Complicating "achievement" in adolescent literacy: Exploring patterns among and differences between higher and l...

Darin Stockdill

Complicating "achievement" in adolescent literacy: Exploring patterns among and differences between higher and lower achieving adolescent readers

Darin Stockdill, Julie E. Learned, Emily Rainey, Natasha Rappa,
Michelle Nguyen, and Elizabeth Birr Moje

University of Michigan School of Education

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Literacy Research Association
Jacksonville, Florida
December 2011

Complicating "achievement" in adolescent literacy:
Exploring differences between higher and lower achieving adolescent readers

In a time when learning is defined in terms of achievement, and adolescent literacy is framed as "in crisis," many scholars of adolescent literacy learning are expanding the discussion by exploring both what it means to *achieve* literacy In this paper, we present a study of literacy achievement and identity among adolescents from one Midwestern urban area using multiple data sources. We approached this work with a strong interest in the interrelationship of identity, culture, and literacy driven by more than a romanticized view of the adolescent; we theorized that a strong self-concept and sense of purpose in reading are necessary companions to strategies and skills for making meaning from and with text. If youth come to literacy tasks without identities as proficient readers or writers, lacking a sense of purpose for text-based learning practices, then it seems unlikely that even technical literacy teaching strategies will be effective in developing comprehension or composition skills.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the differences in literacy practices and values between students identified as higher and lower achieving in school. The youth in our sample are situated in a student population in which average achievement on standardized measures is lower than both state and national averages. Although we are wary of achievement labels, we also recognize that achieving (or not) in school can afford (or constrain) life opportunities. In using the language of *school achievement,* even to the extent of adopting the labels of low and high achievement, our goal is to challenge these notions and to consider how dimensions of literate practice that might seem to reside in the reader or writer may actually be functions of the contexts, texts, and activities youth experience in schools. We hope to problematize the idea that youth are either achieving or not, complicating the discussion about achievement and pushing on notions of struggle and success. More important, we hope to complicate the pathways to achievement. We describe a range of factors that seem to characterize students in lower and higher achieving clusters as part of a discussion on how to best support students in both groups.

To carry out the analysis, we began by using methods of cluster analysis to ascertain patterns in student achievement groups. The analysis produced a two-cluster solution with statistically different mean scores in achievement, as measured by scores on a reading diagnostic assessment and in grade point averages. Interested in further exploring the similarities within and differences between these two groups of students, we then structured our investigation around the following research questions:

- What pattern of literate practices, identities, and values are evident in a group of youth labeled as school achievers in terms of standard achievement measures?
- What patterns of literate practices, identities, and values are evident in a group of youth labeled as low school achievers in terms of standard achievement measures?
- How do the patterns of these two groups compare?

Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Questions about achievement are important in a climate in which standardized achievement has become the official metric for states and the federal government to assess success and growth in literate proficiency. With the advent of the No Child Left Behind (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001), federal and state governments began to focus on reading and math accountability standards for schools, levying sanctions against schools and school districts in which reading and math scores did not sufficiently improve. Prompted by what appeared to be the success of the Reading First legislation, policy makers began to shift attention to the next stages of reading development, arguing that adolescent literacy development was *in crisis*. The *Reading Next* report (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), for example, drew from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data to claim that, "approximately eight million young people between fourth and twelfth grade struggle to read at grade level" (p. 3) in the United States. Similarly, the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) argued that, in general, the practice of reading was in crisis in the nation, reporting from survey data that Americans were reading fiction, poetry, and drama much less than in previous times, and that voluntary reading (of novels) and reading comprehension levels were also decreasing. These reports from influential organizations framed adolescent literacy in the language of crisis and created a sense of urgency among educators.

As a consequence, many middle and high schools increased their efforts to find answers to the question of how to best implement reading instruction in order to improve student achievement. In this climate however, instructional interventions to support adolescent readers often focused on the development of sets of reading skills and strategies intended to help students perform better on reading assessments (Carnegie, 2010; Franzak, 2006; Learned, Stockdill, & Moje, 2010; Palincsar & Schutz, 2010; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009).

Some scholars who examined responses to the crisis discourse, however, argued that the skills-based instruction youth receive may perpetuate low achievement (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; Haycock, 2001; Lee & Spratley, 2010). Indeed, Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez (2009) documented the persistence of deficit models of literacy that locate deficiencies within readers to explain reading difficulty. It is in this context and with these challenges to the *crisis* of adolescent literacy in mind that we began to examine the literacy practices of the youth in our study from a school achievement perspective. As our work from this data set demonstrates (e.g., Moje, 2006; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008), we prefer to view adolescent literacy practices from an assets or strengths perspective, and yet we recognize the power of standard measures of achievement in young people's lives. As a consequence, we began to wonder whether we could discern any similarities or differences in patterns of literacy or social practice if we looked within and across achievement groups and whether documented differences could help us think about how to support youth literacy learning. Our questions build on a history of similar research studies, briefly characterized in what follows.

Research on Differences in Reading and Reading Achievement

Cognitive processes and strategies as mediators of literacy achievement. In the 1970s and 1980s, a line of research studied learners identified as good and poor readers and compared the reading processes they used (e.g., Golinkoff, 1976; Jimenez, Garcia, and Pearson, 1996; Paris and Myers, 1981). In particular, these scholars attended to comprehension monitoring among the children and found that the more skilled readers consistently demonstrated more metacognitive awareness of their own comprehension and reading process. These studies of 'good' and 'poor' readers tended to focus on

process and strategy use, and prompted attention to reading and writing strategy instruction as a way of supporting both struggling and proficient readers as they navigated the demands of increasingly complex texts found in increasingly complex subject-matter domains. These studies, however, did not directly examine the role of topic or content knowledge, motivation and engagement, or social and cultural factors as possible contributors to the differences between good and poor readers.

Knowledge as a mediator of literacy achievement. In contrast to the studies that focused on processes readers employed while reading, Alexander and her colleagues (e.g., Alexander & Judy, 1988; Alexander et al., 1994) investigated the intersection of learner interest with subject matter knowledge and strategic processing in reading, demonstrating that interest in a particular topic or domain (for example, a subject area, peer group, or workplace) correlated with knowledge of that subject matter and shaped both the frequency and quality of strategic processing. Alexander (2005) offered the Model of Domain Learning (MDL), a framework for exploring how reading is a complex, multidimensional process shaped in large part by the domain—or context and activities—in which the reading is situated. Within Alexander's framework, readers are profiled into six categories that represent varying degrees of reader success or difficulty, including highly competent, effortful processor, knowledge-reliant, non-strategic, resistant, and seriously challenged readers. A reader may appear to be highly competent in history class, but resistant in a different domain, such as science class. Alexander and colleagues also position this model as developmental in orientation, taking into account the growth in reader knowledge in particular domains and its impact on readers' interests, skill level, and strategy use over time.

Reading engagement and motivation as a mediator of literacy achievement. Another important consideration is the influence of a reader's engagement and motivation to read on reading skill and strategy use. Researchers from a variety of disciplinary and methodological backgrounds emphasize the importance of understanding motivation and engagement as an aspect of reading comprehension and general school achievement (Baker, 1999; Blumenfeld, et al., 1991; Eccles et al., 1993; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). Indeed, readers' personal interest and investment in a certain domain may motivate them to continue to strive toward greater competency, whereas struggling readers may find it difficult to

maintain interest in a particular domain and thus may be unmotivated to become more competent in that domain (Alexander, 1997).

Identities as mediators of literacy achievement. Related to motivation, value, and self-concept of ability is the idea that identities mediate literacy achievement. A critical and often unacknowledged aspect of adolescents' literacy development may involve helping young people transform the identities of non-reader and non-learner into identities as capable readers and learners (Gee, 1996; Mahiri & Godley, 1998). Some researchers have argued that social identities can position youth not only by shaping how they view, value, and use literacy practices, but also by influencing how others (e.g.. educators, peers, etc.) view them as readers (Ferdman, 1990; McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Educators' expectations for and positioning of adolescent readers, based on interpretations of student identities, may have an impact on how the youth interact with texts (Heron-Hruby, Hagood, & Alvermann, 2008).

