VERNACULAR LITERACIES OF ADOLESCENT BOYS

A MULTI-CASE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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PREFACE

This study was conducted to provide new knowledge pertinent to understanding the literacies practiced by adolescent boys in authentic environments outside of school. Literacy is a social construct and such is environmentally dependent; thus, each adolescent boy's literacy habits may be expected to be somewhat different from all others. To that end, this study has been designed to provide an ethnographic description of the vernacular literacies of three particular adolescent boys, in the hope that this knowledge will bring greater understanding to the phenomenon under study. Specific objectives of this study were to discover (a) what these adolescent boys read and write, how they read and write, and why they read and write; (b) the various physical and environmental influences acting upon the literacy practices and attitudes of these boys; (c) how these adolescent boys value their various literacy practices; and (d) the social discourses to which these boys belong and within which these literacies are imbedded. In order to gather the data providing the foundation for this study, the three subjects were interviewed and their literacy practices observed for a period of several months in the spring and summer of 2000.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Could it be that, contrary to public perception, adolescents today are more literate in more ways than at any other time in history? Is it possible that literacy is now so completely interwoven into the lives of adolescents and into their ways of understanding the world that it has become all but invisible to them?

Like everyone else, in going about their daily lives, adolescents are constantly negotiating an interlocking maze of literacy events (Barton, 1994). From the time they open their eyes in the morning and check the time on the digital clocks resting precariously atop stacks of dog-eared "teen-zines" and CD's until they sign off with their "virtual" friends in the Internet chat room and go to bed, today's adolescents are immersed in world of literacy and are constantly interacting with texts of all kinds. Text permeates the omnipresent television screen, floods the postal system, looms from walls and windows, and litters our lawns and streets. Every waking moment seems to be filled with a constant, unnoticed, almost subliminal stream of stimuli, ideas, information, and inspiration from the printed word.

Everyday, with little conscious recognition of their doing it, all people, adolescents included, read and react to countless written messages (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). A growing montage of text based and text enhanced

media bearing these messages appears in all facets of our lives, shaping and defining our increasingly information centered world. Today's adolescents have been engaged with text on an almost constant basis since well before they began school (McCarthey, 1999). Today's world is one almost totally dependent upon simultaneous access to multiple literacies, a world filled with messages in moving print, in flashing neon, and in the inviting phosphorous glow of TV screens and computer monitors (Morris & Tchudi, 1996).

As children born into the information age, today's adolescents seem intuitively sensitive to their world's growing dependence on the written word. Even as toddlers taking their first tentative steps, today's adolescents were already becoming active participants in a literacy-laced environment. Their world has always been one saturated with a streaming proliferation of increasingly diverse and ever more crucial written symbols and signs (Davies, 1996). For today's children, learning to know and use these signs and symbols is both urgent and compelling.

In generations past, literacy was understood, measured, and defined entirely in terms of stationary printed words fixed in black ink on paper. Access to these texts was almost exclusively the province of adults (Street, 1984). Young children rarely interacted directly with the written word. Children simply didn't need to read. Most children first began to interact directly with the written word when they began school. As these children learned literacy skills in school, access to texts and the teaching of literacy skills was incremental and carefully metered. As children matured, they

were gradually granted greater access to more sophisticated kinds of texts and levels of literacy. Before television, before computers, before the flood of new technology and new information media, this made sense.

The early ancestors of today's adolescents learned almost instinctively to recognize weather signs in the sky, the shapes and colors of edible plants, the taste and smell of potable water, and the look and feel of likely places of shelter. In the same way, very young children today regularly negotiate their family refrigerator by relating labels to the contents of food and beverage packaging. They recognize words like danger or poison. They play games on toy computers. They associate logos on delivery vans and street signs with places and products. They see street addresses on every mailbox in their neighborhoods and quickly adopt them as tools to identify homes of friends or neighbors or locate the limits of their domains. Today's children typically spend hours every day in front of the ubiquitous television set, where they are constantly challenged by attractive, glowing text messages announcing this or explaining that. They notice the words "Men" and "Women" on restroom doors and connect one or the other to themselves even as they are attempting to come to terms with the full meaning of those words. Today's children begin developing literacy skills almost as soon as they first open their eyes.

Even as they learned to talk and to walk, thanks primarily to the inescapable television screen, today's adolescents began learning to distinguish things abstractly and to think in metaphor (Davies, 1996). As

toddlers, today's adolescents knew Coke and Pepsi, not just by their tastes, but by their symbols. They associated the "golden arches" with a favorite place to eat. While still in diapers, today's adolescents chose boxes from store shelves by recognizing words and symbols on the labels. Even in pre-school, today's adolescents associated certain words and symbols on clothing with status and power. The youngest of children today seem to instinctively understand words and symbols on knobs and buttons, allowing them to access and operate electronic games, televisions, radios, and all the hundreds of complex technologies that define modern living. The irony is that these technologies and the literacies that support them go virtually unnoticed, an essentially transparent element of our daily lives.

Today's adolescents grew up watching and learning as their parents conducted the literacy of life at the end of the twentieth century (Nistler & Maiers, 1999). They looked on as people around them wrote checks in the grocery line, worshipped words within a book at church, laughed at Sunday comics, shopped on the Internet, and planned their lives around a TV guide and a road atlas. Today's adolescents witness the power and influence of the written word everyday, in a million authentic ways. Yet, all of these things are rendered virtually invisible by the near absolute pervasiveness of the printed word in today's world.

Though specific literacy skills and practices necessarily vary widely, reflecting the great diversity in life experience and environment inherent to modern society, today's adolescents must master countless complex,

everyday literacies. Accordingly, there can be no universal, generalizable description of the vernacular literacies of adolescents, or of adolescent boys. We can only understand these vernacular literacies one adolescent at a time. That is the goal of this study. Each of the three descriptive case studies attempts to illustrate and illuminate the myriad ways that literacy and the life of a single adolescent boy interact in today's world.

The subject of this dissertation is the intersection of common, everyday literacies with the lives of adolescent boys. Many of these literacies didn't even exist when the parents of today's adolescents were children (Wray, 1999). These everyday literacies, called vernacular literacies by Barton & Hamilton (1998), are at the heart of what it means to be alive in today's world. They are the keys to our personal happiness and success. They are at the center of the discourse we call life in the twenty-first century.

Research Problem

It would seem that the many practical literacy skills acquired during today's early but complex and continuous childhood engagement with a multitude of everyday literacy events, practices, and habits would translate into increased academic achievement and greater proficiency in the formal literacies adolescents are expected to acquire in school. It would also seem that school literacy might inherit the value already associated with these more common literacies. Unfortunately, neither seems to be the case.

Though adolescents, along with the rest of modern society, spend the majority of their waking hours engaged in some literacy event or another, most don't consider themselves readers or writers (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Worthy, et al., 1999). The public perception of both teachers and the general public seems to be that there is a literacy problem and that children are becoming generally less literate (Joyce, 1999; Morris & Tchudi, 1996). Additionally, even though they demonstrate a sophisticated degree of literacy simply negotiating everyday life, most people, including adolescents, believe themselves to be poor readers and writers (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Unfortunately, though most young children are active and enthusiastic readers of books, this enthusiasm seems to dissipate, especially for boys, even before they reach adolescence (Hynds, 1997).

Great emphasis has been placed in recent years on providing students with more experiential and authentic learning experiences. Experiential learning places students at the center of the learning experience, calling upon them to learn new things as a result of becoming involved in some activity demanding an application of skills and knowledge the students already possess. Many of the skills and much of the knowledge valued by experiential educators reside within students' existing vernacular literacies; it is the knowledge they bring with them, much of which is learned from experiences outside the context of formal education.

Authentic learning is a body of contemporary learning theory that places school literacies within contexts that more closely parallel those that

students associate with their "real world." Vernacular literacies are those "real world" literacies.

> One of the assumptions made by this study is that educators benefit from understanding the nature of students' vernacular literacies and can use that understanding to inform curriculum planning and enhance their daily interaction with students.

According to Tett and Crowther (1998, p. 461), understanding students' "home literacies" is critical to developing effective literacy based curriculum for the classroom. Unfortunately, according to Wagner (1993), non-school literacies are rarely valued at school and school literacies bear little resemblance to literacies supporting discourses outside of school.

The Foxfire Project (Puckett, 1989), a literacy based curriculum that took students out into the field to participate directly in the writing of an oral history of their community, is one notable example of experiential, authentic learning as applied to the public school context. Students in the Foxfire project synthesized academic literacies with existing vernacular literacies. Contrary to prevailing practice, students' personal knowledge of their community was recognized and valued, as was membership in existing networks of friends and relatives. Students also found advantage in access to native dialectic and linguistic subtleties, and other qualities acquired as a result of growing up as members of their individual families, their neighborhoods, and their town. Educators involved in the Foxfire project

respected and understood their students' vernacular literacies and used that understanding to create learning experiences that celebrated what their students already knew and could do. They then effectively integrated those often ignored "non-school" literacies with the more formal academic literacies associated with history, biography, geography, ethnography, and writing and editing a book for publication.

Research on adolescents' literacy practices in social contexts outside school are only just beginning to inform our thinking about how to transform literacy practices in classrooms (Luke, 1994). Teachers of today's adolescents often complain their students can't or don't read and are both personally and professionally frustrated by their students' reluctance or refusal to write (Krogness, 1995). Even though literacy related scores on traditional standardized tests have remained more or less constant over the years, the general impression is that adolescents today are less literate than their parents or grandparents (Knobel, 1999). Yet these very students successfully negotiate today's most sophisticated technologies and apparently flourish in a society immersed in literacy.

<div align="center">Definitions of Terms</div>

<u>Literacy</u>

Before a more involved discussion about adolescent literacy can be attempted, an understanding about the nature of the phenomenon named literacy must be established. Literacy has historically meant many things to

many people. Scholars have long struggled with its meaning. There are entire books, such as the work of Venezky et al., (1990), devoted to defining literacy. Even today, there are few things about literacy that most people seem to agree on.

The only aspect of literacy that enjoys almost universal acceptance is that literacy has something to do with the acts of reading and writing. However, most contemporary literacy research asserts that both the nature and the meaning of literacy is mitigated by the environmental context within which it resides and that "reading and writing" is an obsolete and naively simplistic definition when applied to modern concepts of literacy (Street, 1984; Barton, 1994, 1997). Much current literacy research also agrees that there are many different genres of literacy; that multiple literacies exist, and that people regularly access a number of distinctly different literacies (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1997; Street, 1984). Contemporary references to cultural literacy, computer literacy, art literacy, workplace literacy, school literacy, even sexual literacy are familiar examples of the multi-genre approach to understanding literacy that is prevalent today (Morris & Tchudi, 1996).

For the purposes of this study, literacy is defined as any complementary set of skills and dispositions related to an individual's or a group's successful participation in any discourse involving some influence of or interaction with text based or text enhanced media.

Text Based Media

Text based media fits more traditional concepts of text and includes texts found in both print and electronic media. Books, magazines, newspapers, instruction sheets, personal correspondence, Internet web pages, are all representative examples of text based media. Text based media relies upon the printed word to carry most of the meaning in whatever message the media carries.

Text Enhanced Media

Text enhanced media includes text that is incidental to the primary meaning inherent to the media with which it is associated. Text enhanced media is, among many other things, text used as icons and labels, branding texts used to indicate ownership or origin, text messages on the television screen, and text used to decorate, such as one might find on a race car. In text enhanced media, the printed word is secondary to the primary non-text media with which it is associated. The message resident in the word(s) or symbol(s) found in text enhanced media supports a more dominant message residing in the primary media itself. For instance, the large embroidered initial representing a school athlete's alma mater supports primary messages of identity and school pride resident in the wearing of the jacket by identifying the particular school with which the wearer is associated. A large "letter jacket" on a small girl carries an even greater message, suggesting a close association between the girl wearing the jacket and the male athlete to which it belongs. Advertising media painted on a racecar are secondary to

and support the primary message of speed and competition carried by the car itself.

Adolescent

An adolescent is a person living through adolescence. Adolescence is a somewhat non-specific term referring to the years during which children undergo the dramatic physical and psychological evolution that finally results in maturity and adulthood. For the purposes of this study, the term adolescent refers to individuals between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. The period roughly spans from the onset of puberty until early adulthood. This period in a person's life is often alternately called the "teen-age" years, and adolescents are sometimes referred to as "teens." Adolescent students are associated with and usually attend secondary school, grades seven through twelve.

Vernacular Literacies

Vernacular literacies, as defined by Street (1994), refer to literacy practices and skills unrelated to the dominant literacies of the workplace or school. Vernacular literacies are those literacies that individuals access in the home or during times of leisure. Vernacular literacy practices include pragmatic use of reading skills in everyday situations, such as reading instructions for microwaving a bag of popcorn, reading telephone directories, or reading captions on TV screens. Vernacular reading practices also include reading for pleasure, reading to pass the time, reading personal

correspondence, or reading for information related to personal interests. Vernacular reading involves a wide range of texts, some of which are incidental and related more to the individual's environment than to any specific discourse.

Vernacular writing practices include various pragmatic and pleasurable applications of writing skills outside the discourses of work or school. Vernacular writing involves such things as record keeping, memory aids, personal correspondence, and personal writing for pleasure or as a hobby. Vernacular writing produces a wide variety of texts, some of which are valued and representative of significant effort and careful attention while others are incidental to other activities and are typically evanescent in nature.

Discourse Theory

Literacy never exists in isolation. It is always part of a context, an environment (Barton, 1994). It is part of a set of language practices and cultural values and dispositions that can be called a discourse. A discourse is best understood as a social subset that is bound by mutual interests, uses of language (including skills and dispositions related to literacy), values, and behaviors. Literacy practices are sometimes more easily discussed when placed within the context of the discourse they help to enable or create.

All individuals have a primary discourse that is acquired (as opposed to learned) as a child in the home and is later augmented by a variety of self-defining and self-selected discourses (Knobel, 1999; Gee, 1999).

Examination of multiple literacies is simplified if those literacies are placed within the context of their multiple encompassing discourses (Knoble, 1999).

Contemporary approaches to discourse analysis (Gee, 1999), hold that all individuals function within many different discourses, some of which are related to the social, cultural environment of the individual, and others that are selectively created or "joined" as a result of explicit actions taken by the individual. Gee associates elective membership in certain discourses with identity building and explains the dynamic nature of adolescent discourses as part of the universal adolescent search for self. Knobel, (1999) and Finders (1997) identify adolescent identities such as "social queen," "tough cookie," "successful student," "rebel," "clown," and "good girl," associating those discourses with specific literacy practices and dispositions.

Additionally, Gee (1999) holds that there are two major varieties of discourse, minor discourse (with a lower case d) and major Discourses (with an upper case D). Minor discourses represent a closely integrated matrix of language skills, personal behavior, and social values (Gee, 1999). Minor discourses, according to Gee (1999), may involve a number of supporting practices, behaviors, and values and represent building blocks that combine with additional discourses, to construct major Discourses. For instance, one minor discourse might center on the reading of automotive magazines. It would also include such literacy related components as the attitudes and values related to such literature, certain attitudes and values and prior knowledge related to automobiles, automotive specific language, and social

restrictions regulating access to such texts. The minor d/discourse of "car magazine reader" might be part of any number of major discourses. For instance, the "successful male student" major D/Discourse might engage this minor d/discourse, and the "male school drop-out" major D/Discourse might as well.

Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative case study approach is appropriate in educational research when "the desired or projected outcomes of an educational effort focus on humanistic outcomes or cultural differences as opposed to behavioral outcomes or individual differences" (Merriam, 1988, p. 30).

A qualitative case study is a detailed examination of one setting, one event, or a single subject, producing a "thick" description of that event (Merriam, 1988). The case study makes no attempt to generalize, does not attempt to identify a representative sample of the population in question and is primarily qualitative in nature. It is exploratory and inductive. There are no predetermined hypotheses. The case study researcher can never know what the outcome might be until the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The case study researcher observes, intuits, and senses what is occurring in a natural setting (Merriam, 1988).

The subjects for this study were selected using a process Patton (as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 48) calls "purposeful sampling," which is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to choose subjects for case studies from which he can learn the most. Data was gathered from the subjects

using multiple interviews and close observation of the subjects in multiple vernacular contexts.

This dissertation takes the form of a multiple case study, focusing on variables identifiable within the vernacular literacies of three adolescent males. It, like all qualitative case studies, is concerned with the influence of the context within which the phenomenon resides and is particularistic (Merriam, 1988, p. 11), descriptive, and pragmatic in approach.

The Goals of this Study

My study of literacy began with what seemed a simple question at the time: "What is literacy?" I posed the question as the possible focus of a directed reading early in my doctoral program. I never imagined the directions that I would find myself drawn in the quest for an answer to that question.

At first, I was confounded by a growing list of what seemed to be unrelated experiences and activities that have somehow associated themselves with the word literacy. There was no single literacy. In addition to traditional notions of literacy, there were recurring references to computer literacy, cultural literacy, and media literacy. There were books and articles on early literacy and adult literacy, literacy wars and literacy crises, literacy councils and literacy campaigns; and so it went. What became quickly apparent was that there was no simple answer to my question. In fact, there

was no single answer at all. What I found was a number of answers, a number of ways not only of defining literacy, but of understanding literacy.

A high school English teacher for almost thirty years, I assumed myself to be not just literate, but skilled and knowledgeable in the ways of literacy. In the beginning, I was a living example of the teacher stereotype described by Barton (1994). I operated under the naive illusion that literacy was simply a set of skills used in reading and writing, especially reading literature and writing essays. I viewed literacy as a skill to be learned in school, and I classified a person literate if that person possessed the skills my colleagues and I taught in school. A literate person was one who read certain, very specific texts, such as those of Dickens, Twain, and Shakespeare. A literate person was one who could write themes, essays, and research reports well enough to make passing grades. These many and diverse references to multiple kinds of literacy were confusing, and sometimes seemed contradictory or even impossible. Into these muddy waters I waded, and my pants quickly lost their starch.

Literacy, it turns out, comes in flavors, a flavor for every occasion and a flavor for every taste. Literacy is an elusive, dynamic social phenomenon and, like the chameleon, adapts itself to its changing environment.

The environment most commonly associated with adolescent literacy is the school. However, Knobel (1999) found that adolescents regularly

adopted, developed, and valued complex literacies totally unrelated to those taught in the public schools.

School literacy is very concrete and is composed of a set of describable, definable discourses involving specific literacy skills and practices. It is school literacy that teachers understand best, and school literacy that our institutions have chosen to value the most. School literacy is the best understood of all adolescent literacies as it has been the focus of most formal studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) related to adolescent literacy. However, school literacy is rarely the literacy that teen-aged boys value most, and it is certainly not representative of the everyday, vernacular literacy of many teen-aged boys.

Literacy is a gendered phenomenon. Literacy skills, literacy practices, and the attitudes and values that surround these things are gendered (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1997; Knobel, 1999; Lloyd, 1998). This will not surprise any experienced teacher. Michelle Finders' (1997) ethnographic case study describing both the school and vernacular literacies of young adolescent girls, supports the notion that adolescent males and females have widely differing literacies rooted in distinctly male or female discourses, many of which influence or are influenced by personal and sexual identity. This gendering of literacy is corroborated by Hynds (1997) and Knobel (1999).

Though several studies have described the literacies of young girls, few have done the same for young boys. This study is intended to

complement existing literature on adolescent literacy by providing a glimpse into the lives and minds of adolescent boys and their often unique and defining vernacular literacies.

<div style="text-align: center;">Research Question</div>

> What is the nature of the vernacular literacies of three unique adolescent males living in a middle class community in middle America at the outset of the twenty-first century?

That seemingly simple question, of course, is actually a profound one, one in which the following research goals are embedded:

1. Identifying and describing what these adolescent boys read and write, how they read and write, and why they read and write.
2. Describing the various physical and environmental influences acting upon these adolescent boys' literacy practices and attitudes.
3. Discovering and describing how these adolescent boys value their various literacy practices.
4. Describing the myriad social discourses to which these boys belong and within which these literacies are imbedded.

Those are the primary goals of this study.

Adolescent boys' vernacular literacies reside within the many Discourses that define their personal and social lives. Understanding the everyday literacies of adolescent boys would be impossible without an

awareness of the framework within which these literacies function. Also, since literacies, vernacular literacies in particular, are unique and personal by their very nature, the purpose of this study is not to generalize some model of adolescent literacy. Rather, the purpose of this study is to both inform and transform the researcher's understanding of the dynamics at work within the world of adolescent literacies. This study is further intended to both inform and transform the way those who read it understand the personal, everyday literacies of adolescent boys. In doing so, it is hoped that these new understandings can somehow be applied to public education's mandate of satisfying the increasingly complex formal literacy demands today's adolescent boys will face as they find their place in the adult world.

In particular, it is hoped that educators can apply what is learned about the vernacular literacies of the three adolescent boys who are the subjects of this dissertation to developing effective, authentic learning experiences for their students, thus validating their students' own vernacular knowledge and enhancing the effectiveness and perceived value of school based learning and literacy.

Organizational Outline

Chapter two provides a review of contemporary literature relevant to understanding the phenomenon of adolescent vernacular literacies. It includes the following sections:

1. Understanding literacy as a social and cultural phenomenon.

2. The concept of multiple literacies including the nature and significance of vernacular literacies.

3. An introduction to discourse analysis as applied to literacy research.

4. Summaries of related qualitative case studies.

Chapter three provides information about the researcher relevant to the study, demographic information revealing the social and cultural context of the study and a thorough explanation of the ways data was collected, analyzed, and reported.

Chapters four through six present the study's findings organized as three separate narratives, each describing in detail what was learned about the vernacular literacies of the subjects and the social discourses within which those literacies reside.

Chapter seven offers a summary of the findings and forwards the researcher's interpretations of the findings, including any implications they might hold for educators or society in general.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

To be literate is not to be free; it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future. . . . As a narrative for agency and as a referent for critique, literacy provides an essential precondition for organizing and understanding the socially constructed nature of subjectivity and experience and for accessing how knowledge, power, and social practice can be collectively forged in the service of making decisions instrumental to a democratic society rather than merely consenting to the wishes of the rich and powerful.

(Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 155)

This chapter summarizes current thinking in literature relevant to the study and understanding of the vernacular literacies of adolescent boys and provides the core foundations for this study. Topics addressed by this review include (a) theories defining the nature of literacy; (b) issues related to the concept of multiple literacies, including the nature and significance of vernacular literacies; (c) discourse theory as it relates to the study of adolescent literacy; and (d) related studies.

"Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text." (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 3)

There are two major theories defining literacy. One is that literacy is an autonomous phenomenon and that its acquisition by anyone has logical and predictable consequences. As defined by this theory, literacy is necessarily a function of the written word and is bound by print technology (Goody, 1986). Central to this theory is the idea that anyone who acquires literacy becomes, as a direct result, more logical and capable of complex abstract thought. This view of literacy, known as the "autonomous theory," is championed by Goody and Watt (1968). Most formal literacy education is based on this view of literacy.

The chief competing theory of the nature of literacy is one that positions literacy as a result, rather than as the cause of certain societal and intellectual dispositions and environments. This theory, named the "ideological" approach to literacy by Street (1984) claims that there is no single universal literacy and that multiple literacies result from and are shaped by the beliefs (ideologies) and values of the society within which they are practiced. Literacy is not restricted to text literacy and is defined by supporters of the ideological approach as any set of skills and dispositions required for successful membership in some social discourse (Street, 1984). The ideological approach to literacy also suggests that the acquisition of certain literacies and their resulting cognitive influences are unique to the

individual and particular physical and social environments and are not generalizable.

The Autonomous Approach to Literacy

"The trouble with literacy is that it enters all aspects of human life in literate societies." (Robinson, 1983, p. 252)

Language is what sets man apart from the lower animals, allows us to form complex social organizations, and have a sense of the past through the transmission of cultural heritage. The autonomous theory was named by Brian Street (1984) and refers to the notion that literacy can be described autonomously, separate from any context and that there is a distinct psychological variable called literacy which can be measured and which remains the same in different social contexts and at different historical times. The autonomous theory suggests there is a great divide between the literate and the non-literate (Barton, 1994). Goody & Watt (1968) attribute a large part of what it means to be a modern human being to the development of written language, suggesting that the high levels of logic and rational thought demonstrated by civilized cultures are directly attributable to the adoption of a popular literacy. Language, particularly written language, enables people and cultures to transmit knowledge and experience from one moment to another, from one person to another, and one generation to another. It is this network of language, say Goody and Watt (1968), that engendered the intellectual evolution of the human race. They point to today's societies and posit that the difference between highly developed,

technologically advanced cultures and ones that lag behind is the level of literacy prevalent in those cultures.

The effect that written language has on a given culture, according to Goody and Watt (1968) is primarily dependent upon the degree to which use of the system of literacy is diffused through that society. Over history, many very different systems of writing have appeared. Goody and Watt (1968) suggest that the more abstract and metaphorical forms of written language, such as the alphabetic system in use in most modern languages, are more effective because they permit a greater range of expression and because they are inherently simpler than more concrete forms, thus allowing a greater participation and a wider acceptance of literacy throughout the population.

Goody and Watt (1968) point to the early Greek civilizations, cultural and philosophical progenitors of modern western thought, as an example of the influence of popular literacy on a society. Popular alphabetic literacy was in place in Greece as early as the fifth century. Goody and Watt suggest that the diffusion of written language throughout early Greek society caused the shift from primitive mythical thinking to more logical-empirical, intellectual, philosophical modes of thought. Goody and Watt (1968) also characterize science as a critique of myth and attribute the rise of scientific thought to written language. They suggest that written language engendered a more critical and conscious world-view, first in Greek society, and later in all of the cultures that inherited intellectual and philosophical aspects of Greek culture.

The written language, according to Goody and Watt (1968) permitted the early Greek philosophers, Plato and his student Aristotle, to begin to develop epistemological awareness as they attempted to sort out the difference between truth and opinion. It was written language that permitted Greek philosophers to conduct careful analysis of thought and permitted autonomous cognitive discipline. It was written language, say Goody and Watt (1968), that encouraged the separation of the physical world from the metaphysical world.

Graff (as cited in Robinson, 1983, p. 246) associates the rise of literacy and its dissemination to the popular classes with the "triumph of light over darkness, of liberalism, democracy, and of universal unbridled progress" and goes on to contend that literacy is a "major factor in the evolution of modern societies and states."

Goody and Watt (1968) also suggest modern forms of democracy are directly associated with widespread literacy. They posit that alphabetic reading and writing was the single most important factor in the development of a popular democracy, as it permitted wide access to the world of knowledge and public discourse. The central precept of democracy, that the good of the one is superceded by the good of the many is, say Goody and Watt (1968), attributable to the Greek dismissal of "local knowledge" and the Greek idea that knowledge was universal and generalizable. This change, they contend, is a direct result of the wide diffusion of literacy throughout Greek society.

Goody and Watt (1968) attribute certain other democratic institutions, such as public education to the wide-spread acceptance of reading and writing. If knowledge was to be universal and generalizable, then every member of a society must have access to it. The purpose of the public school, they say, is to support this philosophy. Early forms of public education centered on learning to read and write and the reading of certain very specific texts that were thought to contain essential knowledge necessary for full participation in an intellectually enlightened society. Supporting this idea, Greenfield (as cited by Street, 1984) studied the difference between schooled (literate) children and unschooled (non-literate) children and found unschooled children lacking in specific cognitive abilities. Greenfield went on to conclude that literacy permits abstract thought and that this in turn encourages symbolic manipulation and intellectual development like that described by Piaget's stage of formal operations, in which the real becomes a sub-set of the possible. This thinking is reflected today in E. D. Hirsch's (1987) insistence that reading certain very specific texts is critical to becoming a full and successful member of modern Western society. The concept of cultural literacy is also evident in the "core" curriculums found in almost every public school and the universal standards movements that are central issues in public education in the United States today (Myers, 1996).

Other social phenomena are attributed to becoming literate. Robinson (1983, p. 244) contends that it is "a fact of life in our world that the possession of literacy correlates almost perfectly with the possession of

power and wealth." Hildyard and Olson (as cited in Myers, 1996) argue that writing of any kind turns language into an object and creates the detachment necessary for academic thought, that written language permits objective, analytical thinking. Similarly, supporters of the autonomous theory of literacy refer to the written language as a separate and specialized language, the language of analytical thinking and explicit argument, a tool adopted by science and philosophy (Street, 1984).

Recently, there have been many references in professional literature associating personal autonomy with the development of literacy. The inference is that effective readers are better able to make good decisions and participate in modern society. Barber (1992, p. 4) suggests that literacy skills are required to live in civil society, to participate competently in democratic communities, and to "think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world." Freire (1972) argued that bringing literacy to oppressed people was at the heart of their political empowerment and social enfranchisement. Clearly, Freire's position suggests that the autonomous acquisition of literacy has the potential to change the people who acquire it.

Literacy, when viewed as an autonomous phenomenon, would seem to engender certain cognitive and sociological changes on the persons or the cultures that adopt it, irrespective of the nature of the person or the culture itself. It is seen as the cause of many dramatic shifts in the way people think and the way people negotiate the world around them. This is the view of literacy that drives public education today. However, the autonomous theory

of literacy is faced with a powerful and compelling critique by the competing ideological theory of literacy.

The Ideological Approach to Literacy

"Every person, adult or child, has a view of literacy, about what it is and what it can do for them, about its importance and its limitations." (Barton, 1994, p. 48)

The ideological model of literacy, as forwarded by Brian Street (1984) and later by David Barton (1994) and others, views literacy as the result, rather than the cause of certain cognitive and social changes that occur as people and societies evolve. Street (1984) finds literacy, which he terms the particular practices and concepts of reading and writing, to always be defined by the ideological context within which it is situated. Since, says Street (1984, p. 152) "reading and writing are seen as essentially *activities*, undertaken for specific purposes, rather than as forms or 'mediums' then what is involved in 'literacy' will constantly change according to the needs and interests of those using it."   Street (1984, p. 180) goes on to describe literacy as "not just a set of techniques to be easily and quickly acquired, but part of a complete ideology, a set of specific practices constructed within a specific infrastructure and able to be learned and assimilated only in relation to that ideology and infrastructure: the acquisition of literacy is, in fact, a socialization process rather than a technical process."

Street (1984), Barton (1994), Gee (1999), and Knobel (1999) suggest that literacy practices and dispositions are always part of a greater discourse

that includes oral language, certain behaviors, certain dispositions, and certain physical or social environments in addition to text. The ideological theory of literacy allows for an unlimited number of literacies, each tailored to the personal or cultural needs of its users (Street, 1984; Barton; 1994).

Stubbs (as cited in Street, 1984) insists that people "speak, listen, read, and write for different purposes..." and that a coherent theory of literacy would necessarily have to account for the situated environment of any written language and the relationship between the different purposes of various kinds of language and different social setting. Street and Stubbs both view literacy from a hermeneutic perspective, always related to place and purpose, where truth and meaning are fluid and negotiable. For instance, Gee (1999) suggests that whenever we talk or write, we always influence our "reality" in certain ways. First, we give meaning and value to various aspects of the material world. We engage in certain activities. We assume certain identities or positions within a social setting. We confer power. We make connections and establish relationships. Finally, we find ways of making the talk or writing of others more relevant to a certain social group or ourselves.

Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theories concerning the social origins of thought seem to support the ideological model of literacy as the ideological model of literacy treats literacy as a socio-cognitive, socially constructed phenomenon (Dixon-Krauss, 1996).

Heath (1983) found that primary ways of knowing, using, and understanding books and literacy are learned in the home and vary from

family to family and from neighborhood to neighborhood. Her research describing language and literacy in two ethnically different working class communities supports the ideological model of literacy by situating literacy as an environmentally specific phenomenon. Heath (1983) seems to provide direct support for the ideological model of literacy in the following comment:

> If we want to understand the place of literacy in human societies and the ways children acquire literacy orientations of their communities, we must recognize two postulates of literacy and language development: 1) Strict dichotomization between oral and literate traditions is a construct of researchers, not an accurate portrayal of reality across cultures. 2) An unilinear model of development in the acquisition of language structures and uses cannot adequately account for culturally diverse ways of acquiring knowledge or developing cognitive styles. (p. 74)

Heath (1983) goes on to say that literacy events often reflect and must always be interpreted in relation to the larger sociological context within which they are found.

Heath describes the vernacular literacies in her study in terms of "literacy events" and "literacy practices." The ideological model of literacy describes the various ways that literacy may manifest itself in terms of literacy events and literacy practices (Barton, 1994).

