm person who did not get mad often and did not get too excited. When asked to talk about his self-described attention span issues, Fencer stated: “If it’s [what he is doing] something I’m not really focused with, like something I don’t connect to or like, I lose focus and then I’m gone.” In defining what he meant by *gone*, Fencer explained: “Thinking about stuff I would rather do ... thinking about my friends ... stuff like that.” He liked to be active and to feel that he was making a difference in the things he chose to do, but had a hard time focusing on school.

Fencer acknowledged that he tended to goof off too much and needed to get serious about work and “staying on task.” He explained:

Whenever something bores me...I do something else and then I just start going off into la-la land. But once something entertains me, I get really into it and I’ll get on topic. I have a lot of fun that way, and it makes it really easy to learn and I catch on to things really quickly. So probably the more exciting action-oriented topics, I get into much more. Whereas the more subtle discussion...well I like discussions because it’s talking and opinions and all that...but lectures, not so much.

Fencer recognized he had a problem multi-tasking, but became energized when focused on a single interesting topic. He liked it “when I’m doing one thing, and I know what I’m doing, and I know what it’s for, and I know what I have to do at the end of it, and know

how to start it—it’s ‘bam,’ I can fly through it.” He does not feel he is as good when attempting to balance multiple activities.

Family

Fencer lived with both biological parents at the time of the interviews and described his entire family as “really nice” and “supportive.” His mother graduated from the University of California, Berkeley and owned two companies—a medical billing service for physical therapists and an innovative storage solutions company for home and office. His mother attended church regularly and tried to get Fencer to adhere to higher standards of morality and ethics. He described his mother as “really supportive” and “nice” and admired her for working hard but also taking care of the family and making sure they ate dinner and stayed together.

Fencer’s father was a scene painter for the San Diego Opera, who he described as: “Usually he’s easygoing, but he can be strict.” Fencer explained that his dad “tries to be a role model and stuff and not be too childish, but every so often his inner child comes out and we do fun stuff.” Despite the occasional appearance of Fencer’s dad’s inner child, Fencer indicated that his dad didn’t like to see Fencer’s grades go down—which Fencer is thankful for because his dad’s concern helped Fencer focus on school work. His father graduated from San Diego Mesa Junior College and expected his sons to do their best in school and attend college.

Fencer’s brothers attended different schools in the same charter-school complex. His older brother was a senior at the same high school, captain of the

school baseball team, and maintained a 4.0 GPA. He was interested in politics and often helped Fencer with his homework. He described his older brother as “really popular” and “genuine”, although he could be “nerdy” at times. Fencer stated: “it’s really cool to see that, how he can be who he wants to be and still be really popular and have people like him for who he is.”

His younger brother was in his second year of middle school, and, although a straight A student, was struggling during the year of the interview to keep his grades up while playing baseball. He also considered his little brother a “smart-aleck” because he was the perfect student, was good in spelling and grammar, and corrected his brother whenever Fencer made a mistake. He called his brother the “little stenographer” because of his propensity to take copious notes, but also noted that he had started talking back to his teachers now that he was in junior high school. But Fencer added that he was the one who was usually “off task,” and attributed this situation to being the middle child. Fencer stated that he considered both his brothers “cool.”

Childhood Memories

Fencer grew up until the age of 10 in a predominantly working class mixed ethnic neighborhood of San Diego, but approximately five years prior to the interviews, his family moved to a mainly Caucasian middle class neighborhood. Although the move was not very far in distance, it led to him going to middle school in an affluent area of the city, and eventually to his current high school. One thing it did was move him away from his best friends, who used to live across the street. Although they were still friends, they did not spend as much time together as before the move.

Fencer enjoyed meeting new people and learning new and exciting things. He found that he enjoyed fast-paced sports because of the “endorphins” and the “adrenaline rush”. For example, he learned to fence about 3 years ago, hence the pseudonym. He described it:

Oh its fun, it’s very fast paced, keeps you in it. That’s probably why I like it...I’m learning. I know foil fencing—that’s a style, and I’m also learning epee fencing. That’s where instead of foil where only the main part of your chest is on target, whereas in epee everything’s worth a point. So it’s much more fast-paced.

He also enjoyed other action activities including motorcycle riding, which he described as “cool” and “awesome.”

Educational Background

Fencer started his explanation of his educational history by revealing proudly that, although he had attended summer school twice for failing certain subjects, he had never failed a grade. His first experience with school was attending a public elementary school in his original neighborhood where he was a straight A student. His favorite subjects were grammar and spelling, and he was in the gifted and talented (GATE) program. Of this period, he said, “School was easy for me, but I don’t know—ever since I got into middle school, I’ve had trouble; and [in] high school I’ve been struggling also.”

Fencer attributed his struggling in school to a lack of focus on school work. He explained his problem as: “I get bored and then I space out a lot.” He had decided by the last interview to “buckle down” during his junior year because it would affect his ability

to get into the college of his choice. The decision to buckle down had produced mixed results at the time of the interviews as Fencer was struggling to maintain a C average.

When asked what kinds of things interested, Fencer responded “exciting stuff like in chemistry today, we used chemicals and made green fire—it was really cool” and “we also made balloons full of hydrogen and boom—and they’d like explode in these huge balls of fire.” In contrast, he didn’t enjoy classes, such as humanities, that were mainly lectures. Fencer indicated that he finds his mind wandering “off to my own place for awhile” whenever he had to sit through a lecture. He felt that he did better if the instructor wrote on the board while discussing topics, but, when it was just a lecture, he had trouble staying focused. Normally he liked humanities class but “it’s just lectures in general that kill me.” He found that if he put in the effort, he usually got an A when he handed in the assignments. The problem was that he didn’t always complete the work, and, even if he completed it, he often neglected to turn it in and got an F.

When asked why he thinks his grades began to slip in junior high, Fencer recalled several events that may explain this change. He reportedly did not get along with his teacher and his grades began to slip in seventh grade. He explained:

I had a teacher I didn’t really like, she wasn’t nice to me. She split up the class by gender, girls on one side and boys on the other. Her desk and the whiteboard were on the girls’ side so the girls always had the best view and the guys were all kind of thrown in the back.

She thought we were all ruffians and degenerates.

At the end of that year, Fencer had to attend summer school for the first time for failing math.

Fencer also recalled being bullied in junior high because he was such a good student. He explained: “I was just one of the kids that tried to fly under the radar, but they’d go after everybody.” One of the boys who used to bully him sat next to Fencer in a class and made fun of his imperfection because, according to Fencer, he was doing really well in school. The bully would insult Fencer by calling him “stupid” or making a big deal out of anything Fencer said or did that was out of the ordinary—specifically pointing out whenever he said something wrong and ridiculing him in front of his peers. The bully ended up dropping out of school, but has left a lasting impression on Fencer.

Friends and Peer Influences

When asked about his friends, Fencer responded: “I guess I would say I have a lot of friends.” His closest friends were the ones from his old neighborhood who he has known since he was “one or two years old.” His neighbors David, Ryan, and Ryan were older than Fencer and they played together as kids. David, the oldest one, was in college at the time of the interview and was an honor roll student. David went to college full time, worked full time, and according to Fencer “made everything he did look easy.” His friend “never failed at, like, anything—he was a great athlete.” The only friend Fencer had in his new neighborhood was a girl named Mackenzie—she was the only kid around who was his age. Although Fencer and Mackenzie used to “hang out a lot,” at the time of the interviews she attended a different school and they didn’t see each other as much as they had in the past.

Many of Fencer’s friends at school lived in different parts of the city, so he didn’t get to see them outside the school environment. He stated he didn’t necessarily dislike any of the kids at school, although there were a few people who annoyed him. He

explained: “They normally just dislike me so I don’t really care for them.” He didn’t associate with any one clique at lunch but liked to socialize with multiple groups. He mainly talked to other kids who were in his classes, but did not discriminate and was willing to socialize with all the various groups. “I’m either an acquaintance or pretty good friend of everybody,” he explained. He has had male and female friends, and did profess to have a racial bias.

Fencer stated: “I’m either an acquaintance or a pretty good friend of everybody.” He remembered befriending several exchange students from Afghanistan, which had given Fencer an appreciation of other cultures. He had also previously attended a school that specialized in special education students. He recalls “it was nice because you’d get to interact with people and kind of understand and learn that everyone is human.” He credits these experiences with helping him to become more understanding, and to control his behavior because “it really taught me to care for other people.”

During the interviews, Fencer indicated that he believed that almost all of his friends were either in college or would graduate and go to college. Some of his friends just “don’t see going to college as an option”, although he didn’t understand why because they have the aptitude. He indicated that he had cajoled the one or two of his friends who were not sure about their future plans by telling them, “You should go [to college]; it’s the best thing for you—if you have problems, your luck will be a whole lot easier and less problems if you go to college and get a good education.” His school is very much oriented toward college preparation; in fact, every senior is forced to talk about their college plans with school counselors and attend presentations by college recruiters.

Fencer has a couple of friends (“mostly male”) who he knew are not doing their best, and were making conscious decisions *not* to do their best. He tried to motivate them by saying, “I know this is being a bit of a hypocrite by saying this, but you’re going down the wrong path—you should really try a lot harder.” He only had a few friends that he considered in this category, but he cared for his friends and offers “we’ll both do it together and we’ll both get our grades up.” Fencer preferred to “hang out with the smarter kids because I know the kids who don’t try in school – it won’t help me.” He liked the smarter kids because they have more intelligent conversations and if he had a question about something, he figured they will know the correct answer.

The school peer groups identified by Fencer include popular kids, nerds, bullies, the less social kids, and the really smart college bound perfect kids. The less social kids that “hung out” together at lunch. There were those that made fun of other kids and weren’t accepting of others—although Fencer pointed out they were not “bullies.” He tended to hang out with them because they didn’t make fun of him and he enjoyed their sense of humor. He didn’t hang around with the really smart college bound perfect kids because “they always make me feel stupid.”

He preferred to hang around with multiple groups because, as he said, “I don’t have that much of a chance to like mess up and look stupid in front of them.” He explained:

There are groups of kids, but I’m not really part of any ‘clique’ as they call them. Normally during lunch, that’s when most of them hang out. I walk around and talk to some of my friends. Usually I just walk around and say

hi to all the people I know. Normally I go around talking to my friends and just having shorter conversations with them.

Future Plans

When asked about his plans for the future, Fencer replied: “I know I’m going to college; my parents are going to force me—and I appreciate that a lot.” He believed that it was not so much what he planned to do in the future that was important, but the fact that he wanted to do things that would make him happy. He didn’t necessarily want to have a high paying job if it was going to make him unhappy. His main goal was to “be successful, be happy, be nice.” His goals at the time of the interview were very general, but he knew that he wanted to be able to do things he really enjoyed in the future instead of having to do something he didn’t care about just to earn a living.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

When asked about his mentors, Fencer’s response was, “Mentor?” When the term was explained to him, he listed his mother as a mentor because “she graduated Berkeley on the honor roll and Dean’s List.” He admired her for her hard work and her ability to “do it all” and enjoy herself while reaching her goals. He was very careful about who he looked up to, explaining:

I don’t catch on to people really quickly. I’m always kind of ... eh, ‘Should I trust them? Are they a good enough person?’ I’m not trying to sound stuck-up. I just want to be sure. I don’t want to believe in somebody so much and find out they’re not that great of a person. I want to be safe about my decisions.

Fencer's heroes include Valentino Rossi, a motorcyclist from Italy who has won the world championships seven times. Besides being a great competitor who wins a lot but is not a poor sport when he loses, the reason Fencer gave for admiring Mr. Rossi is that "he's a nice guy and he always does stuff for people, and then, once he gets on the track, he really gets serious." Fencer and his dad were planning on going to a race during the summer after the interviews where he hoped to meet his hero in person.

Another of his hero's was Oprah Winfrey because "she's just so nice to everybody—she knows she has a lot that she can give to people." At the time of the interviews, at least, he really looked up to people who are philanthropists and he aspired to be one someday.

For advice, Fencer said: "I'd ask my friends rather than my parents because then my parents would be all asking questions and stuff, and it would be annoying." He usually sought out his childhood friends David, Ryan, and Ryan because they were older and he trusted their judgment. He also asked his older brother because "my older brother always makes great decisions—he's always safe, and he never gets in trouble." When asked about parents, he responded "I can always believe in them and ask for advice," although he admitted that he normally sought out his friends when the subject was personal or about something questionable because he didn't want to unnecessarily concern his parents. He sought out their advice for subjects he considered "safer" such as politics or things that happened at school, but didn't expect much help with other issues because they "grew up ages ago, back in the 'before times'."

Attitude

“No—honestly, no—I could try a lot more,” was Fencer’s response when asked if he was doing his best in school. He believed he had the ability to learn just about anything, but his biggest problem was that he lost focus and forgot things. For example: on the day of the first interview, he forgot to bring in his homework. He had completed it, thought he had done well on the assignment, and simply forgot it on his desk at home—even though he walked right past it on the way out the door. He also stated, “Whenever I do work, it’s not the best quality, probably, unless it’s something I’ll enjoy and then I’ll obviously be entertained by it and try to succeed.” He felt that he was trying much harder the year of the interviews than he did in his first few years in high school because he was starting to realize what would happen later on in life if he didn’t focus on school work.

One project that Fencer was interested in at the time of the interview was a project in his media arts class in which his team was working to increase student awareness of school violence. What he enjoyed about this project was that he had to research the facts and then find an entertaining way of presenting the information. He said: “We’ve got to figure out a way that isn’t just direct like ‘school violence is bad’; we’ve got to kind of make people think they have a decision, but this is obviously better.” He liked this project because “it gets your brain thinking” and was really challenging. He realized that he learned better with the use of visual aids and active participation.

When asked about situations in which he was fully focused, Fencer discussed at length his love of fencing and motocross. He recalled:

The best time I had was the first time I raced the motorcycle. It was 80cc novice, and two strokes—so these things didn’t go very fast, but I was

excited. At the very beginning of the race, I shot off ahead of everybody, but it was a long straightaway and I got up into sixth gear, and I was just flying. I wasn't thinking about why everybody else wasn't going as fast as me...then I realized, a bit late, that there was a really sharp chicane— where it kind of makes an S [curve]. So I go around the first turn, but I just threw myself too far over and I ended up going too wide and rolled over the next one. I ended up just flying off the track, but I was just smiling and couldn't be brought down. I had just fallen in front of everybody, but I was just going so fast and looking so cool doing it. It was the best thing that ever happened.

He felt that the reason he was so focused during these types of activities was because of endorphins. He explained, "Whenever you're afraid or your heart starts beating, you release endorphins which give you that adrenaline rush." He estimated his standing heart rate was in the 70's, but when he was racing, his heart rate was in the 100's. He believed that his attention is only fully focused when his heart rate is up and his endorphins are flowing.

There were also times when he felt that he would not be rewarded even if he did his best. At this school, the students work in a team environment and the team members were asked to grade each other's contributions to the project. If people in the group didn't appreciate Fencer's efforts, they could give him a bad score on the project. This could decrease your grade from what the teacher gave for the entire project. He explained "you won't go from an A to an F, but it'll just maybe bring it down to a B, depending on how good your group did as a whole."

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Fencer would ask other male students if he were conducting this research, he responded with “what’s going on in their lives”; “do they try hard in school”; “why they don’t think they are reaching their potential”; “if they have problems at home or anything, if they have friends, if they’re angry – stuff like that.” He believed that all of these factors were distractions that may cause people to not focus on doing their best.

Epilogue

In the final meeting, Fencer suggested the need to modify the above information due to the four month passage of time between the last interview and the final meeting. Fencer reported that he had raised his grades from a C and F to a B and a C+. When asked what had made the difference, he stated that he was more focused and organized than last semester. He reported that he had developed a good relationship with his teachers and school administrators and had spent more time on completing assigned projects. Fencer had just returned from touring several colleges, and had finally realized that his school choices would be limited if he didn’t raise his GPA. He was much more positive about his future and was sure that his grades would improve now that he was trying harder and not socializing as much.

CHAPTER 11

HERPETOLOGIST

Herpetologist is a Hispanic male who was 15 years old at the time of the interviews and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Herpetologist because he liked raising reptiles and wanted to be a herpetologist when he graduated from school. He lived in a predominantly working class Hispanic section of San Diego with his grandmother because he did not get along with his step-father. He was the oldest of three maternal siblings, with a younger half-sister and a half-brother who was the youngest of the family. Herpetologist was a sophomore in a charter high school in an affluent area of San Diego at the time of the interviews. He did not participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or organized sports at school, but liked to play pick-up games of soccer and enjoyed fencing in an after-school program.

Herpetologist decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended it. He volunteered for the project and set up our first interview for the following week. I met Herpetologist on three consecutive Tuesdays during his lunch period and brought along food and drink of his choosing as compensation. As described in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The interviews were voice recorded, and I took notes while discussing the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized below in the appropriate sections.

Identity

Herpetologist described himself as follows: “Fifteen years old; my interests are playing soccer, fencing, staying at my house, going out with my friends, going to

parties—I'm a pretty funny person.” He indicated that he liked to play soccer with his friends because he got to run around and make goals. What he liked about fencing was that it was fast-paced and taught balance and accuracy. He also liked animals and at the time of the interviews had a cockatoo, three dogs, four turtles, and a snake. He liked listening to hip-hop and what he called “hyphy music”: he also enjoyed “hanging out” with friends.

Herpetologist considered himself a good person because he “helps people.” I don't like seeing people in pain or hard situations,” he stated. For example, he often gave money to the homeless, helped elderly people, performed community service, and stood up for his friends and family. Unlike Producer, he did not self-identify as Mexican or Hispanic during the interviews and seemed comfortable in a multi-cultural environment.

Family

Herpetologist described his family as “a big family” that encompassed an extended family of over 40 people from San Diego, Mexico, and Arizona. His parents were born in Mexico, and his mother moved to San Diego before Herpetologist was born. She married his step-father when Herpetologist was three years old and they lived next door to his grandmother's house. Most of his family members spoke Spanish as their first language and loved to get together and cook Mexican food.

Herpetologist lived with his grandmother because he did not get along with his step-father. His grandmother ran a Mexican restaurant next door to her house and was renowned for her authentic cooking. He described her as “super nice to me—I'm spoiled by her.” His 24 year old aunt also lived at his grandmother's house; she was a secretary at a local county middle school.

His step-father and mother lived next door with Herpetologist's younger half-brother and half-sister. His step-father worked in construction; his mother was a child care provider. Herpetologist explained that sometimes he got along with his immediate family, but at other times, he noted, "I don't get along with them. We're just arguing-- then we just won't talk for a long time."

He described his relationship with his mother as being nice sometimes. He explained: "She'll yell at me sometimes when I get her mad or I'm messing around with my little brother and sister." His younger brother was four years old at the time of the interviews and Herpetologist described him as follows: "He has a big mouth – a very big mouth; he's destructive and breaks all my stuff." His sister was ten years old at the time of the interview and he didn't talk to her much because, to quote Herpetologist, "We don't get along, we're always arguing."

Childhood Memories

Herpetologist described his childhood as "unhappy and happy." He remembered happy times going to places like Disneyland with his mom and having fun with her when he was the only child, but she couldn't always take him places because she had to work, keep up with the rent, and buy food. He didn't have a dad growing up; he added, "I still don't; it just feels weird and unhappy because I always see other people with their families, and they have two families [both mother's and father's extended families], and I only have one [his mother's extended family]." When his mother married his step-father and had two more children, things changed and Herpetologist moved out and went to live with his grandmother. He didn't get along with his step dad and didn't like it when his mom remarried.

Educational Background

Herpetologist did not attend pre-school—his first experience with school was in kindergarten. He attended a Spanish bilingual school for first and second grade and then transferred to a non-bilingual school near his home for third through fifth grades. He did not consider the school he transferred to a very good school. “They mostly did text books,” he told me. “They’d tell us, ‘Oh, copy this, copy this and you’re done.’” He then attended a more traditional middle school from sixth to eighth grade, which he described as a “really bad school” with a lot of gang activity. Most of his friends at the time ended up getting arrested, but Herpetologist indicated he did not participate in gang activities.

Herpetologist found himself behind in school and was put in special education classes. He recalled his embarrassment as they called him out of his regular classes to attend his special-ed classes. He was almost expelled for getting into fights because other kids made fun of him, but the principal gave him one more chance under the condition, “If you screw this up, you’re out.” After talking with the principal and describing his embarrassment, he got new teachers, the school stopped calling him out of class, and his grades improved. He graduated from the school after eighth grade and transferred to his current school.

Although he considers the current school good for his education, Herpetologist does not like the fact that there are no physical education or music programs. He indicated, however, that when he expressed a desire to attend another public high school with a traditional curriculum, he was chastised by his teacher and told that his current school is more professional while the school he wanted to go to was dangerous.

Herpetologist argued with the teacher by responding:

Why, just because different people go there? Why—just because there’s Mexicans, Blacks, and Asians over there? That’s a bad school because that’s the majority and over here there’s a lot of Caucasians, whites, and not much Mexicans, Blacks, and Asians? I got used to that and when I came here it was like—wow, it was different, a new experience.

When asked about grades, he said, “I have somewhat good grades.” When queried further for specifics, he said he had a C, a B, and an F. His grades had gone down because he was tardy “every day” and didn’t have a computer to complete his assignments. He had an F in Humanities because “it’s boring” and the teacher lectured too much. He liked Chemistry because they got to do hands-on experiments. He had never had all A’s in his education— he strived to get a B and considered B’s and F’s “normal”. He liked the project approach to learning that was used extensively in this school, but had a problem the prior year because he did not get along with one of his project partners—and ended up getting an F for a Physics project.

Herpetologist believed that the people who did better in school were the ones who paid attention, strived to do well, and wanted to do well. He knew a couple of people who were not doing their best because “they just don’t care anymore.” They went to school because their parents made them, but they were not trying at all and usually “ditch” school at every opportunity.

Future Plans

Herpetologist stated, “[I would like to] “go to college, university, have a job by then, move out; I would like to be a herpetologist – the one that studies snakes; I’d like to

do that but if not that, a DJ.” His interest in herpetology came from watching the Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and National Geographic. He explained:

I would always be around animals, because of my mom, so I would get used to them. I used to have snakes, lizards, turtles... more than I have now. I used to have lots of them, and then when one would die I would like open it, see what’s inside, and check what it is – a girl or a boy. It just interests me, like reptiles.

His life goals were to make a lot of money so he could afford to have a big house and buy his mother a house. He saw himself being successful, having a nice car, raising a family, owning a business and being “known for something.” He did not see himself living in California; instead he hoped to live in Atlanta, New York, or Brazil. He wanted to go to college in Atlanta; to live in New York because of the fashion, music, and culture; and to visit Brazil to learn a different language and party.

Friends and Peer Influences

Herpetologist had five close friends at the time of the interviews—two he had known since childhood when they used to live next door. Their mothers were friends and the kids played together while growing up. They still lived in the same neighborhood, but had since moved a couple of blocks away. They were still very close friends even though they did not go to the same high school. One of those friends was older [18] and owned a car, so on weekends they drove around and went to parties together.

The other three close friends Herpetologist had known since junior high, although they were not particularly close friends until he saw them at his current school. He felt closer to them since they were from his neighborhood and had similar backgrounds. One

of these friends was female, although she was considered “kind of like a guy because she hangs out with us.” Although these friends lived relatively close to Herpetologist, they were from other neighborhoods that he did not go into because of gang activity. He did hang around with them after school, though, playing laser tag, going to movies, and shopping for clothes with them. Herpetologist had other school acquaintances from different ethnic backgrounds, but he did not consider them close friends.

While Herpetologist and his close school friends planned on going to college, he didn’t believe many of his other friends planned to do so. According to Herpetologist, some of his friends said, “Oh, I don’t need college,” but he tried to convince them that they did if they wanted to be successful in life. His friends who did not want to go to college planned to get jobs in construction or in auto parts, but he pointed out to them that they would not make a lot of money without a college degree.

Herpetologist identified several peer groupings including: Mexicans, Blacks, nerds, and preppies. The nerds are “super smart” and “talk very proper grammar and everything.” He didn’t hang out with them because they were critical of his writings and many of the nerds were Asians. The preppies were “really rich people” who didn’t get along with the Mexicans and Blacks, and had lots of expensive stuff such as I-phones, laptops, and cars. There are not that many Mexicans or Blacks at this school, so they tended to hang out together.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

Herpetologist did not know what a mentor was, and once explained, he stated, “I don’t have any; nobody’s ever been like that to me.” When asked about his heroes, he

also stated he didn't have any. For advice, Herpetologist asked his cousin who was a little older (18), had a job at an ice company, had a kid and lived with his girlfriend.

Attitude

Herpetologist recognized that he wasn't doing his best in school and stated: "I could try harder." He believed he could be an A student, but was failing one of his classes at the time of the interviews. He believed that grades were a direct reflection of the choices people made and the level of effort they are willing to put into schoolwork. He explained: "No one forces you, it's all up to you—if you want to pass, you can pass. If you want to do good in school, you can do good—it's your choice." When asked if he was choosing to not pass his Humanities class, he stated that he didn't have the ability to type his reports at home and could not stay after school to complete the assignments because he had to use public transportation and, consequently, would not get home until after dusk.

Herpetologist had started going to tutoring after school to bring his grades up because he did not want to repeat tenth grade. He had gone to summer school the year before, but was hoping to avoid it that year. One of his close female friends was helping him with Math and Chemistry and had helped him bring his grades up to a C. He felt that he could get A's in school if he tried harder, but also stated, "Once I try hard and don't get it, why even try." When he tried hard and didn't understand the material and the other kids did, then, he felt "dumb". If he didn't appear to try and got it wrong, then he didn't feel bad and he knew the teacher would eventually show him the correct answer anyway. His strategy was to not put a lot of effort into a project that he didn't understand until he was asked to re-do it—then he would have plenty of help to get it right.

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Herpetologist would ask other students if he were conducting this research, he would ask, “do you want to go to school; do you want to be rich and successful?” He would also ask if they liked their classes, and what the kids they hung out with were like.