Although social identities can position adolescent readers as particular kinds of literate beings, at the same time youth may use literacy practices to enact, claim or develop desired identities. For example, in an ethnographic study the revolved around the literacy practices of five youth, Moje (2000) found that the youth read and wrote raps, poetry, and graffiti to enter and participate in peer communities. Similarly, Finders (1997) described adolescent girls' use of texts as visible, material markers of social status and peer group inclusion. Other studies have documented youths' use of literacy practices to continually develop, construct, and reconstruct academic, social, and cultural identities according to changing contexts and social and academic demands (Ferdman, 1990; Jimenez, 2000; Black, 2006). Indeed, even as youth are socially positioned by others in certain ways, they may use texts, and interactions around texts, to challenge such positioning and assert their own understanding of social identities (Sutherland, 2005). These various positioning, however, may matter in how they think of themselves as readers, writers, or more generally, as literate beings.

Culture, context, and social interaction in literacy achievement. These identity perspectives are bolstered by the work of anthropological and sociocultural theorists who showed that differences in achievement are tied to different ways of interacting with the world as articulated in particular literacy

practices and in cultural models about the role and value of literary in everyday and school life. Heath's analysis of the differing ways with words of white and black working-class families and communities demonstrated that those ways with words were not valued in schools dominated by white, middle class ways of being and engaging with texts. Phillips (1983) documented how the communicative practices of Indian students were understood as lacking—and the students conceived of as deficient—by teachers who did not understand the cultural norms that framed respectful communication practices between adults and children in the Indian group under study. McDermott's (1985, 1987) research detailed the ways that youth from minority groups were routinely positioned, or even labeled outright, as having learning or other disabilities that would make their achievement difficult. These examples are but a few of the many studies of how literacy—and literacy achievement—is situated in and mediated by cultural and social conceptions of what counts as literacy.

These perspectives on how young people achieve school and everyday literacy skill informs the research presented in this paper. From the outset of our work, we took the stance that strategy and skill; knowledge; motivation self-concept, and identity as reader; and context and purpose for reading each contribute to the larger whole of reading practice. Each of these dimension helps young people navigate reading contexts, select and engage with texts, and read and write for meaning. Each of these dimensions, we assert, is a necessary, but not sufficient, ingredient in developing agentic school and everyday literacy practices among young people.

Moreover, Many youth who appear low achieving in school appear to enact sophisticated, competent literacy practices and identities in out-of-school settings (Alvermann, 2001; Heath, 1983; Mahiri, 1990; Moje et al., 2008), raising the question of why these youth do not transfer their skills and practices to school texts. Several studies have demonstrated that many youth are capable of complex thinking but lack self-confidence or are unsupported in these tasks in school domains (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001; Langer, 2001; Lee & Spratley, 2010). These studies, together with studies of effective teachers who scaffold youths' literacy learning (e.g., Gutierrez, 2008; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Lee, 2001; Moll & Greenberg, 1990) suggest that improving literacy

achievement may demand attention to building a sense of efficacy, a strong identity as competent (especially with literacy), and agency to read and write for meaning among adolescents. And yet, the role of agency, self-concept of ability, and identity (Alvermann, 2001; Black, 2006; Eccles et al., 1993; Moje, 2011) remain underemphasized in attempts to improve adolescent literacy achievement.

Guided by these various perspectives on why some youth seem to achieve by school standards and others do not, and framed in particular by sociocultural perspectives on how achievement is culturally mediated and how achievement labels for youth may be artifacts of cultural competence, identities assigned or enacted, and the opportunities youth have to be agents in their own literate practice, we decided to examine data from a sample of young people in one community for any hints to how and why they achieved as they did.

Methods

We conducted these analyses in the context of a longitudinal study of adolescent literacy practices in and out of school conducted from 2004 through 2009. This longitudinal study used a mixed-methods approach to analyze how dimensions such as race, cultural background, socioeconomic status, gender, and school and community contexts moderate and mediate youth literacy practices in ways that influence school achievement and young people's capacities to negotiate increasingly complex literacy demands. The design employed a large-scale literacy practices and motivations survey, a large-scale reading diagnostic, school records, and writing samples across four waves of students recruited from five different school settings in one urban community. Members of the research team administered semi-structured and reading process interviews with a sub-sample of these youth. For this analysis, we sampled students from the larger data pools to explore patterns in and across achievement groupings.

Research Context

We recruited participants from five schools that ranged in size from approximately 280 students at one school to 1,450 students at the largest public school. All of the schools were in one predominantly Latino/a neighborhood within a predominantly African American city. Academic achievement on standardized tests in the community schools, including our research sites, was well below state averages.

Across the state, 60% of students met or exceeded the standards in reading and 52% of students did so in combined English Language Arts (reading with an added writing section). By contrast, in the large high school in our sample, only 33% met or exceeded standards in reading and only 24% did so in English language arts. In the smaller high school, 36% of students met or exceeded reading standards and 30% accomplished this in English language arts.

Sampling and Participants

The data for this study are drawn from the third and fourth waves of the overarching project. In the third wave of the study, approximately 56% of the participants were female, and the large majority of students (72.3 %) self-identified as Latino.[1] Approximately one-fifth of the participants were African-American. We do not include data on individual socioeconomic status in part because the survey included imprecise measurements of socioeconomic status (proxies such as student report of parent education levels, parent employment, and school reports of students' free and reduced lunch status), and in part because the variation in SES in the sample is minimal and thus difficult to detect with these imprecise proxies. Suffice it to say that the vast majority of youth in the sample were from working-class or impoverished homes. All of the participating public schools were Title I schools (not applicable to the private school), and the student eligibility rates for the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program were between 70 and 92 percent.

Age levels of the participants varied by grade cohort sampled in these waves (W1 = Grades 8, 10, and 11;W2 = Grades 9, 11, and 12). The largest proportion of students, 63%, came from the large public high school, which had an enrollment of over 1,500, and over three quarters were in high school in the ninth or tenth grade. Just over 20% of the students were in the seventh grade. There were a small number of 11th and 12th graders included, and these were students who for various reasons were taking courses

[1] Within the Latino students there are multiple cultural and/or national identities, predominantly Mexican, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican, as well as Central American and Caribbean nationalities. This paper is focused on broad cultural identities, and the omission of ethnicity-specific data is not meant to suggest a monolithic cultural identity for Latinos.

with 9th and/or 10th graders. Twenty-six percent, or 211 out of 802, of the students in this wave reported having been born in another country. Of these 211 students, only 3 were not born in Latin America and 174 were born in Mexico. Almost 60% of the students in our wave 3 sample self-identified as Spanish speaking, and over 48% reported being able to both read and write in Spanish.

The demographics of the fourth wave were very similar. Again, 56% of the sample was female and close to 70% self-identified as Latino. African-American students were 22% of the sample in this wave, with the remainder of the sample consisting of 6% white students and 3% other. 61% of this sample reported speaking Spanish and 56.5% stated they could also read Spanish. An important difference in the final wave is that all of the students were in high school, with 38% of the sample in 9th grade, 27% in 11th grade, and 31% in 12th grade.[2]

For this particular study, we developed a sub-sample of students using a two-step cluster analysis based upon reading diagnostic scores and grade point average to explore how students clustered around different measures of academic achievement. This analysis produced two clear clusters, one with higher achievement as measured by the SARA (reading diagnostic) variables and GPA and one with lower achievement. This two-cluster sub-sample included 571 students: the lower achieving cluster had 269 students and the higher achieving cluster had 302 students.