Literacy events are actual instances of the use of reading or writing in people's everyday lives (Barton, 1994). Literacy events are located in time and space. "Reading and writing are things which people do either alone or

with other people, but always in a social context - always in a place and time" (Barton & Hamilton 1999, p. 23).   They are occasions when a person attempts to understand or produce written language, either alone or with others (Anderson et al., as cited in Barton, 1994). Literacy events occur when people interact in any way with text, whether it be through primary acts of reading or writing, or as a result of some secondary, often incidental, act of reading or writing. Literacy events are often almost invisible in modern society. They include a range of experiences from writing a note to choosing a greeting card, from reading an infant a bedtime story to checking the want ads, from listening to the news being read on television to checking the ingredients on a box of breakfast cereal. Literacy events have a social history and are the result of an evolution of literacy practices (Barton, 1994).

Literacy practices are socially mitigated sets of purposes, skills, and habitual behaviors involving at least one literacy event. Literacy practices are common patterns in using reading and writing in a particular situation (Barton, 1994). Barton adds that literacy practices may best be understood as "social practices associated with the written word" (p. 37). Literacy practices are often embedded in cultural terms, such as Bible study in church. Describing a literacy practice must include a description of the social setting of the literacy events involved "including the ways in which social institutions support particular literacies" (Barton, 1994, p. 35). Literacy practices also involve selective access to certain texts and to certain ways of reading and writing. For instance, certain literacy practices are appropriate only for ministers, while others may only be appropriate for children.

According to Street (1984), some notions of literacy seem to deny differing interpretations of its meaning while, at the same time, they are actually facilitating them. The ideological model of literacy supports the notion that texts may be interpreted differently by different people and in different contexts. Texts, according to Street, are always adaptable to the readers' or writers' own circumstances and their ultimate use and meaning are more about the user and the situation than the text itself.

Barton (1994) posits that literacy may only be understood in terms of its environment, its "ecology." He suggests that literacy be understood in what he calls an "integrated" manner, which incorporates not only reading and writing, but the physical and social contexts for those acts into the literacy equation. Rose (1989) argues that there are dramatic differences in the ways that literacy is valued and understood among different ethnic groups and members of different socio-economic communities. Barton, like Street, contends that there is no single literacy or definition of literacy that reflects the needs and experiences of everyone, and that literacies are born out of need and opportunity. The ideological model of literacy sees the literacy as a mediator (Barton, 1994). It mediates between individual cognitive function and social phenomenon, between the self and society. It is a way of representing the world to ourselves and to others. It mediates between the possible and the practical. "All thought is socially constructed, and it is the social practices around literacy, not literacy itself, which shape consciousness" (Barton, 1994, p. 47).

The ideological model of literacy acknowledges that texts themselves have no inherent meaning, that all meaning is brought to the text by people as they interact with it, reflecting their life experiences, their cultural heritage, and their personal identity. Graham (1991) suggests that our selective and personal interaction with text, our personal literacy, is constructed in our personal quest for identity. He posits that however, whenever, whatever we read or write, we are revealing who we are, telling something of our life experiences and our cultural heritage. In apparent agreement, literacy, according to Barton (1994), involves bringing knowledge to the text, not taking meaning from the text. It is not simply applying a skill. For instance, Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen (1998) found that high school students reading Hamlet constructed their understanding of the characters and relationships in the play based on their personal knowledge and experience, and though all students read from the same text, there was no uniform understanding or reaction to the play. Accordingly, Underwood (1998, p. 72) finds that "understanding and using a textual message effectively have at least as much to do with the experience, background, and status of individuals as with their skill as scribes or decoders." Every individual's literacy, it seems, is a unique and very personal manifestation of who they are, how they know the world, and how they want the world to know them.

Unlike the autonomous model of literacy, the ideological model does not consider literacy responsible for social or cognitive changes in humankind. To the contrary, the ideological model suggests that systems of

writing and reading evolved in direct response to such changes that were already in progress, as a personal servant rather than as a universal master. For example, when it became necessary for ancient people to keep track of large numbers of facts or to keep records of trade transactions, literacy practices and new technologies of literacy were devised to satisfy those needs. When concepts became so involved and convoluted that it was impossible grasp it all at once, literacies were contrived to help earlier philosophers come to terms with their increasingly complex ways of knowing the world. Even today, new literacies are born and old literacies are sustained as a result of these same essentially pragmatic roots.

The ideological model of literacy rejects the notion of a single, universal understanding of literacy. It rejects the notion that any form of literacy affects everyone or every culture the same. Instead, it suggests that an unlimited variety of literacies exist, each variation limited, enabled, and defined by its physical and social environments, each suited to a particular task and customized by personal need. It suggests that literacy and the technology of literacy are constantly and necessarily being reinvented as part of the dynamics associated with social and cultural evolution. The ideological model of literacy suggests that individual people acquire, develop, and adapt literacies as needed in their quest to negotiate life and make sense of the world around them. It suggests that as people grow and mature, their literacies change and evolve. It is within this framework of understanding that I propose to investigate the particular literacies of adolescent boys.

The Reality of Multiple Literacies

Contemporary literacy research overwhelmingly supports the notion of multiple literacies. Literacies addressed by the literature include (among others) cultural literacy, media literacy, social literacy, computer literacy, information literacy, commercial literacy, recreational literacy, communications literacy, and myriad institutional literacies such as school literacy and political literacy. Vacca and Alverman (1998) write that multiple literacies are needed for negotiating the everyday world, and include the non-academic, non-institutional, non-formal literacies that are often valued most highly. Street (1984) and Barton (1994) suggest that multiple literacies are tailored to suit the unique and changing needs of the individual, the society, and the discourse within which any particular form of literacy resides.

Morris and Tchudi (1996) suggest that there are three basic genres of literacy: basic literacy, which includes encoding and decoding messages using a variety of signs and symbols; critical literacy, which involves moving beyond literal the meanings offered by basic literacy, to include the interpretation of texts, and the use of writing to not only record facts but also to analyze, interpret, and explain; and dynamic literacy, which refers to the ability to act from the content and context of a text, going beyond words to include related skills and abilities that allow literacy to be adapted to suit certain personal needs and social situations.

The concept of dynamic literacy described by Morris and Tchudi (1996) allows for the existence of the many practical and specialized literacies that are so ubiquitous in today's society. They write of academic literacies such as science literacy and historical literacy, technological literacies such as computer literacy and automotive literacy, and practical literacies such as plumbing literacy and cooking literacy. Morris and Tchudi also present case studies demonstrating the different ways that people use, know, and understand the various literacies in their lives.

Street (1984) writes about the need to address multiple literacies as opposed to any single definition of literacy. He suggests there are two primary categories of literacy: dominant literacies, resulting from the dominant institutions of society and "vernacular literacy" which are rooted in everyday life. Street (1984) also associates multiple literacies with the technology of literacy. He finds that each new development in literacy technology, such as manuscript writing, the printing press, the typewriter, and the computer, has ushered in new forms of literacy. He goes on to say that in the change from one literacy to another, we transfer certain previously acquired skills and adapt them to the new literacy, while others are allowed to atrophy and are eventually forgotten.

Myers (1996) acknowledges the appearance of new forms of literacy and the evolution of older forms of literacy to meet shifting social needs. He connects these new literacies to the culture within which they occur and suggests that all people, including children are constantly re-inventing literacy to satisfy the extreme dynamics of modern culture. Myers writes of

"school literacy" as a separate and distinct genre of literacy. His references to "translation/critical literacy" infer a need to negotiate the many and diverse literacies that punctuate our increasingly media rich society. He finds that not only do literacies encourage the development of new technologies but that new technologies result in the creation of new literacies. It is easy to see how today's rapidly expanding range of technology brings with it an equally rapid increase in new literacies. Guth and Heny (1998) agree, arguing that people in the 21st century will face literacy demands we can only imagine today.

Barton (1994) writes that people have different literacies that they make use of, associated with different domains of life. Barton speaks of "imposed literacies" that are required by various social institutions and "self generated literacies" that are learned or acquired as a result of personal interests or needs (1994, p. 38). He speaks of "work literacies" and "legal literacies" and "institutional literacies" and "vernacular literacies" as separate subsets of literacy practices related to the different domains of life (Barton & Hamilton, 1999). Knobel (1999) and Hynds (1997) support this view of literacy as they speak of "adolescent literacies," "family literacies," "religious literacies," and "school literacies" in their studies relating to the literacies of adolescents.

Boyle (1999) writes of the increasing literacy demands of the work place, including those appearing in vocational environments not traditionally associated with a need for literacy skills, and the various specialized "work place literacies" required in the modern, technology enhanced workplace.

Heidorn and Rabine (1998) argue the need for workers in post-industrial societies to possess the specialized literacies and literacy dispositions required for successful independent learning. Buehl (1998) addresses a related topic suggesting that success in today's schools demands a broadened approach to literacy education to include various "content" and "media" literacies including, among others, technology literacy, math literacy, science literacy, and historical literacy.

Three recurring themes in literature addressing multiple literacies involve the significance of three distinct but not exclusive categories of literacy in today's world: information literacy, media literacy, and vernacular (sometimes called "hidden" or "everyday") literacies.

<u>Information Literacies</u>

Literacy is more than the ability to read and write; it is the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze, respond, and interact with the growing variety of complex sources of information. Information literacy most often refers to computer-based generation, the distribution, and the use of information based texts. (Sensenbaugh, 1990)

Information literacy is defined as the ability to recognize a need for information, to identify and locate and gain access to appropriate sources of information, to evaluate the quality of the information obtained and to organize and use that information effectively (Hancock, 1993). The now

historic 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational

Reform," was one of the first that emphasized the need of children to be able

to manage information. New literacy technologies such as computers, word

processors, networks, and telecommunications systems make a seemingly

unlimited volume of information available to more people than ever in history

(Hancock, 1993). Information literacy has also been recently characterized

as ranging from tool and resource literacy to publishing literacy, emerging

technology literacy, and critical literacy (Rodger, 1998). Technological

changes brought about by the computer are changing the ways we

disseminate and communicate information (Vacca, 1998).

"Information literacy raises the awareness of the knowledge explosion

and involves understanding how computers can help to identify, access, and

obtain data and documents needed for problem solving and decision making"

(Horton, as cited in Hubbard, 1987). Included under the umbrella of

"information literacy" are various other literacies such as "library literacy"

"computer literacy" and so on.

Media Literacy

Media literacy is a hot agenda today. It seems that after all these

years, as Marshall McLuan so aptly suggested, the media may indeed have

become the message. In the minds of most educators and parents, media

literacy is the wise and informed use of mass media such as television and

popular magazines. Media literacy most commonly implies what Myers

(1996) calls a critical, analytical literacy. To understand the nature of media

literacy, one must accept the position that all media are texts, symbolic (sign) systems that must be actively read. They are not, says Masterman (as cited in Davies, 1996), self-explanatory reflections of external reality. Media do not just reflect or transmit reality, media are actively involved in the process of constructing and representing reality (Davies, 1996).

The National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy (1992, p. 1) describes a media literate person as one who can "decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media."

Media literacy is a term often used to refer to what is actually "mass media," or the media of mass communication. It is the "media" that makes such "mass communication" possible. Mass media takes both the form of print media, including newspapers, magazines, and books and electronic media, consisting of radio, recordings, television, video, and film (Davies, 1996).

There seems to be significant anxiety surrounding access to various media. Outside of school, ninety percent of America's fifth graders read for four minutes a day or less, but they typically spend over two hours watching TV, which is on about seven hours a day in most American homes (McCannon, 1997, p. xiii). The media of television and the Internet are currently the subject of the majority of such social anxiety. Aiex (1989) argues that, "Mass media technology is shaping young people's lives far more than print..." However, Himmelweit et al. (as cited in Davies, 1986) reminds us that "every new medium of communication has in its time

aroused anxiety--the cinema, radio, and at one time (a chastening thought) even reading. Television and the Internet today are no different."

Vacca (1998, p. 606), on the other hand, finds that "being literate in contemporary society means being active, critical, and creative users of not only print and spoken language but also of the visual language." Vacca goes on to suggest that various forms of highly interactive and engaging electronic texts are transforming the way we think about literacy.

Accordingly, Australian educators, according to Luke (1999), consider media literacy a significant and culturally important aspect of literacy, establishing media literacy as an integral component of school literacies from grades K-12 and defining media literacy as an integration of speaking, listening, and critical thinking with reading and viewing.

Clearly, a critical, analytical approach to media literacy is a prerequisite in today's media saturated world.

Vernacular Literacies

The Nature of Vernacular Literacies

Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy provides for multiple literacies, including those that are not promoted or regulated externally by social or cultural institutions. Street (1993) classified literacies as either *dominant*, meaning those forwarded by dominant institutions in a society, or *vernacular*, meaning those literacies having their roots in everyday life.

Vernacular literacies are those literacies that are used in settings and for purposes that are unrelated to either school or work place literacies

(Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Vernacular literacies are personal, defined by the life style and the interests of the individual. Vernacular literacies are typically self-directed and self-elected. They often include literacy practices that are very pragmatic, such as making shopping lists, filling out forms, or leaving a note on the refrigerator door. They include the day-to-day literacy tasks that tend to go unnoticed, such as following the text on a TV screen, checking the time, or obeying a traffic sign. Vernacular literacies include both pragmatic and pleasurable forms of reading. Vernacular literacies also include some very sophisticated literacies involving creative expression such as making a web page or writing a poem. Often vernacular literacies involve critical reading. Vernacular literacies regularly involve research and record keeping, like when developing a family genealogy.

Vernacular literacies are what Finders (1997) calls "home literacies." They include such literacy practices as magazine reading, letter writing, journal keeping, and references to cookbooks and catalogs. Finders also describes vernacular literacies, using the term "non-school sanctioned literacies" to describe vernacular literacies in play within the school environment. Often people don't consider reading and writing in vernacular contexts real reading or real writing; even reading certain books, newspapers, or magazines is not considered real reading (Barton & Hamilton, 1999). For instance, adolescents rarely consider reading comic books to be real reading.

Various electronic media find their way into vernacular literacy practices. Playing computer games, "surfing the net," Internet chat, and

personal e-mail are becoming integral to everyday life. Often, traditional text media such as books and magazines and television programming are tied to electronic media in the form of CDs, web sites, or computer programs. Though they are rarely valued by dominant social institutions, literacies arising from such "multimedia" texts are very sophisticated and complex, involving high degrees of critical intertexuality and intellectual synthesis.

The Role of Vernacular Literacies

People use, acquire, and adapt literacies to make changes in their lives (Barton, 1994). Because different literacies are valued in different ways and different literacies are associated with certain kinds of people or with certain discourses to which people seek association, often adopting new literacies is part of the act of defining or redefining personal identity or social role (Barton and Hamilton, 1999). People use various literacies as a way of defining who they are and who they are not (Finders, 1997).

In addition to its role in defining identity, vernacular literacy has certain very pragmatic uses. Barton and Hamilton (1999) identify six areas of everyday life where reading and writing are of central importance:

1. Organizing life. People use and keep appointment diaries, address books, and lists of phone numbers. They set aside particular places and times for various literacy events. They write itineraries for visits and vacations. They make and use shopping lists, lists of people's birthdays, Christmas card lists, and home budgets.

2. Personal Communication. People send cards and letters to relatives and friends. People put up signs announcing birthdays, retirements, anniversaries, and garage sales. People take telephone messages and leave notes on the refrigerator.

3. Private leisure. People read books, magazines, and newspapers for leisure as ways of relaxing or passing the time. Many leisure pursuits such as various word games are mediated by literacy. People write stories and poems to pass the time and to entertain themselves.

4. Documenting life. People maintain records of their lives by keeping documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, school report cards, and clippings from the local newspaper documenting various achievements. They save tickets, programs and other souvenirs from special events, holidays, and festivals. People keep recipe books and garden diaries, record automobile maintenance, and keep personal records of local rainfall. Some people write family or life histories.

5. Sense making. People regularly conduct personal research to make sense of the world in which they live. They read instruction sheets, consult repair manuals, study self-help books, and rely on inspirational literature to help them cope with the interminable inconsistencies of life. Many people also have powerful internal imperatives to learn and become local experts in various topics of personal, community, or family interest.

6. Social participation. People utilize a range of literacy practices as they participate in various social activities. Reading and contributing to club newsletters, reading public notices, and writing letters to the editor all facilitate active participation in the local society.

Usually, according to Barton and Hamilton (1999), vernacular literacies are not supported or regulated by external institutions and are correspondingly less valued by society. However, they also find that vernacular literacies may be the source of creativity, invention, and originality. Vernacular literacies can engender improvised or spontaneous new literacy practices, embodying their own values, separate from that of dominant literacies. Creativity arising from vernacular literacies are, however, bound and limited by the values and social pressures of the family and other social groups that regulate everyday, personal living.

Knobel (1999), Hynds (1997), and Finders (1997) find that many adolescents adopt various vernacular literacies as a form of rebellion, to demonstrate independence or opposition to institutional standards or expectations. Sometimes this is demonstrated by students who choose to read socially marginalized books or magazines, by bringing inappropriate books or magazines to school, or simply reading when they should be doing other things. Other examples of such rebellious literacy practices include behaviors like writing and passing notes in school, getting tattooed, or writing on clothing or the person. Adolescent fascination with literacies related to antiheroes or the occult are also examples of such behavior.

Though some reading and writing are wholly private and personal, much of people's vernacular reading and writing involve other people and are located in reciprocal networks of exchange such as when friends discuss the news or share books.

Discourse Theory

We continually and actively rebuild our worlds, not through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing. (Gee, 1999, p. 11)

Language serves a great many functions and the simple exchange of information is only one of them. We use spoken and written language to create art and to build a world of activities and institutions around us. Gee (1999) finds the two primary functions of language are to permit and enable social activities and to serve as an agent of human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions. Literacy, then, is not simply the act of reading and writing, it is one active agent within a dynamic social system that is constantly "producing, reproducing, and transforming" myriad socially constructed cultures, sub cultures, social affiliations, and institutions (Gee, 1999).

Discourse analysis is often associated with the field of sociolinguistics, which is an eclectic discipline composed of elements of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, history, and politics (Knobels, 1999).

Sociolinguistics is concerned with the interaction between language and other social phenomenon. Discourse analysis is one approach to understanding those interactions. It is grounded in the idea that "social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life" (Hymes, as cited in Knobel, 1999).

Without context, all language, including written language, has little inherent meaning. Therefore, in order to understand how language functions, it is necessary to understand the many social and cultural forces in play that give it its meaning and its value. Literacy cannot be understood if it is separated from the person who possesses it or from the complex, socially constructed matrix of interacting factors that combine with it to allow access to some particular aspect of life (Street, 1984). The entire socio-cultural environmental package within which certain literacies are embedded is called a discourse.

Discourse theory positions literacy as one component in a set of practices, skills, language conventions, values, and dispositions. Discourse analysis treats both written and oral language as parts of social practices (Potter, 1997). Discourse theory permits an understanding of how language or linguistic elements function in a "fully integrated way as a simultaneously mental, social, cultural, institutional, and political phenomenon" (Gee, 1999, p. vii). Discourse theory then permits the study of literacy as part of a larger system and allows an understanding of the ways that various literacies and discourses interact. Discourse theory complements the ideological and the environmental models of literacy, as the many discourses to which all

people belong are, like multiple literacies, defined and influenced by countless social and environmental factors.

Gee (1999) suggests that individuals adopt certain attitudes, behaviors, and skills, such as those related to specific kinds of literacy, in order to join or function within a particular discourse. Individuals, according to Gee (1999), belong to a vast number of discourses, some of which are native to the individual's social or physical environment and others that are self selected by the individual in order to support a chosen identity.

D/Discourses and d/discourses

The term discourse is generally used by linguists to describe only the verbal interactions between speakers and listeners. However, to enable a discussion of individual elements of social discourses, Gee (1999) and Lankshear (1997) discriminate between language-related elements and the entire discourse package. Discourse (capitalized) refers to one's social role, and discourse (with a lower-case d) refers to the language one uses to fulfill that social role. Lankshear (1997, p. 45) holds that "all literacies are embedded in Discourses."

Gee (1999, p. 7) refers to contextually specific ways of using either oral or written language as a lower case d/discourse. Knobel (1999), explains d/discourses as the "language bits" of D/Discourses. A d/discourse might be the reading and sharing of biking or skating magazines between adolescent boys. Gee (as cited in Knobel, 1999, p. 34) characterizes d/discourses as a "stretch of language (spoken or written) which "hangs

together" to make sense of some community of people who use that language."

References to upper case D/Discourse, are used by Gee (1999, p. 7) to represent the entire package of defining elements in a discourse including, among other things, language-in-use, behaviors, attitudes, manners of dress, gestures, affiliations, and preferences contributing to a particular "way of being in the world." A D/Discourse might be that of "skater." D/Discourses include and are operated by socioculturally defined groups of people. These people act as and are accepted as members of the D/Discourse, which is constituted by particular ways of "talking, acting, valuing, and believing as well as the spaces and material props the group uses to carry out its social practices" (Knobel, 1999, p. 7). Discourses are a socially constructed integration of words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, gestures, body positions, and clothing. Barton (1994, p. 57) refers to people who use or are part of a given D/Discourse a "discourse community," a group of people who have texts and practices in common. There are myriad discourse communities at work within the world of adolescent boys.

Throughout the remainder of this study I have employed Gee's D/Discourse and d/discourse notation.

<u>Primary and Secondary Discourses</u>

Literacy is the rhetorical ability to discover the rules and principles of discourse and the power to use, extend, and modify those rules to

accommodate one's own experiences, understandings, and needs. (Morris and Tchudi, 1996, p. 202)

A person is born or initially socialized into what Gee (as cited by Knobel, 1999) calls a "primary Discourse." Our primary Discourse includes socio-culturally determined ways of using our native language in person-to-person communication with family, relatives, and close friends. New members of primary discourses are enculturated into being a member of a particular family or family grouping within a particular sociocultural setting. This experience shapes new members' habitual ways of speaking, behaving, valuing, believing, seeing and experiencing the world, and their first social identity (Gee, as cited in Knobel, 1999). Primary discourses are taken for granted and tend to shape the way people understand who we are personally and what class of people we belong to.

Secondary Discourses socialize people and groups of people into various associations outside each person's immediate family group (Gee, as cited in Knobel, 1999). They are more public than primary Discourses and involve interaction with people who are not "intimates." Secondary discourses are more "public" than primary Discourses and often require members to act in ways that are strongly governed and monitored by other members of the Discourse (Foucault, 1972). We begin to find memberships in secondary Discourses as very young children, almost as soon as we find ways to associate with others besides those in our immediate family.

Understanding the Discourses of adolescent boys necessarily involves having an understanding of their primary Discourse, as primary Discourses often have either a limiting or an enabling influence on the kinds of secondary Discourses a person acquires access to (Knobel, 1999).

Knobel (1999) describes primary discourses as being "acquired" rather than being "learned." Acquired Discourses are assumed as a result of exposure to models and the process of trial and error, without any kind of formal teaching. Secondary Discourses, though they may rely heavily on acquired knowledge and metaknowledge, are usually learned (Knobel, 1999). Some secondary Discourses demand years of formal learning or generations of lived experience and the kinds of knowledge and wisdom that comes from such experiences while others can be learned informally in a matter of minutes. Learning, according to Gee (as cited in Knobel, 1999) is a more conscious and formal experience than acquisition. It involves direct and explicit teaching, though not necessarily by an institutionally recognized teacher.

Gee, (as cited in Knobel, 1999) believes that people who acquire a Discourse, perform more effectively within that discourse than those who "learn" it as a result of being taught. However, Gee (as cited in Knobel, 1999) also points out that formal learning is integral to many discourses, as are various kinds of apprenticeship. Membership in the adolescent boy Discourse of skater usually involves an informal apprenticeship to an older adolescent boy who already enjoys membership in the Discourse.

There is always a certain amount of interaction between primary and secondary Discourses (Foucault, 1972; Knobel, 1999; and Gee, as cited in Knobel, 1999). This interaction mitigates the degree of fluency a person may achieve in a given secondary Discourse.

Discourses as Dynamic Phenomenon

Discourse theory organizes social life within multiple social realities that are constructed through our use of language, oral and written (Miller, 1997). Discourse theory demonstrates that our use of language is both defined by and helps to define our individual social realities (Miller, 1997; Gee, 1999). Discourses are, according Gee (1999), reflexive, meaning that they not only change persons who adopt them, but are themselves changed by each new member.

Foucault (as cited in Miller, 1997) describes a "top down" way of understanding discourse. The habits, practices, and dispositions adopted by individuals are defined, according to Foucault, by the discourses to which they belong. In effect, individual people inherit their reality, their ways of understanding and interacting with each other and the world, from the pre-existing socially constructed frameworks called discourses. Fish (1980) and Kress (as cited in Knobel, 1999) support this perspective and associate such discourses with memberships in particular institutions, involving certain practices, values, meanings, demands, prohibitions, and permissions. Knobel (1999, p. 45) also finds discourses to be "normative," pointing out that "characteristic ways of acting, valuing, and interacting are rewarded,

ignored, or censured by members, who, in turn, hold true to the values and conventions of the Discourse." Foucault (1972) uses the term discourse to discuss the many diverse configurations of assumptions, classes, points of view, opinions, and modes of articulation. He uses the coherent interpretive frameworks provided by discourses to define the different social realities within which particular kinds of people exist, interact with others, and thrive. Foucault (1980) develops discourse theory within culturally standardized discourses that limit and define how we interact with our physical and social environments. Even Gee (1999) agrees that discourses perform many "gatekeeping functions," regulating many patterns of social and language practices.

Miller (1997) suggests that discourses are constructed from the "ground up" from discrete social practices, including those related to literacy. Gee, (1999, p. 1) concurs, saying that "...cultures, social groups, and institutions get produced, reproduced, and transformed through human activities." This "ground up" model of discourse theory best supports the ideological model of literacy and suggests that individuals are capable of constructing and defining their own realities within discourses that they build from module like components including such things as social behaviors, language use, attitudes and dispositions, manners of dress, and literacy practices.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) talk of Discourses in terms of "literacy practices." "Literacy practices" are the ways people interact with text in specific places and situations. Like Discourses, literacy practices integrate

language with other aspects of the social and physical environment that provide it context and construct its meaning. Discourses always involve props such as various kinds of books and magazines, laboratories, classrooms, buildings of various kinds, various technologies (Gee, 1999), and various objects from skateboards to basketballs.

Discourse and the Study of Adolescent Literacy

Discourse analysis is particularly important in a study of adolescent literacy because of the way Discourses help to organize our social and personal lives. Our discourses define a large part of our personal identity, our way of seeing ourselves and the world. Gee (1999) sees Discourses as "conditions of possibility" that provide us with the resources for constructing an array of social possibilities. Discourse analysis involves discussions of "situated identities," which are different identities or social positions we enact and recognize in different settings; and "social languages," which are different styles of language used and recognized as belonging to specific settings or to certain identities (Gee, 1999).

The key to Discourses, says Gee (1999) is recognition. Placing language, action, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together so that others recognize you as a particular kind of person engaged in a particular kind of activity constitutes a successful creation of a Discourse. Like a kind of dynamic archetype, however a Discourse is composed, it must be recognizable to be successful.   Also, several discourses may be recognized at once; a boy in the library may be recognized as a rebellious

teen, untraditional, a skater, a reader, a student, and middle class all at the same time.

Discourses, according to Gee (1999) can "split" into two or more Discourses or, conversely, two or more Discourses can meld together to form a new Discourse. For instance, the adolescent boy "biker" discourse split into "BMX," flatland, and "freestyle" variants; whereas "punk" and "metal" musical Discourses melded into the "alternative" Discourse. Often, older Discourses are very different from their contemporary equivalent. For instance, the "biker" Discourse today bears little resemblance to that same Discourse of twenty years ago. Additionally, Discourses are always defined in terms of their association with other Discourses. For example, the "alternative" Discourse is automatically associated with the "skater" Discourse.

Discourse analysis is necessarily tied to concepts of situated identity and situated meaning (Gee, 1999). A situated identity exists only with the context of a given Discourse, so when an adolescent boy is dressed in his "skater uniform," carrying his skate board down the street with a group of other adolescents acting, dressing, and talking in ways defined by the "skater" discourse, his situated identity might be "cool dude." On the other hand this same identity acted out within a classroom Discourse would likely engender a situated identity of "slacker." Socially situated identities, according to Gee (1999) are not fixed, but are provisional and are constantly negotiated in the actual context of lived experience. Situated meanings are given to language or actions as well. All meaning is local, dependent on the

context that generates it. For instance, the word "board" carries a much different meaning for our adolescent skaters than it would for a Discourse involving adult carpenters drinking coffee at the lumberyard. Like socially situated identities, situated meanings don't reside immutably in individual minds; they are negotiated between people in and through social interaction (Gee, 1999).

We enter into discourses and use resources that they provide in order to construct concrete social realities by engagement in discursive practices. Foucault (1972) sees Discourses as tools, providing frameworks for constructing different social realities, for creating cultural "places" for particular kinds of people to exist. Foucault (1972) also insists that each instance of reality construction is distinctive and deserves its own analysis, supporting the value of case studies related to discourse and literacy. Toepfer (1993) refers to the adolescent period as one of growth, development, and transition. He stresses that this is a critical period where we begin to shape our character, ethics, and attitudes about life.

During adolescence, children "try on" various Discourses in this search for who they want to be and how they want to be seen by the world (Knobel, 1999). Knobel (1999) and Richardson (1998) describe what are essentially Discourse apprenticeships and explain ways that people find their ways into new and often very complex Discourses.

To understand the literacies of adolescent boys, it is clear that an understanding of the Discourses to which these boys belong is a priority. To that end, in order to adequately describe the way adolescent boys use

written language, their literacy practices are situated within a larger description of the physical, social, cultural environments and the various discourses to which the boys seem to belong.

"In the end, a Discourse is a 'dance' that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here and now as a performance that is recognized as just such a coordination." (Gee, 1999, p. 19)

Related Studies

Just Girls

Just Girls (Finders, 1997) is a qualitative case study describing the lives, literacies, and Discourses of two groups of adolescent girls attending the same middle American school, but belonging to dramatically different social groups. The study investigates both the school and non-school literacies of the subjects, noting how the two discourses intersect and diverge. The study illuminates the ways the focus groups of adolescent girls developed private, non-school discourses, many of which were expressions of opposition and rebellion. Finders also investigates the role of various literacies in establishing membership and power in the many formal and informal social Discourses to which the members belong.

Everyday Literacies

Everyday Literacies (Knobel, 1999) is a case study focusing on the ways various vernacular and institutional literacies influence the lives of

several adolescent students in Australia. Though the title would lead the reader to believe that the book focuses exclusively on everyday "vernacular" literacies, it actually describes each subject's school literacies and Discourses and then compares those to the students' non-school literacies and Discourses with close reference the students' parents and primary Discourse. The study finds that the students often enjoyed many literacies valued and important in their private lives that were marginalized or even frowned upon at school. Often, Knobel found that students with remarkable talent for various everyday literacies outside of the school context found little or no success at school and with school literacies. At the same time, the study demonstrated that subjects with vernacular, home based, literacies more closely aligned with that of the school tended to be more accepted and successful as students. Another finding of the study was that students often adopted school literacies only in the school context, rejecting them in other contexts and that adolescents sometimes invented private literacies, much like the girls in Just Girls (Finders, 1997) as a form of hidden rebellion or opposition to school Discourses. Knobel made extensive use of discourse theory to demonstrate the relationship between the various literacies practiced by the subjects and the social contexts to which they belong.

On the Brink

On the Brink: Negotiating Literature and Life with Adolescents (Hynds, 1997) is a long term qualitative case study of several urban, ethnically disparate middle school students in the United States. The subjects were

closely studied for one year, while they were students in the middle school classroom being observed by the author and then periodically for several years. Though the study focuses on school literacies and Discourses, Hynds provides rich insight into the subjects' cultural background. The study reveals conflicts between membership in some social discourses and acceptance of school literacies and discourses. Hynds found that if it wasn't socially or ethnically cool to do school, her subjects often didn't, rejecting all aspects of school literacy and academic success. At the same time Hynds discovered that some students managed to value school and school Discourses in spite of social pressures not to. One intriguing and disturbing aspect of the study was that resistance to negative attitudes toward literacy and school was strongly associated with the individual teacher, and that positive changes in the disposition toward school and the valuation of school literacies made by the dedicated work of one teacher could quickly be erased by another or by any number of minor setbacks. Using social constructivist methods of developing curriculum and pedagogy, Hynds focused on practical application of the things she learned about the interaction between adolescent literacy and social identity.

