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CASE STUDY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL READER
ATTENDING A SEPARATE READING CLASS

by
Amy Wilson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

CASE STUDY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL READER ATTENDING A SEPARATE READING CLASS

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Master of Arts

Despite the prevalence of separate reading classes in middle-level schools across the country, there is much debate about the effectiveness of these courses. Many researchers advocate content-area literacy or interdisciplinary teaming instead, claiming that students do not transfer the skills they learn in reading classes to other subjects. This qualitative case study of one middle school student is an intensive description of a biracial Navajo and Piute teenager who attended a separate reading class. The case study looked at three specific areas of the student's reading in regards to this class: comprehension, motivation, and perception. The student did not transfer the skills he learned in this class to his content areas, nor did he change his at-home reading and writing practices while participating in this class.

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Thank you...

To Roni Jo for positioning me so that I could pursue a doctorate.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The years surrounding middle school mark tremendous changes in adolescents' reading practices. Students' attitudes toward reading have often sharply declined as they enter middle school (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995), a trend that continues throughout the three years they are there (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994). Time spent in voluntary reading declines (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994) as schedules become busier and teenagers spend more time with friends. Comprehension may suffer as students make the transition from narrative texts in elementary school to expository textbooks in secondary school (Irvin, 1998). In short, middle school is a time of significant change in which attitudes toward reading, time spent reading, and reading comprehension in school may wane.

Many researchers, however, note that middle school readers are more complex than these overarching disheartening trends may suggest (e.g., Ivey, 1999). In fact, negative attitudes toward reading may be due to a mismatch between school-sanctioned literacy practices and students' individual interests (O'Brien, Springs, & Stith, 2001). In essence, "the schools, not the students, are at risk" (O'Brien, 1998, p. 34). Students may be motivated to read but cannot find materials that interest them in school or classroom libraries (Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). Therefore, while some adolescents may begin to dislike reading, the research implies that thoughtfully-crafted curricula and an expansion of reading materials may help to counter this tendency. Simply put, middle school students need more extensive, positive, individualized experiences with reading, a need which many separate reading courses are designed to fill.

Statement of the Purpose

Accordingly, many secondary schools across the country offer a separate reading course for young adolescents. Given the prevalence of these classes, it is sensible for researchers to examine how reading courses influence students. Surprisingly, relatively few of them have conducted this type of study. The limited research that has been published in this area has focused on whether a separate reading course encourages cross-curricular connections as well as other approaches do. However, strategic literacy across disciplines may be only one purpose of a reading course. Perhaps reading classes also have the power to ward off middle school students' increasing disaffection for reading or perhaps they can increase students' confidence as readers and responders to texts. The latter aspects of reading courses have rarely been studied by researchers. With this in mind, my purpose in conducting this case study was to better understand the multifaceted impact of a separate reading course.

Research Questions

The following questions guided my research: What were the literacy practices and abilities of one middle school student who attended a separate reading course? This larger question subsumed other questions: What changes occurred in the student's reading comprehension in both his reading class and in his subject areas? Did the student apply the strategies he learned in reading to his other subject areas, and what factors encouraged or discouraged him to do so? To what degree was the student motivated to read and write and how did that motivation change or remain the same throughout the course of the school year? How did the student's confidence in his reading ability change or remain the same? With these questions in mind, I designed an exploratory, descriptive case study (Yin, 1994) of one student enrolled in a separate reading class.

Limitations

As with all qualitative research, my case study uses the human as an instrument to come to an understanding of the phenomenon in question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case, my dual position as a reading teacher and a researcher may have biased how I, as the primary instrument, perceived data that related to my teaching. Though I put several methodological checks in place—data audits, triangulation from several sources, member checks, and independent coders—to minimize this potential bias, the fact remains that it was I who took field notes, I who transcribed the interviews, and I who ultimately wrote and interpreted the results. Based on my thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of actual events, readers of this case study must ultimately determine for themselves whether they find my perceptions and conclusions to be trustworthy.

My authority as a teacher and researcher also may have affected data collection in other ways. As a teacher, I was a direct authority figure in the life of the research participant, and he may have been less than forthright in giving responses which he thought I might not want to hear. Again, checks were put in place to counter this possibility: anonymous surveys and non-evaluative questions were used in circumstances where the student may have been reluctant to share information that could hurt my feelings or reflect negatively on him. Conversely, while Jon may have been intimidated by my position as teacher, my colleagues may have been intimidated by my position as a researcher. Consequently, they may not have wanted to share information that reflected negatively upon them as I described the instruction Jon received in his other classes. I tried to counter this possibility, too, by actually observing classes and asking Jon about them. In the end, however, the authority that I carried both as a researcher and as a teacher could have affected the honesty in the data I was able to collect.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Separate reading classes, such as this one the research participant attended, are prevalent within the United States. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University (Becker, 1990), in the most recent study of its kind available, reported the results of a national survey of middle schools and junior highs: 85% of middle-grade schools provide an additional course in reading that is separate from and offered concurrently with a course in English. Middle schools, which are deemed to be more developmentally responsive than junior high schools, were more likely to offer a reading class: 90% required this course for at least some of their students compared to 74% in junior highs. The Johns Hopkins study further revealed that a majority of schools (61%) required nearly all of their students to attend reading classes, while other schools mandated reading courses only for those who needed supplementary instruction. In synthesizing these statistics, Muth and Alvermann (1992) estimated that between 55 and 60% of students are required to take at least one course in reading during either their seventh- or eighth-grade year.

To distinguish the nature of these reading classes, Irvin and Connors (1989) divided them into two categories: developmental and remedial. According to the authors, the primary distinction between these courses is that developmental courses offer instruction in study strategies and flexible reading rates in addition to the instruction in comprehension and vocabulary development also offered in remedial classes. In other words, developmental reading classes include the skills taught in remedial courses but include additional instruction in note-taking, time management, and how to read at different speeds for different purposes. Remedial and developmental classes also serve different populations: a developmental reading course

provides additional reading instruction and opportunities for students who already tend to be competent readers, while the purpose of a remedial course is to improve reading comprehension for students who have scored below grade level on standardized tests. Furthermore, Irvin and Connors noted that the class sizes of these two courses sometimes vary; to provide more individualized instruction for the readers who struggle most, remedial reading courses may contain fewer students.

To provide further information on the two types of courses, Irvin and Connors (1989) determined whether “quality” schools primarily offered remedial or developmental reading classes. They surveyed 155 middle-level schools sampled from two categories: those selected randomly and those recognized as exemplary by the U. S. Department of Education. Their findings revealed that 57% of recognized schools and 64% of randomly selected schools offered a developmental reading course, and 67% of recognized schools and 70% of random schools offered a remedial reading course. Irvin and Connors concluded: “Apparently most middle level schools in the U. S. offer a developmental reading course that is required for all students for some or part of the school year” (p. 310). In sum, most junior high and middle schools—irrespective of their quality—offer a separate developmental reading class to adolescents.

Though Irvin and Connors (1989) delineated differences between the two types of reading classes, other researchers’ articles suggest that the line between remedial and developmental reading is not so clear-cut. While Irvin and Connors placed study skills in the domain of developmental reading courses, Davis (1990) described a remedial reading class that incorporated study skills from other content areas. Gibbs (1997), a classroom practitioner, illustrated the variety among remedial reading classes: she contrasted her interactive approach to teaching reading strategies such as predicting with her colleague down the hall who primarily

taught using direct instruction and questions about novels. Other researchers and practitioners (Beers, 1986; Caverly, et al., 1995; Gersten, et. al, 1989; Golden, et al., 1990; Moniuszko, 1992; Sinagra & Lopez, 1990) also describe developmental and remedial classes in which materials, content, and pedagogy vary irrespective of the title given to the class. A synthesis of these authors' findings reveals that perhaps it is not always easy to identify a separate reading class as either developmental or remedial: reading courses often exist along a continuum between the two based on their purpose, classroom population, class size, materials, and pedagogy. However, with respect to the diverse nature of reading courses, one relatively constant guideline remains: remedial courses tend to be populated with readers who score lower on tests than their compeers in developmental reading classes.

Recently, researchers and teachers have begun creating separate literacy courses in contrast to the traditionally-named reading course. As the title suggests, these literacy classes are designed to improve students' ability to read and communicate in a variety of mediums, often including e-texts (e.g., O'Brien, Springs, & Stith, 2001). Though there are no systematic guidelines that delineate how these courses compare to customary reading classes, their title suggests a shift from reading printed texts to reading, writing, and speaking using a variety of print and non-print texts. For the purpose of simplicity in my research, reading and literacy classes will be considered as one and the same. This definition is appropriate for this study: the district-titled *reading* class described herein incorporated different types of literacy, including listening, speaking, writing, and reading using informational, functional, and literary texts. Though my students had limited access to e-texts due to the lack of computer labs at our school, its focus on communicating using different mediums was still in accordance with some researchers' descriptions of literacy courses.

Regardless of their title, reading classes are a part of many young adolescents' lives (Muth & Alvermann, 1992). Despite their prevalence, there is much debate as to whether a separate course is the best way to teach literacy, broadly defined here as speaking, listening, reading, and writing articulately and appropriately within the conventions of a given discipline. I have divided the research on separate reading and literacy classes into four separate stances, each of which will be described in greater detail: (a) support of a separate reading class; (b) support of literacy instruction within the content areas; (c) support of either separate reading classes or content-area literacy as long as certain qualities are present in the lessons; and (d) support of interdisciplinary teaming.

Support of a Separate Reading Class

The content, purpose, and focus of separate reading classes vary in the United States. In the most recent nationwide survey available, Irvin and Connors (1989) found that only some of these classes included reading strategies that students could apply to other academic subjects. These strategies include summarizing, predicting, previewing the text while noting key features, and other mental operations that increase reading comprehension. According to the study, other reading classes were literature-based, meaning that instructors primarily used poems, short stories, novels, or other literary texts in the classroom without incorporating informational or functional writings. The researchers further found that most reading teachers frequently used skill materials such as vocabulary workbooks in their classrooms. Teachers' surveys also revealed that reading instructors commonly use basals, or compilations of short texts accompanied by questions. Because not all respondents answered the survey question about materials used in class, the researchers did not attempt to draw generalizations from these data.

While Irvin and Connors (1989) discovered differences between various reading classes, other researchers have paid attention to their similarities. Muth and Alvermann (1992) noted that basal reading programs and literature-based programs have been prevalent in middle-level schools. Erickson (1998, 2003) and Mraz and Wood (2003) likewise suggested that reading classes frequently do not incorporate document or informational literacy strategies that can be readily applied to content areas. In short, reading courses nationwide may be similar in that they neglect to incorporate nonfiction and functional texts.

While some researchers have supported the notion of a separate reading class, they assert that the classes must have certain qualities to be worthwhile. One such quality is that they include textual materials from other content areas (Moje & Sutherland, 2003). Another key quality of reading classes is that students must actually spend time reading materials that interest them instead of learning skills or vocabulary words in isolation (Broaddus & Ivey, 2002; Wood, 1998). Because the National Assessment of Educational Progress discovered that the amount of classroom reading is directly related to students' level of reading (Rothman, 1990), adolescents who have an additional reading period may comprehend texts better than comparable peers who do not take a separate reading class. Kornfeld (2003) confirmed this assumption when she compared state-administered reading test scores between middle school students who did and did not take a separate reading class. After outlining statistics regarding separate reading courses, Muth and Alvermann (1992) concluded, "The emphasis given to supplementary reading instruction in the middle grades seems appropriate" (p. 75). Furthermore, because many content-area teachers do not believe that reading instruction is their responsibility (Gee & Forester, 1988; Gee, Olson, & Forester, 1989; Moje, 2000), a reading class may be the primary if not the only place where a middle school student will learn specific reading strategies.

O'Brien (1998) and Dillon (2000) have provided specific descriptions of a high-quality separate reading class in actual practice. O'Brien spearheaded the development of a literacy lab for high school students who had scored in the lowest tenth percentage on state-wide reading tests, who had been referred by guidance counselors or teachers, who were identified as mildly handicapped, or who were otherwise considered 'at risk.' Therefore, the reading class was primarily remedial rather than developmental. As the class title suggests, the students learned forms of literacy beyond reading traditional texts. Instead, they chose research projects that required them to both read and use a variety of mediums to present their findings. Students used hypertexts, magazines, drawings, and lyrics to supplement books. O'Brien (1998) and Dillon (2000), two university professors who participated in the lab in conjunction with two high school teachers, both described success stories of individual students who became more engaged as a result of the separate, nontraditional class.

Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz (1999) also provide evidence that a separate reading class may benefit students. These four high school teachers developed an academic literacy course for all incoming freshmen. Unlike O'Brien's remedial reading class, therefore, this academic literacy course was developmental. The purpose of the course was "helping students become more expert readers across the curriculum" (p. 47), and to achieve this goal, the students read numerous documents from various content areas. Because the four teachers were from social studies and English departments, the bulk of the reading focused around those two disciplines. They reported success in making students aware of the different strategies involved in reading different types of texts; ultimately, they achieved their goal of increasing students' literacy across various content areas. While content-area teachers may incorporate literacy instruction into their lesson plans, students may not transfer these skills to other disciplines

(Moje, 1996), but Schoenbach et. al (1999) implied that separate reading classes may enable students to transfer strategies to other disciplines.

O'Brien and Dillon's literacy lab (1998, 2000) and Shoenbach's (1999) academic literacy course have suggested directions for middle school reading teachers, but these case studies are limited in their ability to inform the research on middle school reading. First, they were not intended to be research articles with a rigorous methodology; consequently, they are simply useful descriptions of two separate reading classes. There is no systematic evidence that these reading classes improved test scores or enabled students to transfer skills to other content areas. Second, these classes are atypical because of the large number of teachers and resources allotted to each class. Third, these separate reading classes describe high schools instead of middle schools. Therefore, while these descriptions of separate literacy classes suggest that integrative reading courses may help middle school students, more germane studies are needed for researchers to determine to what extent separate reading courses benefit middle school students. There is a lack of research that addresses this subject directly. Many formal and informal studies have documented middle school students' literacy practices (e.g., Ivey, 1999; Moje, 2000), but they have not specifically addressed students' reading behaviors and attitudes in regards to a separate reading course.

Support of Content-area Literacy

In contrast, many studies have been conducted suggesting that students' reading comprehension increases when content-area teachers embed literacy instruction as they teach subject matter (e.g., Moje, 1996). The proliferation of books on content-area literacy attest to the efficacy of teaching reading strategies specific to various disciplines (eg., Alvermann & Phelps, 2002; Manzo, Manzo, & Estes, 2001; Ruddell, 2005; Vacca & Vacca, 2005). Some researchers

and theorists specifically argue that reading instruction in content-area classrooms is better than separate literacy classes. For example, Peters (1990) maintained that separate reading courses can be “outmoded organizational structures” which often degenerate into the teaching of skills-in-isolation (p. 63). He noted that some middle schools integrate reading with language arts. Though he believed this approach is better than teaching reading alone, he averred that students in these classrooms seldom transfer strategies to other subject areas. Peters called for all content-area teachers to share responsibility for teaching relevant reading strategies.

Wiles and Bondi (2003) have likewise implied that separate reading classes are outdated. They divided the history of middle-level schools into three eras: the junior high school (1910-1965), the middle school (1965-2000), and the new American middle school (2000-present). While separate reading classes may have been characteristic of the middle school, the authors proclaimed that reading in the new millennium is “an essential learning skill that needs to be an integral part of all subjects and courses” (Wiles & Bondi, 2003, p. 131). The United States Government seemed to endorse a similar position. The authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) affirmed, “The most logical place for instruction in most reading and thinking strategies is in social studies and science rather than in separate lessons about reading” (p. 73).

Research on Discourses (Gee, 1996) also indirectly supports content-area literacy over separate reading classes. Gee has maintained that people who study different subject areas speak with vocabulary words and linguistic patterns that are unique to that field of knowledge. According to Gee, conversations, texts, and other communications through words and symbols comprise a group’s discourse. These communications are subsumed within a larger Discourse, or a way “of being in the world...A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with

the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act” (p. 127). In other words, a Discourse encompasses actions, beliefs, body gestures, and ways of being that are unique to a given subject, regardless of whether the people who study that subject are fully conscious that they are acting in accordance with the rules of that Discourse. Literacy can be defined as the ability to effectively communicate within a given Discourse. Content-teachers who are most familiar with the Discourse of their subject may therefore be best suited to teach literacy in that subject while separate reading teachers may not be fully acculturated to each content area.

Like Gee, other researchers have proclaimed that literacy is unique in each subject area. For example, Lemke (1987) found that language in science classrooms, unlike many other classes, was objective, authoritative, and governed by a set of norms of the discipline. Reading and communicating simply cannot be separated from the linguistic context in which they occur (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1992). Furthermore, reading and writing are subsumed within a Discourse as vehicles for learning the content (O’Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995), and students may not learn as well in a separate class that is outside of the Discourse.

Measor (1984) and Reid (1984) intimated that different Discourses may be more legitimate than others in students’ eyes. Therefore, if teachers want students to see reading strategies as being valuable and desirable, they should be taught in the classes that students deem to be most useful. By the time they enter middle schools, students have already formed opinions regarding the importance of different disciplines. According to Measor, they more highly regard subjects that they believe will help them in the future, such as math and some types of science. Though Measor did not research students’ opinions on a separate reading class, her findings suggest that students may not value such a class if it is not seen as being powerful. In regards to topical content, Reid (1984) similarly claimed, “Students, as rational consumers, are less

concerned with knowing than with the status that comes from categorical membership and the future promise that this implies” (p. 73). This statement particularly indicts remedial reading classes if students do not want to be seen as a member of them. In keeping with this theory, students should learn literacy skills in the content areas that they value most.

While some researchers have not necessarily advocated content-area literacy, they have decried remedial reading classes and called for viable alternatives to promote skilled readers. Allington, Boxer, and Broikou (1987) described a remedial reading class in which students completed vocabulary workbooks whose words did not correlate with the content that they were learning in their other subjects. They calculated that these students in remedial reading had to learn 50% more vocabulary words than their peers who did not take that class. In a related study, Allington (1990) followed a student who attended a remedial reading class even though it was not necessarily labeled as such. He examined a school in which low-achieving students were relegated to supplementary reading courses while high-achieving students were allowed to take a foreign language. He concluded that this unacknowledged tracking system was harmful to students who attended reading, and he posited that remedial reading classes should not be used to improve comprehension. Content-area literacy may be another option for students who struggle with reading across the curriculum.

Support of Either Separate Reading Classes or Content-area Literacy Instruction

While some researchers have argued on behalf of a separate reading class or on behalf of content-area literacy, others posit that both approaches can be effective. Strauss and Irvin (2000) have articulated this dichotomy: “Effective literacy programs in the middle grades emphasize literacy learning across the curriculum; reading and writing are not relegated to one language arts class, but are taught and encouraged in other content areas and/or a reading class scheduled in

addition to language arts classes” (p. 58). In this quotation, the authors placed reading classes on equal footing with content-area literacy provided that these classes emphasize literacy across the curriculum. In their official position statement on the nature of effective middle schools, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) (1995) similarly declared, “Middle level schools can offer courses and units, taught either by individual teachers or by teams, that are designed specifically to integrate the formal school curriculum; or all teachers can identify the connections among ideas and fields of knowledge” (p. 22-23). Although NMSA’s position document did not explicitly mention reading classes or content-area literacy, this statement implies that a single integrative reading course that included literacy skills from other disciplines may be just as valuable as content-area courses that integrated reading strategies.

Some researchers directly claim that reading classes or content-area literacy can be equally effective, but it is more common to see articles about best practices in reading wherein the authors do not mention either a separate reading class or content-area literacy. For example, Farnan (1996) has stated that middle school readers’ goals should be to learn strategies that assist them across a variety of genres and content areas. However, she did not comment on where students should learn these skills. Perhaps it does not matter where the students acquire strategic reading abilities as long as they are acquired.

Finally, Muth and Alvermann (1992) have supported both content-area literacy and a separate reading course but for different reasons. They have claimed that students in supplementary reading classes may improve their comprehension due to in-class time spent reading; therefore, they valued a reading course for its ability to improve comprehension but not for its ability to promote strategic readers across the curriculum. They have also advocated content-area literacy, noting that students who take courses in reading or language arts do not see

connections between that class and other subject areas. Content-area literacy is thus needed for students to be successful readers in each discipline while reading courses may improve reading test scores.

Interdisciplinary Teaming

Many researchers and theorists (e.g., Moore & Stefanich, 1990) promote interdisciplinary courses as the best way to encourage students to apply strategies across different fields of knowledge. Teachers of these integrated courses teach more subject matter from other disciplines than content-area literacy teachers would. For instance, a science educator who teaches strategies for reading the biology textbook is incorporating content-area literacy, while a science teacher whose students read short stories is taking an interdisciplinary approach. In middle schools, people who concurrently teach in regards to a theme rather than in regards to their subject area are also interdisciplinary (Powell & Allen, 2001); this approach is especially beneficial to adolescents (Beane, 1990) who are leaving elementary schools where subjects may merge together when they are taught by one teacher. A final benefit of interdisciplinary curricula is that they require students to make numerous connections across several fields of knowledge (Roehler, Foley, Lud, & Power, 1990), rather than only applying reading strategies across these fields. The Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992) have recommended interdisciplinary programs in middle schools.

Guthrie et. al (1996) demonstrated that these courses improve students' comprehension of different types of texts. In their study of fifth-grade students who attended interdisciplinary science and language arts classes, they found that students made significant gains in comprehension of narrative and informational texts. Introducing multiple texts in conjunction

may have allowed readers to more clearly distinguish the different types of strategies needed for understanding different texts. Guthrie et. al intimated that interdisciplinary courses are better than content-area literacy classes because the former allows for more coherent connections between activities throughout the day. They also recommended interdisciplinary courses over separate reading classes, claiming that “engaging classroom contexts are conceptual, with a focus on substantive topics rather than reading skills” (p. 323). In summary, interdisciplinary curricula may allow students to make meaningful connections that are not possible with other approaches. Furthermore, interdisciplinary teaming may be better suited to the developmental needs of middle school students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Design

Because much research on middle school reading has been quantitative, this qualitative case study responds to researchers who cite the need for more studies of adolescent readers in a non-controlled environment (Ivey, 1999). The potential implications of a reading class are multifaceted: the course may or may not influence students' reading engagement, reading across the content areas, reading test scores, and reading at home. Therefore a rich, in-depth, intensive description was required to begin to speculate on the multiple dimensions of such a class, and a qualitative design best met that need.

Accordingly, I conducted a case study in which I explored and chronicled the complexities of one student's reading practices in relation to a separate reading class. The single case study design was appropriate for numerous reasons. First, rather than explaining phenomena by controlling variables, I instead wanted to understand the multifarious aspects of one student's reading as they occurred in natural settings. Case studies are ideal for understanding the intricacies of a single unit of analysis—in this case, one student—within a bounded system—in this case, his interactions with texts and people at home, at school, and with friends (Stake, 1995; Yin 1994).

Another strength particular to case study research is its personal nature: readers of case studies can draw naturalistic generalizations, or “conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experiments so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake, 1995, p. 85). Unlike quantitative research, which allows for statistical generalizations, the specificity and depth of case studies allow for greater intimacy

and immediacy: readers can make personal connections and see aspects of people they know in the person being studied. As a classroom teacher, I had especial access to writing a case study that was ‘personal’: my camaraderie with colleagues enabled me to visit the student’s natural classroom settings without undue disruption, and these friendships permitted me to speak frankly and frequently with teachers about his performance and behaviors in these settings. In short, as a long-term teacher, I had the type of “privileged access” and “sufficient intensity and duration” praised by Levine (1981, p. 173-174) as being essential to descriptive case studies. In fact, before the study began, I had already informally conducted a “prior ethnography,” a prerequisite for case study research (Corsaro, 1980, as quoted in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 67). In other words, I was intimately familiar with multiple facets of the school context, thereby decreasing my chances of being an ‘outsider’ who would misinterpret situations, and my presence in the context was not contrived. Furthermore, I interacted with the student in two classes each school day and therefore had ample opportunities to write the type of detailed observations that come with single case studies. Although being a teacher and researcher may have put me in a position of authority and thus separated me from the student, my daily, positive relationships with him and other people—all of whom were crucial to understanding the phenomenon in question—put me in a unique position to write a personal case study of one student’s reading practices.

Research Participant

Jon [pseudonym], the only Native American in his school and an “average” reader, was “unique as well as common” (Stake, 1995), making him an ideal selection for case study research. Theorists note two different reasons why a case study may be significant: first, the case is unusual and of general public interest (Yin, 1994); and second, the case is typical and enables readers to make naturalistic generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). Jon met the

former criterion by virtue of his ethnicity: in a school where over 97% of the student body was Caucasian, he proudly held onto his Navajo and Piute culture: he competed in Native American grass dances in full traditional attire made by his grandmother, he shared his tribal music with others, he brought lists of Piute words to memorize at school, he asked the principal to announce upcoming powwows over the school's intercom, and he often expressed in public writings how proud he was to be Native American.

In many other ways, however, Jon was a "typical" teenage student: he liked laughing and socializing in school, hanging out at home, playing baseball, attending a local amusement park, talking on his cell phone, and Instant Messaging his friends. Some of his pastimes were somewhere along the continuum between being exceptional and common: he won eighth place in a statewide BMX race, excelled at deer hunting, and sought to help his family in numerous ways, including tutoring his two elementary-school age brothers in math, science, and reading. He identified himself as Navajo and Piute, the ethnicity of his mother, and to remain true to his perception I will also refer to him as a Navajo and Piute in the case study. His father, though, was Caucasian, and Jon therefore was raised in both worlds: he was fully enculturated into his school's mainstream mores and could converse at ease with countless Caucasian friends, but at weekend dance competitions could just as comfortably slip into a roach and headdress and move to the beat of barrel drums and Native American singing.