Epilogue

In the final meeting there were several changes identified to the above information due to the four month passage of time between the interviews. Herpetologist reported that several of his close friends were no longer attending this school, and although it saddened him, he also indicated that there was less distraction from his schoolwork since they had left the school. He had raised his grades from C and F to a B and D, respectively, and had hopes of bringing them up further. He still reported problems with Humanities because of the subject matter, being mostly classroom lectures, and the need to type reports into a computer—which he did not have. Herpetologist was optimistic about the future and thought he was finally on the path to success.

CHAPTER 12

MOTOCROSS

Motocross is a male of Scotch-Chinese ethnic heritage who was 17 years old at the time of the interview and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Motocross because he liked racing motorcycles in the desert and spent most of his weekends either riding or working on motorcycles.

Motocross was an only child who lived with his father in a predominantly Caucasian middle-class neighborhood of San Diego at the time of the interviews. He was a senior in a charter high school in an affluent area of the San Diego. He did not participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or organized sports—with the exception of weekend motocross.

Motocross decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended it, and he eagerly volunteered and set up our first interview for the following week. I met Motocross on three consecutive Wednesdays during his lunch period, and provided food and drink of his choosing as compensation. As discussed in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The location was visible to the public, but secluded enough to conduct the interviews without interruption. The interviews were voice recorded and I took notes while discussing the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized below in the appropriate sections.

Identity

Motocross described himself as “an outgoing person that likes to do a lot of sports.” As stated previously, he enjoyed racing motorcycles in the desert around Elsinore

and Barona, and had been doing “tracks, jumps, and tabletops” since he was about two years old. Family and friends were very important to him, and he had what he considered good friends that he had known since he was a child. He described himself as a “regular kid” meaning that he went to school, hung out with friends, and basically did the kind of things normal people his age liked to do. He still considered himself a “kid”, but only for six more months since that was when he would reach the age of eighteen—which, for Motocross, means an automatic transition into adulthood.

Family

Motocross’s father was of Scottish heritage, was born in New York, and owned a construction company in San Diego. Motocross had lived with his dad since his parents split up when he was very young; he described their relationship as follows: “My dad and me are best friends.” His dad was the one who played sports with him when he was young and introduced him to racing motorcycles, often going to the desert with him. Motocross said: “It’s kind of weird because he’s the guy who’s always after me about school.” His dad had always been the one who kept Motocross in line and made sure his priorities were correctly focused.

Motocross’s mother was of Chinese heritage, was born in San Diego, worked in Human Resources at a local private university, and lived nearby in a mixed ethnic working class area of the city. Motocross had a good relationship with his mother whom he visited every week—often for dinner. He spent many weekends at her house, and felt comfortable visiting her whenever it was convenient. Motocross described his mom as the typical soccer mom who was always there for him, making sure that he had everything he needed while growing up.

Motocross's extended family includes a grandmother on his father's side who is in a nursing home and doesn't remember much. He visited her irregularly because she lived in another state. His father's siblings also lived on the east coast, so he did not have much contact with them. On his mother's side, his grandparents were very close to him both physically and emotionally. They used to pick him up from school when he was younger, and owned a Chinese restaurant where the extended family would have holiday meals. His grandparents had retired from the restaurant business at the time of the interviews, but they still made great Chinese food whenever he visited them. His mother had three siblings, two brothers and a sister, who are all married and were living nearby—but they did not get together as a family except for holiday events.

Childhood Memories

Motocross described his childhood as “very happy.” He told me he had a “very good childhood—no big problems.” He doesn't remember when his parents split up because he was very young at the time and had grown up with them apart. He thought it was cool to have two families when he was younger because he got to have two Christmases. He remembered when he was about one year old his father got in a motorcycle accident and broke his neck and back, shattered his knee, and broke some ribs. His dad was bedridden and in a wheelchair for a long period of time and Motocross remembers sitting on the bed and riding on the wheelchair with him. Because of the severity of that accident, his mother tried to interest Motocross in soccer and his father got him into baseball—even coaching the team. But Motocross was more interested in riding motorcycles, and eventually quit all other sports to concentrate on racing.

Educational Background

Motocross went to daycare and pre-school with several people who were in his current school and were part of his circle of close friends at the time of the interviews. From kindergarten to the middle of ninth grade, he attended a private Christian school where they taught the basics of education as well as how to behave and treat others with respect. Although he was doing well in most classes at that school, he was not passing Bible study and his dad did not want his grades to keep him out of a good college. In the middle of ninth grade, Motocross transferred to his current school where he is much happier.

When asked what he liked about this school he stated: “The learning environment is just a lot better” and “the teachers are really nice, they’re easy to get along with, they’re down to earth and they’re regular people.” At his last school, he didn’t feel that he fit in, but at this school, he felt that the students had somewhat common backgrounds, and he felt more comfortable with them than he had with the students at the Christian school.

When asked about grades, he stated he had a C in English and B in Math and Engineering. He acknowledged that he was not doing his best in school and explained:

Math is ... I kind of struggle with math and my writing. My English teacher is a really, really good teacher—she’s hard. I might say I don’t like the class, but I really do because she is a good teacher. She teaches me how to write, to get in depth into the text and everything, and it’s really a good class. That’s my worst one

right now, but I'm learning the most as I'm getting the worst grade—it doesn't make sense.

During the final interview, Motocross expressed his feelings of being “stressed out” over the projects he was required to complete in order to graduate. His project team had been working on the design and construction of a mobile cattle trough so cows could get food and water without causing environmental damage from worn patches near fixed feeding and watering sites. The other project he was working on was creating an activity book for a local non-profit that worked with developmentally challenged kids. He also had a major paper due for his English class on a book he was reading. Because he had procrastinated on the projects and the paper, the final semester of high school was going to be a busy time of trying to complete the assignments and graduate on time.

Friends and Peer Influences

Motocross reported that at the time of the interviews he had ten to twelve close friends he could count on who were “basically just like me.” His close friends were into cars and motorcycles, they did relatively well in school, but he also stated that he and his friends did not “put our all into it because we have other things going on like going to races and cars.” He added, “We put that ahead of school sometimes.” As stated previously, he had several friends, both male and female, that he had grown up with and their families were close. He also had a group of close friends from his old school who he still saw on occasion. In his current school he had many “acquaintances” that he knew, but did not consider them close friends. He enjoyed meeting new people and would have liked to have gone to a larger high school because there would have been “bigger crowds

of people, more friends, and more people to talk to.” He knew everyone at this high school, and felt he had a friendly relationship with most students and teachers.

As has already been implied above, his friendships tended to center around racing motorcycles in the desert and working on cars. Motocross’s friends were mostly older than him and did not necessarily live nearby. Because of his racing interests, he had friends from all over the city and state who were either are in college or in high school. One thing he attributed to all of his friends is “they all have good heads on them.” He considered this an important characteristic that they all shared.

When asked if his friends planned to attend college, Motocross responded: “Yeah, all of my friends want to go to college.” According to Motocross, they wanted to go to college because they wanted good jobs to afford nice things and a higher standard of living. While he felt that not all of his friends’ parents were necessarily supportive, his friends understood the economic disadvantages of not having a degree.

Motocross believed that most of his friends were working hard and trying to do well, but he had one close friend who “kind of slacks off a lot” and was not reaching his potential. When asked why he thought that was, Motocross responded “because he doesn’t have anyone telling him to [do his best].” When his friend did something positive, there was “no one who cares” and also there was no one to “twist his arm” to push him towards higher levels of effort. Motocross believed that success in school was simply a matter of putting in the effort – the kids that did better in school were the ones who “study, work hard, do everything they need to do on time, and don’t slack off.” The ones having problems were usually “lazy” and did not put in the effort— making a conscious choice not to do well in school.

In discussing peer groups, Motocross identified bros, scene kids, surfers, and skinheads. Bros work on cars, ride motorcycles, have “plugs” [a style of male earrings], tattoos, and wears jeans, t-shirts, and tennis shoes. Scene kids were “guys that wear girl’s pants, tight shirts, long hair that goes over their eyes” and always act like they are in a scene from a movie or play. Surfers were more laid back, and are all about the ocean and surfing. Skinheads were mostly from East County and adjacent areas and were racist and hateful. While Motocross did not consider himself a bro, other people did—in part because he dressed and acted like a bro, liked to work on cars, and hung out with other bros. But that did not bother him because he was comfortable with his self image and what he represented to others. It did bother him that once you were labeled, it limited your ability to associate with people in the other groups.

While discussing his senior project for English, a book report on *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson, we began discussing how groups decide to pick on certain people. As relayed by Motocross, the book was about a village that once a year held a lottery to select one member who got stoned to death. We discussed how this related to high school culture, where if “they [someone] stand out in a weird way, or they don’t talk, or are considered a nerd—people pick them out and make fun of them or don’t talk to them at all and that hurts as much as being made fun of.”

Although Motocross described himself as an “outgoing” person, he recognized that there were situations where he had been ostracized for who he was and what he represented to different groups. In peer groups, he felt that “it’s just easier when other people [friends] are around you, you kind of have support—you feel moral support, even though they are kind of like pushing you.” When trying to fit into groups of strangers, he

typically used humor to try to draw the strangers in, to make them feel comfortable making the first move.

Future Plans

When asked about his plans, Motocross stated that he was “applying to colleges right now.” He wanted to attend a four year university, but was thinking of attending community college for the first few years to reduce the cost of education. He planned to major in business with an emphasis in construction management. He was interested in getting into construction with his dad and perhaps traveling to foreign countries to manage large projects. The expectation in his family was that he would go to college since both his mom and dad had attended college, and his mom had graduated from and works at a local private university. Motocross had “always wanted to go to college,” had visited several college campuses, and had hoped to get into a major public university in southern California.

At the time of the interviews, Motocross’s life goals were “just to be successful” and make a lot of money. When asked to define success, he said: “I don’t want to make it seem like to have money, but kind of, today, you have to have money in order to be well off.” He wanted to be financially secure enough to be able to take care of his dad later in life, to pay back for all the sacrifices his dad had made over the years to send him to private schools and support his hobbies. He was not as worried about his mom’s future because she was younger than his dad, had remarried, and was doing well financially.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

Motocross not only knew what a mentor was, but quickly responded that he considers his dad to be his biggest mentor. He explained:

He keeps me on top of my game, what I need to be doing. He taught me how to multi-task, how to be able to race one weekend and still do my homework and keep on top of things. And if I don't, I can't race. So I have a low grade right now; he wants me to have a B average—I've always had to or else I can't race. By him putting it there, I get it—but I always know in my head that he wants me to do better.

By supporting his son through school, allowing him to change schools when he wasn't being successful, and supporting Motocross's interest in racing, his dad had earned the title of mentor in Motocross's opinion.

Motocross also believed that many teachers have mentored him over the years. While he could not name any particular one, he felt that teachers in general have played an important role in his life. He explained that he had been in school for a long time and during those years he had spent more time with teachers than with his parents. He also felt that teachers had a larger influence in certain years because kids did not always want to listen to their parents. In his opinion, good teachers reinforce good habits and prepared students for the future.

When asked who his heroes were, Motocross responded that his parents were also his stated heroes because they sacrificed so much for him. He was in awe of the fact that his father had taken care of him in good times and bad. When his dad was out of work while recovering from the motorcycle accident when Motocross was much younger, they spent a lot of time together. They lived in a cabin in the country and did not have a lot of

material wealth, but they “really connected” and bonded during that time—and that close relationship was still evident at the time of the interviews.

He looked to his dad first for advice about life and school because he felt that his dad, as a male, could better relate to the things he was experiencing at that time in his life than his mother could. He asks his dad for advice about school, car problems, and life in general, but found he usually asked his friends advice about girls and current events. He stated, “I’m not weird about talking to my dad, I just go to my friends first” when he needs advice about topics he is not comfortable discussing with his dad.

Attitude

Motocross acknowledged that he was not doing his best in school and explained: “I just get by with what I need to get by—my B’s so I can go on.” The prior year he had really tried to do his best and got all A’s, but during the year of the interviews he found himself getting caught up in other things. The senior year classes seemed much more challenging and working in groups made it harder to bring grades up. But he also recognized that he “slacks off” sometimes when he was tired or got in a mood where he did not want to do anything productive. When asked why, he stated: “I get lazy and don’t work to my potential” and “I wait until the last minute to get everything done.” He procrastinated by doing other things such as working on cars, racing, or hanging out at home or with friends – until he absolutely had to get something done. He believed in planning the work, and working the plan, but “sometimes homework doesn’t fall into those categories,” and he frequently waited until the absolute last minute to complete projects or homework. His strategy at the time of the interviews was “you just have to not fail” when it comes to school.

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Motocross would ask other students if he were conducting this research, he stated that the most important question was, “Who is their mentor; who is there for them?” Another important question he recommended asking was whether or not an interviewee thought he was doing his best; and if not, “What would motivate them to do their best?” Motocross would also ask what they were doing that they thought was more important than getting good grades. He thought it was important to ask “What would you like to be?” and “How do you think it [education] will benefit you?” Motocross thinks most boys who are not doing well are making decisions based on what they perceive is in their best interests in the short term, and not looking out for the long term.

Epilogue

I did not get a chance to allow Motocross to read through his case study for a member check because the contact information provided was no longer valid. Through one of his friends who was also in the study, I learned that Motocross had graduated from high school on time and attended an out of state university in Arizona near the place where he raced motorcycles. Motocross returned to San Diego after a year in college because his mother had died suddenly and he wanted to be near his dad.

CHAPTER 13

MECHANIC

Mechanic is a male of Cambodian ancestry who was 17 years old at the time of the interviews and recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym *Mechanic* for two somewhat related reasons: He liked to work on cars and hung out with friends on weekends who were interested in fixing up old cars and cruising. Mechanic lived with his mother and siblings in a predominantly working class mixed ethnic neighborhood of San Diego at the time of the interviews. Mechanic is the fourth of eight siblings and the oldest son in the family. He was a senior in a charter high school in an affluent area of the city during the time of the interviews. He did not participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or organized sports.

Mechanic decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended it. Mechanic agreed—albeit somewhat reluctantly—because his best friend at school was also part of the study. We set up our first interview for two weeks following the initial meeting due to the following Monday being a holiday. I met the informant on three Mondays during lunch period, and provided food and drink of his choosing as compensation. As discussed in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The interviews were voice recorded, and I took notes while discussing the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized below in the following sections.

Identity

Mechanic described himself as a “well-rounded person” from a family that was not wealthy. He believed he had accomplished a lot considering his background. He believed that “nothing comes above family and friends who stick by me through thick and thin.” He asked that people not judge him just by what he looked like or where he came from because “there’s a lot more to me than meets the eye.” He found that people tended to pre-judge him and felt that he was commonly the victim of negative stereotyping based on his ethnic heritage. He had “a big interest in automotive technology” and worked at Sea World during the summer to buy a car and pay for the maintenance and upkeep.

Family

Mechanic had lived with his mom since his dad left the family when he was very young. His parents were Cambodian refugees who fled their homeland during the war. The family members were housed in a refugee camp in Thailand until being allowed to immigrate to the United States and settled down in San Diego.

Mechanic’s mother came from a family of twelve siblings, had eight children of her own, and was the disciplinarian in the family—at least until the older children could help raise the younger ones. She was a stay-at-home mom who tried to ensure that her children were successful. Mechanic said the following about his mother: “My mom was always trying to make better life for us.” She had apparently been successful at that since Mechanic’s three older sisters had all gone on to college and careers.

Mechanic felt that his father had “abandoned” the family when he was seven and lived somewhere in Arizona. Mechanic’s dad remarried, started a new family, and didn’t have much contact with Mechanic’s family. His father called once and said “what he did was a mistake and he wishes he’d never done it.” His father was sentimental, but Mechanic was not sympathetic, stating: “I mean he’s my dad, but he wasn’t there for me—so it doesn’t really matter.”

Mechanic’s siblings consisted of six sisters and one younger brother. His oldest sister was 26 years old at the time of the interviews, attended college in San Diego for a while and then joined the Army. She completed her enlistment and is currently attending a community college in the San Diego area. His second oldest sister was 22 years old, graduated from a premier research university in San Diego, and was living in San Francisco working in accounting. Mechanic missed this sister a lot because she “took care of them [i.e., him and his siblings]” while his mother worked, and he had a very close relationship with her. His third oldest sister was 21 years old and attending a state university in San Diego. His next older sister was 19 years old, living with a friend in the San Diego area and was an intern with Washington Mutual Bank. His younger sister was 16 years old, attended the same high school as Mechanic, was a hard worker, independent, and tended to get good grades. Mechanic considered her to be most like his second oldest sister in that she was responsible and made good decisions.

Mechanic’s younger brother was 13 years old, attended the junior high school associated with Mechanic’s school and looked up to his older brother. Mechanic regretted exposing his younger brother to bad influences, but rationalized: “I’m just kind of learning and growing up right now because I know that what I do has an affect on him.”

His brother is doing well in school and planning to transfer to a different high school in order to play football. His youngest sister was six years old at the time of the interview, and Mechanic believed she was well taken care of by her older siblings, although she had a different dad than the rest of the family.

Mechanic's extended family included five uncles and eight aunts who lived nearby and got together whenever they could. One of their houses functioned as the extended family gathering place for socializing and family reunions. Mechanic considered his immediate family "dysfunctional" in relation to the extended family because his brothers and sisters didn't like to go to the reunions. But his mother stayed in touch with her siblings who all emigrated from Cambodia and have made comfortable lives for themselves in the United States.

Childhood Memories

Mechanic described his childhood as "troubled"; he felt that as a middle child in a large family with limited means that he had to "fight for his own things." When asked about the term *troubled*, he explained that people had used the term to describe him for most of his life. He felt that in many situations he did what he thought was right, but other people didn't always agree with his decisions. He remembers the first time he got in trouble in kindergarten—some kid took his blocks to build something and, when he took them back, he got in trouble and was sent to see the counselor. After that incident, his family would use the term "troubled" whenever something happened at school or at home.

Mechanic didn't have many childhood memories since his family could not afford cameras to record anything. There were no photographs or videos of him or his family

from when he was a child, and he found it difficult to remember anything prior to the school years. He described one fond memory he had: “My older sisters, during the holiday season, would go to the thrift store and the Ninety-Nine Cents store and buy whatever they could there and pass it down to us as gifts.” He realized that was the best they could do under the circumstances and was thankful and grateful to his family for trying to make his childhood a happy one.

Educational Background

Mechanic did not attend pre-school, and attended a neighborhood charter elementary school for kindergarten and first grade. For second through fifth grade, he attended a new school that opened in his neighborhood that catered to ethnic minorities and celebrated diversity and was closer to home. He attended sixth grade at one inner city junior high school that specialized in improving achievement, and seventh at another more traditional junior high school closer to his home. He was accepted into the middle school on the campus of his current school, a well-funded charter school, for eighth grade, and continued on at the same campus to his current high school.

His memories of his early school experiences were mixed—he remembers crying the whole first day of school as a child because he had to leave his mom. Coming from a poor immigrant family, Mechanic was thankful for the opportunities that school provided. He indicated that he had enjoyed school for the first few years and got good grades in his early education. Then he “slacked off.” He tried to fit in at the different schools, but found that he was easily distracted, did just enough work to pass, and was not really interested in school. Because he had moved from school to school so much in his early education, he indicated he had found it hard to fit in at school.

Friends and Peer Influences

Mechanic had two groups of friends—those he knew from school and those he knew from his neighborhood. At school he had a lot of acquaintances, but one really close friend [Motocross] who was also participating in this research project. He felt that his school friends were, in his words, “interest bonds,” meaning they were only friends because they shared the same interests. These friends liked working on cars and motorcycles, and their conversations were centered around automotive technology.

Mechanic also had a group of friends he hung out with in the neighborhood, but found that they tended to do the wrong things and get into trouble. His friends from his neighborhood were in much the same situation as Mechanic because “almost 99 percent of my friends that I have outside of school don’t have a dad either.” But he considered some of his friends lucky because, even though their parents have split up, they get to spend time with each of their parents and the parents who do not live with their kids are still there for their kids.

Mechanic enjoyed meeting new people and felt that he could find something in common with almost any group, but he also acknowledged that he does not form lasting friendships easily. His closest friends growing up were from his neighborhood. Mechanic indicated that, because they grew up in a rough neighborhood together, he and his friends formed a brotherhood. He also told me that the members of the brotherhood were “distant” because things were happening in their homes that they were not able to easily communicate. Mechanic found that he didn’t put a lot of effort into maintaining friendships, so his friends tended to come and go. And, at the time of the interviews, most had literally moved away.

The different groups identified in his school and neighborhood included people who liked cars, people who had money, and people who were of Cambodian descent. The multiple roles he fulfilled included being a student at school, a family member at home, and a member of his neighborhood. While Mechanic felt fairly comfortable meeting new people from different groups, he thought some people could be negatively judgmental when they met him. He believed “your first impression is always the most important” and how he dressed and acted when he first met people left a lasting impression. While some people were obvious about their ethnic stereotyping by how they treated him, others “have grown to hide it--unless it’s something that surprises them, something about you that surprises them.” When feeling stereotyped, Mechanic indicated that he sometimes tried to prove the stereotypes wrong, but at other times he acted out what people expect of him.

While Mechanic didn’t believe that most friends from his neighborhood would attend a traditional four year college, he indicated that his high school prepared students for college and he believed that almost all of the students from his high school will go onto higher education. He also noted that, even in his neighborhood where most of his peers attended a traditional public school, most of his friends’ parents expected their children to go to college; Mechanic’s family expected him to go also. Although his parents were not college graduates, their expectations were pretty high for his generation—and his older siblings had lived up to that expectation.

Mechanic believed that most students at this school tried to do their best. But in his neighborhood there were people who decided, for whatever reason, that they couldn’t succeed—so why try. He felt that some teachers at public schools don’t really care for

students, and students picked up on that attitude and, conversely, didn't care about school. He felt lucky to be in a school where the teachers take a personal interest in the success of their students. He felt disadvantaged at times because people judged him and his friends based on cultural stereotypes and treated them differently. He also felt that economics played a major part in the choices available to those in his situation, giving an unfair advantage to those of higher economic means.

Future Plans

Mechanic's immediate concerns were to get past some legal problem he was in at the time of the interview and graduate from high school. We did not discuss this legal problem due to Institutional Review Board restrictions, but we discussed how awaiting trial affected his attitude and plans. He wanted to get a degree from college and then join the military as an officer where he would probably stay until retirement. He stated, "Really I don't think there is anything I can excel in, and I know in the military they tell you what to do and show you how to do it and you can just learn from that." He indicated that, despite his current interest in cars, there was nothing else that he was really interested in pursuing as long term goals.

Mechanic believed that teachers could tell who was capable of going on to college. He said, "Teachers that have taught me in the past, most of them would say that I could be going to whatever college I wanted to, if I really tried." He acknowledged that when he applied himself, he was capable of producing high quality college level work. He said: "The only reason that would stop me from going to college is money." While familiar with available financial aid, he was concerned that his legal problems might impinge on his ability to qualify for student grants and loans.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisers

Mechanic's response to my question about people who have served as his mentors was: "What is that?" When the concept was explained, he stated that he did not have anyone who he considered a mentor in his life. When asked who he sought advice from about careers and life in general, he mentioned "Mr. Ray" the principal of his junior high school. Mr. Ray mentored his older and younger sisters and came from a similar background as Mechanic's family members. Mr. Ray was an immigrant who came from a family of modest means who had made something of his life. His older sister saw Mr. Ray as a father figure and someone she could always go to when needing advice. When asked how often Mechanic met with Mr. Ray, he responded, "Not often, only when I need help with problems. The last time was a couple of months ago."

When asked who he admired, Mechanic responded that he admired his second oldest sister who used to take care of him, but now lives pretty far away. He also admired his mother for raising eight kids as a single mom, and his friend Jared who came from a similar background as his and was successful. Jared was 21 years old, graduated from high school, and was attending a technical college in Texas. He loved what he was doing and was "making his life the best that he can to his abilities."

Mechanic tended to seek advice from his friends and not his family. He stated the rationale for this strategy succinctly: "Either they [friends] have been in the situation that I would be going through or just might have some information on what I could do to help." He added:

Usually my situations involve troubles I have. Each and every one of my family members have their own little troubles that they have to go through

and I don't want to bring them down or have them part of mine. So I kind of try to avoid letting them know, just because I've put them through stressful situations in the past and I don't want to do that again.

Mechanic's heroes included Superman because "he's someone that does great things" and "he's really humble about it." Mechanic added that while Superman appeared to be an everyday person, he had a heroic side that made him stand up for what was right. It seemed that nothing could harm him, but there was something that could.

Attitude

Mechanic acknowledged that he was not doing his best in school and explained, "I just get by and move on." He had really tried to do his best the year prior to the interview and got all A's, but during the current year he was pre-occupied with legal issues and unsure about graduation. He was doing better in Science and Physics the year of the interview because of the hands-on project approach to learning, but did just enough in History to pass. He was failing English because of habitual tardiness, missing class a lot, and not turning in assignments on time. After acknowledging that he was not doing his best in school, he explained why: "I am not motivated to excel." With doubts about what the future held, Mechanic was reluctant to put in a lot of time and effort into something that may not be worth it in the long run.

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Mechanic would ask other male students if conducting this research, he responded: "What would make you want to be successful," and "Who would help them through it?" He would also ask, "Why they would not want

to be successful” because there is “no reason not to succeed.” He believed success was a choice that people made, and making the wrong choices led to underachievement.

Epilogue

In the final meeting there were several changes identified to the above information due to the ten month passage of time between the interviews. Mechanic chuckled as he read through the case study to ensure accuracy of the data, and was eager to discuss the major changes in his life since the last interview. With his legal problems behind him, he had graduated from high school on time and he was pleased to report that he had decided to pursue a career in criminal justice. He was working nights stocking merchandise at a local retail store and attending community college during the day with the hope of transferring to a major state university in two years.