Local Literacies

        Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in one Community (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) is a qualitative case study of the vernacular literacies of several members of a lower middle class neighborhood in Lancaster, England. The study focused on the role of vernacular literacies in the lives of the subjects and how the subjects valued those literacies. Barton and

Hamilton found that literacy played an important role in all the subjects' lives, but that the various literacies and Discourses involved varied dramatically from person to person, even though they lived in the same neighborhood. The study seemed to indicate that we take our vernacular literacies for granted and often practice them without any conscious knowledge that we are doing it. The study also found that people regularly developed new literacies as they were needed to communicate, to exercise a need to create, to gain membership in new discourses, to better oneself or to satisfy a need for personal knowledge, or to solve problems. The subjects were unique and interesting, selected using a method Merriam (1988) calls "referral." Barton and Hamilton provided thick and readable descriptions of both the physical and cultural environments. They also located each subject in a rich personal context and supported their literacy description with artifacts and quotes, making each subject come alive for the reader.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is a multicase qualitative case study of the role of vernacular literacies in the lives of three adolescent boys. Since the 1960's, case studies have been an important aspect of educational research, offering useful insights and helping to shape educational policy (Merriam, 1988). Case study is an empirical inquiry method that looks closely at some contemporary phenomenon within its living context, especially in those cases when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not obvious (Yinn, 1994). Literacy can only be understood within its social context (Street, 1984), making qualitative case study a desirable and uniquely appropriate framework for its study.

The qualitative case study design was chosen because the ultimate goal of this study is to generate what Lincoln and Guba (1981, p. 119) call "thick" descriptions of not only the vernacular literacy practices of the individual subjects, but also the contextual social Discourses within which those literacies exist. Qualitative case studies such as this do not attempt to discover causes or effects, makes no predictions about outcomes, and is not intended to generalize any condition or context (Merriam, 1988).

Multi-case qualitative case studies have been used extensively in literacy research, and the design of this dissertation is patterned after those used in multicase qualitative case studies of literacy by Barton and Hamilton (1998), Finders (1997), Hynds (1997) Ivey (1999), and Knobel (1999).

When researchers study two or more subjects, settings, or depositories of data, they are doing multi-case studies. Some multi-case studies, such as this one, are called comparative case studies because two or more case studies are compared or contrasted (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992).

The Researcher

It is impossible to ignore the influence of the researcher when considering the value and usefulness of any qualitative research. The investigator is the primary instrument in any qualitative study (Merriam, 1988). The researcher's experience, prior knowledge, and assumptions must inevitably influence what is learned from a case study and how it will be understood by the reader (Merriam, 1988). During the process of any qualitative study, the researcher makes countless decisions that influence what data is collected, how it is collected, and how it is interpreted. "How the researcher views the world affects the entire research process—from conceptualizing a problem, to collecting and analyzing data, to interpreting findings" (Merriam, 1992, p. 53).

As a veteran secondary English teacher, I have grappled with adolescent literacy issues for most of my adult life. This experience has led me to certain dispositions regarding literacy and the way we teach it in the public schools. First of all, contrary to popular perception and standardized mania, most students I have encountered over the years have been able to read and write at some reasonable level of competency, due largely to

classroom experiences. However, I have long been convinced that learning

to read or write effectively and in more sophisticated contexts was heavily

dependent both on our personal appetite for knowledge and on our personal

passion for the lived human experiences we call reading and writing. In

today's literate world, reading and writing have become so central to life that

they can no longer be separated from it. Literacy sustains life on a basic and

practical level and, at the same time, satisfies a basic human hunger to

understand and to reach out to others. This idea holds powerful implications

for educators because, unfortunately, in my considerable experience as a

secondary English teacher, a personal thirst for knowledge and passion for

reading or writing are rarely the result of anything done in the traditional

classroom.

I began this project by reflecting on my own experience as an

adolescent, remembering how important reading was to doing the things I

really wanted to do, to becoming the person I really wanted to become.

For years, I watched my students moving in and out of my classroom,

noticing with curiosity and some chagrin the countless magazines, catalogs,

and paperbacks they brought stuffed in back packs or in the pockets of their

jeans. I collected my share of private weekend plans on intricately folded

notebook paper. I felt guilty when I forced students to put away Stephen

King or Isaac Asimov and get out their literature text, imploring them to read

and enjoy Dickens and Shakespeare. Even then, I realized on some level

that many of the ubiquitous artifacts of adolescent boydom represented

authentic manifestations of reading and writing skills, but I resisted those implications.

I eventually began to suspect my students were actively applying their literacy skills to a greater degree and in more ways than is ever revealed in the school setting and that these everyday literacies were possibly the keys to building positive values and dispositions toward all literacies. Finally, as I began to learn more about the ideas at the foundation of the authentic learning movement in education, I found myself wondering if these non-school literacies might be the key to opening my students more fully to the literacies of the school. After all, good teachers learn soon after entering the classroom that knowing their students as people, valuing their students' uniqueness, and their validating their students' lived experiences outside of school are among the most important keys to success for both themselves and their students.

Setting

Literacy is always a function of and can only be understood within its social and cultural contexts (Street, 1984). The formal stage of this study is to be conducted during the first half of 2000. The following demographic data was obtained from school profiles and demographic reports prepared by the North Central Accreditation Committee of the school the participants attend. All the participants reside in a suburban community of approximately 40,000. To preserve the anonymity of the participants and their parents, references to the community, the school, and the respondents themselves

are always pseudonyms. For the purposes of this study, the community where the boys live is called Smallville.

Though the school the subjects attend is not directly implicated in this study, school is a primary aspect of the lives of all adolescent boys, so it must assumed that some influence exists. All the subjects attend school in the same middle class suburban school district. The ethnic make-up of the district is predominately Western European. All minorities combined represent only thirteen per cent of the community's population. The largest minority populations are African American (five per cent) and Native American (seven per cent). There are also small, statistically insignificant Hispanic and oriental populations.

The subjects were chosen from a population of adolescent boys attending a mid-high school, serving grades nine and ten, with a student population of about 1100. The mid-high ninth grade English course is named "grammar and composition" and is actually a workshop-based course integrated with world history and geography. Though keyed to thematic focuses, students enjoy significant choice in their reading and writing projects. Tenth grade students are enrolled in a course named English II, which is a world literature survey with a strong writing and research component. Most other courses at the mid-high school involve some degree of formal literacy skill and regular literacy practice. These include the reading of textbooks, worksheets, graphs and charts; and the writing of reports, essay tests, labs, and class notes.

Subjects: A Purposeful Sample

Subjects selected for this study are adolescent boys between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. The three subjects were code named Arthur, Ben, and Charlie. Since no attempt is being made in this study to generalize the nature of adolescent boys' literacies, the participants were chosen using a "purposeful" sampling strategy in an attempt to best address the goals of this study (Erlandson, 1993; Merriam, 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative case study theory assumes that the researcher's purpose is to discover, understand, or gain insight; therefore, researchers using purposeful sampling select the samples from which they believe they can learn the most (Merriam, 1988).

Accordingly, participants were selected based on their apparent willingness to participate in the study. Though openness and a positive attitude toward participating in the study were primary considerations in selecting participants, they were not the only criteria. Subjects were also chosen to represent a range of apparently different vernacular Discourses (Gee, 1999). To that end, subjects were chosen who seemed to represent typical adolescent male social Discourses such as "computer nerd," "honor student," and "athlete." Additionally, since the subjects all live in the same community and attend the same school, it was assumed they would intersect in some Discourses, and no attempt was made to avoid this. Finally, since the subjects are all minors, their selection was also mitigated by their parents' apparent attitude toward the study.

Initial contact with potential participants was made with subjects either known by the researcher to be likely candidates or recommended to the researcher by others who were aware of the nature of this study. Before any actual commitment was sought, contact was also made with the potential subjects' parents to determine their disposition toward such participation. When it was determined that a subject was a likely candidate for the study, a formal consent form was presented to the candidate and his parents. No data was collected until both the participants and their parents were fully aware of the nature and the goals of the study, and after all parties involved had provided informed consent by virtue of a formal consent form agreeing to their participation in the study.

<div align="center">Data collection</div>

Qualitative data for case studies includes "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories" (Patton, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 68).

Data was collected during the spring and summer of 2000. During the study, extended informal visits were conducted with each of the subjects in various locations where they carry out their "non-school" lives, including their homes. During these visits, I made detailed notes on the nature of any literacy practices observed or any references to literacy related topics. I also

made an attempt to collect literacy-related artifacts or at least to make a catalog of those involved. Data collection was terminated when it seemed to become non-productive, at what Glaser & Strauss (1967) call the point of saturation.

Data was also generated by extended interviews with the subjects and their parents during visits in the subjects' homes. Interview is the preferred method of data collection in studies that focus on individuals who share a particular trait (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Each subject was interviewed at least once in this setting. Before the first interview, the subject and his parents were given the standard set of questions for review, allowing the participants to reflect on their experiences and formulate responses. Any questions the subjects or their parents felt were inappropriate or unnecessarily intrusive were omitted. In the first phase, I asked a standard set of global questions (Spradley, 1979) designed to reveal in a general way the literacy practices, attitudes, and dispositions of the subjects. Those global questions included, but were not limited to the following:

1. Tell me about the kinds of things you do that require you to read or write in any way.

2. Tell me about times when reading and writing are fun or pleasurable.

3. When are reading or writing important to you when you are not at school?

4. How do you think reading and writing are different for your generation?

5. How would your life be different if you couldn't read and write as well as you do?

6. Do you ever read or write when you aren't even thinking about it?

7. How would your life be different if you could read and write better than you do?

8. What will you read and write when you are an adult?

Succeeding interviews were structured differently, allowing the subjects to offer any information or opinions they felt they hadn't had an opportunity to express and allowing the researcher an opportunity to follow up with more probing questions on data obtained from previous interviews (Spradley, 1969). For example, follow-up interviews were conducted in subject specific venues that allowed the subjects to demonstrate and elaborate on such things as "bike-logo" and "play-book" literacies.

Interviews were audio taped. Written transcripts were then generated using the tape recording of each interview. Such tapes and transcripts were identified only by the pseudonyms assigned to the subjects, and all tape recordings were erased immediately following their transcriptions, to further protect the subjects' identities. In the course of the interviews, with the permission of the parents and the subjects, I recorded extensive field notes resulting from direct observation of any literacy related aspects of the subjects' homes. Additionally, brief informal interviews with parents and siblings, where applicable, were solicited to complement and corroborate data gleaned from the subjects. All tape recordings, unedited transcripts,

and observation notes were secured in locked cabinets in the researcher's
home.

Internal Validity: Trustworthiness and Credibility

Safeguards for qualitative research work to insure the integrity of the
data, that the description the study generates is a true representation of the
cultural phenomenon under study, and that inferences and interpretations
made by the researcher are grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
Design elements of this study working to enhance credibility and
trustworthiness include extended and persistent observation in the form of
observation over a period of several months, triangularization as a function
of member checks, multiple interviews, direct observation, referential
adequacy materials in the form of tape recordings, peer debriefing following
each interview, and corroboration from direct observation, parents, or
siblings (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Specific elements of the design assuring
credibility include the following:

1. Multiple tape recorded interviews, permitting exhaustive and
   detailed transcripts

2. Detailed and annotated field notes

3. Opportunities for member checks allowing each respondent to
   review and comment on the accuracy of interview transcripts and
   my interpretation

4. Data collection over a period of several months

5. Peer review and debriefing (Erlandson, et al., 1993) by members of my doctoral committee familiar with adolescent literacy patterns and qualitative case study theory

6. Corroboration of data by others familiar with the literacy habits of the subjects, such as their parents, teachers, and friends.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method described by Glaser and Stauss (1967) was used to analyze, organize, and classify the data gathered during the course of the study and correlate the broadest possible range of relevant variables as they apply to each subject and to each other, permitting a detailed and rich understanding of the concepts under investigation. The constant comparative method is a "research design for multi-data sources, which is like analytic induction in that the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of the data collection" (Merriam, 1988, p. 72). Essentially, as more data is accumulated and added to the study, it is constantly organized and reorganized. Themes and categories are sought, thought, and re-thought; and interpretations are made and re-made in response to the introduction of new data. The constant comparison method is an ongoing, dynamic system of data collection, organization, evaluation, and interpretation.

The data was reviewed in phases. The first phase of data analysis was a review of the data as it is collected from each subject, gleaning a constantly evolving sense of each subject's unique vernacular literacy

practices and dispositions. The second phase, performed concurrent with the first, focused on identifying "emergent categories" within which the data was organized as they appear (Erlandson, 1993, p. 118). The third, also concurrent phase, was a search for emerging themes, patterns, or relationships that seemed to cut across all the available data. In concordance with the constant comparative method, in order to assure that all relevant data was included and that it is accurately reflected in the context of the report, all data was reviewed multiple times as the report was being drafted. Additionally, a final negative-case analysis was conducted to insure that the relationships between the data and the themes they support were valid and free of fallacy. A negative-case analysis is a method used to ensure credibility in a qualitative study by positing and testing alternate interpretations of the data, paying particular attention to data that tend to refute the researcher's interpretation (Erlandson, et al., 1993). In studies using negative case analysis, hypotheses are tested against individual pieces of data to determine if the hypotheses are viable. Hypotheses are then revised until there are no substantive difference between the hypotheses and the data (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

The data was then organized into a series of descriptive narratives, one for each subject, describing each subject thoroughly in terms of his vernacular literacies and the physical and social contexts within which those literacies exist. These narratives included, but were not limited to the following information:

1. A brief description of the participant focusing on those personal and social discourses that the interviews and observation have revealed are important to the participant

2. A review of the ways in which I observed literacy at work in the everyday lives of the participants

3. A summary of the ways various literacy practices and habits revealed in interview or observed in the course of the study support the subject's social discourses

4. My general impressions regarding the ways the subjects understand and value literacy and the role of literacy in their primary discourse.

Finally, I composed my conclusions regarding what has been learned from the study and its implications for both literacy education and further study. Hypotheses generated as a result of this study were tested and repeatedly revised using negative case analysis until there was close agreement between the data and the final hypotheses.

The following three chapters explore the many ways literacy intersects with the everyday lives of three teen-aged boys.

CHAPTER FOUR

ARTHUR

It is admittedly impossible to completely capture the essence of any lived experience. This study, as is true of all case studies, cannot claim to be complete or comprehensive, as case studies are intended by definition and design to present what Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 33) call a single "slice of life." Nor can it be claimed that the three subjects investigated in this study provide any kind of generalizable understanding of the adolescent literacies of boys. The nature of literacy and adolescence are both heavily influenced by differing physical environments, cultural attitudes, and social contexts. There are simply too many variables.

Adolescents are preoccupied by an ongoing process of self-discovery and self-architecture (Elkind, 1998). In their personal journey to find a place for themselves in the world, adolescents pass through a series of searching and experimental metamorphoses that bring with them significant shifts in the social discourses to which they either belong or aspire. In the course of the next three chapters, I will attempt to illuminate the literacy lives of three adolescent boys. Acknowledging the social nature of literacy (Street, 1984; Barton; 1994) and the universal nature of the adolescent search for identify (Elkind, 1998), the subjects described in this study were "purposefully" selected to address many of the common social discourses within which adolescent boys find acceptance and identity today. They were also chosen

for their "typicality," to represent several versions of what might be called the "typical" teen-age boy.

The term Discourse (with an upper case D), as used throughout this study, refers to social constructs involving one or more literacies as described by Gee (1999). The narrative organization reflects the various social Discourses within which the subjects' vernacular literacies reside. These Discourses overlap to a certain extent, as all the subjects are approximately the same age and live in the same community, but each has a defining combination of literacies or unique Discourse that separates him from the others and provides for his emerging individuality.

Throughout the study, common threads related to the subjects and their vernacular literacies emerged: literacy as a form of social currency, literacies related to vehicles such as cars and bicycles, literacies related to religion, literacies related to jobs, literacies related to compelling personal interests, and the influence of parental attitudes toward literacy.

Knowing Arthur

Arthur is the prototypical, All-American "boy next door." At the time of the study, Arthur is sixteen years old and a sophomore in high school. He is tall and has a sturdy athletic build complemented by straight, short cut blond hair. Though still an underclassman, he has already been a starter on his school's varsity football team. He says he likes to dress fashionably, but his clothing is conservative. A glance in his closet reveals that much of

Arthur's everyday clothing, including the varsity football jersey he wears to school on game day, reflects his interest in sports and his athletic lifestyle.

Arthur's manner is amiable, yet reserved. His smile is open and honest. Initially, Arthur seems shy, but he makes friends easily. Arthur is well known by teens throughout the community, having many casual acquaintances, but maintaining a relatively small circle of "buds" (close friends). Though he says little and measures his words carefully, Arthur seems to interact comfortably with everyone. He has a dry, sometimes sarcastic sense of humor and enjoys pointing out ironies and paradoxes.

Conversations with Arthur tend to end up being about sports, especially football. He doesn't mention it unless asked, but Arthur has been involved in the Boy Scouts for most of his life and is currently working toward becoming an Eagle Scout. He is a serious minded young man who is goal driven and more focused than many of his contemporaries. He already has chosen the university he plans to attend (admitting that his choice was influenced by the university's sports tradition) and has begun a systematic quest to achieve his career goal, which is to become a psychiatrist. Arthur hints at future literacy practices, describing being a psychiatrist as "listening to people and taking notes on what they say so you can help them become mentally healthy."

Arthur considers himself a reader, which he defines as "someone who reads for information, for study purposes, for pleasure." He also thinks of himself as a writer, primarily because he earns good grades on the writing he does for school. However, he admits he is sometimes frustrated by his

inability to express his thoughts adequately on paper. Arthur believes

literacy skills are extremely important to his achieving his career goals.

<p style="text-align:center">Arthur's Primary Discourse: Home Literacies</p>

Gee (1999) and Knobel (1999) describe the primary Discourse as one

developed as a child growing up in the home. It is primarily influenced by

the child's parents and other close relatives or neighbors with whom the child

regularly associates.

Arthur lives with his family on the edge of an aging, once exclusive

middle class residential edition. His home is conspicuously the newest and

the largest in his neighborhood. It is roomy, well furnished, and exudes a

relaxed, somewhat masculine sense of conservative style. Arthur's parents

are both college educated and quite successful. Arthur's mother is the

director of personnel for a large international oil company. In her work, she

negotiates a complex suite of professional business literacies, including the

reading of resumes, researching of credentials, and the writing of

recommendations and reports. Arthur's mother seems warm and open, very

involved and supportive in the lives of her children and her husband.

Arthur's father is a computer programmer who writes custom software for

the petroleum industry. Though involved in many of his children's activities,

Arthur's father is often out of town on business, sometimes for extended

periods. He is also involved and supportive. When he was the leader of

Arthur's Cub Scout den, in Arthur's words, his dad would "push me to do a

lot of stuff. It was pretty easy when he was telling me what to do." Arthur's

dad is an Eagle Scout himself. Arthur has an older sister who is eighteen and a senior in high school. Arthur's sister is also an athlete, starting for her school's varsity softball team. The family attends church regularly, and everyone in the family is active in church affairs.

Arthur's family is very organized. Arthur's mom is the keeper of the family calendar, which is fastened to the refrigerator in the kitchen and on which everything the family does is meticulously recorded and planned. If it isn't on the calendar, it doesn't happen. Art and his sister have their days and evenings, their weekends, and their entire summer vacations planned to the day, sometimes to the hour. "If we are wondering what we are going to do that day, we go and check the calendar." Already on the calendar are the several church camps and sports camps Arthur and his sister attend each summer, and which consume most of their summer vacation. Additionally, already on the calendar are the twenty-five required workouts for football, football camp, a mission trip, and a church camp that he describes as a sort of "retreat." This summer, Arthur is trying to find a job, something his mother does not approve of and something that threatens to upset the symmetry of the family.

Although Arthur has a driver's license and drives regularly, he does not have a car of his own. He remembers having to study a "little book" before he took the written part of the test, but didn't ascribe much significance to having done it. When he needs to go somewhere, he drives one of the three "family" cars, none of which are the performance or sport utility type vehicles so many teens today seem to prefer. Unlike the majority of teenagers in his

community, Arthur doesn't appear to associate the automobile with his sense of self, viewing it simply as a practical necessity and a mode of transport.

Arthur has a room to himself on the second floor of his family's home. His room is unusually neat and organized compared to that of many other teenagers. It is furnished with a chest of drawers, a desk, a plastic locker, and a double bed with a bookshelf in the headpiece. Above the desk is a cluttered bulletin board.

The top of the chest of drawers is covered with memorabilia. Among the memorabilia are three "pine wood derby" cars of the sort that are built as part of various Scouting programs. The cars have quite a history. Arthur's dad and he built them together, improving the performance with each successive effort, eventually winning his Scout troop's annual derby.

Above the chest of drawers is a certificate of appreciation from his football coach and two framed poems that were given to Arthur by his grandmothers. One of the poems is titled "Arthur" and was written about Arthur by his grandmother who, at one time, exchanged letters regularly with Arthur. The other is a mass produced inspirational poem titled "Footprints." It was a present from his other grandmother. Above the poems is a framed arrow that Arthur explains he received when he graduated to Boy Scouts.

Next to the chest of drawers is a tall plastic locker, containing sports equipment. On top of the locker are two CD-ROM copies of the computer game Doom. When asked about the game, Arthur admitted that he and his

dad had learned to play the game together, finally reading the instructions as a last resort.

Arthur's desk is cluttered. There is no room to write, and no writing materials are visible, but there are many things on the desk, and all of them represent some form of text. Lying on top of his desk is an assortment of sporting souvenirs, including game tickets, programs, scorecards, several old grade reports, and a few party invitations. These are all scattered about the top of the desk in no particular arrangement. There is also a year old (1998) tear-off calendar, each day offering a different sports related saying. The saying for March 6 is, "It matters not whether you win or lose since everybody gets into the playoffs anyway." When I mentioned the out-of-date calendar, Arthur remarked that he had a similar "Far Side" calendar that he did "keep up with."

Above the desk is a bulletin board, covered by an assortment of text bearing artifacts. Displayed among them were several clothing labels and clippings from various newspapers and magazines bearing clever or unusual words or phrases. One of the clippings appeared to be from a magazine and read, "If you live in the present, every moment is a new beginning." There are several candy wrappers pinned to the board and a Christian bookmark bearing quotes from the Bible. There is a pin that a girl gave him last year. There are ribbons Arthur won at track meets and at basketball camp. There is a picture ID card that Arthur said was replaced by his driver's license. There is a miniature scroll proclaiming Arthur a Christian. There is an object Arthur describes as "a tie dyed thing with my name on it" that his sister

made for him. Also on the bulletin board is a lapel button that Arthur wears to identify himself as a school athlete on game days. . . bearing his name, the position he plays on the football team, his uniform number, and his picture.

The bed has a bookshelf at its head containing a significant number of books. Arthur estimates that he owns two to three hundred books total, including his childhood favorite <u>Beirenstein Bear</u> books. The books in the shelf range from children's picture books to contemporary adult novels. There is a Bible bracketed by several R. L. Stine young adult mystery novels. There are also several "Star Wars" novels and all three volumes of the Tolkien trilogy. There are a few non-fiction books, including a dictionary and a book about dinosaurs, and several volumes from what appears to be a set of "Hardy Boys" mystery novels.

Above the bed is a knickknack shelf. Arranged on the shelf is a collection of shot glasses, each one labeled with the name of some famous restaurant, bar, or casino. Notable were glasses bearing the names Hard Rock Café, Hooters, and the New York City Police Department. There was even one from a bar bearing Arthur's name. Arthur admits they were chosen, not for their size, shape, or function, but for the words on them and the images they conjure. He admitted that he had been to only a few of the places named on the glasses and explained that his father had picked many of them up for his collection while traveling on business.

On one wall is a certificate announcing Arthur's nomination to "Who's Who Among American High School Students." On the door is a banner

presented to Arthur by his football coach titled, "Our attitude determines our approach to life." Arthur takes pride in the banner and commented that it "reminds me, so I can see it everyday, to keep a good attitude."

Conspicuously missing from Arthur's room are three things that one might expect in teenager's room today: a television, a telephone, and a computer. I asked Arthur about this, and he explained that there was a computer in his dad's study and that when he needed to use a computer for school or to go "on-line," he used that computer. He added that his dad sometimes used the computer for work and that the entire family shared its use. I have had occasion to visit the rooms of several other teen boys gathering data for this study, and Arthur's was one of two who didn't have his own computer and the only one without a television. Arthur confirmed that most of his friends had computers in their rooms. According to Arthur, he really didn't need his own computer because he "didn't use one that much, anyway." This didn't turn out to be entirely accurate. Arthur's sister has her own telephone, but Arthur ascribes this to what he considers to be a female tendency to talk on the telephone more than males. He said he wouldn't mind his own phone, but that he didn't need one. There were three others around the house, he added. Arthur responded similarly to questions about television viewing. There was only one television in the home, an extra large screen home theater combination in the family room.

Watching the television today involves its own group of textual, technological, and visual literacies. These literacies are also apparently so integral to the act of viewing that Arthur takes no note of them "unless they

are of some significance." "It's like they are transparent," he adds. "Like, I know they are there, advertising things, telling me when things are coming on and stuff." "There are words everywhere…just words in the background; there's lots of stuff on there." Thinking about the TV, Arthur comments, "It's really like the knobs… You know, they're there, the labels on them, but you don't notice them, don't look at them, except when the TV is new."

I asked Arthur about times that he needed to be able to read or write for any reason other than school. Surprisingly, his initial response was computer related. "I have AOL, and I talk on that a lot," was his first response. He continued by adding that he wrote letters to friends, such as those he had met at the various camps he attends. He also writes letters to relatives, explaining that he rarely initiates them, usually just replies. He had been especially fond of corresponding with one of his grandmothers who had recently passed away. She had written regularly, keeping Arthur up to date on what she and other relatives had been doing. Arthur admitted he hadn't always answered her letters and hadn't written many letters at all since her passing. Recently, he estimated he had been averaging "two or so" letters every six months.

When Arthur and the other members of his family want to leave messages for each other, they write notes and leave them on the kitchen table. "I'll usually write them and stick them on the kitchen table. Sometimes they'll notice them; sometimes they won't." Whenever anyone in the family leaves the house or returns, they tend to walk by the table and check to see if there is a note. Most of the time the family comes and goes

through the kitchen door, which opens into the driveway. Arthur explains, "It's usually that my parents have gone somewhere and they have their cell phone and they want me to call them when I get home." "Sometimes I'll leave a note on the table that I'm going somewhere and that I'll be back at a certain time, just to let them know where I'm at."

Arthur has been filling out applications for summer jobs. He was concerned that the last application he filled out, to work in a clothing store in the local mall, was seriously compromised because he had failed to notice an instruction to print his responses until after he had completed the application in long hand. He felt the employer would view this as a sign that he couldn't follow directions. I asked Arthur what kind of job he would prefer, and he playfully answered, "One that pays." The summer job theme came up again later when Arthur mentioned that he had recently been re-certified in CPR, which, he explained, is required for getting a job as a lifeguard at the local swimming pool. He explained that this involved taking a seven hour class, reading several sheets of information, and taking a test. He went on to explain that the job also required a "Life Saving" certificate from the Red Cross and that being certified in life saving also included reading and taking a written test in addition to demonstrating various physical skills.

During one interview session, without prompting, Arthur changed the subject and offered that he also read books, "by himself." He explained, as if I wouldn't believe him, that he reads them "just for himself," just for his "own personal use." "And they're not what you'd call educational; I still read

them, just for entertainment." The first book he remembers reading was Dr. Suess. "Parents started me on those," he remarks.

Arthur related the following story about his learning to read: "Um, there was a book that we, the whole class, was required to read. And I wasn't that strong a reader, and I'd just pretend like I read. Then we have to take a quiz over it, and I'd have no idea. And then I'd start crying. Till the teacher sat me down and started reading it to me; then I started to understand it a little better. I felt a little bit better about that, but I don't know. When I didn't understand something, I just pretend that I did."

Fortunately, Arthur seems to have gotten better at reading and has since become a confident and active reader. Arthur recalls proudly that he belonged to a book club when he was younger. Reading, he suggests, makes him "feel a little bit more intelligent." When asked what books he liked to read, Arthur couldn't immediately frame a response, but as our discussion continued, he interjected several authors and titles as they occurred to him. Arthur remembered reading part of J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, and all of S. E. Hinton's teen classic, The Outsiders. He remembers The Outsiders fondly because it was "about teenagers," adding, "I can relate to it." He likes reading "horror books" and has read several by R. L. Stine. He enjoys books about sports, books about Mafia, "…just anything that looks interesting on the cover." He attributes reading Catcher in the Rye, at least in part, to his interest in psychiatry.

Arthur feels that he reads more "on his own" now than when he was younger, contradicting the impression many adults hold of teens and reading,

adding that, although he read fewer books, the books he read now were "just more, more lengthy." Arthur prefers reading "some place quiet." "I can't concentrate with a lot of people talking to me," he laments, "Usually, sometimes, in my room, I'll read."

Arthur's mom is an avid reader of novels, especially mystery adventures like those written by novelist Tom Clancy. Arthur explained that his mom had once read much more, "probably a novel a month," but that her job "had really kept her busy lately." "Sunday's, sometimes, when my mom has nothing to do, which is pretty rare, she'll just sit down and read. Sometimes at night, when she's all done with her work, she'll sit down and read with my dad." Arthur often reads books recommended to him by his mother, but he feels that many of them are too "adult" or difficult for his taste. He recently began reading Rainbow Six, a Tom Clancy novel, on his mother's recommendation. Arthur's mom buys books for him whenever he puts them in the shopping cart at the grocery story. Arthur also reads books recommended to him by his friends, recalling a book about the Mafia he had read the previous summer at camp.

Arthur's dad apparently only reads books when it is necessary for his job. Recently, Arthur's dad's job required him to learn a new computer language, involving the reading of several large books. In Arthur's words, "He spent weeks doing nothing but reading." Almost apologetically, Arthur added that his dad "works at home a lot, most of the day, usually on the computer," and that he uses the Internet. Arthur's dad is also in charge of managing family finances and business affairs. I later learned that his dad

was a regular reader of magazines and other periodicals related to his profession. I think Arthur is somewhat embarrassed because his father doesn't seem to read books for pleasure. "He's always doing something. I'm not sure when he reads." Sometimes when Arthur uses the Internet to find information, Arthur's father becomes impatient, finding the information for him, printing it out for him to read. As a Scout leader, Arthur's father subscribes to the Boy Scout publication, Boy's Life, which Arthur admitted he also read, but not as much now as when he was younger. Arthur describes Boy's Life as being about "making things and camping out, mostly for younger kids." Arthur's father also subscribes to Sports Illustrated magazine, which both he and Arthur read. Looking out the window in reverie, Arthur recalls that his father is very fond of reading the local newspaper in the kitchen every Sunday morning.

There is no central place in Arthur's home where books are kept. Arthur has an estimated three hundred books, mostly kept in his bed's bookshelf and in his closet. Many of the books in the closet are picture books, "for when I have kids, I guess. In my sister's room there's a big bookshelf; a ton of stuff on that," he bragged, "and in our TV room… Usually not so much in my parent's room." "They don't have a bookshelf," he continued, "but there's piles of magazines sitting there."

Arthur's book and magazine reading habits tend to mirror his parents', who typically read only on weekends or late at night. Arthur often describes book reading as a way to "pass the time," and as something he does when he has nothing else to do. He explained that many of the books he had read

recently were read while he was traveling or on days when the "weather was too bad to go outside and do something." According to Arthur, <u>Sports Illustrated</u> is the only magazine he personally reads with any regularity.

Arthur prefers e-mail to paper mail because, he says, "It's much faster." He doesn't receive much paper mail now that the grandmother who used to write to him passed away. He does admit to regularly writing and exchanging notes with his friends at school. "It helps to pass the time in my boring classes," he blushes. "It's also the main way to know if a girl likes you." Arthur reads a newsletter that his church mails to him. He complains that he gets "a lot of junk mail, magazine subscription type things." He rarely reads this kind of mail. However, recently he received a letter from "some doctor thing" giving him a password and directing him to a web site, "probably because of my academics." It turned out to be an invitation to participate in a "doctor's camp" in Washington D. C. "I guess on one of those survey they hand out in school sometimes I checked, like, I was interested in psychiatry, and they sent me this one thing." He thought "it was pretty cool," but decided he didn't have time to attend. Even in this oblique way, literacy was already helping to shape the way he thinks of himself and his future.

Arthur is regularly involved with activities sponsored by his church and considers himself to be a Christian and a spiritual person. When describing his church youth group, he explained that his youth minister is "not really young enough" to connect with the teens in the group, so he relies on the older teens in the group to teach lessons, believing they are more in tune

with their generation. The youth minister provides Arthur and the other teens in the group with a book that includes lesson plans and other literature supporting Bible study. Their job is to read the lesson from the book and lead the younger members of the group in a discussion. Arthur likes this because he can make the lesson interesting and understandable for the younger members of his group and feels they listen to him and look up to him. Arthur also sometimes substitutes for his mother as a Sunday school teacher. Like the youth minister, she writes out a lesson plan and provides any necessary resources. Arthur is comfortable with both these responsibilities and enjoys them, "most of the time." These literacy practices not only engage Arthur's more traditional literary skills in a context removed from the school, but also reveals the close relationship that exists between church literacy, reading and interpreting the Word, and Arthur's personal sense of spirituality. Being a Christian, from Arthur's perspective, is about reading and teaching (interpreting) the Bible and about living a life based on what is learned from the Bible and other related church texts. Interestingly, like his Scouting Discourse, Arthur appears reluctant to elaborate on the church related literacies that seem so much a part of his life.