This cluster sample was then used in a series of quantitative analyses using survey and reading diagnostic data. We created a sub-sample to explore patterns within and differences between the higher and lower achieving clusters with qualitative data from interviews. We first identified all of the students in the cluster sample for whom interview data were available (N=58) and then used SPSS to randomly select 30 of these cases, 15 from each cluster, for more in-depth analysis. In this initial random selection of cases for the interview sub-sample, there were four cases that were outliers from the cluster, for example, a very low GPA with higher reading scores, or vice versa. In other words, the cluster analysis did not account for a few students with good grades who had poor reading performance, or vice versa.

[2] An additional 4% of the students were 10th graders. This was not a target grade, but some 10th grade students were in 9th grade classes and so participated in the survey.

With the total cluster sample at 571, these outliers did not have much of an impact on statistical analyses, but for the qualitative analyses, we needed to use interview data from students who most closely fit into the clusters: lower GPA with lower and reading scores, and higher GPA with higher reading scores. From the initial interview subsample, we thus eliminated all cases from the lower cluster with GPA higher than 2.8 and/or reading scores above 62%. For the higher cluster, we eliminated students with GPAs lower than 3.2 and with reading scores for the comprehension passage of less than 70% correct. We then purposively selected four additional cases that met these criteria and included them in the interview sub-sample.

Data Collection Measures and Methods

Surveys. In the initial, large-scale study, we administered surveys on laptop computers at all sites. We gave the survey in either one or two sittings depending upon the schedules of the school. Young people answered survey questions in a point and click format. Survey questions addressed both school and out-of-school literacy practices and values as well as background demographic information. The computer surveys were lengthy, so approximately half of the students were randomly selected to answer subject area questions about each of the four core academic domains (English, math, science, social studies); each student therefore addressed only two of the content areas. The open-ended questions on the written questionnaire asked respondents about favorite classes, favorite books, and reading and writing identities (Are you a reader?; Are you a writer?). We gave respondents who spoke Spanish the opportunity the take the survey in Spanish or English. (See survey samples at www.umich.edu/~moje.)

For this study, we focused on several sets of variables related to literacy attitudes and practices both in and out of school. We relied upon factors from previous factor analyses that combined items tied to similar constructs, such as literacy practices in the math classroom. For example, the following questions are administered as separate items in the survey:

In Math class how GOOD are you at reading your Math textbook?

In Math class how GOOD are you at reading other texts your Math teacher gives you?

In Math class how GOOD are you at learning new Math words/symbols?

In Math class how GOOD are you at taking notes from teacher lectures?

In Math class how GOOD are you at writing out your understanding of a Math problem?

Using factor analysis, we were able to combine these variables into one factor which could be thought of as "How good are you at literacy practices in your math class?"[3] Similar items were factored across sets of variables for the different content areas, resulting in factors for how much students liked the literacy practices in a particular content area, how useful they felt these practices were, and also how important they felt they were. All of these items were initially scored on a 1-7 Likert scale, with representing variations of "not at all" and 7 meaning "very much." Similar variables (not factored) related to out of school literacy practices were used (e.g. How much do you like the reading you do outside of school?) as well as frequency variables for out of school literacy practices.

Reading diagnostic. Working with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) we designed a reading diagnostic tool to assess strengths of and challenges to young people's decoding, fluency, and comprehension, which we administered to the entire sample. This diagnostic tool not only measured students' comprehension, but also offered the benefit of assessing *where* strengths and challenges lay. ETS designed the tool using texts we provided, together with standard texts (e.g., a 3rd-grade level text about a bed with an embedded wake-up system) they used in other administrations of this diagnostic tool. Texts were drawn from district-adopted textbooks and from texts we documented youth reading outside of school. We conducted the diagnostic on laptop computers, which were equipped with headphones and microphones for oral instructions on how to complete the diagnostic (written instructions were also provided on the screen) and for capturing oral reading of the study participants (not included in this analysis).

The exact assessment protocol varied slightly across the waves, but all versions asked respondents to read word lists orally, read naturally occurring content area textbook excerpts orally and

[3] All factor items loaded at least at the .700 level and had a Cronbach alpha of at least .8.

silently, and to orally identify the main ideas of the passage. In Waves 3 and 4, we included measures of prior knowledge (a true/false prediction activity) reading comprehension (a true/false post-reading activity), vocabulary knowledge (synonym replacement activity), main idea comprehension (oral response to the question, 'What would you say is the main idea of the passage?") interest measure ("What did you find most interesting about the passage?"), and what we loosely call "metacognition" (i.e., "What, if anything, did you find confusing or challenging in the passage?").

Interviews. From the larger sample of students who participated in the survey and reading diagnostic, researchers recruited volunteers for semi-structured and reading process interviews. We observed classrooms, worked with students as opportunities arose, wrote field notes, introduced the study, and then asked for volunteers for interviews. The interviews took place in the school at times chosen by the students and the researchers and lasted from 20 to 40 minutes on average. Students who preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish were given that opportunity. Interviews were tape recorded digitally, downloaded onto a computer, and then transcribed as close to verbatim as possible (including pauses, mispronunciations, speaking mistakes, laughter and other conversational elements). We first administered semi-structured interviews, followed by reading process interview, usually on a different day (see www.umich.edu\~moje for interview protocols).

The semi-structured interview protocol gave participants the opportunity to explore their reading interests and knowledge resources in greater depth than the survey. Participants were asked to select the material they would most likely read from a large collection of cover shots of books, magazines, websites, and other print resources developed using youth recommended texts. The interviewers also asked the students to talk about any type of material they liked to read which was not pictured. Researchers also asked youth about their writing practices, technology use, and social networking through reading and writing. Based on early findings from Waves 1 and 2, which indicated that survey respondents had a particular distaste for the subject area of history and the social studies, we also included set of questions about the social studies on interviews in Waves 3 and 4.

Data Analysis

Using survey and reading diagnostic data from Wave 4 of the ALD study, a two-step cluster analysis was carried out to explore how students grouped around grade point average and reading diagnostic scores for passage comprehension. The analysis produced two clear clusters emerged and, using the two clusters as a grouping variable, we set up contingency table analyses to look for differences in categorical variable groupings across the clusters. We also used the clusters as grouping variables for a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) looking for cluster differences across a range of survey variables related to literacy attitudes and practices. To explore the patterns within and differences between the higher and lower school- achieving clusters, we established a sub-sample of students including all participants in the cluster who had participated in interviews (N=58). Out of this initial sample, we randomly selected 15 students from each cluster, and we then analyzed the interview data from these 30 students using constant comparative analysis (CCA) (Strauss, 1990).

Our overall approach to these analyses was person-centered as opposed to variable-centered, as we looked at different at different scales to explore how students in the two clusters were different, but also at how they were similar. In our qualitative analysis, we focused our attention on participant responses to a few key interview questions, including the following:

- Which of these texts would you choose to read, and why? (as student looks at pictures of a wide sample of book and magazine covers)
- Do you see yourself as a reader?
- Does your family see you as a reader?

Findings

Two clearly different groups of students emerged in the cluster analysis, one group with higher levels of academic and reading achievement, and another group with lower levels of academic and reading achievement. Although all the youth in our study read outside of school and valued schooling in general terms, our overall analyses suggest that students in the higher achieving cluster (what we identify as the "school achiever" [SA] cluster) valued reading texts both in and out of school more than did

members of what we have labeled the low school achiever (LSA) cluster. School achievers also were more likely to identify as readers. Students in both groups were able to articulate a sense of purpose for reading the books they chose, however, youth in the school achiever cluster were more likely to read texts that dealt with topics and concepts beyond their immediate experience. Table 1 presents an overview of the findings within and across the clusters.