When asked about these dramatic changes, he stated that through self reflection he had finally realized that his attitude affected his performance. He was “so unsure of what I wanted to do at the time” and so distracted by social pressures and legal issues that he found it hard to focus. He was not motivated to change until the effects of not doing his best were evident when he had to attend community college to raise his grades before being able to pursue his goals. Although he still gets a little distracted by work and other life issues, he found it easier to focus on education once he has a firm career goal established. He was optimistic about the future, glad that he had participated in the research, and was anxiously awaiting publication of his story.

CHAPTER 14

ATHLETE

Athlete is an African-American male who was 17 years old at the time of the interviews. He was given the pseudonym Athlete because he liked to play basketball, football, and track and field sports. Athlete was the middle of three children who lived part time with his mother in a predominantly middle class neighborhood of San Diego, and part time at his father's home in a working class neighborhood on the other side of town. He was in his junior year in a charter high school in an affluent area of the city during the time of the interviews. He did not participate in extracurricular school activities or clubs, but was on a traveling basketball team that played around the country on weekends.

Athlete decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended him for it. He was not part of the original group interviewed for this project, but was added later to add more ethnic diversity to the participant group. Athlete enthusiastically volunteered to participate and set up our first interview for the following week. I met the informant on three consecutive Wednesdays during his lunch period, and provided food and drink of his choosing as compensation. As discussed in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The interviews were voice recorded and I took notes while discussing the prepared questions. Responses to the questions from the three interviews are summarized below in the appropriate sections.

Identity

Athlete described himself as “your average kid” who liked to “make the most out of everything.” He explained, “I do regular things like I go to the movies sometimes, I play sports, I like hamburgers.” He admitted, “Sometimes I choose socializing over school” [but] “I think when it comes down to really important things, that’s when I buckle down and get really serious.” He considered himself “sort of outgoing” in that he liked to meet new people, do new things, and go new places. Church and family were important in his life, and he considered himself optimistic because he tried to make the best of any situation he found himself in. Although somewhat shy when meeting new people, he found that he made friends easily once properly introduced.

Family

Athlete described his parents as “good people” who have “been on and off as long as I can remember.” By that he meant that his parents kept splitting-up and getting back together numerous times throughout his life. Even when his parents were split up, “they stayed really good friends” and remained involved in their children’s lives. Although his parents were separated at the time of the interviews, Athlete felt that he enjoyed a supportive relationship provided by both parents and the extended family. The family had moved several times to different parts of San Diego County as his father’s career progressed and his parents separated and reconciled.

Athlete’s father was born in Texas and moved to San Diego when stationed here in the U.S. Navy. He owned a power washing business, ran a sober living facility, and did real estate renovations and sales. His father had attended college at night and earned a bachelor’s degree from a local private adult business university. In describing the

relationship with his dad, he stated: “I think he’s a great man” and “a great father” who worked hard to take of his family.

Athlete’s mother was a San Diego native who met and married his father and worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles. She had attended college but did not earn a degree. His relationship with his mom was described as nurturing because “she’s always there, like [at] basketball games and things like that.”

Athlete’s older brother was twenty-one years old at the time of the interviews, and although they did not look alike, they “act just alike.” Athlete believed his older brother had been a positive influence in his life; at one point, Athlete said of his brother: “He’s helped me be who I am today.” At the time of the interviews, his brother attended a local community college and worked with his father in the power washing business. Athlete stated that although he respected his older brother, he believed that his brother was not necessarily reaching his potential because “when he was in high school he made a lot of wrong decisions.” He was accepted into a major out of state university, but got into trouble and ended up staying in town, attending community college, and working multiple jobs before starting to work with his dad. He believed his brother had a lot of potential, but “his priorities can be out of whack sometimes.”

Athlete’s younger sister was nine years old at the time of the interviews, attended a local elementary school, and was a good student who gets all E’s [for Excellent—the A equivalent at the elementary school level] in school. His sister was somewhat of a “tomboy” who played basketball with her brothers and patterned her brother’s behavior. Athlete said of his sister, “She makes me more mature.” He explained that she does this

because he wanted to set a good example for her and feared that his actions may have negatively affected her.

Athlete also has a paternal half-sister who was twenty-five years old at the time of the interview, lived in Texas, and did not associate with the family much. She had graduated from high school, attended college, got married, and had three kids.

Athlete's extended family included maternal grandparents, seven uncles from his father's side of the family, and two of his mother's sisters who live in the area. The extended family was considered very close, and he had recently attended a reunion of his father's family in Texas that included about 300 relatives. He visited his relatives in Texas almost every year and had spent one entire summer there meeting his father's extended family. Several of his father's brothers had lived in San Diego over the years; some had stayed, while others had moved back to Texas. His mother's family was closer since they all had lived in San Diego all their lives, attended church together, and visited each other often.

Childhood Memories

Athlete described his childhood as a happy one, although he indicated he did not like the emotional upheaval of his parent's relationship. He stated: "I think it's really selfish of them to make us go back and forth just because they can't get it right." Athlete remembered that when his parents were together, every Sunday was family day when they would have dinner together, watch movies, go to the park, and play sports. The family had moved around the city a lot, so there were not a lot of long-lasting friend relationships—but his siblings were close and he and his older brother enjoyed playing basketball together. During the upheavals, sometimes he would have to live with his

grandparents or another aunt, but the family worked together to reduce the stress associated with his parents on-and-off-again relationship.

Athlete remembers getting a lot of “whoopings” when he was younger because of behavioral problems and misbehaving in school. When asked about his behavioral problems in the past, he explained:

I can be really talkative; I like to socialize and meet new people, do new things, and talk to people and stuff like that. I think that sort of—it didn’t work out in elementary school, I guess. But those whoopings, I think they made me a better person.

Athlete recognized that his younger sister was treated differently and was not disciplined the same way he and his older brother were when they were her age. He worried that she might be spoiled because she had gotten used to having things handed to her without having to put in much effort. This was due in part because the family was better off financially at the time of the interviews than when he was her age, but he also recognized that there were gender differences in how people were treated.

Educational Background

Athlete attended daycare at a local religious pre-school, elementary school at a public minority leadership magnet school, and junior high at a public middle school. He had transferred to the junior high school associated with his current charter high school and had attended this high school since his freshman year. He remembered enjoying attending elementary school because it was in his neighborhood, he got to go with his brother, and there were more African-Americans in that school than in other schools he had attended before and after the elementary school years.

Athlete always used to get good grades, was on the honor roll, and even won the sixth grade spelling bee. School seemed easy for him until he came to high school where “everything just turned around.” He described his high school situation by stating, “I try my hardest just to barely get by.” Part of the problem, he believes is that he is in a rather prestigious charter school. At regular public schools, he “stuck out” because he was always one of the smartest kids in the class; but in the charter school he felt overwhelmed by the inherent competition from other students, and also other events competing for his attention.

When asked about grades, he said he had a C in Math, History, and Biology. When asked why his grades had gone down, he stated it was the “atmosphere” of his current school. He explained:

Here there are more white people. But then as my mom was telling me, that’s the way of the world. There’s going to be different kinds of races everywhere you go. So I think it’s a great experience for me—I think it works for the best. We don’t have sports and stuff. Like I was saying, sports are really big with my family—it’s a big change for me. I’m not saying I don’t like school—I’m just saying right now it’s more like a job.

Friends and Peer Influences

Athlete stated, “I choose my friends pretty wisely”; although he knew many people, he only considered a few to be true friends. He had two close friends at school described as being “just like me.” He had these friends for about four years and met them playing basketball in different parts of the city. Although he had other friends from

basketball, these two were closer because they went to the same school and had hung out with each other since all three were freshman. At one point, he declared: “I love my friends here.”

Athlete believed the bond between himself and his two close friends at school were stronger than his other friends not just because they were together a lot, it is also stronger because his friends were genuine and truthful. Athlete explained:

We have a lot of similarities – they look out for me as far as school and stuff. They know my weaknesses and my strengths and I think that’s great. They give me constructive criticism on my projects and stuff [like that] and I think that really helps me out. I do the same for them. That’s what really makes them friends to me, they would tell me the truth about something—they wouldn’t just say what I wanted to hear.

Athlete also has a friend he has known since he was about ten years old who, unlike most of his friends, is almost the complete opposite of Athlete. They used to live in the same neighborhood and played basketball together, but other than that have little in common. He explained:

I go to school to better myself and to become successful in life and to actually do something. He goes to school because he has to, because he has no other options. He wouldn’t go at all if he didn’t have to—and sometimes he doesn’t go. I guess he’s looking at the present and not looking at the future—he’s not looking at the outcome if he doesn’t go to school.

Athlete believed that his friend was not motivated due to several environmental factors including not having a father in his life, his mom not pushing him towards school, and a mindset that things should be “given to him.”

Future Plans

When asked if Athlete and his friends were planning on going to college, he responded, “Yeah, that’s something I like about my friends, they want to go to college just like I do and they tell me new information they know about colleges and SAT stuff—it’s really helpful.” He had researched several major out of state universities and hoped to attend one in either Texas to be close to his extended family, or a historically black college in Atlanta. He did not have anything against going to a junior college, but believed since he attended a college prep high school, he would prefer to attend a major university—although he was not sure which one yet. The expectation was that he would go further in education than anyone else in his family. Although his mother, brother, and half-sister had all attended college, only his dad had graduated from a university.

Athlete and felt that there is a lot of pressure on high school students to decide what they want to do in the future. He explained his angst over not knowing what to select as a college major and stated:

I hate the fact that it came so fast. I hate the fact that it’s happening. It makes me ... not really stressed out, but sort of—to think about what I’m going to major in and what college I’m going to go to. Reality is taking its toll on me now.

His life goals were to do something that really interested him—not just something entertaining, but something that he “would enjoy doing”. Athlete added, “I don’t know exactly what I’m going to do, but I know whatever it is I’m going to be successful.” The term successful meant being self-sufficient, owning a house, and being able to afford his own things. He may take over his dad’s power washing business at some point, but did not see himself doing that for the rest of his life.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

Athlete not only knew what a mentor was but quickly responded that he considered his big brother to be his mentor. He explained:

Most kids would want to say ... well most girls would want to say their mom and boys would want to say their dad—but they’ve been on and off so much. So like my dad’s a great guy and stuff, and I look up to him as well, but I would have to say my brother. Even when we go back and forth, he’s always there next to me and stuff. The bond we had in elementary school, he used to look out for me. Like when my dad was gone, he would be the father in the house.

His heroes included his grandfather who currently is fighting cancer but continues to work, and his grandmother who didn’t finish high school but had worked hard all her life. Athlete looked to his friends for advice about school and social life, and his brother for advice about life. His brother gave him advice “on everything from what deodorant to wear when I was in middle school to what kind of clothes look nice.” He also gave him advice on manners, what his priorities should be, and how to stay out of trouble.

Attitude

When asked if he was doing his best in school, Athlete responded “as of right now—no.” He believed he was doing his best in light of all the things going on in his life at the time of the interviews, but acknowledged that he was doing “just enough to get by.” He believed school was important, but found it tough to balance everything he had to do. Between playing basketball, splitting time between mom and dad, attending church, and his active social life, Athlete felt that he had lost balance in his life. He explained:

The older I get, the more weight gets put on my shoulders. Like now, I don’t have mom and dad pushing me and stuff. I basically do most things on my own—it’s starting to suck. All the other kids seem to have their parents and stuff that helps them and guide them. Me, I do pretty much everything— like school-wise, I do pretty much everything on my own. I think if I had a little pushing here and there, I’d do a lot better –but I don’t.

Salient Questions

When asked what questions he would ask other students if he were conducting this research, Athlete responded: “What do you have going on in your life right now?” He believed that distractions kept people from doing their best. He would also ask: “What kind of after school activities do you do” and “what kinds of things do you want to achieve in life?” He believed that success was simply a question of motivation and that most people could succeed if they put the effort in and were not distracted.

Epilogue

In the final meeting conducted for member checking, there were no corrections identified to the above information, but some major changes had occurred due to the one year passage of time between the initial and final interviews. Athlete was eager to report that his parents had reconciled and the family was once again living together at his father's house. He was sad to report that his grandfather had recently passed away but the family was coping with the loss.

Athlete seemed much more at ease and relaxed since the last time we had met because he had just found out that he had been accepted into a four year university in Houston. He was looking forward to moving to Texas where he planned to live with relatives while attending school. He was still unsure of a major, but was considering either psychology or physical therapy. He liked the idea of studying how people think, but also thought he might prefer the hands-on approach. Although he was not sure exactly what direction his future would take, he was looking forward to the changes in location, atmosphere, and culture associated with going to college in a location that was predominantly African-American. Due to financial constraints, he realized he would have to work during college and planned to join ROTC to defray the tuition costs.

Athlete had stopped playing basketball on the traveling team in his senior year to concentrate on school work and had managed to pull his grades up significantly. He missed playing sports because he had learned important lessons like work ethics and concentration. He hoped to play for the college team and was lifting weights to try to get bigger prior to try-outs. He also hoped that studying physical therapy would keep him in contact with other athletes even if he didn't get to play.

When asked what had changed his attitude since the last time we met, he said that getting some of the unknowns behind him had helped him concentrate. Once he had completed the SAT, getting accepted into college, and picked a major—he found that the future wasn't as daunting. He recognized that the reality of graduating from high school and saying good-bye to family and friends had not sunk in yet, but he looked forward to making new friends and had little doubt that he would be successful in the future no matter what challenges and changes he faced.

CHAPTER 15

ENGINEER

Engineer is an African-American male who was 17 years old at the time of the interviews and was recommended for this research project by his teacher. He was given the pseudonym Engineer because he wanted to major in engineering in college. At the time of the interview, he was living with his mother and stepfather in a predominantly Caucasian middle class neighborhood on the outskirts of San Diego. He was the oldest of three maternal siblings and two paternal step-brothers living in New York City. Engineer was a junior in a charter high school in an affluent area of the city during the time of the interviews. He did not generally participate in extracurricular school activities or clubs, but he did play on the school basketball team.

Engineer decided to participate in the study because his teacher recommended it and his best friend Athlete was also participating. He was not part of the original group interviewed for this project, but was added later for ethnic diversity in the participant group. Engineer volunteered to participate and set up our first interview for the following week. Unlike the other participants who I met with for three interviews, I only met with Engineer on two consecutive Wednesdays because the end of the school year precluded the third interview. As discussed in Chapter 7, the interviews were conducted face-to-face across a table in a meeting room with glass windows along the wall. The interviews were voice recorded and I took notes while discussing the prepared questions. The responses to the questions from the two interviews are summarized below in the appropriate sections.

Identity

Engineer described himself as “really outgoing,” “average,” and “really interactive with people.” He added, “It’s not hard [for me] to get to know people well—that’s one positive about myself I guess.” By describing himself as outgoing, Engineer meant that he is comfortable expressing himself, is truthful, and doesn’t feel he has to hide his emotions. He indicated that he liked to interact with people and found it easy to make new friends. He considered himself to be a good person and tried hard to “do everything rightful.” By average he meant he attended school, visited friends after school, and went home at the end of the day. After school activities he enjoyed included playing basketball, going to movies, and just “hanging out” with friends.

Family

Engineer described his family as “sort of separated” because his father and mother never married when he was younger. He reportedly had a good relationship with both parents and his stepfather. His father and most of the extended family lived back in New York City where Engineer was born. Engineer’s father lived in a predominantly blue collar section of the city, had earned a GED, and had been on disability for several years following a car accident. Engineer described the close relationship he had with his father and said: “It’s hard being away from each other—I call him almost every other day.” Engineer also spends every summer with his dad and indicated that he loved the multi-cultural flavor of the city and being surrounded by a large extended family.

Engineer’s mother was also from New York City, but had married and moved to San Diego when his stepfather was transferred there while serving in the U.S. Navy. His mother had graduated from college with a science degree and worked for a

pharmaceutical company in an affluent section of the city known for bio-medical research. Engineer described his mother as follows: “She is great. I would also say she is outgoing because she’s super about everything.” His mom is the one who made sure that he was focused on getting “really high scores,” being “top of the class,” and getting good grades. When his grades started to slip, she would take away the video games and cell phone until Engineer got back “on track”.

Engineer’s relationship with his step-father was described as “really good” because his step-dad had always been around for the family. His step-father had gotten out of the Navy and worked as a pipefitter at a local ship-building company while attending community college at night. Engineer admired the hard work that had taken his family “from New York living in the projects to out here living in a house.” As a military family, they had moved around quite a bit and after living in several military housing projects over the years, his family had just moved into their first home.

He had a younger maternal brother and sister living with him. His younger brother was eleven years old at the time of the interviews and attended the middle school attached to Engineer’s high school. His maternal sister was in fourth grade at an elementary school near their new home. They got along well and Engineer tried to set a good example for his younger siblings.

Engineer had a large extended family in New York City on both his father’s and mother’s side of the family. His paternal step-brothers included an eleven year old brother who Engineer had just recently met because his father had dated the boy’s mother after the divorce. He was unaware of this brother when he lived in New York, but had received a phone call from the boy’s mother and expected to meet him on the next trip to

New York. He also had another paternal brother from a different mother who he had known for many years and visited with when in New York.

Childhood Memories

Engineer enjoyed growing up in New York surrounded by his extended family because, as he said, “I used to be able to be connected with them a lot more.” He described his childhood memories as emotionally mixed. He explained: “I was happy living with my family, but once we made the move it was like everything just got pushed aside.” While he realized his immediate family was much better off financially and educationally after the move, Engineer missed his extended family and visited them whenever he could. During the summers they would have large block parties where “you have people barbequing on one end, you’ve got people playing music on the other end, you have interactive games—maybe like races or things like that; just fun times.”

Engineer recalled the move to San Diego when he was 10 years old as a fairly traumatic time in his life. He explained:

It was ... sort of upsetting for me. I was young, so it wasn't like I knew.

One day my mom was like “Okay, we’re leaving.” I just remember saying goodbye and then we drove to San Diego. So it was a good five day drive, and it was just long. I remember just sitting in the car day in and day out, just driving—it was crazy. We had a good experience; we stopped at the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, had a few stops along the way, but it was just long sitting in the car.

While he had made friends in his new neighborhood, he still had a longing for the family and friends left behind. At the time of the interviews, he was anxiously awaiting the end of the school year and the beginning of his summer visit to New York.

Educational Background

Engineer had attended private day care and elementary public school in a blue collar section of New York City. He moved around from school to school because he was smarter than most kids and his parents pushed him to excel academically. His mother did not want him attending a substandard public school, and although they could not afford private schools, she made sure he attended the best public school possible. His parents did not want him to skip a grade, but were always looking for opportunities for a better education for their children.

Since moving to San Diego, he attended an elementary school in an affluent section of the city, and enrolled in the middle school associated with his current high school. His grades were “always good,” being top of his class in New York and doesn’t remember ever getting a C. After moving out to California, his grades started “averaging out” because the work was harder—he “actually had to look at the book and study.”

Engineer liked the school he was attending at the time of the interviews because the atmosphere was more like a “community” and “the teachers actually listened.” He enjoyed the hands-on approach and project focus of the curriculum and found the teacher interaction stimulating. When asked specifically about grades, he said, “I was always an A student” and his grades “never dropped below a B+.” At the time of the interview, he had a B in Biology and a B in Humanities and realized that he could have an A in both classes. He did not like Biology class that much because it was mostly lectures and he

found that science “just doesn’t interest me.” He had missed a day of class in Humanities and had not turned in an assignment on time, which negatively affected his grade. He found that he procrastinated on assignments, which caused his grades to be lower than they should have been.

He didn’t know why he procrastinated so much, but felt “I work well, better, when I’m under stress”. He explained the dichotomy of procrastinating on the subjects he knows because it was too easy, but also procrastinating on subjects he did not know because he did not know how to get started. He also noted that this strategy seemed to be present in other facets of his life, stating, “I don’t do my best at all points of my life, but I do my best when necessary.” Sometimes he felt that even if he did his best, he would not be successful—so why bother. He explained:

I also see it around me, people that are doing worse than what I’m doing but still getting the same benefits, I would say, that I’m getting as being the A student and things like that. So it’s like, why do I even try so hard sometimes?

Engineer believed that grades were a direct reflection of effort, that if you do the work and turn it in on time, you will get good grades. He acknowledged that he struggles with decisions about participation in class. If a teacher asked a question that he knew the answer to, he usually did not raise his hand because, in his words, “I would probably be interfering with other people.” He did not want to appear that he was a know-it-all, and felt that if he participated to his full capacity it would negatively impact the attitudes of the other students—so he held back unless he had a question about something he did not understand.

Friends and Peer Influences

Engineer stated: “The way I choose my friends is I like the people I connect with.” Of course, he believed that he could connect with just about everyone he met on some level. He did not discriminate based on race or gender and had a diverse group of friends throughout the school. He did not have too many close friends, though, and did not like letting people get “too close.” He had a couple of close friends who were like family to him—his family knew and liked them and their families knew and liked him, as well.

At the time of the interviews, Engineer had one close friend from his old neighborhood that he knew before he moved into his new house. His friend used to live several doors down from Engineer’s house and, although they live far apart from each other now, they have maintained their friendship. His other close friend went to school with him, is also a participant in this study, but lived in a different section of town so they did not get to see each other outside of school. He recognized that he did not maintain too many friendships outside of school, but considered his friends in New York part of his support group.

Engineer tended to choose his friends carefully, watching how they acted around other people in public. He did not like “people who are just always loud-mouthing other people.” He liked people who tended to “speak the way... [they] feel”, but also preferred friends who were mature and respectful. Many of his friends played basketball or other sports, and he found that athletics helped him connect with other people. He had played on several sport teams including basketball and football teams. Engineer was less

interested in the competitive aspects of sports and viewed sports as a social event and a way to make new friends.

Engineer knew several friends who he believed were not reaching their potential. He said, of them, “They do the same thing I do, they put school second.” He thinks his friends “all have the capability of getting good grades,” but they were making conscious decisions not to try. The difference between Engineer and his friends, though, was that while Engineer did the work and turned it in before the deadline, his friends ended up not doing the work or turning it in late. While Engineer’s mother pushed him to get all A’s, he is not sure his friends have the same family support. He felt that a lot of his friends were happy to just be passing. Engineer believed his entire circle of friends planned on going to college, although one of his friends in New York had decided to focus on work instead because “of his situation up there,” but even he is striving to be successful in business.

When discussing groupings of people in his school, Engineer identified popular kids, “stand-by” people, DSA, and students who share main interests. The popular kids are, obviously, those students who other students admire and gravitated towards. The “stand-by” people are people who are “just on the side,” i.e., students who simply watch what is going on and do not get very engaged in activities. Engineer felt these students were either “shy”, “self conscience”, or “don’t feel they are worthy.” The main interest group consisted of people who shared an interest in some activity such as surfing, skateboarding or basketball. The main interest category encompassed most of the students at the school, including Engineer (his interest was basketball.) Engineer also indicated that students in the school differentiated each other by grade-level and age. He

thought of himself not just as part of the basketball group but as part of *the junior year* basketball group. Engineer added one other point about student groupings in the school: “We don’t group our races or anything like that – we have different races all over.”

Future Plans

Engineer stated very early in the conversation that he wanted to be an engineer, even before the question was asked. When specifically asked about his plans, he reiterated: “I would hope to be an engineer, a successful engineer in the future.” He saw himself going on to college, getting a degree in engineering, and being successful in life. He was not “too much into money” but wanted to be able to do things he enjoyed such as hands-on projects. He explained that he wanted to find a position doing things so that “I like to wake up every morning and actually be happy about going to work.” His stated life goals were to “be successful, help somebody else to be successful, and to be a leader to my other family members,” i.e., his brothers, sister, and cousins.

Engineer wanted to leave California for college and had been looking at the schools in the Atlanta area. He was interested in applying at several historically black colleges and public universities in the south. He had not made up his mind exactly where he wanted to apply, but had already started writing the application essay because he did not want to wait until the last minute.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

When asked about mentors, Engineer not only knew what a mentor was, but considered several people in his life to be mentors. He stated that his grandmother was his mentor because “no matter what her situation is, she’s always happy.” His grandmother is a community activist in New York City working for a community non-

profit organization to improve minority opportunities. He also felt that his dad was a mentor because, although disabled, he was happy with his life. Engineer admired his father who continued to try to move forward in his life despite many challenges, and had taught his son that “there should be no excuses in life.” He also felt that he could talk to both his grandmother and dad about almost anything and trusted their judgment and advice.

When asked about his heroes, Engineer responded: “I don’t know if I have too many heroes.” He did not look up to people that others would consider heroes. When the concept of heroes was explained, he responded that if he had any it would be someone like LeBron James, the basketball player. He respected him because “he made it to that next level but he still didn’t lose track of what’s going on in the real world.” He admired people who are successful and still helped the community they came from and did not just focus on their own goals.

When seeking advice, he looked to his dad and his grandmother because “they’ve both been through a lot.” He liked to get multiple opinions from opposing sides of any issue before making a decision. He found that by seeking out his dad’s advice and his grandmother’s, that he usually got the full spectrum of ideas before making a decision. He also liked that fact that they were removed from his local surroundings, so it was low risk compared to asking for advice from his immediate family. He explained: “I can usually express myself better to them than my mom” and by getting advice from people outside his immediate circle, combined with the advice he received from local family and friends, he hoped to find the middle ground in any issue.

Attitude

When asked if he was doing his best in school, Engineer responded with a definitive “no” and stated: “I could be doing better than I’m doing now.” While he was getting better grades than most of his friends and would be considered doing well by most observers, he realized that he could do a lot better. He explained:

Right now I would say I’m putting school second—even though I’m doing good at it, it’s still second in my life. I know I could do better, instead of A’s and B’s, I could have A+’s—it’s not hard. It’s just that I’m too lazy to put the extra effort into doing it when I could have. I get distracted with things outside of school—always trying to be friends, basketball, things like that. I just like having fun on weekends, lay back after a long week of school, instead of when I could be studying. I still do fine on the test, but I could do better than fine.

Although Engineer liked to get the homework out of the way before going off to play basketball or be with friends, he found that he procrastinated until the last possible moment. He felt that he did his best work as time boundaries were approaching because “when I do it last minute, I usually get a better grade.” While he understood the importance of doing his best in school, he found that “it just doesn’t seem like my first priority in life at this point.”