In his reading abilities, Jon was a 'typical' case study because many of his characteristics matched those of the general population in my reading classes. Since these courses were designed for students who were classified as average or below-average readers, I wanted to research a student whose grade point average was between 1.5 and 3.0 to reflect the intended population of the classes. Jon's cumulative 2.8 GPA, when coupled with his previous teachers'

assertions that he was unexceptional, made him a fitting choice. In addition, Jon's gender matched the preponderance of males in my reading courses. Jon therefore was able to provide me with an overall sense of the meaning of one average, male student attending a separate reading class.

In outlining additional criteria for selecting a case study participant, Rubin and Rubin (1995) aver that the case must be purposefully sampled based on its ability to provide completeness. In other words, the sample may be only one person if he or she is able to "provide an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme, or process" (p.73). Jon was also an ideal case study participant for this reason. A responsible student, he was seldom absent, never missed a scheduled interview, and kept all of his work from his other classes. Both he and his mother were willing to speak openly with me about their experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, Jon attended both my language arts and reading classes, providing opportunities for me to directly observe him for nearly 360 individual class periods. When combined together, these traits allowed me to approximate completeness in my understanding of Jon's reading practices at home, in reading class, and in other classes.

All of these reasons combined together made Jon an excellent candidate for single case study research. Indeed, I carefully employed purposive sampling procedures when deciding whom to study (Royeen & Fortune, 1987; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Royeen and Fortune (1987) asserted that this purposive or judgment sampling, or non-randomly selecting research subjects based on certain criteria, is appropriate when data are interpreted in terms of a theory and are generalized to that theory rather than to a population. While case studies allow for "fuzzy generalizations" to others at best (Bassegy, 1999, p. 17), the data I collected allowed me to compare one student's experiences to theories, such as the theory that content-area literacy

instruction supports learning better than separate reading classes do. Thus, because I compared Jon to ideas rather than to other students, purposive sampling was fitting for my objectives. My manifold interactions with Jon in a natural setting, coupled with his ‘ordinary’ and truly exceptional qualities, enabled me to compare theories to his experiences, and vice versa, thereby illuminating both.

Researcher Stance

Qualitative research inevitably and rightfully uses the “human as instrument” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); as Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979) have pointed out, “where we look from affects what we see...no single [study] ever gives us a complete picture” (p. 15). It is only fitting, then, that I introduce my perspective as a teacher and researcher so readers can ascertain its influence on the case study. I am a single female who grew up in a middle-class European American family. I was raised in a community neighboring Jon’s; the two small suburban cities had comparable demographics. I conducted the case study as a part of a Master’s thesis I was writing while attending a private religious university. At the time of the case study, I had approximately five years of experience as an English or reading teacher, including teaching various ethnic minorities and at-risk populations. I had obtained an English as a Second Language Endorsement and had finished my Reading Endorsement upon the completion of the study.

My personal orientation toward the nature of reality is naturalistic rather than positivistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalist researchers believe that reality is complex and ultimately indeterminate; that causality is mutual rather than linear; and that knowledge is perspectival rather than objective. Accordingly, in conducting the case study, I did not accept one response as “*the answer*,” even if it came from an interview with Jon himself. Instead, I looked for multiple causes and perspectives from multiple contexts and sources. I also continually sought awareness

of my own perspectives in favor of my reading class and countered these viewpoints through using a rigorous methodology. However, I believe that ultimately my case study, as all research studies, still presents a perspective. Thus, rather than trying to determine the absolute truth of the matter, I sought to re-construct the phenomenon of one student's reading experiences as perceived by his family, his teachers, his friends, Jon, and me.

Context of the Study

The foundational context of the case study was the relationship between Jon and me. Moje (1996) and Moore (2001) described teacher-student relationships and interactions as important contexts for literacy; Lincoln and Guba (1985) added onto this definition by claiming relationships are a vital context of research as well. The latter researchers asserted: "In order for the human instrument to use all of [his or her] abilities to the fullest extent possible, there must be frequent, continuing, and meaningful interaction between the investigator and the respondents" (p. 107). My interactions with Jon were indeed frequent, continuing, and meaningful. For my part, my attitude toward him was one of adoration, absolute respect, and profound appreciation.

While I cannot say with certainty how Jon viewed our student-teacher relationship, I can conjecture that the affinity was mutual. Jon burned Native American CDs and gave them to me as unsolicited gifts. In his autobiography, although the writing prompt for the chapter on junior high did not ask him to talk about teachers, he wrote, "Miss Wilson is the best reading and English teacher around. She works just as hard as you do to help you get a good grade." Despite our good relationship, however, he was not afraid to criticize. In a June interview, when I asked him to give any example of a time reading in school was not interesting, he replied, "Like in English how we had to read that [novel]? You had to like keep on reading it and reading it and at

the beginning it just like kept on dragging on and on and same with the middle...dragging on.

And then I kinda lost interest in it” (p. 279). In sum, I would describe the context of the study as a relationship characterized by mutual respect and a fair degree of honesty.

While this relationship formed a vital context for the case study, the community, the district, the school, and the classroom were also highly influential. At the time of the case study, I taught three periods of reading and three periods of language arts to eighth graders in Hillside Middle School (pseudonym), a suburban school where 97% of the student body was Caucasian. In our district, middle schools extended from seventh to ninth grade, and all incoming seventh graders were required to attend a combined reading/language arts class for two periods. Eighth grade students were then later enrolled in either reading or a foreign language based on their seventh-grade Stanford Achievement Test scores. At Hillside, students who scored below the sixtieth percentile on this test were required to enroll in reading, while students who scored above the fifty-ninth percentile were allowed to register for Spanish or French. In practice, approximately half of the eighth grade body scored at or below grade level and was required to take a separate reading class with the intention of improving their reading comprehension.

To further improve their reading abilities, all Hillside Middle School students attended advisory, a period where they read silently for thirty minutes per day four times a week. Some teachers strictly enforced silent sustained reading in their advisories while others allowed more socialization during this period. All students, regardless of their grade level or test scores, were also required to take at least one period of language arts for each year they were in middle school. In seventh and eighth grade, the language arts teachers emphasized reading while in ninth grade they focused on writing. In all grades, the language arts strands of speaking, listening, viewing, writing, and reading were incorporated. At Hillside, three language arts teachers had

earned a reading endorsement upon the completion of the study; no content-area teachers had obtained one.

A colleague and I independently taught all of the reading classes. Although my reading course was primarily literature-based, I complemented each novel unit with a variety of informational and functional texts. As a class, my students chose the novel they wanted to read; students also had individual autonomy in selecting supplementary texts that supported the novel. They also chose a book to read at home each semester and decided how to present it to their peers in a school-wide book fair where other students walked around the media center to peruse my students' projects and ask questions about their books.

In addition, I gave book talks two or three times per month; the books I introduced included a variety of genres and trade books directly related to students' content areas (Keane, 2002). I purposely tried to select texts that related to the responses that my students gave on an interest inventory at the beginning of the year. Parents, administrators, other teachers, and community members presented book talks to my students as well; students also publicly shared their favorite books with one another in a book talk format. To further increase students' exposure to and engagement with books, I took them to the school library monthly so they could select material of interest for silent sustained reading in their advisory classes. Reading students at Hillside also attended a field trip to a remarkable local library. While I encouraged students to read the materials they found and allowed them to borrow texts from my in-class library, I rarely scheduled time for them to read independently in class because they already read silently in advisory.

In accordance with the Utah State Core Curriculum (Utah State Office of Education, 1999), my reading students focused primarily on process rather than content. In other words, the

emphasis of the course was not on learning the material in texts; instead, the texts were a vehicle for the explicit learning of reading strategies. Some of these strategies, such as visualizing and making connections, are common to both literary and informational texts. Some are more specific to a particular type of text: for example, students learned how to predict and question based on headings, subheadings, figures, and captions in informational texts. Although I only occasionally required students to try note-taking or summarizing strategies in their content-area classes, I constantly verbally reminded them about the importance of applying the skills they learned in reading class beyond our four walls, and frequently made explicit verbal connections to other content areas. Approximately fifteen times spread throughout the course of the school year, I assigned students worksheets that were designed to promote strategic reading with their textbooks from other subject areas. I also copied pages from content-area textbooks and required students to use a variety of strategies to read the texts and answer questions.

Twice in the school year, the students brought their textbooks from their content-area courses and I explicitly taught a lesson on vocabulary or text features directly from the textbook. I kept this activity to a minimum for many reasons: students had different math textbooks, different class schedules, and different teachers, many of whom had varying paces for presenting their curricula and only possessed one in-class set of books which they did not allow their students to check out and take to other classes. Furthermore, I did not feel any sense of affinity or expertise in these areas, especially in science or math. These factors made it difficult to specifically delve into the content that students were reading in their other classes; rather, they often learned general strategies and guidelines that could be applied to all texts.

My reading classes were primarily in accordance with Irvin and Connors' (1989) definition of a developmental reading course: I taught study skills such as note-taking,

comprehension strategies such as checking predictions, and reading rate regulation such as when to skim or to reread. Irvin and Connors also stated that developmental reading courses also often offer vocabulary instruction, and while I did not administer vocabulary tests to my students, I taught them how to figure out unknown words and required them to use specific terms (e.g. climax, text feature) when discussing literature. Furthermore, there were a substantial number of students in Hillside's reading classes who comprehended texts at their own grade level, and I had as many students as other teachers in the school, unlike remedial reading teachers whose class sizes are often smaller. For these reasons, even though there were many students in my reading courses who read below their grade level, I believe the course was primarily developmental.

While my class was designed to motivate middle school readers, teach strategic reading, and promote cross-curricular connections, I did not know if the students were consciously applying the lessons they learned about reading to their other classes. Furthermore, I did not know if students felt like they were learning anything substantive in my reading classes because they were not based on content. For example, in a previous year a student remarked, "We didn't learn much in this class. Just reading strategies." Her comment caused me to question whether or not a subject-based class would have more legitimacy in the eyes of students since they may have held the attitude that they already knew how to read and did not need a class to learn how to do it. With these questions and background experiences in mind, I designed the descriptive case study to examine the reading practices and opinions of one middle school student who attended my separate reading class.

Data Collection

I spent over three school quarters, approximately seven months, systematically collecting data from five sources: student assignments, interviews, observations, periodic surveys, and pre- and post-assessments.

Student assignments. In order to gain insight into how Jon applied reading strategies across the content areas, I collected all available corrected assignments from the following subjects: social studies (U. S. History), pre-algebra, general science, woods one, woods two, physical education, and health. In addition, I collected all assignments from my reading and language arts classes. In total, I collected approximately 90% of Jon's written work since some teachers discarded assignments rather than returning them.

Interviews. I interviewed Jon for 20-30 minutes every two weeks, for a total of fourteen interviews dispersed throughout the last three quarters of the school year. In accordance with the phenomenological approach (deMarrais, 2004), I asked him about his reading practices while avoiding questions designed to elicit rationalizations, causal explanations, or evaluations. Most of my questions began with "Tell me about." For example, I asked him to "Tell me about reading in science class," or "Tell me about what you do when you get home from school." To understand Jon's thinking as he completed his worksheets, I asked him about both correct and missed answers on typical assignments in his academic content areas. For example, I pointed to a short-answer question on a directed-reading science sheet and said, "Tell me how you figured this one out." Jon's own thought processes, combined with the final product of the assignments, indicated whether he understood and applied reading strategies to other subject areas. If he did not mention reading strategies or reading class, I did not lead him in that direction. I recorded these interviews on an audiotape for accuracy in later transcripts.

Although I entered each conversation with a pre-determined, consistent set of questions (see appendix A), the design of the interviews was flexible, iterative, and continuous (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Rubin and Rubin have noted the importance of this pattern of interviewing in qualitative research: “Design remains flexible throughout the study because you have to work out questions to examine new ideas and themes that emerge during the interviews” (p. 45). Therefore, while I asked Jon planned questions, I also asked him questions that arose out of previous answers and observations. As themes emerged in the data, I posed questions that related specifically to those themes, thus making the interviewing process iterative. Finally, the research design was continuous because I pursued new and unexpected lines of inquiry (such as Jon’s sense of connection with his Navajo and Piute culture) along with expected lines of inquiry (such as his use of reading strategies) as unanticipated responses emerged throughout the interviews.

To gain a more in-depth perspective on the Jon’s reading practices at home, I interviewed his mother via phone a total of six times spread evenly over the course of seven months. In these semi-structured, focused interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), I asked her open-ended questions to discover what her son was reading at home and to understand her perspectives on her son’s general success at school. The first and last interviews were more extensive and were designed to ascertain changes in Jon over time (see Appendix B). I audiotaped and transcribed four of the six interviews as well; two of them were transcribed through shorthand due to problems with equipment.

In addition, I informally interviewed Jon’s content-area teachers (see Appendix C), taking detailed notes on their comments as they shared their perceptions. At the beginning of the study, I asked my colleagues to keep an eye out for this student, paying special attention to his literacy skills. During collegial conversations at lunch and after school, I asked them to share

their observations and perspectives regarding his reading practices. At the end of the year, in a semistructured interview (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), I asked them comprehensive questions about Jon's social behavior, performance, comprehension, and perceived use of reading strategies throughout the school year. I also asked the teachers to share typical lesson plans and unit plans with me to determine the extent to which the teacher utilized content-area literacy strategies. Because I spoke with many of these teachers at mealtime or in their classrooms as they were working on something, I took notes on these interviews instead of audiotaping them to maintain an informal tone.

The final category of people I interviewed was Jon's friends. I conducted and audiotaped two focus groups (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996): one with six people he identified as friends and the other with four friends and Jon himself. To maintain the research participant's anonymity, five other students were involved in a focus group as well. I invited each of the students to one lunchtime reading focus group where they discussed issues such as class schedules, their perceptions of reading and school, their hobbies and interests, their typical after-school activities when hanging out with friends, and factors that motivated or hindered their reading (see Appendix D). The students were encouraged to be open and frank; they understood that the purpose behind our conversation was to hear adolescent voices so that educators could make changes that were more responsive to their needs. In accordance with this promise, I summarized the main findings of this conversation and shared them with the Hillside Middle School faculty.

Observations. I took field notes on Jon during reading and language arts, noting his behaviors and comments. After jotting notes down on my clipboard, I typed the notes at the end of the day or at the end of the week into more readable, formal observation notes. Additionally, I

observed Jon for two or three periods in all of his other classes, including social studies (U. S. history), pre-algebra, physical science, woods one, woods two, health, and physical education. To maintain the participant's confidentiality, I also watched other classes and told the students that I was required to conduct classroom observations for my Masters degree. In total, I visited one randomly-selected class for every two of Jon's classes.

Periodic surveys. Because I am both my student's teacher and an interviewer, I was nervous he would be hesitant to give me honest responses if they reflected negatively on my classes. For example, I suspected he might exaggerate his use of reading strategies in other subjects so I would perceive him more favorably. To gain a more objective understanding of his reading strategy use, I distributed an anonymous survey (see Appendix E) at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to my reading class. Modeled after Beers' (2003) Think-Aloud Self-Assessment, this survey indicated the extent to which Jon perceived he understood and applied the strategies he learned in reading. It also indicated whether he engaged in pleasure reading as a result of learning about new books from reading class. As a part of the third and final survey distributed at the end of the school, I included additional questions in which students commented on their overall perceptions and usefulness of the class. Though students did not write their names on the assignment, I identified Jon's survey through his handwriting. Although this act was deceptive, his mother knew that I would be collecting all of Jon's work in my classes. Furthermore, the surveys were necessary: while my interviews with the student were purely descriptive, the anonymous surveys provided the evaluative component where Jon could honestly state his opinions of reading without fear of reprisal.

Pre- and post-assessments. Because one purpose of a separate reading class is to improve reading comprehension, I administered the Gates-MacGinitie reading test to Jon both at the

beginning and at the end of the school year to see if he made significant gains in his reading comprehension. While increases or decreases in his test scores cannot be attributed to the reading class, they can combine with the incremental assessments to reveal the long-term development of the student's reading comprehension throughout the course of the year.

A writing assessment at the beginning and end of the year also indicated Jon's long-term literacy development. Paris et al. (1999) described two critical dimensions and attributes of literacy that are related to writing: engagement with text through writing and knowledge about literacy. According to the authors, students indicate engagement with text through writing when they write well-constructed, thematic, cohesive text that is appropriate to the genre, when they draw on personal knowledge and experiences when composing text, when their creative writing reveals a strong sense of voice, and when their writing is technically appropriate with rich vocabulary and correct grammatical structures. Students further demonstrate proficiency in their knowledge about literacy by using several specific text structures and genres and by using figurative language. Accordingly, the writing assessments measured the Jon's growth in these specific aspects of literacy throughout the course of the year.

Think-alouds (Laing & Kamhi, 2002) were also used as a pre- and post- assessment to indicate another aspect of literacy: speaking. I first modeled think-alouds for my students by reading a short text and modeled what I was thinking as I read the text. For example, I explicitly modeled strategies such as predicting, questioning, and using context clues. Following that, I gave the students in class a tape recorder and asked them to read a brief informational website and to state what they thought as they read the text. I administered a similar test at the end of the year to determine if the students could more fully integrate new ideas with previous knowledge, make inferences within and beyond the text, and identify or elaborate concepts, all of which

indicate whether students can read constructively (Paris, et al., 1999). Due to a shortage in audiotaping equipment, students worked with a partner for this think-aloud activity and were instructed to alternate back and forth in their reading and commenting. According to Fry's readability graph (Fry, 1977), the first think-aloud text was on a seventh-grade reading level, while the final text was on a ninth-grade reading level, and students had an equal amount of time (one half hour) to read and comment on both texts.

The final pre- and post- assessment, an attitudinal survey, measured changes in Jon's perceptions and attitudes towards reading over time. Unlike the previous three assessments which indicated academic skill, these assessments indicated continuity or changes in his beliefs about himself as a reader. The test gauged three different aspects of students' reading: their attitude, motivation, and self-perception. Each of the questions were modeled after different pre-existing reading tests: McKenna and Kear's (1999) Attitude Survey; Gambrell, et al.'s (1999) Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey; and Henk and Melnick's (1999) Reader Self-Perception Scale. These surveys were not anonymous so I could learn about each of my individual students as readers. I hoped to encourage Jon to give honest responses on these surveys by letting all students know they received full credit for simply doing the assignment, regardless of the answers they wrote. The four pre- and post-assessments were administered to all students in the class as a regular part of instruction so the research participant would not feel singled out as he completed them.

Data Analysis

In accordance with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I used the constant comparative method to analyze the field notes, assignments, and interviews. As I collected data points, I conducted a microanalysis of each one by asking questions and making

comparisons between words, phrases, lines, paragraphs, and whole assignments. In effect, I unitized the data, or split the texts into meaningful units regardless of whether these units were words or paragraphs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This initial stage allowed me to generate tentative categories, which I represented as a graphic organizer in the shape of a web and changed or reorganized as new themes emerged. I conducted open coding by writing down properties and dimensions I recognized, and my thought processes were recorded in memos that I wrote in post-it notes on the data. I then generated axial codes by relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions. Finally, in the process of selective coding, I integrated and refined the categories and subcategories I found to create theories and to compare the data with existing theories. I collected data beyond the point of theoretical saturation, or the point at which no new data emerged that could reveal a new dimension or property of a category, simply because I had promised the student I would collect all of his assignments until the end of the year.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted there are four components necessary to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research; accordingly, I included procedures to account for all four components as I used grounded theory methodology to analyze the data. First, the design of my study naturally accounted for *credibility* through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. However, I also held peer debriefings with Jon's other teachers to ensure my results and categories were credible to them, and I asked Jon to review my results and perform a member check, "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314), by speaking with me about the extent to which my reconstructions accurately represented him. I also accounted for credibility in my case study by conducting negative case analyses as I used the constant comparative method. In other words, I specifically looked for data points that seemed to

disprove developing categories and theories, and I sought to account for each contradictory datum in my memos.

To meet the second criterion of *dependability*, two people who held a doctorate in education conducted an inquiry audit on a few data points and on my reconstructions as a whole (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An auditor has two functions: to examine the process and the product of the research. Hence, the auditors of my research examined the process of the research by inspecting individual data points, reading their memos, studying the corresponding web, and determining whether my reconstructions were dependable and consistent in their view. Furthermore, these auditors examined my final product to ascertain its overall dependability as well.

To meet the third criterion of *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), two independent coders—one a graduate student in education and one the language arts specialist of a local school district—performed a content analysis (Holsti, 1969) of selected field notes, interviews, and student assignments. From a corpus of data of more than 1400 pages, I chose 150 representative data points to give the two coders. These “telling cases” (Rex, 2001, p. 295) served “to show how general regularities exist precisely when specific contextual circumstances are taken account of” (Mitchell, 1984, p. 239). In other words, I chose specific yet typical assignments that were comparable and similar to other assignments; I likewise chose interviews and field notes that were both revealing and typical. After attending a brief training, the two coders analyzed the data while looking for pre-determined categories that the auditors and I deemed to be dependable. While the coders primarily analyzed the data according to established criteria, they also discussed properties of the data they thought the auditors and I had missed. They established that the data categories were confirmable and neutral.

Transferability, the final component of trustworthy qualitative research, relates not to an additional task the researcher must perform, but to the quality of the methodology throughout the entire study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a researcher, I sought to provide a “thick description” of the physical environment, the specific words, and the observable actions of Jon and others involved (Geertz, 1973). By taking these types of detailed notes, researchers can report the case in such a way that readers can see aspects of it within their own experience. Unlike the other three components of trustworthiness in qualitative research, the onus of transferability rests, not on the researcher, but on the readers, who must compare details of the case study to their own backgrounds. I diligently sought to write thick descriptions in my field notes and observations in the hopes that I could enable my readers to transfer and apply aspects of the study to their own situations. This final aspect of data analysis ends with the reader who, like me, also analyzes the reported data along with my interpretations of it. Thick descriptions enable the readers to more accurately determine for themselves the extent to which my analysis was confirmable, dependable, and credible to them.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

An analysis of the data yielded information in three areas: (a) Jon's reading comprehension, (b) his motivation to read in-school and out-of-school texts, and (c) Jon's perceptions of himself and others' perceptions of him as a reader, writer, and speaker. To clarify the findings in these three overarching categories, I have divided the data further into subcategories outlined in each section, along with adding a section conclusion. Furthermore, in an attempt to maintain the integrity of the data, I have not changed any of the spelling or grammatical errors in people's original spoken or written words.

Comprehension

The subcategories for comprehension are as follows: (a) ability to apply reading strategies, (b) metacognitive awareness of the application of reading strategies, and (c) the application of reading strategies to other content areas.

Ability to apply reading strategies. Jon's ability to apply reading strategies improved both quantitatively and qualitatively over time. A think-aloud on an informational website about gangs, administered during the first weeks of school as students were reading *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), illustrated Jon's initially limited responses to texts: at the end of every paragraph his first comment was "that's weird." He paid limited attention to text features by reading some headings and ignoring others. Though he asked some meaningful questions, such as "Why would someone wanna join a gang when they're nine?," for the most part his responses were brief and simplistic. In total, he applied four different types of reading strategies: asking questions, inferring, predicting, and making a text-to-world connection.

In contrast, Jon’s think-aloud at the end of the year revealed the correct use of thirteen different reading strategies that were explicitly taught in the reading class: asking questions, inferring, using context clues, predicting, checking predictions, visualizing, summarizing, activating background knowledge, making text-to-world connections, making text-to-self connections, determining the reliability of information, using the semantic features of a word to determine its meaning, and noting text features. This think-aloud, conducted using an informational website on King Arthur during a unit on the Middle Ages, not only revealed an increase in number and type of reading strategies, but also revealed an increase in complexity of thought, as illustrated by the length of Jon’s sentences and responses. Compared to his six-word responses at the beginning of the year, Jon remarked in fourth quarter to his partner,

Partner: That word [Chretien de Troyes] seems like...

Jon: French, probably. French. It’s got the little Chetreire or whatever. Um, [I have a] connection [with this part of the text], cause, like, people, like in the government...if there’s like a missing person they look up their background like their heritage, their birth, their childhood, all their murders, whatever. It’s like to get background knowledge.

Jon’s think-aloud pre- and post-test reveal a qualitative and quantitative improvement in reading strategy application, congruent with his Gates-MacGinitie pre- and post-test scores which indicated a one-year gain in reading comprehension.

Another pre- and post-test, the writing sample, also indicated an improvement in recognizing different purposes for different texts. At the beginning of the year, when he was asked to write a detailed, descriptive paragraph about an object (antlers) in front of the room, Jon wrote a narrative. It began, “A couple of days ago a hunter or shooter was hunting. And shot his game he was going for.” At the end of the year he was given the same assignment to write a

descriptive paragraph, this time about a stuffed fish. He began, “Swims in open waters & is eaten everyday. Its skin is used for lipstick. Stripes and spots all over it.” Though perhaps his sentence fluency and syntax did not show significant improvement, by the end of the year he recognized the difference between texts that describe an object and texts that tell a story. In other words, he improved in his ability to consider the purposes of texts.