Table 1. Key Findings: Differences Between Higher and Lower Cluster

Low School Achiever (LSA) Cluster	**School Achiever (SA) Cluster**
Place less value on reading in school	Value reading in school
Place less value on reading out of school	Value reading out of school
Less likely to see themselves as readers, more likely to self-identify as poor readers	See themselves as readers, notably good readers
Reported reading for more functional and immediate purposes, more connected to texts	Talk about text suggested reading centered around ideas and concepts more removed from daily lives
Tended to read choice texts with purpose	Read choice texts with purpose

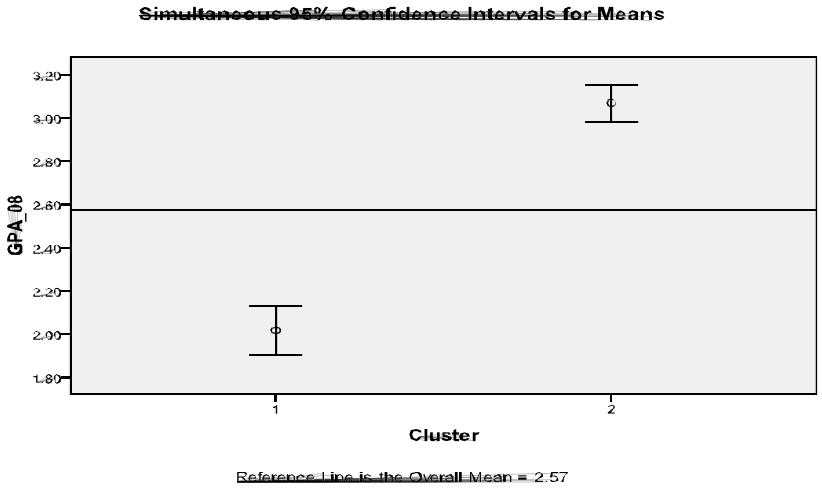
Cluster Analysis Results

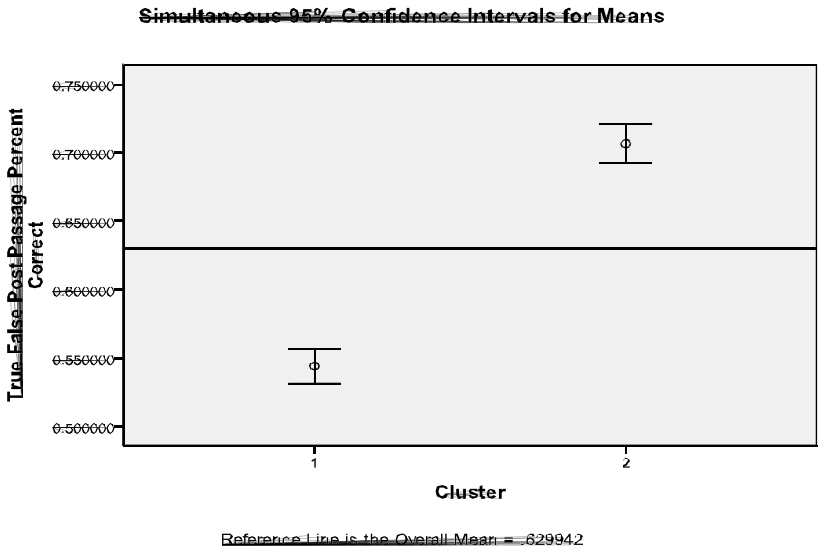
The students in the SA cluster had a mean grade point average of 3.07, compared to an average GPA of 2.02 for students in the lower cluster. With respect to reading, students in the higher cluster correctly answered, on average, 71% of the comprehension questions given after reading a passage of academic text. They also answered an average of 78% of integration, or cross-text comprehension, questions encountered after reading three passages. In contrast, the students in the LSA cluster answered an average of 54% of the single reading passage questions and only 30% of the cross-text integration questions. Students in the SA cluster thus demonstrated higher school achievement and comprehension of academic text (see Table 2.)

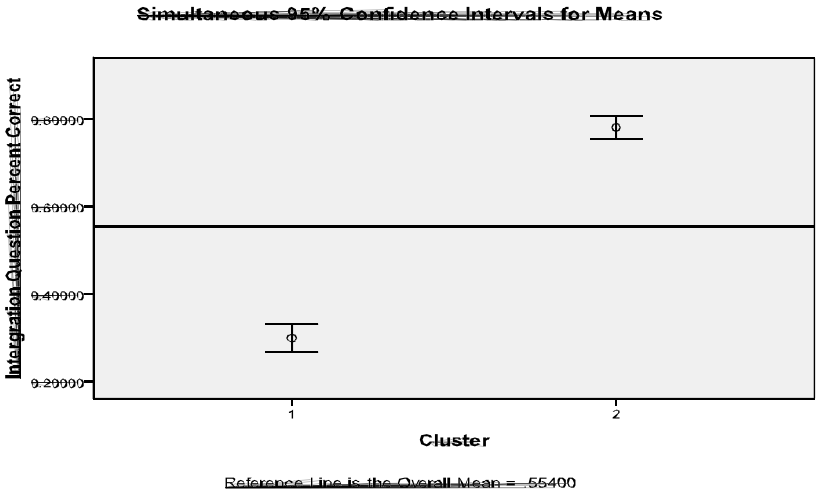
Table 2. Achievement indicators of the two clusters.

Cluster	**N**	**Mean GPA_08**	**True/False Passage % Correct - Mean**	**Integration Question % Correct- Mean**
1 – LSA	269	2.02	54	30
2 - SA	302	3.07	71	78
Sub-sample	571	2.57	63	55

As demonstrated in the diagrams below, there was no overlap between the two clusters with respect to the confidence intervals for the mean scores for GPA and reading diagnostic variables, meaning that the statistical differences between the two groups were clear and significant.







Once established through the cluster analysis, these clusters provided groups for further comparative analyses exploring how else these two groups differed. Using contingency table analyses, we investigated whether or not students in the two clusters had significantly different distributions across Michigan Merit Exam passing groups. Not surprisingly, significant differences were found in all MME subtests ($p < .000$), with higher proportions of students in the higher achievement cluster passing the MME subtests (see Table 3).

Table 3. Differences in state achievement test scores between clusters.

% of cluster who passed	N	Cluster 1 – LSA	Cluster 2 - SA	Pearson chi-square
MME Social Studies	310	36	77	.000
MME Science	199	4.7	32	.000
MME Math	196	2.3	22.7	.000
MME Reading	179	13.9	50	.000
MME Writing	198	0	23.5	.000

Thus, being in the higher achievement cluster strongly predicted a greater likelihood of each of the MME subtests. In addition, contingency table analyses demonstrated that girls were over-represented in the SA cluster at statistically significant levels ($p = .007$). Females were 56.1% of the overall cluster sample, and they made up 61.1% of the students in the SA cluster. 58% of the total number of girls (N=314) were in the SA cluster compared to 47.2% of the total number of boys (N=246); being a girl thus predicted a higher likelihood of being in the SA cluster.

Analyses of variance with the clusters as grouping variables using data from the literacy survey revealed further differences. We found that students in the SA cluster appeared to place more value on reading both in and out of school. These school achieving students were also more likely to see themselves as readers and, notably, as good readers, when compared to the LSA group. In addition, SA cluster students' talk about text suggested that their reasons for reading revolved around concepts and experiences somewhat removed from their everyday lives, whereas youth in the LSA clusters named purposes for reading that were more functional and immediate in orientation and with which they could personally identify. Overall, it appeared that, students in the SA cluster were more consistently able to read different texts with a sense of agency and purpose, whereas youth in the lower achieving cluster read strategically and with clear purpose and agency only when reading texts they chose for themselves.