Salient Questions

When asked what questions Engineer would ask other students if he were conducting this research, he indicated that he would ask “what was [sic.] their goals” and “How do you plan on pursuing them?” He believes that having a clear vision of goals

was important and thinks many of his friends do not have one. Without clear goals, people got bogged down “trying to balance out different things.” He believed it would be better to focus on one subject at a time; in his case, because he wanted to be an engineer, he focused his efforts on math to the detriment of biology and humanities. Without clear goals, he believed his friends got easily distracted and are unable to focus, and he thinks that is the main reason for underachievement.

Epilogue

In the final meeting conducted for member checking, there was one correction identified to the above information. Engineer was also eager to report some major changes had occurred due to the one year passage of time between the initial and final interviews. He was proud to announce that he had started concentrating on school more and had stopped procrastinating. He had brought his grades up and had been accepted to all seven colleges to which he had applied. He had decided to attend a historically black college in Atlanta and was looking forward to the end of his high school years and the beginning of a new phase in his life.

When asked what had changed, he stated: “those questions you asked got me thinking.” The self reflection involved in answering the interview questions made him realize that he was not doing his best. He said that no one had asked him those types of questions before and he thought having someone taking an interested in him had made a difference. Once he started applying to college, he realized that he was in a competition and he had started concentrating more on school. Now that he had been accepted to college, he felt self-satisfied and was proud of what he had accomplished.

CHAPTER 16

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to research the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of a small number of adolescent males. The perspectives and experiences of the individual participants were included in the case studies of the previous chapters and answer the first research question: What are the stories of selected adolescent males identified as underachievers? These case studies give voice to the individual experiences of males identified by teachers as underachievers. Aggregating the case study data provides a starting point for developing more general theoretical understanding about a psychosocial phenomenon and a somewhat more general perspective on what the popular literature has dubbed the lost-boy phenomenon.

This chapter will investigate the shared experiences of the participants and answer the second research question: What common themes can be identified and what differences can be noted in the experiences of the participants? The content of this question loosely aligns with Mathison's (1998) concept for triangulation that guided the formulation of a cross-case analysis matrix table. Appendix E provides the cross-case analysis table with a synopsis of the data from all of the case studies provided. This chapter highlights noted characteristics across the case studies provided in Chapters 8 through 15. In doing so, this chapter is broken into the following sections: Common Themes, and Differences Noted.

Common Themes

This section will discuss the common themes derived from the areas of consistency in the cross-case analysis matrix data. These themes include mentoring,

relationships, mobility, expectations, marginalization, rational choices, and preferred pedagogy.

Mentoring

As indicated in the introduction to this dissertation—and highlighted in the data, mentoring of males was found to be a major issue. While some participants (Motocross, Athlete, Engineer) suggested that family members could be considered their mentors after the mentor concept was explained to them, most participants did not know what a mentor was, and, in all cases, no non-familial mentors were identified by any of the study participants. When the concept of mentoring was explained, one participant (Herpetologist) stated that no one had ever fulfilled that role for him. Another (Mechanic) mentioned a school administrator who had mentored both his older and younger sisters; when asked what advice the administrator had given him, however, he could not remember anything of substance.

Relationships

In contrast to the stereotypical image of disaffected loner youth, one cross-case analysis result was the importance of relationships to adolescent male performance. Besides the rich descriptions provided of familial relations and friendships, participants described the importance of “good friends” and the rules governing group relations. Any factors negatively impacting these relationships, such as mobility, changing schools, changing roles, and socially imposed group boundaries appeared to have a significant impact on the ability of the adolescent males to form and maintain meaningful relationships that seemed to matter to them. There appeared to be a connection between the strength and number of relationships described and success in schools. Participants

with few relationships (Producer) did not appear to be as successful as those with numerous relationships (Fencer, Motocross, Athlete, Engineer).

Another important factor in relationships is who the relationships were with. It appears that the more caring adults (particularly male adult role models) involved in the participants' life, the better their performance in school. Those who relied strictly on peers or relatives close to their own age group (e.g., Producer) for male role models were not as successful as those with numerous older adults in their lives (e.g., Fencer, Motocross, Athlete, Engineer). The presence or absence of fathers in a participant's life seemed to also affect performance; however, there also was a clear indication that other adult males also can be influential. Indeed, the more adult male role models, both familial and non-familial, in a participant's life, the more likely it was that a participant was at least somewhat successful in school.

Mobility

Another finding of the cross-case analysis portion of the research was the large amount of mobility described by the participants. All participants had moved at least once in their lives, with most (Producer, Basketball Player, Herpetologist, Motocross, Athlete, Engineer) having moved multiple times. Besides the normal impact of disrupted lives, moving may impact adolescent males more than females because of the difficulty in forming meaningful male relationships. There are few culturally acceptable ways for males to bond besides sports and clubs, and since most participants belong to neither, they have few opportunities to quickly make meaningful connections in the new surroundings.

This mobility phenomenon may also help explain why almost all the participants reportedly had good grades until they moved from elementary school to junior high school since, in most cases, they did not make the move with their peer group. Each time the males entered a new school environment, they were also required to establish a new social network. Since research has indicated that it is more difficult for males to form these social networks, and this research pointed out the importance of these relationships to performance, it is understandable that male performance after moving to new school environments might degrade.

Expectations

All participants indicated that family, friends, and teachers expected them to complete high school and go on to college. This may be an artifact of the site that was selected for conducting the study. Since participants were selected from a charter school that had a relatively detailed application and selection process, the participation and expectations of parents whose children attended this particular school may have been higher than in the normal population of high school students. Whatever the reason, expectations for these students were relatively high.

Whether these relatively high expectations were always positive could be debated. Several participants voiced the concern of not finishing high school (Producer, Mechanic), getting into college (Herpetologist, Basketball Player), or not getting into the college of choice (Fencer, Athlete, Engineer), and several voiced relief when college acceptance was received (Athlete, Engineer). High expectations did not translate into high performance in any case, or even acceptable levels of performance in most cases, especially when performance was contrasted with potential.

Marginalization

The marginalization of males in the school environment was noted in numerous ways in most cases. The participants described anxiety about participating in classes and, in most cases, described some form of cultural bias against males doing their best in the school environment. Fencer, for example, described a teacher who physically separated the class by gender and put the girls in front of the class and the boys in the back. His statement that “She thought we were all ruffians and degenerates” highlights that teacher attitudes towards males are sometimes overtly misandrinistic.

Engineer, on the other hand, recounted a more nuanced marginalization. He described how his class participation was reduced because of the perceived negative impact on other students. Although he knew the answer to the teacher’s questions, he did not feel comfortable raising his hand because he didn’t want the other students to feel dumb. While this may be an indication of a personal choice, multiple participants indicated a reluctance to participate in class, which may be indicative of a covert type of marginalization.

There were also indications of more than a little self-marginalization: All participants, in fact, noted they were not doing their best in school and felt comfortable maintaining a B or C average, although all believed they could be A students with little effort. The teacher who recommended them agreed that all of the students in the study had the potential for higher performance. While in each case the method of marginalization may be different, what was the common among the participants was the indication of conflicting cultural memes concerning male achievement in the educational environment.

Attitude

All participants indicated they were not performing up to their potential and were making choices that were not necessarily conducive to doing well in the school environment. Some rationalizations for these choices included procrastination (Engineer), peer pressure (Fencer), unequal results (Producer, Mechanic, Athlete), and perceived no-win situations (Basketball Player, Mechanic, Engineer). Whatever the underlying causes, it is clear that adolescent males are somehow signaled that their choices to withhold best efforts are culturally acceptable. Some participants like Mechanic discussed how these signals are transmitted in the first few minutes of meeting someone new, and how he felt powerless to change these perceptions once formed. He said, “Don’t judge me from just what I look like” and explained that people tended to stereotype him.

Almost all participants suggested that the self-reflection inherent in the interview process of this research project made them acknowledge their attitudes and question the choices they had made. Some such as Basketball Player, Fencer, Mechanic, and Engineer even reported increased performance based simply on becoming more conscious of their attitudes and making different choices as a result of this heightened consciousness. This fact highlights the possibility of transformative change caused by the collaborative inquiry methodology of this study.

Pedagogy

Most participants in one way or another discussed teaching methods. All participants expressed a preference for hands-on learning, and the participants expressed support for the project based education model used at the selected site high school. All participants discussed how grades suffered in courses that utilized typical classroom

lectures and note taking either exclusively or primarily. Some (Producer, Herpetologist) discussed how their minds wandered during lectures and the difficulty they had recalling lessons provided in traditional formats.

Because the school site that was the location for this study tended to emphasize the students' preferred form of pedagogy and experiential learning, the performance of the boys in this study may actually have been higher than it would have been with a comparable group of boys that attended a different sort of school. At any rate, the results of the case study argue against a one-size-fits-all approach to education and for making forms of experiential learning an option in schools.

Differences Noted

This section will take note of differences within the participant group that surfaced during the cross-case analysis. The analysis, in fact, revealed differences in the following areas: age, siblings, social economic status, heroes, advice, future plans, ethnicity, familial influences, and teacher relations. These areas of difference will be discussed in detail in the following sub-sections.

Age

Although the age of the participants ranged from 14 to 17, the lost-boy characteristics were evident throughout the participant age groups. The participants themselves noted the large differences in their maturity level in the time period between the initial interviews and the member checking interviews. All participants recognized that they achieved better grades prior to junior high school, and several participants (Mechanic, Athlete, Engineer) who performed the member check during or after their senior year indicated that their performance regained strength in the senior year. This

may support the developmental brain arguments that males may be undergoing transformational changes during the adolescent years and may be more affected by environmental influences.

Sibling Influences

There was inconsistency in the familial data collected including the amount, gender, and relationships between participants and their siblings. From only children to large nuclear and extended families, the data indicate that the lost-boys phenomenon can occur in any familial combination, and also does not indicate a noticeable sibling pattern. This is also true for birth order in that the participants range from first born to last born, and all combinations in between.

One very important note on siblings is the number of families that include both high achievers and underachievers in the same family, with the predominance of higher achievement in sister siblings. This highlights a possible gender component as several participants noted the difference between how males and females were treated and disciplined, even in their own families (Fencer, Mechanic). This would also argue against some of the commonly proffered variables in underachievement including Social Economic Status (SES), single parenting, familial arrangements, and ethnicity since presumably all members of the family experienced the same environmental factors.

Social Economic Status (SES)

The participants in this study did not show a pattern of performance that could be ascribed to social economic status alone. The families of the participants were equally spread between blue collar labor, white collar management, and pink collar women-owned small businesses. Although the school was located in an affluent section of the

city, none of the participants belonged to a family that would be considered affluent, so there could be no determination of any connection at the high end of the SES spectrum.

Heroes

In contrast to the research on the importance of heroes and role models in the lives of adolescent males (Gurian, 2009), the participants in this study did not indicate a discernable pattern in heroes identified. From having no heroes (Herpetologist), to those who, after prodding, identified celebrities (Producer, Basketball Player, Fencer, Engineer), most participants had trouble identifying role models. Surprisingly, the participants who identified family members as heroes (Fencer, Motocross, Mechanic, Athlete, Engineer) seemed to be more successful in school (the only context I was able to study) than those who did not.

Only one participant, Basketball Player, mentioned a teacher as hero even though all attended a school that promoted a great deal of teacher-student interaction. He described how this one teacher had taken a special interest in him, taken him on tours of college campuses, and firmly embedded in his mind the goal of attending college. The impact one teacher can have should not be underestimated.

One final point: Mechanic stated that superman was his hero. This is interesting because Mechanic decided to pursue a career in law enforcement at the local community college after he completed high school. While this may support the thesis that heroes are important to males, the data were too inconsistent and the sample size too small to support any assumptions about the importance of heroes.

Advice

There were no discernable patterns in who the participants sought advice from. Producer stated he did not seek advice from anyone. In other cases, friends, family, extended families, and teachers were sought out for advice. The only common thread seemed to be that the more successful males seemed to have multiple types of individuals from whom they solicited advice.

There does appear to be a connection between the size and makeup of the participant's social network and their willingness to seek advice. Those who have lots of friends and large extended families expressed more willingness to seek advice than those with more limited social networks. There also may be a connection between the age of the advisor and the types of advice sought, and perhaps the quality of the advice received. The participants with an older more diverse advisor group seemed to be more successful, but the data were too inconsistent to make definitive claims even for the small sample on this point.

Future Plans

While most of the participants stated they were planning on going to college, several such as Producer and Mechanic had reservations about whether they would or could attend. Several mentioned possibly going into the military as a way to either pay for college or to mature prior to attending college. Both Producer and Mechanic were considering the military option.

Some participants (e.g., Basketball Player and Athlete) expressed concern about not having definitive plans for the future. Athlete, in particular, mentioned the stress of not knowing what the future held and what major he would pursue in college. While there

may be a connection between those that had firm future plans and performance, the data were too inconsistent to support a definitive conclusion at this point.

Ethnicity

Although this research was not intended to investigate the ethnic component of underachievement, it would be difficult to not address ethnicity during a discussion of the cross-case analysis. The analysis suggests that the lost-boys phenomenon is present in all ethnic groups, although it may be manifested differently and in differing degrees. While most participants stated that ethnicity was not that important, all seemed to pick close friends who were in their own ethnic group. The internalization of ethnic boundaries was evident as many participants (e.g., Producer, Basketball Player, Herpetologist, Mechanic, Athlete, and Engineer) discussed the impact of ethnic differences in daily interactions. If nothing else, ethnicity seems to impact the ability to form relationships, which as discussed in an earlier section, appears to be connected to performance.

Of particular note in this research, an African-American male, Engineer, had the highest level of school achievement. He applied to and was accepted at a prominent historically black university. Athlete, the other African-American participant, also applied to a university that had a large African-American student enrollment. Engineer's and Athlete's decisions to apply to majority black colleges are another indication that ethnicity issues do play a factor in decision making for adolescent males.

Familial Influences

Another difference revealed by the cross-case analysis is family make-up of the participants. The participants family structures run the gamut: the traditional core family with married parents and children living together (Producer, Basketball Player, Fencer);

divorced parents where the participant lives with the father and is in constant contact with the mother (Motocross); divorced parents with the participant living with the mother and having little contact with the father (Mechanic); separated parents with the participant splitting their time living with each parent (Athlete); and married parents with one participant living with his mother and step-father (Engineer) and one living with his grandmother because he didn't get along with the step-father (Herpetologist).

While family structure may not be an indicator of success, how well the family structure supports the participants may be a factor. All participants reported that their families supported them doing well in school and the expectation was that all would go on to college. The larger and more supportive the extended family was, the more school success a participant was likely to demonstrate. On the other hand, the fact that some other siblings were reported to be doing well seems to neutralize family support as a major part of the explanation for the lost-boy phenomenon, at least in this sample.

Teacher Relations

Participant relationships with teachers were another difference noted. The range of participant reported relationships includes: getting along with male but not female teachers (Producer, Fencer); not getting along with any teachers regardless of teacher's gender (Herpetologist, Mechanic); mixed results of getting along with some, but not all teachers regardless of gender (Basketball Player); and good relationship with both male and female teachers (Motocross, Athlete, Engineer).

The reasons given by the participants for not getting along with female teachers included the claim that females are less tolerant of natural male behavior (Fencer). Of course not all participants viewed female teachers negatively. Basketball Player, for

instance, spoke of a female teacher who took extra time to work with him to turn his grades around, renew his interest in education, and plant the idea that he could succeed by taking him on tours of colleges.

Of major note in this research was the relationship of the participants from the charter school to the teacher who recommended them for the research. As an African-American male engineer who returned to the classroom after a highly successful corporate career, he provided what participants suggested was a supportive relationship. He also served as a positive role model for many students at the school. Each participant mentioned him as a valued resource and a living example of the no excuses lifestyle he espoused. Indicative of the impact this excellent role model provided, one African-American male participant (Engineer) decided to pursue a career in engineering, and all participants expressed eagerness in attending his classes.

So the data suggest that teacher relationships matter. The data also suggest that their impact can be negative as well as positive, however. Teacher gender issues may be a factor in some cases, but the more important factor seems to be whether the teacher engages males or not. Unfortunately, the data are less than clear about which teacher characteristics have had a positive and which have had a negative impact, even on the participants in this study.

Cross-Case Summary

The cross-case analysis suggests the following findings: (a) the adolescent males in this study had few, if any, mentors, heroes, and people other than family and peers they ask for advice; (b) even in this study's small sample, there was variation in the quality and quantity of male social relationships and this variation appeared to impact academic

performance; (c) because of moving and other disruptions, supportive relationships often were difficult to establish; (d) some interviewees indicated that being asked introspective-oriented questions during interviews helped them improve their academic performance; (e) there were no programs to assist underachieving adolescent males identified in this study; (f) this study's diverse (but admittedly small) sample suggests that there are common elements in the modern adolescent male gendered experience that transcend ethnicity, socio-economic status, and familial influences.

CHAPTER 17

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THE POPULAR LITERATURE

This chapter will examine the findings of the research in relation to the popular literature discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, this chapter will also will answer the third research question: To what extent are the findings from this study consistent or inconsistent with the explanations of male underachievement contained in popular literature? Appendix F contains a cross-case matrix that compares specific claims made by selected popular literature on the lost-boy phenomenon with the case study data. The following sections provide a comparison, in narrative form, of consistencies and inconsistencies between the popular literature, on the one hand, and this study's findings, on the other.

Consistent Findings

Based on the participant provided data, the topics that appear consistent with the popular literature include: inappropriate teaching strategies (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Gurian, 2009); the importance of relationships (Pollack, 1998; Gurian, 2009); cultural memes that devalue masculinity (Sax, 2007; Tyre 2008); school bias against males and unequal discipline (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Tyre, 2008); developmental differences (Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009); and the importance of purpose, heroes, and mentors in adolescent male development (Gurian, 2009). The following paragraphs discuss the apparent similarity between this study's data and what the popular literature has said about these topics.

Inappropriate Teaching Strategies

As discussed in Chapter 6, all authors agree that the normal pedagogy in schools is not conducive to the male model of learning (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Research participants mentioned differences between what they considered effective and ineffective teaching methods that seemed to be consistent with these claims within the popular literature. As discussed in Chapter 16, some boys (Producer, Herpetologist, Fencer) mentioned being bored in classes that were predominantly lecture-based; others (Basketball Player, Fencer, Motocross, Mechanic, Engineer) mentioned preferring hands-on and project based methods; strategies that were more common at the charter school interviewees attended than at most schools. Almost all of the participants, however, seemed to echo popular literature authors on the topic of teaching strategies.

Male Relationships

Pollack (1998), Kindlon & Thompson (1999), and Gurian (2009) pointed out the importance of male relationships. Once again, there is consistency with the study's findings. As discussed in Chapter 16, the importance of relationships between participants and family, peers, and caring adults was one of the major findings of this research. The importance of these relationships cannot be overstated. In fact, in this study, the number and extent of male relationships appears directly related to higher levels of school performance, the only measure of performance available in this research. The study also suggests that anything that disrupts relationships—such as moving to a new neighborhood or changing schools—can have a negative impact on male relationships, and, in the process, negatively impact performance. To be sure, the sample

in this study is small and, consequently, any findings about the importance of relationships must be treated cautiously. With this caveat duly noted, however, it is possible to say that the evidence from this study strongly supports claims in the popular literature about the importance of relationships.

Cultural Memes about Masculinity

The authors of popular literature about the lost-boys phenomenon also take note of the negative messages transmitted by contemporary culture to young males (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). All of the participants alluded to cultural memes in one form or another. From being taught to stand and fight (Producer) to noticing the gendered difference between how males and females are treated (Fencer, Mechanic) to acknowledging ethnic differences (Producer, Herpetologist, Mechanic, Athlete), there were frequent allusions to popular cultural memes in the interview data.

Furthermore, it seems clear that the memes were not necessarily positive. These memes define the roles males are allowed to take up (Mechanic, Fencer, Motocross), and constrain their ability to transcend stereotypes (Herpetologist, Mechanic). After years of perceived unfair treatment in school, males may eventually begin to get the message that it doesn't pay to do their best. This would certainly be a reasonable conclusion after reading the interview data from Producer, Herpetologist, Basketball Player, Fencer, Motocross, Mechanic, Athlete, and Engineer. Consequently, their stories are, once again, consistent with the popular literature.

School Bias

Tyre (2008) professes that schools are biased against males because they have mostly female teachers, use more female-oriented literature, and expect classroom behaviors that are not natural for males. There is much evidence presented by the participants to suggest that the sort of gender bias that Tyre writes about was present in the participants' earlier school experiences. The evidence includes descriptions of teachers who openly discriminated against males, such as Fencer's description of the teacher who separated her class by gender and considered all boys ruffians. The data also indicates more nuanced forms of gender bias that subtly but clearly signal males not to participate fully in class, such as Basketball Player's comments about negative teacher attitudes that caused him to stop trying in grammar school.

There was less evidence of gender bias in the interviewees' current school setting, presumably because it is a charter school committed to employing the sort of hands-on, project-based pedagogy that seems more appropriate for boys, but, even here, gender bias was not totally absent. Producer and Motocross discussed the differences between their interaction with male and female teachers and portrayed the relationships with female teachers much less positively than their relationships with male teachers. Some even described the difficulty they had in paying attention to female voices. Engineer and Basketball Player also described how they often did not feel empowered to speak in class, even when they knew the answers. In short, even in what might be considered an ideal setting, there is support in the data for popular literature claims about school gender bias.

Developmental Differences

Sax (2007), Tyre (2008), and Gurian (2009) highlighted biological differences between adolescent girls and boys, including brain development and maturity level, and they argue that these differences may put males at a disadvantage in school settings. Measuring physiological and developmental variables was beyond the scope of this study's research design, but one phenomenon was clearly observable: Those subjects who were interviewed over an extended period of time (i.e., up to a year) exhibited noticeable changes in terms of maturity, motivation, and achievement focus. In the case of Mechanic, he was amused by the differences in his own attitudes expressed in the interviews when reading them a year later at the member checking session. Athlete and Engineer were similarly surprised at the major changes in their attitudes a year later. All three had improved their academic performance, had been accepted into college, and realized how much they had matured since the interviews. To summarize, the evidence generated by this study about developmental differences is limited. The evidence that was produced, however, seems consistent with the popular literature's take on this issue.

Mentors, Heroes, and Advisors

Popular literature authors also often highlight the importance of caring adults who can serve as a resource for young males and suggest that this resource often is not available (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). As indicated in Chapter 16, mentoring was significantly lacking for most participants. Although Motocross, Athlete, and Engineer mentioned family members who cared about them and acted as mentors, most of the participants did not know what a mentor was, nor

could they name anyone who had acted in that capacity in their lives once the concept was explained to them.

The same could be said for heroes. Indeed, one student, when pushed, finally named Superman as his hero. Others (Basketball Player, Fencer,) named sports figures and another (Producer) named a rap artist. But for the most part, it was difficult for the participants to single out anyone as a hero in their estimation. As for advisors, the participants expressed a preference for asking advice from peers or family members close to their age. If parents were mentioned as a source of advice, they were, in most cases, assumed to be the least likely source that a young male would consult for advice.

In short, the findings are once again consistent with what has been written in the popular literature. This literature indicates that our society has left young males to basically fend for themselves. It may be significant—in terms of the vacuum we have created—that several participants volunteered that they had benefited from participating in this research project. Basketball Player, Mechanic, and Engineer, in fact, all reported the interviews they had participated in caused them to engage in self-examination and even, to some extent, change their behavior. Engineer for instance, said: “those questions you asked got me thinking” and that self-examination helped him improve his academic performance.

Inconsistent Findings

The topics that seem inconsistent with the popular literature when the literature and the data are compared include: definitions of masculinity (Pollack, 1998); increase in video games and other electronic distractions (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008); increased use of prescription drugs and environmental endocrine disruptors (Sax, 2007); the decrease in

male literacy (Tyre, 2008); risky behaviors and violence as coping mechanisms (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999); and the negative impact of divorce and single motherhood (Pollack, 1998). Each of these topics is discussed in this section.

Masculinity

All of the popular literature authors whose work was reviewed for this study identified the social constructs of masculinity as an important factor in making sense of the lost-boys phenomenon (Pollack, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009). Specifically, they argue that males are taught to hide their true emotions and feelings and male disconnection is promoted via the use of shame to toughen and control them.

While several participants, e.g., Producer and Athlete, identified fears of growing up and having to become a man, other participants assumed they would make the transition to manhood almost automatically at a certain age (Producer, Motocross). A number described what might be called attempts to socialize them to the adult male role. Athlete, for example, described “whoopings” he received to toughen him up, while other described being expected to act certain ways to demonstrate masculinity. But these findings were not consistent across the cases.

Electronic Distractions

Several authors (e.g., Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008) discussed the negative impact of such things as video gaming, computer usage, and cell phones on male academic performance. While the participants were certainly technology-savvy and attended a technology themed charter high school, none mentioned electronic distractions as a possible cause of their underachievement. Of course, it might be inappropriate to expect

this sort of self-diagnosis from adolescents, male or female. It was also the case, however, that there was no real evidence of any of the boys being obsessed by technology. Producer, for example, mentioned playing video games earlier in his childhood, but he also indicated that, after the game player had broken, he stopped playing. Several (Producer, Herpetologist, Basketball Player) reported not even having a computer at home, and all participants reported using cell phones intermittently, mostly to contact family and friends.

Prescription Drugs

Sax (2007) and Tyre (2008) claim that the significant increase in the use of prescription drugs to treat ADD/ADHD has contributed to the symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon. None of the participants, however, reported having been medicated either currently or in the past, even though they were not asked about this matter. This finding may be an artifact of the site selection, since the school attracts mostly high achievers from throughout the city. It is possible that students being medicated for ADD/ADHD would not apply to this school. At any rate, for whatever reason, on this issue, the findings from this study differ from claims in the popular literature.