Jon’s pre- and post-tests were not the only sources that indicated improved cognitive engagement with texts. His formative assessments in his reading and language arts classes also demonstrated a qualitative increase in reading strategy application. For example, at the beginning of the year Jon only asked critical thinking questions in discussions and written assignments, but by the end of the year he asked clarification questions as well. Early on, he wondered about the historical monograph *Black Potatoes* (Bartoletti, 2001), “Why don’t they learn about how the disease is transferred?” and about the *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), “Why is Pony boy going to the rumble when he doesn’t have to fight?” By fourth quarter, he continued to ask critical thinking questions but started to ask questions to clarify the meaning of passages as well. For example, upon reading a myth about King Arthur, he asked in a discussion, “So his son betrayed him, or something like that? That what it said?” Although the number of his questions on any given assignment did not necessarily increase, the types of his questions changed and became more diversified, thus giving him a greater repertoire of cognitive strategies to apply to his assignments.

While Jon improved qualitatively in his use of some reading strategies such as questioning, for other strategies such as connecting the improvement was more quantitative. As students shared their journal entries with each other or discussed literary and informational texts in my reading and language arts classes, Jon began to spontaneously share many of his

connections: to Simpsons episodes, to a time his brother fell down the stairs, to his experiences in hunting, to a time he broke a window, to teachers at his elementary school, to novels we were reading, and—most especially—to his Navajo and Piute cultures. In his journals, he connected much of the material we were reading to his heritage. For example, as we discussed the horrors of the Holocaust, he connected it to the genocide of Native Americans: “Our land was taken not given. And thousands of Indians died.” As students completed a unit on multicultural America, Jon compared his appearance to that of African Americans,

I’m more like my mom. Because I have dark skin and the dark hair. And my brown eyes. But I don’t look any thing else like my dad. My dad is white and has orangeish hair. Because if you have African American parents you will turn out there color of skin and hair, eyes, and historic deaseses.

At the beginning of the year, Jon made connections when specific assignments and questions called for that skill. As the year progressed, Jon increasingly made more connections both verbally and in writing, and he made these connections in assignments and settings where they were not required.

While Jon’s improvement in connecting was primarily quantitative, his improvement in using vocabulary strategies was both quantitative and qualitative. At the onset of the school year, Jon showed no evidence of using vocabulary strategies as he wrote and discussed responses to texts. When asked the meanings of specific words, his responses were off-base. For example, when Jon was asked to look at syntactic and semantic cues to figure out the meaning of the word *malodorous* in an article, he responded that it meant “real life” and wrote simply that he used “words around it” to figure out the meaning, even though the sentence did not suggest that meaning. Later in the school year, the students came across the color *madder* (a moderate to dark

red), and Jon raised his hand to suggest to the class that the color meant red because “the madder you get, the more red your face gets.” During the last month of the school year, when he came across the unknown word *jostles* in a novel, he wrote, “I think this words means knocks because she Jostles papers off of her desk. So she nocked them down. So it kind of blends in.” When Jon brought textbooks from his content areas into reading class, he explicitly used these strategies to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary words there as well (for example, he used text features and context clues to say that “commissioner” of Indian treaties meant “head” of Indian treaties). These and other examples suggest that Jon went through a series of improvements at his ability to determine word meaning using several strategies, whereas in the first months of school he read unfamiliar vocabulary words—ones that were important to the overall meaning of the text—without trying to discover their definitions at all.

It should be noted that, though Jon improved significantly in his ability to apply reading strategies, he still did not achieve a level of mastery in comprehending and responding to many texts. Jon’s attempts at determining the importance of information and summarizing are clear examples of this principle. Initially, he missed key events in texts when summarizing. For example, in September he summarized an article about a girl in a gang: “She has found a new prospective for her self but is tarrifyd of the gang cause she wants out and they will have to kill her first.” Missing from this summary was the fact that Ana, a Los Angeles resident in a Latino gang, told on her friend and fellow gang member in a jury, and over half of the article dealt with her nervousness to testify. In contrast, by the end of the year Jon could identify all of the important information in a text, but he used vague pronouns or references in his description of them. For example, when asked to summarize the important information from a page of *The Other Side of Dark* (Nixon, 1986), Jon wrote, “Jerrods finger prints are important because that is

physical evidence that he was there at that time! this is a big lead for Stacy.” Though Jon picked up the important information from the page, he did not explain that “there” meant Jarrod was present when Stacy’s mother was murdered. In sum, even though Jon did not achieve mastery in articulating key information to others, he did improve in identifying that information.

Metacognitive awareness of the application of reading strategies. Not only did Jon improve in his ability to apply reading strategies, but he also was more cognizant of his mental operations as he read in his language arts and reading classes. His pre- and post-test think-aloud illustrate this point. Though the instructions for the two tasks were the same (pause after every paragraph and state what you are thinking as you read), Jon and his partner did not explicitly name any reading strategies in the first think-aloud, even though their previous language arts teachers had taught these strategies. In contrast, they named several of them in the last think-aloud. They explicitly said, “I infer that...,” “I predict that...,” “That’s my question,” “I can visualize...”, and “Connection.” They also used verbatim words I taught them as statements readers would make in their head if they applied the strategies. For example, “I don’t know what _____ means, but I’m guessing it means _____.” Their language indicates that, not only were they applying more reading strategies, but they were aware they were doing so.

Other examples indicate Jon’s increased metacognition. When I asked him to “tell me what you did to figure out questions for the English [statewide end-of-year test],” he responded, “Just, like basically you know how they had the big stories, you just read the questions, skim through the stories, try to find what you’re looking for instead of reading like small pieces of information that really aren’t that important to the question.” This response indicates the explicit use of three reading strategies: setting a purpose for reading, regulating reading rate (e.g.,

skimming when appropriate), and determining the importance of information, all of which Jon was taught directly. Jon spontaneously applied these strategies on his language arts final.

Besides becoming more aware of his mental operations in English and language arts, Jon also became more metacognitive as he spoke about other subjects in our interviews. Near the beginning of the case study, when I asked him to tell me about his science project, he explained, “I shot at targets with a shotgun to show the spread, and then the .22 with one phone book, with a shotgun and one phone book; and targets to show the exiting point and then my deer rifle for like a thin phone book and a thick one.” However, in a June interview, when I said, “tell me what your science project was,” he responded,

Well...I did a science project on bullets and how they would affect an object at different distances. I used a shot gun—a .22, and a .2506—and I went to different distances shooting at different objects like a pop can. I shot it twice from ten yards [unintelligible] pop can last.

I shot at phone books. They were both about that thick [indicating thickness with fingers], um, shot into those with a .2506, and a .22—well, one of ‘em—and when I shot with the .2506, the phone book at a longer distance had a bigger hole on the back of it. Rather than the, well, on the, with the shorter distance, it had like a little bit smaller hole, but it was still pretty big. But on the .22, it had about as big of a hole as it did with the .2506 at the short range, so yeah, I didn’t really get how that worked.

In this latter response, Jon stated the overall purpose for his science project (“on bullets and how they would affect an object at different distances”) in addition to monitoring his comprehension of the project by stating that he did not understand its outcome. Jon did not apply these metacognitive strategies to his previous description of the same science project, perhaps

indicating an increase in awareness of his thought processes. This same increase in awareness was also demonstrated by his response during another interview. In September, when asked how he could improve his test studying habits, he responded in his journal, “get more time to study and Prepair.” In May, when asked how he could improve on his scores on a science test, he responded, “I would get more background knowledge.” The language that Jon used indicated that he was aware of this specific reading strategy, and he explained it using the terminology he was taught in reading class.

The application of reading strategies to other content areas. However, despite Jon’s improvement in his metacognition and application of reading strategies, and despite his awareness of how these strategies could be applied to different classes, he still did not apply them to his work in other content areas. For example, when I asked him how he figured out answers on his end-of-year science test (the one that was the hardest for him), he responded,

It kind of depends on the question. Like if it was blank makes up everything, it’d be matter cause matter makes up everything that takes up space...like waves, like sound waves, they have to go through matter so on the waves part it’s like what would you need to have a wave like sound wave to be heard? You need matter and whatever.

This answer, based entirely on content, stands in stark contrast to his answer for how he would answer a question on a language arts test: by skimming and determining the importance of information.

It should be noted here that, though the language arts test was entirely text-based—that is, all of the answers to the questions were based on students’ reading of passages, the science end-of-year test was only partially text-based—that is, many of the questions were based on students’ knowledge of content. However, even on the reading-based questions, Jon did not think to apply

the strategies he learned in reading to science. Nor did he apply strategies he learned that related to content-based tests. Throughout the year I distributed pages from science textbooks to students, asked them to answer multiple-choice questions on the material, and reviewed strategies for answering these types of questions, such as looking for key words in the question and predicting the answer before looking at the given responses. Jon did not indicate that he used any of these mental processes on his content-area exams.

Jon did not consciously use reading strategies throughout the school year on other assignments, either. For example, when I asked him how he figured out specific questions in pre-algebra, he did not answer in terms of reading strategies, such as predicting and checking predictions or looking at the math book's text features such as bolded words and modeled problems to figure out the answer. Instead, he answered in terms of content,

Um, you just draw out the line graph and you just go from, start from the age, from, well, like, yeah, well, you do a line graph from twelve to seven. Oh yeah! You, like one is twelve, and, no—twelve to seventeen. I did that kind of weird right there. I don't know how I did that one.

When I asked him how he could figure out a problem that he did not know how to do, he said, "I'd just get stuck on it and ask [the teacher]...but sometimes he's like...he'd say it in a confusing way, so then I wouldn't get it." When I asked him what he'd do then, he responded he would look at the answers to the odd numbers in the back of the math textbook. After I asked him how he could figure out the even numbers, he said with finality, "it's only the odd numbers at the back of the book." In a class where many students were failing and the teacher was absent approximately one in five school days, Jon had little recourse for help. He did not think to use strategies from reading class to help him access materials in the math textbook, his peers could

not help him make sense of assignments, and his math teacher could often not explain the material in an understandable way to him, either.

As in his math course, Jon did not apply the strategies he learned in reading class to science or history, although the picture was less bleak because there he could turn to his peers for help. He often spoke in terms of content when he was explaining how he answered certain questions on assignments. For example, when I asked him how he answered a question on the Gettysburg Address, he explained,

Right there it says, It is for us the living and to be dedicated here the unfinished work for which work which they who fought here have thus so far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. Like, instead of going to that, he's giving advice to like dedicate themselves to what's going to happen before them, like in the future. So that's what I basically did. Yeah.

Alternatively, when asked how he figured out other problems, he occasionally answered, “the girl that sits next to me” when speaking of both science and history. I wondered what he would do if the girl changed seats, and Jon said, “guess, probably.” On assignments in which students had to read and make sense of texts, Jon did not think to question, reread, look at text features, or perform any other reading strategy outside of his reading class.

Jon also attended woods one, woods two, physical education, advisory, and health in addition to the core classes previously described. These classes were not included in my analysis of reading strategy application. When I asked the woods teacher, “What kinds of reading do you do in woods,” he answered, “We don't do books. There is no books in here.” He added that students only read in his class when they read on the board. The gym teacher similarly explained that students did “very little” reading or writing in his class. Though Jon became highly

proficient at using different chisels and throwing baseballs, the reading class did not address these non-print types of literacy. Hence, these classes will be excluded from findings on reading strategy application, since there was not enough written data to make any meaningful determination. Likewise, in advisory class students had no assignments on reading materials, either, and I was unable to collect evidence regarding reading strategy application or lack thereof.

Jon's metacognitive processes were difficult to ascertain in his health class as well. On two separate occasions when I was heading toward the health class, I found students out in the hall playing hackey sack with the teacher gone. On another occasion, as I was walking down the hall in that direction, the substitute for that class accosted me and told me to get an administrator immediately. In some of my observations, the health students spent an inordinate amount of time talking to one another with no assignment or task to accomplish. Though Jon says he gave me 90% of his work in all of his content classes, I received six assignments total from this semester-long subject. Thus, while the teacher said the class was largely textbook-based, the contextual factors of the class and the lack of data prevented me from fairly examining Jon's reading strategy application in that content area. Therefore, that class will also be excluded from my analysis of his cognitive processes.

For all of the content-area classes for which data was available, Jon did not apply the strategies he learned there from his reading class. Interestingly, in class-administered anonymous periodic surveys he repeatedly reported using reading strategies in his content areas as a result of taking the reading class. Interviews with him, designed to bring out his actual thought processes, revealed otherwise. His content-area teachers, too, did not see any evidence that Jon was applying reading strategies in their classes, such as writing in the margins of textbooks or

assignments or stating predictions or inferences in class. In a final reflection, Jon himself did not see the transferability of the reading class, either. As a ninth grader, he thought back upon his eighth-grade year and said that he applied math to science and to woods. I then asked him, “Can you think of any other classes that there was a crossover in what you learned? That you applied something that you learned from one class to something you learned in another?” He rejoined, “Mmmmm, can’t think of any.” In this final analysis of his learning experiences, therefore, he did not see the reading class as being applicable to his content areas.

The teachers may not have seen reading as being applicable to their content areas, either. Though the science teacher estimated that 60 to 75% of the class consisted of reading the textbook, and the math teacher estimated that 80% of the class consisted of reading the textbook, neither of them provided any explicit literacy instruction to help students access the information found therein. The science teacher recognized the value of vocabulary instruction, and remarked that she intended to do it next year, but she reasoned that this year she just did not have the time as she was preparing students for the impending end-of-year science test. The math teacher expressed no interest in literacy instruction whatsoever. Thus, though reading and writing were vital and inherent components of their disciplines, they viewed them as something separate from the content or as something that potentially could detract from the content.

The history teacher, on the other hand, valued literacy instruction and implemented it into her classroom “when she could.” Once or twice, she asked her students to do previewing activities such as SQ3R (Robinson, 1946) and jigsaw readings (Aaronson, Blaney, Sikes, Stevan, & Snapp, 1975). To some extent, her students did reading-before-reading (Manzo, Manzo, & Thomas, 2005) activities, such as reading a passage from the textbook on Andrew Jackson before reading worksheets on Andrew Jackson and debating whether or not he deserved to be on the

twenty dollar bill. As she considered the course of the year, she could think of approximately three times total in which literacy instruction was consciously used. Because it was not reinforced or reiterated, it is understandable why Jon did not apply these strategies regularly to the reading of history texts.

However, Jon mentioned one case in which one-time literacy instruction in history translated into a spontaneous application of the taught strategy. Early in the school year, the teacher asked the students to preview the history textbook, noting key features such as the index. After she had shown Jon how to use the index, he used it himself to look up all of the pages in the textbook that related to Native Americans and later used that information to write a historical fiction story on them. In our interviews, he attributed using the index on his own to his history teacher's requirements that the students look through it. Thus, in this case, content-area literacy instruction resulted in a student successfully and independently using the reading strategy for his own purposes. Despite this single case that attests to the efficacy of content-area literacy instruction, for the most part, Jon was not receiving explicit instruction on reading or writing in any of his classes outside of language arts and reading. As he was working in other classrooms, he did not see the potential transferability of reading strategies, just as Jon's teachers often did not recognize the value of them in their discipline.

This finding—that Jon did not view reading strategies as being applicable to texts outside of reading class—was confirmed in another setting as well. Jon had two elementary-age brothers whom he often assisted with their homework. His mother was concerned that the younger boys were not achieving their full academic potential, and she asked Jon, her eldest son, to help them comprehend the texts that were a struggle for them. When I asked him how he helped his brothers make sense of hard passages, he again explained his answer in terms of content. He re-

explained the main ideas of the text to his brothers, but he did not think to teach them how to access the texts themselves by looking at key features, using context clues, asking questions, and rereading, for example. Nor did Jon consciously think that he would use these strategies with his brothers himself: in other words, he did not ask the boys questions or point out text features to them. Instead, Jon reported that he would re-state the content of the text to his brothers to help them with comprehension. Once again, Jon illustrated that he did not think to use reading strategies to aid in text comprehension outside of the context in which he learned those strategies. For these outside texts, he thought entirely in terms of content.

Conclusion of results regarding comprehension. Jon's reading comprehension improved one full year and was paralleled by an increase in the purposeful and conscious use of reading strategies that have been shown to aid comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002). He verbalized ways that he could have applied these strategies to his content areas; however, he did not do so except for on atypical occasions when it was required by the history teacher. In the final analysis, Jon's approach to various disciplines echoed his teachers': he thought entirely in terms of content with little or no attention to the literacy skills required to actively engage in that content. When Jon was at home, he did not think to use comprehension strategies to make meaning of texts there, either. Ultimately, he used these cognitive skills only in the context in which they were learned.

Motivation

Jon's overall motivation to read—indicated by how much he wanted to read, how much he liked doing it, and how often he read of his own volition—significantly increased as the school year progressed, as measured by questions from McKenna and Kear's (1999) Attitude Survey and Gambrell, et al.'s (1999) Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey. Jon was

motivated to read and write both at school and at home, and the most salient motivators for him were (a) grades, (b) his Native American culture, (c) his interest in sports, (d) his friends, (e) his teachers, (f) his mother and (g) his immediate physical surroundings.

Grades. Jon's primary motivation to read and write texts in school was simply for the grade. Jon himself says it best: "I just participated to get an A basically, and yeah. Just enough to get me by." In practice, this motivator conflicted with Jon's comprehension. As I observed him take a test in science, for example, I witnessed as he looked off of the paper of the "smart" girl who sat next to him several times. This coping strategy demonstrated that he was concerned with receiving a good grade rather than with measuring what he had learned. On a similar vein, in math, I analyzed page after page of assignments on which Jon received 100%—in fact, on all of the year's assignments, Jon only received "minus one" once. I therefore was puzzled when I saw that Jon's math test scores were abysmally low, ranging from twenty to fifty percent. The discrepancy was explained when I observed Jon's math class: the students graded all of the assignments themselves. Jon, whose primary concern was to "get an A," gave himself perfect scores on all of his work. The teacher, in turn, did not grade the assignments on whether or not the problems were completed, but on whether or not the student wrote his or her grade on the top of the paper and circled it. At the beginning of the year, Jon was frustrated that he failed seven math assignments because he put the score on top but did not draw a circle around it, or because he put the circled score in the middle of the paper instead of on the top. By the end of the year, however, he had learned what he needed to do to "get an A" and he did it: put a perfect score on the top of each paper and circle it. He did so, regardless of how well he actually comprehended the material. In his own words, he knew how to do "just enough to get me by."

In sum, Jon was motivated to read and write many in-school texts primarily for the grade. When it came to school assignments, he did not talk about reading or writing as a means of learning or understanding material, or as a means of personal enrichment, but rather he viewed reading and writing exclusively as a vehicle for him to earn high marks. This all-consuming goal had weighty ramifications for how much effort he was willing to put into reading and writing in-school texts.

While pursuit of this goal was an end in and of itself, there were intimations at times that Jon wanted to earn high grades for another reason as well: for acceptance into college and success in his future. Jon's mother belabored this point in our first interview: "What do I want for him in life? I want him to succeed. I want him to go further than what his parents have done." Jon's dad interrupted this phone interview from the background with an emphatic, "That's right." Jon's mother then continued, "Go through college, get a degree in something he loves...he would do better, way better, than what I've done." The mother then noted that she was in resource as a child, and her husband had dyslexia and was now just learning to read well along with his three sons. To Jon's parents, college was the ticket out of a lot of the troubles they had faced in their own lives, including financial stress.

Jon's interviews occasionally echoed his parents' sentiments on the importance of college, and he saw his grade point average as a way for him to be accepted to local universities. He underscored this idea when he remarked that he would try harder in school in ninth grade than he did in eighth and seventh grade because he knew his grades would then "count." Because his final grades in his first two years at Hillside would not go on an official transcript shown to colleges, they were less important (though still highly valued) to Jon. Jon did not only see high

scores as an objective in and of themselves, then, but also as a way to secure his future. When his grades are viewed in this context, Jon's need to earn high scores takes on a sense of urgency.

However, it should be noted that whether the grades were an end in and of themselves, or whether they had significance in relation to the future, Jon's emphasis was on them alone. Rather than saying that learning to write persuasively in English would prepare him to be a lawyer (a profession that interested him), or that learning how to conduct experiments in science would help him understand difficult labs in college, he instead focused on the grades he wanted to earn in each of his classes. To him, the grades, and not the transferable skills, would open the door to future success. His focus was shifted almost entirely away from comprehension to the earning of a score—and in practice, the two were not necessarily always synonymous or even closely connected. Thus, Jon strove to earn a good grade more earnestly than he tried to comprehend the material in each of his classes.

Native American culture. Jon's Native American culture motivated him to read and write texts both in and out of school. His advisory teacher noted,

Every Friday for the last two quarters, I asked students to write on a creative writing prompt...for example, I asked them to tell me something they're passionate about, tell me something they're bugged about. Whatever Jon wrote about, he incorporated the fact that he was Native American. Like I say, *every* assignment was tied into his heritage. He's pretty proud of that.

As Jon's English and reading teacher, I wholeheartedly concur. Jon's ethnicity was at the core of his identity, and he was eager to write about it. Example after example presented itself in Jon's writings. For instance, when I asked the students, "what makes you *you*," he answered in his

journal: “Things that make me me is...I am a native dancer. I feel like Dancing & Native Pride is in me.” In response to other prompts, he wrote,

If I had to compair myself to an animal it would be an...Eagle. Because when I dance in powwows I’m quick, graceful, And swift. Even when I Race BMX.

What I value the most is my native dance suit. Cause my grandma made it and she put alot of time and money into it. And My grandma said that I’m getting better and better at dancing.

The greatest Idea I have herd of was when I had the Idea to create a light weight long Bow. And it had kite string for strings. (Key: using the natural environment.)...The Bow represents hunter. The Bow has been past down to me by my Ancestors.

When I see my family in the future, we are all happy. We were gathered at a powwow in Cedar City. As I got older I became a Traditional dancer...Hunting is a way of life. We would always hunt Buffalo the old school way using home made bows and arrows. I could make them with my mad wood making skills.

When presented with open-ended questions, Jon frequently wrote about his Native American heritage, and these responses were often longer than the required length of the assignment. The longest piece of writing that he wrote all year in any of his classes was the chapter in his autobiography about his heritage. This chapter began with describing his deep roots: “My heritage dates back basically to the beginning of time. I am Native American; my tribes that I am from are the Navajo and Paiute tribes of Utah.” In short, Jon’s culture motivated him to write, and he often would write more than was required for a grade if the subject was his ancestry.

Jon, the only Native American in his school, was also motivated to share his writings about his culture with others. When I asked the students what types of writing prompts they

would like to write about and discuss as a class, Jon suggested, “What is your heritage? And what do you think of it? What kind of dance or dancing do you like? And why? What do you think of when the word Native Americans is said?” These suggestions indicate that Jon not only wanted to write about his culture, but he wanted to share and discuss the subject of these writings with others. I took one of Jon’s suggestions by using the writing prompt about heritage one day in class. One student raised her hand and pronounced, “I am a full-blooded American.” When I questioned her about what she meant, the class was led into a discussion about immigration. I concluded by asking, “Who are the only people who can say they are full-blooded Americans?” A student called out, “Jon.” Jon then raised his hand and proclaimed, “I am a full-blooded American.” In part, he was motivated to write about his culture because he was proud of it and he wanted to publish it to others.

Jon gave further indications that he wanted to write about his culture so he could make it known to his schoolmates. One day in November, he walked up to me after class and gave me a piece of paper titled “Jump Start Suggestion.” (I began class each day with a writing prompt called Jump Start while I played music related to the subject students were studying.) Jon wanted the class to write about and discuss the following subject: “If you were Native American and a native dancer, what kind of dance would you do? And what do you think dance means?” This piece of paper then included a list of vocabulary words and their definitions. For example, “grassdancer: they danced to stomp down the tall buffalo grass...loopdancer: they tell a story about the circle of life.” Jon wrote this list to share his culture with the class and with me. Jon therefore wrote about his Native American culture, not only because it was a subject that interested him personally, but because he wanted to publish his identity and to educate others regarding his culture.

Jon wanted to publish his culture in other ways as well. When I asked him to write a mission statement for his life (which he titled “A Native Within”), Jon asserted that one of his six goals in life was to “speak with dance and not in words and writing.” To Jon, then, native dancing was a means of self-expression comparable to writing yet more valuable. In accordance with this view, Jon explained the symbolism in a variety of native dances to my English classes as he showed them a video, and he gave me a burned CD of traditional Cree songs so that I could play it for the class during jump start writing. He also informed the principal of the dates of powwows in which he was dancing so that she could announce them to the student body, and he performed for them himself in the school talent show. Inspired by Jon, another girl in his English class brought in pictures of a powwow she had attended and showed them to everybody. Jon wanted to publish his culture, not only using a print writing system developed by non-Indians, but using mediums that were true to “old school ways”: native music and dancing. His peers, in turn, responded positively.

Jon’s culture not only motivated him to write and publish at school, but it also encouraged him to read and write privately at home. His parents took him to the local library where he checked out books about Piute words. He then wrote vocabulary lists and studied them voraciously. Jon also scoured his social studies textbook for information about Indians and then wrote a thirteen-page narrative about their history without ever showing it to his history teacher for credit or praise. He frequently visited websites with powwow schedules and could cite the addresses to several of them offhand. He wrote the recipes for Native American dishes and gave them to his grandmother. Additionally, he created and distributed flyers to me to announce upcoming powwows in which he was performing. In sum, Jon’s culture was a profound motivator: it caused him to read, to write, and to express himself in other ways that were

distinctly Native American. Jon wanted to read and write about Native American culture at school so he could share his identity with his peers, but he also wanted to read and write about it at home for personal interest and perhaps for coming to terms with his identity himself.