Values Associated with Literacy In and Out of School

Literacy in school. We carried out an additional set of analyses of variance using the clusters as the grouping variable, and comparing them across a series of factor scores which grouped sets of related variables from the survey together. We compared the two groups of students with respect to the utility and importance they assigned to classroom literacy practices in the content areas of English, science, math, and social studies. We also compared their self-assessments of literate proficiency in these areas as well, looking at factor scores from combined items using the phrase, "How good are you at?" followed by different classroom literacy practices. As represented in Table 4, students in the SA cluster tended to view the literacy practices in their English, Math, and Social Studies classes as being more important and useful than did the students in the lower achieving cluster. In addition, students in the higher cluster reported feeling more proficient in the literacy tasks in all of the content areas than did those in the lower cluster. It was interesting to note that there was no significant difference between the two groups with respect to utility and important of literacy practices in the science class, a finding that we cannot explain with certainty, but which, based on interview and other data, we suspect has to do with all students feeling challenged by science concepts and scientific literacy practices.

Table 4. In-School Values for Literacy

In-School Value Factors	LSA Mean	SA Mean	P-Value
Factor for utility and importance of literacy practices/learning in English	-.276	.348	0.000
Factor for How GOOD at English literacy tasks/learning	-.193	.128	0.007
Factor for utility and importance of literacy practices/learning in Math	-.134	.200	0.007
Factor for How GOOD at Math literacy tasks/learning	-.301	.289	0.000
Factor for utility and importance of Social Studies literacy tasks/learning	-.083	.170	0.045
Factor for How GOOD at Social Studies literacy tasks/learning	-.260	.264	0.000
Factor for utility of Science literacy tasks/learning	-.061	050	0.404
Factor for importance of Science literacy tasks/learning	-.042	100	272
Factor for How GOOD at Science literacy tasks/learning	-.201	.285	0.000

Values for literacy out of school. In conjunction with our analysis of in-school literacy variables, we also explored how students in the two clusters differed in their how they valued their out-of-school literacy practices. We used ANOVA with the clusters and individual survey items (not factors in this case) as the comparison variables (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Literacy Values Out of School.

Variable	LSA Mean	SA Mean	P-Value
How GOOD are you at reading them the things you read outside school?	5.03	5.69	0.000
How much do you LIKE to read them the things you read outside school?	4.00	4.99	0.000
How IMPORTANT is it to you to read the things you read outside school?	4.26	4.76	0.001
How USEFUL is the reading you do outside school, compared with your other activities outside of school?	4.29	4.91	0.000
Graffitti or tagging on paper (how often written outside school last month)	3.30	2.19	0.000
Music lyrics (words to music) (how often written outside school last month)	2.82	2.08	0.000
Read for pleasure (how often outside school last month)	2.78	3.51	0.000
Play video or computer games (how often outside school last month)	4.30	3.75	0.002
Novels, short stories, picture books, plays (how often read outside school last month)	2.84	3.52	0.000

Table 5. Time Spent in Out of School Literacy Practices

Variable	LSA Mean	SA Mean	Mean Total	P-Value
Read for pleasure (how often outside school last month)	2.78	3.51	3.16	0.000
Graffitti or tagging on paper (how often written outside school last month)	3.30	2.19	2.71	0.000
Music lyrics (words to music) (how often written outside school last month)	2.82	2.08	2.43	0.000
Play video or computer games (how often outside school last month)	4.30	3.75	4.01	0.002

As with school-based literacy practices, students in the SA cluster reported feeling better at reading outside of school compared to those in the LSA cluster, and they also tended to place more value and see more importance in the reading they did outside of school. In addition, they reported higher frequencies of reading for pleasure outside of school. On the other hand, students in the LSA cluster reported higher average frequencies of writing graffiti or tagging, writing music lyrics, and playing video or computer games outside of school. This difference suggests that all of the students are engaged in some sort of literate practice, but that the nature of their activity is different in ways that have

implications for literacy achievement as measured by schools. What is important, however, is that all the youth were reading and writing and valued their literacy practices.

Reading Identity

During Semi-Structured Interviews, researchers asked a sub-sample of 30 youth across the higher and lower clusters a variety of questions about their literacy practices, values, and identities. One question asked, "Do you see yourself as a reader?" Table 6 summarizes their responses to this question:

Table 6. Interview Responses to Self as Reader Question

Are you a reader?	LSA Cluster	SA Cluster
Yes	2	11
No	12	2
Sometimes	1	2

More youth in the SA cluster identified as readers (11 out of 15) than youth in the LSA cluster (2 out of 15). Youth who identified as readers tended to be stronger readers, as measured by our reading diagnostic, and better overall school achievement as measured by GPA, than youth who declined reader identities in the interview. These data suggest that whether or not youth identified as readers may indeed have been related to their reading skill. Thus, the question of reading identity is likely important in considering ways struggling readers can best be supported in schools. That said, these data also beg attention to the role of skill in literacy identity enactment and to the ways that teachers might support skill development as a way of encouraging identities as readers.

After finding that consistent patterns of reading identity were evident within cluster groups, we next examined youth's reasons for taking on or declining reading identities. By analyzing the youth's responses to the question, Are you a reader?, we documented five criteria for *being a reader*, and those criteria were consistent across both clusters. Taken in concert, these criteria suggest that a common understanding of what it meant *to be a reader* existed among youth in this sample.

1. Read the "right" texts
2. Read often
3. Read well—demonstrate reading skills and knowledge
4. Read for enjoyment, not only because one has to read for school or work
5. Be seen or recognized as a reader by others

It bears noting that participants did not all articulate the same five criteria. Moreover, when a given criterion was mentioned, not all youth characterized it the same way. That is, for one young person, reading well (i.e. having reading skills and knowledge) might be the rationale for why she identified as a reader, and for another youth, reading well may not be reason enough to identify as a reader. Therefore, in articulating these five criteria for being a reader, we do not mean to imply that every youth shared the exact same understanding of what it meant to be a reader. It appears that multiple notions of reading identity existed among the youth, but the data revealed that some notions about what it meant to be a reader surfaced more often than others. Our primary aim is to explicate what, from the youths' perspectives, what counted being a reader. The following transcript selections serve as exemplars for ways students said it was possible to be a reader. In what follows, all youths' names are pseudonyms; the spelling and punctuation of youths' responses remain intact. The first excerpt illustrates the dimension of *reading the right texts* as a criterion for being a reader:

Youth in Higher Achieving Cluster (female)	*Youth in Lower Achieving Cluster* (female)
Interviewer: Do you consider yourself a reader? Youth: ….Yeah. Interviewer: Yeah? Why are you hesitant to say that? Youth: Because I'm not reading the… right stuff, I guess.	Interviewer: Do you see yourself as a reader? Youth: Not really. Interviewer: No? How come? Youth: I don't really like to read a lot unless it's poetry…

These youth and others discussed the idea that being a reader meant reading the *right* kinds of texts. Across the clusters, responses indicated that the right texts were texts typically read in school (e.g., novels, non-fiction books, text books). Texts that did not signal *reader* appeared to be texts typically unrelated to school or texts read infrequently in school (e.g., websites, comic books, cookbooks, emails, phone texts, poetry). In the exemplars, the higher achieving youth claimed a reading identity, even if hesitantly, while she acknowledged not reading the right texts. The lower achieving youth, however, did not identify as a reader because she was not reading the right texts; from the youth's perspective, reading poetry did afford a reading identity. Perhaps she did not believe reading poetry is real reading because

poetry is not extended prose, or perhaps she was not offered much poetry to read and thus developed a sense of reading as involving texts she encountered regularly. What is clear is that the lower achieving youth, along with the higher achiever, has a sense of the *right* texts established by some person or entity outside of themselves. Although the same criterion for being a reader was at play in both exemplars, the lower achieving youth appeared to be less agentic in countering school-based conceptions of the right text in order to claim a reading identity than the higher achieving youth.