Literacy

While there is a well-documented gap between male and female literacy levels (NCES, 2007) and several popular literature authors pointed out the importance of the issue in accounting for the lost-boys phenomenon (Sax, 2007; Tyre, 2008; Gurian, 2009), the participants did not indicate they had a problem with overall literacy. Some participants such as Producer and Herpetologist struggled with English as a Second Language (ESL), and Motocross reported not doing well in classes that required a lot of

writing, but these problems did not seem so significant that they could be pointed to as a major reason for interviewees' underperformance. Furthermore, Basketball Player, Athlete, and Engineer indicated that they preferred classes where reading and writing were important. Again, site selection may have skewed this study's findings. At the very least, however, the findings in this study indicate that if one wanted to be proactive in attacking the lost-boys problem, it might not be wise to make literacy development the sole (or possibly even the major) focus of the intervention.

Risky Behaviors

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) pointed out that risky behaviors can be coping mechanisms for young males who experience emotional isolation, but these mechanisms were not reported by the participants. Although one participant (Mechanic) reported being in the legal system, and several (Producer, Herpetologist) reported living in areas of the city with gang activity or moving out of neighborhoods due to violence and gang activity (Basketball Player, Engineer), none of the participants reported risky, violent, self-destructive, or illegal activities. This could be an artifact of the study methodology because, for Institutional Review Board purposes, in the introductory session, the participants were cautioned not to confide illegal activities or anything that would need to be reported to the school administrators or legal authorities. Alternately, this lack of consistency might once again represent a site-selection bias.

Divorce and Single Motherhood

Pollack (1998) identified divorce as a social disruptor that impacts males more than females because of social and emotional disconnection between boys and their fathers. While this was certainly evident in several cases (Herpetologist, Mechanic,

Athlete), the family arrangements of the participants included many family combinations including nuclear families (Producer, Basketball Player, Fencer), single mothers (Mechanic), single fathers (Motocross), and re-married couples (Herpetologist, Athlete, Engineer).

What seemed to mitigate the impact of family arrangements was the relationship between the participants and their biological parents. Those who reported strong relationships with both parents (Basketball Player, Fencer, Motocross, Athlete, Engineer) seemed to have a better attitude than those whose parental relationships were strained. Some, such as Engineer, had additional positive adult relationships with their extended families, even though they may have lived geographically distant. But this data indicated that the lost-boys phenomenon was present in all family arrangements, which is inconsistent with the popular literature.

Popular Literature Findings Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to answer the third research question: To what extent are the findings from this study consistent or inconsistent with the explanations of male underachievement contained in popular literature? Comparing the data in this study with the popular literature reveals some findings that are consistent and others that are inconsistent. The categories of findings that were consistent with the popular literature included: (a) school's frequent use of inappropriate teaching strategies, (b) the importance of male relationships, (c) the culture's devaluation of masculinity, (d) the presence of school bias against young men, (e) developmental differences based on age, and the importance of purpose, heroes, and mentors. The inconsistent findings included findings related to the following general topics identified in the popular literature: (a) the

significance of electronic distractions, (b) an increased use of prescription drugs, (c) the impact of environmental endocrine disruptors, (d) limited literacy skills, (e) the tendency for teenage boys to engage in risky behaviors, and (f) problems resulting from having a single parent who almost always was female. This study uncovered very little to no evidence to support claims that these were factors associated with the lost-boys phenomenon, though some of the apparent inconsistencies may be attributable to the small sample size, some specifics about the research design (e.g., a directive to students not to talk about any illegal behavior in which they might be engaged; the absence of a physiological component to the study), and the somewhat unique school that was the site of the study and from which the study's participants were drawn.

Even if the inconsistencies highlighted in this chapter cannot be explained away, there are numerous reasons to conclude that the popular literature is important. First, the authors have kept the topic in the public consciousness despite the political backlash from some in the educational community, special interests groups, and government agencies. Second, the authors have carefully revealed the complexity of the issues involved and the interrelatedness of the multiplicity of possible factors identified. Third, some have done wide-ranging research into the phenomenon, and have been fearless in promoting fair and honest evaluations of the available data. And finally, they have filled the research vacuum caused by the refusal of some in special interests groups, government agencies, and educational community to acknowledge the obvious in the available data.

CHAPTER 18

THE DATA AND ACADEMIC THEORIES

This chapter will include an analysis of the data provided in the case studies from two theoretical perspectives. The first section use a systems approach to analyze the data, looking at large scale trends and building a systems-oriented theoretical construct grounded in participant responses. The second section will provide a dynamic integral theoretical analysis of the data by using integral theory to interpret particular cases. Both of these analysis sections will be used to derive implications and recommendations that will be explored in Chapter 19.

A Systems Approach to Analyzing the Data

This section will analyze the data from a systems approach as described in Chapter 4. This approach will look at the system as a whole and examine input, process, and output without focusing on individual variables. The approach is useful in analyzing complex multivariate environments where individual variables are interrelated and can best be understood by analyzing the aggregate effects. While much research has provided symptomatic reviews of the lost-boys phenomenon, a systems approach is appropriate when “we are less likely to be able to explain the behavior of a complex whole by studying the behavior of the parts: contrarily, we are more likely to be able to explain the behavior of the parts by studying the behavior of the whole” (Gharajedaghi, 1999, p 51). The two aggregated effects that will be focused on here are the *attention gap* and the *performance gap*. These two concepts are described in the following sub-sections and will be summarized in the gap analysis implications sub-section.

Attention Gap

As discussed in Chapter 5, Kleinfeld (1999) theorized that the normal distribution performance curve for male achievement may have a higher standard deviation than that of females. If this were the case, when the two normal bell curves were superimposed upon one another, as depicted in Figure 17, the median GPA for males and females would be equal, but the standard deviations would be greater for males. The darker curve, representing the normal distribution for females, would have a greater central tendency than the lighter curve, representing the greater distributed male curve. Because of this difference in standard deviation, there should be more males than females who qualify for both Special Education (SPED) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs at schools.

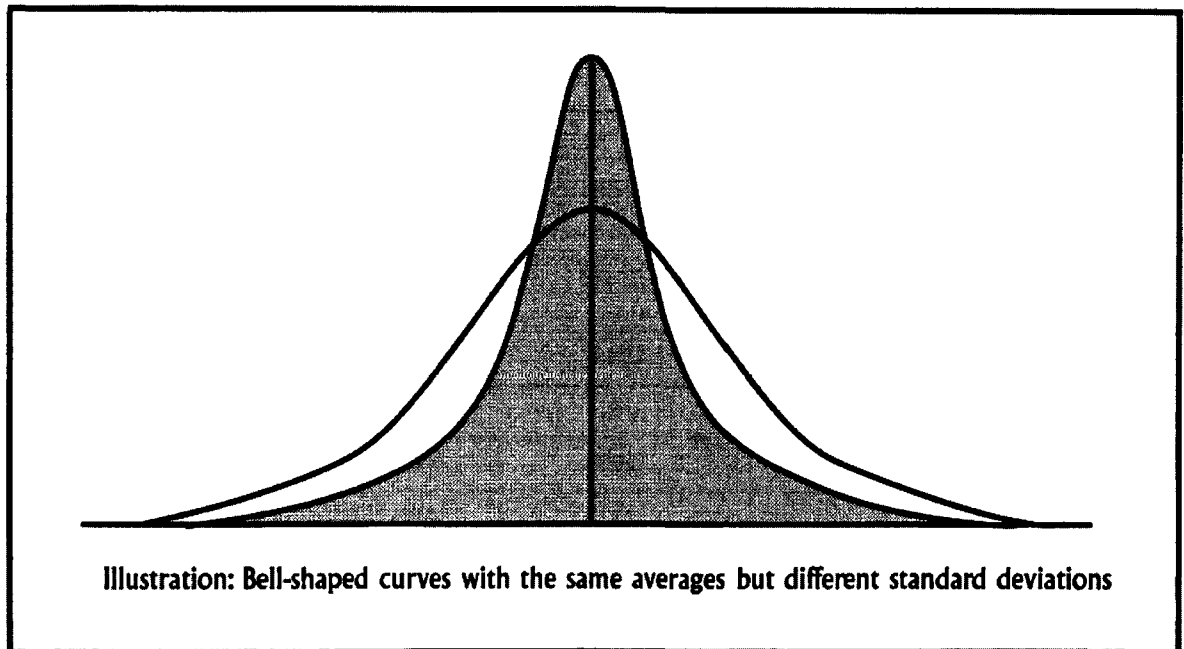


Figure 17. Attention Gap Analysis of the Lost-Boys Phenomenon
Source: Kleinfeld (1999)

While there is clear evidence at the lower end of the spectrum of more males being enrolled in SPED as highlighted in Chapter 3, there is no evidence of a higher

concentration of males in the upper end; in fact, females dominate the AP classes (NCES, 2009).

Actual Reported GPA Curve

Obtaining actual GPA statistics is problematic because, as highlighted in Chapter 3, each state uses different reporting criteria. Parent reported data of estimated overall student performance (NCES, 2009) indicates that the male performance curve is actually shifted downward in comparison to the female performance curve as depicted in Figure 18. The standard deviation for males is actually lower (.69) than for females (.92) due to the male curve more closely approximating a normal curve than the female which is heavily skewed towards the higher limit. Figure 18 depicts the GPA curve of males versus females as reported by parents to the U.S. Department of Education.

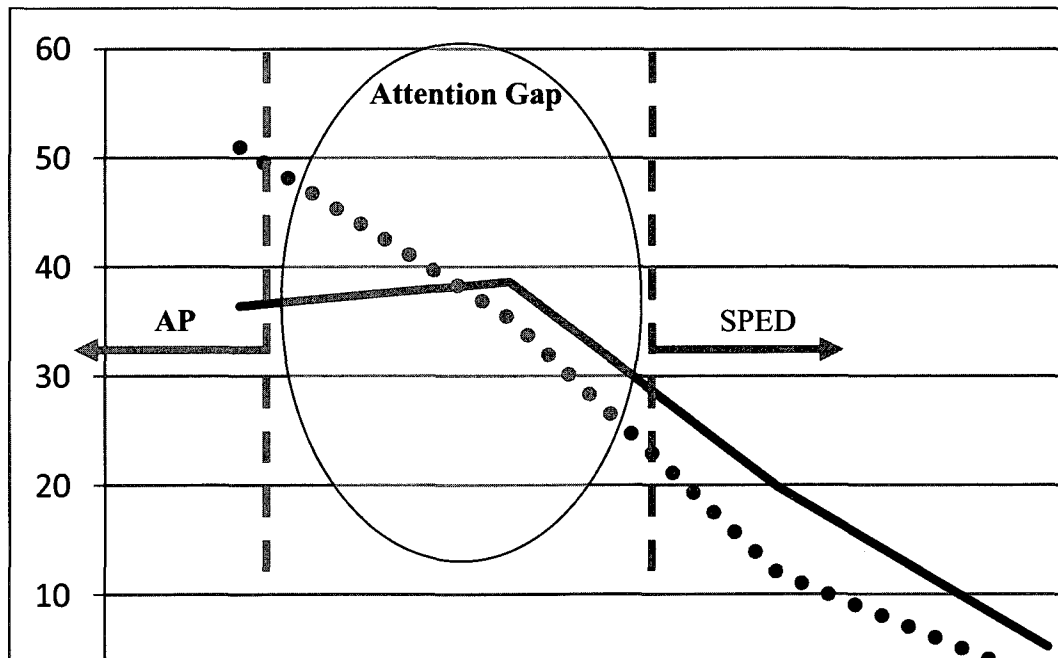


Figure 18. Percent of Parent Reported GPA by Gender
Source: NCES (2009)

Attention Gap Analysis

Theoretically, the performance area under the normal curve between the point where a student would be considered “at risk” or qualify for SPED programs and the point at which the student would be considered for AP programs is an area where less attention is paid to students—both from teachers and peers. The term Attention Gap represents the area under the curve between the SPED and AP cut-offs because it is the performance area where the least special attention is paid to students. There is more attention paid to students in both the SPED and AP categories as teacher qualifications are higher, class sizes are smaller, and personalized attention is administered. The SPED and AP programs are interventions that have proven successful in supporting increased performance at either end of the spectrum. Therefore, the attention gap, as depicted in yellow, is wider than theorized and actually impacts males much more than females.

Implications of the Attention Gap

The majority of the participants included in this research reported maintaining a GPA average of C, which as described by Fencer, allowed them to “fly under the radar” of attention by teachers, administrators, and peers. If males performed too low or too high on the performance scale, they would be singled out for special attention—not all of it positive. Herpetologist described the impact of negative attention on students who were assigned to SPED classes, while Fencer and Engineer described the impact of negative attention on students who were advanced in comparison to their peers. By flying “under the radar,” males could avoid the special attention provided by being at either end of the normal performance curve.

Attention Gap Summary

To summarize, by consciously flying “under the radar”, the males, in effect, insure that they do not receive the sort of professional attention that they conceivably could benefit from. If this is the case, of course, their problems may be, at least in part, self-inflicted. We should still ask, however, why young males do this. The bottom-line problems, in short, *might* still be ultimately in the external environment and, if they are, young males’ decisions to “fly under the radar” would be a rational choice, in effect, an intervening, not an independent, variable.

Performance Gap

Mortenson (2007) highlighted male persistence issues by comparing the number of males per 100 females at certain points along the formal education continuum, i.e., from preschool to post-graduate education. When these points are plotted on a grid, there appears to be a period of male underperformance that stretches roughly from the end of elementary education until postgraduate education. This discrepancy occurs, in part, because the dropout rate of each year is additive (i.e. a drop-out in one year affects the rest of the curve because the student would presumably not be there for the remainder of the years); it is also the case, however, that male students continue to drop out of school at a greater rate than females. Figure 19 depicts this Performance Gap area on the curve representing the period on the time axis where the number of males is less than the number of females.

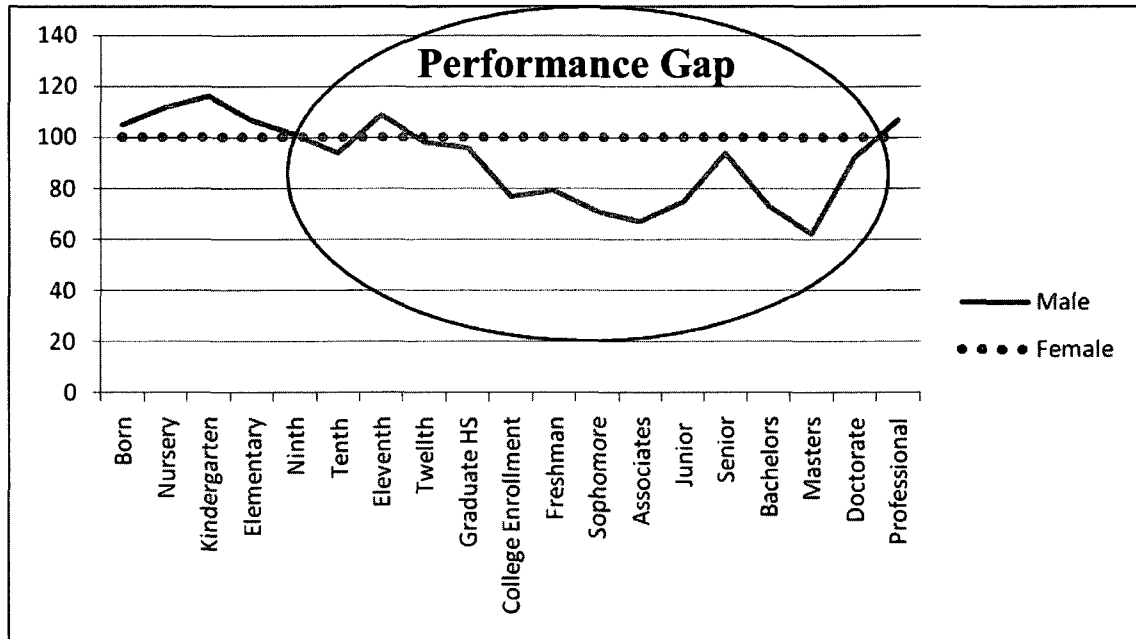


Figure 19. Performance Gap Analysis of the Lost-Boys Phenomenon
 Source: Adapted From Mortenson (2007)

Performance Gap Analysis

Participants in this research illustrated this pattern with descriptions of their own personal educational histories. As stated previously, all participants recognized that they achieved better grades prior to junior high school, and several indicated that their performance seemed to reemerge in the senior year of high school. This study, of course, could not include the males who either dropped-out or were expelled before high school.

Implications of the Performance Gap

The area of most concern in Figure 19 is the point at which the male line crosses the female line on the downward trend at ninth grade. Because the number of males in the population is greater than the number of females in this age group (Census, 2007), the fact that fewer males are present in tenth grade indicates an area of concern. This may help explain some of the problems with accuracy in drop-out rate data statistics, as

presumably a student dropping out while transitioning from elementary to junior high, or from junior high to high school would not show up in current drop-out calculations.

Performance Gap Summary

In summary, the Performance Gap area depicted in Figure 19 indicates that there is a critical timeframe starting in about eighth grade where interventions should be targeted. Using the Theory of Constraints, the ninth grade is a bottleneck area that affects the remainder of the curve because of the cumulative effect of the number of drop-outs. This period of concern continues into high school, and reappears in college. This indicates the need for an enduring intervention for males during the period of time in their educational development from eighth grade through the college years.

Dynamic Integral Analysis

This section will analyze the data utilizing a dynamic integral approach. A dynamic approach is appropriate when analyzing complex adaptive social systems that change over time. Because of the dynamic adaptive nature of the lost-boys phenomenon and the inter-relationship among variables, quantitative methodology—such as regression analysis—is not necessarily appropriate and may not render useful results. Quantitative methods assume that variables are independent of each other and can be held constant while attempting to measure each variable's relative impact on the dependant variable. In cases of complex dynamic adaptive social systems, such as the lost-boys phenomenon, a dynamic integral approach utilizing qualitative methodology is the preferred method for data analysis.

The dynamic integral approach is based on the Wilber's (2000) Integral Theory as discussed in Chapter 3. Wilber's model has four frames of reference including: the I

frame of reference—which addresses identity issues; the We frame of reference—which addresses group issues; the It frame of reference—which addresses performance issues; and the Its frame of reference—which addresses meaning making. The first four sections will analyze the data utilizing each frame of reference individually, creating spectrum vectors derived from the case studies. The last two sections will include an analysis of two case studies that represent the vector continuum extreme cases which will be used to develop a dynamic integral theory of the lost-boys phenomenon by connecting the four frames into a unifying structure.

Identity (I Frame)

Indications of participant identity were revealed in the response to the question “Tell me about yourself?” The answers reveal a variety of responses that indicate a spectrum of developmental stages. On one end of the spectrum, the participant responded with physical descriptions alone (Producer); in the mid-spectrum, participants defined themselves by what they did (Skater, Herpetologist); at the far end of the spectrum participants responded with higher level behavioral characteristics such as “nice person”, “easy going”, “outgoing” and “well-rounded” (Basketball Player, Fencer, Mechanic, Athlete, Engineer). Figure 20 depicts the spectrum of the I frame of reference derived from the data.

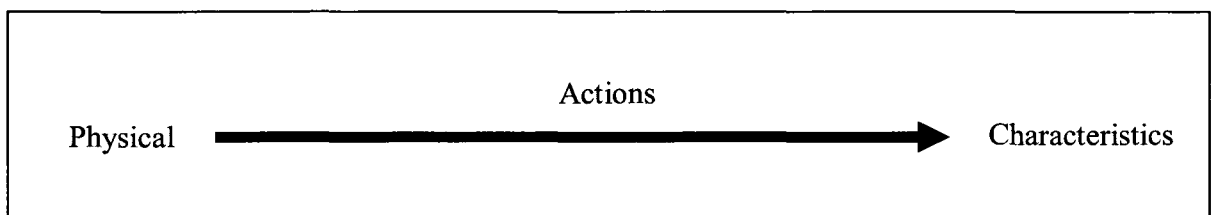


Figure 20. I Frame of Reference Spectrum

Group Relations (We Frame)

Indications of participant group relations were revealed in the response to the question “Tell me about your friends?” The answers reveal differing responses that indicate a spectrum of group relation stages. On one end of the spectrum, the participants responded with highly differentiated answers including having no (Producer) or few friends (Mechanic, Athlete); in the mid-spectrum, participants provided responses that indicated that they were more socially integrated by describing lots of friends and the ability to associate with several groups (Basketball Player, Fencer, Herpetologist); at the far end of the spectrum the participant provided responses with a higher degree of social integration including many group relations and the ability to transit between and amongst groups (Engineer). Figure 21 depicts the group relations spectrum of the We frame of reference derived from the data.

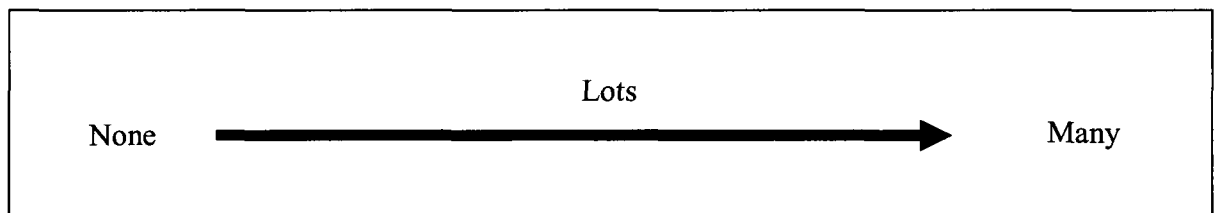


Figure 21. We Frame of Reference Spectrum

Performance (It Frame)

Indications of participant performance were revealed in the response to the question “Describe your educational background?” The answers included various responses that indicated a spectrum of performance as measured by GPA. On one end of the spectrum, the participants reported a GPA of D (Producer, Basketball Player, Herpetologist, Mechanic); in the mid-spectrum, participants reported a GPA of C (Fencer, Motocross, Athlete); at the far end of the spectrum the participant reported a

GPA of B (Engineer). Figure 22 depicts the performance spectrum of the It frame of reference derived from the data.

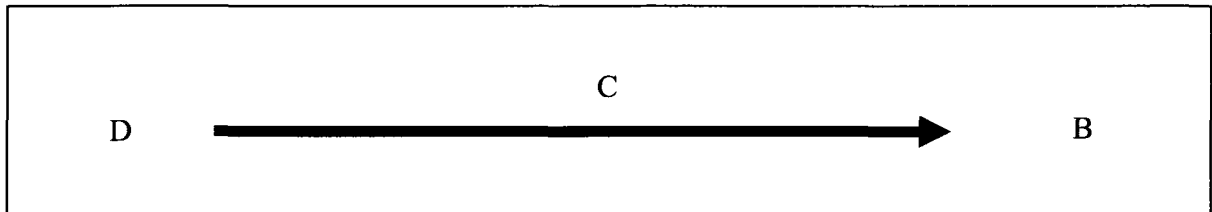


Figure 22. It Frame of Reference Spectrum

Results (Its Frame)

Indications of participant results were revealed in the response to the question “What has changed?” during the member checking interview or events that occurred thereafter. The results indicate a spectrum of outcomes based on either increasing or decreasing levels of performance. On one end of the spectrum, the participant was expelled for behavioral issues (Producer); in the mid-spectrum, participants reported increased performance (Basketball Player, Fencer, Herpetologist); at the far end of the spectrum the participants reported increased performance and acceptance to college (Athlete, Engineer) or attendance at college (Motocross, Mechanic). Figure 23 below depicts the results spectrum of the “Its” frame of reference derived from the data.

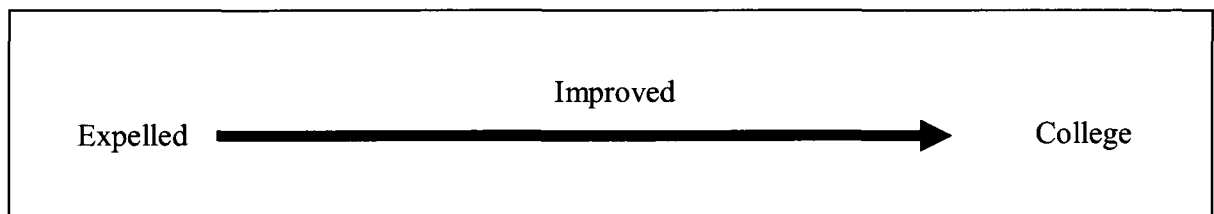


Figure 23. Its Frame of Reference Spectrum

Dynamic Integral Theory Mapping

By connecting the above four frames of reference into a coordinate grid, one begins to be able to visualize the relationships between the I, We, It, and Its frames of reference. For the purpose of depicting the dynamic relationship between the frames of reference and the connection to the lost boys phenomenon, I will use two extreme example participant cases that demonstrate opposite ends of the spectrum—Producer and Engineer.

Integral Analysis of Case Producer

This section describes the dynamic relationship of the integral theory frames of reference as depicted in Figure 24 for the case study of participant Producer. Starting in the I frame of reference (Tangent 1), Producer was rated at the low end of the spectrum due to his description of himself in purely physical terms. This strong association with the physical dimensions of identity limited his ability to expand to higher levels of identity development. Keeping in mind the dynamic nature of the multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000) described in Chapter 2, this identity rating is contextually based in relation to the current situation and to the interviewer at the time of the interviews. Because identity is a developmentally impacted stage, it is also subject to dynamic changes as the participant matures and develops the capacity for higher level identity growth.

In the We frame of reference (Tangent 2), Producer was also rated at the low end of the spectrum for having few if any close friends, being strongly associated with ethnicity, and having limited ability to associate with larger more diverse groups. Because “identity proceeds intimacy” in males (Bergman, 1991), it may not be unusual

for males who rate relatively low on the I tangent to also rate low on the We tangent. Without a higher level of identity, the roles we are allowed to take up in groups are restricted by perceived limited capacities. In the case of Producer, his identification as “a Mexican living here” highly differentiates his role not only by ethnicity, but also in a subset of ethnicity by country of origin. Once again this is contextually based—for instance, if Producer was in an environment where his ethnic group was in the majority, his strong identification with ethnicity may be advantageous and may increase the position on the We spectrum.