Though he considers himself both a reader and a writer, Arthur doesn't keep a journal or a diary, and he doesn't write stories or essays except for school. However, he shocked me with the revelation that he does write poetry. This turned out to be an almost secret literacy practice, one he has

never revealed to his family. For Arthur, poetry writing represents a kind of catharsis.

Arthur: Peer Group Discourses

Among his friends, both male and female, Arthur is popular and respected. He describes himself as a "good kid." He associates himself with the "preps," the "jocks," and the "Christians" in the teen society in his town. He admits he is one of the "smart kids" at school, kids who never get into serious trouble, usually get along well with teachers, and almost always make good grades. Though he seems to be acquainted with most of the people in his grade in school, he claims "three or four" male "best buds" and a number of female "friends." He wasn't romantically involved at the time of the study, but it seemed obvious that he was being courted by several of his female "friends." Many of his closest friends attend the same church and belong to the same church youth group. Most, but not all, of his male friends also define themselves as athletes. All of his friends claim to be "college bound."

Even though Arthur doesn't have a computer in his room, and minimizes the importance of his on-line literacies, both seem to influence many of his social Discourses. He doesn't consider himself or any of his friends to be a "techie" or a "computer geek." However, all of his close friends, male and female, are "on-line" to one degree or another. Arthur figures he logs on to the Internet (AOL) about four times a week, mainly to "just talk with my friends." He quickly amended that he doesn't "usually talk

to people out of Smallville." I sensed that he wanted to position himself away from those who frequented the notorious Internet "chat rooms" and engaged in what he considers inappropriate practices and conversations.

He and a small circle of his close friends, usually about ten, mostly female, regularly use a form of real time Internet facilitated discussion called "private chat" or "Instant Messenger©." He enjoys this kind of conversation because he finds that he can often say things and express himself better on-line using the keyboard than he can verbally and in person. "I think you can talk more freely typing than if you're on the phone. You can express more." He prefers this real time conversation to e-mail or even face to face or telephone conversations. "I am not the best speaker," remarks Arthur. "Everything I want to get out, everything I want to express, I express better if I write it." "So that's a better way for me to do it; they'll get more of my gist that I feel if I write it." Arthur uses e-mail less often than on-line chat, only two or three times a week, when he can't catch someone he wants to talk to on-line at the same time he is on-line. Though he obviously values the power and freedom he feels the written word lends his thoughts, he seems to take all his on-line literacies for granted and is comfortable and often playful when engaging in them.

Clearly, Arthur regularly and skillfully employs many advanced computer and communications literacies, but doesn't consider what he is doing at all extraordinary. For as long as Arthur can remember, there has been a computer in his home. Arthur's father has always worked in the home using a computer as a tool. Perhaps these are the factors that have

rendered computer-based literacies virtually unremarkable, almost invisible to him.

Arthur and his friends see the Internet as one thing that separates them from their parents and other adults. Though he admits he and his peers probably take the Internet for granted, he acknowledges its contributions to his generation and believes using it requires a person to be a good reader.

Arthur mentioned that he used the Internet to help with school, citing the previous evening when he had found a periodic table on the Internet because he had forgotten to bring his chemistry book home. I got the impression that he was trying to validate his use of on-line literacies by placing them in the formal context of school. Then Arthur remembered he used the Internet "occasionally" for other forms of research. One example he gave related to a sports event he had attended the previous week. It was an event that was new to Arthur (arena football), and he wanted to know more about it before he went to see the game. He found sites on the Internet that gave him information on the teams he was going to see and on the rules and peculiarities of arena football. He seemed quite pleased with himself for this. Arthur was able to not only quote many details and rules he had gleaned from those Internet documents, he also gave a running commentary on them as he related them. When I asked him if everyone knew these things, he replied, "No, only me and my friend, Gary." "He went to a Bruisers (arena football team) game with me, and he was asking me about the rules." "I gave him the web site, so he went home and looked it

up. He's the one who told me about <u>Games.com</u>." It was clear that he valued this knowledge and that it was a source of some influence within his football player Discourse. After relating what he had discovered about arena football to Gary, he shared the address of the web site with Gary so he could access the same knowledge. Arthur and his close circle of friends often share good web sites, and being the one who discovers a good site is a source of social currency. A boy who finds a new web site and shares it with his friends temporarily dons the mantle of expert and provider. Arthur likes being the expert and provider of information, but he also appreciates it when his friends share such information with him.

Arthur often uses the Internet to "look up" or "find out about" things. It is often the first resource he thinks of, and he considers it to be the most convenient. Arthur made some interesting comments about the relationship between school and the Internet. Arthur expresses the feelings of himself and his friends, saying, "In school, there's a little bit more censorship than there would be if you just looked it up on the Internet. You might learn more or more stuff that, I don't know, you just couldn't find in school. They would probably kick you out or something if you did that. There's just more censorship in school…because of government, I guess. Everybody complains about it."

Arthur values the Internet in much the same way older generations valued libraries. He revels in the range of information it offers and the intellectual freedom it represents. When Arthur needs to know something, has a question he can't answer, or just has some time on his hands, his first

impulse is to go to the family computer and dial up the Internet. When asked about the credibility of information found on the Internet, his response was a surprisingly sophisticated one. "You have to consider the source. If it's from some 'no name' site, then it's probably somebody's opinions, or they are trying to sell you something. Anybody can put something on the Internet, even me."

Arthur also occasionally turns to newspapers for information, citing his recent job search and a time he helped a friend find a car. Like most adults, however, Arthur and his friends seem to ascribe a certain blanket credibility to things they read in print, whether it's the glowing phosphor of a computer screen or ink on a page. "Usually," comments Arthur, "when someone's talking about something, I want to know all the facts because I usually don't trust what people are saying; rumors you know. I'll read so I can know the real thing." For Arthur, knowing things, having information, is synonymous with power. "If you have more information than the next guy, you have the edge on them."

In addition to chatting with his friends, Arthur also employs computer and Internet literacies for playing games with them. "There's a whole bunch of games I can entertain myself with, like the Games.com one Gary told me about." The games Arthur plays involve competing against others who connect on-line. Arthur estimates that he uses the computer and the Internet to play games thirty minutes to an hour a week, mentioning several game sites on the Internet by name, reciting their URL's (Internet addresses) from memory. Playing and winning these games involves rapidly reading an

almost constant stream of menus, dialogue, and screen messages, in addition to reading any related "help" or "options" information pages. Additionally, most of the games Arthur and his friends play are "role playing" games containing many allusions to literature and popular culture. Arthur and his friends, especially those in his church youth group, also enjoy playing word games, "sort of like anagram games, but I'm not sure what you'd call them." Skill at playing these games and knowledge of their existence contribute to what it means to be a teen in Arthur's close circle of friends.

Arthur's best friend, Gary, considers himself the local expert on the Mafia. "My friend, I guess he's sort of a mobster...He's really into that sort of mobster thing." After reading the novel, Godfather, Gary has become a true aficionado of Mafia and Godfather related paraphernalia and knowledge. He has a large Godfather poster in is room. He has begun a collection of Mafia movies, including all the Godfather movies. Gary quotes from the movies "all the time." He uses the Internet to find out more about the Mafia. Because of his friend Gary's enthusiasm, and "so I could talk to him about it, so I wouldn't be in the dark," Arthur borrowed the book from Gary, read the novel, watched the movie, and investigated various Internet web sites devoted to the topic. He later passed the book on to another of his friends.

Gary and Arthur's other male friends also read Sports Illustrated, providing them with yet another source of common vocabulary and knowledge. According to Arthur, "They live on that stuff." Arthur's friends value sharing literacy related interests and common literacy experiences. When one reads a book or sees a movie, they all do. Because of Arthur's

interest in arena football and Gary's interest in the Mafia, knowing about arena football and knowing about the Mafia are part of his peer group Discourse.

As was mentioned earlier, Arthur sometimes writes poetry, especially when he is very happy or when he gets depressed. He insists that he doesn't do it often. "It's just when it's really, when it inspires me, that I write one." When the poem is finished, he just "sticks it somewhere...till the next time." He might get the poem out to read to himself, but he rarely shares his poetry. Sometimes Arthur will let a very close friend read a poem he has written, demonstrating an absolute trust that his friend will not betray his confidence or make light of the intense emotion that prompted the writing. His friends also share things they have written with him. Arthur never lets anyone in his family read his poetry, and they never ask to read anything he has written.

Each member of Arthur's close group of friends does his or her part to expand the complex, dynamic Discourse that limits and defines the power structure and interaction within the group. This Discourse is also responsible in part for his peer group's social identity and is a contributor to the personal identity of those individuals who belong to the group.

The Boy Scout

As a Boy Scout, Arthur is bound, not unlike his church membership, by a book of rules and rituals. The Boy Scout's Handbook describes the goals of Scouting, what it means to be a Scout, and outlines the ways by which

Scouts must demonstrate both leadership and compliance. Arthur has been active in Scouting for as long as he can remember. His father is an Eagle Scout, was Arthur's troop leader, and remains actively involved in Scouting.

Arthur is one merit badge and his Eagle project short of becoming an Eagle Scout himself, an accomplishment he respects and aspires to. Before Arthur could begin work to become an Eagle Scout, he first had to meet the requirement of lower Scouting ranks, each with its own literature and requirements. An integral part of the Scouting program is the earning of merit badges. Scouts earn merit badges by demonstrating certain knowledge or skills. Each merit badge has a pamphlet, which explains its particular requirements. On the path to becoming an Eagle Scout, Arthur has earned over one hundred merit badges, successfully negotiating the literacy demands of each. With regard to reaching Eagle rank, Arthur explains, "They have an Eagle packet you do, and you fill it out and you turn it in to this committee to see if it's worthy enough for Eagle project. I'm going to have to do that pretty soon. We fill out what they call blue cards. It's sort of like an application for your merit badge…what you've done, all the work, and you have to turn in to a counselor or the leader of the troop." He added that it was important to "do this right and to keep it neat" so that the committee would accept it.

Along the way to becoming an Eagle Scout, Arthur has demonstrated mastery of many skills, all defined, described, and assessed according to the various texts that support Scouting. He must have first mastered the special literacy demands of Scouting before he could possibly demonstrate those

things that are requisite to achieving his goal. Becoming an Eagle Scout depends on his ability to read and interpret these special Scouting texts, successfully using them as a guide to meeting the many requirements of the rank.

At one time, Arthur also regularly read and enjoyed the Boy Scout's monthly periodical, Boy's Life. Though he also appreciated the articles on nature and camping, Arthur especially enjoyed the magazine's humor and looked forward to getting the magazine to read the cartoons. Recently, he "just lost interest."

Arthur's Scouting experience seems to reflect his perspective on power and prestige, that it comes to those who know the most. It has taught him that those who work the hardest, do the most, and know the most will come out ahead in the world. It has taught him the value of compassion and sharing.

The Football Player

In addition to reading magazines and books about sports and sports figures, Arthur watches sports on TV. He pays close attention to the names of the players and their statistics. He admits he learned much of the jargon of football, baseball, and basketball from watching it on TV. I asked him to watch a game, paying attention to how much reading he was doing and what kinds of things were presented in writing on the screen. He was astounded by his observations. "The stuff, the stuff in the background. I never thought

about it. It's like I'm reading all the time when I watch TV. I never noticed, keeping up with who's doing what and the score and all."

Arthur's coaches require that he memorize a playbook. Playbooks contain diagrams and descriptions of plays, specifying which players do what things in what order. Arthur thinks doing this has helped him become a better player, and though they are not yet part of the official playbook, he is quite proud of the several new plays he has created. Arthur likes the strategies and the discipline of football.

Arthur has also played baseball and basketball. Each sport has its own literature and its own very technical jargon that participants must master before they can become players and accepted by their teammates.

This past year, Arthur had considered taking a strength supplement called Creatine to help him bulk up for football. The general perception was that it worked like steroids but had no bad side effects. The first thing he did was look it up on the Internet, trying to get as much information as possible about the consequences and side effects of such a drug. After several weeks of research, mostly on the Internet, he decided against using Creatine.

Arthur: Fitting In

Arthur's literacy habits, dispositions, and values continue to be heavily influenced by his primary Discourse. Meeting his parent's expectations for success in school requires him to maintain a strong set of school literacies. His reading habits and attitudes are much like his parents', reading the same

books and the same magazines for reasons similar to those of his parents. Like his mother, he values and has successfully developed special literacies that position him as a leader in his church and his church youth group. Like his father, he values and has successfully developed special literacies that position him as a leader in the Boy Scouts. Like his parents, Arthur values reading and writing in essentially pragmatic ways, almost always linking literacy skills to jobs or careers, relegating social or recreational literacies as incidental.

Arthur, assisted in many ways by various literacies, seems to have begun the process of differentiation and integration that Elkind (1998) deems essential to becoming an adult with a strong sense of self. Arthur's view of literacy has expanded to include a sense of the power that comes from ideas and information. He has begun to use literacy as a tool to dispel rumor and seek truth. He has begun to use literacy skills to investigate perspectives far removed from that of his family or church. Literacy is a significant factor in his social life. He and his friends share books, web sites, and interests supported by a wide range of both traditional and high tech literacies. They play games that can't be played without special literacies. Reading and writing on computer screens, Arthur and his friends interact comfortably, making friends and developing relationships. As was also true for the "social queens" in Finders' (1997) Just Girls, for Arthur and his friends, literacy is a significant instrument of socialization and maturation. It is personal. It brings acceptance. It bonds friends. It opens doors. It lends privilege. It gives license. It leads to success.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEN

Ben is the "alternative" boy next door. At seventeen, he is also the oldest of my three subjects by several months. Like Arthur, Ben is a sophomore at Smallville high school. Ben and Arthur know each other by reputation; however, they have only had few classes together, rarely see each other in public, "hang out" in different places, do different things outside of school, and share few common interests or friends.

Ben is medium height and has a slim, wiry build. His dark hair is cut short, but not stylishly short. Earlier in the year he briefly wore a trendy cut with his hair long on top and very short on the sides, but that was very temporary. Though he occasionally wears the "alternative" uniform of black dungarees and t-shirt, Ben usually dresses in neatly pressed baggy jeans or "cargo pants" and bright print shirts. He sometimes wears t-shirts emblazoned with the name of some alternative rock group, a bicycle logo, or a clever saying. My favorite is a black one with "still playing with cars" in bold white lettering silk-screened across the front. I would have worn that shirt.

Ben describes himself as a "freestyle biker" and a "car guy." A freestyler is a bicycle enthusiast who uses his bicycle to perform tricks and stunts using apparatus like "half pipes," "ramps," "rails," and "jumps." For years, he has striven to hone his biking skills and to perfect his equipment. He has the reputation of being one of the best bicycle riders in town.

Younger, aspiring "freestylers," all over town, know his name and know of his exploits. Ben skillfully fabricated his bicycle from a collection of high performance and specialty parts carefully chosen to suit his personal preferences and needs.

When I first met Ben, he owned a highly modified import pickup that sat low to the ground and sported wide tires and shiny wheels. Responding to my interest, he proudly described the truck's mechanical attributes and detailed all the various improvements and modifications he had made to it himself. He explained that his primary goal was "performance," not looks. Shortly thereafter, in order to help finance the cost of a sporty new import car, Ben sold his customized pickup. He immediately began planning modifications he would make on this new car.

Ben takes great pride in his machinery, both his bicycle and his car. Much of his time and energy are devoted to these interests, and most of the money he earns is spent on them. Ben seems to ground much of who he is in these two passions. When other teens in Smallville are asked about Ben, they invariably mention his love of cars and bicycles and profess awe at the prodigious specialized knowledge of he has of them.

Though Ben is very athletic, as evidenced by his bicycle-riding prowess, he does not participate in any traditional organized sports. In fact, he has a low opinion of team sports like football, basketball, and baseball or the people that play them. He has, however, entered "X-games" type freestyle bicycle competitions in a nearby large city. Though not a loner, Ben is also not much of a joiner. He and a friend tried to start a car club last

year, but his friend moved and, other than his church, Ben currently belongs to no clubs or organizations, in or out of school.

Ben is comfortable with himself. He is a leader among his circle of friends. They look to him for advice and to set an example. Ben's house is the neighborhood gathering point. At any given time, there are several teen-age boys, and an occasional girl or two, in Ben's kitchen. They sit around the kitchen table, drink soft drinks from three liter bottles in the refrigerator, eat anything not tied down, and talk about everything. Ben is the one they go to with their problems, emotional or mechanical. He listens to their problems and helps them fix their cars and bikes. Ben is easy going and easy to like. He has an engaging smile, but usually reserves it for his friends and others he has found reason to accept or value. With strangers or in an unfamiliar situation, Ben is reserved, but polite. When he is challenged, he is defensive and oppositional.

Ben has a steady girl friend. He has been going with her for over a year. They go out to eat, ride around in Ben's car, go to rock concerts, and sit together at the movies. She watches as he rides his bike. They share many of the same classes in school, attend the same church, and share many of the same friends. Both consider Ben to be the more capable and intelligent of the two. In school, Ben's grades are usually just a bit better than hers. Though possibly related to a shared religious philosophy, she always seems to defer to him and to his interests. When they walk together, they sometimes hold hands. Both of them consider their relationship "serious."

Ben considers himself a person of principle. He values honor, fidelity, fairness, and honesty. He resents hypocritical behavior and people who are "stuck up." He views the world as an often unfriendly place, and thinks many people pretend to be something they are not.

Ben's Primary Discourse: Home Literacies

Ben lives with his mother and father in a small, neat red brick house in an older, working class neighborhood. The house has four rooms, a front living room and kitchen on one side complemented by two bedrooms and a bath on the other. The walls in the front room are paneled. The wooden floors are covered with aging linoleum, and rugs are placed strategically about the house. The furnishings in the house are not new, but seemed to be clean and in good repair.

When I arrived at Ben's house to conduct the in-home interview, I was met at the door by Ben and his father. As I walked into the house, instead of being led to Ben's room, I was invited to sit on one of two sofas placed at right angles in the front room. One of the sofas was against the wall, and the other formed a kind of room divider. To the right of the sofa against the wall was an oxygen bottle and breathing apparatus used by Ben's father.

An older electronic typewriter sat on a small table to the right of the oxygen apparatus, next to a large front window. On a coffee table sitting in front of the sofa were a TV remote control and two large family Bibles, one belonging to the father's family, the other to the mother's. There were crocheted doilies on the sofas and an easy chair in the front room. At the

end of the room, near the open entrance leading to the kitchen, was a portable television on a black wire stand. This television was left on during my conversation with Ben's father and during the interview with Ben.

Just inside the kitchen entryway stands an aging refrigerator, layered with small, decorative magnets holding photographs, grade cards, appointment reminders, and scraps of paper bearing phone numbers and several hand-written messages. One of the messages is a note from Ben to his mother, explaining that he is going camping with his friends and would return in a couple days. Ben tells me that this is the way his family communicates with each other. This is especially true for his mother, who works unusual hours and is often gone when Ben leaves the house or returns.

To the left of the kitchen entrance is a chrome and vinyl dining room set. Sitting there, drinking soda from plastic tumblers, are three of Ben's buddies. Ben explains they are waiting for us to finish our interview so they can leave for their campout. Ben's friends seem quite patient and curious about what Ben and I are doing. They know I am a teacher, and they are not accustomed to seeing their teachers outside of the school setting. They are even more curious about my old German sportscar, which is parked in the drive. Curiously, they seemed to know a great deal about the car, including detailed specifications and performance figures, even though the model has been out of production for many years. When I asked Ben about this, he explained that they read about cars in magazines and that boys just "naturally" know about cars.

With the exception of Ben's bedroom, which defies adequate description, the house seems well kept. The lawn was recently mowed, neatly trimmed, and uncluttered, unlike many nearby homes. Behind the house, at the end of an old-fashioned driveway consisting of two parallel concrete ribbons, is a somewhat dilapidated detached garage. Off to the side of the drive, around the back, rests the ruined hulk of the sporty import car that had replaced Ben's custom truck.

Last winter, only weeks after buying it, he slid it sideways into a telephone pole while attempting to go around a corner too fast. It had been a new car, but now it looks somewhat like a rusting metal banana. Ben's hip was broken in the crash, causing him to limp around on crutches for several months afterward. Next to the wreck stands Ben's new car, identical to the one he destroyed, highly polished, and decorated with several decals in the tinted rear and quarter windows representing appropriately "cool" automotive performance equipment manufacturers.

Ben's room was the only cluttered, untidy room I saw in the house. It was a mess. There were piles of clothes, shoes, CD's and video games almost completely covering the floor. It was difficult to find a place to step. In one instance, he dug into a pile of clothes beneath a window next to his bed and uncovered a broken bicycle frame. In addition to an unmade bed, the room was furnished with a straight back chair that appeared to match the kitchen table furniture, a small television, and a video game. The walls were covered in bicycle posters pulled from magazines and home made graffiti. Ben was quite proud of his homemade wall graffiti, bragging that he

had painted them himself. On one wall, the slogan, "Freedom or Death" is scrawled boldly in dripping, blood red spray paint. On another wall, also spray painted in red, is the universal symbol of the "alternative" youth movement, a large "A" within a circle. The same symbol has been spray painted on one of the many t-shirts scattered about on the floor. As I understand it, the symbol actually stands for "anarchy," and represents what I believe to be an adolescent's universal need to challenge and critique society as describe by Elkind (1996).

Ben's father had been a local factory worker, but is now unemployed and on medical disability with a lung ailment. When I visited the house, Ben's dad greeted me at the door, and then returned to what appeared to be his customary place, sitting on a sofa against one wall of the front room. He was an affable man, but seemed a bit uncomfortable with my being in his house. On the other hand, he did seem supportive and genuinely interested in my study. At times, he would offer an aside or comment on something mentioned in the interview with Ben. When I asked Ben's father about the availability of books in the house, he explained that there were "a few." Though I didn't investigate Ben's parents' room, I didn't personally observe any books or bookshelves anywhere in the house, with the exception of the two large Bibles lying on the coffee table in front of Ben senior's sofa.

Ben's mother works long and somewhat irregular hours as a medical technician at the local hospital. Though I only met her on the telephone, she seems a caring, concerned mother who is very proud of her son. Ben explains that his mother sometimes reads paperback books at the hospital

when she works the "quiet shift" at night, but "not that much." He also explained that his mom had some medical books that she had needed for a nursing course she once took at the community technical school. Ben's mother does most of the personal correspondence for her family, writing letters and keeping up with the exchange of holiday and birthday cards. Ben hasn't written a letter in five or six years.

Ben's mom and dad speak with a thick colloquial dialect usually identified with a limited formal education and the lower working classes. They seem to reflect many of the same literacy practices and values of working class people described by Barton and Hamilton (1998). For instance, Ben's mom is a compulsive card sender, sending cards to people for birthdays, Christmas, and "even Halloween." She also is the primary caretaker of the family history kept in their family Bibles. Both Ben's mom and dad mentioned to making lists (such as shopping lists and to-do lists) and writing personal notes and letters to family. Examples of these kinds of literacy artifacts covered the refrigerator door.

I asked Ben to list everything he could see in the living room with writing on it. "Let's see," he observed tentatively, "(video) tapes, TV, plastic bag over there, the Bible, the TV Guide, my pants, my shoes, my shirt, the car wax over there, …envelopes, more pictures, a bag of rocks for the driveway, my hat." When asked what he had read the day of the interview, his list was equally interesting and surprisingly short. "My hat," he observed, "the stop sign, the pop in there…I read what kind of pop it was so I wouldn't drink the wrong kind, the clock…I read what time it was." Reminiscent of the

cereal box literacy so common in my youth, Ben reflects, "If I eat, I read what's on the package of what I eat." As I will note often in this report, Ben seems to understate most things related to his literacy practices.

"I read," insists Ben, "but it's not like a hobby. I don't read books all the time." Though he denies reading books for pleasure other than what he must for school, he does admit to enjoying a good mystery and likes the reading related act of wondering "what's going to happen next" and will "keep reading to find out." Ben remembers that when he was very young, his grandparents gave him a "whole lot of (picture) books." He recalls enjoying them, but laments that he, "didn't remember any of them, so it didn't do much good." His memories about learning to read and write are sketchy and all very mechanical, focusing on things such as phonetic recognition of syllables and the physical forming of letters and words.

Even though he admits, "You have to read to get through life," and believes that "everyone reads sometime in their life," Ben seems oblivious to the pervasive nature of the incidental reading he does as he negotiates each day, naively commenting that his generation "doesn't sit at home and read as much as people use to."

To Ben, everyday reading practices such as reading labels on packages, reading text on the TV screen, and reading the hundreds of signs and messages he sees everyday don't count as "reading." "I notice when it's printed in, like, big bold letters, like DANGER and KEEP OUT," he jokes about biking in restricted areas, "I know I got two or three minutes to ride before the cops get there." When I challenged him about his apparent

understatement, Ben grudgingly responded that he "probably reads stuff without thinking about it. Like when you walk through stores, something like magazines, you walk by…you read them, but you really don't pay attention to what they say, but you still read them." He picked up the TV remote control from the coffee table, held it up, and commented on its fading labels, "They get worn off after awhile; I just know where all the buttons are." "If it was new," he continues, "I'd have to look all the time, when I flip the channels or something, before I knew what's what."

One of Ben's earliest memories of reading is reading the names of cartoons on TV. Though Ben admits to watching "too much television," he seems only vaguely aware of the vast amount of textual information that must be processed in order to access and fully enjoy the content. "Yeah," he remarks, "I notice it, but I don't pay much attention." However, Ben does demonstrate a certain critical approach to his television viewing. For instance, when discussing the textual component of television programming, he commented that "they" use it mainly, "…to try and get you interested, to try and suck you in, to make you buy what they try to sell." To me, this was not surprising; I have a strong impression that Ben never accepts anything at face value.

Ben believes his generation and that of his parents view books and reading in different ways. According to Ben, "We (referring to himself and others his age) have TV, so, instead of reading the book, we get to watch the movie. Makes it easier on us. We don't have to do as much." It's obvious that he doesn't realize how much more he must read to just get by and be an

active participant in today's world than in the previous generations about which he speaks. I believe Ben also reflects his generation's casual acceptance of motion pictures and video as valid forms of literature, having just as much meaning and value as books.

When Ben does read, he is very selective. "It would have to be something that I was interested in, something that grabs my attention," he comments. Ben insists that all people should make their own choices about what to read, suggesting that we should "...read what you want to, and not what people want you to read." "If you read stuff you don't like," he continues, "you're not going to be interested in reading because you're, like, all this is like, you know, boring and stuff. You need to explore what's out there so you could read what you think is interesting to you." Ben has a simple but powerful sense of the value of literature. Regarding things he reads, he insists, "If you like it, it's good. If you don't like it, then it's not good." He is very resistant to being forced to read something he doesn't choose to. "They can't force me to read, you know. They can sit there and make me stare at the paper, but I don't have to read it. I can sit there and just look at it." Ben doesn't look to others to make his decisions or tell him what he should like or value. He seems quite ethically and intellectually autonomous.

Though Ben and his parents made frequent references to reading the Bible, there was little mention of other church literacies. However, Ben does attend Bible study at his church regularly and describes it in this way: "You read during the Bible study and usually there's sets of questions that they

had set out that they'll discuss. You write your answers to the questions, compare it to what they say." In this description, Ben positions himself as the "other" and the leaders as "they," comparing his personal interpretations to "what they say." Ben seems to be exercising an active critical awareness and elements of what Elkins (1998) calls an integrated, differentiated self.

Like Arthur, Ben doesn't keep a journal or a diary and never has. He insists that he just "doesn't have time." Ben says he doesn't mind writing if he is writing about something that is interesting and something that has holds meaning for him personally. However, he goes on to say that outside of school he tends to express himself with drawings instead. "I don't write much," Ben says, "I draw pictures, and that's a little different. I draw a lot, but I don't really write too much."

Both Ben's father and mother expressed chagrin that Ben seemed unconcerned about school, and that he wasn't doing as well as they believed he was capable. Having discussed Ben's schoolwork with his tenth grade English teacher, I found myself agreeing with them on that point. He found Ben to be very bright, thoughtful, and reflective. Ben is articulate and seems to pick things up quickly. However, Ben also appears to purposefully regulate his grades, working just hard enough to avoid a "bad grade," which Ben defines as a D or an F. He usually does his assignments, especially if most of the work can be done in class, and he normally does well on tests. He could be an outstanding student and knows it, but he prefers to make average grades, balancing the demands of school against the other interests in his life. "School isn't everything," Ben adds.

As long as he gets his schoolwork done, Ben believes his parents don't care if he reads or writes. However, both Ben and his parents are adamant that he will attend college after he finishes high school in two years. Ben plans to attend a state college, but might possibly need to start out at a local community college. He doesn't have any idea yet what he would like to study in college or what kind of a career he wants to pursue. Ben's mediocre grades in school and his tendency to score well on standardized tests will certainly qualify him for college entrance, but they will not qualify him for any traditional scholarship assistance. This is fine with Ben as he intends to work his way through college. Ben already knows how to work and go to school at the same time.

Freestyler and Car Guy

Much of Ben's identity and sense of self are expressed in his machinery. Likewise, much of Ben's literacy practice is associated with his love of bicycles and cars. As it turns out, though he doesn't consider himself a "reader," Ben actually reads very regularly, reads very closely, and reads very critically. Like many people whom I have asked, Ben associates reading in general and being a reader with reading books, mainly novels. Ben claims the only book he reads in addition to what is required in school is the Bible. On the other hand, Ben is a devoted reader of certain bicycle and automobile related magazines and catalogs. He professes not to read for enjoyment, but admits to enjoying his magazines and catalogs. This reading helps him create plans, be informed, solve problems, and dream about the future.

If he needs information about his car or his bikes, Ben's first impulse is to access his network of friends who enjoy the same interests. Many of his friends, like Ben himself, know a great deal about mechanics. If no one he knows can satisfy his need for information or advice, then Ben admits, "I'd end up buying a book." I found it interesting that he didn't consider going to the library to find a book first. That would have been my first response when I was his age. As it turns out, Ben had only been to the library once in the past year, and that was to return a book he was required to read for a school assignment.

In a quick tour of his rather disorganized garage, I noticed several greasy, well-used books that appeared to be shop manuals for cars. They were lying open on crude workbenches, amidst cans of oil and stacks of wrenches. Ben had recently purchased a new car and didn't think he had a maintenance manual for it, but his dad insisted that he did. Ben's chagrined response was that "it doesn't tell you much." It is obvious that Ben comes from a family that prides itself in doing its own automobile repair.

Ben regularly reads two magazines, BMX Plus and Ride, and a mail order bike accessory catalog, Dan's Competition, that he also refers to as a magazine. Additionally, I noticed several car magazines (Sport Compact and Hot Rod), new car brochures, and mail order catalogs (Jackson Performance and JC Whitney) among the unruly piles of things covering the floor of his room. Ben is not alone in his confusion between magazines and catalogs. When my students are allowed to bring magazines to class, they

will often bring various catalogs, sincerely in the belief that they are the same as magazines.

Whenever he has money, Ben buys these magazines for himself at a discount variety store because of their lower price. Ben is very price conscious, and this is apparent not only in the way he purchases his magazines, but also the way he uses them. He receives the catalogs through the mail because he has purchased merchandise from the companies that produce them. He doesn't subscribe to any magazines. He uses the magazines and the catalogs to help him make good decisions about purchases and to insure he will get the best possible price.

Ben reads his magazines over and over. "Some days I pick up my biking magazines and sit there for an hour or two flipping the pages, reading them. I might read it once, but then I go back through it and read it again just to let it sink into my memory bank." When I asked him how much time he spends doing this, Ben responded, "I usually read them about two or three hours a week." Given that Ben always seems to have one of his bike magazines or catalogs on his person, I would consider that estimate very conservative. When Ben gets a new magazine or catalog, he will sometimes share the older ones with friends, but more often keeps them to re-read later. In his words, "If I don't give them to someone else, they stay somewhere in my room until I find them again." Given the clutter in his room, that might be a while.

According to Ben, his friends have much the same reading habits as he. They all sometimes share magazines and often buy the same

magazines. Many of the things they read about become fuel for their conversations. They talk often about plans for their cars or bikes. In Ben's words, "Like, in one of the car magazines…we start talking about cars, and like, Yeah! I'd like to get that to put on my car, or get that bike." Additionally, the facts gleaned from these magazines and catalogs seem to provide a kind of social currency for Ben and his circle of friends. These magazines and catalogs help to provide Ben and his friends with much of the knowledge that is expected of the members of their particular social Discourses (Knobel, 1999).