The second excerpt illustrates two other criteria the youth reported for being a reader: *enjoying reading* and *being seen as a reader*:

Youth in Higher Achieving Cluster (female)	*Youth in Lower Achieving Cluster* (female)
Interviewer: Okay. Um, do you see yourself as a reader? Youth: Yes. Interviewer: You do. Why? Youth: Um, because reading is one of the things that I enjoy. Um, probably in my top ten things that I enjoy doing.	Interviewer: Do you see yourself as a reader? Youth: Um not really cause like most of my friends don't even know I like to read most often cause like I hardly read to them but like when I'm alone or something then I read.

Enjoying reading and being seen as a reader appeared to be criteria for identifying as a reader among youth in both clusters. In this exemplar, the higher achieving youth claimed a reader identity without hesitation because she enjoyed reading, indeed reading was one of the "top ten things" she enjoyed doing. The lower achieving youth also enjoyed reading, but because his "friends don't even know" he liked to read, the youth declined a reader identity. Later in the interview, the lower achieving youth reported that, similar to his friends, his family did not know he liked to read either. Why the youth's friends and family did not know he enjoyed reading is unclear in this interview transcript. Did he mask his reading practices because reading is somehow perceived unfavorably, or did his community deliberately or unconsciously fail to notice his reading? What is clear, however, is that the lower achieving youth seemed attuned to a non-reader identity ascribed by others even though he enjoyed reading, and the higher achieving youth does not mention how others perceive her as a reader. This set of

exemplars illustrates not only the importance of enjoying reading in assuming reading identities, but also the implications for youth, particularly lower achieving youth, who are not viewed as readers.

In addition to *reading the right texts*, *enjoying reading*, and *being seen as a reader*, youth reported that *reading often* and *reading with skill* were also ways of being a reader. Notably, these five criteria for being a reader were common across clusters. However, higher achieving youth appeared to have more agency to enact reading identities even if they failed to meet a criterion. Lower school achievers, though they may have reported reading various texts, establishing purposes for reading, and liking to read, often did not claim reader identities. If enacting reading identities is associated with reading achievement, which it is in this study, then supporting struggling readers to develop or assume literate identities is likely a crucial avenue for school literacy development. Bolstering this assertion, we found in a previous analysis of these data (Moje at al. 2011) that self-concept of reading ability, similar to the identity criterion of believing one reads with skill, predicted reading ability as measured by performance on the reading diagnostic. These findings suggest that believing one can read well may help enable reading development.

Text Choices and Text Complexity

In addition to examining identity as reader in the semi-structured interviews, one of our first analytic moves was to investigate whether there were any notable differences in the nature of texts youth in the different clusters chose to read. Table 7 presents a list of the text choices by text type and cluster.

Table 7. Text Choices

Cluster 1: Low School Achiever Cluster	Cluster 2: School Achiever Cluster
News media	
Newspaper articles	*Newspaper articles*
Books	
Hair Rules *Hair and Makeup (2)* *Frida Kahlo* *The Outsiders* *Soccer*	*Aaliyah* *The Bible* *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* *The Coldest Winter Ever* *The Da Vinci Code* *Frida Kahlo* *Harry Potter (any in series)* *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* *The Outsiders* *The Skin I'm In (3)* *When I was Puerto Rican*
Magazines	
Latina *Anime* *Cosmo Girl (2)* *Lowrider Magazine* *M -Music Secrets (2)*	*Anime (magazine)* *Cosmo Girl*
Manga and Graphic Novels	
Fruits Basket *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*	*Fruits Basket*
Other	
East Bay	e-mail

This listing of text choices by broad text type suggests that the SA cluster members read more books than did the LSA cluster, whereas the LSA cluster read more magazines than the SA cluster. IN addition, the types of books varied across the clusters, with the LSA cluster reading more informational texts (e.g., *Hair Rules)* and the SA cluster members read more novels (e.g., *The Coldest Winter Ever, The Skin I'm In,* and *The Outsiders*, all among the most popular books nominated by all youth on the surveys across all waves). This difference offers one possible explanation for differences in school achievement: Stanovich (1986) documented what he termed "Matthew effects," or the phenomenon that regular reading begets reading skill because world and word knowledge is built in the process of reading (and in turn, skilled reading begets more frequent reading). Guthrie (need citation) posited that novel reading is more likely to produce these Matthew effects because novels are longer and readers are more likely to engage in

sustained reading of a novel over time than they would with informational reading, which tends to occur in smaller bursts. Perhaps a simpler explanation is that novels are more like many of the texts privileged in school and on standard school achievement measures. The youth who read school-like texts are therefore more likely to be successful by school achievement measures (cf. Moje et al., 2008).

That said, one question often raised about youths' out-of-school reading and writing is whether the texts read or produced are as complex as those demanded in school and on achievement measures. Our analyses of the complexity of these texts suggests that in some cases the informational texts youth in the LSA cluster read were actually more complex than many school texts, as measured by the Coh-Metrix tool (Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004) than the novels youth typically read. The *Hair Rules* book, for example, was rated as equivalent with Grade 11 texts and was also designated as more complex on a range of other Coh-Metrix measures, such as semantic and syntactic density. Even a cursory review of the excerpt provided here reveals the complexity of the text (although we must acknowledge that the youth in the study may have spent more time with photographs or hair style tips than with texts such as these in the book):

From *Hair Rules*

> In the early 1970s, women of all races gloried in their natural hair texture. Self-pride flourished during that liberating, self-expressive time. By the late 1970s, however, the hair and cosmetic companies, having lost money, began an assault on the psyches of women and embarked on extensive advertising campaigns lionizing conservative, straight-haired styles. Their success, a return to the primacy of straightened hair, was accompanied by an even more disturbing trend: workplace discrimination against women of color who wore natural or braids. Not surprisingly, the right to wear one's clean, coiffed hair in an attractive, non-Eurocentric fashion had to be fought for all the way to the Supreme Court.
>
> In any battle there are casualties, as there were for the victors of hairstyle choice. Many ambitious professional omen remained convinced that their career mobility would be eclipsed if they didn't conform to European standards of hair beauty. To this day, when women in high-profile positions go into a meeting with straight, styled hair, it may be because they feel more put together and secure that they'll be taken seriously by their male counterparts. I'll be the first to admit that there is truth to that: Straight hair can convey a stern, no-nonsense, dare I say "I-can-be-a-bitch-if-I-have-to" look. The same reservations about career mobility hold true for black women and braids in the workplace. It has only been since the 1990s that professional women of color have sported braids.

One challenge in analyzing the complexity of the various texts is that texts can range in aspects of complexity, making it difficult to assess, in any global way, one set of texts as more or less complex than another. Furthermore, many of the texts youth read outside of school contained images that live in relationship with the print text; Coh-Metrix, however, is not able to account for images. We have yet to employ other image-based analyses (e.g., Kress, 1996; 2003) to examine the complexity of the range of texts. Even when we do, however, it will be difficult to know how to compare texts that may be vastly different. Perhaps more interesting than the question of whether chosen texts differed in complexity is the observation that even when the youth in the analysis chose the same texts (e.g., a biography of Frida Kahlo), they read for different purposes.

Reading for abstraction and establishing purpose

During interviews, youth were asked discuss texts they chose to read, as opposed to school-assigned texts. We found that students in the higher cluster tended to talk about text in abstract ways that were removed from their everyday lives, whereas students in the lower cluster tended to talk about text in concrete or personal ways that were connected to their immediate, lived experiences. Youth in the higher cluster consistently established purposes for reading with texts they chose as did many youth in the lower cluster. In the following exemplar a student in the higher achieving cluster explained that her interest in learning about various cultures—beyond her own culture—was a reason for choosing a text. The lower achieving youth described her interest in a choice text, *El Latina,* in concrete terms that were immediately relevant to the culture with which she identified.