In the It frame of reference (Tangent 3), what Producer is able to accomplish is limited by the low I and We frames of reference. Therefore, Producer also falls to the low end of the spectrum in performance as measured by GPA. It is difficult to perform well when interpersonal relationships are limited. In essence, “know how” is limited by the “know who” of the previous frames of reference. As indicated in the case study, Producer knows he can do better in school, but has made conscious decisions not to for whatever reason. Speculatively, one reason may be that performance is dependent on the size and diversity of social networks and support groups, as well as a sense of identity. Choosing not to perform at potential may be seen as an identity protection mechanism through differentiation.

In the Its frame of reference (Tangent 4), the meaning derived from the low performance is a recognition by Producer that he is “not doing his best”, and therefore, earns a low rating on the Its frame of reference as well. This recognition may cause feelings of failure, frustration, and at the extreme, the phenomenon of learned helplessness. Since these feelings impact the sense of identity, the Its frame of reference

impacts the I frame and the cycle begins anew—albeit in this case at a lower level of the spectrum. Without intervention, this downward spiral could continue and lead to ever decreasing levels in all four frames of reference, and may lead to risky behaviors by those caught in this negative dynamic. In the case of Producer, the intervention of being expelled from school could, depending on the meaning made, have either a positive or negative impact on the situation. Figure 24 depicts the dynamic integral analysis view of the Producer case study.

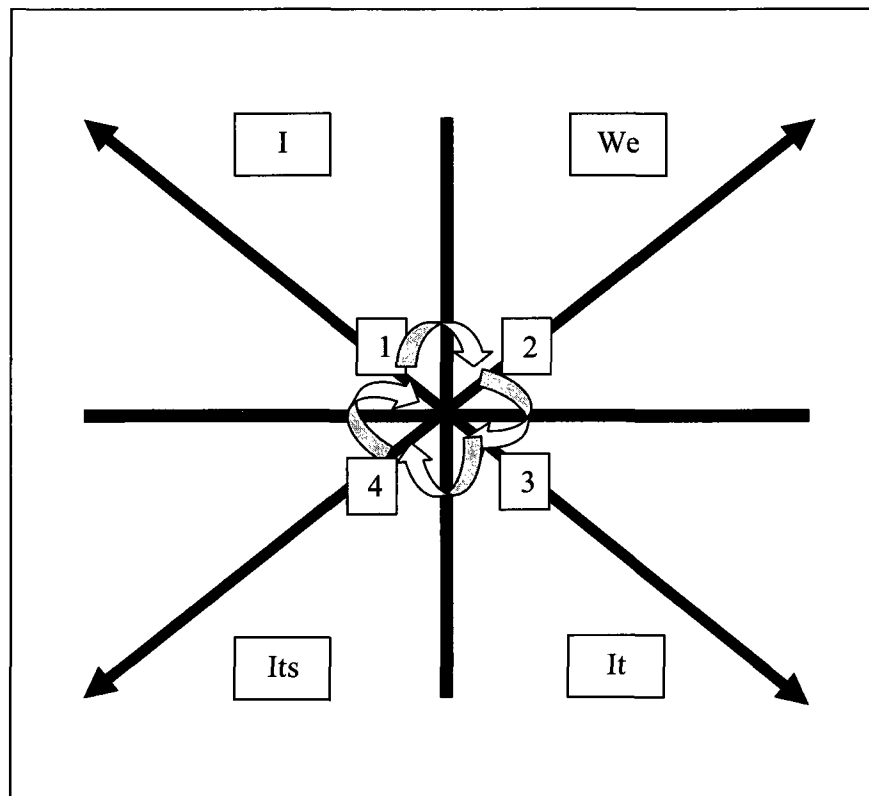


Figure 24. Dynamic Integral Analysis of Case Producer
Source: Adapted from Wilber (2000)

Integral Analysis of Case Engineer

This section describes the dynamic relationship of the integral theory frames of reference as depicted in Figure 25 for the case study of participant Engineer. Starting

again in the I frame of reference (Tangent 1), Engineer was rated at the high end of the spectrum due to his description of himself in higher level behavioral characteristic terms. This strong association with the behavioral characteristic dimensions of identity indicated higher levels of identity development. Again, this is contextually derived and may change as roles, culture, and environment change.

In the We frame of reference (Tangent 2), Engineer also rated at the high end of the spectrum for being highly integrated as evidenced by his claim to being able to connect with just about everyone he met. Although Engineer differentiated by ethnicity, sport, and year group, he was not strongly differentiated on any one topic and recognized the multiplicity of groups that he associated with. He was comfortable crossing group boundaries and taking up multiple roles in diverse groups based on the situation. It may not be unusual for males who rate relatively high on the I tangent to also rate high on the We tangent; with higher levels of identity, the roles we are allowed to take up in groups are expanded by perceived superior capacities. Being contextually based, this dynamic may change—for instance when Engineer visits New York, he may experience diminished group relations as the veritable outsider in the different environment.

In the It frame of reference (Tangent 3), what Engineer is able to accomplish is expanded by the high I and We frames of reference. Therefore, Engineer is also at the high end of the performance spectrum as measured by GPA. In this case, “know who” supports the expansion of the “know how” required for higher levels of performance. Although Engineer also acknowledges he can do better in school and has made conscious decisions not to for whatever reason, once the decision is made to change—the ability to quickly improve performance is possible.

In the Its frame of reference (Tangent 4), the meaning derived from the high performance is a recognition that Engineer is capable, and therefore, earns a high rating on this frame of reference as well. This feeling of competence and success positively impacts the sense of identity, and the cycle begins anew—albeit in this case at a higher level of the spectrum. Without intervention, this upward spiral could continue and lead to ever increasing levels in all four frames of reference.

In the case of Engineer, the interventions of graduating from high school, being accepted into the college of choice, and having to start anew in a different environment away from home and successful support structures could, depending on the meaning made, have either a positive or negative impact. Because identity is contextually based, the new college environment could decrease the sense of identity, and without strong group associations could decrease performance—at least temporarily. The data clearly indicate the importance of building new social networks in order to achieve success in college (Perrakis, 2008). Since Engineer has chosen to attend a historically black college, he will have at least one less dimension of differentiation and could use the shared dimension of ethnicity as an integration accelerator. Figure 25 depicts the dynamic integral view of the Engineer case study.

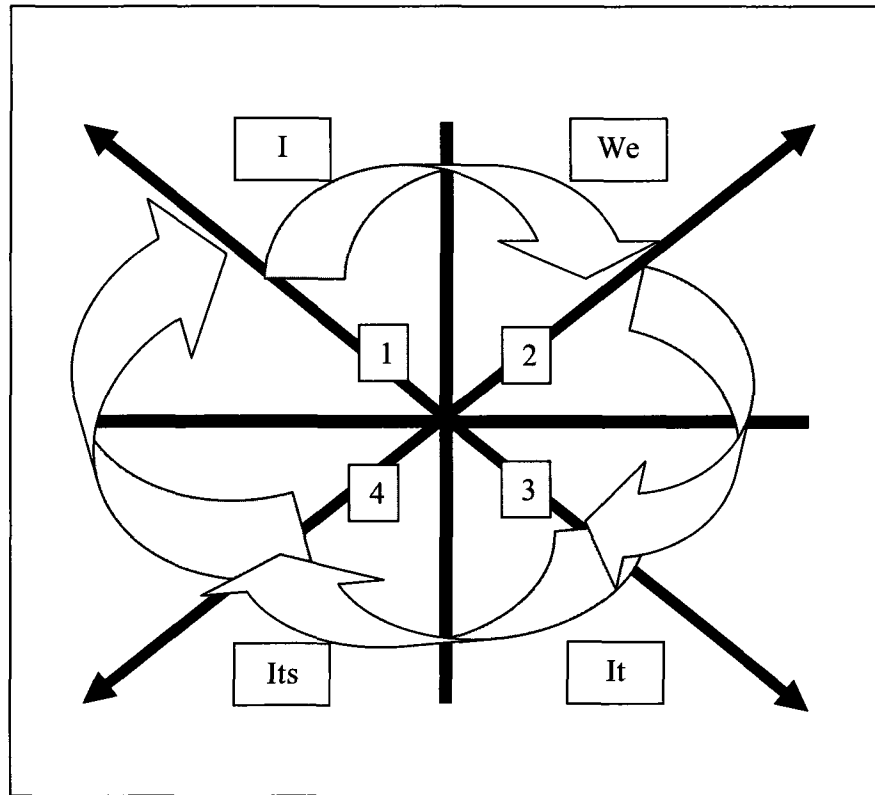


Figure 25. Dynamic Integral Analysis of Case Engineer

Summary of the Dynamic Integral Analysis

The dynamic integral analysis provides a useful tool in depicting the dynamic adaptive nature of the lost-boys phenomenon and the inter-relationship among the different frames of reference. While the model may not be widely accepted, it provides an opportunity to examine the dynamics that can cause an upward or downward spiraling of performance. These spirals continue in a direction—either upward or downward—until an intervention occurs. Interventions can have either positive or negative effects, and can cause the spiral to accelerate, decelerate, or change direction. It takes a concerted effort to reverse direction of a spiral (i.e., from downward spiral to upward spiral), and a reversal typically cannot be accomplish without external intervention (Wilber, 2000).

Summary of the Theoretical Analysis

This chapter used systems analysis and dynamic integral analysis to investigate the supporting data of the lost-boys phenomenon. This analysis should be used to design interventions to help young males improve their performance. Using the attention gap analysis, interventions should be planned for males who are underachieving by focusing on those with a C average. Using the performance gap analysis, interventions should be designed to start in the eighth grade and continue through the first few years of college.

What type of interventions should be designed? Based on the dynamic integral analysis, interventions should be designed to address the four frames of reference in the model. For the I frame of reference, interventions should focus on mentoring and coaching to increase the emotional intelligence of the individual. For the We frame of reference, interventions should focus on group dynamics by forming male clubs, support groups, and Men's Studies curriculum. For the It frame of reference, interventions should focus on tutoring to improve reading, writing, and comprehension skills. For the Its frame of reference, interventions should focus on changing cultural memes through national forums to illuminate the problem, focus on possible solutions, and provide a national policy agenda.

While each of these interventions may individually have been attempted in the past with mixed results, the combination of the four interventions simultaneously, as demonstrated by the Women's Movement, has the potential of creating the required positive results. The objective of implementing and coordinating the above mentioned interventions is to create the upward spiral in performance needed to reverse the current negative trends of the lost-boys phenomenon.

CHAPTER 19

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to systematically investigate the characteristics associated with the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the boys themselves. Qualitative research methods were used; the research findings, along with analyses of these findings were presented in the previous chapters. This chapter will briefly summarize the findings of this research, discuss the implications of the study for policy and practice, highlight areas for further research, and review the significance of the study.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this research was to begin to investigate the lost-boys phenomenon and identify the common characteristics and differences noted in a small sample of adolescent males who exhibit the syndrome. The study employed a small sample and qualitative research methods to provide richness of detail. Case studies of eight high school males identified as underachievers by a school teacher were presented.

The findings suggests the following: (a) the adolescent males in this study had few, if any, mentors, heroes, and people other than family and peers they can ask for advice; (b) even in this study's small sample, there was variation in the quality and quantity of male social relationships and this variation appeared to impact academic performance; (c) because of moving and other disruptions, supportive relationships often were difficult to establish; (d) some interviewees indicated that being asked introspective-oriented questions during interviews helped them improve their academic performance; (e) there were no programs to assist underachieving adolescent males identified in this study; (f) while ethnicity is a factor in forming relationships, and, therefore, may

indirectly impact academic performance, this study's diverse (but admittedly small) sample suggests that there are common elements in the modern adolescent male experience that transcend ethnicity.

Characteristics of the Lost-Boys Phenomenon

One of the goals of this research was to define the symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the adolescent males themselves. The holistic approach was used in this investigation due to complexity of the phenomenon and the assumption that “the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of the parts” (Patton, 2002, p. 59). After analyzing the data in Chapter 13 using the cross-case analysis method and the systems analysis and the dynamic integral analysis in Chapter 18, it is now possible to begin to define the symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon to assist in follow-on research. The sections below describe some of the symptoms inherent in the lost-boys phenomenon as derived from the participant provided data.

Underachievement

As stated in the methodology chapter, underachievement is one characteristic that all lost boys appear to exhibit. Of course, not all underachievement can be traced to the lost-boys phenomenon, but it is one indicator that is common with all cases and acts as a marker of possible lost-ness. Underachievement is difficult to definitively quantify—but parents, administrators, teachers, and peers seem capable of readily identifying numerous adolescent males who fit their descriptions of underachievement. Since underachievement is contextually based with some adolescent males underachieving in

certain facets of their lives but not necessarily in others, what separates the truly lost boy is chronic underachievement in many facets of life over extended periods of time.

Identity Issues

The degree of lost-ness appears to be somehow connected to identity issues. The lower the participants rated on the identity vector scale, the more lost they appeared. Since identity is a developmental issue, males may go through some periods of feeling lost and other periods of significant growth. Identity is also contextually based, so just because someone may be low on the identity scale in some situations—such as the school environment—does not mean that they will be low on the identity scale in other environments such as sports or extracurricular activities. In looking for lost boys, the marker should be low identity ratings in multiple situations for extended periods of time.

Social Isolation

Another marker that seems to be readily available is the quantity and quality of social connections. Lost boys appear to have fewer friends, limited group attachments, and the inability to assume multiple roles in multiple groups simultaneously. They are highly differentiated and find it difficult to form lasting male relationships with anyone who is not “just like me” (Producer). They see group boundaries as well defined and unchangeable, and recognize large amounts of bias in others, but not necessarily in themselves. Because they have trouble making friends easily, disruptions in social networks caused by life changes such as moving, changing schools, or shifts in the ethnic balance of the environment appears to take a higher toll on their social connections.

Again, all males may face similar circumstances—but what differentiates lost boys is the severity across multiple social situations for extended periods of time.

Average Performance

While underachievement is a characteristic of the lost-boys phenomenon as discussed above, what is surprising in this research is the apparent need for lost boys to maintain an average performance—in this study a GPA of C. This allowed them to fly “under the radar” (Fencer) and not attract special attention for either performing too well or too little. Any special attention is unwelcomed, and may cause the adolescent male to be singled out for ridicule by peers and other parties. This ridicule feeds into the discussion of the previous paragraph about isolation, indicating some connection between performance and group relations.

Procrastination

Many participants discussed or exhibited a problem with procrastination manifesting itself as turning in assignments late and being late to class. The reasons given by the participants for procrastinating seemed to fall into two categories: the fear of failure, and fear of success. In the fear of failure, the arguments focused on not wanting to execute a task before competence was achieved. In the fear of success, the arguments focused on not wanting to put too much effort into an assignment so as not to appear to care too much. While procrastination is a common defense mechanism used at times by almost everyone, what differentiates lost boys is procrastination in many different situations for multiple reasons over extended periods of time. Procrastination is a

legitimate short-term defense mechanism that may become a long-term strategy for some adolescent males.

Lack of Engagement

One symptom that appears associated with lost boys is their total lack of engagement in extracurricular activities and clubs. None of the participants in this research belonged to a club or service organization. At the school level, there appears to be a plethora of clubs and activities targeted at females or both genders, but there appears to be a lack of clubs and activities targeted at adolescent males—with the exception of sports. Not that having these clubs would necessarily solve the problem, since another characteristic of lost boys is their reluctance to volunteer, but the absence of these clubs seems to indicate a lack of concern by administrators for the phenomenon. This may be a cultural meme issue with roots in the societal fear of males in groups due to social stereotyping. Whatever the reason, it is clear that lost boys are not fully engaged in the school environment, clubs, or social organizations. Again, this marker is a long-term pattern across multiple facets.

Low or Unrealistic Aspirations

There was a wide disparity in responses from participants when asked about their future plans. While some were sure about what they wanted to accomplish in the future, some provided murkier responses. The ones who were unsure of the future or had no definite plans seemed to struggle with other decisions in their lives as well. As described by Athlete, it is difficult to properly prepare for the unknown. While all males may face

periods of indecision, what defines the lost boys is indecision and low or unrealistic aspirations in many facets of life over extended periods of time.

Risky Behaviors

Although participants were asked not to discuss illegal activities during the interviews due to IRB restrictions, it was apparent that some felt pressured to participate in risky behaviors. Some mentioned gang activities at home and in some school environments, and one was involved in legal issues at the time of the interviews. While this topic is beyond the scope of this current research, the amount and severity of risky behaviors may also be an indicator of the lost-boys phenomenon.

Implications

The following sub-sections will discuss some of the implications derived from this research. The section is divided into implications for parents, educators, policy, and society in general. While it is important not to over generalize from a study with only eight participants, all of whom attended a somewhat atypical school, the goal here is to provide a working hypothesis that can be used to make some sense of the lost-boys phenomenon while follow-on studies are conducted.

Implications for Parents

Many parents of young males have been led to believe that underachievement is just their son's or just their family's problem. This research indicates that the lost-boys phenomenon may be a large-scale phenomenon that is engendered through cultural memes and is present in many male populations. As defined in Chapter 4, memes are learned responses passed down through generations via traditions and customs (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). As discussed in Chapter 2, the dynamically changing

environment and the shifting definitions of masculinity due to the societal changes of the last century may make some of these memes counterproductive at best.

While parental involvement has been demonstrated to have a positive influence on male student achievement, parents alone cannot overcome many of the cultural influences of the lost-boys phenomenon. Parents should demand the programs and services required to help their son's achieve to their potential and be open to changing environmental factors such as schools and pedagogy whenever their sons are not succeeding. Finding teachers and administrators who are sensitive to the phenomenon and are willing to work with parents to build supportive male learning environments may reduce frustrations for both parent and students.

Changing pedagogy and building supportive environments for our sons will require activism on the part of parents because the practices that support the lost-boys phenomenon are ingrained in the culture in which we live. The conditions that support this phenomenon may not be obvious to those not associated with the males affected by it, and some practitioners biased with certain agendas may even argue the existence of the phenomenon. But as learned from the women's movement of the 1970's, changing cultural memes is possible with the correct activism focused on data driven gendered solutions.

Implications for Educators

First and foremost is the need for educators to recognize the lost-boys phenomenon for what it is: a wide-spread psychosocial cultural phenomenon. Recognition of the problem will change educator perspectives on the issue of male underachievement and may motivate them to experiment with possible solutions, some of

which may be effective. While the lost boy problem is not necessarily caused by educators, how educators approach the issues of male marginalization appears to either reinforce or help males overcome the cultural memes underlying the phenomenon. Special in-service classes should be developed to help educators learn how to recognize the symptoms of the phenomenon, and provide proven techniques to overcome the effects.

While this research was not focused on pedagogy per se, the data indicate that teaching males requires a different approach than what may be currently employed in most schools. The factory school model of the last century may not be an effective model for the classroom of the future. All participants professed a preference for more hands-on, project based education, even in a school where the rhetoric endorsed this pedagogical approach. They all gave concrete examples of why males do not do well in the classic lecture-based classroom. While some researchers have argued for single sex or male directed education, the data indicate a need for both caring male *and female* involvement in the lives of adolescent males.

Lastly, what is clearly indicated in the data is the complete lack of male support organizations—either on or off campus—with the notable exception of sports. Clubs and programs seem to be either co-ed or female focused. While these clubs and programs have certainly supported female successes in education and the workplace and should be applauded and continued, what is needed is a fresh approach for providing the same type of support for males. One obvious gap is the need for mentoring, specifically from older males not associated with education. One recommendation would be to involve civic organizations in providing mentoring for underachieving adolescent males.

Implications for Policy

It is imperative that policy makers stop debating whether the phenomenon exists and start recognizing the empirical indications apparent in existing data. While the laws currently exist to provide gender equality in education, policy and funding in past years has focused solely on bridging the education gap for females in math and science. Since these efforts have demonstrated positive results, they should be continued, but what is also needed is the same level of effort and funding to bridge the male performance gap.

Policy makers should begin immediately to chart a new course in addressing male underachievement. Funding for research should focus on the lost-boys phenomenon and programs to mitigate the years of neglect of this research agenda. Programs that enhance male achievement—specifically in reading and language arts—and participation opportunities in extra-curricular and civic organizations should be funded and implemented at the middle school level, the area where the data indicate the so-called lost boy problem first appears. These programs should continue at the high school and college levels, with mentoring from civic groups added to help adolescent males deal with the issues associated with educational performance and engagement.

Implications for Society

Since the lost-boys phenomenon is a psychosocial cultural phenomenon, parents, educators, and policy makers alone cannot solve the entire problem. Society must recognize the phenomenon and act to change the cultural memes that contribute to it. While successfully driving needed change for females, the divisive gendered politics of the last 30 years have outlived their usefulness and should be reexamined in light of

current data. Marginalization of adolescent males in our culture should be challenged, as marginalization of other demographic groups has successfully been in recent years. Reversing years of negative stereotyping of males, denigration of male relationships, and the fear of men in groups need to be on the national agenda—as successfully demonstrated by the women’s movement for females.

The media must begin to again provide positive role models and heroes for males and stop glamorizing male underachievement. Changing the image of male high achievers from one of the “nerd” to a more positive role that young males will aspire to should be a top priority. Moving away from the current trend of demeaning depictions of males in the media must be a priority. We must also foster mentoring relationships for young males and provide the support and guidance they need in order to succeed.

Most importantly, we must begin to recognize the importance of helping each individual reach their potential—regardless of gender. Our world has changed from the United States economic dominated world of the 20th century into the global economy of the 21st century. This shift has precipitated the need for transformation from a predominantly manual labor work force to a knowledge based labor force. In order to remain competitive, we must unleash the innovation that the U.S. economy is famous for producing. In order to do that, every individual must be highly educated and engaged—something that is not currently occurring for adolescent males.

Future Research

While this research successfully answered the questions posed in Chapter 1, at least with respect to the participants in the study, like any good research it raises many new questions. Some questions needing further investigations include: (a) what other

factors need to be included in the definition of the phenomenon; (b) what is the most effective methodology for identifying possible research participants; (c) and what strategies are most effective when attempting to overcome the effects of the phenomenon. The following paragraphs highlight some avenues for future research.

This research highlighted the lost-boys phenomenon at a single site in San Diego; follow-on research should attempt to replicate the techniques at multiple and diverse sites in different settings. By replicating the methodology, a library of case studies could be built that would indicate if the phenomenon is as widespread as purported. Researchers might even engage in a process that is, in at least some respects, analogous to both anthropologists' ethnology (the construction of general cultural theory from individual ethnographies) and sociologists' grounded theory strategy (building theory about societal phenomena inductively case by case). In addition, because of the positive results of self-examination reported by the participants, this research methodology may transition from basic research to action research if the results can be replicated.

Another area requiring further study is the nature of male relationships and their impact on male achievement. While much is discussed about female relationships, male-female relationships, and homosexual relationships in the popular literature, very little is known or discussed about the importance of male relationships. Male relationships appear to take longer to form, are governed by restrictive cultural memes, and are limited to certain approved activities, and yet the importance of male relationships on achievement is clearly indicated in the results of this study.

Another area requiring further research would be the impact of mentoring on adolescent males. While the data indicate that none of the participants had mentors other

than family members, what is not clear is what impact having mentors would have on underachievement. There are numerous civic organizations that profess to provide mentoring and conceivably would be willing participants in the research, but most data associated with the impact of that mentoring is intended to garner support for the programs they were commissioned by. What is unclear is what impact mentoring would have on adolescent males who were identified as exhibiting the lost-boys phenomenon symptoms, and determining the impact of mentoring on mitigating the effects.

Once the lost-boys phenomenon is qualitatively defined, large-scale qualitative or mixed methodology research should be conducted to determine the breadth of the problem. Listening to many administrators, teachers, and parents of boys describe the observed phenomenon in their own experiences indicates a widespread phenomenon, but this research only involved eight participants. Large-scale qualitative research should be conducted to empirically determine the scope of the phenomenon and perhaps validate the findings of this study.

Significance of the Study

First, the primary significance of this study is that it begins to define the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the adolescent males themselves. While other studies have concentrated on individual symptoms of the phenomenon, this study indicates that the phenomenon is multi-faceted, complex, and wide-spread. Due to this finding, the phenomenon needs to be examined in aggregate, versus as individual symptoms or as unique to certain demographic groups. As psychosocial dynamic, the phenomenon should not be viewed as an individual problem, or a problem that can be resolved symptomatically, but must be addressed holistically.

Second, the use of case studies provided voice to the lived experiences of high school aged males, of whom very little is empirically known. While other studies have provided glimpses into the world of adolescent males, this study provides data from the participants themselves, and, if nothing else, allows other researchers the ability to build their own theories based on the cases provided. The participants willingly shared their experiences with the researcher, and their voices are important data in their own right. The participants may have benefited from the self reflective methodology used in the study.

Third, this research helped lay the foundation for follow-on large-scale empirical studies of the phenomenon. Laying the groundwork and providing indicators for identifying the males who exhibit symptoms of the lost-boys phenomenon will enable follow-on researchers to readily identify participants, possible causes, and effective solutions for resolving the underlying issues that have affected this generation of young males. The symptoms provided as part of the holistic description of the phenomenon are intended to provide a starting point for follow-on research questions.

Methodological Postscript: Trustworthiness Revisited

One major issue of this research is the question of trustworthiness of the findings due to the small sample size ($n = 8$) of the respondents. Trustworthiness is typically defined as a combination of reliability, validity, and subjectivity issues. The reliability of the data in this study was provided by electronically recording the interviews, careful transcription of the recordings, and member checking for accuracy of the transcription. The validity issues were minimized through the use of clarification of researcher bias, member checking of the findings, and conducting data audits. While subjectivity is

inherent in qualitative research—and arguably in most research, the goal of the researcher was to reduce the impact of subjectivity on the findings by conducting a data audit, and performing member checking of the findings. Table 5 below summarizes the techniques used to increase the trustworthiness of this research

Table 5. Techniques for Establishing Trustworthiness

Criterion Area	Technique	This Research
Credibility	Persistent Observation	Conducting multiple interviews
Transferability	Thick Description	Case Studies
Dependability	Dependability Audit	Data Audit
Confirmability	Confirmability Audit	Data Audit
Safeguards	Bias Distortion	Data Audit

Source: Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 328

Conclusion

This research has investigated the lost-boys phenomenon from the perspective of the adolescent males themselves and provided a cross-case analysis to determine common themes and noted differences from the existing literature. It provided indicators for identifying participants and a sound methodology for future research. It highlighted implications for parents, educators, policy makers, and society in general. What is needed now is a dedicated effort to put this issue on the national agenda.