As the official writer for his friends' band, Jon composed song lyrics that particularly illustrated identity development as a motivation for his writing. In a song called "Runnin' out of Time," Jon wrote,

I'm Runnin' out of time
 To find out who I am
 Runnin & Runnin all over the Place,
 looking & searching for my own face.
 Asking around if they know me
 Im the only one left on my family tree.
 Trying to find Answers to all of my questions.
 My head is spinning is so many directions.

In these lyrics, Jon wrote of trying "to find out who I am" with a sense of great urgency, and he associated his identity with a dying family tree, or with his ancestry. At the beginning of the year in an interview, he said, "[My culture] influences me a lot because I don't really know how to put it into words but it's cool." Perhaps Jon was motivated to write and read as a way of "trying to find Answers to all of my questions," questions in part about being Native American in a family that was just beginning to reinstate Navajo traditions that the mother had previously forgotten. (Jon had been a grass dancer for only eight months at the time of this study.) Indeed, by the end of the school year and after much writing, reading, and speaking with others about his culture, Jon *had* found a way to put his culture into words: being Native American meant

powwows, hunting, depressing beans, time with cousins who were like sisters, beading sessions with his grandmother, grass-dancing, drum-beating, dark skin, soaring eagles, respect for elders, honoring the land, working hard, and being a full-blooded American. These song lyrics suggest that Jon's constant reading and writing about his Native American culture were motivated in part by coming to terms with his identity.

Interest in sports. Due to the frequency and volume of Jon's writings about being a Navajo and Piute, I initially concluded that this aspect of his life was the greatest motivator for him to read and write out-of-school texts. I also thought it was a significant but secondary (to grades) motivator for him to read and write many in-school texts. Contrary to my expectations, Jon corrected me during our member check by informing me that sports were equally as important to him as his culture, and that they motivated him to read and write out-of-school texts (and some in-school texts) just as much as his heritage did. Indeed, as I reread the data I found that Jon read more sports magazines than he did Piute vocabulary books, though he wrote more about his Native American heritage than his participation in sports.

In any case, regardless of each of the interests' relative importance to his reading and writing, it is clear that sports played a significant role in motivating Jon both to read and to write. Baseball and BMX (bicycle motorcross) racing were Jon's favorites. In fact, the only type of text he read consistently throughout the entire school year was his BMX magazine, as reported by both his mother and himself. Even when late-night baseball games and practices prevented Jon from returning home before 10:15 p.m., he would wake up early in the morning and read from his new biking magazine over breakfast the next day. Though Jon stated he liked both biking and baseball equally, he rarely if ever read about the latter sport except for an occasional perusal of the *Sports* section over morning cereal.

When opportunities arose for Jon to write in response to open-ended questions in school, he often opted to write about baseball and biking, though he was not self-motivated to write sports plays or other sports-related texts at home. Most of Jon's open-ended writing prompts came from Jon's reading and language arts classes. For example, when I asked my students to write a concrete poem, Jon responded with a lyrical poem in the shape of a baseball diamond,

1, 2, 3 strikes go past me

too fast, too slow, Just Right, 3 balls, 2 strikes, gotta stay alive & fight

swing once, swing twice, swing once more, 'crack' you can hear the crowd roar

15 to 15 is the score to win we need just 1 more

Jon also often wrote about baseball and biking in response to daily writing prompts. Though he completed many of his school assignments, including these prompts, primarily for the grade, he would sometimes write more than the required amount or do extra (ungraded) revising of his work, perhaps indicating that to some degree he was also inherently motivated to write by the subject about which he was writing.

Hunting was an additional sport that influenced Jon's reading and writing. Unlike his love of baseball and biking, which manifested itself only in language arts and reading classes, he drew heavily from his passion for hunting while creating his science project. Though Hillside students worked on one other small-scale science project throughout the year, this science project in question was designed to be extensive: much of the student's grade for the quarter depended on it, and it determined whether or not students made the highly-competitive district Science Fair. Students completed worksheets, a poster, a report, and a reflection on their findings; in short, they knew that their science fair projects were a big deal. Jon opted to investigate the effects of shooting different-sized bullets from different distances at different-sized objects, an

inquiry that arose from his personal experiences in hunting with his dad. In interviews with me, he indicated a high level of engagement as he explained his results, in contrast to other assignments we discussed. In fact, when I asked him about the second, smaller-scale science project, he did not answer that question but instead returned to this first project, which had interested him more.

Though Jon’s science teacher described him as a largely unnoticeable student who “can sometimes fall through the cracks,” she could not help but pay attention to his science project, which placed in the schoolwide Science Fair and almost made it to the district level. At the end of the year, when I asked her to talk about her overall experiences with Jon, she remarked on his project from the second quarter of the year, “He had me talk to his dad about his science fair project. He likes guns and understands a lot about them.” In her end-of-year summary of him, then, Jon’s understanding of guns stood out to her and was the only content that she explicitly mentioned that he had learned well. In this project, he went above and beyond what was required of him to get an A. In other words, he broke his own rule of doing “just enough to get me by” when he encountered a project that he connected to his own sports interests. His love of guns motivated him to write well and extensively, though he reported that he did not read any materials to supplement the science project.

Jon’s interests in hunting in the great outdoors also motivated him to read and write in language arts and reading classes. When students selected books to share with Hillside’s student body in a school-wide book fair, Jon opted to exhibit *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen (1987), a book about a thirteen-year-old who encounters several animals in his attempts to survive alone in the wilderness after his plane crashed. When Jon selected a book to present as a book talk to his reading class, he chose Jack London’s (1905) *White Fang*, a novel involving shooting and

survival in the wilderness in the face of hostile animals. Jon's mother also noted that her son sporadically read about deer hunting at home. Thus, Jon's interests in hunting intersected with certain school projects and provided him with an impetus for his reading both for pleasure at home and for assignments at school.

Jon's affinity for hunting not only motivated him to read, but inspired him to write as well. Oftentimes, his narratives about hunting were related to his Native American culture, highlighting the point that the different activities that interested and motivated him often intertwined. For example, Jon wrote a four-page, single-spaced, ten-point font story about an Indian family who hunted for bears, when the original length requirement for the assignment was a two-page handwritten story. Excited about his work, Jon turned in his story early but later retyped it and revised it of his own volition because he noticed some errors he had made and he wanted to turn in impeccable work. Eager to share his story on hunting and Native Americans, he was one of ten students in reading class who volunteered to read their stories in a read-around (where students moved their desks in circle facing each other and shared their work). After his story was posted on the wall, during parent teacher conferences he proudly showed his parents what he had done. Once again, Jon exhibited that he was highly motivated to read, write, speak, and share about things that mattered to him: in this case, a story combining his ethnicity and one of his favorite pastimes.

Friends. These favorite pastimes not only intersected with Jon's heritage, but also with his friends. To be sure, Jon's friends were a part of his recreational life as well as his literate life. On his cell phone, he constantly received and read text messages from his friends about activities they wanted to participate in together: movies, biking, baseball, and more. It was not uncommon for our interviews to be temporarily suspended by Jon's beeping or ringing cell. When I asked

him how many text messages he received or sent per day, he estimated that he communicated with about twenty different people. This continual (and—at Hillside—illicit) exchange between friends meant Jon was motivated to constantly read and write to friends each day, even if it meant sneaking away to an unsupervised corner of the hall or punching numbers in class with his hands in his pocket or covered by a book. Jon also sent Instant Messages to his friends almost daily; even on days when he felt very ill, he still made it a priority to get online.

Though Jon’s peers motivated him to read and write with each other, they did not have any discernable impact on his reading traditional print texts outside of school. Although I tried to harness the potential of peer influence in class by asking students to share books they loved with each other, Jon did not act on any recommendations from his peers. Similarly, I witnessed Jon’s close friends enthusiastically endorsing certain books while they were together in the library, but Jon never expressed any desire or inclination to read them. The last time that Jon read a book recommended by a friend was in the fourth grade. Therefore, at this point in his life peers did not motivate him to read specific books for leisure.

In contrast, according to Jon, peers played a vital and even central role in motivating him to engage in school-sponsored forms of literacy. His friends’ influence can perhaps best be illustrated by his grade point average. Jon’s grades ranged from A’s to an F last year, with every grade in between, giving him a cumulative GPA of 2.8. In contrast, during his eighth grade year his lowest grade was a B, accompanied by many A’s, giving him a cumulative GPA of 3.5. When I asked what caused the overall improvement in grades this year, he was quick to respond that he had better friends who cared about school. Jon’s mom echoed this statement in my final interview with her. She remarked that “he’s starting to understand more and comprehend.” When

I asked to what she attributed this comprehension, she responded, “I guess his new friends, actually, cause he would like to do as well as they do.”

In a general sense, then, Jon’s eighth-grade set of friends had the general attitude that school was a worthwhile endeavor, even though many of them viewed it as being painful. During a focus group, when I asked Jon’s friends what they talked about when they mentioned school, I received responses such as, “It’s boring.” “Yeah.” “How bad it sucks.” “Boring.” “Boring.” “And it’s ugly.” “We talk about how bad school is cause we have to suffer.” Hence, Jon’s newfound friends did not necessarily have an affinity for school that rubbed off on Jon and motivated him to read and write in his various classes. However, these friends did believe in the importance of school and conscientiously completed their homework assignments, even though they disliked them.

Their attitude toward reading in school was similar: they did not like to do it, but they thought it was important, and they viewed themselves as reading more in their future. Their attitudes toward school can perhaps best be summed up in the following interaction:

Amy: How important do you guys think reading is?

Jon’s Friend: It’s important, but it’s not fun.

Other Friend: A necessary in life.

Other Friend: Kinda how school is...it’s important, but it’s not really fun.

Other Friend: Yeah.

In the final analysis, Jon’s friends modeled for him that school had a purpose and was a valuable, though not enjoyable, endeavor. In contrast, Jon’s friends in the seventh-grade did not even see school as being valuable; they did not participate in their classes and encouraged Jon to do likewise.

Interestingly, all of the friends that Jon mentioned he had in the seventh grade were boys, but the majority of the friends that he had in the eighth grade were girls. All of the people who helped him with specific school assignments were females. For example, when I said, “Tell me about history,” Jon responded, “The girl that sits next to me kinda helps me out a lot, cause, well, she helps me out a lot cause I don’t really get... understand the history.” Similarly, when I asked him how he figured out problems in science, he responded, “The girl that sits next to me.”

Throughout the year, Jon pinpointed four specific girls (and no boys) who helped him with assignments in science and who rotated according to the teacher’s seating chart. One of these girls had a 4.0 GPA and was his only friend who unreservedly loved reading in her spare time. He often opted to partner with her on assignments in reading class as well, and after school the two went to the movies together on occasion. The other three girls who helped him in science were all members of the National Junior Honor Society. Jon had developed an elaborate social system for reading and writing with these girls in science; to fill in their science packets, Jon and the girls would go back and forth finding answers to fill in the blanks.

In both science and history, Jon did not move himself to sit by these girls; serendipitously, each teacher placed him by these high-achieving students who later became his friends. In fact, near the end of the year, the best friends of two of the girls confided in me that each one had a crush on Jon. Hence, Jon’s relationships with the females in his classes often extended beyond just “the girl that sits next to me,” as evidenced by the fact that Jon made them birthday cards, wrote them notes, and began to include them in his circle of friends whom he text messaged and Instant Messaged. These high-achieving girls developed personal relationships with Jon, which motivated him to participate in reading and writing in school to be seen as a worthy friend in their eyes.

Annie (pseudonym), one of Jon's friends from science class who was attracted to him, influenced the level at which he read and wrote in-school texts in another way. After school one day, Jon approached me and asked me which English class I thought he should take the following year. Though he was currently in regular-level English, I said he would do well in an Honors course if he was willing to put forth the time and effort in writing weekly essays and reading more materials in a shorter span of time. Jon hesitated and was vacillating between whether he should take the accelerated or on-level class. Annie, one of my Honors students, was also in the room at that time, and she insisted that Jon take Honors English so the two of them could be in the same class. The next morning, Jon asked me to sign the form indicating that I recommended him for Honors English, although he muttered that he would transfer out of it next year if he was not placed in the same class as Annie.

After he had been in the ninth grade a few weeks, I asked Jon if he and Annie were in the same English class. He said no, but noted that he had decided to stay in the Honors class anyway because he had made new friends there. This class was the first accelerated academic course that Jon had taken in junior high—previously, he had been in pre-algebra, a subject that the math teacher said was below level for eighth-graders, and reading, a course that was reserved for students who scored at or below average on standardized tests. Thus, a recommendation by a friend—one who valued reading and writing in school—influenced the both the types and the frequency of reading and writing which Jon would do as a ninth grader. By placing himself in an Honors class for the first time, Jon put himself in a position to frequently read and write challenging materials with people who tended to value in-school types of literacy. A casual conversation with a friend therefore tremendously influenced Jon's in-school reading and writing.

In all, Jon's friends—both male and female—influenced his out-of-school reading and writing in the sense that Jon wrote to them frequently using various technological mediums. In turn, he read what they wrote to him. This type of communication found its way into the school illegally, where Jon expanded his forms of communication to include handwritten notes passed secretly back and forth in class, this time mostly to girls. Jon's friends thus motivated him to read and write texts that were not school-sanctioned. However, the influence of Jon's friends on out-of-school literacy practices stopped there. He did not take their recommendations to read books or even websites, often preferring instead to browse sites and printed texts on Native Americans. Where Jon's friends made the biggest difference was in school-sanctioned forms of literacy: his friends encouraged him to value reading and writing in school and to push himself beyond the types of assignments that he had previously done. Jon's friends therefore were a central motivator for him to read and to write in school.

Teachers. Perhaps surprisingly, teachers seemed to play a minimal role in motivating Jon to read and to write in-school or out-of-school texts. In all classes, Jon was motivated to read and write for that particular subject because he wanted to earn a good grade, regardless of whether or not he liked the teacher or regardless of the type of texts that the teacher assigned for reading and writing. As a case in point, throughout the year in various interviews Jon spoke poorly of his math teacher: “[Math] is kind of not that fun cause the teacher’s kind of a little whack. He forgets a lot of stuff a lot...I don’t really like how he teaches you cause he like skips around. He’s talking about one thing and then goes to another...he’d say [things] in a confusing way so then I wouldn’t get it.” Jon continued to express his frustration about how the math teacher lost assignments and how he graded students’ multiple choice tests with keys that he admitted were faulty. He further stated that the teacher often lectured but nobody listened; the teacher did not

stand up from his chair in front of the room or give students assignments other than textbook pages and worksheets. Irrespective of whether Jon’s perceptions of the teacher were accurate, it is clear that Jon did not find the teacher or his assignments to be engaging or motivational, nor did he have a positive relationship with him. Yet, when I asked him what class he did the most writing in throughout the year, he said that it was math, which required him to write “daily chores,” or starter activities, and an assignment of textbook problems each day. Jon completed all of his assignments in that class with rare, if any, exceptions and was undeterred by what he considered to be a poor teacher. Hence, the teacher was not a determining factor in whether Jon was motivated to read or write in math.

Conversely, Jon did not read and write more for teachers with whom he had a positive relationship. For example, Jon repeated in numerous interviews that he admired the history teacher Ms. McAllister (pseudonym) who came to Hillside during the second quarter of the school year after his first social studies teacher left the classroom to become a school counselor. I heard Jon speak positively of Ms. McAllister to his peers; he himself also told me that he recommended her to his younger friends who wanted to know which teachers to take the following year. When I observed Jon’s classes, the history teacher, the woods teacher, and me were the only ones to hold one-on-one conversations with him during the class period. Ms. McAllister also often assigned Jon writing assignments that allowed him choices of topics and format; she gave him the type of “writing [where] you can, like, use your imagination,” to use Jon’s own words. This type of assignment was exactly what Jon said he preferred. Yet despite the individualized attention and the engaging assignments that Jon read and wrote in history, he was not motivated to do more writing for this teacher than for others. In fact, Ms. McAllister had a leveled grading system where students could choose the amount of assignments they wanted to

turn in for an A, B, or a C, and Jon—who usually shot for the minimum he could do to get an A—was content with doing the minimum reading and writing he could do to earn a B. Hence, the respect and affinity he held for the history teacher did not translate into an increased motivation to excel in her class by doing additional reading and writing.

It should be noted that Jon wrote extra assignments, or assignments beyond the required length, in both English and history, classes in which he had a friendly relationship with the teachers. The thirteen-page story he wrote about the history of Native Americans, based on information he synthesized from his history textbook, is a case in point. Yet Jon attributed his motivation to write this story exclusively to his own personal interest in his heritage, and not to his relationship with the teacher. Though teachers may have occasionally assigned writing and reading coursework that sparked his interest and inherently motivated him, the subject of the texts was his impetus for writing and reading—not the teacher-student relationship.

Just as teachers played a negligible role in whether or not Jon read or wrote in school, they played little role in motivating at-home reading and writing for pleasure. My reading class, the one course specifically designed to increase students' motivation to read at home, is a perfect illustration of this principle. Though I gave book talks on subjects that interested him every two to three weeks—ranging from *Scary Stories* (Schwartz, 2001) to *Brian's Winter* (Paulsen, 1996) to books about baseball or Native Americans or woodworking—he did not check out one of them to read for personal interest at home. In reading class, his peers and adults from the community also gave book talks on a variety of interesting subjects, but they, too, did not influence Jon's at-home reading. Nor did he check out books from the well-stocked school library on our class's multiple excursions there. Both other teachers and myself had little influence on what Jon read and wrote beyond the boundaries of school assignments.

Yet, though teachers may not have influenced whether or not this student read or wrote, they had an all-powerful say in what and how he read and wrote in school. Naturally, Jon wrote what teachers assigned: directed readings in science consisting of fill-in-the-blank and short-response worksheets based on the textbook; numeric problems in math; and a variety of primary and secondary sources in English and history requiring both convergent and open-ended responses. In science, writing most often consisted of quickly reading through the textbook to look for sentences and then filling in the blanks with the appropriate word (or reading off a partner's worksheet), sometimes circumventing comprehension. Writing in science also meant reading teacher's notes off of the overhead and copying them verbatim. On the other hand, writing in social studies meant reading the textbook and primary sources, then writing a series of journal entries through the eyes of an escaped slave, requiring synthesis, inference, and imagination. Writing and reading in history was also coupled with discussion, role-playing, activity, and debate. Thus, while teachers may not have played a role in motivating Jon to read or to write, their importance should not be at all discounted or negated. On the contrary, they largely determined the quality and depth of Jon's reading and writing experiences in school, since he did what they asked him to do.

Teachers played another vital role in Jon's schooled literacy practices: though the quality of teachers' instruction and their relationship with him did not determine whether or not Jon read or wrote, they controlled to a large extent whether or not Jon enjoyed those practices. Though motivation and affect often go hand in hand (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000)—that is, students are often motivated to participate in classes they enjoy—in Jon's case, the two were distinct. Even if Jon did not like reading and writing in school, he was resolved to do it: for social status with his newfound friends, for high grades, and, by extension, for entrance into college and into the life

his parents dreamed for him. In sum, Jon would have read and written regardless of what his teachers asked him to do.

However, in some classes it was evident that Jon enjoyed reading and writing more than in others. For example, I observed Jon smiling and laughing several times in English: in writing play scripts with friends, in whole-class discussions of a novel, in text-based activities, and more. At points, I, too, was laughing so hard during some instructional activities that tears came to my eyes and I had a hard time speaking. When he won review games with his friends on more than one occasion, he threw his arms up in the air and yelled a triumphant, “Oh!,” indicating a level of emotional engagement with the subject. It was not rare for him to raise his hand several times in one class period, undaunted even after he gave incorrect answers. In contrast, I did not observe Jon or his math teacher smile in pre-algebra, nor did I observe Jon volunteer to participate in the class. Thus, based on his body language, Jon was more involved reading and writing in some instructional contexts than in others. Jon’s affective orientation for each academic subject was largely determined by the teacher alone, as evidenced in his autobiography,

This year, the classes are a lot cooler than the others like wood shop, the best class ever! ...[the teacher] is the best teacher ever! Ms. Wilson is the best reading and English teacher around. She works just as hard as you do to help you get a good grade.

In this passage, Jon connected his favorite subjects explicitly and primarily to the teacher of each respective subject. Though he did not read and write often in woods, he liked the subject largely because of the teacher who smiled constantly, who gave him one-on-one attention, who loved his craft, who praised Jon in front of the class often, who knew what activities students participated in outside of school, and who often put his arm around students’ shoulders. Hence, the nature of teachers’ instruction and the quality of their relationship with him influenced whether or not he

liked the subject, including the writing and reading done therein. Though teachers did not determine whether Jon was motivated to read or write, they did control the quality of those reading and writing experiences and the extent to which he liked doing them.

Family. Jon’s family, especially his mother Marita (pseudonym), motivated him to read texts both for school and for leisure while he was at home. Marita directed Jon and his two younger brothers to read from twenty to thirty minutes per day as soon as they got home from school, a mandate given because her two elementary-age boys’ teachers assigned them to read 2000 minutes at home over a given time span. The types of reading done in this time period varied: Jon was just as likely to read his BMX magazine as he was to read textbooks for school assignments. Marita also occasionally asked Jon to tutor his younger brothers by aiding them in comprehending difficult texts. Furthermore, she sometimes took her children to the local library to check out books. In these ways, Marita motivated her children to read by requiring that they do so.

Marita also motivated Jon to read through her example and book recommendations. To understand the influence of Jon’s mother, it is first important to understand the singular nature of his relationship with her. He stated in numerous interviews and writings that his mother was the family member with whom he most identified, primarily because she was the source of his Navajo and Piute heritage. Jon’s father was Caucasian, and his two younger brothers were light-skinned, in contrast to Jon’s own darker skin. Jon named this reason when explaining that he felt a special closeness to his mother. He also attended powwows with his mother’s family, and he considered two of his cousins from his mother’s side to be his sisters. When Jon’s aunt substituted for one of my classes, she confided in me that Jon was “nothing like his father” and

that he took after his mother. Thus, Jon's unique connection with Marita made her a key role model in his life, and he clearly looked up to her.

Jon observed his mother set an example as the avid reader in her home. Despite a rocky start with reading in elementary school, Marita said, "And then, after that, actually I love reading now. It's something I would rather do than sit and watch TV. I could sit and get lost in a book for hours and days if I could." One evening when I called Marita's home, I apologized and asked if I had woken her up. She responded that she was "just reading." Jon must have witnessed his mother reading often, and he followed her footsteps not only by reading, but by reading the specific books that she recommended.

In fact, Jon valued his mother's opinions on books more than he did his friends' or his teachers'. For example, when Jon was faced with a decision about which reading materials to select for a reading project, he chose *White Fang* (London, 1905) because his mother liked it. On a visit to the school library, he searched for *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) *Call of the Wild* (1903), and *The Yearling* (Rawlings, 1967) on the computer, again because his mother enjoyed them when she was his age. Though Marita was not computer-savvy and did not recommend websites or other e-texts to Jon (in our interviews, she said of chat rooms: "I don't know what it's called...the chat thing?"), she was influential in Jon's traditional print reading habits. He trusted her taste implicitly, and her commendations of books motivated him to seek them out on his own.

Marita additionally encouraged literacy in the home by making commonly-read books a focal point of discussion and bonding time between the two of them. She remarked, "He's been reading a couple of my stories...he read *Skipping Christmas* and he's also read a bunch of books on Native American stuff. We'll talk about [the books] sometimes." Thus, not only did Marita

set aside time each day for reading, but she also used a host of books to initiate interactions with her son. Jon could discuss his Native American culture with his mother using a text as a starting point: asking her questions, sharing new vocabulary words, and further clarifying for himself what it meant to be a Navajo and Piute. Thus, Jon's unique relationship with his mother was an ideal context for discussions that served to mediate and shape his identity as a Native American.

Physical surroundings. Jon's immediate physical surroundings motivated him to read and discuss books. Not surprisingly, if Jon was in a print-rich environment where he had access to a variety of texts, he was more likely to skim through them and discuss them as opposed to when he was in print-scarce environments. Though Jon did not look through my own well-stocked classroom library of his own volition, he took pleasure in looking through shelves of books in our school media center on our reading class's visits there. He spontaneously picked up books, held them up to his friends, and discussed them—saying, for example, that he'd seen the movie on the book and that it was good. His friends, too, found books on shelves to discuss with him: one girl showed him *Among the Brave* (Haddix, 2004), remarked that she loved the *Shadow Children* series from which it came, and outlined elements of the storyline. Jon's group of friends read the backs of novels to each other and gave commentaries evaluating the books. Similar events happened during the school's Book Fair: Jon held up a book, laughed at its cover and shape, and talked to a female friend briefly about its contents. Hence, print-rich environments provided a context wherein Jon was motivated to spontaneously read and discuss texts with others.

Jon's pre- and post- Reading Attitude Survey (Gambrell, et al., 1995) likewise revealed that his immediate physical surroundings influenced his desire to read. The test revealed a significant increase in motivation to read as a whole, but one question demonstrated the most

notable change: “How do you feel about going to a library or to a store that sells books and magazines?” During the first week of school, Jon responded “indifferent.” In contrast, on the last week of school Jon circled the highest word on the scale, “happy,” and then wrote to the side in the margin: “excited!” In sum, on an instrument designed to measure Jon’s motivation to read, the question that earmarked the greatest increase in motivation was the one related to physical context.