Youth in Higher Achieving Cluster (female)	*Youth in Lower Achieving Cluster* (female)
Interviewer: Ok tell me about [*When I Was Puerto Rican*], what made you choose that? Youth: Before like I am really interested in Hispanic artists and stuff and I saw her book one time but I wasn't able to get her book. And I was kind of wondering I want to read her book too. … Youth: …I saw the title of the book at it said how like they live through her life and stuff like that and how she grew up. And like with her like Puerto Rican and Mexicans they're different cultures but they have similarities as well but I want to learn about different cultures as well.	Interviewer: *El Latina*? And have you actually ever read that? Youth: Not really, but it seems really interesting … Youth: It has right here like, first it's about my culture. And I really enjoy my culture. I think it's a really good culture. And it talks about the hair and outfits and all that. I would really read that.

These exemplars illustrate that while the higher achieving youth established a purpose for reading that was not immediately connected to her daily experiences—learning about different cultures—the lower achieving youth articulated an interest in reading about her particular culture. Both youth, however, established purposes for reading their chosen texts.

In another example, a student in the higher achieving cluster and a student in the lower achieving cluster each selected *Esparanza Rising*. In the following exemplars, they discussed why they chose the novel.

Youth in Higher Achieving Cluster (female)	*Youth in Lower Achieving Cluster* (female)
Youth*: …(Esparanza Rising)* tells the story of a small girl. Some kids, like how they live in Mexico, some of them they could have went through that. So it could be telling you about some of the history back then.	Youth: …it shows you like, what she's going through and how she like, experiences and like, you read it, and now you like, when you go through that problem, you know what to do, how to handle it.

In each case, the youth was attracted to the text in order to learn from the protagonist's struggle, but the higher achieving youth employed an historical lens to interpret the text, whereas the lower achieving youth used personal problem-solving lens to interpret the text. Both youth established purposes for reading, but they articulated different reasons—one more abstract and one more concrete—for choosing the same text.

Although youth in both groups generally established purposes for reading texts they chose, students across clusters tended not to set purposes for reading school texts, with the exception of some of the highest achieving youth. When youth set purposes for reading that are deeply personal or related to their lives—be it with school or choice texts—it is an effective reading practice. However, when youth do not or cannot *also* establish purposes less immediately relevant to their lived experiences, their reading practice repertoires remain under developed. In the course of school reading, youth undoubtedly encounter and need to make sense of texts that represent ideas, experiences, and perspectives that are outside everyday lives. Helping students learn to both expand their spheres of relevance and set a variety of purposes for reading are important, perhaps especially for youth who have difficulty with school reading.

Conclusions and Implications

Our analyses demonstrate that students across both clusters were reading and writing on a regular basis, that they understood and used the texts they read to achieve various goals in their own lives. They enjoyed the reading and writing they did, found it generally valuable, and they were able to read texts they cared about with purpose and agency.

Despite these similarities, we also found that students in the school achiever cluster appeared to value reading both in and out of school and to see themselves as readers and, notably, as good readers. In addition, their talk about text suggested that their reasons for reading revolved around concepts and experiences somewhat removed from their everyday lives, whereas youth in the lower achieving clusters named purposes for reading that were more functional and immediate in orientation and with which they could personally identify.

As we reflect on our findings, we worry that risk reproducing the very deficit model (see Gutiérrez et al., 2009 we seek to undo because our analysis rests on what readers are thinking about and doing with texts and literacy in various contexts, rather than focusing on the texts and contexts in which youth are reading and writing. To challenge deficit perspectives, we highlight three key points from our findings.

First, all of these youth would be likely to fall into the *struggling reader/writer,* or, at best, *basic reader/writer* category as a result of standard measures of the achievement. And yet all were reading and writing for important purposes in their lives. They all valued reading and writing, but valued it at different levels. They all read and wrote, but only some identified as readers and writers, often because they did not identify as competent. All read the texts of their lives with purpose and agency, but the school achievers seemed more likely to be able to read for reasons removed from their everyday experience, which we argue is a skill valued in school and on achievement measures. Thus, the youth identified as *school achievers* in our study, when compared to low school achievers, tended to demonstrate more fully four critical dimensions of literate practice: knowledge and skill, self-concept of ability, a broad sense of purpose when reading a range of texts, and identity as reader. These four dimensions, taken together, illustrate how students are agentic readers.

This observation about identity and agency underscores the second point that challenges the idea that reading and writing struggle lives inside the individual: The young people's talk about identity as reader in this analysis was as much about being seen as a reader as it was about seeing themselves as readers. In other words, the positioning of young people as readers and writers is a social process. A sense of self is not constructed within an individual alone; rather, self and identity are constructed—produced even—in social interaction. As our data suggest, the assignment of achievement labels communicate to youth a sense of self as *good* or *bad* reader (or writer) and conceptions of what counts as *reading the right texts*. The youth in this study appeared to take up and live out the literacy identity positions available to them.

That said, it is difficult to separate out relationship between performance, self-concept of ability, and the value young people assign to literacy tasks in and out of school. Youth may place more value on reading when they are better at it, and they may be better at it if they value if more and thus do it more. In any case, important patterns demonstrating that students with low academic achievement do value their everyday reading, read with agency and purpose in certain circumstances, and sometimes see themselves as readers, although less frequently than those with better academic and reading achievement. It appears

that there is something at work between the interactions of achievement and self-concept of ability and utility (Eccles et al, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992).

Third, although we documented a key school achievement difference between those youth reading purposes are more abstract and those who are inclined to read (and write) for immediate or functional life purposes, we do not view the latter as a deficit residing in the youth. Instead, we see the inclination to read for immediate purposes as a reasonable way of approaching texts in life. We suggest that those who read for more abstract purposes are not necessarily more skilled readers or thinkers, but may simply have had different opportunities to read. More important, their ways with words are the ways valued in school (see Heath, 1983). That youth can read for their own purposes should be encouraging to literacy educators and policy makers; rather than focusing on teaching strategies, which many of the youth we studied appeared to know (Moje et al., 2011), we suggest that we instead engage youth in building the knowledge and agency necessary to expand their purposes for reading. Texts such as the *Hair Rules* excerpt we included in the Findings section can be used as starting places because these texts both serve immediate everyday purposes and provide the fodder for historical, sociological, and anthropological analyses that help youth to see how their everyday purposes are embedded in larger social, historical, and cultural forces.

It is important to note that students in the low school achievement cluster did read or write with agency and purpose when given a choice of what to read or write. This finding suggests that educators need to provide opportunities for these students to select texts that are challenging but connected to areas of interest and strength. Although there is currently a strong push in the field to explore the cognitive and strategic resources that students bring to play as they read, it is also important to consider the person, the purposes, and the context for literacy that shape how students approach literate practice. How students see themselves, and how they see literate practice, is clearly associated in some way with their ability to obtain academic success. Students who read well and get better grades also see themselves as more competent, place more value and utility in literate practice, and also tend to read with a greater range of independent purposes.

Although there may be a chicken and egg dynamic at play here – it is difficult to establish, for example, if self-concept as a reader develops because of reading skill, enables reading skill, or both- it is important to remember that these factors are at play. How young people see themselves and literate practice does appear to matter, and so paying more attention to what we communicate to young people when we assign these achievement labels is critical. If we can support and promote reader identities among all students, and if we can help all young people learn to set and develop their own purposes for reading, and if we can reshape the contexts and purposes for reading and writing across multiple school domains, we might see more youth move into the *school achiever* cluster without ever having to teach them another literacy strategy. In other words, we assert that developing youths' literacy skills and strategies is necessary but not sufficient, and nor is it a prerequisite for growth as a literate person or recognition as a *school achiever.* Instead, those who care about young people's literacy learning need to know more about how the dimensions of agentic literacy come together (strategies and skills; knowledge; motivation, self-concept of ability, and identity as reader/person; and purpose for reading) and how the texts we choose and the contexts we orchestrate for literacy learning can support the growth of those agentic literacy dimensions.