Appendix A
Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Q1: Could you describe yourself to me?

Q2: Please tell me about your family and describe some of your early childhood experiences.

Q3: Can you describe your educational background such as where you went to grammar school and junior high? Did you enjoy going to school there?

Q4: What can you tell me about your friends?

Q5: Can you describe how you see yourself in the future? What are some of your life goals?

Q6: Are you or any of your friends planning on going to college? Why or why not?

Q7: Who in your life would you consider to be a mentor? Who are your heroes? Who do you admire and look to for advice?

Q8: Do you think you are doing your best in school? Why or why not?

Q9: What kind of kids do better in school? Why do you think so?

Q10: Do you know anyone that you would consider to be underachieving in school? Can you describe their behavior?

Q11: If you were involved in researching male perspectives on achievement, what questions would you ask?

Appendix B
Solicitation Letter

Solicitation to Participate in a Research Study

Dear (parent/guardian),

I am a doctoral student in the Leadership Studies program in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego conducting research about high school males' perspectives on achievement and the reasons why boys, at times, do not achieve their potential. As a dissertation project I will be interviewing high school boys to get their views on this important issue.

I am soliciting participation in this study which will entail a series of no more than 4 interview sessions lasting 1 hour or less. If I need clarification after the interviews about something that your son said, I will telephone you and make arrangements for a 30 minute follow-up interview. Participation in these interviews is strictly voluntary and participant names will not be released.

During the interviews I will ask your son questions that will be provided to you and him prior to the interviews. Foreseeable risks in this study are minimal. The study is not intended to make your son uncomfortable. Discomforts he may experience include length and depth of interviews, subject matter of the questions, and sensitivity when talking about lived experiences. The participants may benefit by getting a chance for self-reflection on the issues and examining their own decisions and actions.

If you are interested in having your son volunteer for this research, please respond by returning the enclosed Informed Consent form in the envelope provided, or via E-mail or telephone. Your son, of course, will have the final say over whether or not to participate, but he will only be given this opportunity if you give your consent for participation in the study.

Very Respectfully,

Richard Stakelum



Appendix C
Informed Assent Form

Informed Assent to Participate in a Research Study

My name is Richard Stakelum and I am a graduate student at the University of San Diego, School of Leadership and Education Sciences. I am studying teenage boys' attitudes about achievement. I would like to see if you would like to be in this research study. Here is some information that might help you decide if you would like to participate.

What will happen to me in this study?

You will be participating in interviews about the perceptions of high school aged boys. I will initially ask you 10 questions related to your experiences and thoughts on achievement. Each of the 3 - 4 interviews will take about 50 minutes. The interviews will be done in a private place in and around your school. You will be tape recorded and videotaped. Your real name will NOT be used. After the interview, if I have questions about stuff you said, I might call and make arrangements to meet to talk about it. That would take about 30 minutes. I will keep all the stuff from this study- including the tapes- locked up in a file cabinet, and nobody else will see them or listen to them. I

will keep this stuff for at least 5 years before I destroy it.

Do I have to be part of this survey?

Only if you want to. It is absolutely VOLUNTARY. That means you can decide not to be a part of the study and you will not get into any trouble. It will not affect your grades or how you do in school. If you choose to do the interview you can choose to answer only the questions you are comfortable with, or none of them. It really is up to you, and you can start the interview and stop it at any time without any problems.

Can anything bad happen to me?

You might get tired during the interview. You can ask to stop and rest anytime. You can re-schedule the interview for another time. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to. Please know that if you do tell me about doing things that are dangerous and/or illegal, I have to tell the school authorities, and the school authorities will have to take appropriate action. Sometimes when people are asked about things that are sad or difficult, they feel upset. You may or may not feel upset by some of the questions. If the interview does make you

upset, don't hesitate! Talk to a counselor or psychologist at your high school. They know about this study, and are standing by in case you need them. If it's not during school hours, call the **San Diego Youth Crisis Hotline at 800-448-4663** or call the **California Youth Crisis Line at 800-843-5200**.

Can anything good happen to me?

Doing this interview may or may not make you feel better. But, if we can learn more about the perceptions on achievement in high school aged boys, we will be able to help teens meet their potential. You also may benefit by getting a chance for self-reflection on the issues and examining their own decisions and actions.

Do I have other choices?

You can choose not to be in this research. Just tell me you don't want to do this, and it will be no big deal.

Who can I talk to about this research?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can e-mail me at stakelum-04@sandiego.edu or call me at 619-794-9051, or you can talk to my teacher Dr.

Robert Donmoyer, at [REDACTED] or call him at [REDACTED].

What if I DON'T want to do this?

You don't have to be in this study. No one will be mad at you if you if you don't and you won't get in trouble if you don't. If you don't want to be in this study and do the interview, you just have to tell us. And, remember, you can say "yes" now and change your mind anytime. It's up to you.

Do you understand this research and are you willing to participate? (circle one)

YES

NO

Signature of Student

Date

Printed Name

Date

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Richard Stakelum, a doctoral student in the Leadership Studies program in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego, is conducting research on adolescent male perspectives on achievement.

1. This study will involve a series of 3 - 4 face-to-face interviews lasting approximately one hour. Follow-up interviews will probably be needed so your son can clarify or expand upon ideas discussed in the initial interview and discuss new topics as they arise. If I need clarification after the interviews about something that your son said, I will telephone you and make arrangements for a 30 minute follow-up interview.
2. Your son will be given a brief background and overview of the study. The researcher will explain the interview process and ensure your son has an understanding of his rights as a participant in the study.
3. The interview will be conducted at your son's school between or after class in order that he not be distracted from his current responsibilities.
4. Interviews will be video and audio recorded, subject to your and his approval, and transcribed. Nobody other than the researcher will listen to and/or see the recordings. Written notes will also be taken and kept in a field notes notebook.
5. While efforts will be undertaken to ensure confidentiality (e.g., by keeping data in a locked cabinet or password protected file on the computer until it is destroyed five years after the completion of the study; and by using fake names), confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. I am required to report any dangerous or illegal activities revealed in the interviews to school authorities. The school authorities will be required to take appropriate action.
6. Information from this study will contribute to an understanding of why boys sometimes do not achieve to their potential.

7. Foreseeable risks in this study are minimal. The study is not intended to make your son uncomfortable. Discomforts he may experience include length and depth of interviews, subject matter of the questions, and sensitivity when talking about lived experiences. If he experiences discomfort of any kind, he should inform the researcher.
8. His comments may be quoted in the final report. He will be allowed to review the transcripts and final report to ensure correctness and accuracy of things he said.
9. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your son may withdraw from the study at anytime. Participation or withdrawal from the study will not affect his grade in any class. If he decides to withdraw, information collected prior to his withdrawal will not be used unless he agrees in writing to let the data be used.
10. If you have any questions about this study or activities that occur during the course of this study, you may contact Richard Stakelum at [REDACTED], [REDACTED] or his faculty supervisor, Dr. Robert Donmoyer at [REDACTED], [REDACTED].
11. The information collected will be used in a dissertation paper and presentations and, possibly, in additional publications or presentations emerging from this study.
12. There is no agreement written or verbal, beyond that which is expressed on this consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the above conditions and give my consent to my son's voluntary participation in the research that has been described.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____
 Printed Name: _____ Address _____
 Contact Information: Phone: _____ Email _____

Appendix E
Cross Case Analysis Matrix

Table 6. Cross Case Analysis Matrix

Factor	Producer	Basketball Player	Fencer	Herpetologist	Motocross	Mechanic	Athlete	Engineer
Age	14	15	15	15	17	17	17	17
Ethnicity	Latino	Latino	White	Latino	Asian	Asian	Black	Black
Family	Core	Core	Core	Other	Divorce	Divorce	Sep	Step
Class	Blue	Blue	Pink/ Blue	Blue	White/ Pink	Pink	Blue	White
Siblings	3 Sisters	2 Bro 1 Sister	2 Bro	1 Bro 1 Sister	None	1 Bro 6 Sisters	1 Bro 1 Sister 1 SS	1 Bro 1 Sister 2 SB
Order	Second	Last	Middle	Oldest	Only	Fourth	Middle	Oldest
Memories	Happy	Mixed	Happy	Mixed	Very Happy	Troubled	Happy	Mixed
School History	A until JH	B until JH	A until JH	Special Ed	A until JH	Good until JH	A until HS	A until JH
GPA	D	D	C	D	C	D	C	B
Attitude	NDB	NDB	NDB	NDB	NDB	NDB	NDB	NDB
Sibling GPA	S1 – A S2 – A+ S3 – B	B1 – G S – G	B1 – A B2 – A			S – Good	B – Pass S – A	
Teacher Relations	Good M Not F	Mixed	Good M Not F	Not Good	Good	Not Good	Good	Good

Marginalize	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pedagogy	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On	Hands On
Friends	0	Lots	Lots	5	Many	1	2	Many
Mentors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heroes	LL Cool Tupac	Teacher Jordan Bryant	Mother Rossi Winfrey	None	Parents	Sister Mother Friend Superman	Grand-Parents	Father Grand-mother James
Advice	1 - No One 2 - Cousin	1 - M 2 - B 3 - Fr	1 - F 2 - B	Cousin	1 - F 2 - P	1 - Fr 2 Teacher	1 - Fr 2 - B1	1 - F 2 - GM
Activities	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Clubs	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Sports	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Mobility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
College - Family & Peer Influences	F - N M - N S - N C - N P - N	F - Y M - N B1 - Y B2 - N S - Y P - N	F - Y M - Y B1 - Y P - Y	F - N M - N GM - N P - Y	F - N M - Y P - Y	F - N M - N S1 - Y S2 - Y S3 - Y P - N	F - Y M - Y B - Y P - Y	F - N M - Y SD - N P - Y
Expectation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Plans	Nothing	UNK	College	College	College	Legal	College	College
Results	Expelled	Improve	Improve	Improve	College	Community College	Accept	Accept

Cross-Case Analysis Table Definitions

- Age – Age of the participant at the time of the interviews.
- Ethnicity – Ethnicity of participant.
- Family – Makeup of the participants' family.
 - Core – Mother and Father married and living together.
 - Other – Living with grandmother.
 - Divorce – Living with one parent.
 - Step – Living with mother and stepfather.
- Class – Parental working conditions
 - White – White collar office work.
 - Blue – Blue collar labor.
 - Pink – Pink collar business owner (mother).
- Siblings – Number and make-up of siblings.
 - Bro – Brother.
 - Sister – Sister.
 - SB – Step-brother.
 - SS – Step-sister.
- Order – Participant birth order.
- Memories – Childhood memories.
- School History – Participant reported GPA in previous schools.
- GPA – Participant reported GPA average at time of interview.
- Attitude – Participant reported level of effort.
 - NDB – Not doing his best.
- Sibling GPA – Participant reported how siblings were doing in school.
- Teacher Relations – How well participant gets along with teachers.
 - M – Male teachers
 - F – Female teachers
- Marginalize – Participant reported marginalization in some form.
- Pedagogy – Participant reported learning preference.

- Friends – Number of friendships reported.
- Mentors – Number of mentors reported.
- Heroes – Who participant looks up to.
- Advice – Who the participant asks for advice and in what order.
 - F – Father
 - M – Mother
 - Fr – Friend
 - B – Brother
 - GM – grandmother
- Activities – Extracurricular activities of participant.
- Clubs – Clubs participant belongs to.
- Sports – Does participant play organized sports.
- Mobility – Has participant moved during childhood.
- Influences – Did family members attend college, were peers planning to go.
 - F – Father
 - M – Mother
 - S – Sister
 - B – Brother
 - C – Cousin
 - GM - Grandmother
 - P – Peers
- Expectation – Family expectations about participant going to college.
- Plans – Participant plan for the future.
- Results – Epilogue reported results.

Appendix F
Popular Literature Matrix

Table 7. Popular Literature Cross Case Analysis Matrix

Source	Factor	Producer	Basketball Player	Fencer	Herpetologist	Motocross	Mechanic	Athlete	Engineer
Real Boys Pollack (1998)	Masculinity	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	Relationships	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Pedagogy	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Violence	C	I	C	I	I	C	I	I
Ibid.	Divorce	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C
Raising Cain Kindlon & Thompson (1999)	Unequal Discipline	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Pedagogy	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Solitude	C	I	I	I	I	C	I	I
Ibid.	Risky Behavior	C	C	I	C	I	C	I	I
Ibid.	Violence	C	I	C	I	I	C	I	I
Boys Adrift (Sax, 2007)	Video Games	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I

Ibid.	Pedagogy	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Medication	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	Endocrine Disruptors	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	Masculinity Devaluation	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Trouble With Boys (Tyre, 2008)	Literacy	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	Teacher Gender	C	I	C	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	Brain Development	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Electronic Distraction	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ibid.	School Bias	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Masculinity Devaluation	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Purpose of Boys Gurian (2009)	Brain Differences	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Purpose	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Heroes	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C

Ibid.	Mentors	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Pedagogy	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Ibid.	Relationships	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C

Popular Literature Matrix Explanation

William Pollack, Ph.D.

Pollack is a clinical psychologist and Director of the Center for Men who's stated purpose is: "to help men identify and master the stresses of work, family and intimate relationships, as well as to cope throughout their lives with emotional or physical health challenges" (Pollack, 2009). He is the author of: *In a Time of Fallen Heroes* (1991), *A New Psychology of Men* (1995), *New Psychotherapy for Men* (1998), *Real Boy's Voices* (2001), and *Real Boys Workbook* (2001). He practices at Harvard University's McLean Hospital and works with the U.S. Department of Education and the Secret Service to reduce school violence.

In *Real Boys* (1998), Pollack argues that young males are in "serious trouble" due to feelings of detachment, alienation, isolation, confusion, and despair and need to be rescued from the myths of boyhood. He states: "Confused by society's mixed messages about what's expected of them as boys, and later as men, many feel a sadness and disconnection they cannot even name" (p. xxi). This disconnection is purportedly due to the squelching of natural human emotions starting at an early age, and continuing throughout life.

Masculinity

Pollack (1998) correlates the main factor in male disconnection as a socially proliferated “Mask of Masculinity” (p. 11). Societal memes promote male disconnection by: the use of shame to toughen and control males; and the continued forced emotional separation—prematurely from mothers in childhood and from males’ own emotions in adolescence and adulthood. While perhaps not voiced directly by the culture, these messages are transmitted subtly and continuously in how boys (and later adolescents and adult males) are treated in everyday situations. Often, the result of this treatment is what Pollack calls the “silence of lost boys” (p. 13) in which males are acculturated to suffer in silence or appear weak in front of their peers.

Violence

Pollack (1998) contends that the result of this male disconnection is depression, suicide, and violence. Cultural memes against males demonstrating emotion causes them to internalize sadness—which often leads to depression, and ultimately suicide. The only culturally acceptable male emotion is anger. Anger is the result when males are shamed, and when anger builds, it eventually leads to violence. This violence can be expressed against oneself, against others, and in the extreme—against society. In essence, violence is due to the innate male bias for action combined with pent up emotional anger over perceived transgressions.

Relationships

Another factor identified by Pollack (1998) is the “hidden yearning for relationship” (p. 18). Despite the cultural pressures on males to remain disconnected and the stereotypical image of adolescent detachment, males continually attempt to form

meaningful relationships with family, friends, and other caring adults. Most boys (and arguably men) maintain their “inner wellspring of emotional connectedness” as demonstrated by the special male bonding rituals. They long for close relationships with peers and adults and their behavior is shaped more by these relationships than by nature. Anything that disrupts these relationships increases male disconnection, with the resultant effects discussed above.

Divorce

One extreme relationship disrupter identified by Pollack (1998) is divorce which causes disconnection from parents and sometimes other relationships. This is often accompanied by the feeling of shame and the masking of emotion to cover the sense of loss. Because the mother gets custody of the children in most divorces, male children often are physically and emotionally detached from their fathers. This can have a disproportionate affect on males due to the cultural straightjacket restricting emotional displays. Retreating behind the mask of stoic silence, males in this situation may become angry, act out, and argue with those closest to them to hide the pain of shame.

Pedagogy

Pollack (1998) also suggests that schools do not recognize or are not empathetic to the male model of learning. He states:

Our schools, in general, are not sufficiently hospitable environments for boys and are not doing what they could to address boys’ unique social, academic, and emotional needs. Today’s typical coeducational schools have teachers and administrators who, although they don’t intend it, are often not particularly empathetic to boys; they use curricula, classroom

materials, and teaching methods that do not respond to how boys learn; and many of these schools are hardly places most of our boys long to spend time. Put simply, I believe most of our schools are failing our boys (p. 231).

Dan Kindlon, Ph.D. & Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Kindlon is a clinical psychologist specializing in child and adolescent psychology who teaches at Harvard University. He is the author of *Tough Times, Strong Children* (2003), *Too Much of a Good Thing* (2003), and *Alpha Girls* (2007). He lectures groups on childhood emotional issues and learning disabilities including ADD. Thompson is a psychologist specializing in family and child psychology. He is the author of *Speaking of Boys* (2000), *Best Friends/Worst Enemies* (2001), *Mom, They're Teasing Me* (2002), *The Pressured Child* (2004), and *It's a Boy* (2009). He conducts presentations and workshops for parents and teachers on the impact of school culture and raising responsible children.

In *Raising Cain* (1999), Kindlon & Thompson purport that through cultural prejudice, we are “railroading boys into lives of isolation, shame, and anger” (p. xiii). Popular culture mis-educates boys and is destructive to their emotional well-being. Traditional gender stereotypes cause us to treat boys differently, and these stereotypes are harmful to their ability to gain emotional maturity. They explain:

Our culture co-opts some of the most impressive qualities a boy can possess—their physical energy, boldness, curiosity, and action orientation—and distorts them into a punishing, dangerous definition of masculinity. (p. 15)

They point out that, despite the stereotypical impressions of masculinity, males have the innate need to connect with one another, with females, and with caring adults.

Discipline

One factor identified by Kindlon & Thompson (1999) is the preferred use of harsh discipline when dealing with male behavior. When dealing with males, authority figures more often resort to the use of power and coercion to try to control behavior. This causes males to respond more aggressively and to act out more, reaffirming our prejudices. Parents, teachers, and others in authority positions presume that harsh discipline—physical, verbal, and emotional—will help boys mature into men. By doing so, we try to impose a “tyranny of toughness” on males that perpetuates a culture of cruelty throughout their lives (p. 54).

Pedagogy

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) purport that early education is a female environment that perpetuates negative male stereotypes and disadvantages boys. Because of gender developmental differences, boys have a harder time adjusting to early education and this pattern of learning shapes their entire educational careers. In many ways they are taught that no matter what they do, they just don’t measure up to others’ expectations. Because of these negative messages given, “often by third grade, [males] have already disengaged their energy from the task of learning, tuned out of school, and written it off as a place they can’t do anything right” (p. 26). Typically, a boy’s educational experience is greatly shaped by his relationship with teachers—both positively, but more often negatively as teachers take their apparent underachievement personally.

Solitude

According to Kindlon & Thompson (1999), isolation and solitude become a reflexive behavior to harsh treatment received by the time boys reach adolescence. They have learned to hide their emotions and disguise their true feelings. They are intimidated by the culture of cruelty and constant threat of humiliation, and rationally decide to withdraw emotionally rather than continue to experience the pain. This learned behavior continues throughout life, and perpetuates the male stereotype of stoicism and silence in emotional situations.

Risky Behavior

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) point out that boys often resort to risky behavior as a coping mechanism. They explain: “The emotional turmoil a boy feels—shame, anger, sadness—and his difficulty expressing those feelings may contribute to high activity and impulsiveness” (p. 40). The descent into self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse and risky sex is often an outwardly visible side effect of the depression caused by constant emotional turmoil.

Violence

Emotionally isolated boys are more also likely to resort to scapegoating and violence, according to Kindlon & Thompson (1999). Trouble signs include “a darker mood that persists, a withdrawal from friends, declining grades” and these “red flags” should trigger action from caring adults (p. 145). Stoicism may indicate a self-contempt that is cultivated from within, and may presage acts of hostility.

Mentors

Kindlon & Thompson (1999) point out the need for mentors in boys' lives to help them overcome emotional adversity. The difference between those who successfully learn to overcome this emotional adversity and those that do not depends on the amount and quality of resources boys have available to help them cope. Parents are important as role models for emotional literacy and dealing with emotional issues, but other caring adults are required to overcome years of negative feedback and unhealthy learned behaviors.

Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D.

Sax is a family practice physician and psychologist, and the founder and executive director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education that is "dedicated to the advancement of single-sex public education for both girls and boys" (NASSPE, 2009). Sax is the author of *Why Gender Matters* (2005) and numerous articles on gender differences and single sex education.

In *Boys Adrift* (2007), Sax acknowledges that despite the media attempts to discredit the boy crisis as a myth, the problem is large and growing. He points out that the often quoted NAEP (2000) study was noticeably biased by focusing on the reading improvements of nine year old males while completely ignoring that "one in four white boys with college-educated parents can't read proficiently" (p. 39). This study was enthusiastically picked up by the media which heralded that the boy problem was a myth. In his research he identifies five factors affecting male underachievement which will be highlighted in the paragraphs below.

Pedagogy

The first factor identified by Sax (2007) is the changes in teaching pedagogy. Starting in kindergarten which has changed from painting, socialization, and motor skill development, into reading, writing and rote memorization, schools have changed—to the detriment of the males. This disadvantage is reflected in teacher attitudes and expectations, and is transmitted to males as “the teacher doesn’t like me” (p.19). Males quickly learn that in the school environments, they are considered by teachers and peers to be part of the “Dumb Group”—a moniker that tends to follow them throughout their school experience.

Video Games

Being unsuccessful in school feeds into the second factor identified by Sax (2007)—the rise of video gaming as an escape mechanism. Males have an innate need for mastery of skills and what Nietzsche termed a “will to power” (p.56). Video games give boys a feeling of power and being in control, something they have little of in real life. While some may argue that video games makes today’s generation smarter (Johnson, 2005), what is clear is “the more time your child spends playing video games, the less likely he is to do better in school” (p. 63). This negative correlation has been shown to have a causal affect on disengagement and violent behavior and displaces other activities that help males develop empathy.

Medication

The third factor identified by Sax (2007) is the rise in the use of prescription drugs to modify male behavior. What was once considered natural boy behavior such as that described in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Mark Twain, 1876), is now considered

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The increasing diagnosis of ADD and ADHD has also led to an increase in the use of medication to mitigate these behaviors. Besides helping boys focus and behave, the medications prescribed have been shown to cause depression and have lasting negative effects on brain development.

Endocrine Disruptors

Sax (2007) identifies the fourth factor affecting male development as the increase in environmental endocrine disruptors. The increasing use of hormones in beef, phalates in clear plastic bottles, and the presence of endocrine disruptors in drinking water is causing developmental issue in both males and females. But these disruptors seem to have a disproportionate effect on male development—including brain development, bone and muscular tissues, and reproductive organs. Males have lower testosterone levels today than their fathers and male infertility is on the rise.

Masculinity Devaluation

The last factor identified by Sax (2007) is the devaluation of masculinity in our society. The typical male role model in popular culture has shifted from positive and successful depictions of caring and responsible males to one of evil buffoonishness. He explains:

Forty years ago, if a young man were told to “grow up!” he knew what that meant. It meant acting like the characters portrayed by MacMurry and Young in *My Three Sons* and *Father Knows Best*, or Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, or Jimmy Stewart in *It’s a Wonderful Life* or by Sydney Poitier in *In the Heat of the Night*. But if you ask a boy today to “grow up!” what

does that mean? Who is he supposed to act like? Homer Simpson?
Michael Jackson? Rambo? Akon? Mel Gibson? What does it mean today
to be a man? (p. 179-180)

Peg Tyre

Tyre is an investigative reporter for Newsweek magazine covering social and education trends and a speaker at schools and organizations throughout the country on gender issues in education. She is the author of *Two Seconds Under the World* (1994), *Strangers in the Night* (1996), and *In the midnight Hour* (1997). She has been nominated for numerous National Magazine awards for her concise and complete investigative reporting and authored the Newsweek cover story on the status of boys in education.

In *The Trouble with Boys* (2008), Tyre states that as a “grateful beneficiary of the feminist movement,” she expected to find “how boys dominate classrooms at the expense of girls” (p. 3). Along with many dedicated teachers and administrators, she had been working to help create a level playing field for girls in school. What she found instead was just the opposite of what she expected to find. She explained: “For several years, I didn’t see what was in front of my face: the myriad ways in which boys are not thriving in the classroom” (p. 3). She gradually began to understand that something had changed in our culture and schools, and the changes were marginalizing boys. The below paragraphs discuss some of the factors identified by the author.

Pedagogy

One factor identified by Tyre (2008) in the changing pedagogy of early education. Starting in pre-school and early elementary, educators have been pushing curriculum further down in the age groups in order to better prepare kids for standardized testing. But

this early learning model is not synchronous with male development—particularly brain development. Reducing play time and expecting boys to sit still in class and pay attention to topics that are more appropriate for girls is unnatural. The additional move to zero tolerance on pretend play that includes violent themes doesn't allow boys to develop admirable traits such as courage and loyalty.

Teacher Gender

Another factor that puts males at a disadvantage identified by Tyre (2008) is that most early educators are female. Female teachers do not know enough about boys to develop a “classroom environment that engages them” (p. 69). The lack of male teachers as role models creates the image of school as a feminine place that real men don't value. She argues that schools should “reflect, at least to some degree, the ethnic and gender makeup of their students” (p. 131). While female teachers help raise the achievement of girls, they lowered the achievement of boys. Although educators do not necessarily agree, Tyre concludes that in the case of achievement—teacher gender matters.