In our final interview, I showed Jon his pre- and post- test inventory results and asked him to tell me about the change. He attributed his excitement about libraries and bookstores to his aunt, who had started taking him to Barnes and Noble that year. He reported browsing through the mystery and adventure sections, sipping hot chocolate, and plopping in a chair to read books which his aunt would sometimes later buy for him. He and a female friend also praised the store together after school one day. Thus, being in an inviting print-rich environment fostered Jon’s overall desire to read and increased the likelihood that he would read while he was in that milieu.

Jon’s overall increase in motivation to read also mirrored an increase to access to texts in the home. At the beginning of the year, Jon did not have a working computer or many books. He named a handful of them that were his own. When I asked him about why he squinted in all of his classes, he explained that his parents had a lot of expenses to tackle before they could afford to pay for his glasses. Jon’s parents, then, addressed essential expenses first before investing in books. However, throughout the course of Jon’s junior high experiences, Jon’s mother was hired for a more lucrative job and his aunt started buying printed materials for his family. For example, she often bought the newspaper for them, which Jon then read over his morning breakfast. As he began to grass dance and to inquire into his heritage, his mom took him to the library with

greater frequency. Understandably, when Jon was surrounded with greater numbers of texts, he could read more; he could not read printed materials without access to them. Consequently, being surrounded by tempting books increased his motivation to read them.

Conclusion of results regarding motivation. In returning to the original research question—what motivated the student to read in regards to a separate reading class—the answer must be that his motivation cannot rightly be interpreted in regards to this class. Too many factors overshadowed it: his heritage, his love of sports, his family, his new friends, his desire to achieve social status, and his immediate access to engaging texts. In fact, teachers played an inconsequential role in motivating him to read or write texts on his own. The same holds true for myself as the teacher of Jon’s reading class: despite my purposeful attempts to create a context that inspired a love of literacy, Jon was not necessarily more motivated to read or write. At home, he did not read any books or magazines he learned about in reading class or in any class for that matter. Nor did our class’s discussions of texts in other content areas motivate him to be a more thoughtful or engaged reader therein: his desire to earn an A was the subsuming motivator in this case. In conclusion, attending the separate reading class did not motivate Jon to read more or to read differently at home or in school.

However, while participating in the reading course may not have increased his love of print, it did not decrease it, either. While many middle school students increasingly report disaffection with reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995)—some of them attributing it to irrelevant, forced, or boring reading experiences (McKenna, 2001)—Jon became more motivated to read as his eighth grade year progressed. A host of factors in his life combined together to make reading and writing personally important and relevant to him. The frequency with which Jon smiled, laughed, commented, and volunteered to participate in activities in reading class also

indicated that he was engaged in reading, writing, and speaking about print within the four walls of the classroom, even if he did not carry the class as a reason for being motivated beyond those boundaries. In this regard, the reading class may have been a minimal success in providing Jon with engaging, positive experiences with a variety of texts. Nonetheless, on the whole it cannot be said that the course itself played a role in Jon’s overall motivation to read and to write.

Perception

Just as Jon’s motivation to read throughout the year increased, so, too, did his sense of self-efficacy as a reader, as measured by Henk and Melnick’s (1999) Reader Self-Perception Scale. For example, at the onset of the year he classified himself as “an okay reader” who worried what other kids thought about his reading “every day” and who had trouble thinking of answers. In contrast, at the end of the year he deemed himself a “good reader” who only worried what other kids thought about his reading “once in a while” and who could always think of an answer.

Other indicators also suggested that Jon grew to be more confident in his ability to read and respond to texts; for example, he dramatically increased the number of times he participated in classes by volunteering to read aloud and by answering text-based questions. Though his increased participation could be perhaps be attributed to a whole host of factors—feeling more comfortable with the teachers and students in each class, wanting to “be a good example” as the participant in this case study, and developing generally as an adolescent—in part, he participated more because he felt competent to do so without fear that he would make embarrassing mistakes in front of his peers, whose opinion he valued highly. His science teacher, who also taught Jon as a seventh grader, noticed the change: she said he was more willing to ask and answer questions in class as opposed to his “introverted” behavior the previous year. Jon’s increased self-

confidence thus manifested itself not only in his self-perception scales but in his interactions in the classroom. This section will address (a) changes and consistencies in his own self-efficacy as a reader and writer, in addition to documenting (b) Jon’s peers’, (c) his teachers’, and (d) his parents’ perceptions of him as a reader and writer as well.

Jon’s self-perception. At the beginning of the year, Jon lacked confidence in his ability to access the information found in challenging texts; however, by the end of the year he was more self-assured in this area. The ways in which he positioned himself in regards to his peers best illustrated this shift in self-perception. In our first interviews, Jon viewed his peers as being more capable than him in terms of comprehending texts and writing responses to them. For example, he said of both of his history and science classes that he depended on the girl who sat next to him for answers, that he did not understand the material on his own, and that if this classroom neighbor moved, his only remaining recourse would be to guess answers. In his descriptions, he placed himself in a position of dependency on others, implying that they were better at figuring out texts than he was.

In the third quarter of the year, several interviews indicated a shift in how Jon positioned himself as a reader and writer in relation to his peers. Even when speaking of a girl whom he regarded as being highly intelligent—one who had a perfect grade point average and who loved reading—he viewed himself as her equal in making sense of texts in science and reading. “When I work with [this person], well, it’s kind of like on and off,” he explained. “I get answers by myself, and she gets answers by herself. And then if we’re both stuck on the same one we’ll both help each other out with that.” This quote reflects an improvement in Jon’s self-perception: he moved from being dependent to being interdependent in terms of reading and writing responses to texts.

In the final school quarter, Jon positioned himself differently yet again: this time as an independent reader and writer who helped his less capable peers. When speaking of math, his most difficult subject, he noted that he and his peers worked together to help each other on their assignments. Then he qualified his statement, “‘Cept mostly I help them.” Thus, by the end of the year, Jon moved from a continuum of being entirely dependent upon others in his attempts to access texts, to having others be dependent on him. His self-perception as a reader and responder grew as he positioned and measured himself against his peers.

Even so, Jon’s perceptions reached a plateau: he did not consider himself to be a “very good reader” on the perception scale; his own self views rested comfortably at “good.” In our end-of-year interview, Jon qualified the term “good” even further: when I asked him how he saw himself as a reader, he replied, “Pretty good reader. Not perfect, but pretty good.” According to this statement, in his own mind he was good at reading only with a caveat. While this response alone may be interpreted as a sign of humility, he echoed a similar sentiment in a different situation. During the final grading period of the school year, he won “Eagle of the Quarter,” a prestigious award given to a handful of Hillside’s best students as nominated and voted by their teachers. When I asked Jon to “tell me about Eagle of the Quarter,” he answered, “It was unexpected cause I didn’t think I was doing like really, really great, but I thought I was doing good, but not to get Eagle of the Quarter.” Once again, this reply revealed that the increase in Jon’s self-perception had a limit: in his mind, he could not have been exceptional or “really, really great”: at best, he was only a solid “good.” Thus, while numerous indicators revealed a marked increase in Jon’s self-perception as a reader, writer, and student, this increase had its ceiling as hovering above average but never scaling the heights to extraordinary.

Peers. Jon's peers, on the other hand, consistently viewed him as being a competent reader and writer throughout the school year. For example, in the first semester of Jon's health class, I observed nine students and Jon working together to deliver a presentation to their peers on a section of the textbook. The other students nominated Jon to be their sole speaker and counted on him to reliably reconstruct the information in the textbook to the rest of the class. They also trusted him to represent the rest of them when their own presentation grades were on the line. When somebody seated in the class asked another student in the group a question, she deferred it to Jon. Thus, though at the beginning of the year Jon viewed himself as being less capable of comprehending texts than those around him, his peers thought of him as a competent reader.

Similar situations recurred on many occasions in other classes as well. Another example, taken from my field notes while observing Jon's math class, highlights his peers' high esteem of him. That particular day, a substitute taught the lesson, a common occurrence due to the regular teacher's chronic eye problems. After the students completed their "daily chore" of adding fractions, one student asked, "How do you do these? I don't know how to do these." In response, the substitute retorted, "That's why you do them everyday." Following this interaction, the substitute continued on in unsuccessfully asking students for answers to other questions, but the student persisted in her quest for comprehension with rising irritation in her voice: "I don't know how to do these." "Well, you should," replied the teacher. "Someone should tell me," the student came back. "I can't just know the answers." Later in the day, as I was observing random classes to preserve Jon's confidentiality, this student whispered to me that her dead grandmother could have taught her more than that sub could have. To add to the sense of increasing frustration in the classroom, after the daily chore was finished, the substitute handed out a

worksheet which two students said was the hardest assignment they had ever received in this class.

Unable to turn to the stand-in teacher, one student came and knelt by Jon's desk to copy his answers. He asked Jon, "Did you even get it?" hoping to find some help. This student was a member of the National Junior Honor Society, and once he had copied off Jon's paper, another grade-conscious student came to this second student and in turn copied off of his paper. Thus, some students, especially those who were concerned with excelling academically, viewed Jon as somebody who could interpret math problems and write correct responses. They perceived him as a competent reader and writer of mathematics texts.

Likewise, numerous examples from my English and reading classes underscore the high esteem in which Jon's peers held his reading and writing abilities. For example, one day in English I was playing a Jeopardy review game in which students were divided into groups of four to compete against each other. The first team who held up the correct answer—related to organizational patterns of texts, various text features, and literary terms—would receive points and the right to choose the next category. I stipulated that each group should have a different person hold up the answer paper each time; otherwise, the team would be disqualified for that question. Jon's group leaned over his desk and asked him to write the answer every time; even when another student also wrote the answer on a separate piece of paper, the group still unfailingly chose Jon's answer sheet. To make it seem as though their group was rotating scribes as I had required, Jon would quickly write answers and then pass it off to another team member. Therefore, even in situations when Jon could be penalized for representing his group in writing, his team members still chose him as the most competent person to do so. Even their physical positioning—all swarmed around his desk—indicated that they saw him as the group leader.

Once again, they demonstrated that they perceived Jon as being competent at writing text-related responses.

In sum, a host of peers in different classes looked to him as a leader in terms of reading and writing skills in various content areas. In fact, several of Jon’s teachers noticed the diverse groups of friends—both male and female, “goth” and “preppie,” school-oriented and not-so-school oriented—who accepted and respected him. As his advisory teacher succinctly stated, “He can get along with different kinds of kids.” More often than not, in assignments involving reading and writing, these various students would gather around his desk, a physical indication of his central importance to the group. Furthermore, in collaborative assignments, they almost always selected him to be the scribe; even when other students wrote, he was usually the one to go back and fix their mistakes. Though Jon’s opinions of his own reading skills were low at the outset of this case study; by the end, they grew to resonate more with the beliefs his peers held about him all along: namely, that he was indeed a good reader, and one who could be relied on to construct solid interpretations of a variety of texts. Furthermore, they trusted him to write responses to texts in ways that would earn a respectable grade for all involved.

Teachers. Though Jon’s other teachers and I saw no sign that Jon’s peers viewed him with anything less than respect, these teachers’ perceptions of him as a reader and a writer fell into two different camps: those who viewed him as average—based upon the reading, writing, and speaking he did in their classes—and those who viewed him as exceptional. Two months into the school year, when I first approached Jon’s math teacher to ask him to pay special attention to Jon’s reading, writing, and speaking skills, the math teacher did not know who he was. It was not until January when the teacher could attach Jon’s name to a student in his classroom. He assessed Jon as being, “a common kid...just an ordinary kid. Nothing

exceptional.” According to this teacher, he had “no skill deficiencies” on the one hand, but was “not a math whiz” on the other. A comment by Jon’s second history teacher illustrated why perhaps the math teacher did not notice him at first: “He’s one of those students who is underneath the radar...one you can kind of forget about sometimes. I know this sounds awful.” Jon’s advisory teacher concurred, “[Jon]’s one of my kids that’s the least of my worries so I don’t pay a whole lot of attention to him.” And from his science teacher, “[Jon] can sometimes fall through the cracks...If he had been in a different class, I might have heard from him more. That class had the most special ed students than all of my other classes.”

Thus, for most of his teachers, Jon was not an outstanding participant in their respective content Discourses. He went largely unnoticed. A few teachers commented to me that they watched him only because I requested that of them; otherwise, he may have received very little attention indeed. Even after teachers exerted above-average effort to notice Jon’s literacy practices, they still concluded, in the words of Jon’s science teacher, “He’s middle of the road, just your average kid. He’s not a [name of a brilliant science student] or a [name of an exceptionally introverted special education student]. He knows that he is average.” Jon’s teachers from last year, if they could recall him, used similar terminology. To them, he was “average. I don’t remember him standing out that much.” All of Jon’s teachers I could contact from the previous year agreed with that assessment. Thus, to sum up their perceptions of him, coupled with the perceptions of five of Jon’s seven teachers from his eighth-grade year, I will use the words of Jon’s gym teacher, “He’s probably pretty average.”

In stark contrast, in his eighth-grade year Jon had a woods teacher, Mr. Crandall (pseudonym), who extolled his positive qualities. In fact, as I walked in his class for an unscheduled observation one day, I heard him praising Jon’s dedication to his craft to the rest of

the class and urging the other students to be more like him. Mr. Crandall also made Jon one of two class foremen to whom other students had to report daily. The woods teacher gushed over Jon in our personal interviews,

He's a great kid. He's just awesome. He's a great kid. He works harder than anybody else; he does more than anybody else...His leadership skills are just a big part of [Jon].

As quiet as he is, he's just a powerful leader. He doesn't say it, he just exemplifies it.

Peers see it. They asked me to nominate him as Student of the Day because of all his hard work...I hope I have him again next semester. If you have any more case studies, send them my way.

Though Mr. Crandall's perception of Jon did not relate to his reading and writing skills, it is still noteworthy due to its uniqueness. In Jon's academic subjects, where reading, writing, and speaking were the basis of grades—Jon's teachers related to him as though he was average or perhaps even as though he was not there at all. In one of Jon's rare subjects where print literacy was not the basis for the class, both his teacher and his peers publicly acknowledged his excellence. Just as Tatum (1997) asserted that identity can be constructed in relation to others' perceptions, Jon began to see himself as a craftsman after Mr. Crandall saw him as such and put him in a position of authority where his peers could see him as such. Jon often talked about his woods projects at home and proclaimed that he wanted to earn a Masters degree in woods when he was older.

Though Jon's desire to be a carpenter may be attributed to an inherent love or skill in woodworking, his experiences with the new woods teacher the following year suggested that it was Mr. Crandall's perceptions of him, and not his love of woodcarving itself, that made Jon love the subject and want it as a part of his life. After Mr. Crandall left the school, Jon lamented

that woods was no longer his favorite class and he no longer wanted the discipline to be his profession. He claimed that the new woods teacher was “sloppy,” with no real sense of dedication to the craft. This teacher, in turn, did not see Jon as anything exceptional, reiterating his previous teachers’ assertions that he was “average.” Hence, after Jon no longer had a teacher and classroom full of students expressing his exceptional work in woods, he no longer viewed himself as a woodworker, either.

As the writer of this case study, I was the other teacher who was the exception to the rule: as with Mr. Crandall, I did not see Jon as being “average” or “middle of the road.” I did not go to the lengths that the woods teacher did to praise Jon publicly by comparing him to his peers, but I frequently expressed appreciation for him in our private interviews, acclaiming his reading, writing, and dependability. In addition, I nominated him for Eagle of the Quarter, a prestigious honor given at Hillside in an assembly attended by the entire student body. Though he did not receive as many teachers’ votes as then other recipients of this award, my colleague and friend spearheaded the assembly, showed me a list of possible candidates, and asked me who I thought deserved Eagle of the Quarter. I recommended Jon, and my vote was the deciding factor. Thus, at the end of the year Jon received an accolade that represented the collective approbation of teachers. As the principal explained in the assembly, this award signified to recipients that teachers viewed these students as the best of the best. Consequently, while Jon went through much of the year with teachers who thought he was average, he finished his time as an eighth-grader with an award stating they thought he was extraordinary. Jon’s experiences with how teachers perceived him, therefore, ranged from the unexceptional to the truly great.

Jon’s mother. Inevitably, Marita’s perceptions of her son extended beyond what teachers saw of him in school. She called him “creative” and “artsy fartsy” for inventing new ways to

make money when he was younger, such as drawing pictures and selling them around the neighborhood. She saw him as “our entrepreneur” who would post signs offering to mow people’s lawns and pull their weeds. She perceived him as a great older brother, one who would help out with chores and babysit her two younger sons whenever she needed help.

However, among all of the perceptions Marita held of her son, the one about which she spoke with the most urgency was her perception of her son as a student. The stories she told about her son in this regard stemmed in part from her own perceptions of herself and her husband as students when they were younger. Marita’s stories of herself revealed her self-perceptions and how they influenced her perceptions of her son, consonant with Anzaldúa’s (1999, as quoted in McCarthy, 2001) claim that “we are clusters of stories we tell ourselves and others tell about us.” For example, in the first interview she constructed the story of her husband as a “farm boy” who had dyslexia, but also as a dedicated father who learned how to read along with his children because he considered it essential to their academic futures. Marita, too, viewed reading and writing—subsumed under the larger umbrella of education—as the key to achieving beyond what she had achieved as a resource student. She hoped that, in life, Jon would do “better, way better, than what I’ve done.” Not only did she want her son to “do better,” but she wanted him to do “way better.” By qualifying her original statement, Jon’s mother suggested she perceived herself as one who could have gone much further in life if she had the right literacy skills and education. Her statement also indicated that Marita interpreted Jon’s experiences as a student in terms of her own life story: she wanted him to succeed in relationship to her perceived lack of success.

However, by framing her stories about Jon in regards to herself, perhaps she also placed a limit on what she perceived her son was able to achieve. For example, when speaking of Jon as a student, she said,

We tell him you know: the one thing is is you never give up. No matter how hard you try, we want to at least see you try. We don't want you to step back and say you can't do it. You might not win, you might not get straight A's, but at least you're trying is our opinion on things.

In this statement, then, even if Jon tried his hardest at school, his mother perceived him as still possibly “not winning.” She said that her “one concern” for Jon was “just achieving his goals for, you know, high school, and he wants to go to college.” Yet her expectation was not that he earned the requisite grades or credits required to get there, but instead that he simply tried his best to get there. Telling her son to “not give up” implied a road of trials and failures, advice that was sage when considered in the context of her own life story. However, by assuming that there would be academic failures and a good chance that he might not win overall, her perceptions perhaps placed a ceiling on what she thought her son could achieve. Of course, she thought the world of her son, and concluded our final interview with the overall statement, “I just think [Jon] is a great kid.” All the same, perhaps her own constructions of her life story, which she explicitly used as a reference point to create Jon's life story, bounded what she saw as possible for him as a reader, writer, and student. If she perceived that she had not gone far in her own life, and she used that as a starting point for her son, then the latter could only go so far.

Though Marita perhaps saw constraints to her son's success as a reader and writer, she, like Jon, perceived a significant improvement in his reading and writing abilities throughout the eighth grade. She observed, “He struggled last year, [but] I think it went really good this year. He

did a great job. Um, he's starting to understand more and comprehend." When I asked if she had any concerns about reading, she said, "Not hardly. I think he's doing a lot better." She later clarified that he was reading with more comprehension in all of his classes, including math and science, the two subjects that were traditionally the most difficult for him. Though she noted that Jon still had room for improvement in his science comprehension in the future, she applauded the advances he had made.

Conclusion of results regarding perception. To answer the research question—how did Jon's self-perceptions as a reader and writer change or remain the same in regards to a separate reading class—it is first necessary to examine the ways in which Jon's self-perceptions shaped and were shaped by others' perceptions. Bakhtin (1981) speculated that people's self-perceptions, or the stories and constructions they make up about themselves, are internal dialogues stemming from voices they have heard in their recent and immediate pasts. According to Bakhtin, these voices often clash and contradict, necessitating continual reconstruction of people's self-perceptions. Jon certainly received many opposing messages about who he was as a reader and as a person. Researchers suggest that low expectations can be communicated to students, regardless of whether or not they are verbally expressed (Proctor, 1984). If so, Jon may have received from his content-area teachers the message that they directly told me: he was a thoroughly unexceptional reader, writer, and student. This perception stood in contrast to his woods and reading teachers' assertions that he was outstanding and also to his peers' perceptions that he was more competent than them. Finally, his mother implicitly viewed him as one who was destined to struggle in reading and academics, although she perceived improvement over the last year.

In the midst of all of these voices, where did Jon position himself as a reader and a writer? His own self-perception resonated most with his mother's: he grew to think of himself as a "good reader" by the end of the year, but he never achieved the status of "great," despite his peers' repeated assertions of his academic competence and despite the display of confidence that teachers showed in him when they gave him Eagle of the Quarter for academic prowess. Jon had endured at least two years of teachers—those authority figures giving the all-important grade—who thought he was "average," so much so that they were not actively aware of him and did not remember him, even at times when he was still in their classes. Though it can only be speculated as to how these consonant voices mingled with others in Jon's internal dialogue, it is no surprise that Jon thought of himself as being an average to good reader at best as he was reading in-school texts.

Those who viewed Jon as outstanding, especially his woods teacher, may have joined the chorus of his peers' voices and contributed in the improvement in Jon's self-perception as a person, student, and reader, since self-efficacy in reading may at times be connected to a sense of self-efficacy towards life as a whole (Purkey, 2000). Though the exact interplay of others' voices—in harmony and discord with each other and with Jon's own perceptions of his reading comprehension—will never be ascertained, it is clear that, as with Jon's motivation to read, the reading class probably did not play a major role in his construction of self-perception. His successes and repeated A's in reading class were countered by his F's in math; his peers' admiration was tempered by his mother's worries for his future; his woods teacher's confidence in him was challenged by the next woods teacher's lack of attention. Hence, to use Mishler's (1999) metaphor of "our selves as a chorus of voices" (p. 8), the perceptions of Jon that were

held in the reading course were joined with such a cacophony that it is impossible to attribute any change in self-perception to the course alone.

Summary of Results Section

Overall, Jon fared well as a reader and writer in the eighth grade. His perception of himself in this area increased significantly, as did his motivation to read both in school and at home. His reading comprehension scores increased one full year, as they should have, and his grade point average rose dramatically. The question remains: what role did the reading class play in this picture? The answer is that the class played a negligible or minimal role in the student's overall comprehension, motivation, and perception in regards to reading. Jon often enjoyed his time in the reading class, and he demonstrated increasing cognitive sophistication in reading demanding texts within that course. However, these comprehension strategies were seemingly left behind at the door to the classroom. As demonstrated by our interviews, he did not consciously apply them to history, science, or math; nor did he subconsciously develop a habit of mind that enabled him to apply these strategies to outside texts without thinking about it. The reading class did not visibly influence his motivation to read; instead, other motivators—such as discovering his heritage and earning high grades—far overshadowed the course. Finally, in the area of self-perception, so many different viewpoints of Jon existed that it is impossible to correlate Jon's increase in self-regard with confidence he gained from this course. In conclusion, the separate reading class did not make a discernable difference in Jon's reading practices outside of the 45 minutes each day when he was actually attending the course.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications of the findings, when combined with other research studies, are many. These implications fall into three categories in relation to reading: (a) comprehension, (b) motivation, and (c) perception.

Comprehension

Implication one: Incorporate literacy instruction into the content areas. Despite attending a reading course designed to promote the transfer of cognitive strategies to other content areas, Jon did not think to do so when confronted with a challenging text in his other disciplines. An interesting exception to this principle is Jon's language arts class, also taught by me in the same classroom. Though students explicitly learned about reading strategies in that class as well, most of the instructional time was spent in pursuing other curricular goals: learning elements of literature, writing various types of narrative and persuasive texts, and learning viewing and speaking skills, just to name a few. All of the language arts strands—reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting—are interdependent and not learned in isolation (Utah State Office of Education, 1999), but most of Jon's explicit strategy instruction in reading did occur in the separate reading course.

Yet, when I asked him to explain to me how he solved problems on the language arts end-of-year state administered test, he explicitly mentioned several strategies that were covered only in reading class. Strategy transfer—in this case, from reading to language arts—was seamless. Hutchison (2004) has offered a suggestion for this phenomenon in his discussion of place in education. He asserted that learning occurs within and is tied to a physical space, which is not only comprised of geography, but also of relationships and personal meanings given to that

space. For example, he named a certain area outside of his high school the “smoking corner,” a place where certain students held particular interactions and could safely hold furtive conversations with each other, and a place about which other students felt negative associations. He asserted that classrooms were also defined places: each with teachers who held different expectations and philosophies; each with different organizational structures and environments; each with different subject matter.

Soja (1996) also emphasized the importance of physical space as a vital part of human interactions. He stated, “We are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our...spatialities” (p. 1). Thus, as “spatial beings,” students come to associate relationships with teachers and with their peers to particular places, and in turn the interactions they have in those spaces shape and define what those places mean to them. Soja primarily emphasized the social nature of physical space, an idea which by extension applies to learning as well. Learning is a social act, arising from interactions between teachers and students, and students and each other. Consequently, in accordance with Soja’s theory, learning may be often deeply rooted within a given physical space.