"Reading my bike magazine is pleasurable," Ben comments, "I read my bike magazines to figure out information about the bikes." "I read all the little subscripts that's under the bike pictures so I know what each one is made of and the length of the frame, and if they have a warranty or not, and how much it's going to cost. I compare that to the other bikes that's in there, how good a quality they are." "You get to thinking, like, you know, if had some money, I'd buy that one."

Ben reads his magazines to keep up with what is happening in the bicycling world. "The bike magazines I read, I know what events are coming to town and who's number one on the circuit, which products are the best, and which ones have failed the test and broken and it's not worth the money to spend on them."

Ben's fascination with machines and technology does not extend to computers. "I mean, I know how to work it," Ben remarks, referring to his skill using a computer and the Internet." "I know how to type and stuff, but

it's something I am not interested in using." Ben considers himself to be "computer illiterate," and doesn't have a computer to use in his home, but he again seems to be contradicting himself as he purposefully finds the time and means to discovers things about his cars and his bicycles on the Internet. When he wants to use the Internet, he visits one of several friends who do have computers and Internet access, something he admits to doing "kind of much." "I'll go to the car web sites and the bike web sites, but that's all," he explains.

"There's not many bike web sites," Ben laments. "I mean there's a lot, but it's not as good as cars." "I got a bike. I know what I want for my bike. I know what's out there." "I don't need to look at pictures if I already know what's out there." Primarily, Ben admits to using the Internet to learn more about cars. "I'm looking to see what would look best on my car, what to do with the engine to make it go faster, stuff like that."

When Ben finds web sites on the Internet that he finds interesting or helpful, or ones that he thinks others will enjoy, he writes down the URLs and shares them with his friends. "I try to get them on the good web sites," he boasts, "the ones I know, like, my friend in Oklahoma City….He's in the Intense Gravity Car Club, so I try to get them (his other friends) to all go look at that and look at his cars and stuff that's up there." Ben's buddies return the favor, creating a pattern much like book or magazine sharing among friends that was common to pre-Internet generations. Most likely because only a few of them have access to the necessary technology in their

homes, Ben and his friends do not chat or use e-mail to interact personally over the Internet.

Though Ben considers the Internet tedious and "nerve wracking," requiring great patience to "sit there and punch in a million different things and wait for something to pop up," he respects it for the information it provides him. Though Ben visits many sites that offer things for sale on the Internet, he has never bought anything on the Internet because he doesn't have access to a credit card. Instead, when he finds something he wants to purchase, he calls the vendor on the phone and has the merchandise shipped to him COD.

In addition to sharing web sites with his friends, Ben also occasionally uses what he reads in magazines and catalogs to help his friends. He explains, "Sometimes, it might work out by accident if I read something in a magazine about a car, and like, some of my friends… I'm like, well, what's wrong with it? I'm like, well, it said it could be this and this and then it would be, like, you try and fix it, and sometimes it might work and …usually it's by accident." Ben explains that his friends often come to him with questions about their cars. He enjoys being able to help them. It is obvious that Ben's access to such information represents a kind of social power and is at least one contributor to his being a leadership figure within his social group.

Ben contends that he doesn't make plans, especially written ones. However, Ben does admit to writing lists. These lists are actually detailed plans for things that he wants to do to his bike or car. I saw one of these

lists, and it was quite extensive and very reminiscent of an outline or mind map. It covered the front side of a piece of notebook paper and most of the back and was written in pencil and two colors of ink. Included were names of things, part numbers, prices, names of suppliers, small drawings, and notes to himself. In addition to organizational notations such as "Do this first," and "This will be cool!" there were many erasures and strikeouts, evidence of significant revision and manipulation. Ben explained that though he sometimes followed through with what he has planned on these lists, he often makes these lists without ever actually using them, comprising something rather like what I would call wish-lists. There were several lists like this and annotated drawings of cars and bicycles Ben had designed tacked to his room's spray-painted walls and scattered here and there in the clutter of the floor.

The Working Teen

Ben doesn't do summer camps. He once attended a week long church camp when he was younger, but "doesn't have time" for such things any longer. Constantly balancing school success and his need to earn money to support his passions, Ben has been working year round, almost full time, since he was fifteen. He has had a variety of jobs, but most of them have been at local fast food restaurants. When he was injured in his car crash this year, he lost the job he had, as he was disabled and on crutches for almost two months. Recently, he found another job, at another fast food restaurant. He needed the job to pay his car insurance. He mentioned that he found the

job by reading a sign in the window. After reading the sign, Ben "put in an application." Ben suggests he could never have gotten the job if he hadn't been able to read the instructions and to write the answers on the application. Ben stresses that, "You have to make sure that you have everything right. You have to read it right. If you don't read it, you don't understand it, and if you get messing up, you have to start all over again." This wasn't Ben's first prominent mention of signs. Ben mentioned reading signs often (billboards, traffic signs, store signs, etc.) in the course of our interviews, and it is obvious that sign reading is a literacy practice that is important to him.

I made a brief tour of the restaurant where Ben currently works. The place is alive with signs and labels. The kitchen is very modern and there are instructions posted on every appliance, specifying cooking times and temperatures. There are digital readouts and warnings on many of the machines. There are inspirational posters obviously intended to boost worker moral. There are admonitions to wash hands and to wear hats. Workers are constantly reading from the various displays. Even food preparation is becoming a high technology, literacy intense experience.

At his new job, Ben explains that he must "punch little buttons on a little computer." Each of these buttons, of course, is labeled with words, and the readout display is both verbal and numeric. "I have to make people's food," Ben says when I ask him about reading or writing at work, "I can't do it without reading." Demonstrating with his finger, he continues saying, "A little thing pops up on the screen, and you have to be able to know what

they want. It's like when you're working on the fryer, it's like little things up there, pops up and tell you what to make. You have to read the little buttons on there if you're taking orders, like whatever they want, like fifty-million at a time."

Additionally, Ben mentions that his new job requires that he read "some, like, thick book, about fifty-million pages of rules and regulations." "It's not real big; it's like that (indicating about an inch thick); it's out in my car. It's decent and big." I saw the book, and it was assuredly "decent and big."

At one of his previous jobs, Ben wrote food orders on more traditional paper "ticket" pads. He explained the importance of writing things down in certain ways so the cook and cashier would know what the customer wanted and how much to charge them. Ben mentioned that he already knows about "resumes at work" and again stressed the importance of making "sure you have everything right." In Ben's words, "I write to get by in daily life."

Ben realizes that without the literacy skills he now possesses, he would "probably not have a job, wouldn't be able to do as much at home, …wouldn't be able to drive." Ben can easily envision a future where he has a job that requires him to write. He realizes many jobs today and in the future require people to write, and he seems willing to do that and confident that he can, but only if he has to.

The only time Ben reads the newspaper is when he is looking for a job or for a car. He mainly reads the classified ads. He explains, "The newspaper, I think, is for cars, see what the heck is out there, see who was

hiring." Ben's parents do not subscribe to a newspaper, so Ben buys one when he needs to read one. During school, he sometimes reads the newspaper in the school library. He estimates spending an average ten minutes a week reading the newspaper. However, he demonstrates a detailed awareness of almost every car for sale in town and every job opportunity suitable for a teen. Either he is understating the actual time he devotes to perusing the ads, or he is an extraordinarily quick study.

Ben perceives certain literacy skills as being important to his getting and holding a job. He understands that being able to read and write certain texts are part of negotiating the work place and that there are specific work place literacies that he must master to be successful. Ben only reads books when it is required for some practical purpose, like the employee manual at his new job, the repair manual for his car, or assignments for school. Ben describes himself as a good worker, one who learns quickly, and one who can do anything he sets his mind to doing. Part of his confidence is tied to the easy competence he enjoys in the many job-related literacy practices that define the teen's workplace today.

Ben: Finding a Way

Ben's literacy practices meet his personal and social needs. He uses them much as he uses a sidewalk, a screwdriver, or a spoon...to get him where he is going, to make something work, or to satisfy his hunger to know. His "alternative" bicycling and automobile related literacies serve to separate him from his parents and the adult establishment. His work, church, and

family literacies tend to bind him to them. Ben's work literacies allow him to be regularly employed and able to pursue his personal interests.

Ben reads to learn, to find information. He uses that information to achieve his goals and to inspire his creative spirit, to discover who he wants to be and to learn what it means to be that person. Ben writes little, but what writing he does works toward the same creative ends and helps him plan and prioritize the projects that largely define his life. His specialized bicycle and automobile related knowledge, chiefly the result of years of reading magazines and catalogs, lends him status and power within his circle of friends. Ben is a dreamer, and like millions of young men before him, seeks his dreams between the covers of glossy magazines that he consumes as much as reads. Dewey (1916) understood people like Ben who seem internally driven to learn about things that are related to their everyday "occupations," comparing such authentic internal motivation to a physical hunger. Ben chooses to be independent and self-determining. He chooses to be his own person. No one tells Ben he needs to do the things he does or read the things he reads. For better or worse, Ben, like so many other adolescent boys, uses literacy as one important vehicle in his quest to construct and reconstruct, define and redefine the illusive identity he must inevitably choose for himself.

CHAPTER SIX

CHARLIE

At fifteen, Charlie is still a kid, "a growing boy." His feet get in his way, and he is constantly outgrowing his clothes. Charlie is the youngest of the three subjects and had just completed his freshman year at Smallville Mid High School at the time of the study. He is average height, but has grown six inches in the past eight months. Charlie has an all-arms-and-legs, somewhat gangly, Icabod Crane like build. He wears his thick, rusty red hair in a what his barber calls a "Caesar cut," but insists that his "hair doesn't matter" and resists his mother's efforts to keep it cut and combed.

Charlie dresses fashionably in khaki cargo pants that drag the ground, past-the-knee length cargo shorts, and t-shirts, most of which are printed with slogans like "Got Bike?" or the logo of some bicycle shop or manufacturer. He never wears anything else unless his parents force him to. His oversized shoes are specially ordered from bicycle supply stores. They are custom designed for riding bikes, and boast the "grip" needed to do bike tricks.

When Charlie was very young, he was diagnosed with severe myopia and has worn glasses or contacts since he was about three years old. From the beginning, his glasses were thick and heavy. Today, he wears contact lenses, but is almost blind without them. When he was younger, his poor eyesight and the distortion caused by his thick lenses caused him great

difficulty mastering the ball sports enjoyed by almost all the other boys in his neighborhood, and he has since shied away from such activities.

Charlie is easy going. His teachers and friends describe him as being "laid back." His parents describe him as "non-committal." When asked questions, Charlie's two most common responses are either an uninflected "OK" or an equally neutral "whatever." He is soft-spoken and somewhat shy in most circumstances, especially those in public and those involving people he does not know well. Charlie smiles reluctantly, but when he does smile, his smile is warm and genuine. It is almost as if he doesn't want the world to know when he is happy or amused. Charlie seems to interact easily with people he does not know, but makes friends very slowly and cautiously. Charlie has a dry, witty sense of humor and loves word play. He revels in irony, and his favorite movies are based on parody. His favorite comic strips are ones dripping in obvious satire, such as Garfield and Dilbert.

Charlie chooses friends that share his interests in bicycles, guitar playing, and or computers. He has "bicycle friends," "guitar playing friends," and "computer-Internet friends." Few of his friends share all three of his passions. Most of Charlie's friends are a year or two younger than he is and live within bicycle range of Charlie's home. When the weather cooperates, Charlie and some of his friends can always be found at the local school or church parking lots where they talk and practice their "flatland" bicycle tricks. Charlie hasn't yet become interested in girls.

Charlie has a non-threatening, accommodating demeanor and is well liked by his classmates at school. His grades rise and fall like the yo-yo he

still carries with him, but he manages to keep them slightly above average, due mainly to pressure from his parents. Possibly in mild rebellion to his parents, who are both teachers, he doesn't seem to value good grades.

Charlie does not seem to identify with any particular social clique at school, moving between them almost invisibly. Charlie is respected and well liked by most adults he has occasion to interact with, including his teachers.

Charlie is known throughout the community's bicycling sub-culture as one of the best "flatlanders" in town. Though they live many miles apart, move in very different social circles, practice vastly different bicycling skills, and have ridden together only once, Benjamin and Charlie enjoy each other's mutual recognition and respect as bicycle enthusiasts. Having discovered what seemed to be a common interest, I asked each about the other. Both first clarified the technical differences between freestyle and flatland bicycling, but each took the opportunity to complement the other saying things like, "Yeah, I've seen him ride. He's good."

Charlie's Primary Discourse: Home Literacies

Charlie is an only child and lives with his father and mother in a newer, middle class residential development. His home sits on top of a hill, just a few blocks up the street from the elementary and middle schools he once attended and the mid-high school he goes to now. Charlie's house feels lived in and is roomy and comfortable. The furnishings are informal and functionally arranged. Charlie's mother and father have separate rooms they use as home offices. Charlie's mother's room doubles as her sewing room,

and Charlie's father's room doubles as his workshop.   Charlie has his own room.

There are bookshelves in every room in Charlie's house. Most are full of books. There are books in the bedrooms. There are large shelves full of books in both studies. There are books in Charlie's room. There are books in the kitchen. There are magazines in the bathrooms. An entire wall of the large family room is covered with books on shelves. In the family room, there are reading lamps at each end of the large, L shaped sofa and periodicals of various kinds cover the top of the coffee table. Among them are <u>Newsweek</u>, <u>Autoweek</u>, <u>English Journal</u>, <u>Model Aviation</u> and <u>Ride BMX</u>. Charlie was asked to estimate how many books were in his house. After a significant pause, he estimated that there were "probably thousands."

There are baskets full of writing paper, pencils, and pens in the kitchen and drawers full of writing supplies in his mother's study. In addition to heavily laden bookshelves and desks, there are computers with printers and Internet access in Charlie's bedroom and both his parents' work-study rooms. Since he was born, there has always been a computer in Charlie's house. Charlie has had his own computer since he was seven years of age.

Charlie's bedroom is almost as messy and disorganized as Benjamin's; however, he informed me solemnly that "it isn't always this bad." There are empty water bottles, granola bar wrappers, cereal crumbs, several magazines, guitar accessories, bike parts, and video game paraphernalia scattered here and there on the floor. His room is furnished with his roughly made bed; a cluttered, heavily laden computer desk-bookshelf combination;

a television with two video game consoles on top; racks full of CDs and video tapes; a stereo system with several large speakers; a large basket full of magazines and writing supplies; a floor lamp he uses when he reads in bed; a large, perpetually overfilled trash can; and two electric guitars with amplifiers attached to cables and pedals that coil through the confusion on the carpet. There are model cars scattered here and there around the room. A hand drawn portrait of Charlie and several posters of Charlie's favorite professional bicycle riders, cars, and airplanes decorate the walls. Also hanging from nails in the wall are a calendar, four model airplanes, and a clock. The top of his closet is filled with books, magazines, and unused toys. Charlie's chest of drawers, and all of his clothes are kept in the main part of his double sized closet. The floor of his closet is littered with shoes, bicycle parts, and dirty clothes. Charlie's primary interests are clearly revealed by a tour of his room.

Charlie's mother teaches at the middle school down the street from Charlie's house. She was Charlie's eighth grade English teacher. She is totally dedicated to her teaching and her family, which includes Charlie, her husband, and two large, lazy cats. After teaching for twenty-five years, concerned that she was no longer reaching her students, Charlie's mom went back to school and earned a Master of Science degree in Education.

Charlie's mom is a doting mother who came to motherhood late in life and has since committed herself to being the best mother she can be. When Charlie was born, she was chagrined to discover he "didn't come with an

instruction manual." She has since collected a series of books purporting to advise her how to raise a child and understand an adolescent.

Charlie's mother has always supported Charlie in his various passions and caters to his sometimes fussy taste in clothes or food. When he was younger, she took him to the pool for swimming lessons and drove him to "t-ball" games. Today, she keeps him in bicycle tubes, orders his bicycle parts, and takes him to his weekly guitar lessons.

Aside from her teaching and her family, Charlie's mom's first love is reading. She always has a book with her and reads "every chance she gets." She perpetually has her limit of books checked out of the city library and visits the library at least once every two weeks. Charlie estimates that his mom reads "several books a week." She dearly wants Charlie to inherit her love of books and reading. This summer, she offered him a sum of money for each book he reads. Charlie read four books before school started.

Charlie's mother has written stories all of her life. She originally wrote them in large spiral notebooks, but in recent years has reluctantly given in to computer word processors and floppy disks. She has written a collection of almost one hundred short stories, some of which have been published. Charlie's mother has an uncommon distrust of technology and believes computers and electricity are "magic."

Though she is still suspicious of the technology, Charlie's mother spends at least an hour each day reading and sending e-mail messages to her friends and family. She is an active member of two e-mail discussion groups. One is a special interest teacher group, and the other is a support

group related to macular degeneration, a disease that threatens to take away her sight.

Charlie's father teaches tenth grade English at the mid high school that Charlie is currently attending. However, by mutual agreement, Charlie is not in his father's class. Charlie's father is compulsively busy.

In addition to being a veteran teacher and a perpetual graduate student, he pursues several other interests. He is an amateur radio operator; an aircraft modeler; and an automobile enthusiast, serving as conservator and mechanic for all the family cars. He reads books and magazine articles constantly, sometimes at his desk and other times in front of the television or in bed. Charlie's father buys books often and subscribes to more than ten magazines and professional journals. He reads both for pleasure and to learn more about teaching or one of his other interests. He writes articles for teaching publications, articles related to his hobbies, poetry, lesson plans, and stories.

Charlie's father relies on the Internet daily for both formal and informal research and for e-mail. He has been an Internet user for almost ten years, since before web browsers and the World Wide Web. Like Charlie's mother, he spends about an hour each day reading and writing e-mail to friends, colleagues, and family. He belongs to several e-mail discussion groups, most of which are hobby related.

Like his mother, Charlie's father supports his son's interests, keeping him supplied with expensive, specially equipped "flatland" bicycles and high quality electric guitars. At the same time, he strongly insists that school

should be Charlie's primary focus and that Charlie should work hard to earn good grades.

Except during summer vacation, Charlie's parents will not allow him to have a job until he graduates from high school. Outside of his chores at home, the only jobs Charlie ever had were tutoring an elderly friend in the use of her new computer and mowing lawns in the summer.

Charlie's parents have always actively encouraged him to read and write and have bought books and magazines for him all of his life. In addition to the "read books for pay program" his mother is currently employing, in previous years Charlie has been required to read certain numbers of books per month and to write daily journal entries. They subscribe to several magazines for Charlie, never turning down his request for them. Over the years, Charlie has had subscriptions to custom car magazines, video gaming magazines, guitar magazines, and several bicycling magazines. He currently subscribes to two bicycling magazines, one electronic gaming magazine, and one guitar magazine. Neither his mother nor his father has ever rejected a request for any book or magazine. Charlie's parents have always provided him with more school supplies and equipment than he ever personally believed he needed.

Charlie's strength in school is mathematics, but his favorite class has traditionally been art. Charlie loves to draw, especially cars and bicycles, especially using his computer. He has always loved to draw. He is also good at language arts; however, his very poor handwriting has handicapped him over the years in writing intensive classes. Though he compensates by using

his computer when he can, many of his teachers have required that he write by hand.

The last time Charlie's grades ebbed, Charlie's mother and father established a routine requiring him to study with one of them for at least an hour at the same time every day. Additionally, his bicycle riding time was rationed in a directly proportionate way to the number of "A" papers he brought home from school.

Charlie and his parents expect him to go to college after high school. He has already chosen the college he wants to attend, one of his parent's alma maters. He thinks he might want to become a computer programmer of some kind, but he hasn't really given his future much thought.

Flatlander

When Charlie was asked to describe himself, his answer was characteristically understated and concise, "I bike and play guitar." When he says "bike," Charlie means participating in an individual sport known formally as "flatlanding." Charlie describes flatlanding as "like gymnastics, like the balance beam or something, except on a bike." Flatlanding is more than just an event at bicycle competitions; it is an adolescent identity, much like being a "skater" or a "jock." Like many other teen pastimes, flatlanding is a separate culture with music, literature, fashion, and language all its own.

Charlie took me outside to show me his bike. As he described flatlanding, he demonstrated a few of the intricate maneuvers he performs on his bike. "A 'tailwhip' is when the main part of the bike and the back tire

go around the bike and then back to regular and you land it." "A 'hang five' is when you are standing on the front pegs with the back tire in the air just kind of going along." "A 'hitchhiker' is where you are standing on the front pegs holding the back tire high in the air and the handle bar really close to the ground." Flatlanding has a vocabulary all its own, and that vocabulary is part of the flatlander Discourse.

Charlie identifies more with being a flatlander than anything else. It fits his personality. It is something that he can do by himself, making his successes and failures entirely his own. In Charlie's words, flatlanding is a form of bicycle riding that requires "a lot of commitment." "It takes a long time to get good." Charlie doesn't give up. If he sets his mind to something, he works at that thing doggedly until he accomplishes his goal. It took him three years to get his very special bicycle exactly the way he wants it. Sometimes it takes him months to learn a single trick.

Charlie serves as the neighborhood bicycle expert and free mechanic. Whenever another kid in the neighborhood has a problem with his bike, they come to Charlie for help. He willingly gathers up his tools and rushes to their assistance. During one interview, the doorbell rang and a ten or twelve year old boy, with his wounded bicycle in tow, stood in the doorway. He needed Charlie to help him repair the brakes on his bike.

Bike magazines have had a profound influence on Charlie. "They influenced me a lot to start flatlanding. I saw the people in there doing it. It looked like fun, so I read to find out what was going on." Charlie became a flatlander "two or three years ago," almost immediately after he obtained his

first issue of <u>Ride BMX</u> magazine. Since then, guided to a large extent by what he reads in bicycling magazines, Charlie has devoted much of his time and money toward developing both the mechanics of his bike and his flatland riding skills. Magazines, according to Charlie, "are usually used to keep up with current information on a certain topic, like bikes." Charlie subscribes to <u>Ride BMX</u> magazine because it "has the most about flatlanding of any of the bike magazines." However, he also reads other bike magazines if they have articles related to his interests. In his words, Charlie reads bike magazines so he can "see what's going on in the world of bike…like the people that bike at the contests and stuff." Like Benjamin, Charlie also regularly studies a comprehensive, full color bike parts catalog called <u>Dan's Competition</u>.

According to Charlie, he reads these magazines almost daily, learning more about his favorite flatland champions and heroes while planning upgrades and changes to his bike. He studies the advertisements and product reviews, sometimes for hours at a time. Like Benjamin, Charlie plans by making drawings of what he wants his bike to be like and writing lists of things he has located in his magazines and catalogs that will allow him to make the changes he desires.

Charlie's bike magazine literacy has inadvertently resulted in a minor cultural revolution in his neighborhood. Almost single-handedly, Charlie has made wearing a biking helmet fashionable, even "cool." Actually, Charlie's helmet wearing began after he suffered a serious biking accident when he was only nine years old. He was thrown off his bike, hitting his head on the edge of a concrete curb, fracturing his skull and rendering him unconscious.

After two days in the hospital and months of medication to prevent swelling and seizure, his parents insisted that from that day on, he would wear a helmet any time he rode his bike. Charlie occasionally resisted this until he saw that the "pro" riders in his bike magazines wore helmets. His parents bought him a helmet like the ones worn by the pros, and he wears such a helmet to this day, anytime he is on his bike. As Charlie continued to wear his helmet, and as he gradually developed a serious, almost professional approach to biking, his leadership grew within the local biking community. Slowly, beginning with Charlie's inner group of bike buddies, other young boys in the neighborhood began wearing similar bike helmets. Prior to Charlie's conversion to helmets, seeing a boy wearing a helmet while riding his bike was rare. Now, it is unusual to see a young boy riding his bike in the neighborhood without one, one just like Charlie's.

At the time of the study, Charlie was satisfied with his bicycle development efforts and considered his bike "perfect." He admitted, however, that could easily change if he happened to see something in the magazines or catalogs that he thought might allow him to do his flatland tricks better. For example, just a few weeks ago Charlie remembered, "They were talking about 'freecoasters,' and I read to figure out what that was, and I thought it was pretty neat, so I decided to get one when I got the money." He did just that. Based on my observation, when certain "pro" flatlanders in the magazines or on the Internet are shown using a new accessory or part, that becomes Charlie's next imperative.

Charlie's bicycle is a rolling billboard. Almost every square inch of its chrome frame is covered with stickers and decals. It is important for Charlie to have the appropriate flatland related stickers; they are part of the flatland Discourse. Whenever Charlie gets a new part or accessory for his bike, it always comes with a sticker. In addition to the stickers, each of the specialized parts is clearly labeled with names like "Fishbone," "Primo," and "Odyssey." When two bike riders meet for the first time, they size each other up, in part, by reading the various stickers and logos that decorate and define the nature of their bikes. They can tell at a glance what kind of biking the other rider does and how serious the other rider is about biking. In essence, they "read" each other's bike, and in doing so, read the rider.

Charlie also uses his computer and the Internet to support his flatlanding interests. The Internet is the first place Charlie looks to for information and to find out about things he is interested in. It was on the Internet and in his bicycling magazines that he learned about many of the various "tricks" and "stunts" he performs on his bicycle. Additionally, Charlie often shops for bike parts and accessories on the Internet, claiming that Internet shopping makes it easier to "compare prices" and that "they have a greater variety."

In addition to finding information, Charlie also provides information about flatlanding on the Internet. He created his own flatland themed web site titled GroundRide that he updates regularly and on which he has described his bicycle and placed pictures and logos demonstrating various

biking loyalties. He searches for other web sites related to flatlanding and then provides them for his friends by creating links to them on his web site.

He has more than fifty bike-related web sites bookmarked on his computer. Some of these are personal web sites like his own, and some are commercial. Charlie also uses Internet e-mail and on-line chat to talk with his friends about biking and fixing up bikes. He does this every day. Charlie and his friends regularly share biking web sites they have found and use commercial sites to show friends what new bike related gadget or accessory they are planning to purchase next or to support on-line discussions related to flatlanding.

When Charlie is not out bicycling, he is often in his room playing computer and video games. In Charlie's words, "Playing video games is what I do when it's too hot or raining outside, or if I'm just bored and there's no one to bike with." Most of his favorite video and computer games have something to do with riding bicycles. Charlie downloads many of these games from the Internet. Whenever anyone in his group of flatlander buddies discovers a "fun looking" game available for download on the Internet, the word is quickly passed; and before the end of the day, all of them are playing it on their computers. Much of their on-line discussion centers on such activity.

Guitar Guy

Even as a young child, Charlie wanted to play the guitar. When he was in kindergarten, he went to a "concert thing" and "there was a guy playing one." Charlie thought it "looked fun." Due to Charlie's enthusiastic and persistent urging, his parents bought him his first toy guitar when he was five and a child sized acoustic guitar when he was seven. For the past three years, he has been playing the electric guitar and taking weekly guitar lessons. According to Charlie, he plays "because it's fun," and because he likes "to play along with songs" on the radio and on his CD's.

Two of Charlie's best flatlander friends also play guitar, and Charlie enjoys "being able to go to other people's houses that play and share songs." Interestingly, according to Charlie, "Most of the flatlanders I know play musical instruments." He often refers to the loose group of friends that occasionally gets together to play as "his band." In addition to the three guitar players, the group includes a neighbor who plays drums. Almost apologetically, Charlie insists that guitar playing is something that he does when he is "inside and can't ride." I suspect that depends on the time of the year.

When Charlie was researching the purchase of his newest guitar, he began by reading a catalog provided by a mail order company called The Musician's Friend. He had gotten his first copy of this catalog from a fellow "guitar guy." He began receiving them himself after buying something from the company that publishes the catalog. Charlie poured over this catalog for

hours at a time, comparing the attributes of many and various guitars and circling several possible candidates. When he had narrowed his choices down to three or four, he began searching for information on the Internet. Every guitar manufacturer he was interested in provided its own company web site, each offering detailed information and colorful images of all the various guitars they make. Charlie devoted hours to these web sites, reading and re-reading the detailed specifications of the guitars he was considering, listening to samples of guitar music, and downloading picture files of each guitar to decorate the "desktop" on his computer. He also read reviews of the various guitars on an Internet web site called Guitarnotes.com. During this process, Charlie and his guitar playing friends regularly met on Charlie's patio to look a the catalog and discuss the merits of Charlie's choices. Charlie also e-mailed his friends the URL's of the web sites from which he was getting his information so they were all up-to-date and equally informed.

When Charlie finally reached his decision, the guitar was ordered. Charlie is very proud of the careful, analytical way he made his choice, and both Charlie's friends and his guitar teacher have congratulated Charlie for choosing so well.

Charlie regularly searches the Internet for what he calls "tabs" or "tablature." This is a simplified type of musical notation used by guitar players that is based on a guitar's six strings and twenty odd frets. When he finds a tab for a song he likes, he downloads it and saves it on his computer. Often, he sits in front of his computer, picking out the songs while reading

the tab on the screen. Charlie and his guitar playing friends regularly share tabs they have found on the Internet with each other using e-mail.

To Charlie, "Music is a pastime. People use it…to describe certain feelings they have about things. Music to me is <u>Blink 182</u>, <u>MxPx</u>, <u>Philmore</u>, <u>Santana</u>, and <u>God's Bus</u>" (names of contemporary musical groups and their bodies of music). Though he is clearly influenced by the style and quality of any guitar playing, Charlie's musical preferences are sometimes influenced by song lyrics. Whenever Charlie and his friends get a new music CD, the first thing they do after shoving the CD into the ubiquitous portable CD player is read the CD "cover," which is a printed insert giving information about the music on the CD and the musicians who made it. These inserts usually also include the lyrics of the songs, which the boys are very interested in, but they do not include any musical notation. For that, Charlie goes directly to the Internet where new guitar tabs seem to appear almost as soon as the CD's are released. According to Charlie, tabs are usually posted on Internet web sites by other guitar players who learn the songs by listening to them and then translate the music into guitar tablature.

In addition to the reading he does on the Internet, Charlie also reads two magazines devoted to guitars and guitar players. He doesn't read these magazines as often or as thoroughly as he reads his biking magazines, but he looks forward to them each month. One of the things he likes to do is read about new guitars and accessories. He also likes to read about famous guitarists, and enjoys learning about their styles and techniques. Once, after reading such an article, Charlie went to the music store to buy a "slide."

Another time, he purchased a "wah wah pedal" because he learned from a magazine article that it was the same one used by guitar playing super star, Jimmy Hendrix.

Computer Expert

When I asked Charlie how literacy for his generation differed from prior ones, his response seemed to reflect a growing reality. "My computer… I read all the time. Pretty much everything requires reading." "Computers are, like, everywhere," he added, "People read and write more. Everybody watches TV, all the time." Clearly, Charlie senses the impact of technology on reading and writing. The written word in Charlie's world exists as much in the glowing phosphor of TV screens and computer displays as it does on the printed page.

Charlie spends several hours every week using his computer. After checking the time on his clock, the first thing he reads every day is his computer screen. He is considered by friends his age and by many adults to be a computer and an Internet expert.

The thickest book in Charlie's room is a detailed technical manual for his computer's operating system. His father gave it to him a year ago. Charlie says that he rarely needs to refer to it any longer, but that it is still handy "once in a while." Last year Charlie got a new computer. He spent many weeks familiarizing himself with his computer's operating system and the various applications programs that are loaded on his computer. He learned both by "just trying things" and by reading help files. According to

Charlie, once you begin to understand the "pattern" of a computer, everything becomes simple.

Charlie uses the Internet "ten or so" hours a week. In addition to using the Internet to find information, Charlie also uses his computer to communicate with his friends. Like Arthur, he usually only "talks" to his friends on the Internet, rarely using public "chat rooms." He exchanges files and messages or chats with these friends everyday, sometimes several times a day, using a combination of traditional e-mail and a real-time discussion mode called "Instant Messenger©." Charlie and his friends regularly log in and check to see if any "buddies" are also on-line. If no one else is connected, they use e-mail to leave their friends messages.

For Charlie and his friends, on-line text based communication has replaced regular telephone conversation. "I never talk on the phone," remarks Charlie. Charlie prefers on-line communication because he can "talk to more than one person at a time." Even though Charlie admits keyboard conversations aren't as easy as talking over the telephone, explaining that "you have to read and type it in instead of just talking," he feels that on-line conversations are more thoughtful and robust, and both he and his friends prefer them.

Charlie has an e-mail account separate from his parents. He acquired his own account so his parents wouldn't have to read all his mail, and to provide himself with a "little privacy." Free space on a web server was included with his free e-mail account, and that was what inspired his interest

in making web pages. Charlie had watched as his father created web sites when he was younger and later decided that "it might be fun to do."

Charlie has now maintained his personal web page for three years. It began as a simple collage of pictures reflecting his interests in music and bicycling. Today it is more focused, and is mainly about his interest in flatland bicycling. Charlie enjoys showing it off, demonstrating its various features including all sorts of custom graphics and special visual effects that he either created himself or adapted from other web documents. He often spends several hours a week working on his web site. Its name, GroundRide, is a subtle reflection of Charlie's love of word play.