Literacy

Tyre (2008) found that “boys do worse in reading and writing the longer they stay in school” (p. 135). Literacy is essential not only for doing well in school and college, but also for economic success and survival. Boys are more affected by the kinds of books selected for reading, with the choice of action and adventure being high on their preferred list. The move to more feminine literature in education solidifies male impressions that literacy is a female activity. Although it is clear that “boys from every socio-economic background and every racial group underperform their female counterparts” (p. 141) in literacy, there are no programs designed to close this gap.

Brain Development

Another factor identified by Tyre (2008) was the developmental differences in male brains. New technologies have allowed researchers a glimpse into brain functions and are leading to new models of brain development. Unlike the once widely accepted model of intelligence being fixed at birth, brain scans have shown that brain development is much more dynamic and that males and females brains develop differently and at different rates. The boy brain is “astonishingly plastic and is shaped by the experiences and attitudes that he’s immersed in” (p. 179). Teaching to the boy brain requires different strategies as it responds more to environmental factors and does not reach maturity until age 30.

Electronic Distraction

Tyre (2008) identifies electronic distraction as another factor in male underperformance. The proliferation of violent video games and the number of hours boys spend playing them (nearly twice as much as girls) have negatively affected their ability to concentrate. Some have acquired an addiction that has replaced social interaction, school work, and family life. The time spent playing video games decreases “boys’ involvement in out-of-school activities that support learning, improve socialization, and promote community” (p. 199). The negative effects of video gaming appear to be dose related, so setting limits is important.

School Bias

While boys do equally well in intelligence tests, Tyre (2008) purports that schools are biased against boys by “prizing organization, handwriting, collaboration, and rule following over intellectual growth” (p. 239). Teacher evaluations of students are often

biased towards neatness, promptness, and non-competitive participation and don't take into full account the many facets of male intelligence. In doing so, "poor organization—which may be rooted in neurological maturity—becomes synonymous with underachievement" (p. 234). Boys pick up on teacher attitudes, and these constant messages soon condemn them to failure.

Masculinity Devaluation

The cultural messages that devalue masculinity is another factor identified by Tyre (2008). She explained: "As a community and a country, we are unequivocal: We want girls to reach their full potential" (p. 244). But when it comes to boys, she continues:

In contrast, the only unified message that we regularly send to boys has nothing to do with doing well in school or achieving economic independence. The main message we deliver to our young men is that they should do well in sports—particularly team sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and lacrosse. Schools that barely have enough money for textbooks build stadiums for their (largely male) teams. (p. 245)

Boys soon get the message loud and clear that there is no way for males to gain the respect of teachers, parents, and peers through academic achievement and are put in no-win situations that devalue their natural masculine tendencies. She concludes: "If we want to change the behavior of boys, ..., we need to change the negative, self-destructive, and contradictory messages we give them" (p. 251).

Michael Gurian

Gurian is a family therapist and Co-founder of the Gurian Institute whose stated purpose is: “*helping boys and girls reach their full potential by providing professional development that increases student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and parent involvement*” (Gurian, 2009). Gurian has authored twenty five books in the field of psychology, parenting, and gendered education including *The Wonder of Boys* (1996), *A Fine Young Man* (1992), *What Could He Be Thinking* (2002), *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (2002), *The Mind of Boys* (2005), and *Leadership and the Sexes* (2008). Besides leading gender specific teacher training seminars, he is a pioneer in the field of neurobiology and its impact on pedagogy, policy, and parenting.

In *The Purpose of Boys* (2009), Gurian argues that young males have lost a sense of purpose and provides a vision for families, schools, and communities to help young males become purposeful men. He states:

Our sons are not only losing a sense of educational purpose in school and college. They are also losing a sense of social purpose in their behavior—filling our juvenile justice system and prisons. They are losing a sense of purpose in their hearts and souls—committing suicide and harming others at alarming rates. In each of these areas, they are increasingly falling behind or failing at life. (p. 17)

Brain Differences

Gurian (2009) purports that biological and biochemical differences in the brain cause males and females to develop differently, and that male psychology is not just socialized—but is actually hardwired into the male brain. The male brain

compartmentalizes brain activity which causes them to be more focused, but also less capable of multi-tasking. Biochemically, males have: more testosterone, which affects risk-taking and aggression; less serotonin, which calms impulses; and less oxytocin, which affects the ability to bond with others. Because of these differences, “boys need to be led to motivation by role models before they become motivated to carve out an identity for themselves” (p. 33).

Purpose

The second factor identified by Gurian (2009) is the need for a male sense of purpose. Unlike females who are born with an innate sense of purpose (i.e. procreation), males must create purpose in their own lives. Males have a need to feel heroic, and have a natural preference “to *do* something rather than *talk* about it” (p. 34). They need to find meaningful projects that help build a sense of purpose and tend to daydream more about heroic activities. The role of “seeker-warrior” is an important one that helps males find a sense of self and purpose in their lives.

Heroes

The third factor identified by Gurian (2009) was the need for heroes and role models. Unlike the media portrayed mythical stoic male, males have a need for social acceptance. They have a need to be accepted and respected in the larger community, and to belong to “communities of purpose” (p. 153). Through emulation of heroes and role models, males learn how to find purpose in their lives. Males also respond differently to social rejection and lack of respect for their identity and roles, instinctively triggering a fight or flight reaction which can lead to violence or isolationism.

Mentors

Gurian (2009) also identified the need for mentors, maturation rituals, and group learning activities. He explained:

Boys don't have as much inner access as girls do to sensorial information, memory, or feelings. In order to gain complete empathetic development, boys will often need cultural and social maps and rigorous rituals to make connections between their senses, important memories, and important feelings. They will need, in other words, parents, mentors, and other people to help guide them toward a plan, an objective, or a sacred text in which they feel their emotions are useful, purposeful, and meaningful. (p. 35)

Pedagogy

The fifth factor identified was the need for pedagogy change to match the male model of learning. Unlike females who learn through verbal communication, males learn more through trial and error. Gurian (2009) recommends: matching pedagogy to the male brain; building learning communities in which teachers bond with boys and become a "second or third family" (p.159); and "making schools an environment of relevance and purpose for boys and young men" (p. 160).

Appendix G
Data Audit

Data Audit Case Study Producer

Table 8. Discussion Board: Case Producer

<p>The central characteristic of Producer’s profile is his Hispanic culture. Producer spends a lot of time talking about how it feels being a Hispanic living in the United States. By the end of the interview sessions he clearly expresses what can only be characterized as grief as he describes missing the traditions and celebrations that are central to his heritage. In the Identity section of the chapter, the author quotes Producer as saying “It was weird—like half the time we lived...,” thus providing context for the rest of the case study; however, the author does not provide clear details about where Producer was born (Mexico or the US) and how he came to the US. As a result, some of the discussion that follows is confusing.</p>	<p>Concur – will add.</p>
<p>Because Producer’s ethnicity is central to his view of the world and, consequently, his school performance, direct quotations—rather than brief interview summaries--should be used to capture the depth of his feelings. His description of what it means to be “too friendly,” for example, illustrates how he thinks about interacting with others; these comments also provide some insight into the social isolation he seems to be feeling. In addition, a brief discussion of his experience in advisory could provide the reader with a sense of “what worked,” at least partially, for him in school.</p>	<p>Concur – will add.</p>
<p>It is interesting to note that in interview 1, Producer indicates that he has no real plans for the future, but in the third interview he announces that he wants to become a producer (after joining the Marines). Producer also seems to be more inclined by the third interview to want to go to college. The author might speculate as to whether or not something he said in the first interview inspired Producer to think about having a career goal, and also whether there is other evidence in the data to show that Producer’s “lost boy” status was at least partially caused by his feelings of isolation.</p>	<p>Concur – included in Chapter 18.</p>
<p>On pages two and three of the third interview Producer explains why he believes cultural traditions are important, and why he finds the US to be lacking in such traditions. He also describes how he yearns to be with people who think “The way I think. The way I think.” Still, by the third interview Producer seems to be thinking about a brighter future than he envisioned at the beginning of the interview process. This is an especially poignant fact given that soon after the interview process ended, he was expelled from school.</p>	<p>Concur – Included in Chapter 16.</p>

Table 9. Producer Data Audit Matrix

Source	Line	Target	Page	Paragraph	Line	Type	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 3	49	Case Study	80	1		Major	Add	Clarify here, right at the start that he was born in USA but was living in TJ when he crossed border to go to school	The sequence of events of birth and schooling are confusing	Approved	In interviews 1 and 2 it is confusing, but in interview 3 he clearly states on line 49 that he was born in the US, but lived in TJ. Added this to identity section.
Interview 2	20-23	Case Study	81	1	6	Substantive	Comment	Nice use of quotation		Concur	No change necessary
Interview 2	100-133	Case Study	82	2	2	Major	Add	Need more explanation of "close"; your summary of his comments seems contradictory	Relationships need to be fully understood by reader; I sensed he was feeling something had been lost since he was little	Approved	Added a little more detail to the family section.
Interview 1	159-164	Case Study	83	2	8	Administrative	Change	Computer class not named in interviews	Accuracy?	Rejected	In interview 1 lines 159 - 164 he states he likes the computer class.
Interview 2	167-168	Case Study	83	2	1	Substantive	Add	Should you say here that the cousin is the person he is most close to but parents don't know?	Has implications for current behavior	Approved	Added the last line in the Childhood Memories section

Source	Line	Target	Page	Paragraph	Line	Type	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1	197-199	Case Study	84	1	3	Administrative	Add	insert "male or female" in parentheses after "teacher preferences"	It's what you really were asking	Approved	Changed wording to "gender preferences"
Interview 1	173-183	Case Study	84	1	1	Substantive	Add	Say that he used to be able to do math when it was addition and subtraction, but he has trouble with algebra	could be relevant to his learning difficulties	Approved	Added to Educational Background section.
Interview 2	218-227	Case Study	85	1	6	Major	Add	Use direct quotation so his real point isn't lost	This really captures this kid's world-view; don't miss the opportunity	Approved	Added the quote in the Peer Influences section
Interview 2	502-507	Case Study	85	2	8	Major	Add	Use direct quotation so his real point isn't lost	Proves an point which otherwise seems exaggerated	Approved	Added the quote in the last line of the friends section
Interview 3	186-198	Case Study	86	1	1	Major	Add	He said in at least two of the interviews that he only had future plans if he didn't die in the Marines	He mentions death a lot; this seems like a theme that shouldn't be overlooked	Approved	Added a couple of lines in the opening paragraph of future plans.
Interview 3	216-221	Case Study	86	1	5	Administrative	Change	The percentage changed from interview 2 to interview 3	Not sure how you should handle this	Approved	Added a comment in paragraph two of future plans

Source	Line	Target	Page	Paragraph	Line	Type	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 3	216-234	Case Study	86	1	1	Substantive	Add	More needs to be said about his thoughts about going to college; by interview 3, he had heard from someone only two years would be enough; he also said in interview 3 that the more he learned about college the more he thought he'd like to go	The influence of other people giving him information that changed his views is readily apparent here and shouldn't be ignored	Approved	Inserted the quote in the Future Plans section paragraph 2.
Interview 1	383-388	Case Study	86	2	1	Administrative	Change	Are you combining mentors and heros at this point? Also, he rejected Tupac on some level in interview 2 (?)--I think because he is dead	See comment 12 above	Approved	Included an ending quote in the Heroes section

Source	Line	Target	Page	Paragraph	Line	Type	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1	391-392	Case Study	87	1	2	Substantive	Comment	Nice use of quotation, but is there room for you to comment on the significance of this comment here?	His independent and loner attitude could be foreshadowed by material like this	Rejected	Analysis of this case, identity, and group relations are included in Chapter 18.
Interview 1	407-413	Case Study	87	1	5	Substantive	Add	Use more concrete comments about what his engineering teacher did for him	This is an important relationship that needs to be more fully described and characterized	Approved	Added new last paragraph to Advisors section
Interview 1	419-456	Case Study	87	2	11	Major	Add	Look for more comments he makes on this topic	Seems like a superficial treatment of something that's really significant	Approved	Added more detail to the last line of the paragraph.
Interview 2	411-422	Case Study	88	1	4	Major	Add	The best part of this quotation is that he noticed the other guy gave him credit for work he did not do; it shows the other kid was smart and not trying, but that's not the real punch of the comment	Leads the reader astray a little	Approved	Added entire quote in Peer influences section

Source	Line	Target	Page	Paragraph	Line	Type	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
		Epilogue						Amazing!!!	All the more reason to be sure you foreshadowed such a possible outcome	Concur	No change necessary

Data Audit Case Study Fencer

Table 10. Discussion Board: Case Fencer

<p>The story of Fencer is an important case for this study because it reveals the importance of family relationships in shaping a young boy's behavior. Fencer's mother clearly influences his thinking about how to relate to others, how to deal with school issues, and how to plan his future. Fencer's brothers also impact his behavior and his sense of self. It is interesting to see how his feelings about his younger brother change over the course of the three interviews. (He calls the brother a "smart-aleck" in the final interview.) The chapter needs some more direct quotations about how he feels toward his parents and siblings so the reader can better understand his view of the world.</p>	<p>Concur – will add.</p>
<p>In the interviews Fencer does a good job of explaining his short-comings at school. He understands that he cannot focus when instruction is mainly delivered by lecture. He also states that he knows he cannot multi-task. One strategy that he uses to improve his odds of succeeding at school is choosing carefully the kinds of other students with whom he spends time. He says that he wants to associate with students who are serious about their work and "smart," but he also likes to make sure he has friends in a number of different groups so he can be "happy."</p>	<p>Concur.</p>
<p>Fencer is a complex individual who reveals a great deal in the interviews about what motivates him, what worries him and what he knows about himself. Some of the richness of his story is lost in the chapter, however, because summations of comments are used in place of direct quotations. Also, opportunities to connect self-revelations to events in his life are often missed. For example, his detailed (and frequent) descriptions of his admiration for his mom is never directly associated with his own desire to "be kind," and his sensitivity to the feelings of the disabled children in his elementary school or the foreign exchange students in his high school.</p>	<p>Concur – will add.</p>
<p>Another aspect of Fencer's personality is his need for fun and excitement. He tells about the first time he rides a motorcycle and describes the adrenaline rush he got when the bike went out of control. He tells this story after analyzing what doesn't work well for him in the classroom. It might be inappropriate to use the bike incident as a metaphor for what he wants his life to be like. It is probably also important to link this and other</p>	<p>Concur – will add.</p>

events to his moniker (Fencer), because it is not completely clear how he got this name in the study.	
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Table 11. Fencer Data Audit Matrix

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1	42-46	Case Study	Substantive	120	1	9	Add	He also talked about going to robotics club at times and improv comedy events	This fits in with his desire to have fun and be happy (a life priority)	Approved	Added to last line of paragraph 1.
Interview 1		Case Study	Substantive	120	2	10	Change	There is so much about the conditions of the interview	I don't recall these sorts of details being very important in other cases.	Approved	Removed details of interview discussed in Chapter 7.
Interview 1		Case Study	Administrative	121	2	5	Change	Use a comma, not a semi-colon	grammar	Approved	Changed to comma.
Interviews 1 through 3	1: 10-27 2: 8-14 3: 6-30	Case Study	Major	121	2	11	Add	He said a lot of other things about himself and how he loses focus--for example the impact of not being able to multi-task (interview 3); he also talks a lot about just wanting to be happy, and trying not to get angry.	This brief description of his identity lacks the depth of some of the other cases and leaves a lot of important stuff out.	Approved	Included beefed-up description in Identity section.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1	32-37	Case Study	Administrative	121	3	1	Change	Use present tense	He still lives with parents	Rejected	He lived with his parents at the time of the interviews, will add this statement to the Family section.
Interview 2	29-39	Case Study	Major	121	3	6	Add	The main points he made about his mom were that she was "nice" and very hard-working. Add some quotations from interview 1 or 2	His admiration for his mom needs to be shown--it seems to be having impact on his behavior at school and his personal high expectations for himself	Approved	Added more quotes to Family section.
Interview 3	39-46	Case Study	Major	122	2	4	Add	In interview 3 he shows growing impatience with his younger brother (calls him a smart-aleck)	It's inaccurate to leave out how his feelings about his younger brother changed over time.	Approved	Added more quotes from Interview 3 into the Family section.
Interview 1	148-165	Case Study	Substantive	122	3	1	Change	He didn't technically grow up in his first neighborhood if he left at the age of nine or ten.	Accuracy	Approved	Added "until the age of 10" in the first line.
Interview 1		Case Study	Major	122	3	1	Change	How does reporting that he moved constitute being a childhood memory	Other cases included much more of actual memories of feelings and experiences	Concur	Did not directly ask the question or spend much time on this topic.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1		Case Study	Administrative	123	2	6	Delete	It is implicit that GATE is for exceptional students	Redundancy	Approved	Removed redundancy
Interview 2	244-249	Case Study	Major	123	2	9	Add	This is a place where an extended quotation on how he intends to improve effort is needed	"Buckle down" doesn't fully capture his decision; I don't recall him saying specifically that he had a C average; he used some colorful descriptions of what losing focus meant-- "drifting off"-- but none of that is included here (p. 6 of interview 2)	Approved	Added more quotes
Interview 3		Case Study	Substantive	124	1	3	Add	Why mention this incident if you don't connect it to anything or interpret its significance to the rest of his profile?	Good quotations shouldn't be left uninterpreted	Rejected	Interpretations of this incident are included in Chapters 17 and 19.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 3		Case Study	Major	124	2	8	Change	Connect this memory with something he says in interviews 1 and 2 about wanting to be kind to other kids--in his elementary school where he saw learning disable kids, or the foreign exchange kids	Without these connections, there seems to be no reason to claim this incident left an impression (which seems like high inference in any case)	Approved	Included this in new paragraph in Friends section
Interview 2	90-92	Case Study	Substantive	125	2	10	Substitute	Did his parents host the students or were they just in his school?	I couldn't tell from the interview material that they were in his home--he couldn't even say one of their names....	Approved	Changed the verbiage.

Interview 3	263-308	Case Study	Major	125	2	5	Add	There is a lot more to say about his choosing which groups to hang-out with. Use quotations about the limits and pluses of the groups he thinks he must choose from (You do this to some extent later, but I don't think you make connections to the ways in which he feels connected to the different groups)	How he picks friends seems to be a metaphor for how he makes decisions about his own life and school performance; I don't think you should treat this info too superficially	Approved	Added another paragraph to the of the Friends section with additional quotes.
Interview 3		Case Study	Substantive	126	3	6	Delete	I noticed in the interviews he seemed to contradict himself about hanging with smart kids in order to benefit from their positive influence, but staying away from really smart kids who called him dumb; you don't sort that out	The two paragraphs on page 126 seem contradictory	Concur	He liked intelligent and successful kids, but not smart ones who made fun of him for being "stupid".

								here			
Interview 3		Case Study	Substantive	127	1	8	General	Nicely summarized!!	There is potentially a major theme here	Concur	No change necessary.
Interview 1		Case Study	Major	127	2	5	Substitute	His preference for certain types of instruction does not seem to fit in future plans	Organization problems with your content	Approved	Moved the last paragraph to the section on Education.
Interview 2		Case Study	Administrative	128	3	4	Change	Add the word "he" before "aspired to..."	It sounds like his hero's are people who aspire to be philanthropists	Approved	Added the word.
Interview 3	256-259	Case Study	Substantive	129	1	6	Add	He also talked about his parents weren't very helpful when they got too upset with his problems; add this quotation	It helps to see through his eyes the way his parents help him deal with personal issues--the reason, therefore, he keeps certain things from them	Approved	Added the quote to the last paragagraph.

Interview 1	Case Study	Substantive	130	2	7	Add	His story about the first time he motorcycle raced and flipped the bike should be place here	This story captures his view of the world in some ways--and really illustrates his adrenaline rush comment	Approved	Added the quote to the Attitude section.
Interview 3	Case Study	Major	131	1	2	Comment	I didn't see him being overly bothered by peer grading	I think you may have led him in a direction you were expecting him to go rather than learning about something that really bothered him; peer grading is pretty commonplace and kids usually just accept it. Plus he made it clear that grades would only be slightly influenced. He actually seemed more bothered that he might not have treated the girl on his team fairly--until he saw the others do the same.	Concur	I don't think he was bothered by peer grading, but he also stated that he "unconsciously" did not put in his best effort because he did not see the payoff.

Data Audit Case Study Basketball Player

Table 12. Discussion Board: Case Basketball Player

<p>The Basketball Player (BBP) chapter covers the factual information found in the interviews fairly comprehensively. The chapter also makes good use of several direct quotations to present important data. BBP reveals a great deal about himself, as well as his family and friends, and the chapter summarizes this data fairly succinctly.</p>	<p>Concur</p>
<p>The chapter would be greatly improved, however, if it could somehow capture BBP’s strong empathy for others and his poignant need for individual attention. He is clearly a relationship-oriented person who feels strong attachments to his friends and family. Some evidence of this aspect of his personality is included in the chapter, (On page 122 for example, he expresses his love and devotion for his mother.) however a potentially strong theme about how his connection to others influences his behavior is not fully developed. His detailed discussion about his concern for his LA friend, for example, reveals as much about himself as it does his friend. Likewise, his description of being able to perform better in school when a teacher stands nearby seems particularly illuminating.</p>	<p>Concur – will add</p>
<p>It is difficult not to believe that the process of being interviewed for this study had something to do with the happy ending to BBP’s story. As the interviews progressed and BBP had the opportunity to interact one-on-one with a concerned adult, BBP seemed to be working through his own personal analysis of why he wasn’t “living up” to his potential. It might be interesting to suggest in the epilogue that, for BBP, individual attention really is key to success.</p>	<p>Concur – will add</p>

Table 13. Basket Ball Player Data Audit Matrix

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 1	139 - 147	Case Study	Substantive	123	3	7	Add	Where did it say they wanted to escape violence?	Could you be inferring that?	Rejected	Interview 1 lines 157 - 159 BBP talks about likind SD because "it's not that dangerous."
Interview 1	97 - 109	Case Study	Substantive	123	1	1	Add	Summary is too general; add quotation	Reader doesn't get enough of a sense of the brother	Approved	Added quotation
Interview 1	157 - 158	Case Study	Substantive	123	3	9	Add	Describe his feelings about SD in more detail or add quote	Too general to be useful	Approved	added quotation
		Case Study	Substantive	123	4	1	Change	When did he say he never went to pre-school?	No data in interviews	Rejected	In the interview 1 lines 168 - 171, his description of his educational background statrts in elementary school.
		Case Study	Substantive	124	1	7	Change	Why do you say his experiences have been positive?	Summary of data, but no real evidence; in fact, much he said was not positive	Rejected	In interview 1 lines 186 - 188 he says "its been good" - will add the quote to the paragraph.
		Case Study	Substantive	124	2	8	Change	Where does he call the other math class "engineering"	Don't see the term in the interviews	Approved	Changed in Case study to advanced math.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 2		Case Study	Substantive	125	1	2	Change	Where did he say he enjoyed school because he learned a lot?	Don't see the data for this...IN fact, on page 5 of second interview he only says he can't say he doesn't like it; in fact, he suggests that he just tries to put up with it.	Rejected	In interview 1 line 226, will include the quote in the case study.
Interview 3	123 - 126	Case Study	Substantive	125	3	3	Add	He describes feeling more confident when a teacher stands near-by, giving individual attention-- use that quotation	This comment connects to his need for individual, personalized attention-- something you can use later	Approved	added the entire quote
Interview 3	45 - 62	Case Study	Substantive	127	1	1	Add	The anecdote he uses should be added (about the teeth, p.1 of interview 3)	Without the quotation, the significance of the comment he made is lost	Approved	included quote
Interview 1		Case Study	Major	127	2	1	Change	He says in all interviews that he is torn about whether to go to college or just get a regular job. Yes, he thinks college would be the better choice, but he is clear on a number of occasions that he has not made up his mind	You need to be really accurate about this. It speaks to his "attitude" and demonstrates that he may have trouble applying himself if he is not totally convinced it will pay off.	Approved	In the section on future plans, it is obvious BBP is unsure. Deleted the statement in this section since the point was about his peers anyway.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 3		Case Study	Substantive	127	2	6	Change	Did he say his friend expected a scholarship or was it just implied?	Accuracy	Rejected	In interview 2 lines 310 - 313, BBP says his friend will be drafted to USC.
Interview 3	396 - 398	Case Study	Substantive	127	3	3	Add	He was quoting his friends when he said "trouble comes to them"	It could be implied that BBP doesn't quite see how this makes sense--that it's probably just an excuse. These subtle comments are what go to the heart of who he is. It's IMPORTANT not to leave these out!	Approved	Included the entire quote in Friends section
Interview 2		Case Study	Major	128	3	2	Change	The way you word this it sounds like he has an either-or analysis of his situation: basketball or education. In fact, I sense he thinks that the only way to play ball is to go to college and get on one those teams.	I think he sees sports and education as part of the same package--not mutually exclusive	Rejected	In interview 1 lines 267 - 271 indicates he sees these as possibly mutually exclusive. In interview 2 lines 365 - 367, BBP talks about his hero Kobe Bryant who passed up college to play in the NBA.

Source	Lines	Target	Type	Page	Paragraph	Line	Category	Comment	Rationale	Decision	Decision Comment
Interview 3		Case Study	Substantive	128	3	7	Add	This comment about African kids goes with his comments about kids in his old neighborhood who have losts of advantages but squander them. You should quote him here on that.	It's always a good idea to show patterns of thought, repeats of themes and attitudes	Approved	In interview 3 lines 270 - 279 he describes friends who could go to college, but are not. Included quote in Peer section.
Interview 2	227	Case Study	Substantive	129	1	2	Add	In interview 2, line 227, BBP tells how he encouraged his LA friend to stay on the right track. So, he was deliberately being a mentor to someone else. That might be worth pointing out	Adds to richness of profile and shows his appreciation of mentors even if he if he doesn't describe his behavior that way. In any case, it would make this section of your chapter have a little more "umph"	Approved	Added quote to Friends section

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