My interviews with Jon bear out the theory that learning for him was associated with place. It was not uncommon for him to confuse content learned in one of my classes with content learned in another. Thus, because reading and language arts were taught in the same place—in this case, defined broadly as the same room, same teacher with the same body gestures and way of speaking, same types of schedules written on the board, same music playing in class as he entered, same constructivist approach, same procedures for turning in paperwork, and more—he could easily transfer lessons learned in one class to another.

When the concept of place is tied to literacy instruction, it becomes imperative for content-area teachers to incorporate literacy strategies into their own classrooms. When students enter new places—complete with new teachers who have new organizational structures and new expectations—they may not think to connect lessons learned from one space to another. Hence, content-area teachers cannot reasonably expect the English or reading teacher down the hall to instruct the student regarding the reading and writing skills needed in other content areas. Not only is the reading teacher not a member of the respective disciplinary Discourse (Gee, 1996), but the student is also in a new space with new social interactions and new norms for behavior.

This was certainly the case for my colleagues and me. No two of us were similar in many ways: in our manner of dress and relating to the students, in the physical set-up of our classrooms, in our grading scales and paperwork policies, in our beliefs on the role of literacy instruction, and myriad others. Given that teachers inevitably and rightfully create unique micro-worlds in their classrooms, the following questions are areas for future research: Can teachers set up spaces that facilitate transfer of lessons learned in other spaces, and if so, what factors need to be present? For example, if I had used more fill-in-the-blank assignments as the science teacher did—one dimension of space being the type of work done therein—would Jon have been able to transfer the strategies more easily? If I had conducted labs and presented the students with only science texts—one dimension of space being the subject matter—would Jon have seen the applicability and validity of reading strategies in science? Or, as Soja (1996) has suggested, are we intrinsically “spatial beings” who associate certain lessons with physical locations?

In any case, Jon’s content-area teachers often did not use literacy instruction in their areas and, for the most part, they saw explicit instruction in reading and writing as actually detracting from the time they had to cover their curricula. As Jon stepped into their space, a place

permeated by their expectations and beliefs, it is little wonder that he did not apply reading strategies that were not valued or perhaps even wanted there. The surest way for teachers to encourage quality reading and writing in the content areas is for them to instruct the students in those literacy skills themselves. That way, those skills would be grounded in that space, which would be constructed from several elements: the teacher's beliefs that literacy is essential, social interactions between students and teacher involving discussions that apply those strategies, and the clear connection between literacy and the subject matter taught in that place that is associated with the discipline in the mind of the student.

The findings of this case study, when viewed in the context of place in education, also have implications for the middle school reform movement. At Hillside, we teachers were in the midst of a transition from a junior high philosophy—which we associated with distinct and separate disciplines—to a middle school philosophy—which we associated with integrated curricula across subjects. With terms such as “differentiation,” “interdisciplinary,” “student-centered inquiry,” and “teaming” running through our heads, some of us sought ways to connect one content area to the other as we read books on middle school reform in small study groups. Based on our professional development activities and readings, we also moved towards having teams whose members all had the same grading scales with the same reinforcement of the same rules. However, many popular books for middle school practitioners and principals (e.g., George & Alexander, 2003; Knowles & Brown, 2000; Weller, 2004; Wiles & Bondi, 2001; Wormelli, 2001) omit direct calls for reading instruction across the disciplines, suggesting “interdisciplinary teaming” or “differentiated” instruction instead.

Interdisciplinary teaming and differentiated instruction are *not* synonymous with content-area literacy; though they may complement content-area literacy, they do *not* require content-

area teachers to provide the types of reading instruction that would give students greater access to discipline-specific texts. Hillside teachers were a case in point: though Jon's woods teacher may have talked about adding decimals at the same time as Jon's math teacher, they both may not have provided Jon with access to reading difficult mathematics texts, such as predicting answers and subsequently checking predictions. As another case in point, Wiles and Bondi (2001) suggested thematic, interdisciplinary units that focus around safety, exploration, recycling, and lifestyles for the eighth grade. Yet all content-area teachers may be teaching thematic units on recycling without providing any reading instruction on difficult texts that address recycling. When considered in the context of place in education, the question still remains: when middle school teams have the same grading scales, the same rules, the same nurturing attitude, and the same subjects of study—all of which are dimensions of space—do students automatically transfer the strategies taught in reading class to their content areas? Theoretically, given that so many other aspects of place are also present in classrooms—including physical set-up, teacher personality, the location of the classroom, varying types of student interactions, and more—it is not inevitable that middle school teaming alone produces greater access to texts at this critical juncture in students' lives when they must read more textbooks that are increasingly demanding. Therefore, until more studies are conducted to determine what aspects of space are necessary to facilitate the transfer of literacy skills, it is incumbent upon all teachers in a middle school team to integrate literacy instruction, and not only subject matter, into their curricula.

Implication two: In professional development materials and presentations, explicitly present literacy instruction as literacy instruction. When implicit literacy instruction is presented under the title of “differentiation” or “integrated curricula,” teachers may not provide students

with explicit literacy instruction. Ms. McAllister, a first-year teacher whose history class Jon attended, illustrated this point. She actively sought ways to improve her teaching in accordance with the middle school philosophy (NMSA, 2003): by interviewing students about her teaching to create a more student-centered environment, by paying for professional development courses in addition to school-sponsored meetings, and by asking colleagues about their curricula and learning materials. Active learning, nurturing interactions sensitive to the unique needs of adolescents, and multiple assessments—also core components of the middle school philosophy—were her *modus operandi*. She also believed in integrated curricula: she used her training in art education often to combine history with art projects. Jon recognized these qualities in her: he respected her, spoke of her positively to his friends while in my classes, and recommended her to the younger baseball players on his team.

In particular, during the year of the case study, Ms. McAllister was concerned with implementing differentiation into her classroom based on what she had learned from sundry classes, books, and websites. From these sources, she learned numerous methods of differentiation: carefully-planned seating arrangements, progress-based grading, graphic organizers, KWL (Know, Want-to-know, Learned) charts, inside-outside circles, jigsaw, learning centers, learning contracts, and more. While some of these differentiation techniques explicitly addressed reading instruction (such as KWL charts to activate background knowledge before reading a text), others (such as seating charts) were only peripherally related to literacy. George and Alexander's (2003) middle school handbook was a case in point of a text recommending these specific differentiation strategies. In this guidebook and others, because providing students with access to texts was secondary to the idea of individualizing instruction, the notion of literacy instruction also became a minor, implicit point hidden within a larger idea. In practice,

teachers who are concerned with differentiation or integrated curriculum—both of which *can* include teaching reading strategies—may allow literacy instruction to fall by the wayside as though it were tangential to their main focus.

Ms. McAllister, the well-intentioned and dedicated history teacher, was an example of somebody who attempted to fully integrate the middle-school philosophy into her curricula. Despite her dedication, she only provided her students with literacy instruction perhaps four times throughout the school year in the name of differentiation. In accordance with George and Alexander's (2003) description of a grading contract as a possible component of differentiation, she required her students to state in advance what grade they wanted to earn and, by extension, the amount and quality of work they wanted to do. For example, a student who wanted an "A" might have to complete the terms of the "B" contract, in addition to creating an independent project addressing the American Revolution. Ms. McAllister provided students with diverse options on their grading contracts: from quilting to writing journals of slaves on the Underground Railroad to selecting readings from primary sources, she incorporated multiple intelligences and learning styles, also a component of the middle school philosophy (NMSA, 1999). Yet she most often did not think to provide her students with explicit instruction on how to read and write these historical texts, and at the end of the year Jon did not speak in terms of strategies he could use to access these texts, either. Perhaps if the materials she had read had called "literacy instruction" by "literacy instruction," rather than by calling it "differentiation," she would have recognized more clearly that the two principles are distinct. More research is needed to determine the role of literacy instruction in the middle school reform movement: is it clearly presented as a worthy goal in its own right, or is it superseded and marginalized when it is grouped with other components of the middle school philosophy?

Two defining documents of the middle school reform movement suggest different answers to this question. *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), in the chapter “Designing Instruction to Improve Teaching and Learning,” includes a Special Focus section titled “Teaching Reading in Middle Grades Schools.” These subsequent subheadings indicate a sustained attention to content-area literacy: who should teach reading, teaching reading across the curriculum, how to teach reading, reading instruction and language minority students, and supporting and staffing reading instruction. Thus, this document, replete with citations of research, comprehensively and explicitly illustrates the importance of literacy instruction.

In contrast, *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1999), a position statement designed for practitioners, subsumes reading instruction under the heading of integrative curricula. In this section, the National Middle School Association first recommended coherent curriculum “focusing on those ideas that cross arbitrary subject boundaries” (p. 22). Thus, the NMSA first defined integrated curricula as an emphasis on content relating to different academic disciplines. Next, in this same section, NMSA wrote one sentence explicitly related to literacy instruction: “Reading, writing, and other fundamental skills should be taught and practiced wherever they apply, rather than taught only in isolation as separate subjects” (p. 22). Afterward, the authors further outlined and defined integrated curricula, stating that “integrating all these dimensions is most effective when the curriculum is focused on issues significant to both students and adults” (p. 23). This statement signals a return to integration defined in terms of content, and not in terms of literacy skills, as in the first statement. Hence, the idea of literacy instruction is subsumed under the larger goal of integration, rather than being presented as a distinct and worthy goal in its own right. Furthermore, there is only one sentence in the whole document that explicitly

addresses literacy instruction, and it is couched between sentences that emphasize integration of content, perhaps syntactically hiding the idea.

Teachers at our school were asked to read and discuss this document, a briefer and more reader-friendly text than *Turning Points*. Because NMSA subsumed literacy instruction under the larger idea of integration in *This We Believe*, it is easy to see how Ms. McAllister, as one dedicated to the middle school philosophy, may have focused on integration to the exclusion of literacy skills. She did integrate curricula to the extent that she felt trained to do so—combining history with art, her two majors in college, whenever she saw the opportunity. Yet because integration was the focal point, literacy instruction became a sidenote. Her experiences, when combined with an analysis of key documents in the middle school reform movement, suggest that literacy instruction should be presented as literacy instruction, not as integrated curricula or differentiation. An analysis of other popular texts about middle schools is needed to more fully ascertain the status that literacy instruction is given in the middle school reform movement and to further determine whether sufficient attention is given to literacy instruction as such.

Implication three: Focus on comprehension in the content areas. Though this may be a commonsensical assertion, multiple factors prevented Jon and his teachers from valuing comprehension in the content areas. An analysis of the beliefs, priorities, and practices that kept Jon from comprehending may point to ways that content area teachers and students may foster comprehension.

One factor that limited the depth to which Jon engaged in the content material was the nature of his assignments. He described the vast majority of his science assignments: “They’re one-answer questions and it’s like basically copying them out of books, like they just take out a word and you just have to find that word.” In this class, the other portion of his grade rested

solidly on copying notes verbatim from an overhead transparency, and taking multiple-choice tests with a few short-answer questions at the end. Assignments like these short-circuited Jon's comprehension: copying words from books and transparencies did not translate into an increased understanding of complex scientific concepts, a finding that confirmed elsewhere by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Wenglinsky, 2004), a research organization which asserted that completing worksheets based on textbook readings had no discernable positive effects on comprehension. In addition, these types of assignments made it easy for Jon to use coping strategies (Brozo, 1990) such as copying answers off of friends' assignments with no discussion as to the correct answer.

In contrast, extended writings and more open-ended assignments increased Jon's comprehension of various subject matters, and they encouraged him to speak to his peers in academic and constructive ways. When all of Hillside participated in the science fair competition, Jon was enthused about shooting different guns at different objects from different lengths. He wrote a coherent report about his science fair project and presented it not only to his peers but to adult science fair judges. The project required him to inquire, write, and speak as a scientist without giving him opportunities to copy off his friends who did other projects. Additionally, Jon spent a longer time explaining his science fair project to me than he did any other science assignment in our interviews; his ideas in this case were more complex, sophisticated, and well-developed than when he spoke about answers to science worksheets, though there was still room for improvement. At the end of the year, when the science teacher was sharing her overall impressions of Jon, she mentioned, "He likes guns and understands a lot about them." Interestingly, this was the only subject of study that she tied to his comprehension; she did not mention him understanding matter, energy, or the subjects of other units. Overall, the

different literacy components of the science fair project (summarizing, predicting the outcome of his hypothesis, making inferences, and more) required him to develop more complex understandings than his typical science worksheets did. Thus, the nature of teachers' assignments may largely determine the extent to which students comprehend the material.

An undue focus on standardized test scores may also displace student comprehension. The science teacher explained why “there was not enough time” for her to teach reading strategies in her classroom, “This year we’re way behind with the new textbooks, and I stuffed things in at the end of the year. I did a power point presentation at the end to go through the uncovered concepts on the state core test. We had four different textbooks that we used.” As Jon was faced with a tremendous amount of text at fast rates—readings from four different textbooks, notes, and power-point presentations—he was not given corresponding instruction on how to ask questions, figure out difficult vocabulary words, or make connections to experiences outside of the science classroom. The preeminent focus on test scores, especially at the end of the year, rushed the teacher into valuing dissemination of content at all costs—with the potential risk of losing some students’ comprehension along the way. Interestingly, she also cited the science fair project as a hindrance to her students’ test scores, rather than as a way to enhance their understanding of science concepts: “We have too much that we have to teach, but this year with the science fair there was not enough time.” The teacher recognized the value of literacy instruction, noting that she hoped to “do some next year,” but based on the outcome of her choices, in her moment of decision the content—and not nuanced, in-depth comprehension—became the all-important factor, driven by concern over student test scores. Hence, the perceived dual pressures of scarce time and too much content may have denied students opportunities to understand rich scientific concepts to the extent that they could.

This focus on test scores, with its corresponding push to disseminate content, was a school-wide phenomenon. Every quarter in every subject, our administration required students to take a pre- and post- test related to the core curricula. These tests were usually multiple-choice but sometimes required students to fill in the blanks from a variety of options. Individual teachers' test scores were then posted in front of the other faculty in mandatory after-school meetings. Our principal was proud that Hillside was one of the only middle schools in our district that had met Adequate Yearly Progress standards, as defined by No Child Left Behind, for the past three years. We spent many faculty meetings discussing the importance of continuing this trend by having students score well on end-of-year comprehensive state-administered tests. Furthermore, the administration spent extra money in having an additional agency analyze individual classes' performance on the end-of-year tests because the Utah state agency that administered the test did not provide specific enough information regarding individual teachers. These results were also published to the faculty, although this time they were published by subject and grade (usually a group comprised of two to three teachers) and not by the teacher alone. Thus, students' test scores were a common subject of discussion, and individual teachers were frequently publicly held accountable for their students' performance on those tests. Correspondingly, Jon's science teacher focused on the content that would be on the state exams and she gave assignments matching the format of those exams. Schools, teachers, and systems which give precedence to content found on multiple-choice tests, while limiting conversations about comprehension, may actually disable students from understanding subject matter to the greatest extent possible, as was the case for Jon.

Some may assume that test scores measure students' comprehension, and therefore an increased emphasis on these evaluations leads to an increase in comprehension. This assumption

was not verified for Jon's learning experiences, nor is it verified by additional research. According to McTighe, Sief, and Wiggins (2004), an over-emphasis on multiple choice tests, which often de-contextualize facts, causes teachers to develop two misconceptions: that they have to teach to the test and that they have too much content to cover. Jon's science teacher was a classic example of this principle. If our faculty meetings had emphasized comprehension as the main goal, with multiple-choice assessments as only one measurement of that main goal and not as the goal itself, perhaps the school-wide focus would have been different. Instead of posting bar graphs of students' improvement on multiple-choice tests, perhaps individual teachers could have been responsible for posting one student's extended writing sample and explaining how it demonstrated an understanding of the core curriculum concept in question. If the science teacher was held accountable in that way, rather than being held accountable for multiple choice tests alone, perhaps the nature of some assignments would of necessity have changed. In that case, the science project, which sparked Jon's interest and engaged him in sustained scientific inquiry, would not have been viewed as a hindrance that impeded the teacher's test preparation. As it was, the multiple-choice format, with its attendant weaknesses when it is used as the primary method of assessment, prevailed.

An emphasis on multiple-choice test scores went hand in hand with an emphasis on grades, another factor that limited Jon's comprehension. Jon himself preferred a high grade over comprehension: instead of taking additional time to read and understand the science textbook, for example, he would copy off of the smart girl next to him to ensure a high score. Rather than asking his math teacher questions about a confusing concept, he would circle a perfect score on the top of the paper so the teacher would enter it into the computer. This focus on grades, sans comprehension, was consonant with the teachers' focus on grades as well when I interviewed

them. When I asked them how he was doing in class, they either responded in terms of his general characteristics (“quiet,” “just an ordinary kid”), or, more commonly, in terms of grades. For example, Jon’s science teacher responded, “He has a B+. He missed three out of forty assignments.” She added he must have just forgotten to talk to her about the missing assignments because she pegged him as a normally responsible student. Similarly, Jon’s health teacher responded to the same question that Jon had an A- because he was missing one assignment. She, too, thought that he must have been absent and had forgotten to ask her about the assignment the next day. Similarly, when I asked the history teacher what her overall impressions of Jon were, she said, “Let’s see...his final grade is an A-.” Like the other teachers, after first seeing his performance in terms of a grade, she explained that he earned that grade because he did less work than that required of an A. Hence, when asked how a student was doing in their class, rather than responding with the extent to which he was engaging with and understanding the content, each teacher responded with a grade. They each then further clarified that the grade was based, not on comprehension, but on the amount of work they received from him.

Jon, too, was aware that completion of assignments, and not comprehension of the materials, was the basis for his grades. When I asked him why he had an A in science at one point in the semester, he responded, “I turned in missing assignments and got an A on all the rest.” Jon first attributed his A to the amount of work he turned in, and not to the quality of that work. He then attributed his overall A to getting A’s on his assignments, which he later called the “easiest” type of reading because it just required fill-in-the-blank responses. In addition, the science teacher often let students grade those assignments themselves. Hence, Jon learned that an A was not synonymous with actually grasping the material. As with his teachers, though Jon

mentioned grades and the amount of work he turned in, any discussion of understanding the material was notably absent.

Though the interviews may or may not reflect the degree to which the teachers and Jon actually valued comprehension, their answers raise some important questions: is it fitting to give students an A grade that is entirely devoid of a basis in comprehending the material? If Jon handed in all of math assignments with no evidence of meaningful understanding with a perfect score on the top, should he earn a high grade? Should grades measure effort or comprehension? What should be the balance between the two in teachers' grading scales? Ironically, Jon's experiences suggest that grades based primarily on effort caused him to put forth less effort than if the grades had been based on comprehension. For example, Jon's history teacher explained that "students get full credit if they just do the work" when talking of leveled assignments in her history class. Jon, determined to do as little schoolwork as possible during baseball season, explained to me that he chose the easiest option, the slave journals, and exerted minimal effort on them, while Ms. McAllister, in turn, gave him full credit on the assignment because they were the required length and they were turned in on time. His understanding of what happened during American slavery seemed an unimportant point for both Jon and Ms. McAllister. Jon's experiences suggest that comprehension of the content area should form at least part of the basis for students' grades, though more research is needed to determine whether and how teachers' grading practices affect comprehension for the majority of students.

Interestingly, out of all of my periodic interviews with the teachers, only once was comprehension mentioned, and that conversation began in my final interview with the science teacher in which she was describing Jon's science project. She explained to me that Jon really "understood guns." In a project which required authentic student inquiry, and in which students

were evaluated based on the depth of their understanding and the quality of their ideas by science fair judges, it was natural for the teacher to talk in terms of comprehension rather than in terms of grades. However, careful teacher attention to these types of assessments was the exception rather than the rule. For Jon, the separation between comprehension and grades, as evidenced by my conversations with both him and with his teachers, caused Jon's comprehension in his content areas to suffer.

A final factor that limited Jon's comprehension was his teachers' deterministic perceptions of him. They viewed him in terms of already having pre-determined characteristics which in turn determined the extent to which he could succeed. For example, Jon's math teacher perceived him as "just an ordinary kid...I observed him because you asked me to, but he's an average kid...not a math whiz." Other teachers used the word "average" in describing Jon, and his science teacher, too, said he was no Matt Smith (pseudonym of a brilliant science student). In other words, the teachers viewed some students as having the innate ability to succeed, and others as being inherently average. This viewpoint absolved them from teaching comprehension strategies: based on pre-determined characteristics, some students were going to "get" the content, and some were not. Rather than believing that comprehension was a matter of giving all students the literacy strategies they needed to succeed in understanding their discipline's texts, they attributed a lack of comprehension to a catch-all general characteristic they called "average."

Once again, if the teachers had related to Jon in terms of his comprehension, they may have been able to use a more empowering approach towards him. When I asked them how Jon was doing in their class, any of them could have said something such as, "He understands this concept to this extent, but he's stuck here, and I'm working on teaching this comprehension

strategy that would help him here.” If this comprehension-based response were their approach, then they could have scaffolded him to take his comprehension to a higher level. As it was, for the teachers, Jon was innately “average,” implying he was just that way and there was nothing they could do about it.

When the context of Jon’s schooling is considered as a whole, many factors combined to work against comprehension in the content areas. Many of Jon’s assignments required rote repetition rather than complex understanding; a school-wide emphasis on test-scores pressured at least one teacher to cover content at the expense of teaching comprehension strategies; teachers and student focused on grades, which were detached from comprehension; and teachers viewed the ability to comprehend the material as being innate rather than acquired through their teaching.

While this case study provides more numerous examples of what deters comprehension rather than what fosters it, a few inferences can be made from the data and can be tested in future research studies. First and foremost, comprehension should be a focal point in instruction, in school-wide meetings, and in educators’ perceptions of students. Comprehension should be at the forefront of faculty’s minds and should be centerpiece of conversations—between teachers and parents, between teachers and students, between administration and teachers, and among teachers themselves. This case study paints a bleak picture of what can happen when comprehension takes a back seat to time constraints, to test scores, or to system-wide pressures. In contrast, a focus on student understanding would of necessity include conversations about—not effort, innate characteristics, or even just content alone—but about comprehension strategies that make the content come alive, including ways to ensure that students are asking meaningful questions, using their background knowledge to bear on current topics of study, and going beyond texts to

make inferences of their own. Comprehension must come into the picture more often to ensure that students such as Jon have more in-depth experiences with understanding content.

Implication four: Include the application of comprehension strategies as part of students' grades. This implication, a logical extension of the previous ones, arises from Jon's assertion that he would do the minimum to get by with a good grade. As Wiggins and McTighe (1998) have asserted, "What and how we assess signals what we value" (p. 127). Accordingly, if content-area teachers value masterful reading and writing in their discipline, they will design assessments that reflect this priority. Furthermore, they will attach grades to these types of assessments. This approach would have benefited Jon's comprehension in his content areas. Because Jon could "get by" with a decent grade regardless of whether or not he asked questions, predicted outcomes, or summarized findings in his content areas, he was not motivated to apply these literacy skills which may have taken extra time or thought. Instead, he could much more easily zip through assignments by writing the answer when the teacher announced it, or by copying answers out of a book. If his teachers had tied the application of these strategies to his grade, they would have signaled to the student that they valued his comprehension, that they valued literacy within their discipline, and that they valued deep engagement with the subject matter. They would have provided a disincentive to cheat, since summaries and questions are more unique to individuals than one-word answers are. Finally, his teachers would also have decreased discrepancies between grades and comprehension by making effective reading and writing skills—of necessity involving comprehension strategies—part of students' scores.

Summary of case study's implications for reading comprehension. In regards to reading comprehension, the implications of this case study are numerous but interrelated. First, reading strategies must be taught and graded in the content areas to show that teachers value

comprehension and literacy in their respective disciplines. Because a separate reading class is a distinct place with a unique teacher, unique social interactions, and unique norms for behavior, it may be difficult for students to transfer the concepts learned there to another place. Hence, it becomes incumbent on the content area teacher to instruct students in comprehension and communication within their disciplines. While test scores, pre-made worksheets, school mandates, and other factors may discourage these teachers from this type of instruction, nonetheless they must persist if they want students such as Jon to develop in-depth understandings of their discipline. At the middle school level, this type of comprehension instruction is especially important as students face an increasing number of cognitively demanding informational texts. Middle school reform documents should place an according emphasis on literacy instruction as a central component of a responsive middle school, rather than placing this type of instruction at the periphery of other reform goals such as content integration.

In a world where Jon, his teachers, his school administration, federal legislators, and even researchers and writers of reform documents could have been better champions on behalf of Jon's comprehension, one person stood out as a true and consistent advocate for understanding: his mother. Repeatedly and over time, when I asked her in each interview if she had any concerns with her son and reading, she explicitly mentioned comprehension. In our first interview, her response to the question was: "just him understanding," and in a later interview, "probably understanding what he's reading, comprehending, like...the subject...trying to focus on what the subject is," and once again in another interview, "probably just understanding, comprehending what he is reading." Concerned with his comprehension, especially in the areas of science and math, she spent time tutoring him at home. As an example, she was "trying to

help him understand the graph part...he was measuring in yards and inches when he needed meters and centimeters.” Throughout his eighth-grade year, Jon’s mother kept comprehension as the heart and goal of her son’s learning, supported his understanding at home as best she could, and placed an injunction on her son to seek comprehension in school, even if he did not earn the best grades.