According to Charlie, the thing that really interests him about working with his web site today is his mastery of the source languages used to create web documents and various effects related to them. His first web pages were made using word processor type "HTML" editors that simplify the creation of web documents by allowing the writer to easily manipulate pictures and text, never having to actually deal with the HTML source language itself. Charlie became frustrated with the limitations of using these editors, wanting his web pages to be more technically sophisticated and unique. He began by modifying samples of HTML source language found on web pages that he liked until it suited his needs. Later, he found documents on the Internet that explained HTML in a more complete and technical way. He read everything he could find on the subject and spent hundreds of hours trying things and learning how various HTML commands and controls worked. Recently, in order to further enhance his web site and to do things that

weren't possible with HTML, he learned some of the basics of another computer language called Java. He now is very interested in even more sophisticated computer programming challenges and wants to begin learning to program with "visual Basic" and "C++."

In addition to his work on web page design, Charlie has used his programming skills to personalize several of the programs he uses on his computer. For example, he recently customized a special program that he uses to listen to digitally recorded music that he has downloaded from the Internet. Though he has left the inner workings of the program unchanged, Charlie has personalized the look and feel of the program, which he calls its "skin," to suit his individual aesthetics.

Charlie's interest in computers is a personal thing with him. Though all of his friends have computers and Internet access, he is the only one who has an interest in the more technical aspects of their use. His friends and his teachers often rely on Charlie for help in resolving problems with their computers and computer programs. His mother regularly relies on Charlie to maintain her computer or to help her through various computer related difficulties she faces, almost daily. Charlie's father has, on several occasions, asked Charlie's help doing research on the Internet and respects Charlie's opinion on computer related topics. As was mentioned earlier, when Charlie was only fourteen, he was retained to mentor an elderly lady who had just gotten her first computer. His job was to spend one hour each week showing her how to use both her new computer and the Internet.

Charlie: Shaping Himself and His World

Charlie is clearly not only influenced by his vernacular literacies, he influences them as well. His flatland web site and his role as the neighborhood bicycle repairman and mentor positions him as a contributor to and shaper of the flatland Discourse within which he negotiates his personal identity. Additionally, by helping others gain admittance into computer and Internet literacies and by learning to manipulate the core languages of computers and the Internet to customize and personalize his web site and many of the programs he uses on his computer, Charlie has become a contributor within this Discourse as well.

As in the case of Arthur and to some extent Benjamin, Charlie's parents seem to have wielded significant influence on his literacy development. Within his computer and his flatland biking Discourses, like his teacher parents, Charlie serves as a guide and mentor. Additionally, through a combination of personal expectations, direct guidance, exceptional availability of books and magazines, and extraordinary access to information technology, Charlie's parents have made it easy for him to develop a wide range of literacies. Though Charlie's vernacular literacies reflect, to a degree, the literacy influences of his parents, Charlie is his own person and has used those inherited literacies to suit his own ends.

Charlie cannot be separated from his Discourses nor the literacies that support them. Cumulatively, they shape and define who he is and how others know him. Like Arthur and Benjamin, Charlie uses knowledge and

skills he has gained from within his various literacies to negotiate social position and purchase acceptance into the diverse Discourses he has fitted together in his effort to define himself and to position himself in the greater society within which he lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Adolescent boys do read and write. However, what they read and write often differs markedly from the reading and writing they do in school. The vernacular literacies of contemporary adolescent boys are both practical and romantic. Their everyday literacy practices reflect their personal passions and aspirations and, as such, are valued highly. Vernacular literacies and the Discourses they support are an integral and dynamic part of a complex process of socialization and identity formation through which adolescent boys discover and celebrate who they are.

Everyday Literacy Practices

Barton and Hamilton (1998) found that people's vernacular literacies tend typically to fulfill certain social and personal needs of those who practice them. Vernacular literacies are rooted in everyday experience and serve everyday purposes. These purposes include "organizing life, personal communications, private leisure, documenting life, sense making, and social participation" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, 247). The three adolescent subjects studied in this report seem to reflect this pattern; however, in the case of teen-aged boys, one additional aspect of literacy must also be addressed, that of identity building.

As I observed their literacy practices and discussed reading and writing with the three teen-aged subjects, it became clear that many of their

vernacular literacy practices are tied to a personal identity they had constructed or were currently constructing for themselves. Outside of school and ignoring the realities of economics and neighborhood geography, the personal identities and social allegiances of adolescent boys seem to follow themes of compelling interests, such as football, cars, computers, or bicycles. Knowing certain things, reading certain magazines and books, possessing certain information literacies, and having access to certain communication technologies and the knowledge to use them all play a significant role in determining the status and role each of the subjects plays both within his own social group and within the larger community. With adolescent boys, literacy seems to be primarily an instrument of inclusion, an opener of doors.

In her study of the literacies of adolescent girls, Finders (1996) discovered a similar relationship between literacy and adolescent social identity, but found it not always a positive one. "From the perspective of the focal students," Finders (1996) writes, "literate practices could be unsafe. Carrying the wrong kind of book, writing the wrong kind of story, passing notes to the wrong people, all might mark one as an outsider or as an insider in the wrong group." Although this wasn't apparent in my findings, it would seem that, in addition to serving as a powerful agent in the socialization of adolescent girls, literacy can also be an instrument of exclusion.

Organizing Life

It wasn't surprising that literacies of organization were found to occupy a role in lives of adolescent boys. According to Street (1984), such literacies

represent an almost universal application of reading and writing skills, spanning time, geography, and culture. Lists, schedules, and appointment calendars are inescapable and exist at the center of contemporary life. My only surprise in this regard was the overwhelming importance of the family calendar in Arthur's family. Members of Arthur's family did nothing without first consulting the family calendar. Even before Arthur could schedule follow-up interviews, he first had to consult the family calendar. On it, Arthur's family listed by hour, day, and week essentially everything each member of the family would do, when they would do it, and where they would be. Arthur seems quite comfortable with this. Though the practice is interesting, I believe most adolescents would find this level of organization suffocating.

Though not to the degree demonstrated by Arthur, Ben and Charlie also employ literacies of organization. Apparently, neither keeps calendars nor makes reference to using calendars in the way Arthur and his family do. But they do create detailed plans, draw pictures, and make detailed lists. These, in effect, are used to organize their lives around the pursuit of whatever their current interests might be. This might include such personal quests as designing a new bike, fixing up a car, purchasing a new guitar, planning a new page for a web site, or scheduling an itinerary of upcoming bicycling competitions.

Though this study purposefully avoided school literacies, it would be interesting to see if Arthur's exposure to such a disciplined literacy of organization transfers to recording school assignments and making notes. It

would also be interesting to see if learning to use written schedules and reminders at home, or the lack thereof, would lead to similar habits at school.

Personal Communications

I began with the assumption that literacy played some role in the way the subjects communicated with their friends and their families. I was struck by the central role that the home computer and Internet modes of personal communication enjoy in the lives of Arthur and Charlie. I believe it is significant that both Arthur and Charlie insist they prefer e-mail and Internet chat to talking on the telephone, a media long considered the mainstay of adolescent personal communications. Ben enjoyed much less contact with computers or the Internet, and they were correspondingly less significant in his everyday life.

The literacies of the boys in this study tended to be strongly influenced by the availability of books, magazines, and computers in the home. Based on what I learned about Ben and his friends, a significant technological disparity seems to exist between children of poor, less educated parents and children with parents of greater means and higher learning. For Ben, books, home computers, and the Internet are still "only for school."

One simple communication literacy proved common to Arthur, Ben, and Charlie. All three subjects and their families use, often several times a day, hand-written notes strategically placed in their respective kitchens to communicate with one another. Some are very detailed. "Gone camping

with Gary, Steve, and Bart. Taking my car. Will be at Baker's Cove. Leaving 5:00 back 9:00 Wednesday, Love," reads one. Some of these notes were very cryptic: one such simply says, "Mowing." All three subjects seemed comfortable with this family messaging practice, participating willingly and often without thinking. Such practices may have become more common today as a result of our increasingly mobile society and what Elkind (1998) calls the "postmodern permeable family" where both parents of adolescents frequently work outside the home, often not coming in direct contact with their children for extended periods.

Arthur alone claims to write letters and mail them in the traditional envelope and postage sense, though he admitted that it was something that he is doing less and less frequently. The practice of letter writing has never been particularly common or popular among teenaged boys, but the advent of electronic modes of communication seems to have stimulated what might be called a limited renaissance of such practices. Instead of writing letters on paper and putting them in the mailbox, Charlie, and to a lesser degree Arthur, almost always use Internet e-mail to send messages to relatives, and both frequently send thank-you notes and electronic greeting cards to friends and family.

Charlie demonstrated another impact of emerging technologies on adolescent literary practice with his personal web site. Using new information technologies and his personal web site as a form of publishing, Charlie continuously broadcasts regularly updated information about his

current hobbies and interests to friends and strangers alike, creating a real-time, public narrative of his private search for self.

<u>Private Leisure</u>

Somewhat surprisingly, given the popular assumption that teen-aged boys don't read or write unless they are forced to, Arthur, Ben, and Charlie all demonstrate some literacy practices related to leisure and relaxation. Arthur and Charlie readily admit to reading books for pleasure or to pass the time during periods of leisure. They were eager to talk about books that they had read and how they and their friends share literary preferences, and sometimes books or magazines. Both admit they would read more if they had time. Equally surprising was the strength of Ben's claim that he never reads books at all for pleasure, and that he only reads books, other than the Bible, because they are assigned in school. His claim seemed incredible at the time he made it, but after extended discussion and further observation in his home, it now seems very likely that Ben's statement was essentially true.

Not so surprising was the finding that Ben and Charlie, and to a lesser extent Arthur, regularly read magazines for personal pleasure and in support of their primary leisure time activities. Additionally, all three subjects enjoyed looking up information related to their personal interests or just "looking at" web pages on the Internet. Though Ben explained that his experience was limited to times he visited friends with Internet access, all three boys mentioned "surfing the web" or "looking at web sites" as ways they entertained themselves. All three boys also entertained themselves

with video and computer games, each game requiring a sophisticated technological literacy and often demanding rapid reading, the recognition of complex metaphorical representations, and literary allusion. This is another significant finding, as it hints to the degree that adolescents are in tune with new forms of literary media and the extent to which the very essence of literacy is changing as a result of the evolution of information technology.

Documenting Life

In a way, each subject's room was an illustrated text that, in effect, documented their lives. The certificates, medals, ticket stubs, photographs and other memorabilia on Arthur's bulletin board and on the shelves in his room reveal the real people, places, and accomplishments that define his life. Ben's spray painted wall graffiti and his many wall posters express his innermost feelings and tell anyone who enters what he is about. In addition to his essentially autobiographical web page, the desktop display on Charlie's always-running computer provides a running documentary of his most current interests and accomplishments. Pictures, CD covers, stacks of magazines, clothing labels, license tags, award certificates, stickers, and souvenir programs not only decorate the walls and ceilings of the rooms of these adolescent boys, they proudly spell out their passions and their values.

Sense Making

Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 250) define sense making as "people carrying out their own research." All three subjects demonstrated several literacy practices devoted to this end. Looking things up in books or going to

the library simply isn't what these boys do when they want to know something. Their first impulse is to "look on the Internet." All three subjects, including technology-limited Ben, seem to be quite comfortable using Internet search strategies to locate information on the World Wide Web about whatever they want to know. They also seem to have developed functional criteria for deciding the value and validity of information they find there. To them, the Internet is the first, most natural, and most obvious way to discover what they need to know.

Using journal articles and the results of clinical studies published on the Internet, Arthur researched the dietary supplement Creatine before eventually deciding not to use it. Using magazines and catalogs as constant references, Ben and Charlie developed an interest in a particular genre of biking, designed their own bikes, purchased the parts, and then put them together. When Charlie's simple HTML editor could no longer generate the complex and sophisticated web pages he wanted to create, he researched the necessary source languages on the Internet.

If ranked in order of perceived importance, Charlie, Ben, and Arthur would list sense making as the number one purpose for literacy. Literacy to them is primarily a way to gain information. This information is essential. Information allows them to identify and pursue the personal interests that are such a big part of who they are and provides them access to the social Discourses to which they aspire.

Social Participation

The various literacies that Arthur, Ben, and Charlie enjoy are often tied directly to such things as friendships, social alliances, and status. Possessing certain knowledge and practicing certain special literacies offers a form of social position and lends some degree of authority.

The quintessential football star, Arthur prides himself in his knowledge of football and other sports-related literacies. These literacies are important to Arthur because they allow him access to and status within the football player and school athlete Discourses that he values and aspires to. The knowledge generated by sports magazine and Internet literacies enhances his social influence and the status he enjoys among others who participate in the football player Discourse. Arthur's football knowledge and play book literacies facilitate a beneficial discourse between Arthur and his coaches, helping to guarantee his position on the team and his opportunity to play. Away from the football field, Arthur's Bible study literacy places him in a respected position, trusted by both his mother and his youth minister to act as teacher and mentor to adults and other adolescents alike. His Scouting literacies permit him access to the highest levels of Scout society, providing him with authority and privilege at Scouting functions and among his Scouting friends. Arthur's personal friendships are strengthened by Internet e-mail and chat enabled conversations, by sharing web sites, by having common literacies related to religion, and by reading, recommending, and sharing books with friends.

Ben's friends admire his knowledge of cars and bicycles, which Ben admits is primarily the result of his reading magazines and catalogs. Ben actively applies knowledge gained from a variety of traditional and high-tech literacies to exercise a leadership role within his close group of neighborhood friends. He is the one everyone in his group looks to when a technical question arises. If it's about cars or bicycles, he knows what to do, how to do it, which parts are the best, and where to get them at the best price. Ben also maintains informal contact with distant friends and fellow bicycle enthusiasts by reading his biking magazines. To keep up with the automotive exploits and accomplishments of a friend that has moved away, Ben relies on his friend's car club web site, which regularly posts pictures and descriptions of member's cars.

Charlie and his friends enjoy many of the same interests, supported by the same literacies. Like Ben, Charlie shares information he discovers in his biking magazines with his friends and uses knowledge gained from reading to help them maintain their bicycles. When Charlie and his friends can't be together on their bikes, they communicate by e-mail or Internet chat, much the same as Arthur and his friends. When Charlie and his friends talk, the conversations generally focus on bicycles, and much of what is said relates to things they have read in magazines or on the Internet. Charlie's computer and Internet literacies have widened his social contact by bringing him closer to many adults and winning him significant recognition and admiration.

The social grouping and alignment of adolescent boys seems to be a composite of both who they know and what they know. Ben's city-wide

recognition for his biking and car expertise, Arthur's collaborative relationship with his football coaches, and Charlie's computer mentoring of adults seem to defy normal social rules, proving that, sometimes, knowing things helps to tilt the balance and allows social access and even movement where it might not otherwise have been expected.

Identity Building

In Finders' (1996, p. 119) words, "The discourse we accept defines us and shapes our relationships to others." The literacies demonstrated and valued by each of the subjects in this study effectively reveals the Discourses to which they belong, the kind of person each of them wishes to be, and how they want to be known by others. The subjects of this study chose and then developed literacies as they were needed to gain access to Discourses to which they belong.

While very young and under the primary influence of their parents, they mastered literacies like calendar reading, kitchen message writing, and Bible study. As they matured and began to develop their own unique personal identities, each chose various defining Discourses and then began to master the literacies necessary for membership within them. Arthur adopted football player and Scouting Discourses; Ben chose freestyle biking and car guy Discourses; Charlie selected flatland biking, guitar player, and computer expert Discourses. Each of the subjects thinks of himself in several different ways. Each of these ways represents a composite part of their as yet incomplete identity. All along the way, literacy is integral to

Arthur's and Ben's and Charlie's discovering and becoming who and what they want to be.

The literacies of adolescent boys are not static. They are constantly evolving to satisfy new needs and other Discourses. Arthur reads and writes the kinds of things in the kinds of ways that label him as an obedient son, a Christian teen, a high school honor student, a star football player, and an Eagle Scout. However, when Arthur became interested in arena football, he immediately sought out texts to support that interest. Arthur aspires to become a psychiatrist, and as such is already developing literacies to support that aspiration. He volunteered to take part in this study because it sounded interesting, like psychology, and he though it would help him in college. To get a job as a lifeguard this summer, he took a course in CPR. Arthur's literacy practices are ways to his ends; they get him what he wants. They satisfy the expectations of people who are important to him and, in doing so, himself.

Ben is a freestyler, a hard worker, a car guy, and a rebel. His literacies both facilitate and demonstrate these Discourses. Like Arthur, Ben adopts new literacies as needed, to suit his purposes and his needs. When he got his new job at the fast food restaurant, he first had to read their book of rules and learn the literacy of their computers. He did this willingly because it brought him the job he wanted and the money he needed to support his car and bicycle interests. When he switched his car guy Discourse from being a "mini-trucker" to a "sport-compact" driver, he began reading different magazines and had to develop an almost entirely different

vocabulary. He did this enthusiastically, first discovering the appropriate texts and then studying his magazines and catalogs for weeks to become conversant in the language of sport-compacts.

Unlike Ben, Charlie never seems to discard one Discourse for another. He just keeps adding them on. He is a flatlander, a guitar player, a computer guy, and most recently, a "yo-yo guy." During our final interview, he showed off his new yo-yo, telling me about how he found it on the Internet and how there were "lots of yo-yo sites." He had already begun to add yo-yo guy to the collection of Discourses he belongs to and which make up who he is. Like Arthur, Charlie has already begun developing discourses in support of his future aspirations. Charlie wants to become a computer programmer. His computer guy Discourse is not only responsible for this dream, but is a way he sees of earning himself a place in the Discourse of computer programming.

Secret Literacies of Adolescent Boys

I suspect that despite my best efforts, certain literacies enjoyed by my subjects remained just out of sight, on purpose. The most obvious disparity that comes to mind is the total absence of literature devoted to teen relationships or the opposite sex. Based on the responses to an anonymous questionnaire circulated prior to the formal study, teen-aged boys responding almost always reported some contact with "men's magazines" and books with "good parts." However, none of the boys in this study made any mention of reading such literature. Nor did they admit to reading the typical teen

magazines that are filled with attractive images and aimed at adolescent concerns about personal appearance, grooming, fashion, romance, and relationships. These kinds of omission are not remarkable. Even studies focusing on the vernacular literacies of adults rarely report any admission of persons reading such "questionable" literature (Barton and Hamilton, 1998).

Vernacular Texts of Adolescent Boys

I expected magazines to be the primary texts in the lives of adolescent boys. As it turned out, Arthur, Ben, and Charlie all read magazines, and magazines were primary texts in the case of Ben and Charlie, but magazines weren't as central as I expected. Teen-aged boys today read fewer magazines, and the ones they read are more specialized. Instead, the Internet seems to be filling many roles traditionally the province of magazines and newspapers.

The Internet encompasses a broad range of texts, from fiction to breaking news, from general interest to highly specialized, from journals to databases. Much of the information my subjects sought on the Internet was found on sites that are best described as Internet based periodicals. Their look and feel are very similar to that of print magazines. Like their print counterparts, Internet magazines provide adolescent boys with specialized and highly attractive articles, reviews, and editorials that both create and fuel new interests and new identities. However, the video and audio components of Internet periodicals seem better suited to a generation that grew up in front of a television screen.

The computer allows adolescent boys to access kinds of texts that were not available at all until recent years. Many reference books they use are found only on CD-ROM. All three subjects regularly interact with role-playing video games, a relatively new form of computer-based literature. Additionally, because the computer provides a more professional product and offers writing aids such as spelling and grammar checkers, both Arthur and Charlie strongly prefer using the computer whenever they write something. Ben differs in that he is less familiar with computer-based texts, and it is significant that he is the only subject who did not have access to a computer at home. He does, however, have his own dedicated video game machine and game cartridges that allow him to enjoy many of the same kinds of interactive games played by Arthur and Charlie on their computers.

Many of the texts negotiated by my subjects were not what most would consider traditional. Signs, billboards, and posters decorate their rooms and follow them everywhere. News, weather, sports scores, and advertising slogans dance constantly across their television screens. Stickers, labels, and logos are inseparable from the lives of adolescent boys. Many of these texts are associated with identity, recognition, and power. Wearing clothing with a certain logo or having a shirt with a given message printed on it can purchase sure acceptance to one social group insuring quick rejection by another.

Books, especially novels, have not, as many adults seem to believe, disappeared from the lives of teen-aged boys. Though Ben claims to never read books except when required for school, he apparently means that he

doesn't read novels because he obviously reads books that help him to maintain and repair his cars and to hold a job. Both Arthur and Charlie enthusiastically described reading books and proudly displayed books in their rooms. Though they read a wide range of literature, from adult best sellers to young classics, young adult fiction seems to be their favorite genre.

Parental Influences on the Vernacular Literacies of Adolescent Boys

Each subject's literacy practices and attitudes demonstrate significant parental influence. Part of that influence seems to be directly related to the availability of books, magazines, computers, writing materials, and the Internet in the home. The remainder of the literacy related influence exercised on the subjects by their parents stems from the literacy practices of the parents. The more the parents read and the more time they devote to reading, the more their adolescent sons read.

In Art's case, he all but mirrored his parents' vernacular literacies. He read the books his mother recommended and the magazines his father provided. He shared the family computer and shared responsibility for teaching his mother's Bible study class.

Though Ben veers the farthest away from his parents, he does reflect their literacy attitudes and practice by not reading any books other than the Bible, "unless he had to for school." Interesting, and in conflict with the other subjects, Ben's rebellious wall graffiti and his zealous magazine reading seem to separate him from his parents.

Charlie is obviously influenced by the immense availability of literature in his house and by his parents' obvious devotion to many literacy practices. He, like Arthur, often reads books recommended by his mother. Like his parents, Charlie spends several hours each week reading and reads a variety of texts. His fascination with computers began by watching his father, and though Charlie's interests are different, he has developed many of the same computer and Internet literacies. Charlie has, however, often taken his own path and developed certain literacies not enjoyed by either parent, helping him to become his own person.

Interviewing Adolescent Boys

Nothing I read in the literature of ethnographic case studies prepared me for the challenge of trying to extract data from three elusive, painfully understated, noncommittal teen-aged boys. I purposefully chose subjects I gauged to be the most willing and available participants and the most likely to provide me with the kind of information about themselves that I would need for my study. I began the study with wonderfully broad and open-ended questions, anticipating an unfettered and limitless flood of data to flow from their lips. I expected examples and explanation. I expected anecdotes and analogies. I got sentences...short, clipped sentences. Adolescent boys are, as a colleague of mine so aptly surmised, "not forthcoming."

In order to engender any usable data from interviews, I learned to first spend considerable time just talking with the subjects, gaining their trust, making them feel comfortable with the tape recorder and with me in places

that were usually private and unavailable to adults and doctoral students. Even then, open-ended questions like the "global questions" described by Spradley (1979) were not particularly productive. It was as if they believed there was some correct answer that they didn't know, so by providing as little information as possible, they were avoiding being wrong. More specific, pointed questions eventually allowed me to chip away at the data I needed for this study. However, the answers were still often evasive, incomplete, or understated.

I hoped that with each succeeding session, the subjects would become more accustomed to the questioning and to my expectations, but that did not turn out to be the case. In fact, later sessions seemed to become less and less productive.

Fortunately, all the silence afforded by my reluctant participants availed me the opportunity to make careful and detailed observations of the places my subjects spent their time outside of school. A great deal of information can be gathered while taking note of an adolescent subject's personal environment. I searched for texts, literacy related artifacts, literacy related technology, and other evidence of literacy practices in the subjects' homes. I particularly made note of anything that might be related to any form of literacy in the subjects' rooms, using these observations to lead my questioning. I gathered careful notes of anything I observed to be remotely related to literacy on their bicycles and cars, in their garages, around their work places, and within a coach's office.

Careful and close observation of the subjects and their living spaces provided the most valuable data used in this report. It revealed things about the literacies of my subjects that I didn't know enough to ask about and that they considered too inconsequential to mention. Careful observation of my subjects' vernacular environments allowed me to ask better questions about their vernacular literacies and to understand the answers they generated better and more completely. As a famous baseball player and folk philosopher, Yogi Berra, once said, "You can see a lot by looking."

Implications for Teaching and Future Research

Since Dewey (1902) pioneered the concept of authentic learning at the turn of the century, educators have known that effective learning occurs best when it occurs in a realistic context, and when students are pursuing authentic goals and interests. One thing that became obvious as I conducted this study was how closely everyday literacy practice was aligned with the physical and social world within which the subjects lived. Pedagogically, it seems more attention could be brought to the contextual nature of literacy. Two ingredients seem necessary to instigate the development of new literacies, individual need and opportunity.

Individual Need

Wherever the boys found a desire to know or be, they sought literacies to support their quest. When Ben switched from being a "mini-trucker" to being a "rice boy," driving and modifying an oriental import sedan, he

needed a new jargon, new literature, and new ways of thinking about cars and about himself. To satisfy these needs, he turned to a new family of repair manuals, specialty magazines, parts catalogs, and Internet web sites. The same was essentially true of Arthur when he discovered arena football and Charlie when he needed to go beyond the limits of his standard web editor's ability to manipulate the way his biking web site looked and performed. Whenever the boys needed to know or become, they sought out the texts and skills to do so.

Opportunity

Wherever there were books and magazines, reading them became part of the boys' lives. Whenever these two phenomena coincided, the subjects in this study developed rich and personally rewarding literacies. Charlie's constant access to a computer may have not only permitted him to develop sophisticated technology literacies, but might possibly have inspired him to do so. If Arthur's father hadn't established computer and Internet use as a valued skill and provided Arthur with both, Arthur might have had interest, but never access to the Discourse of arena football. If Ben's father had not maintained the family car and always kept a repair manual in the garage, Ben might never have developed the automotive literacies that so define him today.

Educators as Interested Observers

Educators would benefit, as I did, by becoming diligent, silent observers of adolescent boys' behavior, constantly seeking clues within that

behavior as to why boys sometimes seem disinterested or out of sync with the Discourse of school and its literacies. Educators sometimes make unfair assumptions about the literacies of teen-aged boys, based on worn-out stereotypes and very few facts.

This study emphasizes the impact that personal motivation has on developing new literacies and new literacy skills. The degree of passion and devotion demonstrated in the vernacular literacy practices of these three teen-aged boys in the pursuit of their personal goals and purposes is rarely duplicated in formal learning environments. To that end, it would seem important that educators work to know more about their students' personal lives and aspirations while broadening the range of texts found in schools to better address their students' ethnographic realities. Possibly a greater focus on student-centered self-study programs might combine the inherent motivation of students' personal passions and interests with the more sophisticated techniques, technologies, and resources available in the school. Educators need to realize that most adolescent boys arrive at school with sophisticated knowledge and highly honed literacy skills. This vernacular knowledge and these vernacular literacy skills are real and valuable and should be recognized and treated as such by teachers.

Changes in School Literacy Programs

School literacy programs alone would appear to be insufficient for students like Ben, who don't have home access to books, a computer, or the Internet. Some method needs to be in place that would allow him and his

friends convenient access to such literacy related resources after school hours and during vacations. The degree to which such a deficit will ultimately limit an individual's happiness, opportunity, or contribution to society remains unclear, but considering our society's increasing reverence for and dependence on information and information technologies, it is worth our serious consideration. Even more compelling is the notion of a significant segment of our society for whom various ethnographic realities have denied them access to full cultural, economic, and political participation. It would seem to be in our collective interests to insure equal access to not only traditional texts but also the latest in electronic information literacies.

Re-inventing Libraries

A starting point might be to re-invent and revitalize the role of libraries in vernacular life. In the light of the almost total rejection of libraries as a resource supporting adolescent vernacular literacies, libraries should attempt to discover ways to make themselves more inviting and relevant to adolescent boys, possibly by shelving books or subscribing to magazines that support adolescent interests or by offering them greater, more convenient access to the Internet.

In cases like Ben's, this might not be enough. In the 1950's mobile libraries called "book mobiles" brought books and magazines directly into the neighborhood. That was a good idea, but I don't believe it went far enough. In fact, a total rethinking of the shape and mission of public libraries may be in order. Instead of pretending ethnographic neutrality, these often cold and

intimidating temples to tradition and the preservation of dominant culture might function best if they were as accessible and contextually relevant as the ubiquitous neighborhood convenience store that knows and understands its clientele, stocking shelves with what neighborhood folks need and want and, in today's teen-age vernacular, is open for business "twenty-four seven."

Implications for Curriculum Designers

High school curricula are not usually designed to support vernacular Discourses or Discourses of socialization, though both are of primary importance to adolescent boys. Additionally, school literacies rarely lend credibility or value to lived experience (Elkind, 1998). Adolescent boys value literacies that get them things, literacies that provide them power and access, and literacies that help them be what they want to be. Associating teen valued vernacular literacies with traditional school literacies may be one key to engendering adolescent boys with more positive attitudes toward school-based literacies and with greater internal motivation for learning those school literacies.

School literacy experiences can be adjusted to accommodate and be more representative of the authentic literacies that adolescent boys practice in day-to-day life, so that they validate and enhance lived experience. More time and school resources should be devoted to enhancing and validating magazine and Internet literacies. Adolescent boys have plenty of questions. Right or wrong, good or bad, they will find the answers to those questions with or without the school. To better serve the present and future needs of

the subjects of this study and thousands of others like them, schools and their curriculums can be designed to support, not ignore or devalue, their students' everyday literacy needs.

Future Research

The inspiration for this study was Just Girls, Finders' (1996) fascinating book about the "hidden literacies" of two very different groups of adolescent girls. Every story added to the body of knowledge about adolescent literacy will broaden our understanding of its function and its importance. To that end, additional case studies such as this one need to be conducted, each of them inspiring even more studies, all telling the literacy stories of different teens and different Discourses and different social and cultural environments. Only in this way will we come to fully understand the phenomenon of adolescent literacy.

Also, it would be interesting to know if any correlation exists between vernacular literacies, especially those that are part of an adolescent's primary Discourse, and the literacy related attitudes and practices they bring with them to the school and to formal learning. Do parents who rarely read influence their students to rarely read? What impact does a house full of books or a house with no books have on literacy development or school success? How much disadvantage does a teenager without home access to computers and the Internet suffer in school today? What is the value of reading for pleasure beyond the immediate? Are teens that read regularly for pleasure better students? Are teens that read rarely for pleasure worse students? Do adolescents reject their parents' literacies and the school's

literacies as a matter of course in their attempt to define themselves as unique and individual? It seems this study has raised more questions than it has answered.

Adolescent boys, and I suspect the rest of us, take our vernacular literacies for granted. However, without them, our lives and the ways we perceive the world would be dramatically altered.   Any personal or social influence as dramatic and compelling as these everyday literacies deserves our attention and our respect.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

May 2-July27, 2000

ARTHUR

<u>First Impressions</u>

Arrived at Arthur's a few minutes early and was struck by the relative size of Art's house, compared to those around it. It appears to be new, possibly built on a vacant lot remaining from the end of some building boom. The house is two stories. There are three cars in the driveway, nothing special about them. I was met at the door by Art's mother. She is a pleasant lady. We had a brief chat, but she seems to be a woman of few words. Arthur came down stairs and showed me around the house. It is very clean and neat. Hardwood floors and expensive looking rugs. Art's room is upstairs.

Art's room is at the end of the hall upstairs. His sister's room is across the hall. Arthur's room is exceptionally neat and well kept. The walls and the door are covered with posters, knickknacks, and memorabilia. Arthur sits at his desk chair and I sit on his bed. The desk is obviously not used much. It is covered with "stuff," but none of it might be used to write. Art's bed has a bookshelf built into it, and it is full of books. Other than the desk and bed, there is a chest of drawers and a large, vertical plastic locker of some kind. There are CD's in cases here and there in the room, mostly on top of the desk and the chest of drawers.

When we sit down, Art and I talk briefly about things unrelated to the study. He seems very interested in pleasing me, giving me what I want. He also seems concerned that he might not be a very good subject. Then we began.

<u>Session One</u>

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the kinds of things that you do that require you to read or write in any way.

ARTHUR: I have AOL, and I talk on that a lot. I write letters to friends I've made earlier, like I made at a church camp. And relatives. Not very often, but I do sometimes. I've been filling out applications for jobs lately. Not too lucky with that so for, but I really haven't tried my hardest. We'll see. Ah.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of job are you looking for?

ARTHUR: One that pays. Uh... I'm not real picky. I, uh, read books, um, by myself. Like I read them outside of class; I read them just for myself, just for my personal use. And they're not what you'd call educational; I still read them just for entertainment,

INTERVIEWER: What books do you like to read?

ARTHUR: Can't think of one just at this time.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read more now than when in you were younger, or do you read less?

ARTHUR: I read more. Not more often but, like, when I do read, it's more, more lengthy.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you a question: Do your parents read very much?