Thus, we argue that adolescent literacy researchers, educators, and policy makers should turn at least some attention to how to support youth in developing and maintaining a sense of agency in literate practice, a sense that they can assign their own purposes for literacy, ask questions and challenge texts, and use text to make their voices heard in a variety of domains. However, more research needs to be done on understanding how to support youth in developing and maintaining a sense of literate identity and agentic literacy practices that both serve their needs *and* their school achievement. For example, by building upon youths' literate practices, educators could expand the notion of what it means to be a reader, for both educators and youth. Our findings also point to a need for more research on how to help youth assign their own purposes, paying attention to more complex and abstract purposes for reading a variety of texts. These texts include academic texts and non-choice texts. Literacy teaching practices and strategies that engage youth in conversations with the text are an important starting place; recognizing

how these practices and strategies do or do not support youth in developing identities as readers is a necessary move to expand these strategies and practices to encompass all the dimensions of agentic literacy practice.

In addition, if purpose and agency are important to adolescent literacy instruction, then research still needs to be done on effective teacher education practices. How can we teach teachers to do this work? How do current models of literacy instruction address youth identity, literacy purposes, and the development of agentic literacy practice? What can be developed further? If the technical work of teaching skills and strategy instruction are necessary, but not sufficient for youth literacy development, then how do we teach teachers to help youth build additional dimensions of literate agency?

Works Cited

Allington, R. L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (1989). School response to reading failure: Chapter 1 and special education students in grades 2, 4, and 8. *Elementary School Journal, 89*, 529-542.

Alvermann, D. E. (2001). Reading adolescents' reading identities: Looking back to see ahead. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 44*(8), 676-690.

Black, R. W. (2006). Language, culture, and identity in online fanfiction. *E-Learning, 3*(2), 170-184.

Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Davidson, A.L. (1996). *Making and molding identity in schools: Student narratives on race, gender, and academic engagement*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Delpit, L. (1988). The silence dialogue: Pedagogy and power in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review* 58: 280-298.

Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Eccles, J. S., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R., Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., et al. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motivation* (pp. 75-146). San Francisco: W. H. Freedman.

Eccles, J. S., Wigfield, A., Midgley, C., Reuman, D., MacIver, D., & Feldlaufer, H. (1993). Negative effects of traditional middle schools on students' motivation. *Elementary School Journal, 93*, 553-574.

Entwisle, D., Alexander, K. & Olson, L. (2001). Keep the faucet flowing. *American Educator, Fall.* Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.

Franzak, J. (2006). Zoom: A review of the literature on marginalized adolescent readers, literacy theory, and policy implications. In B. M. Gordon & J. E. King (Eds.), *Review of Educational Research* (Vol. 76, pp. 209-248). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

Gee, J. (1996). *Social Linguistics and literacies: Ideology in the discourses* (2nd Ed.). London: The Falmer Press.

Golinkoff, R. M. (1976). A comparison of reading comprehension processes in good and poor comprehenders. *Reading Research Quarterly, 11,* 623-659.

Graesser, A. C., McNamara, D. S., Louwerse, M. M., & Cai, Z. (2004). Coh-metrix: Analysis of text on cohesion and language. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments & Computers, 36*(2), 193-202.

Greenleaf, C.; Schoenbach, R.; Cziko, C.; & Mueller, F. (2001). Apprenticing adolescents to academic literacy. *Harvard Educational Review, 71* (1), pp 79 – 129.

Greenleaf, C., Hull, G., & Reilly, B. (1994). Learning from our diverse students: Helping teachers rethink problematic teaching and learning situations. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10,* pp. 521-541.

Gutiérrez, K., Baquedano-López, P., Tejeda, C., & Rivera, A. (1999, April). *Hybridity as a tool for understanding literacy learning: Building on a syncretic approach.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec.

Gutierrez, K. D. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(2), 148-164.

Gutiérrez, K. D., Rymes, B., & Larson, J. (1995). Script, counterscript, and underlife in the classroom: James Brown versus Brown v. Board of Education. *Harvard Educational Review, 65*, 445-471.

Gutiérrez, K., Morales, P. Z., & Martinez, D. (2009). Re-mediating literacy: Culture, difference and learning for students from non-dominant communities. *Review of Research in Education, 33*, 212-245.

Hart, B. & Risley, H. (2003). The early catastrophe. *American Educator.* Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers

Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, *58(6),* 6-11. www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/0103/haycock.html

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Jimenez, R.T., Garcia, G.E., & Pearson, P.D. (1996). The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/0 students who are successful English reader: Opportunities and obstacles. *Reading Research Quarterly 31*(1): 90-112.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.

Langer, J. (2001). Beating the odds: Teaching middle and high school students to read and write well. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*, pp. 837-880.

Learned, J., Stockdill, D., & Moje, E.B. (2010). Integrating reading strategies and knowledge building in adolescent literacy instruction. In A.E. Farstrup & J. Samuels (Ed.s), *What Reading research has to say to reading instruction* (pp. xx-xx). Newark, DE: Interational Reading Association.

Lee, C. D. (2001). Is October Brown Chinese? A cultural modeling activity system for underachieving students. . *American Educational Research Journal 38*(1), 97-141.

Lee, C. D., Spencer, M. B., & Harpalani, V. (2003). "Every Shut Eye Ain't Sleep": Studying how people live culturally. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 6-13.

Lee, C. D., & Spratley, A. (2010). *Reading in the disciplines: The challenges of adolescent literacy*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Lee, V. & Burkam, D. (2002). Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school. Washington DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Mahiri, J. & Godley, A.J. (1998). Rewriting identity: Social meanings of literacy and "revisions" of self. *Reading Research Quarterly, 33* (4), 837 – 880.

McDermott, R. P. (1985). Achieving school failure: An anthropological approach to illiteracy and social stratification. In H. Singer & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (3rd ed., pp. 558-594). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

McDermott, R. P. (1987). The explanation of minority school failure, again. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 18*, 361-364.

McKeown, M. G., Beck, I. L., and Blake, R. G. (2009). Rethinking reading comprehension instruction: a comparison of instruction for strategies and content approaches. *Reading Research Quarterly, 44*(3), 218-254.

Moje, E. B. (2011). Developing disciplinary discourses and identities: What's knowledge got to do with it? In G. L. Bonilla & K. Englander (Eds.), *Discourses and identities in contexts of educational change.* New York: Peter Lang.

Moje, E., Overby, M., Tysvaer, N., & Morris, K. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations, and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review, 78* (1), pp. 107-154.

Moll, L. C., & Greenberg, J. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social contexts for instruction. In L. C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education* (pp. 319-348). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moll, L. C. (2000). Inspired by Vygotsky: Ethnographic experiments in education. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.). *Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research: Constructing Meaning through Collaborative Inquiry*, (pp. 256 – 268*)*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

NCES, National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Nation's Report Card, Reading Report Card.* Retrieved March 7, 2009 from http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2007/r0009.asp?tab_id=tab2&subtab_id=Tab_2#chart.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read.* Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved February 21, 2009 from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.cfm.

Ness, M. K. (2008). Supporting secondary readers: When teachers provide the "what," not the "how." *American Secondary Education*, *37* (1), 80-95.

Neuman, S., & Celano, D. (2001). Access to Print in Low-income and middle-income communities: An Ecological Study of four neighborhoods. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*(1), 8-26.

Palincsar, A.S., & Schutz, K.M. (in press). Reconnecting strategy instruction with its theoretical roots. Theory into Practice.

Paris, S., Myers (1981)

Phillips, S. U. (1983). *The invisible culture: Communication in classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian reservation*. New York: Longman.

Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Washington DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 360-407.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tatum, A. W. (2000). Breaking down barriers that disenfranchise African American adolescent readers in low-level tracks. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 44*, 52–64.

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (1992). The development of achievement task values: A theoretical analysis. *Developmental Review, 12*(3), 265-310.