Despite his profound respect for and connection with his mother, Jon seemingly did not heed her counsel to seek in-depth understanding at school but instead sought to finish assignments with as little effort as possible. His home, a place where his mother resided and gently pushed her eldest son to be the best he could be, differed greatly from school, where Jon was an average student who fell under the radar screen for the most part. His mother’s expectations that comprehension could be learned differed from his teachers’ perception that he inherently may not have had the ability to understand at the same level as innate geniuses. His mother’s careful one-on-one attention contrasted with the science, math, and English teacher’s assertions that Jon was one of many students in their worst class of the day. At home, Jon was a Native American grass dancer; at school, his science teacher thought he was Latino and his principal stopped him in the hall to talk to him in Spanish. Undoubtedly, the places of home and school were vastly different: if he did not transfer comprehension lessons from one class to another down the hall, it is not surprising that he would not transfer the lessons learned from his mother at home to his reading of texts at school.

Jon’s failure to share in his mother’s goal of comprehension implies that it is all the more imperative for school faculty to teach literacy strategies. If students are to read, write, and speak masterfully in each of their content areas, then teachers of these disciplines cannot leave instruction in these areas to the parents or to the reading teacher because some students may not

transfer lessons learned in one place to another. The findings of this case study suggest that content-area teachers must teach reading themselves.

Motivation

Implication one: Provide students with opportunities to read books in appealing locations in their communities outside of school. This implication contradicts previous research on middle school students' motivation to read. Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) found that sixth graders were indeed motivated to read if they encountered the types of reading materials they liked, such as magazines, comics, and light series; however, students seldom had access to these engaging materials at school and had to find their reading materials elsewhere. The authors thus concluded that schools should have access to more appealing materials for youth. Worthy (2002), in an extension of her previous research, found again that providing students with choice and variety of reading materials in school motivated them to read on their own. Ivey (2001) similarly called for the quality and diversity of reading materials at school as a way of motivating adolescents to read. However, Jon's experiences suggest that school cannot be a place that motivates some students to read on their own. In response to Alvermann's (1998) question, "Concerns have been raised about the potential irony in sanctioning adolescents' nonacademic literacies. In sanctioning them, might we find that we have canceled out their very appeal?" (p. 357), the answer in Jon's case was yes.

Jon had ample opportunities to hear and read about appealing books at Hillside. Recognizing that many school-sanctioned, academic texts may not appeal to students, I purchased items for book-talks which students recommended but which were not in our school library: various versions of *The Simpsons* (Groening, 2005) (which was Jon's favorite show), *A Child Called It* (Pelzer, 1993), *Two-Minute Murder Mysteries* (Sobol, 1967), *Ripley's Believe It*

or Not (Packard, 2004), and *Classic Optical Illusions* (Brandreth, et al., 2003), to accompany the variety of informational books and magazines I collected with Jon's specific interests in mind. For every subject that Jon wrote down on various reading interest surveys, I purchased a book on that topic. Jon was interested in these texts: for example, when a classmate checked one out from me, I observed him showing Jon certain passages, pointing to items on the page, and discussing it with him. Jon took this book and read it while it was time for a class assignment, an uncharacteristic move for him as a responsible student who was usually on-task. However, though Jon had easy access to these materials in my class, and though he asked throughout the year to sit with his friends on the beanbags in our welcoming Book Corner, he did not pick up and read one book of his own volition.

Similarly, our media center was amply stocked with a variety of books designed to appeal to adolescents. Our librarian was responsive to the needs, interests, and requests of young adults: students waited at the doors for her to arrive to the library, sat and read on the couches during lunch, and researched items on the internet after school until it was time for the librarian to lock up. For many students, the media center was the social hub of the school, drawn in part by the librarian's warm personality and by visually appealing and constantly changing book displays. Jon also expressed interest in books while he was in the school library on our multiple excursions there. For instance, he looked up books about Native Americans on the library search system and skimmed through them. He also took novels off the shelf and showed them to his friends as enthusiastic discussion ensued. However, once again, he did not check out any books to take home and read. Thus, these trips to the library did not directly influence or inspire his at-home reading.

Our field trip to the Salt Lake Downtown Public Library, an architecturally beautiful four-story library with a whole floor dedicated to teenagers, also motivated Jon to read while he was there. Fast-moving glass elevators, comfortable couches, and a large plasma-screen TV attracted my students. Though I did not observe him reading directly (he was off on a scavenger hunt in a small group of friends with parental supervision), he said in our end-of-year focus group that the last time he read entirely on his own—for no other reason than just because he wanted to—was when he was at this library. According to him, while there, he read as much as he could in the time that was allowed; I also heard him and his friends talking about wanting to go back (a planned activity that never occurred). In our interviews, he raved about the library. Nonetheless, once again, Jon was motivated to read while in an appealing location, but this desire to read did not translate into reading more or different books at home.

Despite the fact that school-sponsored activities did not introduce Jon to books he read at home, Jon's mother reported at the end of the year that Jon read more this year than he ever had before. Where, then, did Jon find access to these engaging texts that he read at home? His parents and extended family took him to the local town library, while his aunt bought him books at Barnes and Noble. Jon said of the latter in a ringing endorsement: "That place is gooooood." Jon's aunt bought him books to read here, such as *White Fang* (London, 1905), which he in turn read for a reading class project. Thus, while parts of Worthy (2002) and Ivey and Broaddus's (2001) research held true—namely, that Jon was motivated to read when he had access to books that interested him—for Jon, these books could not be found at school, even if they were all around him there.

In fact, the farther away from school these locations of books became, the more likely he was to appropriate books for himself and read them at home. Within my classroom, he did not

pick up a book to read on his own, nor did he read any book that was recommended therein; within the school library, he picked up books to skim on his own, and he discussed them with friends but did not take them home; within a local library, as part of a school-sponsored field trip but away from the teacher, he read books and expressed interest in returning but did not seek out any books he found there to read on his own; at home, when entirely away from school-sanctioned activities, he read books and magazines recommended by his mom or purchased by his aunt. Motivated to read these texts that were disassociated from school, he stole spare minutes to read them whenever he could even when he was busy: at breakfast and between baseball practices and games, for example.

Again, perhaps a fitting theoretical lens for looking at this phenomenon is the theory of place in education (Hutchison, 2004), which avers that places are not only physical locations, but spaces to which people attach strong associations and emotional connections. “School,” to Jon and his friends, was “boring,” and they talked to one another about “how bad it sucks.” Reading therein was “boring,” too; in fact, school was the primary source of “a lot of bad experiences” or “confusing” ones in reading. In addition, school was a place where Jon’s friends said they were “forced to read.” One friend added, “I don’t like being forced to read; I won’t read if I’m forced.” Another of Jon’s friend’s said of a class in school, “You always have to read, no matter what, they make you read.” Even though students mentioned positive experiences with individual teachers, the place “school” on the whole was lumped together as a conglomerate and held generally negative connotations for them in terms of reading. For example, I asked one of Jon’s friends “where do you have bad experiences in reading,” and then I suggested the name of a certain class which he had said he did not like. However, he quickly countered my leading question, not by naming the individual class, but by stating, “at school.” Hence, the overall place

of “school” was associated with negative feelings when it came to reading. Jon and his friends also said they talked often about this overall disaffection with school.

Accordingly, when it came time for Jon to read books at home which he freely chose for his own enjoyment, he did not choose one text that he learned about from this place. It must be noted here that I read research and practitioner articles and mined the farthest reaches of my brain to make our class motivational: students shared appealing books with each other; parents and faculty role models shared their favorite books with students (many of which involved animals and hunting, two of Jon’s favorite subjects); and students chose books they wanted to read and how they wanted to present them to others. Because I was conducting this case study of Jon, he had unique advantages and opportunities to be motivated, unbeknownst to him: I bought a book on every subject he said interested him, on any titles he recommended, or on topics which I thought would interest based on my close readings of his assignments. Despite this special attention, Jon did not read anything his friends or his teachers recommended to each other while they were at school. Though other teachers may have been able to find ways to motivate Jon to read, at the very least it can be said that Jon had access to interesting texts, a factor which Ivey and Broaddus (2001) have asserted is enough in and of itself to motivate reading despite the classroom setting. For some students, therefore, having access to engaging texts at school may not be enough. These texts, situated within a certain place with certain connotations, may inherently be tainted.

It follows that students need access to engaging texts outside of school. As other studies have demonstrated (e.g., Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999), school may be a place wherein some students can learn about books that spark their interest and expand their desire to read. However, this case study of Jon implies that for some students, school-

sanctioned reading becomes inherently corrupted with all of the connotations associated with “school.” This study suggests that, for students like Jon to read of their own volition, they need access to interesting reading materials in appealing book-laden places outside of school.

Communities therefore share the onus of motivating students to read by having bookstores and libraries with materials designed for teenagers.

This finding raises further theoretical questions: does it matter where students become motivated to read as long as they become motivated? Even though school had little effect on his motivation to read at home, Jon became a more avid reader throughout the year and said he viewed reading as an important part of his future. Does it matter, then, that school did not motivate him? Did I as a reading teacher, or did the place of “school” in general fail Jon in the area of motivation to read? In what other places (in the broad sense of the word) are students motivated to read? Would Jon have read something he learned about at a powwow, or another place with positive connotations, at home? While many unanswered questions remain, students may be more self-motivated to read if they are encouraged to read a variety of texts to which they have access in many different places: away from school while they are with their friends, at home with their families, at school, at church, at libraries, at bookstores, at recreational settings, and more. As students move from place to place in their lives, with each space embedded with certain connotations, learning a love of reading may best occur in places where students love to be. It therefore falls upon the community and homes, and not only teachers in schools, to create places in which students can grow to love reading.

Implication two: Provide male students with the opportunity to interact with females and to write in ways that are not emasculating to them. Many studies have indicated that boys are falling behind girls in schools both nationally and internationally (NCES, 2000; OECD, 2003).

Not only are eighth-grade boys in America a full year and a half behind girls in reading and writing, but males also receive 90% of discipline referrals nationwide, and comprise 80% of high school dropouts (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). While some people offer biological explanations for this disparity, claiming that girls' brains have more cortical areas devoted to verbal functioning (Moir & Jessel, 1989), others provide sociological reasons for boys' failing in schools, claiming that reading and writing in schools may challenge boys' socially-constructed masculinities (Martino, 1999; Reay, 2002; Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000). Boys who read and write stories, for example, may not be seen as "tough" or "cool" in the eyes of their peers. After all, writing may be dangerously connected to expressing one's feelings, a feminine—or even gay—attribute in their eyes (Martino, 1999).

International researchers, primarily in Great Britain and its former colonies, have connected this hostility towards school with the concept of the "lad," a term in part defined by males who participate in disruptive behaviors and who are interested in pastimes and subjects constructed as masculine (Francis, 1999; Martino, 2000; Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000). After the School Standards Minister attributed boys' lack of progress in school to their "laddish" attitudes in 1998, different research studies have concurred with his assessment: boys did have a more laddish attitude towards the General Certificate of Secondary Education, or the qualifying high school exit exam, in Great Britain (Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000). Despite individual variations, on the whole it was more acceptable for girls to work hard and be part of the "in crowd" than boys who were more likely to be ridiculed for their academic studies. Thus, boys may perceive that reading and writing in their respective classes (often taught by women), undermines their masculinity.

When compared against the two predominant theories of why boys are failing (biological versus sociological), Jon's experiences confirm the latter to some extent. Jon's male friends were the ones who, for the most part, expressed a disdain for reading and writing. While some of Jon's close female friends wrote in their journals and liked reading novels at home on their own, the boys were less likely to express an interest in any reading or writing. For example, one of Jon's friends said a typical day for him after school would be to "sit down, take a nap, sleep." When I asked him if homework was a part of his schedule, he responded, "I get lots of homework, I just don't do it. I fall asleep." Similarly, in Jon's seventh-grade year when he reported academic struggling, all of his close friends were male, and he described them as constantly asking him to go BMX biking with him while he ditched his schoolwork. In the first few weeks of his eighth-grade year, one of Jon's male friends was threatening to get in a fight with him, and Jon was determined to fight back. In sum, his male friends tended to construct biking, fighting, and refusing to engage in school activities as being socially acceptable activities for young men, a finding in line with Martino's (1999) description of "cool boys" who were into sports and violence and who thought of being a man as being the opposite of a female. Martino explained these *cool boys'* orientation towards school: "The 'cool' boys 'act dumb' in order to establish a hegemonic form of masculinity through which they can demonstrate their opposition to the values embodied in the aims of formal education" (p. 251). Accordingly, when Jon hung out with only male friends both in school and outside of school, he was more likely to adopt ideas from their constructions of masculinity, which often went against school-sanctioned activities, for himself.

The same dichotomy between genders existed in Jon's family. When I interviewed Jon's aunt, she depicted her brother (Jon's dad) as "always getting into trouble" when he was younger.

In the first sentence that described his dad in his autobiography, Jon wrote, “He is a big sports fanatic but is the laziest person in the whole inters family.” Jon’s dad also was an avid hunter and took his boys shooting often. Additionally, when Jon was having problems with a boy at the beginning of the school year, he wrote in his journal: “My dad says if he touches me in any way. To hit him.” While Jon’s dad did not like reading in school, he made the effort to read to his children as an adult, an activity he did—not for personal enjoyment of the act—but as a way to construct himself as a good father who provided for his children, including their academic needs. Thus, Jon’s father, too, embodied socially-accepted constructions of masculinity: he enjoyed rough-and-tumble activities; he was defiant against others’ expectations, at least as a youth; and he was a provider for his children.

On the other hand, Jon’s mother was an avid reader and nurturer. She read and discussed several novels with her son, in harmony with Gambell and Hunter’s (1999) findings that females are more likely to see an intrinsic value in reading than males. While many boys may learn gender-constructed roles from their fathers, Jon had an important role he actively sought to learn from his mother: what it meant to be a Native American. The first sentence about her in his autobiography thus defines her accordingly: “Her name is shelly she is the one who gave me my native culture.” Interestingly, women from Jon’s Native American side of the family were the other family members who encouraged him to read and write: Jon’s aunt took him to Barnes and Noble to buy newspapers and books, while Jon’s grandma encouraged him to read Navajo recipes and write them up for her. Jon thus received potentially conflicting messages from his mother and father’s side of the family: being a man meant being action-oriented and even a little rebellious, while only female role models—albeit Native American ones—read and wrote.

Where did Jon find himself in all of these messages? Seemingly, based on interview data, his friends tipped the scales one way or the other. Both Jon and his mother attributed his dramatic improvement in academics in his eighth-grade year to his new set of friends. When Jon was friends with guys in the seventh-grade, he put forth minimal effort into school. In contrast, in the eighth grade as he started to associate with females more—and when romantic attractions began to increase—he began to be more motivated to read and write in-school texts. Unfailingly, while working on assignments in science, he received and gave answers exclusively to the girls that sat next to him. After working with him, some of these girls developed crushes on him. According to Francis (1999), one component of the “lad” may be related to the ability to attract women. Hence, participating in schoolwork with girls not only gave him a circle of friends in which reading and writing in school was an acceptable activity, but it also maintained his status with males who saw Jon repeatedly going on social excursions with these females while continuing to excel in masculine activities such as hunting and BMX racing.

The implications of this case study are clear: Jon’s friendships and interactions with females enabled him to participate in school-sanctioned literacy activities while still being masculine. The teachers who serendipitously placed Jon by high-achieving girls unknowingly threw Jon an academic lifeline. While this finding of the case study cannot be generalized to outside populations, it raises an important question for future research: Are boys who sit by female friends more likely to participate in academic reading and writing with them than if they sit by male friends? In trying to search for an answer to this gender gap, Kruse (1996) posited that teachers should “support and challenge boys in their attempt to change their culturally given roles” (p. 80). Yet how to do this is still a question. Jon’s experiences suggest a starting point for teachers: they can require the two genders to partner and interact with one another. Interestingly,

in their study of “laddish” adolescent males in Britain, Warrington, Younger, and Williams (2000) noted of 14-year-olds that “although boys and girls do mix socially, it was apparent from the division of space within the classrooms, and from what students themselves told us, that students of this age overwhelmingly identify with other people of the same sex” (p. 404). If these spatial and social divisions were broken down in school, would boys be more comfortable reading and writing academic texts? In Jon’s case, the answer was yes, though more research is needed to determine if gender-mixing would be beneficial for other boys, and under what circumstances.

Another question remains: If social interactions with girls benefit boys, how does participating in school with boys influence girls? Most often, to answer this question, researchers have conducted comparative studies between co-ed and same sex schools and have found conflicting results. Harker (2000), in an attempt to debunk the all-too repeated myth that girls do better in single-sex schools, claimed that socio-economic difference was the determining factor of girls’ success in both single-sex and co-ed schools. Criticizing the small sample sizes of research that supported same-sex schools for girls, he asserted that, once he controlled for socio-economic status in research studies, girls in same-sex schools performed academically the same as those in co-ed schools. Warrington and Younger (2001) found somewhat different results: both boys and girls in single-sex schools performed better than their counterparts in co-educational schools, but the overall benefit of same-sex schools was greater to boys than to girls. Thiers (2006), in a synthesis of comparative studies between single-sex and co-ed schools in the United States, contended that not enough data was available to make a determination one way or the other.

Hence, the question remains whether both boys and girls succeed better when they are separated or together. However, given that only 211 public schools in the United States offered some form of single-sex classes as of January 2006 (Theirs, 2006), additional questions remain to be explored regarding gender-integrated schools: how often do boys and girls work together on academic tasks in classes; do students produce better output when they work with people of their same gender or of other genders; what qualities must be present in the classroom or in students' relationships to make gender mixing or same-sex peer groups beneficial; and to which gender will these various groupings be most beneficial? Though Jon's experiences intimate that some form of gender-mixing is beneficial for some students, much research still needs to be conducted in the field of gender and education.

Though Jon's female friends motivated him to improve his grade point average in school, their influence on his literacy practices did not stop there. To some extent, they inspired him to read and write texts that were not school-sanctioned, and perhaps were even illicit. Specifically, they encouraged him to write, read, and pass a host of notes during class time. It was a rare occasion when Jon's back pocket was not stuffed with a folded note, along with a school assignment or two. Though I witnessed the passing of these notes multiple times in my observations, I had minimal access to the materials found therein, except for a rare glimpse at Jon's writing, "Wudd (up arrow) N2MH?" or, in a more interactive, dialogic note,

Friend: What is wrong with [name]?

Jon: She wont tell me.

Friend: Why does she do this? It so weird.

Jon: I now but yeah.

Despite Jon's continual interchange of reading and writing information with his female friends, Jon's male friends did not encourage him to participate in the same illegal contraband trade of notes. In fact, all of the notes which I saw him pass were either to or from females.

Interestingly, though, Jon would read and write to males when texting them on the phone or when Instant Messaging them. Some researchers (Christensen, Knezek, & Overall, 2005; Colley & Comber, 2003; NCC, 1990) portray technology as a male-dominated domain, claiming that boys use computers more than girls; that computer games are marketed more to males than to females; that most computer specialists in schools are males; and that after the sixth grade, girls have a less positive orientation towards computers than boys. While other studies challenge the notion that boys prefer computers more than girls (e.g., Miller, Schweingruber, & Brandenburg, 2001), the findings of this case study suggest that Jon's male friends felt as though computers and other forms of technology (i.e., cell phones) were not a threat to their masculinity, even when they were writing to other males. Thus, though writing and reading may be constructed as a female domain, perhaps computers, video games, cell phones, and other forms of technology can be used as a way to engage males in reading and writing for various purposes while still allowing them to maintain their sense of manhood.

Overall, an analysis of Jon's literacy experiences in relation to gender reveals two principles. First, Jon benefited from interactions with the opposite sex. For Jon, girls motivated him to read and write the types of texts that comprise the traditional fare of many schools: writing with paper and pen, and reading and writing about sanctioned academic printed texts. More research is needed to determine the conditions under which other boys may academically benefit from different-sex interactions as well. The second gendered principle uncovered by this case study is that certain types of reading and writing are less emasculating than others to those

‘cool boys’ who position themselves against school (Martino, 1999). Though Jon’s female friends felt comfortable using technological mediums to communicate with him, Jon’s male friends exclusively preferred the technological communication as being in harmony with their masculinity. Teachers must be sensitive to gendered roles and what they can do to challenge them when they are giving writing and reading assignments. Varied use of technology and carefully pairing students of different genders may be a starting place to help motivate boys to read and write in schools.

Implication three: Provide students with school-sanctioned opportunities to draw from their personal experiences and interests as they connect to academic disciplines. Even though Jon may not have taken books from school to read at home, some subjects intrinsically motivated him to read and write in school more than others. These subjects connected to his personal interests, such as hunting and being a Native American. For example, Jon wrote extensively on his science fair project regarding guns: he used his extensive background knowledge and interests to bear on an academic discipline, motivating him to write more than when he studied other scientific concepts that were less interesting to him. Moje et al. (2004) have described this connection between primary Discourses (the types of knowledge and ways of knowing as found in the home) and secondary Discourses (the types of knowledge and ways of knowing as found at school) as a type of “third space” in which teachers “build bridges from knowledges and discourses often marginalized in school settings to the learning of conventional academic knowledges and Discourses” (p. 45). By connecting Jon’s home life to his academic learning, Jon’s science teacher created a third space for him which intrinsically motivated him to write at school. Although I have argued that Jon’s consistent underlying external motivation was to earn a grade, the creation of this third space motivated Jon to go beyond what was required to just

“get by.” He talked about this assignment more often and in more complex terms than he did any other assignment. Thus, though Jon likely would have completed the science project whether he enjoyed it or not, providing students with opportunities to connect their home lives to the content areas may create environments that motivate students to read and write about academic subjects on a more sophisticated, engaged, and personal level.

In a concept consonant with that of “third space,” Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005) have emphasized the importance of drawing on students’ “funds of knowledge” that they bring from their homes to connect them with content-area learning. Because students may not spontaneously connect learning that occurs in one place to learning that occurs in another, teachers who draw upon “funds of knowledge” help to facilitate those connections, and thereby increase both comprehension and motivation in academic disciplines. Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005) have insisted that, in order for teachers to effectively draw upon students’ funds of knowledge, they must have an intimate and extensive knowledge of the students’ backgrounds themselves. For example, teachers in their study visited students’ homes and interviewed their families to ascertain ways they could connect students’ home lives to their academic ones.

Because many of Jon’s teachers did not have the same time or incentive to come to know his background as I did, I was placed in a unique position to draw upon Jon’s funds of knowledge in the classroom, and I took opportunities to do so. Though I could not visit his home or meet with his parents personally due to district policies, I did attend his powwows and discovered that they endowed Jon with a rich understanding of symbolism and metaphor. The announcer at the powwow stated that each color, each animal, each direction, and each dance move carried a historic and symbolic meaning, deeper than the object itself. Consequently, in a multicultural literature unit that included these concepts, I asked Jon to present his grass dancing

to the class and to explain the principle of symbolism. He counter-offered my request by instead showing the class a video of Native American dances, and he later explained that each move represented something above and beyond itself. For example, the women's fancy shawl dance represented a butterfly hovering above the ground whilst the pounding foot movements of men's grass dancing represented both a search for animals and enemy warriors, thereby illustrating to the class that symbols represent a world of possible fitting meanings.

After Jon's lesson, the class both discussed symbols in a novel we had been reading and created some symbols to represent themselves, while having to expound why they chose that symbol. Jon selected a fox holding a bow and arrow, explicating that the fox represented his craftiness, while the bow represented two ideas: that he was a hunter, and that he was a part of a long line of Native Americans. He also drew symbols to indicate that he was an oldest child and drew colors that also represented a multiplicity of meanings: namely, that he liked "challenging adventure...and...independence too. And I want/need to be respected." While it is uncertain whether or not Jon would have made similar metaphoric connections if he had not been explicitly asked to draw upon his funds of knowledge as a grass dancer, it can be inferred that he was intrinsically motivated to share unique funds of knowledge with the class: the following year, as a ninth grader, he asked me if I would show the same video to my current batch of eighth graders when it fit into the curriculum. Then he asked me a third time if he could explain the symbolism in a video of himself dancing with my current English classes. When Jon was well-received as one who had valuable funds of knowledge to bear on the learning of English, he was motivated to share his insights with others. Thus, when teachers create third spaces that draw upon students' funds of knowledge from other places, students may be motivated to read, write,

and speak about the subject at hand to a greater extent than when these funds of knowledge are not utilized.

However, while teachers can draw from students' funds of knowledge to connect them with their academic discipline, they must be careful not to appropriate and claim expertise over students' personal experiences. Though Jon was enthusiastic to share about Native American symbols when the topic at hand was learning symbols, he was resistant to teachers outside of the Native American community who tried to present aspects of modern Indian culture to him. For example, as my students were in the midst of an American multicultural literature unit, they each made a dream catcher with accompanying writing assignments. The dream catcher, an item that originated with Lakota and Ojibway peoples, now has dubious ties to authentic Indian culture due to its commercialization. Jon withdrew from participating in the class during this activity, perhaps more so than at any other time in the year. Though Jon normally talked with his friends while students were making projects in my classes, he sat by himself, several desks apart from other class members, staring quietly off into space for minutes during several intervals throughout the two days that students worked on the project. Furthermore, in an unprecedented and unrepeated act for him, he never finished the assignment or turned it in. He had similar sullen responses to other articles about reservations and brief biographies of Indians that we read. Though I asked him in indirect ways what he was thinking about the Native American stories we studied in my classes, he never provided me with a full answer. This response is understandable given that he wanted to maintain a good relationship with me, and I was the person who gave the potentially insensitive lesson plans.