ARTHUR: Yeah, my mom. She's been pretty busy with work, but when she wasn't, she used to read, probably a novel a month. They read quite a bit. My dad, umm, he's a computer programmer. He works at home a lot, usually on a computer, like, most of the day. So, he types a lot.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you used AOL. How do you use it?

ARTHUR: Umm, just to talk to my friends. I don't usually talk to people out of Bartlesville that much.

INTERVIEWER: So, like, e-mail or what?

ARTHUR: Both, usually it's just instant messages. Occasionally I'll send e-mail.

INTERVIEWER: So, like, e-mail or what?

ARTHUR: Both usually it's just instant messages. Occasionally I'll send an e-mail. You know, just to talk. Can't always catch people on line.

INTERVIEWER: How often do you do that?

ARTHUR: I probably send about two or three a week e-mail. I get on America Online four times a week, probably.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use AOL for any other reason besides e-mail?

ARTHUR: It's a connection to the Internet, which I use, to do homework, like, last night I forgot my science book, I needed a periodic table so I went on the Internet, pulled up the periodic table and I used it.

INTERVIEWER: Well, do you ever use it for anything besides school stuff?

ARTHUR: Oh, yeah, occasionally but, like we went a XXXXX game the other night. I was wondering about arena football, like the rules they had. So I pulled up the XXXXXX web site and just read it. But that was also school related. That's all it was.   But I also use it somewhat for outside of school stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me more about arena football.

ARTHUR: Well, uh, they have fifty yard fields, which are usually... are usually a regular outdoor field or regular football field is a hundred yards long. You can't punt because it's a fifty yard field...and uh, they uh, you can't punt because it's too short a field.   You can't put because it's a fifty-yard field. That'd defeat the purpose.   They uh...

INTERVIEWER: They could punt the whole field inside, especially since there's no wind.

ARTHUR: Pretty much...like the regular crossbars I think it was fifteen feet wide, across like that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

ARTHUR: These ones are about half that size.

INTERVIEWER: Do they kick at all?

ARTHUR: Like field goals? Yea, they kick those all the time, a lot of the time. ...cause they don't score touchdowns every time. Like every drive will either ..there's a lot of fumbles...interceptions and stuff like that for some reason.

INTERVIEWER: Is it the same width as a regular field?

ARTHUR: No, it's a little bit narrower too, but they have no out of bounds. Actually it's a wall that's out of bounds. They have like a four or five foot high wall ..run into that a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever go a basketball game over at XXXXX?

ARTHUR: Um, yea, I played eighth grade basketball at XXXXX, and we practiced in there. There's not much room to run. Pretty tight quarters.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's see what else we can find to talk about. We talked about reading some book. Do you have any favorite authors, or what kind of books do you like?

ARTHUR: I don't usually have a favorite author. I just uh …over the last summer…the book I really liked was <u>The Godfather</u>, Mario Cuso. (Sic)?

INTERVIEWER: Why did you choose to read that?

ARTHUR: Mmmm, my friend, I guess he's sort of a mobster. He's really into that sort of mobster thing. He knows a little bit about it. I just watched the movie. You know, <u>The Godfather</u>. I was actually, uh, going on a trip and I needed something to read and I was at Wal-Mart and saw it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ARTHUR: Looks good.

INTERVIEWER: You don't have any sort of…you don't read science fiction, you don't read mysteries? You just read whatever seems interesting.

ARTHUR: I do read those but it's not like, uh, the only thing I read.

INTERVIEWER: So you needed a book to go on a trip. What do you mean by that?

ARTHUR: I was going to have a lot of spare time, and I just needed something to entertain myself, so to read makes the time go faster.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of any other times when in reading or writing is fun or pleasurable?

ARTHUR: I don't know, there's some others, like sometimes at church youth groups my youth minister comes up with games, sort of like anagram games, but I'm not sure what you'd call them. I'm thinking of anagram games. I'm not sure that's right. We did it in class once. With Miss xxxxxx it'd be like a word and then be some special things about them. Like banana…and that'd be split in half and that'd make a banana split.

INTERVIEWER: Yea, I don't know either. But I know what you're talking about. So it's a word game. Ever do crosswords or anything like that?

ARTHUR: For school, but not usually.

INTERVIEWER: So you don't do the newspaper ones?

ARTHUR: My sister, she went through a phase a couple two months ago. When she didn't have anything to do, she'd have, like one of those books you see six years old working on. I guess it's for older people because it's kind of hard. I tried one.

Session Two

INTERVIEWER: You've talked about writing letters to friends. How often do you do that?

ARTHUR: Not very often. Maybe, uh, really not that often. It's like maybe two every six months. I don't know. I just don't write letters very well. E-mail is a lot quicker. My grandma used to send me letters all the time. Maybe one every two months. I'd never really write back and she'd understand. She'd just get something to us, tell us what's going on.

INTERVIEWER: This next question is kind of hard. How do you think reading and writing are different for your generation? I mean, you see things from a different perspective than I do, than your mom does. So how do you think it's different?

ARTHUR: Well, like, back when you were a teenager, you guys didn't have, like talking on the Internet, all these other things like it's a little bit more convenient. We probably take for granted now. That's a hard question.

INTERVIEWER: You think it's more or less important now?

ARTHUR: I think it's still important but maybe not as emphasized. I'm not sure how it's not emphasized as much. I don't know, it just seems like the Internet is more prominent now.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider the Internet to be reading?

ARTHUR: Yeah, cause there's tons of information out there and you just have to read to get it. Just click it.

INTERVIEWER: How would your life be different if you couldn't read or write as well as you do?

ARTHUR: I probably wouldn't be able to express myself as well, like, uh, I'd probably like a probably make not as good grades as I do. It seems like each grades not. I don't know. I was brought up where if I didn't make good grades my parents would be mad. I didn't want my parents to be mad so I made good grades.

INTERVIEWER: Outside of school, how would it be different?

A; Hmmm...long pause....(no answer).

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write when you aren't even thinking about it, that you're aware of?

ARTHUR: Not usually...I usually watch TV when I'm not doing anything.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever notice you are reading when you are watching television?

ARTHUR: Uh, you mean the stuff in the background? Yea, I just never thought about that.

INTERVIEWER: How would your life be different if you could read or write better than you do? If that is possible?

ARTHUR: It's possible. Um, I'm pretty good at reading, but writing is a weaker point than reading is. I don't know. I applied for an application at GAP the other day. A while ago, I guess. And, uh, I have problems reading instructions before I do something. And, uh, think I need to start doing that cause it said, "Please print." I wrote in cursive the whole time.

INTERVIEWER: You won't be the first one.

ARTHUR: No, but they are probably looking for someone who pays attention to directions. That probably didn't win me any job.

INTERVIEWER: I've learned to make copies of applications and forms before I fill them out so I can make revisions. Let's see. What do you think you will read and write when you are an adult?

ARTHUR: Um, probably work related. I'm thinking about going....it's pretty early now to decide, but I'm kinda interested in being a psychiatrist, psychiatric field, I guess. I don't know, probably, something work related....I'm sure I'll read on my own cause I enjoy reading. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about some of the things on your bulletin board. I notice that almost everything up there has words on it.

ARTHUR: Yea.

INTERVIEWER: Did you choose what to put up there based on what words were on it, or anything like that?

ARTHUR: Some cases... that pin right there. This girl gave it to me last year, so I just decided to stick it up there. I don't know why, but, like, these ribbons over here, the XXXXX City Track Meet. That was in fifth grade. I got third place for something, I'm not sure. Those other ribbons are for basketball camp. I won some event in that. I don't know if you can see that little log type thing, it says...I'm a Christian.... It's a verse from somewhere. I'm not sure. It's just things that have collected up there.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes, its things like that that can tell you a lot about yourself or in the case of someone who doesn't know you, can tell another person a lot about the person who owns it.

ARTHUR: I dunno. My sister made that tie-dye looking thing with my name on it.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a poem about you up there?

ARTHUR: Um, yea, that's a, my Grandma sent that to me a while ago. I though that was pretty cool. "Footprints" (refers to a framed poem on the wall) That's from my other grandma that's still alive. It's a pretty famous poem, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Oh I see what it is. Pine wood derby cars? Are you in the scouts?

ARTHUR: Yea, I was in the scouts. These two right here didn't win a single race. Then the next year, that one won the whole thing. So, I thought it was kinda ironic. The first one, we put quarters underneath here to weight it, but the quarters ended up being too high or too much because they ended up dragging on the track, so it was slower. I don't know what was wrong with the other one.

INTERVIEWER: The trick is getting them just heavy enough.

ARTHUR: They had a weight limit.

INTERVIEWER: Were you pretty active trying to get merit badges and that sort of stuff?

ARTHUR: My dad was what they call den leader. He'd always, ah, push me to do a lot of stuff. It was pretty easy when he was telling me what to do. That's my arrow, I, you get it when you graduate to boy scouts.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still active in scouting?

ARTHUR: Yea. I'm a still a scout right now. I'm working getting my eagle. 'Bout one merit badge away from that, and then I have to do my project. Then I'll have it. My dad was in scouts. He was an Eagle Scout. Were you ever a scout?

INTERVIEWER: Related a story about my scouting experience. Ok. Let's see if there is anything else I can ask in general. Can you think of anything else about reading or writing?

ARTHUR: My Room? Anything?

<u>Session Three</u>

INTERVIEWER: (Brief re-explanation of the purpose of the study.) Can you think of any way literacy impacts what you do when you play sports?

ARTHUR: Well, we have to learn plays on offense. He gives a sheet we have to learn. Usually we take them home to study. I wrote my thing, I wrote my big report that we had to do in your class about Critean (sic) I mean, usually I try to read about stuff before I stuff taking it, like a supplement, usually I read about that.

INTERVIEWER: So you research things.

ARTHUR: Yeah

INTERVIEWER: How do you research things? What do you use to find information?

ARTHUR: Um. I usually, I ask other people, most the time. And sometimes, I'll get on the Internet. And my dad will gripe at me for, about using it. So he'll print out stuff about that and show it to me.

INTERVIEWER: How 'bout, ah, do your read any magazines?

ARTHUR: Um, I, always get this, uh, I used to read a lot of it, <u>Boys Life</u>. I don't know why, recently I just don't read it. Just lost interest.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read any sports magazines?

ARTHUR: <u>Sports Illustrated</u>. My dad used to get that. Whenever, if I see it at somebody's house, and I'm bored, and see Sports Illustrated lying somewhere, I'll pick it up and read it. I went to a doctor's appointment yesterday, for my physical. We were in the waiting room, there's a whole bunch of <u>Sports Illustrated </u>sitting right there, just picked one up and read it.

INTERVIEWER: Lot of people spend a lot of time reading magazines. Are you a reader?

ARTHUR: Yes. I read for school. I read a whole bunch for school. I read outside of school, books and stuff, so I guess that makes me a reader.

INTERVIEWER: What is a reader?

ARTHUR: Person who reads.   Reads for information, for study purposes, for pleasure, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: What are readers like?

ARTHUR: Probably read a lot of books, spends a lot of time reading.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read?

ARTHUR: Information. If you have more information than the next guy, you have the edge on them.

INTERVIEWER: What do you read for pleasure?

ARTHUR: Books about sports, books about Mafia, sci-fi.... just anything that looks interesting on the cover.

INTERVIEWER: Besides the Godfather, do you have any other books you liked a lot. I am not going to ask you for a favorite. That's too hard.

ARTHUR: Yea. We read the Outsiders in seventh grade. We read that book, I like that book a lot. ...about teenagers. I can relate to it.

INTERVIEWER: What books have you read? Can you think of any others?

ARTHUR: Read part way through Catcher in the Rye...um, I used to read a lot of R. L. Stine...I like horror books...He's written a lot of books. I've read Hardy Boys, got all of 'em. Have you read this one? (holding up a sample he retrieved from his bedstead bookshelf.

INTERVIEWER: What book are you reading now?

ARTHUR: Like a book I'm reading? I started a...it was on a Friday, I was going back to your shelf, I was reading Rumble Fish, but it kinda disappeared.

INTERVIEWER: Do you own books? Can you estimate how many?

ARTHUR: About two hundred, three hundred, including all my Beirenstein Bear books, when I was little.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you keep your books?

ARTHUR: I have a bookshelf. There's a whole bunch in the closet, that I can't fit in my bookshelf, for when I have kids, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: How do you get books to read?

ARTHUR: I used to, when I was at the supermarket or something and there's books there and my mom's standing there, I just threw it in the cart.... and she'd get it for me. I just acquired.   I used to be in a book club. I got a lot of books from there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever recommend books to friends?

ARTHUR: Um, not usually, if I really like it, I'll say it's a good book if they ask about it. But ah, when I was on my trip when I bought the <u>Godfather</u>...I finished it early. Another person didn't have anything to read, and just gave it to him. I still haven't got it back.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends ever recommend books to you?

ARTHUR: Um, yeah, my friend, xxxxx, he, ah, he read <u>The GodFather</u>. He has the movie...a big poster of it in his room. You know, I thought it was kinda interesting. He always quotes it.   All these other Mafia movies. So, you know, I decided to read <u>The Godfather</u> so I could talk to him about it, I guess. So I wouldn't be in the dark.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read?

ARTHUR: Usually when someone's talking about something are out what to know all the facts because I usually don't trust what people are saying, rumors you know, <u>I'll read and so I can know the real thing</u>.

INTERVIEWER: What you read for Information or where do you go for information?

ARTHUR: I go to Web sites sometimes, newspapers, the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: How would you get information on football?

ARTHUR: Probably, um, probably use the Internet or if it was something like the conditions and I'd probably ask the football coaches or something, cause coaches, you know, they are usually around. . . . usually Internet or <u>Sports Illustrated</u>.

INTERVIEWER: Do you follow college or professional sports?

ARTHUR: I like college a lot better than professional sports. I'll watch NFL. I'll watch but I like watching college best. They're competing not for money, just for competing. I liked to play baseball, but just not watch it.

INTERVIEWER: What do your parents read?

ARTHUR: Who's the author of <u>Rainbow Six</u>?

INTERVIEWER: Tom Clancy.

ARTHUR: My mom reads a lot of those books. That's her favorite author, I think. She reads a lot of those books, pretty much the only books she reads.

INTERVIEWER: They're pretty good; you ought to try them.

ARTHUR: I have. They're pretty thick, too. My dad, I'm not sure. He reads the newspaper a lot. I'm not sure, I don't hang around what he does in the day, but he went through a training program to learn a new computer language a while ago. I'm sure he read a lot about that. I'm not sure what he does; he does use the Internet. He manages our bank account.

INTERVIEWER: This is kind of an interesting question. What time do your parents read? Is there any particular time you noticed?

ARTHUR: Sundays, sometimes, when my mom has nothing to do, which is pretty rare, she'll just sit down and read. Sometimes at night, when she's done with all her work, she'll sit down and read with my dad. He's always doing something. I'm not sure when he reads.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you like to read?

ARTHUR: Someplace quiet. I can't concentrate with a lot of people talking to me. Usually, sometimes in my room, I'll read.

INTERVIEWER: Do you talk about what you read with your friends?

ARTHUR: Some things. Not usually the focus of the topic.

INTERVIEWER: Are there things in your house to read?

ARTHUR: Lots, someplace.

INTERVIEWER: We've already talked about where books are kept. Are there any more bookshelves in your house or any other place books are kept?

ARTHUR: In my sister's room, there's a big bookshelf. A ton of stuff on that. In our TV room.

INTERVIEWER: So everyone has their own individual collection of books and stuff?

ARTHUR: Usually, not so much in my parents' room. They don't have a bookshelf, but there's piles of magazines sitting there.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a favorite time or place to read in your house? Is there a place or time two of you might be reading at the same time? Newspaper, magazine, book, doesn't make any difference.

ARTHUR: Um, in the mornings, sometimes, on Sunday mornings, my dad will be reading the newspaper, and I'll come down.

INTERVIEWER: Why the not Saturday?

ARTHUR: I sleep.

INTERVIEWER: We've also mentioned this. Do your friends read?

ARTHUR: My friend, X X X, reads Sports Illustrated all the time. He lives on that stuff. X X X reads novels about the Mafia.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends read for reasons different from yours?

ARTHUR: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: So mostly they just read for information.

ARTHUR: Well, X X X, if it's a Mafia book, he'll just read it because so he can tell everybody about it, how cool it is.

INTERVIEWER: So, knowing about the Mafia is a little bit about who X X X is?

ARTHUR: Could say that

INTERVIEWER: How do you leave messages for family?

ARTHUR: I'll usually write them and stick them on the kitchen table. Sometimes they'll notice them; sometimes they won't.

INTERVIEWER: If anyone does look for a message, they look from the kitchen table. It's a specific place?

ARTHUR: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How do people leave messages for you?

ARTHUR: On the kitchen table.

INTERVIEWER: Same way?

ARTHUR: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you notice words on TV?

ARTHUR: If it has some significance, but most of the time I won't.

INTERVIEWER: Like they are transparent? Like you see through them?

ARTHUR: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you suppose they put words on TV?

ARTHUR: There are words everywhere. Are you talking about, just words in the background? There's a lot of stuff on there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you notice words on labels and controls?

ARTHUR: Like, TV controls? They're usually worn off. I usually notice them. I usually memorize them. I usually notice those.

INTERVIEWER: When do you have to read, outside the school?

ARTHUR: Outside of school? Boy Scouts. There's probably lots of stuff, I just can't think of the right now.

INTERVIEWER: When do you have to write, outside of school?

ARTHUR: Maybe my family notes. I'll write notes to people in school. I'm not a big note writer, but sometimes I'll write one if they bug me enough.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider yourself writer?

ARTHUR: I consider myself more of a reader that writer. Pretty much, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever written anything just because you wanted to?

ARTHUR: It's not my forte. If I'm feeling, uh, some big strong emotion, I'll write poetry for some reason. But that's not usually; that's one and a million times I'll do that. What I'm feeling depressed, sometimes, all write one, just to have something to do.

INTERVIEWER: If you do get depressed, and you write a poem, what you do with it?

ARTHUR: I don't know, on occasion, very rarely, I'll let my friend read it, and usually I'll just stick it somewhere. . . Till the next time. Then, maybe, I'll read it again or something.

INTERVIEWER: So do you collect these things?

ARTHUR: I haven't really written that many. It's just when it's really, when it inspires me, that I write one.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use a computer?

ARTHUR: Yes, I do. Plug in to America Online. Play games.

INTERVIEWER: How many hours a week the spend using the Internet?

ARTHUR: Less likely, because I have a lot of schoolwork. I use it for school, but I guess that's not what you're talking about. Maybe, 30 minutes to an hour, an hour max.

INTERVIEWER: How you use the Internet and if not for school or work?

ARTHUR: If a topic interests me enough, I'll research it.

INTERVIEWER: Search for information?

ARTHUR: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Can you find entertainment on the Internet?

ARTHUR: Yes, they've got game sites. . . There's game.com; there's a whole bunch of games I can entertain myself with.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you use e-mail and Instant Messenger?

ARTHUR: Probably because a lot of other people are doing it; I think you can talk more freely typing that if you're just on the phone. You can express more.

INTERVIEWER: Compare communicating with friends on the Internet with talking to friends on the phone.

ARTHUR: <u>I am not the best speaker. Everything I want to get out, everything I want to express, I express better if I write it. So that's a better way for me to do it; they'll get more my guest that I feel if I write it.</u>

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever share information about Web sites or Internet resources with friends?

ARTHUR: Sometimes, X X X was asking. He went to a XXX game with me and he was asking me about the rules. I gave him the web site. So he went and looked that up. X X X told me about the <u>games.com</u>.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever shop on the Internet?

ARTHUR: Not usually. I went to. . . If I'm bored again, sometimes all go to E Bay and just click around and see. There is some interesting stuff on there.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever bought anything on the Internet?

ARTHUR: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever learned anything on the Internet?

ARTHUR: Uh, yes, about arena football league, about Creatine, and all that other stuff.

INTERVIEWER: I was learning things on the Internet different from learning things at school?

ARTHUR: In school and there's a little bit more censorship than there would be if you just looked it up on the Internet. You might learn more or more stuff that, I don't know, I just couldn't find in school. They'd probably kick you out or something if you did that. There's just more censorship in school. Because of government, I guess. Everybody complained about it. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: What is the first thing you ever remember reading?

ARTHUR: Wow! Gonna have to say Dr. Suess. Parents started me on those.

Me: What you remember about learning to read?

ARTHUR: Um, there was a book that we, the whole class, was required to read. I wasn't that strong a reader, and I'd just pretend like I read. Then we have to take a quiz over it, and I'd no idea. And then I'd start crying. Till teacher sat me down and started reading it to me, then I started to understand it a little better. I felt little a bit better about that, but I don't know. When I didn't understand something, I just pretended that I did.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about learning to write?

ARTHUR: I remember I thought that everything I wrote was pretty good, and that it was perfect, actually. Yesterday, I was looking for a notebook, that was just a clean notebook, and I found one that was like from the third grade. It wasn't perfect. I spelled with W H I T H, with a lot of other stuff, a lot of H's where they weren't supposed to be. A learning experience, but it was pretty clear that I'm better now.

INTERVIEWER: How does reading make you feel?

ARTHUR: Like what I read? Makes me feel a little bit more intelligent.

INTERVIEWER: When you write, how does that make you feel?

ARTHUR: Sometimes frustrated, because I can't, I don't know what I'm trying to say in my head. I can't express it usually. Sometimes I can't express it on paper, like when I'm talking, I can't express what I can and writing, but I, this idea in my head, its like it's good in my head but I can't get it on paper and it sounds stupid.

INTERVIEWER: Is it because you don't have the words, or?

ARTHUR: That's part of it, I just have this grand idea in my head that I think is pretty smart; I just can't express in words and sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: What advice do you have for others about reading?

ARTHUR: You can't get that far in the world without it, so don't put it off.

INTERVIEWER: Do you receive much mail?

ARTHUR: Junk mail, sometimes. Magazine subscription type things. My church sends a newsletter out to church members, I receive that. I received this one thing recently that was from of some doctors thing, and I guess on one of these surveys they hand out in school sometimes I checked, like, I was interested in psychiatry and they sent me this one thing…this web site. And, like, here's your password. And it ended up they wanted, because of my academics, they wanted me to attend, like, a doctor's camp in Washington D.C. I thought it was pretty cool, but I didn't have time to go to it this summer.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read this mail, or your junk mail very often?

ARTHUR: Not usually.

INTERVIEWER: When you e-mail or instant messenger friends, what kind of messages do you sent them?

ARTHUR: Like what kind of conversation? Well, sometimes, if I'm bored, I'll just talk about anything that there is to talk about. I'll, say it's like a Friday, I'll see who's on, see if they want to go do something that night or that weekend. See what their plans are.

INTERVIEWER: Do you initiate or do you just respond to other people's messages?

ARTHUR: It depends on who it is.

INTERVIEWER: How many people to you correspond with by e-mail or Instant Messenger?

ARTHUR: Most of the time, it would probably be around 10, but that's not really, that's busy.

INTERVIEWER: Boys and girls?

ARTHUR: Yeah. Mostly girls, actually.

INTERVIEWER: When you leave and family members notes on the kitchen table, or when they leave you notes, what are the notes usually about?

ARTHUR: It's telling that, it's usually that my parents have gone somewhere and they have their cell phone and they want me to call them when I get home. Or that, sometimes, they'll leave a note on the table. I'll usually call them that I'm going somewhere and that I'll be back at a certain time. Just to let them know where I'm at.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever make lists of things or write plans down?

ARTHUR: Not usually, I mean, I don't usually plan my evenings out.

INTERVIEWER: How about this summer? Have you planned your summer?

ARTHUR: I play football. And they have the required 25 summer workouts, and then I'm going to a football camp. I'm going to, my church, much church is having a church retreat, mission trip type thing and then I'm going to a church camp. Just, ha, everybody goes there, then it's just sort of like a retreat. It's not just my church, it's other churches. <u>We have a calendar where I write all that stuff down. We have this big calendar on the refrigerator and everybody, my parents, usually write down our stuff. If we are wondering what we are going to do that day, we go and check the calendar.</u>

INTERVIEWER: What does your mom do?

ARTHUR: She's, ah, the director for human resources at XXX.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever make lists, like for birthday presents?

ARTHUR: No.

INTERVIEWER: Why would you marry someone who reads and writes?

ARTHUR: Just based on that context?

INTERVIEWER: Why would you marry someone who reads and writes, or why would you not marry someone who reads and writes?

ARTHUR: Well, I want to marry a wife that will work. I grew where my mom works and my dad works. And, you know, I realize it's a better income, and you'll be more stable if your wife works.

INTERVIEWER: Could you be interested in a wife that did not read or write even though she could?

ARTHUR: If I was really going to marry them, I don't think it would make any difference.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write for church?

ARTHUR: For youth groups sometimes my youth minister is not really young enough, too, well, so he's trying to get us to teach lessons. Our youth group isn't that big, so we combined middle school, and there's a few, like lower grades in our youth group and he wants us to start teaching lessons to them. He has this book that we can read the lesson out of and discuss it with the group.

Whenever my mom's gone and she can't find a substitute, she teaches Sunday school, and sometimes she'll tell me to do it. And I'd do that sometimes. It's not often. She has a lesson book I read out of. And I have scriptures you read. We read the Bible, too. In choir. I'm in choir, so we have to read music from our sheet music. My church choir

INTERVIEWER: Do ever have to write up lesson plans?

ARTHUR: No. It's not that involved.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write for a club? This would be like for your Boy Scouts.

ARTHUR: I'm thinking what I do for Boy Scouts. Coming up, I'm going to have to have an Eagle project to do. I'm going to have to. . . They have an Eagle packet you do, and you fill out and you turn it in to this committee to see if it's worthy enough for Eagle project. I'm going to have to fill that out pretty soon. We fill out what they call blue cards. It's sort of like an application for your merit badge. When you've done all the work, and you have to turn in to a counselor or the Leader of the troop.

INTERVIEWER: Do your parents care if you read or write?

ARTHUR: I'd think they do, yeah. I'm sure they do. It's not like . . . they know I read and write, and they encouraged me to do it when I was little, but they really don't. . . It's not so much now that they. . .

INTERVIEWER: Do your Mom or Dad ever recommend that you read a book?

ARTHUR: My mom does a lot, but I usually don't unless they're Tom Clancy books.

INTERVIEWER: Do your mom or dad ever ask you to write anything for them?

ARTHUR: Not usually.

INTERVIEWER: Do your mom or dad ever read anything you've written?

ARTHUR: Not usually.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends care if you read or write?

ARTHUR: Probably not.

INTERVIEWER: How are reading and writing important to your future as an adult?

ARTHUR: Psychiatrists have to take notes on that little pad you always see in the movie.

Session Four

This brief interview took place in the high school Locker Room. Art's coach has let us use his office so that we have access to the various texts Arthur wants to share. We have come here because he had mentioned the playbooks and the "study sheets" the coach has his players use. I also am hoping he will be more comfortable in this setting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get the job at the XXX?

ARTHUR: No. I never heard back from them.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still trying to get a job?

ARTHUR: Yeah. I just got re-certified for C P R. That's required for Red Cross. And trying to get an application at XXX for life-saving job. I'm going to call XXX tonight.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about getting certified for C P R.

ARTHUR: It's a. . . There's a day long class that went from 9: 30 to I think we ended up about1: 30, but it was supposed to be a nine hour class, but our instructor was real understanding that we had other stuff to do, and he didn't want to be there for that long either. We skipped lunch, and we just went right through it. But we had to watch videos, and then he . . . We had dummy's we had to practice on, and we watched nice videos. There were different skills.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a Life Saving certificate?

ARTHUR: Yes. I have it with me. Do you want to see it?

INTERVIEWER: How did you get that?

ARTHUR: We had to take the course. Like CPR. He filled it out. And we had to take 50 question test at the end.

INTERVIEWER: Have the got a driver's license yet?

ARTHUR: Yeah. You had to read, well, I read, the little book.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you like to add?

ARTHUR: I think that if you don't have good literacy skills you're not getting very far. Society. You did just be working at McDonald's. Most jobs require good literacy skills.

INTERVIEWER: So this is a playbook?

ARTHUR: Yeah. Look, see, it's got writing and descriptions, not just the circles an x's.

INTERVIEWER: Do you understand all of this?

ARTHUR: Yeah. Sort of. I have my own plays.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read books about athletes, football players?

ARTHUR: Yeah. Well, I've read three or four. Read a book about the history of football last year. It was pretty good; I read it riding to games. I did a report on it for school. I read some books about sports.

INTERVIEWER: Does the coach know you make up your own plays?

ARTHUR: Yes. We ran some in practice this year.

INTERVIEWER: How did that make you feel?

ARTHUR: Super. Well, it was cool to see if it worked.

INTERVIEWER: And did it?

ARTHUR: Pretty good.

BEN

First Impressions

BEN met me at the door wearing a tee shirt bearing the slogan "still playing with cars." I commented that I wanted a shirt like his. Ben's father was right behind him. Our interview was set for early afternoon, to avoid conflict with Ben's job at a local fast food restaurant, where he does a variety of jobs.   His father appeared to be retired and was a middle-aged man with a thick accent. He was smoking when I came; but he quickly extinguished his cigarette in an ashtray on the coffee table directly in front of him. Next to him on the sofa was an oxygen machine. We sat in the living room where there was a large family type Bible on the coffee table. Also on the coffee table was a large family photo album. At a small desk near a front window was an aging word processing typewriter.   On the walls are two framed poems, both were religious in nature.

Ben's room was cluttered with dirty clothes, magazines, and video games. The walls were covered with pictures clipped from biking magazines. He noted that he knew many of the riders in a particular clusters of pictures. On a low table at the head of the bed was a TV set that was attached to a video game. Several game cartridges and hand controllers were scattered around the game box. On one wall was the red spray painted symbol for "anarchy", (a capital "A" in a circle) a typical symbol of teenage rebellion. On the opposite wall was a slogan…"Freedom or death." Amidst the clutter on the floor was a bicycle frame BEN showed me that was damaged.

Much of the clothing strewn about and piled up in one corner of his room was adorned with some sort of textual labeling, either a slogan or a trade name.

Session One

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the kinds of things you do regularly that require you to read or write in any way.

BEN: At work, I have to punch little buttons on a little computer. I look through my bike magazines. I ride my bike a lot. Have to read the keep out signs; it just means that I have about 30 seconds before security guards, come and run me off. Let's See. I have to make people's food.

INTERVIEWER: What does that have to do with a reading?

BEN: A little thing pops up on the screen, and I have to be able to read to know what they want. It's like, when you're working the fryer, it's like little things up there, pops up and tell you what to make. You have to read the little buttons on there if you're taking orders, like whatever they want. Like a 50 million at time.

INTERVIEWER: I know you told me before, but were you work?

BEN: At Arby's.

INTERVIEWER: So, what do you do at Arby's?

BEN: Just about anything that's there. Make food. Clean, basically stand there a lot and clean. It's not much to do.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get the job there?

BEN: I read the sign outside as I was driving home from school one day. I was, like, well, put in an application in there, see if I could get the job to pay for my insurance. I had to read some, like, thick book, about 50 million pages of rules and regulations.

INTERVIEWER: You had a read a book to work at Arby's?

BEN: Yeah, it's not real big, it's like that, (indicating about 1 in.) it's out in my car. It's decent and big.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that you read bike magazines earlier. Talk about that a little bit.

BEN: I don't know, I have to, I read all the little subscripts that's under the bike pictures so I know what each one is made out of and the length of the frame and if they have a warranty are not and how much it's going to cost. Compare that to the other bikes that's in there, how good a quality they are.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about times when reading or writing are fun or pleasurable.

BEN: Reading my bike magazine is pleasurable. You get to thinking like, you know, if I had some money I'd buy that one and then. I don't write that much. I draw pictures, and that's a little different. I draw a lot but I don't really write too much.

INTERVIEWER: Besides your bike magazines, what else do you read?

BEN: TV Guide sometimes, ha, that's not very often, I don't think I read much.

INTERVIEWER: When are reading or writing important to you when you are not at school?

BEN: Filling out tickets and stuff and, uh, I don't know, when you have something important they have to, like, turn in like, ahh, your resume at work or something. You have to make sure you have everything right. You have to the read it right. If you don't read it, you don't understand it, and if you get messing up, you have to start all over again. Reading the stop sign. That's good.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think reading and writing are different for your generation?

BEN: Well, we have more stuff to do, so we don't sit at home and read books as much as people used to. We have TV, so, instead of reading the book, we get to watch the movie. Makes it easier on us. We don't have to do as much.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever notice of writing that you are reading on television?

BEN: Yeah, sometimes, we'll be like it's German, but it comes up in English. That's about all.

INTERVIEWER: How would your life be different if you couldn't read or write as well as you do?

BEN: Let's see. Probably wouldn't have a job. Wouldn't be making as decent grades as I am in school. Means I wouldn't be able to do as much as home. And, uh, wouldn't be able to drive. Still wouldn't have another car.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write when you are not even thinking about it?

BEN: Probably. I probably read stuff without thinking about it. Like when you walk through stores something like magazines that you walk by you read them but you don't really pay attention to what they say, but you still read them.

INTERVIEWER: What will you read or write when you are an adult?

BEN: Depends on the type of job I get as to whether I write too much stuff. I'll probably still read the bike magazines no matter if I'm like 50 years old and uh, it just all depends on what type of job I get and what requires me to do.

INTERVIEWER: What are you thinking about doing when you graduate?

BEN: I haven't the faintest idea. Just get through college. That's about as far as my goals are set right now.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any idea what you're going to study in college?

BEN: Not right now.

INTERVIEWER: Are you a reader?

BEN: I read it, but it's not like a hobby. I don't read books all the time.

INTERVIEWER: What is a reader?

BEN: I don't know, someone who reads. You have to read to get through life.

INTERVIEWER: What are readers alike?

BEN: Whatever they want to be like. There's no specific class, I mean, everyone reads some time during their life.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read?

BEN: I'll probably read just so I know what's going on.

INTERVIEWER: What do you read to know what's going on?

BEN: Like, ah, the bike magazines I read, I know what events are coming to town and, ah, whose No. 1 on the circuit, which products are the best and which ones have failed the test and broken and it's not worth your money to spend on them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read books?

BEN: Just the bible. That's about all. The only book I can. It's the only book I can read.

INTERVIEWER: Have you read books? Other than the Bible?

BEN: For school. That's all. Just for school.

INTERVIEWER: What are you reading now, anything?

BEN: No specific books. The BMX plus and Dan's competition. Ride magazine. That's all.

INTERVIEWER: How many minutes do you read magazines in a normal week?

BEN: It depends. Some days I pick up my biking magazines and sit there for an hour or two flipping the pages reading them. I might read it once, but then I go back through it and read it again just to like sink it into my memory bank is what it is. Two or three hours a week.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you get your magazines?

BEN: I get some of them sent to me through the mail. And others you have to buy at the store.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever share magazines with friends?

BEN: Sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: What you do with the magazines after you've the read them?

BEN: If I don't give them to someone else, they stay somewhere in my room until I find them again.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read a newspaper?

BEN: Only when I was looking for a job. That's about all.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read a newspaper?

BEN: To look for a job. When I was looking for a car, too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read a newspaper regularly?

BEN: No.

INTERVIEWER: How much time you spend reading newspaper and normal week?

BEN: Maybe 10 minutes.

INTERVIEWER: How you get a newspaper to read?

BEN: If there's not one at the front door, you have to go to the store to get one.

INTERVIEWER: So you get one every day?

BEN: Not every day.

INTERVIEWER: What happens to the newspaper when you're finished?

BEN: It gets thrown away.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read for information?

BEN: Sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: What the you read for information?

BEN: Like, what type of magazines? Well, I read my bike magazines to figure out information about the bikes. The newspaper, I think, is for cars... see what the heck is out there, see who was hiring.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any kind of shop manual or repair manual for your car?

BEN: I'm not sure; I don't think I do. I pretty much know how it all works. I don't really need repair manual for it.

Father: You do have a maintenance manual for your car.

BEN: Yeah, but that doesn't tell you much.

INTERVIEWER: How would you get information about your car?

BEN: Probably one of my friends.   He's into the imports and stuff, and knows what to do with them. If he didn't know what to do with it, we'd probably take it to one of the mechanics that knows, or else go buy a book. I don't think you can buy a book on the kind of car I have right now. I'm not sure. If we couldn't figure out by asking someone, I'd end up buying a book.

INTERVIEWER: Does anybody in your house read books?

BEN: The Bible. That's all. It's the only. . .

INTERVIEWER: Do you talk about reading with your friends? If you read an interesting article in a magazine, do you talk about it with your friends?

BEN: Sometimes. Like, in one of the car magazines it starts talking about cars and like, yeah, I'd like to get that to put on my car. You know. Or get that bike, you know, or something. That's about the extent of it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a favorite place in your house to read? Do have a favorite place to read?

BEN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends read?

BEN: About the same thing I do.

INTERVIEWER: How do you leave messages for your family?

BEN: Usually, write them on a piece of paper, and stick to the refrigerator.

(When we go into the kitchen to view the refrigerator, there are several teen-aged boys there, sitting around the kitchen table, drinking a soft drink and eating chips. They are curious about what we are doing and anxious that we finish the interview as they are going to leave for a camping trip as soon a wee are finished. Ben is the one with the car. They are also curious about my car. "Zat your 944?" one asks. "It got the 2.5 liter engine? It's an '85-'86, ain't it?" "Sure looks new. How do you keep it looking so new?"

The refrigerator is covered with hand written notes, photographs, and documents of various kinds…bills, grade cards, greeting cards, etc. One note that Ben had obviously written earlier reads, "Gone camping with XXX, XXX, and XXX. Taking my car. Will be at XXX's Cove. Leaving 5:00 back 9:00 Wednesday, Love.")

INTERVIEWER: How the people in your family leave messages for you?

BEN: The same way.

(The interview is concluded at this point as I can tell that BEN is anxious to be finished.)

Second Session

INTERVIEWER: You said you watched a lot of TV.

BEN: Yeah. I watch almost everyday, when I am not doing something else.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of show do you like to watch?

BEN: Different things. <u>Simpsons</u> and <u>Want to be a Millionaire</u> are OK.

INTERVIEWER: Do you notice words on television?

BEN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Why you think they put words on television?

BEN: To try and get you interested. Try and suck you in. To make you buy what they try to sell.

INTERVIEWER: Do you notice words on labels and controls? Like when new use the TV set or drive your car or when you get something out of the refrigerator?

BEN: Sometimes. When printed like big bold letters like the danger, and keep out. Yeah. Something like that. Like the remote control, I just know where all the buttons are. They get wore off after a while. If I'd out a new one, I'd have to look at it every time, when I flip the channels or something, for I knew what's what.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider yourself a writer?

BEN: Not really. I mean, I write to get by in everyday life. As far as extra, like, literature, anything that I write, I don't.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use a computer?

BEN: no. I'm computer illiterate. I mean, I know how to, like, to work it. I know how to type and stuff but it's not something I'm interested in using.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use e-mail or the Internet?

BEN: I'd go look at like the car Web sites, and the bike Web sites, but that's all.

INTERVIEWER: Do you do that very much?

BEN: Kind of. It depends on if I actually take the time to go and sit at a computer and have the patience to sit there and punch in a million different

things and wait for something to pop up. It's usually, you know, nerve wracking.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever bought anything on the Internet?

BEN: No, I haven't yet. I just usually call them and order it C O D and it gets here in two or three days.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever share information about Web sites with your friends?

BEN: Yeah. I try to get them to get on the good web sites. The ones I know, like, my friend in Oklahoma City, he's in the Intense Gravity's Car Club, so I try and get them to all go look at that and look at his cars and stuff that's up there.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends ever share information about Web sites with you?

BEN: Yeah. He. When he comes down, he tells me all the good web sites to go to and which ones have the best stuff on there.

INTERVIEWER: So it's mainly about cars then?

BEN: There's not many bike Web sites. I mean there's a lot, but it's not as good as cars. I got a bike. I know what I what for my bike. I know what's out there. I don't really need to go look at pictures if I already know what's out there. Looking to see what look best on my car and what to do with the engine to make it go faster. Stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about learning on the Internet.

BEN: There's, like, articles you can read that Carco puts out. Tells you like simple things to modify your engine to increase your hp. On the bike Web sites, it tells you a little pointers that you can do to make, to improve your skills.

INTERVIEWER: What's the first thing that you ever remember reading?

BEN: The picture books probably... like the names of the cartoons on TV would be the thing that I actually remember reading first.

Father: Grandpa and Grandma bought them a whole lot of books when they were small.

BEN: But I don't remember any of them, so it didn't do much good.

INTERVIEWER: But you remember having books with your real young?

BEN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about learning to read?

BEN: Just learning how to pronounce the words syllables and all that and... .

INTERVIEWER: What the remember about learning to right?

BEN: How to write the letters, not make them backwards and everything making words out of them.

INTERVIEWER: How does reading to make you feel?

BEN: Depends on what kind of book you're reading. If it's like a job or something. A book... you don't know what's going to happen next, so you just keep reading to find out.

INTERVIEWER: How does writing make you feel?

BEN: Depends on what type of mood you're in to what you're writing

INTERVIEWER: What advice do you have for others about reading?

BEN: Read what you want to, and not what people want you to read. Find out what you like, and then. . . _If you read stuff that you don't like, you're not going to be interested in reading because you're, like, all this is like, you know, boring, and stuff, so you need to explore what's out there so you could read what you think is interesting to you._

INTERVIEWER: What advice to you have for others about writing?

BEN: Only do it when you have to. Write where people can read it, and they can understand what you wrote, and that's about all.

INTERVIEWER: How would you describe good writing?

BEN: Whatever you think is good. If you like it, then it's good. If you don't like it, then it's not good.

INTERVIEWER: What would you like about something for it to be good writing?

BEN: It would have to be something that I was interested in. Something that grabs my attention.

INTERVIEWER: Do you keep to log book, a journal, or a diary? Do your friends?

BEN: No. Don't have the time.

INTERVIEWER: Look around you and list all the things you see that as writing on them.

BEN: Let's see. Tapes... TV... plastic bag over there... the Bible... the TV Guide... my pants ...my shoes... my shirt... (The following statement is on his shirt: "Still playing with cars.") car wax over there. Let's see, envelopes, more pictures, bag of rocks for the driveway, my hat.

INTERVIEWER: List as many things that you've read today that you can.

BEN: My hat. The stop sign. The pop in there. I read what kind of pop it was. So I won't drink the wrong kind. The clock, I read what time it was.

INTERVIEWER: Have you written anything down today?

BEN: No.

INTERVIEWER: What's the first thing you read in the morning?

BEN: The time. I have to wake up and see what time it is and then it would probably be a stop sign because I don't read anything as I walk through the House. I get dressed. I leave. There's a stop sign right down the street. It's probably the stop sign.

INTERVIEWER: What is the last thing you read at night?

BEN: Probably the clock again. Let's see. It depends on if I eat before I go to bed. If I eat, I read what's on the package of what I eat.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write about a hobby a sport or interest?

BEN: Only during school. Other than that, I don't think I've wrote anything that has to do with anything that I do.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever make lists?

BEN: When I'm buying stuff for my bike, I'd make a list of what I want, and then go back and it changes 50 different times, if I get what I want to. That's the only list that I make.

INTERVIEWER: Can I see one of these lists?

(At this point we go into Ben's room. It is a mess! He finds a scrap of notebook paper stuck between his bed and the wall and hands it to me. It is an annotated drawing of a bike. It is more than a list.)

INTERVIEWER: You ever write plans for anything?

BEN: No. I don't plan much. It comes as it comes.

INTERVIEWER: What about your drawing?

BEN: Oh, yeah, I guess…. I plan like that. I do that a lot. I do that for cars, too.

INTERVIEWER: How would you learn something on your own?

BEN: Trial and error. Keep trying until I get it right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write to help someone else?

BEN: Sometimes, it might work out by accident if I read something in a magazine about a car, and like, some one of my friends, like well, what's wrong with it? I'm, like, well, it said it could be this and this and this, and then it would be, like, you try and fix it and sometimes it might work and. . . Usually it's by accident.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever go to the library?

BEN: Last year. Once a year

INTERVIEWER: Why do you go to the library?

BEN: To return a book that I had to have for school.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any writing materials?

BEN: Somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever write letters?

BEN: no. That's been like five or six years since I wrote a letter.

INTERVIEWER: Would you marry someone who reads and writes?

BEN: I hope. I don't want her to be completely illiterate and stupid.

INTERVIEWER: Would you marry someone who does not read and write?

BEN: I don't do that much. I wouldn't hold that against them if that's the only thing they didn't do. Unless they continuously didn't read the stop sign and get hit by a bunch of cars. Then I'm, like, I ain't paying for this any more.

Third Session

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write for church?

BEN: Yeah. You read during the Bible study, and usually there's sets of questions that they hand out that they'll discuss. You write your answers down to the questions compare it to what they say.

INTERVIEWER: Do you belong to any clubs?

BEN: I ride a bike. I was going to start a car Club, but my friend of the Oklahoma City and that got blown all to heck, and then I sold my truck, and that got blown all to heck. Not anymore.

INTERVIEWER: besides the Bible, what's the most important thing ever written?

BEN: B M X +. Has to be B M X Plus or Dan's competition.

INTERVIEWER: Do your parents care if you read or write?

BEN: As long as I get my schoolwork done, they don't care. Like, well, they can't force me to read, you know. They can sit there and make me stare at the paper, but I don't have to read it. I can sit there and look at it.

INTERVIEWER: How is the printed word different from the spoken word?

BEN: I can't see that there is any difference.

INTERVIEWER: Can we go and look at your garage. I would like to see your car.

BEN: Yeah, OK. It's kind of a mess.

(We walk through the house and out the back door. The garage is separate from the house. Ben's car is outside. It is clean and appears new. Beside it is the shell of an almost identical car. Inside the garage there are tools and car parts scattered here and there. There is a large wooden workbench at the back of the garage, and on it are two automobile maintenance manuals. Above the bench, a couple of Ben's "lists" are hung on the wall. There is also

a picture of the car Ben wrecked and a picture of a custom pickup Ben once owned.)

CHARLIE

<u>Session One</u>

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about yourself. How would you describe yourself?

CHARLIE: I bike and play guitar; also sometimes I type HTML on computers and read. I'm 15, and I have dark red hair.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the things you do everyday.

CHARLIE: I bike, and I play my guitar, get on the Internet, and usually watch a lot of TV.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about books.

CHARLIE: Books are stacks of paper with binding on the left side holding them together; they have words in them that all relate to one storyline usually.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about magazines.

CHARLIE: Magazines are similar to books except there is no story; they are usually used to keep up with current information on a certain topic, like bikes or guitars in my case

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about bikes.

CHARLIE: Bikes are probably my favorite thing to do; they require a lot of balance in my field of the sport,

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about music.

CHARLIE: Music is a pastime; people use it when making it to describe certain feelings they have about things. Music to me is Blink 182, MxPx, Philmore, Santana, and God's Bus mostly.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about playing the guitar.

CHARLIE: Playing guitar is fun; that's about all it really is for me.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your parents.

CHARLIE: My parents are both teachers, and they are very supportive in most of my hobbies. My mom wants me to be a consistent reader like she is. My dad flies control line airplanes as a hobby most evenings

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your room.

CHARLIE: My room is filled with posters of guitar players and bikers, with the occasional car or airplane poster. There is a desk with a computer and my stereo in the back left-hand corner and a TV in the middle of the back of my room. My bed is just right of the door when you walk in.

INTERVIEWER: Tell about your computer.

CHARLIE: My computer I use to look up information on bikes, guitars, music, and anything else I currently am interested in, such as yo-yos right now.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about playing video games.

CHARLIE: Playing video games is usually what I do when it's to hot or raining outside, or if I'm just bored and there's no one to bike with.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your friends.

CHARLIE: Most of my friends are in to the same hobbies as me, mainly biking. Most of them are into the same music as me, not many of them read that much, but some of them do.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write without even thinking about it?

CHARLIE: Probably.

INTERVIEWER: Like when?

CHARLIE: Watching TV or something. Commercials.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of an example?

CHARLIE: Can't think of one.

INTERVIEWER: Are you a reader?

CHARLIE: Yeah. I read often.

INTERVIEWER: Can you explain?

CHARLIE: Read books and stuff, kind of often.

INTERVIEWER: What are readers like?

CHARLIE: People.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe a reader?

CHARLIE: Mom.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read?

CHARLIE: Entertaining.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the only reason?

CHARLIE: Something to do.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read for pleasure?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What do you read for pleasure?

CHARLIE: Magazines and books.

INTERVIEWER: Any specific magazines or books?

CHARLIE: Ride B MX.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read books?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What books have you read?

CHARLIE: (long pause) That would probably take a while.

INTERVIEWER: What books have you read lately?

CHARLIE: A Harry Potter book, that Holes book, I Know What You Did Last Summer, and I'm reading Staying Fat For Sarah Barnes.

INTERVIEWER: When the you read books?

CHARLIE: Usually, right before I go to sleep.

INTERVIEWER: Do you owned books?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How many?

CHARLIE: Like, 10 or 20.

INTERVIEWER: How much time you spend reading books in a week?

CHARLIE: Between half an hour and a few hours.

INTERVIEWER: Where the you keep your books?

CHARLIE: On my desk or by my bed when I'm reading.

INTERVIEWER: What about those books in your closet?

CHARLIE: Oh, yeah. Forgot about those. I already read those.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you get books to read?

CHARLIE: Usually, my parents.

INTERVIEWER: Explain.

CHARLIE: my mom will say, "You should read this," so I read it.

INTERVIEWER: How else?

CHARLIE: A book's laying around, and I find one that looks interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever recommend books to friends?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends ever recommend books to you?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read magazines?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Besides <u>Ride BMX</u>, do you read any other magazines?

CHARLIE: Yeah. <u>Guitar Player</u>, <u>Guitar One</u>, <u>Play Station magazine</u>.

INTERVIEWER: How much time do you spend reading magazines in a normal week?

CHARLIE: Between 10 minutes and an hour.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you get magazines?

CHARLIE: Subscription and Wal-Mart.

INTERVIEWER: What do you do with magazines after you've read them?

CHARLIE: Put them in my magazine stack (gesturing toward a large stack of magazines on his desk).

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever go back and read them again?

CHARLIE: Sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever loan them to friends?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: Do friends ever loan magazines to you?

CHARLIE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read a newspaper?

CHARLIE: Does the comics section count?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What are your favorite comics?

CHARLIE: Frank and Ernest and Dilbert.

INTERVIEWER: What do you like about them?

CHARLIE: They're funny.

INTERVIEWER: When do you read a newspaper?

CHARLIE: When it's there.

INTERVIEWER: How do you get a newspaper?

CHARLIE: It's laying there on the counter.

INTERVIEWER: What happens to the newspaper when you are finished?

CHARLIE: I put it back on the counter.

INTERVIEWER: Do you read for information?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What do you read for information?

CHARLIE: Stuff on the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: How would you get information on guitars?

CHARLIE: Search for "guitars. " Like Yahoo or something.

INTERVIEWER: How else? If you were going to buy a new guitar, how would you decide which one to buy?

CHARLIE: "Guitarnotes.com" has, like, reviews. I could read them. And there's others.

INTERVIEWER: Is that all? Is that the only source you would use?

CHARLIE: Probably not. I'd search for a guitar that I like the looks of, and then find out if there are reviews elsewhere.

INTERVIEWER: Do your parents read?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When your parents read?

CHARLIE: 24-7.

INTERVIEWER: What does that mean?

CHARLIE: 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

INTERVIEWER: What do your parents read?

CHARLIE: Everything.

INTERVIEWER: What does that mean?

CHARLIE: Books, magazines, newspapers, other stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Where do your parents read?

CHARLIE: On the couch, at their desks.

INTERVIEWER: Why do your parents read?

CHARLIE: Pleasure, sometimes for assignment things.

INTERVIEWER: Do you talk about reading with your friends?

CHARLIE: One of them.

INTERVIEWER: What do you talk about?

CHARLIE: Like how far I've read in the book, we read the same books.

INTERVIEWER: Are there things to read in your house?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Where are the reading materials kept?

CHARLIE: About everywhere, mostly in the shelves in the living room.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a favorite time or place to read in your house?

CHARLIE: Not that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a favorite time and place to read and outside of your house?

CHARLIE: Not really

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends read?

CHARLIE: One of them.

INTERVIEWER: What do your friends read?

CHARLIE: Harry Potter books.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends read magazines?

CHARLIE: Probably.

INTERVIEWER: Why do your friends read?

CHARLIE: Something to do, interesting book or something.

INTERVIEWER: Do you talk about reading with your friends?

CHARLIE: One of them.

INTERVIEWER: How do you leave messages for your family?

CHARLIE: A note on the counter, the kitchen counter.

INTERVIEWER: How do people leave messages for you?

CHARLIE: Same way.

INTERVIEWER: Do you notice the words on television?

CHARLIE: Kind of.

INTERVIEWER: Why are there words on television?

CHARLIE: So they will have to talk so much.

INTERVIEWER: When do you have to read? Outside of school?

CHARLIE: When you are trying to get somewhere looking at street signs.

INTERVIEWER: When do you have to write? Outside of school?

CHARLIE: Whenever you're, like, signing something or writing a check or something.

INTERVIEWER: Is reading important to you?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How?

CHARLIE: It's something you have to do. If you didn't know how to read, you couldn't do anything.

INTERVIEWER: Is writing important to you?

CHARLIE: Kinda. Like talking to someone on the Internet?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Do you consider yourself a writer?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: What is a writer?

CHARLIE: A person who writes for living.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever write for pleasure?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use a computer?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: D0 you use the Internet?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How do you use a computer if not for school or work?

CHARLIE: Looking up, like, tablature for my guitar, and making Web pages.

INTERVIEWER: Is making Web pages writing?

CHARLIE: Sort of, I think, so I do write for pleasure!

INTERVIEWER: How much time do you spend using a computer for these things?

CHARLIE: A lot.

INTERVIEWER: About how many hours a week?

CHARLIE: 10 or so.

INTERVIEWER: How often in the you communicate with friends on the Internet?

CHARLIE: Every day.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use e-mail or chat on the Internet?

CHARLIE: Both.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

CHARLIE: To talk to people when they're not here when.

INTERVIEWER: How many people do you talk to?

CHARLIE: Like three.

INTERVIEWER: Who are these people?

CHARLIE: Friends.

INTERVIEWER: How often do you communicate with friends on the Internet?

CHARLIE: Every day.

INTERVIEWER: Compare E-mail and chat to talking on the phone; how is it alike or unlike talking on the phone?

CHARLIE: I never talk on the phone. You have to read and type it in instead of just talking.

INTERVIEWER: Is it easier or harder to use the Internet e-mail or instant messenger than talking on the phone?

CHARLIE: Easier. You can talk to more than one person at a time.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever share information about Web sites or other Internet resources with friends?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What kind?

CHARLIE: Neat sites we found, like with a good tabs.

INTERVIEWER: What are tabs?

CHARLIE: Guitar music.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else?

CHARLIE: To show them something I'm thinking of getting to see what they think about it.

INTERVIEWER: Do your friends ever share information about Web sites or other Internet resources with you?

CHARLIE: Yeah. Download places, places to get new games.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever shop on the Internet?

CHARLIE: Sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about shopping on the Internet.

CHARLIE: I order, like, bike parts and stuff, but not anymore because my bike is perfect.

INTERVIEWER: What is different about shopping on the Internet than shopping in a store downtown?

CHARLIE: It's easier to compare prices and usually a better selection.

INTERVIEWER: What is the first thing you remember reading?

CHARLIE: A little book thing we made in kindergarten.

INTERVIEWER: The first thing you remember is something that you wrote?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about learning to read?

CHARLIE: Nothing, really.

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember not knowing how to read?

CHARLIE: No.

INTERVIEWER: What was the first thing you remember writing?

CHARLIE: That book in kindergarten.

INTERVIEWER: What the remember about learning to write?

CHARLIE: Teacher made us write these little curvy things after the letters.

INTERVIEWER: So it was the physical act of writing that you remember the most?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How does reading make you feel?

CHARLIE: Calm.

INTERVIEWER: How does writing make you feel?

CHARLIE: Calm.

INTERVIEWER: What advice do you have for others about reading?

CHARLIE: Read good things, things that you're interested in.

INTERVIEWER: What is important about being able to write?

CHARLIE: Couldn't really survive too well without it. If you couldn't sign your signature, it couldn't get things, couldn't get information.

INTERVIEWER: What about writing on the computer? How important is that?

CHARLIE:

INTERVIEWER: What advice to you have for others about writing?

CHARLIE: Write about stuff you like.

INTERVIEWER: Describe good writing.

CHARLIE: Writing that pulls the reader in, get into it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you keep a logbook, a journal, or a diary?

CHARLIE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever?

CHARLIE: Yeah. Mom made me keep one for a while.

INTERVIEWER: Why did she do that?

CHARLIE: I guess it was to practice my handwriting.

INTERVIEWER: Do any of your friends keep a logbook, a journal, or a diary?

CHARLIE: No, not that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: Look around you and tell me all the things with writing on them that you see.

CHARLIE: Posters, guitar, water bottle, things on TV, stereo, CDs, TV, music box, books, shoes, amp, everything.

INTERVIEWER: list as many things that you've read today that you can (it is 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning).

CHARLIE: Comics, all the stuff I just said.

INTERVIEWER: List as many things and you can that you have written down today.

CHARLIE: Nothing so far.

INTERVIEWER: What's the first thing you read in the morning?

CHARLIE: The clock.

INTERVIEWER: After the clock, what?

CHARLIE: Usually, my computer screen.

INTERVIEWER: What is the last thing you read it night?

CHARLIE: Usually, a book or something.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write about a hobby, a sport, or an interest?

CHARLIE: Yeah. The things I said before. I wrote my whole Web site about bikes.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you read the guitar and bicycling magazines?

CHARLIE: Guitar magazines so I can get a better guitar, bike magazines so I can see what's going on in the world of bike.

INTERVIEWER: what you mean by the " world of bike?"

CHARLIE: Like the people that bike at the contests and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read or write to help someone else?

CHARLIE: Kind of. Sometimes I write notes down to help my friends; sometimes I look things up for them. One time, Todd wanted me to find tablature for a song.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you find that for him?

CHARLIE: Internet.

INTERVIEWER: How do you learn something on your own?

CHARLIE: Research how you do it.

INTERVIEWER: How do you do that?

CHARLIE: Go to the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever go the library?

CHARLIE: Rarely. Once or twice a year.

INTERVIEWER: Why would you go to the library?

CHARLIE: To find a book to read that I don't have at the House.

INTERVIEWER: Where are the writing materials kept in your room?

CHARLIE: My desk and probably some on my TV.

INTERVIEWER: Where are the writing materials kept in your house?

CHARLIE: On the side of the refrigerator, desks.

INTERVIEWER: Who buys the writing material you use?

CHARLIE: My parents.

INTERVIEWER: Who accuses the writing materials you use?

CHARLIE: My mom.

INTERVIEWER: What is the most important thing that you ever read?

CHARLIE: That's a tough question. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: How is the printed word different from the spoken word?

CHARLIE: You can go back and look at it later. Like a recording. You can go back and look at it.

INTERVIEWER: If you wanted to know what was on TV and a certain time, how would you find out?

CHARLIE: <u>TV Guide</u>.

INTERVIEWER: If you wanted to know when a particular movie was coming to the theater, how would you find out?

CHARLIE: Read the newspaper, or watch TV.

INTERVIEWER: If you were going on a vacation to Wyoming, how would you find out what to do or see?

CHARLIE: Ask people or look up something on the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: If you wanted the board how to repair a car, how would you do it?

CHARLIE: (reaching for a thick Mercury Tracer repair manual on his desk) Car repair thingy, book.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever want to learn the lyrics to songs?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How would you find the lyrics to a song?

CHARLIE: Normally in the CD cover.

INTERVIEWER: Do you usually read the CD covers?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the kinds of things that she did require you to read or write in any way.

CHARLIE: When I bike, I have to look at street signs so I can get to someone's house or to a certain place to ride. Computer, I read all the time. Pretty much everything requires reading. Read the clock to find out what time it is.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about times when reading or writing are fun or pleasurable.

CHARLIE: Most of the time, watching TV, typing, writing programming languages.

INTERVIEWER: What the mean when you say watching TV?

CHARLIE: There is, like, words on the screen; you have to read them.

INTERVIEWER: What the mean when you say programming languages?

CHARLIE: Like, HTML, when I am making my web pages.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think reading and writing are different for your generation?

CHARLIE: Computers are, like, everywhere. People read and write more. Everybody watches TV, all the time.

INTERVIEWER: How would life be different if you couldn't read or write as well as you do?

CHARLIE: I definitely wouldn't have a Web page. I wouldn't have the same bike I have, because I wouldn't have used some of the parts that are good. I wouldn't have most of the things I have the same.

INTERVIEWER: How would your life be different if you could read and write better than you did?

CHARLIE: My web page would be really, really fancy.

INTERVIEWER: What will you read and write when you are an adult?

CHARLIE: Books, probably not write books but read them, magazines, and hopefully going to be able to write programs, you know, like, for computers.

INTERVIEWER: Is that what you want to do, write programs for computers?

CHARLIE: Yeah, I think it is.

INTERVIEWER: How is it important to a computer programmer to be able to read and write?

CHARLIE: You have to be able to write the programming language.

INTERVIEWER: What is a programming language?

CHARLIE: A language you type into a computer to tell it to do certain things.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your Web site.

CHARLIE: My web site 's about flat land biking. It's got a bunch of fancy HTML stuff on it.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about some of the fancy HTML stuff.

CHARLIE: I made the buttons that change when you put the mouse over them; and when you click them, they have little drop down menu to go to links. I have an internal frame a thing; I really don't have to have a whole bunch of frames to get it were a want it to be. There's not really so much information on it; I did it because I like making stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: What gave you the idea to make it?

CHARLIE: Just wanted to make a web site. I'd been playing with HTML for a while.

INTERVIEWER: Explain what HTML is.

CHARLIE: A programming language to use on the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: earlier we talk about your communicating with friends using e-mail and " Instant Messenger." What kind of conversations do you have?

CHARLIE: About bikes and games that we got from the Internet that we're trying to figure out.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the magazines and catalogs that you read about your bike.

CHARLIE: They influenced me a lot to start flat landing. Saw the people in there doing it. It looked like fun, so I read to find out what was going on. Later, they were talking about free coasters, and I read the figure out what that was, and I thought it was pretty neat, so I decided to get one when I got the money.

INTERVIEWER: So most of what you get from the magazines is technical?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What about your guitar and music and your guitar playing? Do you ever read anything about guitar playing?

CHARLIE: I read about, like, techniques and tablature you can find in some.

INTERVIEWER: You said you read two guitar magazines, anything specific that to look for when you get a new one?

CHARLIE: They have tabs, and I look for good songs and articles about bands that I like.

INTERVIEWER: What else can you tell me about things that you read and write?

CHARLIE: I just read what's there. If there's something sitting there, I'll just pick it up and read it. I don't really write that much outside of school, except for typing. I guess typing is writing. In that case, I write a whole lot.

INTERVIEWER: What do you type besides HTML, e-mail, and Internet chat?

CHARLIE: I used to have visual Basic.

INTERVIEWER: Another programming language?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever write letters?

CHARLIE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever send cards or thank you notes?

CHARLIE: I write e-mail thank-you notes.

INTERVIEWER: How do you plan what you're going to do? Do you ever make lists of things?

CHARLIE: Not really.

INTERVIEWER: When you were thinking about how you wanted your bicycle to be, did you ever do any planning?

CHARLIE: Yeah. Looked in catalogs, picked out the parts I wanted, and added them up. Idea that on-line, sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever draw?

CHARLIE: Quite a bit.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of things the you draw?

CHARLIE: Bikes and cars, sometimes guitars. The Blink 182 rabbit guy.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever use the computer to draw?

CHARLIE: Yeah. I do that to when I'm making WinAmp skins.

INTERVIEWER: What are WinAmp skins?

CHARLIE: An interface for the M P 3 program.

INTERVIEWER: What is a M P 3 program?

CHARLIE: A program that plays a M P 3 music that I get from the Internet.

INTERVIEWER: How did you learn to do that?

CHARLIE: Started with somebody else's and edited it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read the instructions for doing things?

CHARLIE: There aren't really instructions for making skins.

APPENDIX B

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: April 5, 2000   IRB #: ED-00-222

Proposal Title: "VERNACULAR LITERACIES OF ADOLESCENT BOYS"

Principal   Pamela Brown
Investigator(s):   Robert Redmon

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited (special population)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature:

Carol Olson

_____   _____April 5, 2000_____
Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance   Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Robert J. Redmon

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: VERNACULAR LITERACIES OF ADOLESCENT BOYS
A MULTI-CASE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Denison, Texas, on June 11, 1946, the son of
Robert and Wanda Redmon.

Education: Graduated from Altus High School, Altus, Oklahoma, in
May 1964; received Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education
from Central State University (UCO) in Edmond, Oklahoma, in May
1969; received Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction
from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, in
December 1995. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of
Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction in
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Experience: Employed as a teacher of secondary English in Winfield,
Kansas, public schools from 1969 to 1971. Employed as a teacher
of secondary English in the Bartlesville, Oklahoma, public schools
from 1971 to present.

Professional Memberships: National Council of Teachers of English,
National Writing Project, Oklahoma State University Writing Project,
National Education Association, Oklahoma Education Association,
Bartlesville Education Association.