While I did not find out directly why he did not complete the dream catcher writing assignments in my class, informal conversations with Jon throughout his ninth grade year

revealed that he had a similar experience with his current English teacher as she was teaching *Touching Spirit Bear* (Mikaelson, 2001), a novel involving modern Native Americans. Jon reported he disengaged from this novel more so than other novels as the teacher (a Caucasian) was presenting herself as the expert regarding the content of the book. In sum, then, Jon was eager to bring his cultural experiences to bear on academic learning, but when the subject was Native American culture itself, he became less motivated to learn about it when he was subordinated to the expertise of people who knew less about it than him.

This finding, when combined with other theories and research studies, has implications for the way that teachers include minority students in their classrooms. While some researchers have questioned whether White teachers even have the desire or capacity to sensitively educate racial minorities (Howard, 1999; Jones, 1999; Pearce, 2005), others have asserted that White teachers can successfully include multicultural elements in their classes as long as certain characteristics are present. Howard (1993, 1999) described an ideal relationship between White teachers and minority students as a dance in which everyone shares the lead. Similarly, Friere (1970) recommended a dialogic—as opposed to a monologic—approach to education, even though he was not talking about racial relations per se. He asserted that teachers alone should not control the discussion and instructional activities that take place in a class (in effect, creating a type of monologue), but rather that students and teachers should have a true dialogue with one another in which both parties are seen as having equally important contributions to make to the academic conversation.

When the other English teacher and I in effect created a type of monologue as we were teaching about Native American culture, Jon was quick to withdraw and become exceptionally unmotivated to read and write. Interestingly, he did not withdraw from other monologic classes

or situations, but only from those related to his culture. Hence, in situations wherein well-intentioned White teachers are presenting issues of race and culture to minority students, it is vital that these students are active participants and shapers of classroom events and discussions. If not, a White educator who presumes to teach minorities about their own culture may only be perpetuating relationships characterized by dominance and subordination (Jones, 1999). Jon certainly felt uncomfortable in circumstances where he was not actively consulted in issues related to contemporary Native Americans.

Jon's experiences with his culture in academic disciplines therefore have two polar opposites: he was zealous about sharing his love of grass dancing when he was the expert who assisted the class in understanding symbolism, but he was resistant to read and write about Native American issues when the teacher was the expert who assisted the class in understanding contemporary Indians. In other words, in one situation his unique funds of knowledge as a Piute were brought forth and valued, and in the other situation they were not used. This dichotomy highlights the tremendous importance of creating dialogic conversations in academic disciplines: when students bring extensive funds of knowledge to school with them (as Jon did in his knowledge of contemporary Native Americans), this knowledge should be honored and drawn on extensively as a central contribution to the subject at hand. Doing so increases students' motivation to read and write; failing to do so may have adverse affects on students' motivation. In Jon's case, this principle was especially salient in regards to his ethnicity. Though all students should be seen as having something vital to bring to the conversational table, perhaps this principle is especially important for minorities in certain cases.

In their description of different "third spaces," Moje, et al. (2004) have described this marriage between the academic discipline—or the domain of the teacher—and personal funds of

knowledge—or the domain of the student, as the ideal type of “third space.” In this type of third space, teachers do not use students’ funds of knowledge only as a means to understanding an academic discipline. Instead, in this truly dialogic space, both the teacher’s authoritative subject knowledge and the students’ personal funds of experience are combined together to create a new space in which both are simultaneously honored and questioned. More research is needed to determine ways to create these types of third spaces for students (Moje, et al., 2004), but Jon’s case illustrates the harmful effects that strictly monologic instruction can have on students, and the motivating effects that drawing from students’ funds of knowledge can have.

Conclusion of implications for motivation section. When Jon’s motivation to read is considered as a whole, a few implications for practice stand out: first, though teachers and school librarians should do all in their power to provide an engaging, print-rich environment for adolescents, families and communities also bear the responsibility for promoting adolescent literacy by providing teenagers to access with lots of appealing books whenever possible. For teenagers who are alienated from school, or who do not attend school altogether, these outside places may be key motivators to read. Second, though teachers may not motivate students to read at home in some cases, they can affect the extent to which adolescents want to engage in literacy-based activities at school. Connecting students’ at-home experiences to their academic knowledge may naturally motivate deeper, more involved learning; failure to do so may cause students, especially some minorities, to disengage themselves from the subject. Third, teachers can also motivate students to read in school by integrating various technological mediums and by creating thoughtful seating charts that give students the opportunity to interact with diverse people, as teachers look for the right combination of friends and acquaintances that will motivate each other to finish their assignments.

Perception

Implication one: Provide students with many constructive opportunities to interact with a variety of peers in a positive environment. Adolescence is a time of rapid growth and fluctuation in students' self-perceptions and identity formation (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). It is also a time in which teenagers are particularly susceptible to what others think of them, since these opinions may influence how they see themselves in a myriad of complex ways, both directly and indirectly (Kroger, 2004). In essence, middle school students are learning to find “the balance between self and other” (Kroger, p. i) as they aspire to be socially accepted yet also seek to define themselves as an individual. Erikson (1968) asserted that “true ‘engagement’ with others is the result and the test of firm self-delineation” (p. 167), and adolescence is a time wherein many teenagers are still defining and testing those boundaries of the self as they compare their interests, values, and abilities to others’.

Loevinger’s (1997) theories of identity development place additional emphasis on the crucial role of “other” in the creation of adolescents’ self-perceptions. According to Loevinger, most early adolescents are at the “conformist” stage of their identity development, a stage in which “the self is not much different from others in the group, whatever one’s group may be” (Loevinger & Blasi, 1991). Students often perceive themselves, therefore, in relation to their own groups and in contrast to other groups. These groups may be formed based on academic, athletic, or other abilities; socioeconomic status; ethnicity; personal interests or dislikes; and more. Loevinger (1997) theorizes that the adolescent first tests the boundaries of self in comparison to these groups. Only after he defines himself in relation to a group can he advance to the self-aware stage in which the self is not distinguished only in relation to group norms. In other words,

adolescents' navigation through groups' external standards of behavior often lead to their developing internal standards of behavior in later adolescence and early adulthood.

Because “other” is so important in the formation of students' self-perceptions during early adolescence, it is crucial that educators provide students with opportunities to relate to their peers in constructive ways. Peers cannot be sidestepped or underestimated in the process of adolescent identity formation: students often do not listen to teachers and parents' assessments alone because they think adults may praise them automatically or as a way to make them feel good (Apter, 2006). Consequently, in order for middle school students to develop the sense of communal belonging which is vital to people of their age, they need to see themselves as fitting in with their peers. By extension, they will often define themselves in relation to the peer group in which they fit.

This principle certainly held true in Jon's case. In interviews, Jon stated his self-perception as a reader and writer in relation to his peers; from the beginning to the end of the eighth grade, he also grew from perceiving himself as average or below average to fitting in with the “smart” group of students. His peers facilitated this transition in his self-perception as a reader and writer. For example, in a think-aloud at the end of the year, a “4.0 student,” one whom Jon perceived as being exceptionally smart, praised the way Jon thought about the text by saying with admiration, “You're good.” Another time in reading class, after Jon starred as the main villain in a class-produced movie of a novel we had read, a student walked up to Jon, shook his hands, and told him he did a good job on the acting. Though the student's compliment was tongue-in-cheek, other students' compliments reaffirmed to Jon that his was a star performance in the reading of the movie script. While Jon's “smart” peers instigated many compliments of his reading and writing abilities, Jon sometimes had to seek out their approval. For example, in an

assignment in reading class that involved writing summaries, Jon showed his paper to the aforementioned “smart girl,” and asked, “Is that good,” a question to which she responded with lavish praise. Thus, as Jon associated with people who excelled academically, and as they showed him he was one of the group by admiring his academic work, Jon grew to slowly perceive himself as belonging to the group of smart students who could proficiently read and write academic texts.

Teachers can facilitate the process wherein students associate positively with different social groups and wherein they have a chance to feel accepted by them. For the most part, teachers assigned Jon to sit by these smart students that initiated him into their academic elite; they did not seek out Jon to sit by him, nor did Jon move to sit by them. Eventually, Jon became friends with these high achievers and grew to view himself as part of their social group, even to the point of hanging out with them outside of school. Though peer to peer relations can also be disastrous in identity self-formation (Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005), teachers can do much to establish a positive classroom environment and to model respectfulness with the expectation that the students will interact positively with one another as well (Marzano, 2003). When teachers require students to interact in educational and constructive ways with people from different academic and social groups, they provide students with opportunities to cross boundaries from group to group. Jon’s experiences illustrated this principle: he went from being a seventh grader identifying with boys who only cared about biking, to an eighth grader who was part of a group of girls (and some boys) who cared about school. Remarkably, he was able to maintain status in both groups. Notably, if teachers had not provided him with the opportunity to meet and speak often with the group of “smart” kids whom he met only in class, it is doubtful he would have had the chance to become a part of their group and to define themselves in terms of their qualities. In

turn, it is questionable whether or not he would have perceived himself as a good reader and writer of academic texts without the opportunity to be part of the smart group. Therefore, by the way they design their seating charts and instructional activities, teachers ought to provide low-achieving students with opportunities to work with high-achieving ones, a principle confirmed in studies condemning academic tracking in middle schools (e.g., Oakes, 1985).

The case study points to another reason why healthy adolescent identity development may require positive peer-to-peer interactions: as Jon's classmates encouraged him to be proud of his Native American heritage, he became increasingly more comfortable in publicly displaying it. Though Jon satisfied his need to belong by fitting in with the academically adept, in one way he was irrevocably different from everybody else in the school: he was Native American. Yet rather than viewing this as a source of ridicule, his peers repeatedly told Jon how they admired his heritage. "Cool" was most often their choice of words in describing his culture. For example, when students exchanged their autobiographies in my English class and wrote sticky notes to each other, two students wrote about Jon's heritage chapter, "That's way cool! All of it." When Jon wrote that his future plans entailed gathering at a powwow in Cedar City, a student wrote, "Way cool plans!" and another student pointed an arrow to that fact and wrote, "That's awesome." When my students wrote thank-you notes to Jon for presenting the grass-dancing video to my class, they again praised his knowledge of grass-dancing by commenting, "That was cool." Inspired by Jon's sharing of traditional dancing, another student brought in photos of a powwow she had attended to share with the class. Thus, Jon's peers affirmed that they respected and liked his culture, providing him with the sense of belonging that is so vital to identity development in early adolescence (Loevinger, 1997).

Though Jon always expressed a desire to read, write, and speak about being a Native American in class, his assertiveness in doing so increased over time. Midway through his eighth-grade year, I asked him if he would grass dance in the auditorium for my students. He felt uncomfortable doing so but counter-offered by showing a video of dances to the class. Although he knew of powwows during his seventh and eighth grade years, he did not announce their times and locations to his friends. However, at the end of his ninth grade year, he had tried out for the highly competitive school-wide talent show by doing a grass dance, and he was the only act to have made all three assemblies (one for each of the grade levels). Furthermore, he began giving announcements of upcoming powwows to the principal, and he encouraged students that he did not know to come to his initiation into the Piute tribe. Beginning at the end of his eighth-grade year and continuing on into his ninth, Jon also passed out flyers he made announcing various powwows. In short, as he came to know that displays of his Native American culture would be received with approbation, and as he grew to be more grounded in his identity with his group of intertribal dancers out of school, he became more comfortable with sharing aspects of his culture within the school. Late in the ninth-grade, Jon even sought to extend the sharing of his culture beyond school walls when he offered to dance at his brothers' elementary school. *The Salt Lake Tribune*, a widely-distributed local newspaper, featured a large picture of Jon grass-dancing in the assembly. Thus, his peers' positive perceptions of his culture created a welcoming context in which Jon felt comfortable expressing himself as Native American to those who were ethnically different from him. This non-threatening context in turn allowed him to dance, read, write, and speak about being Native American to ever-widening audiences.

After Jon's peers perceived him both as a "cool" Native American grass dancer and as one of the smart group, Jon increasingly felt at ease assuming both of these roles. However, if

teachers and administrators had not provided him with opportunities to constructively associate with different peers, he may not have received the bombardment of positive feedback that let him know he fit in during this conformist stage of his life. Therefore, to build students' positive self-perceptions of themselves as readers, writers, and people, they should have the opportunity to interact with peers in affirming environments.

Implication two: Avoid deterministic perceptions of students. Though different people's messages such as "you're smart," "you're good," or "that's cool," helped Jon define where he fit socially, and though they may have contributed to his significant gain in self-perception as a reader overall, Apter (1998, 2006) has asserted that these types of comments may not contribute to a positive self-perception on task-specific assignments. As an example, she cites a student who was praised for his "natural math ability" throughout his elementary years and who consequently feared in middle school that struggling with difficult math problems meant that he had suddenly become stupid. According to Apter, praising students for perceived innate abilities—such as their intelligence—can actually be detrimental to their confidence as they tackle task-specific problems because they may attribute their success or failure to an immutable innate quality rather than to the amount of work or strategic thinking they put into the task.

Jon's content-area teachers were invariably examples of this type of thinking, and these deterministic perceptions of him had negative implications for his learning in the classroom. They talked about Jon in terms of his general intelligence—for the most part he was average, in some cases he was great—but in all classes his teachers thought he either had it or he did not. As a logical extension of this perception, they did not provide him with comprehension instruction; after all, based on their philosophical orientation, the extent to which a student would understand was a foregone conclusion and they could not change the perceived fact that Jon was

intellectually mediocre. However, if the teachers would have viewed Jon in terms of the amount of work he put into assignments or in terms of improvement (as Apter has suggested), or if they had viewed Jon in terms of degree of mastery of cognitive strategies, then they would have viewed themselves as having access to influence Jon's comprehension. For example, instead of saying that Jon's average qualities did not allow him to draw rich, interpretive meanings from history texts, a teacher could have seen his literal readings as an opportunity to teach him how to make inferences, a strategy which can be learned and can improve over time. Jon's case, when combined with Apter's theories and research, suggests that teachers should avoid seeing students only in terms of innate abilities.

Conclusion of implications of perception section. As various people formed perceptions of Jon's innate abilities at school, their perceptions seemed to serve two functions: one, they signaled to Jon which social group he fit in, and two, they pre-determined the extent to which teachers thought he could succeed in their discipline. In the first case, Jon may have benefited from the perceptions: when his peers labeled him as smart, he was allowed to join their social group and therefore had a circle of friends with whom he could try hard in school yet still meet his need for conformity. However, in the second case, his teachers' perceptions of him may have limited the amount of comprehension instruction he received. In both cases, teachers wield power: they can create environments wherein students interact with different social groups and have the chance to be accepted by them, and they can themselves perceive students in terms of their mastery of certain teachable skills, rather than in terms of any innate characteristics.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations Section

To return to the original intent of the case study—describing one student's comprehension, motivation, and self-perception as a reader in regards to a separate reading

class—the conclusion remains that Jon’s experiences as a reader and writer were so complex that they could not fittingly be described primarily in relation to this class. As a thirteen-year-old adolescent, Jon was forming his identity as a male, as a Native American, and as a group member—shifting social circles and defining the boundaries of the self, all of which influenced his literacy practices. As a student, he was navigating from academic place to academic place, each one replete with its own expectations, values, and social norms. When this place required the use of comprehension strategies, he used them; when they did not, he did not. As a part of a school system, he adopted the prevailing attitudes within that system—namely, that school is a necessary evil that should not affect what is done in leisure time—and he was at the effect of systemic forces pushing teachers to instruct and assess in certain ways. As a son, he wanted to fulfill his parents’ expectations of living a better life by being a good student. As an authority on being Native American, he resisted others’ impositions of authority and sought ways to establish his expertise in this area to different audiences. As a teenager, he played baseball, went snowboarding, raced BMX bikes, fell in love with different girls, and Instant Messaged his friends. All of these elements interplayed in different ways at different times to influence Jon’s comprehension, to motivate or dissuade him from reading and writing, and to influence his self-perception as a reader.

As a student in a reading class, Jon improved in his reading comprehension, in his ability to apply cognitive strategies to make meanings of texts, and in his metacognitive awareness of these comprehension strategies. However, it is perhaps contrived to separate this class from the other, more encompassing, facets of Jon’s literate life. Because a separate reading class played such a small role in Jon’s literacy practices, both outside and inside of school, this study points to the idea that it is unrealistic to expect one reading class to single-handedly improve students’

motivation, self-perception, or comprehension in other content areas. Rather, this study supports the notion that students' literate lives reside within a vast and complex network comprised of friends, teachers, family members, administrators, expectations, relationships, ethnic identity, interests, physical surroundings, experiences, technology, adolescent social development, and more. The broad implications of this case study are that, if we as researchers and educators want students to read well and to love reading, we will need to address as many of these fronts as possible. Questions such as, "How can we effectively encourage content-area teachers to incorporate sound literacy strategies into their respective disciplines? How can we make it socially acceptable for all boys to read and write in school without emasculating them? and How can we change the deep-seated perception that school is boring?" become more salient than how can one reading class influence a student's reading practices. Though more research of other reading classes is needed to see if students apply the lessons learned therein to other areas of their lives, in this case study, the conclusion is clear: a separate reading class is not sufficient. Students need support in literacy instruction and motivation from other areas of their lives as well.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Student

List of initial interview questions for the student

1. Tell me all you can about your thoughts or feelings on reading.
2. Tell me about your past experiences with reading.
3. Tell me about what a typical day was for you last summer.
4. Tell me about what you like or don't like to read.
5. Tell me about what makes a good piece of writing or a good book.
6. Tell me about what makes a good reader.
7. Tell me about how you see yourself as a reader.
8. Is there anything else you want to say about reading or about anything else?

List of final interview questions with student

1. Tell me all you can about your thoughts and feelings on reading.
2. Tell me about your experiences with reading this year. By reading, I don't mean our reading class, though that can be part of your answer if that's what comes to your mind. I mean tell me about reading at home, at school in any of your classes, or in any place where reading happens.
3. Tell me about how your reading this year compares to your reading last year.
4. Tell me what you think a typical day will be like this upcoming summer.
5. Tell me about what you like or don't like to read.
6. Tell me about what makes a good piece of writing.
7. Tell me about what makes a good reader.
8. Tell me about how you see yourself as a reader.
9. Is there anything else you want to say about reading or about anything else?

Sample list of interview questions asked periodically throughout the year

1. Tell me about _____ (subject area).
2. Tell me about how you figured this one out (pointing to a problem).
3. Tell me about this one (pointing to a problem he missed).
4. Tell me what you would do if you had this same problem again (pointing to a problem he missed).
5. How is school or this class going for you overall?
6. Tell me what you did this week when you got home from school.
7. What did you and your friends talk about this week?
8. Read anything good lately?
9. Anything else you'd like to say about your reading lately or about anything else?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Parents

List of initial interview questions for parents

1. Tell me about your son and reading.
2. What are your son's strengths and weaknesses in reading or at school?
3. What does your son typically talk about when you see him or do things with him?
4. Describe a typical day for your son this past summer.
5. What do you think does motivate or would motivate him to read?
6. What do you want for your son?
7. After considering what you want for your son, how does that compare to what you have experienced in life? In particular, how have your reading experiences been? For example, did you have positive or negative experiences with reading in school?
8. Is there anything else you want to say about your son, about reading, or about anything else?

List of periodic interview questions for parents

1. How are things going for your son?
2. How are classes going for him?
3. Describe a typical day for your son after he got home from school this month.
4. What has your son talked about when you have seen him or done things with him lately?
5. Do you have any concerns in regards to your son and reading?
6. Has your son's work in school improved, declined, or stayed the same so far since we've spoken last?
7. Why do you think that is?
8. Anything else you'd like to say?

List of final interview questions for parents

1. Tell me about your son and reading.
2. How do you think the school year went overall?
3. Overall, do you think your son read more, less, or about the same when he got home from school this year as compared to last year? This reading can include recreational reading such as magazines and reading for homework such as textbooks.
4. What do you think is the cause of this increase/decrease in reading time?
5. What are your concerns about your son this summer and in the upcoming school year?
6. Anything else you'd like to say?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Teachers

List of questions for content-area teachers

1. How is the research participant doing in your class?
2. On any given day, how does he act and participate during the period?
3. How is he doing on his assignments?
4. To what do you attribute his success/failure?
5. What would you say is a typical day for him in your class?
6. What are you studying now?
7. Will you describe a few lesson plans that you are using as you teach this unit?
8. Anything else you think might be relevant to understanding this student?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Focus Groups

Questions for first focus group

1. What classes are you taking?
2. What subjects do you like and why?
3. What do you guys like doing with your friends? Describe a typical activity that you would do together.
4. Do you think that's what most people your age like doing?
5. Describe a typical day in detail.
6. Do you think that's a typical day for most middle school students?
7. What do you think a typical day will be like when you get older? For example, a typical day for me is that I teach until 3:20, grade papers, eat dinner, watch T.V., maybe go out with friends, and read a novel before falling asleep. What will you do?
8. What do people your age like?
9. Has that changed from when you were younger?
10. How will that change when you get older?
11. Anything else you want to say about people your age?

Questions for second focus group

1. When you and your friends talk about school, what do you usually say to each other?
2. Do you know about any books right now that you'd like to read? Tell me about them.
3. How do you guys feel about reading? I don't necessarily mean the reading class, I mean how do you feel about reading in general?
4. Do you think most people your age view reading that way?
5. Why do you think people your age see reading that way?
6. When was the last time you wrote something just because you wanted to?
7. Have you read anything lately that a teacher didn't ask you to read? What was it?
8. What do you generally read in a week?
9. What could teachers do to make reading more interesting for you?
11. How important do you think reading is?
12. Do you think you will read more or less when you're older? Why?
13. Do you read more or less now than you did when you were in elementary school? Why?
14. Anything else you want to say about reading?

Appendix E

Periodic Survey

Please put a check by all of the reading strategies that you feel comfortable with. By putting a check next to the strategy, you indicate that you know both how and when to use the strategy.

- Previewing texts by looking at headings, subheadings, and key features**
- Predicting and checking your predictions**
- Summarizing**
- Making connections**
- Visualizing**
- Making inferences**
- Asking questions**
- Annotating or using sticky notes**
- Making graphic organizers**
- Talking with a friend about what you read**
- Determining the importance of information**
- Paying attention to bolded words and subheadings**
- Figuring out a word based on context clues**
- Figuring out a word by looking at the word itself**
- Recognizing when you are distracted**
- Recognizing when you don't understand**
- Re-reading**
- Reading aloud**
- Recognizing different patterns of text organization**
- Skimming or reading ahead to look for relevant information**
- Consulting outside resources such as a dictionary**

1. What reading strategies have you applied in your other classes? (Using the list above, please write the answers below.)

2. When you do use reading strategies in your other classes, do you use them because you remembered them from our reading class?

3. Why do you use the strategies you learn here (in reading) in your other classes?

or

Why don't you use the strategies you learn here in your other classes?

Please circle the number that most closely matches what you think.

1. I understand the reading strategies for different texts that this class has taught me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I use the reading strategies that I learn here in my other classes.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. In reading class, I have learned about some new books or texts that interest me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I have read some texts (including magazines or comics) that I learned about from this class.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I have read some books that I checked out from the school library or from the reading classroom library.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I read more things for personal pleasure than I did at the beginning of the year.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. What books would you like to hear more about in future book talks?

Appendix F Reading Interest Inventory

Please answer all of the questions by circling the words that most apply to you.



1. Imagine that your birthday is tomorrow, and when you arrive home this evening, your brother gives you a text as an early birthday present. How do you feel?

happy pleased indifferent not happy disappointed/upset

2. How do you feel about going to a library or to a store that sells books and magazines?

happy pleased indifferent not happy disappointed/upset

3. How do you feel about learning from a book?

happy pleased indifferent not happy disappointed/upset

4. How do you feel about reading your school books?

happy pleased indifferent not happy disappointed/upset

5. What, in your opinion, makes a book “good”?

6. If you could read a book or text about anything, what would you want it to be about?

Please check the box that best describes you.

1. My friends think I am

- a very good reader
- a good reader
- an OK reader
- a poor reader

2. Reading is something I like to do.

- Never
- Not very often
- Sometimes
- Often

3. I read

- not as well as my friends
- about the same as my friends
- a little better than my friends
- a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is

- really fun
- fun
- OK to do
- not fun

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can

- almost always figure it out
- sometimes figure it out
- almost never figure it out
- never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.

- I never do this.
- I almost never do this.
- I do this some of the time.
- I do this a lot.

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand

- almost everything I read
- some of what I read
- almost none of what I read
- none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are

- very interesting
- interesting
- not very interesting
- boring

9. I am

- a poor reader
- an okay reader
- a good reader
- a very good reader

10. I worry about what other kids think about my reading

- every day
- almost every day
- once in a while
- never

11. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I

- can never think of an answer
- have trouble thinking of an answer
- sometimes think of an answer
- always think of an answer

12. Reading is

- very easy for me
- kind of easy for me
- kind of hard for me
- very hard for me

13. When I grow up I will spend

- none of my time reading
- very little of my time reading
- some of my time reading
- a lot of my time reading

14. When I am in a group talking about stories, I

- almost never talk about my ideas
- sometimes talk about my ideas
- almost always talk about my ideas
- always talk about my ideas

15. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class

- every day
- almost every day
- once in a while
- never

Please circle the word that most strongly matches your opinion.

1. My teachers think that my reading is fine.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I am getting better at reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel comfortable when I read.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. My classmates think that I read pretty well.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. When I read, I recognize more words than I used to.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I think reading is relaxing.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I enjoy reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I understand what I read as well as other people my age do.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I read faster than other kids.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I like to read aloud.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree