



8-2014

Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Literacy Engagement and Interaction in the Home and School

Sarah Lynn Swauger

University of Tennessee - Knoxville, sswauger@vols.utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Swauger, Sarah Lynn, "Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Literacy Engagement and Interaction in the Home and School. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2014.

https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/2904

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sarah Lynn Swauger entitled "Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Literacy Engagement and Interaction in the Home and School." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Stergios Botzakis, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Colleen Gilrane, Trena Paulus, Richard Allington

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective
Ethnographic Case Study of Literacy Engagement and Interaction in the Home and
School**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sarah Lynn Swauger
August 2014

DEDICATION

This work is for my father
James E. Swauger Sr.

and

for my brother
Dr. James E. Swauger Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who accompanied me on this journey and supported my personal and academic growth in ways I cannot adequately describe, but I will do my best.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Stergios Botzakis, my committee chair, who guided and supported me throughout my entire doctoral pursuit. You led me through the dissertation, modeled what it means to be an excellent collegiate teacher, gave me the opportunity and trust to teach your classes, and supported me in my role as a university mentor. Thank you for thinking through ideas with me, constantly channeling positive energy, listening to me vent, and reading God only knows how many drafts of this work. Your mentoring has been invaluable, and I cannot thank you enough for helping me achieve my goals.

I would also like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, each of whom graciously offered her or his time to review drafts, provide feedback, and extend encouragement. Dr. Colleen Gilrane, who served as my initial advisor and made it possible for me to begin the program, thank you for believing in me and lifting me up. Dr. Trena Paulus, who helped me find my way as a researcher, thank you for always demanding more. I have grown exponentially as a scholar because of you. And, Dr. Richard Allington, I began my doctoral journey interested in educational policy, but your passion and wisdom influenced me to make it a lifetime intellectual pursuit.

To the “literacy/ DA gals,” we share experiences of sheer joy and trial that few will ever understand. We ran this course together hand and hand, pulling through tumultuous ice storm Cowboy Cab rides, escalator rescues, and several challenging but stimulating “Trena” classes, and we celebrated often for no apparent reason. Thank you for game nights and brinner parties. Without you, one would have been the loneliest number.

To Kim McCuiston, who has been my partner in crime since doctoral orientation, we began this walk together and we will end it together! Thank you for being “my person.”

To Dr. Andrea Stairs, it is amazing how affirmation and a suggestion from a teacher can inspire and subsequently change a life. Thank you for telling me I should do this. You planted a seed and it grew.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. To my parents, James and Lisa Swauger, who relentlessly pushed me towards self-actualization, without your unwavering support and confidence, I would not be where I am today. To my brother, Dr. James E. Swauger Jr., thank you for supporting and advising me along the way. And, to my husband, Justin Light, thanks for believing I could do this, encouraging me to go for it, putting up with me through the highs and lows, and marrying me anyway. I couldn’t have done it without you!

ABSTRACT

This collective case study uses ethnographic methods to explore the literacy engagement and school interactions of two families of struggling adolescent readers within the accountability era following the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a time period where there have been as yet few studies (e.g. Compton-Lilly, 2009) focused on family literacy. Formal and informal interviews with students and their guardians as well as observations and document analysis were the main data sources. Results illuminated the influence of school policies and curricula on students' families' interactions and identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The researcher found that families lacking cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) were not adequately informed about high stakes assessments or involved in decision-making, which significantly impacted the lives of their children. Consequently, students were tracked into letter groups that reflected the grading scale and influenced students' scholastic identities, used reading programs that did not develop intrinsic motivation, and barred access to necessary reading interventions solely on the basis of group placement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Conceptual Framework: Family Literacy.....	4
Schooled Literacy.....	7
Research Questions.....	8
Organization of Dissertation.....	9
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Method.....	11
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Family Literacy Research.....	17
Adolescent Literacy Research and Best Practices.....	32
History of Adolescent Literacy Policy.....	63
CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....	73
Personal Commitments and Motives.....	73
Reflexivity Statement.....	76
Epistemic and Ontologic Assumptions.....	79
Purpose and Significance of Study.....	82
Definition of Terms.....	82
Delimitations.....	84
Rationale.....	86
Research Approach.....	87
Method.....	93

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PORTRAITURES.....	109
Mabontown.....	99
The Boyd Family.....	100
Julia Boyd.....	100
Jackie Boyd.....	104
The Sutton/Johnson Family.....	105
Jimmy Johnson.....	105
Debbie Sutton.....	109
Highland Elementary School.....	110
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS.....	123
SAR Family Literacy Practices.....	124
Daily Life Functioning.....	124
Information.....	129
Entertainment.....	134
School at Home.....	139
SAR Literacy Practices at Home.....	143
Conceptualizations of Literacy and Reader Identities.....	144
Interaction Between the School and Family of a SAR.....	147
Coming to Know of Literacy Struggles.....	149
Communication of Services.....	155
Communication of Academic Achievement.....	158
Communication of Behavior.....	185
Communication of School Happenings.....	187

Guardians' Beliefs about School to Home Communication.....	191
Guardians' Approaches to School Interaction.....	198
Presence of the Accountability Era in the Lives of SARs and their Families.....	206
CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS.....	207
Family Literacy Practice.....	207
Family Literacy Practice Influences.....	208
Schooled Literacy Influences.....	211
Interactions Between Home and School.....	193
Technology Access and Communication.....	214
Cultural Capital and School to Home Interaction.....	214
Identity Theory and Communication of Academic Achievement.....	219
The Presence of the Accountability Era in Interaction Between School and Home.....	221
Implications for Practice.....	222
Limitations.....	226
Suggestions for Future Research.....	227
Conclusions.....	228
REFERENCES.....	229
APPENDICES.....	245
VITA.....	262

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Data Collection Moments and Sources.....	96
Table 3.2. Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation.....	100
Table 4.1. Julia’s QRI Results.....	111
Table 4.2. Jimmy’s QRI Results.....	117
Table 5.1. Analytical Process-Family Category: Family Literacy Practice.....	125
Table 5.2. Analytical Process-Family Category: Home to School Interaction.....	148

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. Conceptualization of Reality.....	81
Figure 5.1. Julia’s Initial Tier II Advancement Letter.....	150
Figure 5.2. Julia’s Final Tier I Advancement Letter.....	151
Figure 5.3. After-School Testing Tutoring Letter from Highland Elementary.....	159
Figure 5.4. Jimmy’s Assignment Sample.....	161
Figure 5.5. Julia’s Assignment Feedback Sample.....	167
Figure 5.6. Jimmy’s Progress Report.....	172
Figure 5.7. Jimmy’s Report Card.....	174
Figure 5.8. Julia’s ThinkLink Chart.....	177
Figure 5.9. Jimmy’s ThinkLink Chart.....	178
Figure 5.10. Julia’s Star Testing Result Chart.....	180

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

One year before I began work on this study, I tutored a boy named Isaiah (pseudonym) in reading. His mother contacted me after she was informed that, according to his benchmark tests, he was seriously struggling. Though she knew Isaiah had trouble reading, she knew little about the services he was receiving in school. She understood that Isaiah was enrolled in a “reading group,” which later turned out to be a scripted reading pullout program, but that was the extent of the information she received. According to the initial Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) assessments I conducted with Isaiah in December of his first grade year, he was performing at a pre-primer level. I spent the next four months working with Isaiah, and he was reading on grade level by the end of the school year. However, during the first two of those four months, Isaiah’s mother battled with the school to remove him from the scripted reading program about which she had only recently learned. The communication and interaction, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, sparked my interest in families of struggling readers and their interactions with schools. I wanted to learn more about the ways schools interact with families of older struggling readers, especially in an educational climate so focused on testing and outcomes. I wanted to know more about the family literacy practices of those struggling readers.

Nearly simultaneously to beginning work with Isaiah, I read Purcell-Gates (1995) work about Jenny, a non-literate mother and her first grade son, Donny. Though Purcell-Gates (1995) set out to learn about the lives of a non-literate family and their journey to become literate, she stumbled upon some notable interactions between Jenny and

Donny's school. Jenny faced great struggles to capture the attention of school staff, but she was ignored and cast off when she insisted Donny be retained a year because he was unable to read. It took Purcell-Gates stepping in with her cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) to get the assistance Donny needed and the outcomes Jenny wanted. Moreover, Jenny regularly came to the school and called in order to communicate about her lack of reading skills. She requested that they call her about Donny rather than send letters home, yet the school continued to only contact Jenny through the mail.

Likewise, Rogers (2003) noted interesting interactions between June Treader, a struggling adult reader, and her daughter, Vikki's, school system. Though June believed Vikki was too smart for special education and adamantly did not want her admitted, she conceded to the wishes of the school in their special education meetings, and Vikki was placed then later retained in special education. For a while June passively resisted attending the initial special education meeting by ignoring the correspondence, but she eventually succumbed to the pressures and set up the meeting. Also like Jenny, most communication home came in the way of written correspondence, which June sometimes found difficult to comprehend. She sometimes required Rogers assistance to navigate the documents she received.

Though Jenny characterized herself as a non-reader and June characterized herself as a struggling reader, there were still literate events occurring in both homes, and both mothers valued school and literacy. As Jenny worked to cope with life as a non-reader, she participated in events that even she did not realize were evidence of literacy use, such as using symbols on a calendar to help her remember important dates. In addition, Jenny frequently conveyed the importance of reading to Donny and did whatever she could to

get him the assistance he needed. Though June was a struggling reader herself, she created a print rich environment by developing a miniature home library where schooled literacy events took place immediately after school. The Treader home was a text rich environment, and June regularly modeled the importance of reading and writing in a variety of ways.

It has been more than seventeen years since data for Purcell-Gates' (1995) and Rogers' (2003) studies were collected. In a new era characterized by increasingly sophisticated technology and higher educational performance accountability, would the family literacy events and school to home interactions of struggling adolescent readers and their families be similar to those described by Purcell-Gates (1995) and Rogers (2003) over a decade later?

Statement of the Problem

In the last decade, there has been much discussion about the massive changes to the public education system in the U.S and how those changes affect instruction and the school environment (e.g. Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012; Ravitch, 2009; Allington, 2005; Pennington, 2004). Studies have investigated the uses and outcomes of packaged reading curriculum and their influence on literacy conceptualization and reader identity (e.g. Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004; Wickstrom, 2004). However, there has been little research about family literacy in this new educational climate (e.g. Compton-Lily, 2012).

Both families and schools play important roles in shaping readers. Yet, few studies have focused on how these two major contributors communicate or interact with each other regarding reading struggles and services. In fact, the most recent studies of family literacy that explored school to home interaction conducted data collection

primarily in the early to mid-1990s (e.g. Rogers, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995), before the instatement of NCLB. And, the focus of those studies was not necessarily school to family interactions; rather, the exploration was a byproduct of answering other research questions related to family literacy. Schooling has changed a great deal since the instatement of NCLB education reforms, and it is important to revisit literacy interactions post 2001 in order to understand how families of struggling adolescent readers engage in literacy in a technology rich era keenly focused on student test data. Because of high stakes testing, interactions between institutions and families may be different than they were when Purcell-Gates (1995) and Rogers (2001) created their data.

In my opinion, school to home interactions form the basis for guardian knowledge of the student's academic and social achievement and either encourages or inhibits parental support. Firm understanding of a student's reading achievement affords guardians opportunities to provide their student with support. If guardians are unaware of their student's progress or needs, there is no way for them to help the student achieve at her highest potential, nor can they advocate for the best interests of that student. If communication between school and home is lacking, families can be left crippled by ignorance.

Conceptual Framework: Family Literacy

Family Literacy

This section addresses family literacy as an important contributor to student reader motivation and conceptualization. It aims to define family literacy, critique the deficit perspective, and highlight the sometimes apparent disconnect between family literacy and schooled literacy.

The definition of family literacy is broad (Morrow, 1995). Family literacy includes all reading and writing events that occur with or by family members (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). These events include: [using] drawings or writings to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing. [It may] be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their everyday lives. (Morrow, Paratore & Tracey, 1994, p.5)

Family literacy is a pivotal component of developing a literate being (Morrow, 1995). As a child observes her parents or guardians engaging in literate activities, she begins to shape her understanding of what constitutes valuable literacy practice. Each time a influential adult writes or reads, the child constructs a vision of what it means to be literate and what purpose it serves (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Chall & Snow, 1988; Taylor, 1983). These conceptions have the power to shape their motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and reader identities (Stanovich, 2009). If students come from families that value and engage in literacy, they are more likely to believe that literacy is useful in their everyday lives. Thus, guardians arguably have the primary impact on the literate development of their offspring because they model these practices and motivate their children to do the same (Morrow, 1995). How they engage in literacy significantly influences how their children engage in literacy and their level of motivation. The more motivated the child is to engage in literacy practices, the more she will read, and the better a reader she is likely to become (Stanovich, 2009).

On the other hand, children who have little to no access to print rich home environments miss opportunities to see certain literacy practices modeled at home (Taylor, 1983). The absence of print at home impacts student literacy experience prior to school (Morrow, 1995). Those who have had less exposure to schooled literacy are less prepared to meet the schooled literacy expectations set by the middle-class, making it more difficult to excel.

In the past, assumptions about the poor drove much policy and research on family literacy. Many assumed that those who lived in poverty did not value literacy, did not regularly engage in literate activities, and did not keep print in the home (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Auerbach, 1995). They based these assumptions on the low academic performance of low-income students, believing that their low academic performance was a direct result of deficient family literacy practices. This misconception of poor and English Language Learner (ELL) families was actually the basis for much of the initial family literacy rage of the mid 1980s through the 1990s. It was considered “a new solution to the problems of schooling” (Auerbach, 1995, p. 12). In fact, The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy was established in 1989 and began funding many such programs (Bush, 1995). However, the initial ideological conceptions of family literacy came from a deficit perspective, one that assumed impoverished, minority, and English as a Second Language homes were void of rich literacy environments and values. This perspective supposed that these families must be “cured” in order to stop the “disease” of illiteracy (Auerbach, 1995). However, counterevidence (e.g. Compton-Lilly, 2009; Taylor & Dorsey- Gaines, 1988; Heath, 1983; Chall & Snow, 1982) showed that these families were not deficient at all; they were simply different. Their homes were

indeed rich with print, and literacy was used regularly in their lives. Thus, the problems experienced by these families did not lie in their lack of literacy, but in either the fact that their literacy did not align with the expectations of the mainstream majority or other social factors (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

With this in mind, it is important to remember that even children whose parents regularly engage in literate activities with or in front of them may not easily learn to read and write (Auerbach, 1995). Reading acquisition is more complicated than simple mimicry, and cognitive struggles do account for some reading difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, intellectual disability) (Hua, Woods-Groves, Kaldenberg, & Scheidecker, 2013; Channell, Loveall, & Conners, 2013; Stein, 2001).

Schooled Literacy

Although family literacy is highly influential in the conceptual development of literacy, one's first understanding of literacy and literate identity can shift and further develop as a result of school experiences (Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004; Chall & Snow, 1988). As students enter school, they begin to learn a new type of literacy, one that is often markedly different from their home literacy conceptualization (Morrow, 1995; Heath, 1983). In school, they learn schooled literacy (Rogers, 2003; Morrow, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1995), and if they do not find success in this form of literacy, their reader identities are likely to suffer (Stanovich, 2009). Therefore, one's family literacy, the everyday literacy experiences an individual encounters with family members (Rogers, 2003; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1995), intersects with schooled literacy, the institutionally specific literacy experiences, and emerges as a

multifaceted conceptualization developed from the two (Chall & Snow, 1988). A student's experiences in each realm influence her constructed reader identity.

Research Questions

This study investigated the literacy engagement of struggling adolescent readers and their families within the school and home contexts. I examined families' literacy engagement in their home settings as well as their interactions with their respective school systems. In order to accomplish this task, I utilized an ethnographic collective case study method as my mode of analysis, as ethnographic case studies attend to interaction and experience within specific contexts or "bounded systems" (Barone, 2011). The system was bound by the presence of a struggling adolescent reader within the family, and the collective case consisted of two families. To secure participants, I contacted a gatekeeper at a religiously affiliated after-school program that could introduce me to potential participants. Once participants were selected, I gained entry into the home environments by providing free tutoring to the struggling adolescents of the participating families. Data were created simultaneously to engaging in this tutoring.

In order to address the multi-faceted nature of the problem, I devised the following research questions:

- 1) How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy at home and perceive and engage in interaction with a school in the era of accountability?
 - a. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy practices at home?
 - b. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive and engage in school to home communication?

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One began with a description of the circumstances that led to the development of the study and an exploration of the need for updated research on family literacy and school to home interaction within the present educational context. From there, I defined family literacy and described how it influences the literacy conceptualizations and reader identities of children. Next, I explained how schooled literacy also works on students' conceptualizations of literacy and their reader motivations and identities. I then concluded that both family and schooled literacy work together to develop a student's reading conceptualizations and identity and explained why they are important to a student's literate success. I concluded the chapter by introducing the study and research questions. In Chapter Two, I provide a review of pertinent literature and make a case for the need for the present study by illuminating areas that require further study. In Chapter Three, I make transparent my epistemological and ontological assumptions and positionality, propose my methodological framework, connect the methods and methodology to my epistemological beliefs, and explain the data collection and analytical techniques used. In Chapter Four, I report the results and, in Chapter Five, the findings and implications.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter Introduction

Chapter Two first reviews the major theories that framed the research and analytical design of the study. It then reviews three major categories of literature that inform this dissertation: family literacy, adolescent literacy, and adolescent literacy policy.

A major underpinning of this study is the notion that reader identities and conceptualizations are developed and influenced by both family and schooled literacy experiences (Auerback, 1995) and that those identities and conceptualizations influence reader motivation and performance (Stanovich, 2009). Furthermore, it is an additional assumption that since schools and families play such a pivotal role in the literate development of children, a bridge between schooled literacy and family literacy experiences should be built (Taylor, 1983; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995). The purpose of this chapter is to examine research that speaks to these notions.

I begin this review by elucidating the three major theories that framed the study: Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1997). After introducing the theoretical foundations, I explore studies that define family literacy, examine its nature, and demonstrate its influence on child literacy development. I further consider two studies that not only contributed to the definition and understanding of family literacy, but also began to address issues of school to family interaction and its impact on student literacy acquisition. Next, I review research on adolescent literacy to consider how

schooled literacy practices influence reading conceptualizations and reader identity. I then review the recommendations of the International Reading Association and evaluate pedagogical research that supports those recommendations. Reflecting on this pedagogical research allows me to consider how the use of reading strategies at school and home influence participant reading experiences and their reader identities and conceptualizations. Finally, I survey the history of educational literacy policy and make the case that educational policy has the power to influence schooled literacy. This survey of educational literacy policy serves to provide evidence that policy, in addition to family and schooled literacy, has the power to shape students' conceptualizations of and experiences with reading and writing. I explicate the current state of affairs in educational literacy policy, namely the accountability era, and how those policies have recently influenced adolescent literacy instruction. This final section of the review supports my claim that additional research on family literacy within the current educational context is needed because education has rapidly changed since earlier studies on family literacy.

Method

I conducted two waves of searches for this review. In the first search, I used EBSCO Host and the ERIC and Education Source databases to conduct a sweeping search of literature related to adolescent struggling literacy. I used the following search terms: adolescent, literacy, read*, and struggling. I then used these terms in a number of pairs and selected articles and chapters that were related to theory or practice in adolescent struggling literacy. As I read the first batch of results, I began to create themes of motivation, choice, reader identity, and appropriate evaluation. I then used those themes to further refine my search techniques and conduct a second search. I back-

checked the sources and visited bibliography sections to round out my review. After reading the IRA's position statement on adolescent literacy (IRA, 1999), I began fitting the literature into their list of instructional components. I then filled in any perceived gaps by returning to the search engines using the words literacy and read* paired with teacher quality. I also spoke with colleagues who directed me to additional sources. In the second search, I went back to EBSCO host and Google Scholar to locate articles regarding family literacy. I used the keywords "family," "literacy," and "read*." The database results were scarce, thus, I continued the search by using the same words in the university library catalog, which directed me to the works discussed below.

Theoretical Framework

The following section reviews the major theories that framed this study. They are included at the forefront of this chapter because they provide the foundation for all research design and analytical choices and are referenced regularly throughout this work. The first three theories, Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (2000), and Choice Theory (1997), inform the way family and schooled literacy experiences influence reader identity and motivation and how motivation can be fostered while the final theory of Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1977) informs an understanding of school to home communication and interaction.

Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), presumes that people define and categorize themselves. This defining or categorizing of oneself creates a social identity, which leads to social categorization, and eventually categorization with a certain social group. The social group can be either an in- group, which leads to

personal satisfaction, or an out-group, which leads to personal dissatisfaction (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory relates to struggling readers because self-identification as a non-reader promotes non-reader tendencies. In this case, it does not necessarily matter whether or not being a non-reader makes one part of the in-group or out-group, simply identifying as a non-reader makes a person less likely to read (Stanovich, 2009; Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams & Yoon, 2007). The less a person reads, the less likely she is to improve, and this becomes particularly detrimental to reading growth. It is a reciprocal downward cycle described by Stanovich (2009) as the Matthew Effect. When a person does not believe she is a good reader, she reads less, which means she improves less, which makes her fall even further behind her peers, which feeds her non-reader identity.

Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation

The Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 2009) can be explained by the Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which posits that one's motivation for engaging and persisting to engage in an activity is dependent upon prior experiences with and socialized beliefs about the activity. They propose that:

Expectancies and values are assumed to influence directly achievement choices. They also influence performance, effort, and persistence. Expectancies and values are assumed to be influenced by task-specific beliefs such as ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of different tasks, and individuals' goals, self-schema, and affective memories. These social cognitive variables, in turn, are influenced by individuals' perceptions of their own previous experiences and a variety of socialization influences. (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 69)

In short, an individual determines future decisions for engaging in an activity based on past performance, the amount of energy required, the probability for future success, and socialized beliefs, such as “reading is for nerds” or “C group students are trouble makers.” Struggling readers often determine that there is no value in reading because they cannot expect to enjoy it or to be good at it, thus they self-identify as non-readers.

Choice theory. Because this study explores modern family literacy practices of struggling adolescent readers, their perceptions of the quality of school communication and interaction, and the bridge between family and schooled literacy practices, it is important not only to recognize the factors influencing the students’ reader identities and motivations, but also to consider what is or is not being done to foster their positive reader identities.

One way to try to counteract self-identification as a non-reader is to expose struggling readers to as many positive experiences with texts as possible. By providing students with the time and resources to engage with texts they can and want to read, previous reader identity damage might be undone. If students can have more positive experiences and outcomes with texts, they may begin to value reading and expect to do well. Choice Theory can explain this phenomenon.

Choice theory is based on the work of Glasser who studied psychology and counseling. Glasser suggested that every human being has a desire to meet four needs: “the need to belong, the need for power, the need for freedom, and the need for fun” (Glasser, 1997, p. 17). He rejected the theory of behaviorism and concluded that reinforcement did not change desire or people; it only masked whom people truly were for a short enough time to get what they wanted. So, students who have taken on non-

reader identities cannot be changed into readers simply by extrinsic rewards. Though it may increase fluency for the short term by increasing the amount children read, programs that reward students for reading a certain number of books will not change their reader identities if those books are not engaging books the students want to read, and reader identities ultimately determine how much self-initiated reading occurs. Glasser explained that people cannot be changed with coercion; students will be motivated to learn when teachers and schools become a part of their “quality world” (Glasser, 1996; Glasser, 1997a; Glasser, 1997b). This can only be accomplished when teachers and schools are viewed as caring and enjoyable, when they meet student needs for belonging, freedom, and fun (Erwin, 2005). By honoring students’ likes and interests and by providing them with choices, schools can become a part of this “quality world” and foster positive reader identities.

Cultural Capital

Although the previous theories focused on adolescent struggling readers and their identities and motivations, the theory of Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1977) informs an understanding of school to home communication and interaction. Cultural Capital was not an initial guiding theory in the design of the study, as I began this study from an Interpretivist perspective rather than a Critical perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000); however, through the data creation and analysis process, it became an integral aspect.

The theory of Cultural Capital posits that cultural hierarchy is reinforced and reproduced by itself. For example, the upper and middle classes reproduce their power positions through the education system. It is the upper and middle classes who determine what is worthy of study (.i.e. canonical literature) and who are the ones who are most

likely to have been exposed to what is valued because of their cultural wealth (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu explained that:

The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and sections of a class) in that the culture which it transmits is closer to the dominant culture and that the mode of inculcation to which it has recourse is less removed from the mode of inculcation practiced by the family. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 493)

In sum, the usual family practices of the middle class are more in tune with what is valued by education than that of the lower classes, thus their offspring are more likely to succeed in school because they have experiences and values that mirror what is valued in school.

Lareau (1989) further extended this theory to lower socio-economic guardians. Because middle class parents and guardians are more likely to have been successful in school and to have furthered their educations past public education, they hold cultural capital when interacting with public school institutions. She explained that upper and middle class guardians are in greater positions of power because they understood how public education worked and had equal or greater cultural capital than that of the school staff. This situation gave privileged parents or guardians the confidence and wherewithal to interact with schools (Rogers, 2003; Lareau, 1989; Bourdieu, 1977).

Cultural deficit theory. Because the upper and middle classes determine which cultural practices are valuable—their own—and these values are reproduced through the education system, the less privileged are less likely to succeed in school because their practices do not translate as well (i.e. literacy practices). Rather than attribute this

historically poor academic performance of low socio-economic children to cultural differences or inequalities, those in power blame the poor's lack of success on cultural deficiencies (Valencia & Soloranzo, 1997). This preferred view of the poor as deficient is called the cultural deficit perspective (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Valencia & Soloranzo, 1997) and has been used to reproduce the privileged agenda while ignoring inequality. The deficit perspective propelled the study of family literacy in the 1980s and 1990s because many politicians were looking for answers in "fixing" the literacy problems of the socio-economically disadvantaged (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). The following section reviews family literacy research that focused on actually learning what family literacy practices were like and in so doing determined that the practices of the lower class were different, not deficient.

Family Literacy

In this section, I review the literature on family literacy. First, I examine studies that inform our understanding of the term "family literacy." I then progress through studies focused on families from an array of ethnic and socio-economic populations in order to shed the deficit perspective. Finally, I end with two studies that began to address school to home interaction. These final two studies lay the foundation for my methodological choices because each study employed ethnographic research. At the same time, their review illuminates space for further contribution to family literacy research, specifically within a new educational context and with a narrower focus on school to home interaction.

Ethnographies of Family Literacy

Family literacy and the white middle class. Children's literacy is fostered by everyday family literacy practices; those everyday practices make up what is called family literacy. Taylor (1983) conducted a three-year-long ethnography of family literacy practices within six "white" middle class suburban families living within a fifty-mile radius of New York City. Taylor initially used convenience sampling to select neighborhood friends whom she knew had young children successfully learning to read. She began with the first family in 1977 and continued snowball sampling over the next two years. Throughout the study, Taylor regularly visited with the families in numerous contexts. She visited their homes, they visited hers, her children played with their children, and she interacted with them at social events. While in their homes, she collected written artifacts from the children, obtained audio-recorded story time samples, took photographs, observed, and conducted countless informal interviews with parents and children.

Taylor (1983) determined that children learn literate activities from their families in a variety of ways, but less through direct instruction. Interestingly, when the parents in Taylor's study tried to engage in explicit literacy instruction with their children, they were met with resistance. It seemed that the children learned best from observing family members and experimenting with those observations through play (e.g playing waitress in a pretend restaurant and making the menu, creating an adoption form with results, and developing written club rules and member lists) and for their own purposes (e.g writing cards and letters). Additionally, children's engagement in literate practices changed the way the families engaged in literacy. Each child beginning literacy acquisition engaged

differently and thereby changed the family literacy practices (e.g story time, homework, literacy play). Thus, family literacy engagement was a reciprocal activity. Parents influenced literacy practices, and so did each child.

This seminal work informed the definition of family literacy and illuminated the ways in which children acquire literate skills. Family literacy is inclusive of all literate activities that occur with or by family members and children learn much of their literacy skills through observation and mimicry of those family members. This study also began the discussion of schooled literacy's influence on family literacy because children's reciprocal influence stemmed in large part from schooled literacy brought home (e.g homework).

Family literacy across socio-economic demographics. Twelve years later, Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995) also investigated the literacy interactions of families in their everyday lives. Their goal was to learn about the literacy experiences in which children engage with their families. Unlike Taylor (1983), these families came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Forty-one guardians of prekindergarten participants from six public elementary schools with an array of demographics kept diaries to record what activities the children participated in throughout the week. Those diaries, paired with a follow up interview, served as the primary data for the study.

The investigators determined that “about 60 percent of the parents in each sociological group spontaneously reported activities in their diaries that reflect[ed] encounters with print through daily routines, such as assisting with food preparation and shopping” (p. 241). These authentic print experiences, also noted by Taylor (1983), were major contributors to family literacy practice.

Storybook reading was another literacy rich activity in which families engaged. Ninety percent of middle income and fifty-two percent of low-income families reported reading storybooks with their children. There was a notable percentile difference between middle and low-income families in this practice, yet the findings do suggest that many low-income families do engage in storybook reading to their children. In addition, going to the library, using independent print as a source of entertainment, and school-related activities/explicit instruction were other forms of literate activities in which the families participated.

The difference between low and middle-income families' use of literacy "as a form of entertainment" versus "literate activities undertaken for the purpose of learning literacy" was an interesting finding by Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995, p. 248). They posited that low-income families who did more schooled literacy activities might feel the need to provide more structured activities, possibly because they found literacy acquisition to be "a rather difficult and unrewarding task" (p. 248). This low-income family preference for schooled literacy at home directly contrasted with the findings of Taylor (1983), which suggested that children learn literacy best from observation of authentic family literacy occurrences. In essence, Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995) found that low-income families were focusing on schooled literacy at home, which was a less effective mode of transmitting literacy values than naturalistic modeling of family literacy use, such as creating grocery lists or reading the newspaper..

As a result, Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995) suggested that teachers and schools consider connecting their literacy teaching practices to practices students may engage in at home. They, like Taylor (1983), argue that such connections between home

and school yield greater literacy gains. This requires bringing more authentic family literacy practices into the classroom rather than schooled literacy into the home. And, this belief is supported by their findings that children better acquire literacy practices and values from observing and engaging in authentic literacy experiences.

Family literacy and the socio-economically disadvantaged. Another study that debunked the deficit perspective of low-income family literacy was Chall and Snow's (1982) ethnographic study of out-of-school (family) literacy, which aimed to understand why some children progressed to the later stages of Chall's reading development (1979) and others did not. The investigators paid particular attention to social class, seeking to determine how some lower-class families, whose children characteristically underperform in schooled literacy, manage to be successful.

The participants were thirty-one families with thirty-two children from low-income families who were either above-average or below-average readers, as determined by standardized test scores and teacher recommendations. Data collection consisted primarily of interviews with as many family members as possible and observations of students and their families participating in a homework-like task created by the researchers. In addition, there was a child-maintained diary component that happened once during the school year and once during the summer. Furthermore, reading and vocabulary tests comprised part of the data to determine what the children's capabilities were, and the investigators gave teachers questionnaires, reviewed school records, and observed classroom to determine how the children "function[ed] in classroom contexts central to acquiring literacy skills" (p. 46).

Chall and Snow (1982) determined that: one, a strong relationship existed between the “cognitively enriching activities” provided at home and the child’s word recognition and vocabulary skills, and, two, there was a relationship between the “emotional climate of the home” and the child’s reading comprehension (p. 533). This suggests that both the quality of family literacy activities and the general emotional climate at home are instrumental in shaping literacy acquisition. It mirrors Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) where children must have their basic needs met before they may efficiently acquire literacy skills from their families. Therefore, many of the literacy issues experienced by children of low-socioeconomic means may be from family stressors (possibly due to poverty) rather than a lack of literacy value or practice at home.

Heath (1983) also contributes to countering the deficit perspective of low-socioeconomic literacy. Heath conducted a ten-year ethnography to study the literacy practices of two working-class communities, one Black and one White. She hoped to understand how environment influences the language development of children. Through extensive observation and audio-recordings, Heath determined that the family literacy practices of these communities, despite their struggles, were rich, though different from what schooled literacy would expect of them. While “children in Roadville [grew] up surrounded by print: their room decorations, homemade alphabet quilts, books, toys, and church experiences give them an abundance of reading materials,” (p.233) the “Trackton children [had] no books, and [found] their reading in tasks which evolve[d] for them in the house, the plaza, and at the neighborhood store” (p. 233). Despite the difference in access to books at home, both communities praised and encouraged reading, Trackton

engaged in oral reading and storytelling and Roadville emphasized silent reading. The study provided further counter evidence to the notion that minority families and families of the working-class lacked value for or did not engage in literate activities.

Additionally, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) conducted an ethnographic study of six Black children and their families living in extreme inner-city poverty. For three years, they visited with families who lived on Shay Avenue and kept meticulous thick descriptions of her observations and interactions. Like Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983), the investigators determined that children used literacy frequently for authentic and varied purposes. Regardless of the fact the children lived in extreme poverty, they too came from rich literary environments. They saw parents and children engage in reading and writing activities consistently. For example, parents regularly had to employ reading and writing skills for instrumental purposes when dealing with social service agencies. In addition, they used literacy for autobiographical purposes, for entertainment, for interpersonal communication, for learning, and for memory among others. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) also determined that literacy and education are different entities. The parents of many of these families may not have been educated (some had not obtained a high school diploma), but they were literate and used their literacy skills regularly and for an array of purposes. Thus, they were not highly educated, but they were literate. Subsequently, many of their children became literate quite easily and performed well in school despite their hardships.

The findings of this study were highly important to the field of family literacy because they counteracted claims that poor children with uneducated parents lacked literate opportunities and experiences (e.g. Hart & Risley, 1995; Bereiter & Engelmann,

1966). This was not to say that all families practiced literate activities or that all Black families struggling with poverty provided rich literacy experiences for their children, but it did discredit the deficit assumption that poor minority families were devoid of literacy (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). Furthermore, it also confirmed previous research that found families regularly engage in literacy for an array of authentic or instrumental purposes.

Compton-Lilly (2012) attended to time and literate identity construction in her eight-year longitudinal qualitative study of eleven Black urban secondary students and their families. She posited that students continue to construct their reader identities over extended periods of time and that they also continue to reconstruct their identities through their choice and level of engagement with literature.

Compton-Lilly (2012) began her study with eleven of her own first grade students. She revisited these students in their fifth grade year and again in their eighth grade year. Over time, she noticed how these students changed their beliefs about reading, their constructions of themselves as readers, and the content of their reading. One particular finding of interest was that many of the students, who had initially enjoyed reading and books when they were in first grade and fifth grade, altered their identities to non-readers. Most did not discuss shared reading experiences with peers, though they did admit to reading some popular texts at home and having enjoyed a few school selections. Overall, it seemed that the canonical works read at school did not connect with their personal reading tastes, a finding that further supported the notion of disconnect between family literacy and schooled literacy first discussed by Taylor (1983) and Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995).

An additional finding of interest from the Compton-Lilly (2012) study was the affirmation that parents use personal literacy and school experiences to navigate the experiences of their children (Taylor, 1983). Parents often relied on the past to understand the child's current literacy experiences and to determine how to engage in literate activities. This point made inquiry into family literacy history particularly important in understanding family literacy practices and how parents decide to engage in literacy with their children.

Ethnographic Case Studies of Family Literacy

The studies addressed thus far have primarily focused on the definition of family literacy and its nature across racial and socio-economic lines, and many have complicated or challenged the deficit perspective. The following studies, although they did not necessarily focus on defining family literacy or critiquing the deficit perspective, considered the nature of family literacy in the homes of two low-income families whose mothers were struggling or non-literate. Also importantly, they visited the topic of school to home interaction. They contributed enormously to the design of the present study because they involved researcher positioning as full participant literacy tutor and some exploration of school to home interaction. Thus, they are here described in rich detail for their contributions to family literacy and again in Chapter 4 where I discuss the methodology of the present study.

Family literacy and the aspiring to be literate mother. Purcell-Gates (1997) wrote a highly influential piece that fed my desire to understand families of struggling adolescent readers and their interactions. Her ethnographic case study focused on the struggles of a non-literate Appalachian family living in the North and the mother's

attempts to get her son the interventions he needed. Jenny, the mother, and Donny, her son, worked with Purcell-Gates in tutoring sessions for two years after repeated let down by the school system. The result was a captivating account of the world of a non-literate family and their interactions with the school and society.

Jenny approached Purcell-Gates at a literacy center in the early 90s. Before coming to the center, she tried to get Donny additional assistance from the school and asked that he be held back a year, but her attempts were unsuccessful. The school system ignored her requests and made it highly difficult for her to communicate with them. She explained to them that she was unable to read, yet the school system continued to send home written correspondence. Jenny called the school several times to speak with the principal, but her concerns were never addressed. She also came to the school to speak with administration, but the school still dismissed her; they considered her an absentee parent. Jenny knew Donny was struggling with reading, and she did not want him to be passed along having never learned how to read. She had experienced that fate first hand and did not want the same for her son.

When Jenny came to the literacy center, Purcell-Gates became a tutor for not only Donny, but Jenny as well. Those tutoring sessions eventually made their way into Jenny's home, and Purcell-Gates was able to observe the literacy practices of the family there, noting the way Jenny made marks on a calendar to remind herself of appointments though she could not write standard English. She also found it particularly interesting how Jenny memorized the order of letters on items she needed to purchase at the store. Jenny was practicing her own form of literacy for survival.

Purcell-Gates accompanied Jenny and Donny as they navigated their world with very little literacy capability. She went to the library with them to secure library cards and ended up using her own cultural capital (Lareau, 1989) to interact with the school system on their behalf. It actually took Purcell-Gates' interactions with the school to get Donny retained in first grade. These experiences placed Purcell-Gates in an interesting ethical position because she did intervene in the interactions between her participants and the institution. She did so in the interest of Donny, but she became an advocate rather than remaining unobtrusive or practicing any semblance of distance.

Purcell-Gates situated herself somewhere on the spectrum between a participant observer and full participant (Glesne, 2009). She investigated her own environment in that the study began in the literacy center where she worked. However, her position morphed as she began to tutor in Jenny's home. She observed the home site and the family literacy practices and regularly informally interviewed Jenny and Donny as she traversed their environment. At the same time, she was a participant in her position as a tutor.

Purcell-Gates (1997) documented the unique literacy practices of Jenny and Donny, their tutoring journey, their family's literacy practices, and their interactions with the school system. She found that, though they were both unable to read and write, Jenny was able to navigate her world by creating her own reading and writing coping skills. However, her non-literate status made it especially difficult for Jenny to help Donny and to advocate for him in a school environment, and Donny's father, also non-literate, was in and out of the picture and did not concern himself with school interactions. In addition, Jenny was perceived as an absent parent by the school system despite her repetitive

attempts to be involved, and no accommodations were made to assist Jenny as a non-reading and writing mother. Last, through tutoring with Purcell-Gates, both Jenny and Donny were able to make literate gains. Once Purcell-Gates moved away from the site, Jenny was able to read and write letters with her, a testament to the progress she had made in the two-year study.

For Purcell-Gates (1997), the focus of research was more about understanding the lives, struggles, and coping techniques of the non-literate family rather than studying school to family interaction. However, interaction of the school and family became a byproduct of the study as Purcell-Gates journeyed with Jenny and Donny through their literate development. It was the first of two family literacy studies to explore school to family interactions between the mother of a struggling reader and his school.

Rogers (2003) conducted another influential ethnographic case study, which, like Purcell-Gates's (1997) study, began in an educational center. In the case of Rogers (2003), this center was a center for adult basic education where Rogers was observing for another research project. She wanted to work with an adult who was struggling with literacy and who had children in the public school system. An adult education teacher directed Rogers to June Treader, a Black mother of three living in New York with whom Rogers had already established a rapport. Though Rogers initially intended only to tutor June, June suggested that Rogers also tutor Vikki, who was 11 years old at the time and also needed help. Thus, the tutoring in the Treader home ensued, but expanded as neighboring children began attending sessions. It eventually turned into a reading group for a few neighborhood children whereby Rogers also gained insight into the community with the children's local history research projects.

Serving as a literacy tutor afforded Rogers many opportunities to observe family literacy practices in the home while gaining insight into June and Vikki's specific reading struggles. She was able to observe to what materials the family had access and noted how June set up many "schooled literacy" experiences for her children by providing them with books in her mini-library. There the children were to finish homework or read and write after school. As a regular visitor to the home environment, she was also able to assist June in the everyday struggles she had dealing with institutional discourse (Fairclough, 1995) by providing support in reading and filling out documents for health care and school forms. Through her experiences with the family, she was able to characterize their family literacy practices and determined that family literacy was similar to apprenticeship. This was particularly evident in the way that June spoke about literacy and modeled it for her through her adult education studies. June asked Vikki "how you gunna get somewhere without readin'?" (Rogers, 2003, p. 65) thereby defining the importance of literacy and teaching Vikki to value it as a tool for getting places.

During Rogers' research, it became clear that June was struggling with the schools' attempts to classify Vikki in special education. This is where the school to home interactions about literacy began to take place. At first June did not want Vikki placed in special education because she believed Vikki was too smart, and she asked Rogers to attend the school meeting with her. Rogers, like Purcell-Gates, was placed in a position of advocate, a detour from a researcher stance. At the special education meeting, however, June eventually conceded to identifying Vikki for special education services because the school convinced her that special education was the only way to give Vikki the extra support she needed. The following year, June expressed her fervent belief that

Vikki should be taken out of special education, and she asked Rogers to again accompany her at the meeting. Though June went into the meeting intending to get Vikki removed from special education, she left unsuccessful at her attempts and conceded yet again to the wishes of the teachers.

Rogers' main data collection techniques consisted of observation, informal interview, maps of facilities, and audio recording of school meetings. She used each of these techniques to piece together the Treader story. She specifically conducted a critical discourse analysis of the school meetings to determine how the talk was working and what it was doing.

Rogers determined that throughout the special education placement meeting, the "rhetoric of 'special education' was hidden from June" (Rogers, 2003, p. 118). The staff used language like "resources" rather than "special education" and situated it as an offering. This language worked to persuade June to sign the paperwork and allow Vikki to be classified as a special education student. She would not be able to get the resources that would help her improve if she was not admitted into a self-contained classroom. Furthermore, the nature of the annual follow up special education meeting altered greatly in comparison with her placement meeting. Unlike the first meeting, this meeting was informal and Vikki was present. Rogers named three specific contradictions of the meetings. First, was the rhetoric of evidence. Rogers noted that where in the first meeting the committee members spoke of tests and "evidence," in the second meeting they spoke from experience. Second, the deficit framework turned into a framework of strength. Whereas they had spoken of all Vikki's deficits in the first meeting, the second meeting focused on her strengths. Last, was the continued consent. Though June adamantly

professed that she wanted Vikki removed from special education, in the meeting, she consented to her continued placement. These two meetings were interesting interactions between the family and the school and demonstrated how the school promoted its agenda.

Notably, both Purcell-Gates' (1995) and Rogers' (2003) studies produced evidence that mothers possessing little cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) and had little success advocating for their children in school to home interactions because their desires were disregarded by their respective schools. Jenny required the assistance of Purcell-Gates' cultural capital to retain Jimmy in first grade because he could not read, and June, who did not want Vikki enrolled in special education, caved under the pressure and persuasion of the school staff on two different accounts.

Section Summary

Together, these ethnographies and ethnographic case studies illuminated the intricate role of family literacy in the development of a literate child. They challenged the assumption that families from poverty, hardship, and minimal education were incapable or did not provide literate opportunities for their children. They also brought attention to the disconnection that often appears between family literacy and schooled literacy. Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995) and Taylor (1983) called for enhanced school to family relationships in order to build a literacy bridge between family literacy and schooled literacy. This suggestion was not evident in the school to family interactions described by the Rogers (2003) and Purcell-Gates (1995) case studies.

Rogers (2003) began to address the interactions between the Treader family and the schools and Purcell-Gates (1995) became involved in the school to family interaction between Jenny and Donny's school. However, these ideas remained tertiary to the larger

story of tutoring non-literate or struggling adult readers and their children. Both studies spoke to power differentials that appeared in home and school communication and practices, and in each case the researcher was tasked with intervening on behalf of the family. Even so, the results of the interventions were mixed at best, speaking to how dominant the intentions and expectations of the schools were.

Adolescent Literacy

In the upcoming section, I explore literacy research related to adolescent struggling readers as well as suggested instructional techniques for helping them improve. Review of this literature was important for grounding my tutoring methods in proven instructional practices for struggling adolescent readers, and it allowed me to speak to how those methods were or were not present in the communicated instructional practices of the participants' school. Knowledge of the school's literacy teaching practices was important for understanding the students' schooled literacy practices, which was important because it informed my understanding of the relationship between schooled and family literacy proposed by Taylor (1983) and Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995). Understanding the nature of the students' schooled literacy experiences also allowed me to interpret the formations of their literacy conceptualizations and reader identities.

Helping Struggling Adolescent Struggling Readers

According to literacy research (e.g. Dennis, 2009; Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004), struggling readers differ greatly in their strengths and weaknesses and require individualized instruction (Faggella-Luby et al., 2009). According to The International Reading Association (1999), a nonprofit organization dedicated since 1956 to improving

global literacy, struggling adolescent students need appropriate assessment and equally appropriate individualized instruction. They created a list of instructional components adolescents deserve in their classrooms:

1. Adolescents deserve access to a wide variety of material that they can and want to read.
2. Adolescents deserve instruction that builds on both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials.
3. Adolescents deserve assessment that shows their strengths as well as their needs that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers.
4. Adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum.
5. Adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning how to read.
6. Adolescents deserve teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics.
7. Adolescents deserve homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed. (pp. 4-9)

According to the IRA, adolescent readers deserve each of these components. This section of the review is organized to discuss the literature associated with the components

outlined. It provides a foundation for understanding my tutoring practices and allows me to speak to how these methods do or do not exist in other data.

Choice and Motivation in Improving Positive Reader Identities

Providing adolescents with appropriate and desirable reading material is important for cultivating motivation and positive reader identity. When students are allowed to engage in material they choose for themselves, reading becomes a part of their “quality worlds” and the activity is more likely to transform into something intrinsically motivating (Glasser, 1997). Such a worthwhile and pleasurable activity is likely to have a positive expectancy value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), meaning students will expect reading to have positive outcomes and they will be more likely to continue engaging in the activity. The more they read, the better they become, and the better they become, the more their reader identities improve and the more value they attribute to reading (Stanovich, 2009; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Family literacy may have the first influence on reading conceptualization and identity, but schooled literacy also has the power to influence students’ conceptualizations of reading and their reader identities. The existence or non-existence of choice in classrooms characterizes “schooled literacy” as either an activity that values students’ selves, or not (Glasser, 2007).

Motivation and reader identity. Reader identity and motivation are two of the most important factors facing adolescent struggling readers, and they often create a barrier between the student and reading development (Stanovich, 2009). Students who struggled to read as adolescents have likely faced years of challenges associated with their lack of skills. As a result, their reader identities suffered along with their desire to read. Decreased motivation usually resulted in decreased reading, which resulted in less

progress, which led them to fall further and further behind their peers (Stanovich, 2009; Roberts et al., 2008). Additionally, the humiliation of repeated failure sprouted avoidance techniques from intentional invisibility to explosive behaviors (Hall, 2007). Thus, some struggling readers avoided reading in all contexts. Without the desire to read, acquiring the skills necessary to improve became difficult. Thus, finding ways to improve motivation and reader identity through tutoring should help a struggling reader improve. The more a tutor can motivate a struggling reader with engaging texts that she wants to read, the more likely she is to develop a strong reader identity. And, the stronger the identity, the more likely she is to continue reading on her own. The more she reads, the more she is likely improve (Stanovich, 2009).

In the section to follow, I will further address the literature regarding reader identity and motivation as they relate to skill acquisition.

Reading motivation and choice. Reading motivation has tended to decline as students enter adolescence (IES, 2008; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, Scammacca, 2008; Alvermann, 1999). One way to combat the decreasing motivation in adolescent struggling readers is to let them choose what books they read. Glasser (1997) proposed that every human being has a desire to meet four needs, “the need to belong, the need for power, the need for freedom, and the need for fun” (Glasser, 1997). He suggested that people could not be changed with coercion, and that students would be motivated to learn when teachers and schools become a part of their “quality world.” This could only be accomplished when teachers and schools were viewed as caring and enjoyable, when they met student needs for belonging, freedom, and fun (Erwin, 2005).

Alvermann (2007) exemplified how providing adolescent struggling readers with choice can elicit worthwhile results. Half of sixty seventh, eighth, and ninth grade participating students, of whom all but six scored in the lowest percentile of their standardized reading test, were involved in an after school media club. The club met weekly after school for fourteen weeks to engage with video games, computer games, and books. From student documented reading logs and parent interviews, Alvermann determined that the struggling readers from both groups read an average of thirty minutes a day. These students were identified as strugglers, yet they were participating in strong reader behaviors. Most importantly, students involved in the after school media club reported reading more because they heard about an interesting book than students who were not enrolled in the media club. Not only were struggling readers from both groups reading, the ones involved in the media club were exposed to new genres and read more as a result. The relaxed atmosphere in addition to socialization, freedom and access to good books seemed to feed the intrinsic motivation to read new material. If tutors and schools can make reading fun, they have a stronger likelihood of increasing the amount a student reads and her overall reading ability.

In another study further supporting the claim that autonomy over reading material improves reading motivation, Alvermann (1999) gave students an opportunity to choose the books they wanted to read in a summer reading program. Twenty-two students visited the public library to read and discuss books with an assigned group and leader once a week for fifteen weeks. They completed journals about their experiences and were paid a small sum per journal submission. Initially, they were encouraged to select and read the same book for discussion, but all of groups decided against this, opting instead to each

read the books they wanted. Clearly, these students craved the freedom to select their own reading material, and their wish was granted. They enjoyed reading and discussing books on their own, particularly with minimal input from the leader. They did not want their discussions in the reading program to be like the ones they had at school; they wanted “real discussion.” This included talking over each other, interrupting, and cutting up. The meetings resulted in several students picking up books they might not have chosen for themselves if they had not heard about them from a friend. Furthermore, the students had rich discussions about those books with little adult intervention. Though the study consisted primarily of participants who were avid readers in the first place, it is relevant to the study of struggling adolescent readers because it shows how choice motivates reading. The group members explained that had they not had the flexibility in book choice and discussion format, they would not have continued participating. Thus, choice was a determining factor in the low attrition of club members. The autonomy over reading material made the summer reading program part of the participants’ quality worlds. Freely reading and discussing books was fun, thus continuing to do so worthwhile. Avid readers read because they find intrinsic motivation in choice, the same goes for struggling readers. Thus, in order to motivate an adolescent reader, tutors and teachers should consider what materials the student is interested in reading and provide choices (Glasser, 1997). These choices may provide the struggling reader with positive reading experiences that, in turn, lead to increased reading and increased fluency, which leads to improved reader identity (Stanovich, 2009).

Continuing with the impacts of reader identity, boys who do not succeed at school-style reading are often quick to self-identify as non-readers (Smith & Wilhelm,

2004). They tend to “embrace” activities they are good at and “reject activities in which they [believe] they would be or appear to be incompetent” (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004, pp. 456-457). Smith and Wilhelm (2004) conducted an interview study, which consisted of three interviews with forty-nine middle school and high school boys from varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. They asked the boys to discuss activities they enjoyed and explain why they enjoyed them. The boys varied greatly in which activities they enjoyed and believed to be competent. However, there was a consistent theme of why they liked a certain activity. The boys expressed that they liked activities in which they were inherently skilled or that were easily picked up. Each participant used literacy within the context of doing something he enjoyed outside of school. However, the boys expressed that they did not like to read. Specifically, they did not enjoy reading done at school. School reading was described as hard and useless, and the genres were too descriptive, convoluted or boring. Most of the boys explained that their teachers did not teach them how to read school literature. Only one boy mentioned a teacher that taught him how to read a text, and he appreciated this, finding that he was capable of doing the reading. An interesting component of the research design was the introduction of the story of Andre, a successful male student who enjoyed reading and often went to the library to read though it made him less popular than the other boys. Instead of responding to Andre with disdain, many of the boys conveyed that they wished they could be more like him and enjoy reading; they were happy he was doing something he was good at.

This study is important to adolescent struggling reader research because it shows that, with many boys, struggling to read may be less related to decoding or fluency and more related to training, motivation, and identity. According to this study, adolescent

boys become frustrated with activities in which they do not quickly find success. This suggests that teachers must work to teach students how to read different text structures in advance of reading the material. If boys are better equipped to conquer reading, there is a greater chance of success and a following construction of a positive reader identity. Boys need to experience this success quickly and repeatedly to be motivated to continue.

The study also showed that the boys felt school reading was uninteresting. The genres they were asked to read did not seem relevant to their lives. Teachers and tutors should think about the genres of texts they require their students to read. It is important to find a balance between struggling with the canons, reading for enjoyment, and reading instructional texts. If boys were given more opportunities to engage with the types of literacies in which they excel, they might begin to find reading fun, identify themselves as readers, and be motivated to read more. Participants of the Smith and Wilhelm (2004) study complained that school reading was too difficult and not relevant to their lives. Giving students choice in what they read allows them to engage in their interests and shows teacher value of those interests. This is particularly important for teaching struggling readers who often have low motivation and a poor reader identity.

Motivation and instructor relationships. An important factor in motivating adolescents is the student-teacher relationship. Moje (1996) discussed the importance of student-teacher relationships on increasing student motivation to read. Using symbolic interactionism as her theoretical framework, her ethnographic study focused on how teacher-student relationships impact student motivation to engage in literacy practices. The study lasted two years and the participants consisted of one teacher and her chemistry class. Moje selected seven student participants as key informants based on

their “class participation, interactions with the teacher, achievement levels, gender, and willingness to be interviewed” (p. 179). Daily field journals as a participant observer, formal interviews with the teacher, formal interviews with the students, and informal daily interviews with the teacher and the students provided the sources of data for the study. Moje found that, within the particularity of this classroom setting, “literacy was practiced as a tool for organizing thinking and learning in the context of a relationship built between the teacher and her students” (p. 180). Landy, the classroom teacher, cared about her students and their learning, thus, she adamantly sought out literacy techniques to help her students make sense of the material. The students, knowing that Landy went above and beyond to help them, utilized these strategies within the room, even if they did not use them beyond her classroom setting. She believed in teaching her students how to learn, and they recognized this.

The findings of this study were important to struggling adolescent literacy because they demonstrated the importance of teacher-student relationships. Students who struggled were more likely to learn and use comprehension strategies if they had a strong relationship with their teacher. In Moje (1996), Landy’s students attributed the literacy strategies to their teacher Landy, meaning they believed she created them, so they used them. When students had a humanistic understanding that the work a teacher asked of them was legitimately for their benefit, they were more likely to buy-in. Fostering a safe environment and building rapport is important to motivating struggling readers.

Reader identity and comprehension strategies. Not only does reader identity have a reciprocal relationship with motivation, it also has a reciprocal relationship with comprehension strategy use. Reader identity is important to the way students approach

texts, and this is influential in the success of their reading comprehension. Hall (2012) studied how reader identity correlated to text discussion and use of comprehension strategies. Her study, which involved the participation of three middle school classes and their teachers, used a Reader Self-Perception Scale, seventy-eight bi-weekly observations, 144 audio-taped small group discussions, and the Gates-MacGinitie, Fourth Edition test of reading achievement (GMRT-4), which was given at the beginning and end of the study. The study consisted of four cycles in four steps: the teachers taught their classes a reading strategy, students read a piece on their own, students documented their use of the reading strategy, and last, students discussed the text and the strategy in small-groups. Students were grouped by likeness in reader identity and then participated in three small group discussions over the twelve-week span of the study. The first two discussions were about a text they read and the last was on what they learned about texts and comprehension strategies.

Hall (2012) determined that high achieving readers tended to discuss “using comprehension strategies as a way to clarify or deepen their knowledge of content and to support their interpretations of the text” while average and low achieving readers separated discussion of texts and strategies (p. 251). Average and low achieving readers also tended to repeatedly use strategies they liked regardless of whether they actually worked. Hall also found that on average, students who participated in the study over the twelve-week period “gained an average of approximately half a grade level” (p. 252). Notably, the students documented that they used the strategies 97% of the time. Students’ self-perceptions as readers also improved with 13% of students who had previously identified as low achieving no longer doing so and an increase of 15% identifying with

the high achieving group. The research showed that reader identity correlated with how students used reading strategies and that the use of reading strategies correlated with increased reading achievement and reader identity. These findings imply that reader identity influences how readers utilize reading strategies and reaffirms its importance in continued reading development. If teachers and tutors can help struggling readers identify as readers, the strategies they teach may have a larger impact on reading achievement.

Read alouds. One teaching mode or strategy to engage struggling adolescents is through read alouds. Students who struggle with reading sometimes forget how much fun literature can be because they spend so much cognitive energy trying to read the words (Allen, 2000). Read alouds by a teacher create positive experiences with literature because students have the opportunity to focus on meaning rather than deciphering. Then, when discussion begins, they are on track with everyone else. This provides opportunities for finding success and subsequent motivation (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Last, if the right books are chosen, unmotivated students are exposed to exciting literature. Students who hear about a book, or hear a section of a book they liked, may later desire to pick up the book and finish reading it for themselves (Alvermann, 1999). The more they read, the better they will get (Stanovich, 2009). Unfortunately, as students progress through school, teachers tend to read to their students less and less (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Allen, 2000; Erickson, 1996). This is unfortunate considering the positive influences teacher read alouds can have on motivation and reading interest (Allen, 2000). Read alouds are a tool that tutors and teachers can use to increase positive reading experiences for their pupils while modeling good reader oral fluency.

Situational Interest. If intrinsic motivation cannot be sparked by choice and group discussion, Paige (2011) suggests that intrinsic motivation to read can be increased through situational interest, which begins with first connecting reading with extrinsic motivation. Paige (2011) found a significant correlation between oral reading fluency and extrinsic motivation in 112 sixth grade students and 115 seventh grade students. The two groups took the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ), the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), and the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT-4). The correlation suggests that teachers and tutors can help access intrinsic motivation in adolescents by first finding a way to extrinsically motivate them. The idea is that over time students will realize their enjoyment in reading and eventually see it as something they like to do. As struggling readers read more and more, their fluency and comprehension improves, which makes the act of reading increasingly enjoyable; in effect, situational interest creates a reverse Matthew Effect.

Instruction That Builds Skills and the Desire to Read

Not only are motivation and choice important to increasing struggling reader achievement, providing reading materials within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) is of paramount importance to improving reading ability. Effective skill development occurs when students read materials on their instructional level (Allington, 2005). The instructional level is just beyond their independent level; it is a place where they are challenged but not frustrated (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). Appropriately challenging books paired with comprehension strategy instruction produces the best skill development (Olhausen & Jepson, 1992; Valencia & Riddle Buly, 2004). First, however, adequate assessment is necessary for driving this instruction.

Appropriate Expert Assessment

As previously mentioned, students make greater gains when they read materials within their zone of proximal development. The QRI (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) refers to this zone as an instructional level. In order for teachers to understand what types of instruction their students need, they must first be able to identify each student's reading level as well as her varying strengths and weaknesses. Though several students may be on the same reading level, this does not necessarily mean they need the same strategy instruction (Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004). Students who struggle are a heterogeneous group; they cannot adequately be taught with identical instruction (Swanson, 2003). In the following sections, I review some literature on appropriate reading assessment.

The Valencia and Riddle-Buly (2004) study conducted a series of reading assessments with 108 fifth grade students who failed the state reading test but were not identified as requiring special education or English as a Second Language services. They noted five types of struggling readers: automatic word callers, struggling word callers, slow and steady comprehenders, slow word callers, and disabled readers. Though each student failed the state test, the reading difficulties were vastly different. Automatic word callers have excellent decoding and fluency skills, but they do not comprehend what they read. Struggling word callers stumble with word identification and comprehension, yet they have stronger fluency than the rest of the types. Slow and steady comprehenders struggle with fluency but comprehend what they read. Slow word callers can decode texts slowly, but their fluency is labored, as is their comprehension. Finally, disabled readers struggle with fluency, word calling, and comprehension.

As each reading struggle is unique, so is the necessary intervention. Word callers

need to work on slowing down and holding thinking and might also benefit from vocabulary study. Whereas, slow and steady comprehenders may simply need to work on fluency by accessing prior knowledge, reading more, and reading repetitively. Notably, neither one of these types of readers would benefit from explicit intensive phonics instruction, as both are able to sound out words. The work of Valencia and Riddle-Buly (2004) supports the need for teachers to be the assessment experts. When teachers are able to assess reading strengths and weakness, they are better able to provide the individual instruction necessary for maximizing struggling reader development. Because struggling readers' needs greatly differ and standardized tests do not provide teachers with frequent and high quality formative diagnostic information, teachers must be equipped to create this information for themselves.

Dennis (2009) had similar findings to Valencia and Riddle-Buly (2004) when she administered reading inventories to ninety-two middle school students in grades six through eight. Unlike the Valencia and Riddle-Buly (2004) study, students who qualified for special education service were included in the study. Modeling after the Riddle-Buly and Valencia (2002), she categorized the results of her reading assessments into four clusters: strategic readers, slow word callers, automatic word callers, and rapid "readers." Each cluster represented roughly twenty-five percent of the students tested. She found that students who fail state standardized reading tests are heterogeneous and "... require differentiated instruction tailored to fit their unique needs" (Dennis, 2009, p. 109).

An important finding from both of these studies was that state standardized tests simply do not give teachers the tools they need to appropriately determine gaps in reading ability. Learning that a student is "basic" or "below basic" in reading tells the state and

the educator virtually nothing about that student's abilities. In order to decide what type of instruction will help a student build on what she knows, teachers must first be viewed as assessment experts. Using a reading inventory, they can individually assess their students and gain far better insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their students' reading ability than what is provided from a standardized test (Fisher & Ivey, 2006). With such detailed information, teachers are able to purposively design personal instruction to meet the needs of their students and to adjust that instruction as their students make gains. This is extremely important because "what is considered high-quality instruction for one child may be considered poor quality for another," and spending instructional time on skills already obtained does not result in increased achievement (Valencia, 2010, p.31). Assessment should be frequent and often formative (Faggella-Luby, 2009; Rissman, Miller & Torgesen, 2009) as "ongoing assessments [are] necessary to determine students' purposes for reading and writing, what they already do, and where they could use some help" (Fisher & Ivey, 2006, p. 183). It needs to be formative so teachers can determine appropriate instructional methods and frequent so instruction can be adjusted as students make gains (Rissman, Miller & Torgesen, 2009).

Reading Specialists for Adolescent Learners

Too often, secondary school systems do not have access to certified reading specialists. In fact, in 2003 only one in five schools districts had a high school reading specialist (Daggett & Hasselbring, 2007). Most likely, the availability of certified reading specialists for adolescent students is even more limited considering the historically low involvement of the federal government in adolescent literacy affairs. Thus, secondary students who struggle with reading rely on their content area teachers for reading

instruction. Yet, secondary school teachers have felt unprepared to teach reading (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). This is not surprising considering the historical lack of literacy coursework for secondary teachers (Jacobs, 2008). The status quo in education does not reflect the advice given by the Center for Instruction, which suggests accommodations such as:

... small teacher-to-student ratio (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001), the assignment of the most highly qualified teacher to the neediest students, the resources needed to purchase intervention materials, and the scheduling of students who share similar reading difficulties into the same class. (Rissman et al., 2009, p. 38)

Adolescents who struggle with reading require access to expert instruction. All teachers have the ability to give this instruction by implementing the research proven teaching strategies outlined within this review. This goes for all subjects, not just reading or English teachers. Teachers of all subjects need to be teachers of reading, as each content area requires different content specific reading techniques. Furthermore, the more teachers who aim to teach reading in their subject areas, the more opportunities students have to practice effective reading techniques and strategies and become expert readers in an array of genres.

Vocabulary Instruction and Reading Comprehension

Students born to families with less social capital are immediately disadvantaged in the classroom; this is particularly evident in their access to specialized vocabulary and their limited prior knowledge about middle class experiences (Hart & Risley, 2003; Lareau, 1989). Many struggling adolescent readers are perfectly capable of decoding words (Dennis, 2009; Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004), they simply lack privilege

vocabulary and/or experience. Students who come from families with little education or financial resources often lack exposure to extensive academic and white-collar worker vocabulary used by the middle class (Hart & Risley, 2003; Lareau, 1989). Thus, they are constantly working to keep up with privileged children who have access to privileged vocabulary and experience (Chall & Jacobs, 2003).

Hart and Risley (2003) conducted a study of vocabulary usage in various types of families. The researchers selected forty-two families of somewhat varied socioeconomic status and ethnicity and observed each child beginning at age 7-9 months and ending at three years. During observations, the field researchers tape recorded the interactions between parents and their children and took meticulous field notes. The recordings were transcribed and scanned into a word count and syntax-charting database. The investigators found that children from welfare families “not only had smaller vocabularies than did children of the same age in professional families, but they were also adding words more slowly” (Hart & Risley, 2003, p. 7). When compared to the number of words in the vocabularies of working class and professional families, they found an enormous gap that would continue to develop each year as welfare children added words at a slower rate than children from working class families that added words slower than professional families. Continuing the number of words used with the rate at which new words were acquired, the study suggested that by age three there would be a 30 million word gap between children in welfare families and children of professional families.

Such a large gap in vocabulary opportunity would put children from lower class families at a huge disadvantage when entering school. Not only does a lack of privileged

vocabulary make it harder for them to make connections to new words, they may not have reinforcement for using such words at home. As stated earlier, having a strong privileged vocabulary helps children who are learning to read. This type of vocabulary produces greater automaticity because children who have a strong privileged vocabulary are not working to learn words while also learning to decode (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). As less privileged children work to acquire the privileged vocabulary words, children who have this vocabulary acquire new words at a quicker rate, the problem, as noted by Hart and Risley (2003), compounds with time. By adolescence, students from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds have struggled to add words and this had the power to influence reading achievement.

It would be a mistake to assume that Hart and Risley (2003) is generalizable. The participants were all from the same area and were selected based on their socioeconomic status and their willingness to participate in the study (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). They are also criticized for their deficit perspective of linguistics. They characterized their findings in a way that claimed “poor children lack the rich and varied vocabulary needed to succeed in school” (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009, p. 362). Lower socioeconomic families may not have “privileged” vocabularies, but this does not mean that their vocabularies are void of richness and variety; they are different not deficient. While educators and tutors should be cautious of approaching vocabulary acquisition from a deficit perspective, there are still some important things to consider from the findings of the Hart and Risley (2003) study. The reality of public school and the work force is that there is a privileged vernacular of English that is used in testing, reading, writing, and everyday speech that continues to hold power. In order to succeed in this

environment, students do need to learn “code switching” (Nilep, 2006). And, for students in lower socioeconomic situations, this is more difficult than for those who come from privilege. It also makes reading more difficult for the reasons described in the Hart and Risley (2003) study. Simply, there are more vocabulary words to learn.

Chall and Jacobs (2003) studied fourth grade children and reading achievement. The investigators determined that a huge change in reading instruction occurs in third grade. Whereas earlier elementary students learn to read, fourth grade students and above read to learn. This becomes a problem for children from lower socioeconomic homes. As students transition to reading for learning, they come into contact with increasingly difficult vocabulary that makes it difficult for them to stay on level with their peers. They have to work much harder to make sense of the text. As a result, many of these students begin to fail standardized reading tests. The Reading First Initiative would put them in phonics instruction, when what they really need is intensive vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategy instruction. Instead, many are taught concepts they already know. As other students trudge forward, these students are undoubtedly left behind.

Vocabulary knowledge is extremely important to word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. A student who is unfamiliar with a word is more likely to struggle with decoding because the student has no schema from which to work. Vocabulary can also hinder comprehension if context clues are not sufficient for producing understanding. Students who come from lower class families generally have narrow vocabularies because they are not exposed to as many words in their home environments (Hart & Risley, 2003). Educators need to teach vocabulary in meaningful ways and connect this instruction to their students’ experiences in order to improve their reading skills.

Vocabulary strategies. Now that I have explained why vocabulary is so important to reading instruction, I will explain how research can be applied to practice. Bromley (2007) suggests that traditional vocabulary instruction is flawed because it includes too many words too quickly and largely focuses on rote memorization techniques that do not require admittance to long-term memory. The words are usually unconnected to students' lives; thus, they forget most of the words they are taught. As Bromley puts it:

Word lists, teacher explanation, discussion, memorization, vocabulary books, and quizzes often are used in an effort to help students learn new words. But these methods ignore what research and theory tell us about word learning and sound vocabulary instruction. (Bromley, 2007, p. 528)

Instead, Bromley (2007) suggests that teachers rethink vocabulary instruction by reducing the number of words students are expected to learn in a week, finding ways to connect such words to their lives and cross-curricular schoolwork, encouraging students to develop their own definitions, and teaching etymology. This is especially important to teaching struggling adolescent readers because a stronger vocabulary increases fluency, word recognition, and comprehension. The more words struggling students actually learn and add to their vocabularies, the more likely they are to become better readers.

Reading comprehension and prior knowledge. Students who come to school with limited life experience are working with a limited schema when compared to students who have had rich experiences. Studies show that students read better when they are familiar with a concept (Priebe, Keenan & Miller, 2010; Bransford & Johnson, 1972). This is not surprising because familiarity with a concept increases the likelihood of

running into familiar vocabulary. In addition, previous understanding of material makes it easier to build on that knowledge. Control of background information affects word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Thus, creating cross-curricular connections and administering pre-reading mini lessons are methods teachers can use to assist struggling readers. Also, a reading tutor might begin tutoring sessions with books containing familiar content, that way the student has a higher chance for experiencing reading success.

Bransford and Johnson (1972) presented the findings of four studies, which supported the notion that prior knowledge of a topic greatly increases reading comprehension. In the first study there were five groups, each with ten members. The groups were given varying access to context through viewing of a picture, and they all read the same passage. The first group was given no context. The second group was given some context before the reading. The third group heard the passage first and then was given the context. The fourth group was given partial context, which was only part of the context within the picture. The last group was given no context but the passage was read twice. Each participant was then asked to give a recall of the passage and provide a comprehension rating. The investigators found that participants who were given context in advance scored higher in comprehension and recall than all the other groups. No context scored higher than context after the passage, and partial context scored higher than no context, context after, and no context repeated reading. The context repeated reading scored higher than no reading at all. This demonstrated that prior knowledge in the form of context especially, but also through repeated reading, has a large impact on comprehension.

The second, third, and fourth studies were all conducted in a similar fashion in that they also included listening to a passage once and then recalling and completing a comprehension rating. However, unlike study one, they used a topic instead of a contextual picture. With these studies, the researchers found that prior knowledge of a situation does not guarantee its usefulness in comprehension. In order for prior knowledge to aid comprehension, it must become an “activated semantic context” (Bransford & Johnson, 1972, p. 724). On the other hand, they also found that with the right information, prior knowledge increased comprehension.

Priebe, Keenan and Miller (2010) conducted a study assessing the connection between prior knowledge and word identification. Sixty fourth-grade students from a larger study participated; half participated with the prior knowledge group and half with the no prior knowledge group. In each of those groups, half of the participants were poor readers and half of the participants were skilled readers. All participants were measured in decoding, word recognition, timed oral reading of single words, comprehension and vocabulary. The investigators determined that prior knowledge has a significant impact on fluency, accuracy, and comprehension of poor readers. Notably, the frequency of errors had a strong correlation with comprehension. This suggests that prior knowledge impacts word recognition, which also impacts comprehension. These results were not the same for typical readers, who performed only slightly better with prior knowledge on grade level texts. Priebe, Keenan and Miller (2010) suggest that this is most likely due to their reading on grade level. They propose that further research be conducted for on-level readers reading more challenging texts.

The studies reviewed in this section suggest that prior knowledge plays a pivotal role for struggling readers. Such knowledge helps them identify words better, which aids in fluency and comprehension. This shows that providing students with background knowledge helps them read better (Priebe, Keenan & Miller, 2010; Bransford & Johnson, 1972). When they are introduced to concepts and new vocabulary before reading, they are able to build on that knowledge and draw connections. This is incredibly important to increasing reading fluency. Teachers can help level the reading playing field by providing background information on a topic. “Front loading” does not hinder reading rigor, it simply provides the foundation necessary to create meaning (Tovani, 2004). Failing to provide such background knowledge only increases the achievement gap by neglecting to provide necessary information to those who were not fortunate enough to learn it at home.

Comprehension strategies. Teaching comprehension strategies to adolescent struggling readers is extremely important to their reading development (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004; Topping & McManus, 2010; Tovani, 2004).). In fact, “research has shown that struggling readers need explicit instruction in how to use comprehension strategies” (Rissman, Miller & Torgesen, 2009, p.39). It is not enough to talk about comprehension strategies; teachers must explicitly model them for their students. In three middle school classes, Hall (2012) conducted a study on the use of comprehension strategies to improve struggling reader engagement in group discussion. Heterogeneous groups were formed and students were taught a series of strategies over the course of twelve weeks. Through a pre and post study reading assessment, a reader identity assessment, student strategy documentation, audio recordings of discussions, and

struggling reader interviews, she found that struggling readers significantly increased their participation and roles in discussion around the 6 to 8 discussion mark. Initially, struggling readers had been primarily silent during discussions, as they did not want their struggles to be known to the group or did not believe they had anything to contribute. However, once the group began discussing their use of the strategies and revealing that they also struggled sometimes, the struggling readers steadily increased their participation in discussion. Hall (2012) explained that

the experiences of struggling readers in their small groups allowed them time to observe and learn from their peers about different ways to use comprehension strategies. Providing them with adequate time to observe their peers and become comfortable may have been an important factor in their success. As the struggling readers became more comfortable with their group and the expectations for participating, they began to take risks and become more vocal (p. 326).

Eventually, struggling readers actually took on a leadership role within the group, which fostered deeper discussion about strategy use than had occurred when high achieving readers led the group. This implies that not only are comprehension strategies helpful for helping struggling readers check their understanding, they are also effective tools for helping students feel like they have something to offer in a discussion.

Modeling interaction with the text. Comprehension strategy instruction is important, and just as important is the way it is taught. Students need to realize that all readers of varying abilities come into contact with difficult material at some point, and that when they do, they should have a toolbox full of strategies to help them grapple with

the text. Tovani (2004) stresses the necessity of teaching struggling readers how to engage with a text through modeling. This modeling is important because it not only describes the strategy, it shows a students how to think while using the strategy. Struggling adolescent readers have usually acquired decoding skills, what they need is to be taught how to engage with a difficult text.

Think alouds. Thinking aloud is a great teaching tool for modeling the use of comprehension strategies or simply how to monitor one's engagement with the text (Daniels & Zimelman, 2004; Tovani, 2004). In a think aloud, the teacher approaches the text by reading it aloud and stopping every time she has a thought. The purpose of a think aloud is to make the internal dialogue a good reader has with the text transparent. Thus, the teacher stops every time she has a question, a comment, or a connection with the text. The think aloud strategy can be used in conjunction with teaching comprehension strategies as the teacher demonstrates her thought processes for selecting a strategy to hold her thinking. Struggling adolescent readers will especially benefit from this, as many of them have difficulty monitoring their reading and comprehending what they read. Students in Smith and Wilhelm (2004) complained that they did not understand how to do many of the things their teachers demanded. By using think alouds, teachers of struggling readers can make explicit how to think about and tackle difficult texts from an array of text structures.

Holding thinking. Students who have trouble comprehending what they read often conceptualize reading as decoding; they read the words on the page and find that they cannot remember anything they read. This is due to their failure to think about the text and engage as they read. Tovani (2004) suggests that students be taught a number of

comprehension strategies designed to get them interacting with the text as they read. She refers to this as “holding thinking.” Holding thinking can be achieved by sticky notes, book marks, and graphic organizers like double-entry journals (Topping & McManus, 2010; Daniels & Zemelman, 2004; Tovani, 2004). As students read, they are asked to record their thoughts about the text, be it a question, a comment, a connection to their lives, the greater world, or another text. They may also write down salient quotes and their significance. By learning to stop and think about the text, they learn to be metacognitive about their reading comprehension, to realize when they lose understanding, and to do something about it.

Fluency and Comprehension. Fluency is believed to improve comprehension because choppy unconnected words make it difficult to derive meaning from text; this is also known as automaticity theory (Alt & Samuels, 2011). The reciprocal relationship is also true. After decoding becomes automatic, comprehension increases fluency because the more we understand what we are reading the easier the words flow (Laberge & Samuels, 1974). But, is prosody important for adolescent struggling readers? Fluency is understood as one’s ability to read words with automaticity. Prosody, on the other hand, is not just about speed; it is about making meaning from the words with expression (Kuhn, 2010). And, research has shown its connection with silent reading comprehension in the primary grades (Paige, 2013). However, its connection to silent reading with adolescent students was studied until recently.

Paige (2013) conducted a study to determine if reading with prosody impacted comprehension in adolescent students. 108 ninth grade students were selected to complete two reading exercises: the TORC-4, which determines silent-reading

comprehension, and a grade-level narrative passage, to be read aloud. Each students' TORC-4 score was compared with her or his performance reading the narrative passage aloud. The study showed a strong correlation between the participants' reading prosody and silent reading comprehension. This suggests that adolescent students who read with increased prosody have increasingly better silent reading comprehension.

The findings are important to thinking about adolescent struggling readers because they demonstrate that struggling student have less prosody. If teachers can help struggling students work on not only their fluency, but also their reading prosody, it may help them comprehend what they read when they read silently. Struggling readers often read the text disjointedly as vocabulary and sometimes decoding can get in the way. Then they are taught to believe that good reading is fast reading through standardized tests like the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS), which “assesses” students' literacy with in one minute. As a result, conceptualization of literacy at a fundamental level becomes apparent (Deeney, 2010; Davis, 2009). Secondary teachers should work to help these students re-conceptualize good reading as reading for understanding (Newkirk, 2010; Tovani, 2004). This might be achieved by practicing reading with prosody.

Teachers Who Understand the Complexities of Individual Adolescent Readers

All previous instructional components outlined by the IRA lead to up this component. Adolescents deserve teachers who are educated about literacy and teaching reading, are capable of appropriately assessing student reading achievement, are persistent in motivating students to read by giving them choices and good books, and are effective at using this assessment to tailor reading instruction to meet the needs of

individuals through appropriate reading materials and comprehension strategy instruction. As noted by Valencia and Riddle-Buly (2004) and Dennis (2009), students who struggle with reading are vastly different and need individualized instruction. These students require teachers who have been educated to recognize and assess these differences and provide the necessary instruction.

Homes, Communities, and a Nation That Will Support Adolescent Literacy

Historically, adolescent students have been ignored in educational literacy policy and literacy research (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). Until recently, all federal policy relating to literacy achievement focused on young children. Such emphasis on early literacy seemed to stem primarily from the belief that, with early intervention, schools could sidestep the need for future literacy instruction (IRA, 1999). If the right instruction was given to young children, it followed that older students would know how to read.

Emergent literacy was considered a cure-all for all literacy problems, and this contributed to the lack of adolescent literacy policy and funding. Why spend money on adolescent literacy when emergent literacy would have a seemingly more worthwhile effect? Thus, only recently has educational policy had any real impact on funding and instruction for adolescents. Efforts to channel resources to the young came up short and NCLB attempted to respond to these failures. By holding teachers and schools accountable for progress and by funding the mass implementation of teacher-proof “scientifically research based” programs, no child would be left behind. Subsequently, the shift from equity to accountability inadvertently changed the presence of adolescent literacy policy in the United States (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). Whereas in the 1960s through 1980s educational policy regarding adolescents was sparse and did not directly

target literacy, recent policy changes, specifically those beginning with the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), heavily impacted current literacy instruction for students in middle and high school.

Though federally funded programs such as Reading First, a reading component of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which mandated the use of “scientifically research-based reading programs” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) were devised to solve literacy problems, the fact is that there are many adolescents today, who were young children when those programs were implemented, that are still not proficient readers. According to the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 69% of eighth graders tested were not grade level proficient (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Just four years ago and eight years after NCLB, close to two thirds of American eighth graders were unable to read eighth grade material at a proficient level. Instead of the measurable national gains the government hoped for, adolescents got scripted reading programs.

The influences of NCLB on schooled literacy are present in the continued use of scripted reading programs. Fagella-Luby et al. (2009) posits that “[w]e need legislation that puts more emphasis on adolescent literacy, [and] we need more funding for professional development to improve our teachers knowledge of literacy instruction (p. 468). We also need more funding for hiring of certified reading specialists for struggling adolescent readers and funding for content area classroom libraries and supplemental texts so teachers can do something with their professional development. We need financial support from the Federal and State governments and our communities to make

these resources available to our school systems if we really want to improve the literacy skills of public school children.

Furthermore, communities can help adolescents by investing time and money into after-school programs that increase reading motivation (Alvermann, 2007). They can set an example for youth by making literacy a focal point of the community and by providing resources that get students of all ages and their parents involved in literate activities. This might include library events, media clubs, reading tutoring, and adult, adolescent, and children's book clubs. Communities should work to show their children that they value reading and writing not only with their pockets, but also with their actions.

Not only do our communities and our federal government need to increase financial and political support for adolescent literacy, families must work especially hard to show their children that they value literacy. Intrinsic reading motivation is often driven from the home, and students are more likely to value reading when their families' value reading and provide literacy rich environments (Guthrie et al., 2006; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Worthy, Patterson, Salas, Prater, & Turner, 2002). Parents, guardians, and teachers have enormous influence over their children's intrinsic motivation to read. Demonstrating value in reading cannot be solely accomplished by making children do their homework and read books. Actions do indeed speak louder than words and parents and teachers alike must take the time out of their busy lives to read in front of their children and show them the value through their everyday activities. Reading the newspaper, novels, bills, blogs, websites, and cooking instructions shows children how literacy is useful (Rogers, 2003). Every act of literacy counts.

Section Conclusion

Adolescent struggling readers are not all the same (Dennis, 2009; Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004). Recent educational policy mandated the use of packaged curricula for secondary students; however, a struggle with reading does not equal a struggle with decoding. In fact, as many as half of students who fail standardized reading tests are perfectly capable of decoding (Dennis, 2009; Valencia & Riddle-Buly, 2004). But, because of a lack of access to privileged vocabulary, many may not have the skills they need to comprehend texts at the level required. Some may read too quickly, some may not have the prior knowledge they need to understand the subject matter, and some may need practice with developing their prosody skills. There are multitudes of ways to assist struggling adolescent readers, but the first step is appropriate assessment. In order to maximize the benefits of reading instruction, a teacher must first determine what the struggling reader actually needs and work to provide that student with individualized instruction. Carefully planned and executed vocabulary instruction paired with mini-lessons for prior knowledge are two ways to help students who simply lack the background knowledge they need to perform when they read. Literature circles and other experiences with high interest, age-appropriate, Young adult literature can help motivate students to read and subsequently increase reading fluency. Practice with prosody, reading strategies, and text structure are useful methods for aiding in comprehension. Most important of all, creating an environment where struggling students feel safe and supported leads motivates students to work hard and maximizes student benefit. Teachers who demonstrate a sincere concern for the well-being of those who struggle will ultimately help their students improve more than those who do not (Alvermann, 2007;

Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). All of this is only possible with the attention of teachers skilled in literacy instruction. Students deserve instruction from teachers who are trained to assess and provide intervention. Adolescents are our immediate future, and we must prepare them for this increasingly demanding world.

Section Summary

In the section above, I provided a sampling of the empirical and practical literature associated with theory and practice in adolescent literacy related to the suggestions outlined by the IRA. First, I reviewed empirical studies on reader choice, motivation and identity and followed with practical solutions to low motivation in order to inform my tutoring practices and to connect to the literacy instruction of the schools in my study. Next, also to inform literacy instructional critique and practice, I discussed the importance of vocabulary, comprehension, and prior knowledge and reviewed empirical studies that addressed their significance and provided suggestions for practice. I then visited empirical studies on the role of assessment in appropriate reading instruction and suggested that assessments be used to tailor future instruction to individual needs. Finally, I discussed the importance of instructor quality as well as community, parental, and national support of adolescent reading improvement.

History of Adolescent Educational Literacy Policy

The final section of this literature review addresses the historical path of adolescent literacy policy in order to show how NCLB and subsequent educational reforms have greatly influenced literacy instruction in American schools. I explicate these major changes in order to support the claim that family literacy and school to family interaction has likely been influenced by this new educational climate, and that the

present study attends to a previously unexplored educational territory within family literacy and interaction. I also make apparent the connection between the theoretical framework of this study and educational policy by explaining how these political forces influence reader conceptualizations, motivations, and identities.

From Equity to Accountability

A shift from equity to accountability inadvertently changed adolescent literacy policy in the United States (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). Whereas in the 1960s through 1980s education policy regarding adolescents was sparse and did not directly target literacy, recent policy changes, specifically those beginning with the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), heavily impacted literacy instruction for students in middle and high school.

NCLB reinstated Reagan's educational excellence goal and extended the goals of America 2000 (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). This act called for increased annual testing with the intention of adding accountability so that children would not be left behind educationally. At this point, the focus was still on early literacy, but the accountability movement directly led to massive changes in adolescent literacy instruction, especially for struggling students.

NCLB focused on a few key areas of literacy funding. First, \$250,000,000 was set aside for improving public school libraries. Additionally, funding for reading improvement grants were allotted under Part B. The purpose of these was to provide funding for programs grounded in scientifically based reading research, support professional development for teachers, fund reading assessments, assist states with purchasing or designing instructional materials and "[t]o strengthen coordination among

schools, early literacy programs, and family literacy programs to improve reading achievement for all children” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1536).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) marked a monumental change in the level of federal involvement in education. The act was instituted “to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child [was] left behind” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p.1). With this act, came an era of accountability and, as a result, an era of standardized testing. The policies eventually impacted struggling adolescent literacy instruction as a result of state standards, standardized testing, and the Reading First initiative.

State Standards

Under NCLB, each state was to assess and redesign their state standards to increase rigor. The act mandated that states adopt “challenging content area standards and challenging student academic achievement standards” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1445). These standards were to be submitted to and approved by the federal government and eventually assessed each year by standardized tests.

Standardized tests and accountability. The importance of standardized testing grew exponentially and rapidly following the NCLB Act. As the federal government required each state to establish goals for achievement within 12 years after 2002, standardized tests were required to assess how the state was meeting those goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1447). Furthermore, the federal government threatened state sanctions if their goals were not met, but it was not exactly clear what those sanctions would be. The Act mentioned bonuses and recognition for progress but did not explicate the nature of the sanctions. Consequently, like never before, states were

increasing the rigor of the standards and tests at the same time while threatening to sanction schools that did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). According to the NCLB Act:

Each State plan shall demonstrate, based on academic assessments described in paragraph (3), and in accordance with this paragraph, what constitutes adequate yearly progress of the State, and of all public elementary schools, secondary schools, and local educational agencies in the State, toward enabling all public elementary school and secondary school students to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, while working toward the goal of narrowing the achievement gaps in the State, local educational agencies, and schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1446)

The states were to meet the goal of 100% proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014 as well as a 100% graduation rate (Smith, 2004). Schools that did not meet AYP were placed on a series of levels. The constitution of those levels differed based on Title I classification. For example, schools that did not meet AYP for the second year in a row were put on a School Improvement Plan Level I. Those Title I schools were publically announced and students would be given the choice to transfer elsewhere, holding the original school responsible for paying for that transportation. Non- Title I schools were publically announced but did not receive sanctions until placed on Level 2, which would occur if a school did not meet AYP for three years. The ramifications associated with this level for Title I schools was the mandate for them to provide supplemental services to low-achieving students. Non- Title I schools were assigned an outside expert and parental notification of the classification was required. In the fourth year of not meeting AYP

Title I schools would be required to take “corrective action” by one of the following measures:

1. Replace staff
2. Implement new curriculum
3. Significantly decrease management authority at the school
4. Appoint an outside expert
5. Reorganize the internal organization of the school (Smith, 2004).

Non-Title I schools received resources from the government and in turn were required to supply supplemental services and school choice. In the fifth year schools that did not make AYP were to plan conversion to a charter school, contract with an institution of higher education, or prepare for takeover by the state (Smith, 2004). In the sixth year on not meeting AYP, schools were taken over by the government for restructuring.

Not only were the goals of the states extremely high, the ramifications for not meeting these goals were also searing. In a matter of six years, a school could be taken over by the government and every administrator and teacher fired. This made it an absolute must for students to perform on standardized tests, which affected instruction for adolescent struggling readers.

Reading First

NCLB largely focused, as noted in its goals, on reading and mathematics achievement as well as graduation rates. The focus on reading achievement was accompanied by the Reading First Initiative. The goal of Reading First was to get all children reading on level by third grade, an extension of President Clinton’s Goals 2000 program. The initiative provided grants to states that used instructional programs

supported by scientifically based reading research (SBRR) and the hiring of literacy coaches to analyze data and teach teachers to use those programs. States were required to apply for the grants, and in their application, they were required to detail the programs they intended on using. According to the Reading First Initiative website,

SEAs fund those proposals that show the most promise for raising student achievement and for successful implementation of reading instruction, particularly at the classroom level. Only programs that are founded on scientifically based reading research are eligible for funding through Reading First. (Reading First Initiative, 2009)

States that met the required criteria were given grants and the wide-scale purchasing of packaged reading programs ensued.

Striving Readers (2005)

A grant program specifically designed to increase reading achievement in adolescent students finally made its way to the frontlines in 2005. Before then, the federal government continued minimal involvement in matters of adolescent literacy, preferring, instead, to focus on providing support for early literacy and adult literacy programs. The Striving Readers grants program was developed “in response to the considerable number of adolescents who failed to meet grade-level proficiency requirements under NCLB” (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013, p. 394). Following along with the previous grants of the Reading First Initiative, the Striving Readers grants were intended for states to purchase programs targeted at adolescents. Again, the language of SBRR came into play:

The purpose of the Striving Readers grant is to raise adolescent students' literacy levels in Title I-eligible schools. The Striving Readers grant will also build a

strong, scientific research base for identifying and replicating strategies that improve adolescent literacy skills. (Flanagan, 2010)

The program, however, was discontinued under the Obama administration in 2012, possibly due to reports that the grant program had little positive effects (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013).

Reader Identity and Literacy Conceptualization in the Era of Accountability

The accountability era, which began with NCLB in 2001 (Booher-Jennings, 2006), sparked mass literacy program implementation across the nation where even school systems that effectively taught using balanced literacy were mandated to switch to packaged scripted decoding programs because balanced literacy was not scientifically-research based (Pennington, 2004; Reading First, 2008). The programs quickly entered classrooms across the nation while their publishing companies made record fiscal gains (Harkinson, 2008). Schooled literacy underwent a notable paradigm shift, moving from a balanced literacy approach that values student culture to a fundamental notion of literacy, which focuses solely on decoding (Pennington, 2004).

NCLB opened the doors for packaged program use in secondary schools. Whereas in the past The Department of Education intervened minimally in the happenings of public school (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013), NCLB mandates determined everything from where money is spent to what can be taught and how to teach. Though the mandated programs introduced by Reading First were designed for young children, they were marketed as tools for students of all ages and found their way into the secondary classrooms, negatively impacting motivation and reader identity (Wickstrom, 2004). The widespread use of scripted reading curriculum as a result of the Reading First Initiative is

important to consider because it shows how educational policies directly influence classroom instruction, which in turn influences students' conceptualizations of reading (Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004).

Even if curriculum is not forcibly changed the way it was with the Reading First mandates of NCLB, skills that are privileged in state tests shape instructional content and focus, which molds students' conceptions of literacy (Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004). The raised stakes of standardized tests are an outcome of NCLB, as those tests are now used to determine whether or not a school is meeting its Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) (U.S Department of Education, 2002) The tests decide what is important to know in reading and writing, and the teachers must ensure that their students perform on those tests.

High-stakes standardized tests carry heavy ramifications for students who struggle. Standardized tests not only hold school systems accountable for student achievement through AYP, but they are used to determine which courses students take and what types of services are provided. In essence, if a student does not perform well on standardized tests, she can expect to be streamlined into a class with students who performed similarly, and she may be marked for receiving support. These testing outcomes could have considerable influence on her conception of literacy because they determine her schooled literacy experiences (Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004). Those literacy experiences have the power to shape her reader identity and motivation (Hall, 2012; Stanovich, 2009).

Now that schools are held accountable for each student's proficient performance on increasingly difficult standardized tests, the pressure to improve student performance

has also increased (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Schools that do not get their students performing at proficient levels risk AYP sanctions. Within the last couple of years, many states such as Tennessee and North Carolina, are moving to tie teacher salary to standardized testing and have done away with salary aligned to level of education (Hardy, 2013). Merit Pay based on these tests places teachers' livelihoods in the hands of students' performance on one day on one test, regardless of additional factors that influence outcomes. The question is, how do schools and their personnel, in this particular educational climate, interact with students who struggle to achieve on those standardized tests? My initial thoughts were that these interactions might be strained as a result of increased pressure on schools to perform.

NCLB continues to influence reading instruction, literacy conceptualization, and school culture (Davis, 2009; Pennington, 2004; Wickstrom, 2004). Yet, little is known about familial and school relations of struggling adolescent readers within the educational climate of the accountability era. Understanding literacy interactions, motivations, and conceptualizations of struggling adolescent readers and their families at home and with their respective school institutions could help school personnel make future instruction, communication and interaction decisions.

Chapter Summary

I began this chapter by reviewing empirical studies that defined family literacy, described its nature within numerous socioeconomic and cultural contexts, countered the deficit perspective, and/or began to explore school to family interaction. Next, I outlined the IRA's suggestions for adolescent literacy instruction and discussed studies that addressed these recommendations. Furthermore, I related these recommendations to

theory, such as the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 2009), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), and Choice Theory (Glasser, 1997) by reviewing studies related to identity and motivation within adolescent literacy. I explained how motivation and identity are intricately intertwined and suggested that choice, positive experiences with books, and strong instructor relationships are the first steps to improving adolescent literacy. I then discussed the importance of appropriate assessment in determining individualized instruction and the need for all teachers to be teachers of reading in order to provide this instruction. From there, I explicated methods for accessing prior knowledge and expert instruction of vocabulary and comprehension strategies, which can be used to further develop literacy skills, in order to provide a foundation for my tutoring methods and analysis of the participant's schooled literacy experiences. Finally, I concluded the review by discussing the importance of family, community, and national support of adolescent literacy. I summarized the history of adolescent literacy in order to elucidate the process by which the U.S public education system has come to arrive at an era of accountability, and also to depict the essence of this era for the reader, as this study is situated within this particular historical context.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Chapter Introduction

Because I am the primary research tool of the study, it is important to make clear my commitments and motives. I did not come to choose the issue of this study lightly. Several life experiences prompted the development of this research topic. In the sections to follow, I will illuminate chronologically the life events that have influenced my choice to study adolescent struggling readers and their families. Following the transparency of personal experience and commitments, I will explain the epistemic and ontologic assumptions that impact the research design.

Personal Commitments and Motives

In the mid-1990s, I was a struggling reader. In the second grade, I was still having trouble reading, and I was aware that reading was seemingly more difficult for me than for other children. I was pulled out from class for a reading group regularly, but this did not seem to be enough, and I remember being lost when I re-entered the classroom. According to my parents, my second grade teacher told them I would never make anything of myself. Instead of taking this comment to heart, they sought out a reading tutor. With a decoding program and a tutor individualizing my instruction, I learned to read and learned to enjoy it, though my reading continued to be slower than many other children.

With the influence of excellent fourth grade and fifth grade teachers, I developed a passion for reading and writing that carried into high school. My self-efficacy in those areas flourished, and I distinctly remember self-identifying as a writer in the fifth and

sixth grade. Eventually, I obtained an undergraduate degree in English and a graduate degree in Education. I am certified to teach English 7-12. However, my own experiences as a struggling reader and graduate degree in education did not completely prepare me for what I would experience teaching in the real world.

After a year-long intensive teaching internship, I went back to teach where I graduated from high school. I quickly realized that I wasn't "in Kansas anymore." Things had either changed immensely, or I had been oblivious for my four years there. In my first year, I taught "regular" freshman English and something called SRA (which I now know to be the Science Research Associates' Corrective Reading). I was told that SRA was a reading class, was given a CD to learn with and the scripted teacher manual, and was advised that the whole book needed to be completed by the end of the first semester.

A semester teaching SRA Corrective Reading left me angry, a fiery, vigilant, I'm going to do something about this, angry. By goodness, I'm going back to graduate school! I'm going to get a PhD., and I am going to show the whole world what lunacy this is! We, the students and I, had spent a semester of ninth grade repetitively sounding out phonemes, reading about a spy mustard jar that squirts mustard at people, and answering low-level comprehension question to the tap, tap, tap of my pencil against the scripted teacher manual, which I attempted to read like anything but a robot, though that was a real challenge. Luckily, I had these students the entire year and could attempt to make reading and writing the relevant and inspiring experience I wanted it to be. But, I knew I couldn't one-hundred percent undo the irreparable damage I heard when a student asked, "we are the stupid class, aren't we Ms. Swauger?"

With that, and another year of fury, I headed with a vigilante attitude to graduate school once again. I knew I wanted to study scripted reading programs and their impacts on students. I was going to prove how horrible they were. But, then, I realized many academics already knew this for one, and two, a vigilante attitude is no way to conduct research (Piantanida & Garmen, 2009). For the first year and a half of doctoral course work, I struggled to reign in the fire; I took a step back and opted to simply listen to what students had to say about enrollment in a scripted reading program. But, the focus would soon change as I began to work with a sweet first grade boy who was struggling to read.

Coincidentally, I began reading Purcell-Gates' (1995) *Other People's Words* nearly simultaneously to beginning a tutoring journey with Isaiah (pseudonym). Through interactions with his mother, I learned he was enrolled in a scripted reading pullout program which took place during his writing time. His mother knew nothing about this program until she asked what I thought about an email his teacher sent her. I asked her if she knew what this reading group was, who was teaching it, when it was happening and where. She knew nothing, except that he was in a reading group. She decided to ask the teacher, found out what it was, and eventually opted to remove Isaiah from the program, but not without a fight from the school system. According to his mother, she felt bullied over the phone by the principal. The principal made her feel like a bad parent for wanting to withhold services from her child. Retention was also dangled in front of her as a threat; I was appalled by what I was hearing. This was a moment when I firmly began to question the interactions between a school system and the family of a struggling reader. First, very little about her son's interventions were communicated to her. Second, she was almost guilty and manipulated into submitting to a program she did not want for her

child, regardless of the fact she was contracting outside expert assistance. What is happening in education that a principal felt compelled to behave this way with this parent? What are other families' interactions like with the school system and how does this impact the way they interact with a struggling reader at home? Through these interactions with Isaiah's family, paired with stories from fellow colleagues about their personal experiences with the school system as a parent of a struggling reader, and simultaneous reading of Purcell-Gates (1995), the idea for this study was born. There is a strong need to understand how school and home interactions of struggling readers and their families are shaped by the current educational climate. Policy makers and administrators must be informed so they can reflect on the ways they choose to interact and disseminate information to families.

Reflexivity Statement

My life experiences as a teacher and my position as a tutor during the research process impacted the study in a few ways.

First, my history as a teacher made me internally defensive to some comments about teachers made by Jackie and Debbie. Sometimes I felt like they did not understand the current state of affairs for teachers and felt a pull to inform them about the current trials of teachers. For example, one guardian mentioned that it was the job of the teacher to make the lessons interesting and exciting for students, and while I agree that this is true, I heard my internal voice trying to explain that many teachers do not have the autonomy they once had over their lesson plans. I was able to contain my reaction, but I had it repeatedly when reading the transcript on every occasion.

My position as literacy tutor for the family impacted what data I was able to create and collect. Because I was a tutor, I was in a position of power. The families looked to me for knowledge and advice about their children's reading and, on occasion, advice about interacting with the schools. I made a choice before embarking on this study not to interfere with the interactions between home and school unless I was specifically asked for advice. On one occasion, I was. One guardian participant asked if she should have her grandson tested by the school, and I explained that I thought it was in his best interest to have the school test his reading abilities further so they would have more information about his areas of strength and struggle. She decided to take this advice and an entire set of interactional data was created as a result. I could never have anticipated the interactions that ensued, but ultimately my advisement contributed to her actions, especially considering the cultural capital I held.

Having had experience as an English and reading teacher in public schools, I sometimes felt angry or shocked by what the participants told me during formal and informal interviews. When the students told me about the lack of book reading they did in reading class or complained about how uninteresting their Accelerated Reader (AR) books were, I cringed at what I felt was a poor job of fostering their reader identities. Remembering my rich literacy experiences in fifth grade, I thought they were being robbed of literate wonder and had to work to keep this shock or frustration under wraps so not to sway their verbal representations of what happened during the school day, what they enjoyed or did not enjoy, or how they talked about their teachers. This also impacted what I paid attention to when analyzing data.

Perhaps most importantly, what I found interesting or concerning was certainly different from what a researcher with no background as a teacher might find interesting or concerning. In particular, I was drawn to notable events that I thought were detrimental to the adolescent participants reader or scholastic identities and found myself hypothesizing what I would have done if these participants were in my classroom. I spent a lot of time with the adolescent participants one on one as their literacy tutor and got to be quite close with each of them. My position as their tutor and growing relationship naturally made me protective over their well being. Thus, I was increasingly sensitive to issues that affected them negatively and was more likely to see the data from point of view. I made a choice to only represent the families' side of the story because I felt what they experienced and believed was most important to answering the research questions. I did not aim to represent Truth, but rather a few truths that showed how families of struggling readers engaged in literacy and perceived their interactions with schools.

Also as a teacher and scholar of education, I was privy to knowledge about the way school systems work and many of the programs used for administrative and educational work. Sometimes, I already knew much about a program, like Accelerated Reader (AR), and on occasion I let it slip that something like this was familiar. However, having never been a public student in the accountability era or a guardian of a child in the accountability era, I was able to approach questions about topics with which I had some familiarity from a learner stance because I legitimately knew nothing about what it was like to be a child using AR or a guardian using ParentPortal to check grades. Nor was I present for the interactions between the guardians and the school staff described in this study.

Some may believe this section to be self-indulgent, too focused on my experiences and myself, but I believe every word spoken to be important to understanding what has influenced the primary research tool of this study. My mind is not tabula rasa, I come with many a marking that will influence what I see, what I pay attention to, and how I react; I am human. I have been a struggling reader, I am a teacher, I have taught students that struggle with reading, I have taught scripted curricula, I am a tutor, I am white, I am female, and I was raised middle class. Because of these facts, I will continuously reflect on how my positionality and my experiences impact the research.

Epistemic and Ontologic Assumptions

In this section, I will explain the process by which I came to select ethnographic collective case study as the methodology for this study. I will first discuss my ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs and the process through which I arrived at these assertions. From there, I will connect my beliefs to the interpretivist constructivist paradigm with which I have come to align and explain how the method of choice fits with those belief systems. Last, I will explain how the research aligns not only with my methodological choice, but also with my beliefs about knowledge and truth, how it can be attained, and what is valuable to know.

The journey of methodological alignment has been a difficult one to say the least. My story begins with a tumultuous wrestle to pigeonhole my seemingly conflicted beliefs into a single paradigm. For a long time, I argued for what I called mixed methods because, still to this day, I believe both quantitative and qualitative methods are important for understanding the world; however, I have come to the conclusion that qualitative

methods are best for understanding social science. I believe that any research dealing with the complexity of human experience, interaction, emotion, or other social phenomena will encounter multiple realities, many truths. The existence of multiple realities makes quantitative methods inappropriate for studying the uniqueness of human interaction and experience. Thus, I now consider myself an Interpretivist when it comes to social science (Glesne, 2009; Hatch, 2002). As is the nature of human existence, my belief systems are complex and may sometimes seem conflicting. However, they are my beliefs, and they are relevant to how I understand the world, how I study it, and how I write about it. In order to clarify where I stand with knowledge and truth, I will explain, in the following paragraph, my thoughts on these matters.

While I believe in multiple truths held by individual beings, I also believe there is one ultimate Truth, a Truth that cannot be completely understood by humans. I hold that this belief system stems from the fact that I do, in fact, believe in a higher power. In order to better explain my beliefs that one and many realities exist simultaneously, I conceptualize realities as bubbles (see Figure 3.1). I believe that there are micro bubbles of truth floating around within the confines of a macro bubble, the ultimate Truth (see Figure 3.0). The microcosms of truth are truths experienced by non-omniscient beings. Individuals, because they are incapable of truly seeing the world outside themselves, are encapsulated in a bubble of conceptual understanding unique to the individual. Individuals are incapable of seeing Truth; they are constrained by their personal truths. Though they cannot see the world outside of their own lens, an ultimate Truth still exists, encompassing all.

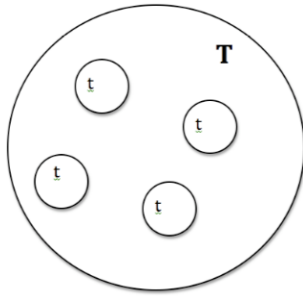


Figure 3.1. *Conceptualization of Reality*

Epistemologically speaking, my belief about how knowledge can be created depends on the type of research being conducted. Natural science does not study human interaction or experience; it studies Truth, and though I do not believe humans will ever fully comprehend the natural sciences, it can be measured quantitatively from the post-positivist perspective. Social science, on the other hand, studies human interaction and experience; it studies the multiple realities of individuals, thus it requires analysis through interpretivism, which acknowledges these realities. Social science requires interpretivism because we are all limited as research instruments to the confines of our personal experience bubbles. In social science, it is human experience, interaction, and perception that are important to know; it is important to recognize the outliers; it is important not throw them out (Stake, 1995).

Constructivism

Within interpretivism, I find myself most drawn to constructivist ideas. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create

understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (p. 27). Thus, I believe that knowledge is socially constructed and that multiple realities exist. Findings do not emerge because they are out there to be discovered; the researcher and participants create knowledge and the researcher interprets this knowledge. I believe that knowledge, within the social world, is constructed. Meaning making is all we have because we cannot see past our own constructions, our own bubbles. Therefore, it is important to know how this knowledge is made and what meaning is made. I desire to understand “human ideas, actions, and interactions in specific contexts or in terms of the wider culture” (Glesne, 2011, p. 9).

Section Overview

The section aims to make transparent the research questions, methods, and analysis techniques used in the present study. After addressing the research questions, I explicate my choice to utilize an ethnographic case study research approach and explain how this method aligns with my epistemological and ontological assumptions. Last, I describe the methods I used to create and analyze the data and the measures I took to ensure quality and sound ethics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was twofold. First, this study was developed to investigate how adolescent struggling readers and their families engaged in literacy at home. Second, it was also designed to investigate how schools and families of struggling adolescent readers interacted. Investigating the literacy engagement and interaction of struggling adolescent readers and their families in the home and school contexts provided a platform for evaluating the fluidity between schooled and family literacy, as well as the

interactional efforts by the school and guardians. Also, specifically situating the study within the accountability era provided insight into how political policies did or did not seem to influence institutional interaction, schooled literacy, family literacy, reader identity, and literacy conceptualization.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the literature regarding struggling adolescent readers and their families' engagement with literacy in the home as well as school to family interaction. It provides the research community with a unique perspective of reading struggles, the relationship between family literacy and schooled literacy, institutional interaction, and insight into how current policy influences these interactions. It is significant to policy makers, administrators, and teachers because it supplies accounts beneficial to understanding and critiquing the way administrators and teachers interact with families of struggling adolescent readers.

Definition of Terms

Families are defined here as persons co-residing and/or legally and financially responsible for children. Thus, this definition includes guardians, siblings and extended family living in the dwelling, and parents who may or may not live with the children but are financially and legally responsible for them. A *home* will be defined as any place of residence. A *struggling reader* is a student that does not read grade level texts at an independent level (QRI, Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). State tests provide information about participants, but they will not be the sole determinant of a students' identification as a struggling reader. The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI, Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) was be conducted in addition to parental and state identification to determine whether or

not the student was a struggling reader. State standardized test identification was essential to understanding how interactions between the family and school were shaped by the accountability era, as the tests are a major component of accountability. Though some define adolescents by grades four through twelve or six through twelve (Fagella-Luby, 2009), my operational definition of *adolescent* includes students aged 10-17. I view adolescence as age related not grade related (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). Adolescence is the stage between childhood and adulthood, thus this stage is associated with chronology rather than grade level or achievement. It is a stage where children begin to change physically, intellectually, morally/ethically, emotionally/psychologically and socially into adults (Caskey & Anfara, 2007).

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study created a boundary for what was and was not considered relevant to the research. First, this study was concerned with struggling reader and family interactions around literacy within the context of the accountability era. Any information gleaned from talk about interaction before the accountability era, while interesting for juxtaposing interaction within the accountability era, was by itself not relevant to this study. Second, the study was concerned with interaction between the home and the respective school. Any interaction around literacy outside of the home and school was outside the scope of this research. Third, while individuals outside of the family unit or school system had the potential to become a part of the data set by coming in and out of the house or by being present at the same school, their talk and interaction was not pertinent for the purposes of this study. Only family members and members of the respective school institution who interacted with the family and the struggling

adolescent reader were relevant. Fourth, a requirement of the study was that each family contained at least one member who was a struggling adolescent reader. This meant that the students had to be between the ages of 10-17 and perform at a frustration level with grade level material (QRI, Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). Families who did not meet these criteria were not considered for the study. Last, this study focused on interaction between the families and their schools and family literacy. It did not aim to determine what participants experienced, as it is my belief that only the participants are capable of understanding their own experiences. The study focused on how participants interacted with their schools and how they engaged in literacy at home.

Research Questions

Barone (2011) suggests that, in case study research, a possible “strategy is to start with one broad question. As the study progresses, other questions emerge that provide more focus” (p. 21). Following Barone’s suggestion, I formulated one broad question with a set of sub-questions under the notion that these questions were likely to shift as I learned during data creation. Research stemming from interpretivist assumptions is a highly reflexive process by which research questions, methods, and analysis are under constant refinement (Saldana, 2013). I embarked on this study in order to answer the following question and sub-questions:

- 2) How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy at home and perceive and engage in interaction with a school in the era of accountability?
 - a. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy practices at home?

- b. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive and engage in school to home communication?

I answered these questions with an ethnographic collective case study. A rationale for the research approach is explained in the following sections.

Rationale

An ethnographic collective case study methodology was used. It is a blend of ethnographic case study and collective case study models (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). I selected this method because of its attention to human factors such as perception, interaction, and meaning making. I also selected it because of the “closeness and richness of detail” I could get from working with only two families (Rogers, 2003, p. 24). I was interested in understanding how struggling adolescent readers and their families engaged in literacy in the home and how educational institutions interacted with them, specifically within the accountability era. Though there were ethnographic case studies that addressed family literacy and some interaction with schools (Rogers, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995), those studies did not address the literacy engagement and school to family interactions occurring in the educational climate of the accountability era. Drastic changes in educational policy, technology, and classroom practice took place after the institution of NCLB (Ravitch, 2009; Pennington, 2004), thus, it was necessary to revisit family literacy engagement and school to family interaction within this new context. Understanding such interactions required extended time with the families in order to build relationships and compile ample data. Thus, the use of ethnographic methods within the bounds of a case study was a good fit because it allowed me to pay close attention to two families over an extended period of time.

I chose to implement a case study because I sought specifically to understand how two adolescent struggling readers and their families interacted within the home and school contexts. The bounded system was delimited by the family component, the adolescent component, and the struggling reader component. I further decided on a collective case study because I wanted to juxtapose interactions of two families and their educational institutions. Therefore, the present study was a case study in that it was bounded by the components above and was collective in that I worked with two families. Working with more than one family certainly led to broader findings than if I had only worked with only one. It allowed me to think about how interactions differed from one family and situation to another.

Not only did I choose to implement an ethnographic collective case study on the basis of my research questions, but I also extensively considered the alignment of my epistemological and ontological underpinnings and my methodological choice. Before determining to use ethnographic collective case study, I grappled with my beliefs about truth and knowledge. My decision to use ethnographic collective case study was determined with a strong emphasis on maintaining solidarity between my assumptions and my methodology of choice. An explanation of those beliefs and how they connect to case study were provided in the epistemology section.

Research Approach

In the section to follow, I describe the ethnographic collective case study research approach in order to provide support for my research design choices. First, I provide a brief overview of case study and collective case study methodology. Following this overview, I supply a short history of its extensive use in Literacy Studies. Then I describe

the qualities of ethnographic case study by providing thorough detail of the methods utilized by Purcell-Gates (1995) and Rogers (2003). Following this section, I describe how I used the ethnographic case study model and delineate my methods.

Case Study and Collective Case Study

Case study research is concerned with particularity (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). It aims to represent the specific intricacies of one case, be it a single participant or a group of people, within a bounded system (Barone, 2011; Merriam, 1998; Stake 1995). The bounded system contains the parameters or delimitations used to narrow the context of what is to be studied. Merriam (1998) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii). For a case to exist, there must be a knowable bounded system.

The defining characteristics of case study research are limited to the bounded system and existence of an issue. Thus, there are no prescribed methods of case study (Merriam, 1998). However, case study research has a rich history, and traditional methods of case study consist of interviews, observations, and document analysis; case studies usually employ all three to some extent (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). A notable characteristic of qualitative case study is that they do not attempt to generalize findings; instead, they seek to represent the particularity of that bounded system (Stake, 1995).

Collective case studies are a collection of instrumental case studies within a bounded system (Barone, 2011; Stake, 1995). Analyzing multiple cases within the same bounded system allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple perspectives and experiences related to the case. The purpose of a collective case study is

not to triangulate studies in an attempt to make generalizations or to find the Truth; it is an attempt to “[build] a stronger understanding and a more compelling argument for the significance of the work through the use of multiple cases” (Barone, 2011, p. 9).

Though many case studies have been conducted in literacy research, fewer are ethnographic case studies, even fewer of those have been ethnographic collective case studies, and the focus has been primarily on younger children. The present study aimed to address adolescent struggling students, whose lifeworlds have mostly been represented through portraiture.

Ethnographic Case Study

Ethnographic case study is the study of a bounded system using ethnographic methods. It “is defined as prolonged observations over time in a natural setting within a bounded system” (Angers & Machtmes, 2005, p.777). As noted earlier, ethnography is influenced by anthropology and is rooted in understanding culture (Fairhurst & Good, 1991). Merriam (1998) explains, “[a] case study focusing on, for example, the culture of a school, a group of students, or classroom behavior would be an *ethnographic* case study” (p. 34). In an ethnographic case study, a researcher studies the bounded system for an extended period of time and immerses oneself in the culture or environment. She pays attention to what people say, do, and the artifacts they use (Fairhurst & Good, 1991). She interviews, observes, collects artifacts, takes field notes, records thick descriptions, and keeps a researcher journal to crystallize the data.

Purcell-Gates (1997) is an exemplar of an ethnographic case study used in literacy research. In her study of a non-literate urban-Appalachian family, Purcell-Gates (1997) spent two years working with Donny and Jenny. During that time, she tutored both

Donny and Jenny at the Literacy Center and at their residence; she also accompanied them to the library and advocated on the behalf of Jenny to the school administration. Purcell-Gates immersed herself in the world of Donny and Jenny for an extended length of time as their tutor, as a researcher, and as a friend. She used informal interviews, observation, and artifact analysis to understand their lives, how they did or did not use literacy, and how their lack of literacy experiences shaped their daily interactions. She found that Donny's school set up many barriers to Jenny's interaction by using written communication when they knew Jenny was unable to read and by regularly avoiding responding to her telephone and in-person contact.

Much like Purcell-Gates (1995), Rogers (2003), the most influential study for the present research, conducted an ethnographic case study in literacy studies as a participant in the home and as a participant observer in institutional settings. Rogers' data consisted of thick descriptions from her regular interactions and observations in the home, interviews, document collection, audio recordings of special education committee meetings at the school, interviews of community members, photos, and a researcher journal. She entered the site already having known June and Vikki through her interactions at a literacy center. Again like Purcell-Gates (1995), she received permission to do the study while she served as a personal literacy tutor for the family. Her thick descriptions, interviews, document collection, and researcher journal were all developed as a result of her presence as a literacy tutor. These ethnographic methods allowed Rogers to become a regular participant in the family environment. She was in the home to serve a purpose and not simply to "observe" the participants. This gave Rogers the opportunity to form trustworthy relationships that eventually led to her participant

observation of special education committee meetings two times over the two-year course of her study. She was invited to attend those meetings to advocate for Vikki when necessary. The Treader family therefore served as gatekeepers for additional access to institutional interaction.

Rogers (2003) began the study hoping to understand how discourse was constructed around the literate lives of the Treaders in the home and school and how “literate competence” is constructed by “official literacies” (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). She found that both June and Vikki bought in to official literacies and constructed themselves as literacy deficit rather than focusing on their observed literacy strengths within the home. Rogers noted that June gave in to special education classification for Vikki as a result of the deficit discourse in her meetings with school personnel. Despite her beliefs that Vikki did not need special education placement, she conceded to Vikki’s classification in order to get Vikki the extra resources she believed Vikki needed.

Case Study and Constructivism

The nature of case study research closely aligns to constructivism in its focus on specific contexts (Glesne, 2009). As an interpretivist, my goal was to interpret the meaning making of participants. This could only be achieved by “in-depth, long-term interactions with relevant people in one or several sites” (Glesne, 2009, p. 9). I wanted to know about families of struggling adolescent readers, their family literacy practices, and their perceptions of school to home communication. Thus, as is characteristic of ethnographic case study research, I spent extensive time interacting and developing rapport with two families in their home environments in order to build a well founded account of their literacy practices and perceptions of school communication quality.

Maintaining Reflexivity

Also customary of interpretive work, I practiced reflexive strategies to make my researcher processes transparent. I am the major research tool for this study, who I am and how I perceive the world shapes what I pay attention to, what questions I ask, and how I interpret data. Because I played such a large role in the creation of knowledge, it was important that I keep a constant check on my positionality, thoughts, and biases (Saldana, 2013). I did this by keeping a research journal where I wrote about my experiences and impressions, as well as what surprised, intrigued, or disturbed me during the data gathering and analysis process (Saldana, 2013). This was done at minimum once a week and more when I had strong reactions to events. It was particularly important because of my heavy entwinement with the family as their literacy tutor. I had to regularly keep checks on how I interacted with the family in order to maintain perspective. For example, I had a strong reaction to learning about the communicative techniques used by a school psychologist in a phone call to one participant. While I felt inclined, as a teacher and tutor, to step in and demand more be done for the participant, I captured those thoughts and feelings in my researcher journal and used them to reflect on my reasons for these reactions. The guardian handled the situation the way she saw fit, and I held in my personal feelings. She never asked for my advice in this situation, so I did not give any. By reflecting on my reactions and reigning in my desire for involvement, I learned about this participant's interactive style and how cultural capital seemed to influence her final decisions.

Method

The sections that follow describe the design of the study.

Site Description and Participants

Participants of this study were struggling adolescent readers and their family members. Secondary participants consisted of individuals who interacted with the students and families for academic purposes, as one of the questions concerned the nature of family interactions with the school; this will be explored further in the last paragraph of this section. A struggling adolescent reader was defined as one who, by measure of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), was not on grade level in either reading fluency, comprehension, or both. This was determined at an introductory meeting prior to beginning tutoring and formal participation in the study.

As I studied the bounded system of struggling adolescent readers and their families, my participants were selected based on their fit with this bounded system, thus they were selected purposefully. I asked the gatekeeper, who worked with a religiously affiliated after-school program, to select two students whom she believed to be struggling readers. She then spoke with the guardians via phone about participating in the study. Once those two families were selected and agreed to talk with me, the gatekeeper provided contact information. From there, I contacted the participants to provide them with initial information regarding the study and answer any questions. Once they confirmed that they were still interested in participating, we set up a time for an initial meeting where I conducted a QRI-5 assessment to determine the students' reading abilities. In addition to the QRI-5, I also used the Striving Readers Motivation for Reading Questionnaire for Adolescents (MRQA) (Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, & Rintamaa,

2011) to determine each participants motivations for reading, the Student Reading Strategies Inventory (Cantrell et al., 2011) to determine what effective reading strategies they already used, and a Reading Interest Survey (Hildebrandt, 2001) to determine what types of texts they enjoyed reading. This additional information was used to develop a reader profile, included in Chapter Four, which informed my tutoring practices. Both of the first two participants met the criteria of below grade level performance, so I gave the families a week to think about their participation and review the information and informed consent documents. Once all questions were answered, participants were fully aware of the risks and benefits, and the informed consent documents were signed, we began tutoring sessions twice a week for four months.

I chose to work with two families because I wanted the opportunity to juxtapose different family, adolescent, and school interactions and communication perceptions. The varied family dynamics and situations allowed me to gain a more complex understanding of how different families navigated through similar obstacles within the same chronological time period. I chose to work with two families rather than more because I felt this number would allow me to fully immerse myself in the daily lives of the participants. More than two might have spread my attention too thin, and I wanted depth rather than breadth as the study was a case study and my intentions were to understand the intricacies of the lives and perceptions of a few.

One element of the design of this study was the tutoring aspect. Because my work was ethnographic, I needed to spend a great deal of time with participants and become a part of their worlds on a daily basis. One way to do this was through offering tutoring for the struggling family member in their home (Purcell-Gates, 1995; Rogers, 2003). This

design was much like that of Purcell-Gates (1995) in her continued tutoring of Donny, the non-literate first grader, and Jenny, his mother, in the Literacy Center and at their home and like Rogers (2003) in her study with the Treader family during the mid to late nineteen-nineties. Not only did my services provide the participants with a strong benefit, it also allowed me to obtain a great deal of information about the students' strengths and needs in reading instruction, have conversations with that student about reading, have conversations with the guardians and other household family members about the students' reading, and have regular opportunities to be at the home observing the literacy practices and environment. Tutoring afforded me a 'place' in the family environment while providing the participants with reciprocity. Becoming such an intricate part of the families' inner circles undoubtedly affected my observational stance, and I kept a consistent research journal in order to maintain perspective of my role and influence in the family, specifically in their interactions with the school system. However, I decided before carrying out the study that if I were approached for my opinion on a school matter that impacted the wellbeing of the student, I was ethically bound to put the student first and answer such questions truthfully and carefully while at the same time cautioning about potential ramifications from taking my advice.

Data Sources and Creation Procedures

The traditional data sources in case studies are interview, observation, and document analysis (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). I used all three of these methods to collect data. The data collection period lasted four months, an appropriate length for a case study in education because it lasted the duration of one semester and schools often

undergo much shifting when switching from one semester to another (Merriam, 1998).

Table 3.1 illustrates the data collection moments and sources of data.

TABLE 3.1

Data Collection Moments and Sources

Data Collection	Boyd	Sutton
Number of Visits	31	31
Adult Formal Interviews	2	2
Adolescent Formal Interviews	2	2
Informal Interviews (Adult/Adolescent)	countless	countless
School Assignment Artifacts	1	7
Grade Cards/Progress Reports	3	3
Standardized Testing Artifacts	3	1
School Newletters/ Handouts	4	4
Services Notifications	3	1

The following sections explicate how each method was used and to what extent.

Both informal (Hatch, 2002) and formal (Glesne, 2011) interviews were conducted throughout the data collection period. Two formal interviews, one at beginning of the study and one within the last week of the study, were conducted with each primary guardian and adolescent using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendices G-H). Multiple informal interviews occurred on a daily basis and occurred before, during, and after tutoring for the participant and before or after tutoring for the guardians. After each tutoring session, I maintained the practice of debriefing the guardian about what happened during tutoring, what was learned, and what we would be doing in the future.

This was a good time to interact with the guardian participants and inquire about what was happening at school and at home. The ethnographic nature of the study lent itself to change as new opportunities for data collection arose and informal interviews allowed me to ask previously unanticipated questions as they developed (Sands, 2002).

Formal interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview protocol and were audio taped and transcribed by me. Almost all of each audio recording was transcribed, as I believe everything that is said has potential meaning; however, a few areas in the follow up interviews were not transcribed because the children went completely off topic or the talk contained information that could threaten anonymity. Informal interviews happened on the spot, thus, audio recording was not appropriate for those interactions. For informal interviews, I practiced the suggestions from Hatch (2002). Upon leaving the field, I immediately verbally debriefed everything I remembered happening or, on rare occasion, rehearsed everything in my head until I could get to a place to write field notes. I made sure this happened before I slept so the interactions were fresh. I did not discuss any happenings until the thoughts were recorded (Hatch, 2002).

I continuously observed as a participant observer in the home of each family over the four-month span and visited each home roughly two times a week for a total of 31 times. I observed interactions in the home and visited the school on one occasion. In the home, I was a full participant coming and going as a literacy tutor and engaging in tutoring sessions with the SAR students. Our sessions usually began with some small talk about how they were doing and what happened at school that day. Often, the students would pull out graded work to show me, and I would take pictures of the work for

document collection. This was followed by spelling work, often in the form of games, talking about their silent reading and holding thinking strategy work (Topping & McManus, 2010; Daniels & Zemelman, 2004), and paired reading of high interest books to model and build fluency and rate. We usually closed by discussing their next silent reading activity and holding thinking assignment. Before and following the sessions, the guardians and I had short discussions about things that were happening in school and the progress of the student. In addition to the regular participant observations at home, I accompanied Jackie and Julia to one parent teacher conference and observed the school site. In the same manner as described for formal interviews, I followed the suggestions of Hatch (2002) and rehearsed, jot, and wrote thick descriptions before speaking of data or sleeping. I did not observe the family outside of coming to and leaving the home for tutoring. I wanted my presence to be as authentic as possible and did not want to make the families uncomfortable by prolonged observation, so I felt it best not to observe the families outside of my tutoring visits. In addition, my authentic presence and regular appearances seemed to capture more natural literacy engagement observations.

I also collected artifacts for document analysis throughout the data collection period (e.g. Appendices E1-F3). This included any artifact relevant to the struggling student's literacy or interactions with the school including but not limited to emails, letters, and any other form of written communication between the school and each respective family that the families were willing to share. I also collected evidence from our tutoring sessions to crystallize data from my thick descriptions and researcher journal.

Warranting Claims and Standards of Quality

Following the criteria for a quality and rigorous study outlined by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione, (2002), I engaged in the following strategies: thick description, triangulation of data sources, and researcher journaling for reflexivity. In the paragraphs to follow, I explain how I used each of these methods in data analysis and in warranting the claims and standards of quality.

Thick description. Hatch (2002) recommends that researchers write up thick descriptions as soon as possible once they have left the field, reciting in their heads what was seen and said until they can make jottings and eventually turn those jottings into thick descriptions. Thick descriptions should be written before retiring to sleep, as much detail will have been lost by the morning. In the present study, I followed this method as strictly as possible. I did not write jottings; rather, I audio recorded my memories and thoughts. Following almost every visit, I immediately audio recorded what happened before, during, and after the sessions as I drove to the next appointment or home. Upon returning home, I wrote thick descriptions and utilized the audio notes to recharge my memory. On rare occasion, something prohibited me from making such recordings, but thick descriptions were developed as soon as I returned home and always before retiring for the night.

Triangulation. I triangulated the data by cross-checking what was said in informal versus formal interviews versus what was seen and heard in observation and what was present in documents. Table 3.2, modeled after Anfara, Brown and Mangione, 2002, displays each major finding and the data used to support it. This triangulation did not take place in an effort to generalize findings; however, it served to generate findings

from the data (Stake, 1995; Fine, 2000). Triangulation was especially helpful in confirming or disconfirming family claims of school communication with written communication from the school and interpreting the effectiveness of this communication.

TABLE 3.2

Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

Major finding	Source				
	SI	GI	O	D	Q
Category: SAR Family Literacy Practices					
1. The families regularly used literacy for functioning in daily life.	X	X	X		
2. The families regularly used literacy to obtain information.	X	X	X		
3. Sometimes the families engaged in literacy for entertainment.	X	X			
4. Literacy was used often when school was brought home.	X	X	X		
5. Jimmy and Julia generally did not engage in literacy at home unless required to do so by the school.	X		X		X
6. Jackie and Debbie did not have wide conceptualizations of literacy.		X			
7. Jackie and Debbie had relatively poor reader identities.		X			
8. Children can develop conceptualizations of reading different from their guardians.	X	X			X
9. The SARs had very poor reader identities at the beginning of the study.	X		X		X
Category: Interaction Between the School and SAR Family					
1. Neither guardian was contacted by the school about her SAR's reading struggles. Debbie was completely unaware of Jimmy's struggles and Jackie only had an inclination.		X			
2. The school communicated services mainly through paper communications.		X		X	
3. Services were not provided to Jimmy the same way they were to Julia.		X		X	
4. Academic achievement was communicated by the school in a variety of ways but was sometimes contradictory or insufficient, especially in terms of Jimmy's reading progress.		X		X	
5. Behavior was communicated by the school quickly and efficiently.		X	X	X	
6. Information about events happening at school was communicated regularly and in a variety of ways.		X		X	
7. Debbie believed the school could do a much better job communicating academic achievement, especially in terms of Jimmy's reading struggles.		X			
8. Jackie believed the school did a great job communicating.		X			
9. Debbie had an assertive approach to communicating with the school while Jackie had a more reactive approach.		X	X		
10. The Accountability Era was present in most forms of school initiated communication with the SAR's families.		X	X	X	

Note. SI = Student interview, GI = Guardian interview, O = Observation, D = Document, Q/A = Questionnaire and/or Assessment

Fourteen out of nineteen major findings were triangulated from multiple sources of data. The five findings that were not triangulated all came from guardian interviews and were either related to guardian beliefs or guardian conceptualizations of self as literate beings. Thus, I felt these findings were adequately supported by guardian formal or informal interview. Furthermore, the findings were not cross-checked with school personnel because the study was focused on family literacy and perceptions of school to home communication rather than the school's account of their communication practices.

Anfara et al. (2002) also stressed the importance of ensuring rigor and quality during the research process through deliberate transparency of research design, data collection, and data analysis. This can be accomplished by special attention to reflexivity within a researcher journal. In the upcoming paragraphs, I explain how the researcher journal and was maintained.

Researcher journal. I wrote about my initial reactions and interpretations in the field and during analysis in a research journal (Bazeley, 2013). Each day that I conducted work on the study, I wrote Word processed thick descriptions of events and uploaded them to ATLAS.ti after each month of journaling. Within these descriptions, some of my impressions of the struggling adolescent readers' tutoring progress was included in parenthesis. As my role was that of a tutor, I described what happened before, during, and after sessions and included ideas for where to go next with instruction. When notable events occurred to which I had personal reaction, I delegated those thoughts to the researcher journal. This journal served as a reflexive instrument, taking note of what surprised, upset, or angered me in an effort to make transparent the beliefs and feelings I

brought to the study. These reactions provided a layer of data that helped me understand why I came to pay attention to certain phenomena and how this impacted my findings. However, in the fourth month, I noticed that it felt extremely awkward for me as a writer to continue writing my reactions in a separate researcher journal so far physically removed from the action of the day. Thus, I spent the last month focusing my researcher journaling in parenthesis as I reacted to what I was writing in my thick descriptions. This personally felt more natural because these reactions were so closely tied to specific events that I recorded. As I analyzed my data, I also wrote about my analytical process, logging how I came to make certain analytical choices in both memos and my researcher journal.

Ethical considerations. As the present study involved human participants, I adhered to the guidelines set forth by the Institution Review Board (IRB) at The University of Tennessee. An informed consent and information form regarding the present study was distributed to all selected participants before embarking on the research. Non-adult participants signed an assent form with a parental consent form. I ensured that the children understood what their participation entailed and informed them of their rights by reading the assent form, which was at a comprehensible reading level, to them and providing any clarification necessary. The participants also met me in an introductory meeting where I clarified the aims of the study, the protection measures, the risks, and the commitments before giving them time to think about their involvement. Participants were reminded that they could stop participation at any time without ramification at the beginning of the study, and with each formal interview.

Protecting the anonymity and well being of participants was of my utmost concern, thus I began using pseudonyms in all written data creation (i.e. thick descriptions, verbal debriefing, and testing documentation) and discussion with advisors and colleagues from the onset of the study. I also continuously reflected on how my choices and position of power affected the lives of the participants.

A researcher's experience and extended time in the field requires moral choices throughout the research process (Tedlock, 2003, p. 455). As a researcher, I am privileged with the power to interpret and write about the lives of others. As an educated teacher and doctoral student, I was considered an expert and my advice and opinions were valued. Thus, I was consistently cognizant of what I said around and to participants. I made every effort to position myself as a learner rather than an expert when in contact with participants in all exchanges not related to tutoring. When in my tutoring role, however, I needed to assume the expert role, as I was teaching the struggling reader strategies for improving.

For example, when discussing the tutee's literate abilities, progress, and needs, I took on the expert role and told the guardians where I believed the tutee stood and what she or he needed. However, when interacting with participants in order to understand their literacy practices or their perceptions of interaction or quality of communication from the school, I positioned myself as a learner. It was helpful that I did not know what the participants thought about their school's communication practices or what their family literacy practices were like. However, it was challenging to pretend to not know anything about ParentPortal, an online grade information site, when I had, in fact, used the site myself as a teacher. I balanced this by reminding myself that I truly did not know

anything about ParentPortal from the eyes of a guardian, and I focused my mental stance that way when questioning about concepts familiar to me.

Though I entered the homes with the intention of conducting research, when tutoring, the learning experience was always placed as the primary concern. I did not allow the research to alter the quality of the tutoring at any time for any reason. Rather, I began sessions by asking the participants how their day at school went and probed specifically about reading and writing classes. The students organically began to show me their work as we built relationships and these offered pieces fueled further discussion of their class work and perceptions of school. I found that the questions I asked about their daily lives served a dual purpose. I was creating data, but I was also showing a sincere interest in the lives of my participants and this built rapport.

Leaving the site. How I left the site was just as important and arguably more important than how I entered. My presence impacted the lives of those with whom I came into contact. The tutoring aspect of this study made the leaving process more difficult as I provided a service that was still necessary for the male participant after the research ceased. I worked with the participants for the full four months and made up sessions with them when sessions had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. Once I stopped visiting, I made sure my participants had my contact information and invited them to contact me if they ever needed information or guidance. I also asked if I could call every so often to check in with them and see how the students and the family were doing. For the participant who could still use additional tutoring, I let his guardian know where he stood with his reading and was honest about what he still needed. He began significantly

more behind in his reading than the female participant, and his guardian intended to secure tutoring services over the summer to help his continued improvement.

Data analysis. Analysis of ethnographic work is a multi-layered process that often includes triangulation, pattern identification, identifying and exploring key events, creating organizational charts, and content analysis, but there is no “single form or stage” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 112). My analytical process occurred in several stages throughout the entirety of data creation (Fetterman, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the first stage of analysis, I created a foundational layer of memos that captured my initial impressions of the data (Bazeley, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This practice allowed me to think through the data before determining appropriate initial codes. My analysis therefore remained open for an extended period of time as I processed and worked with the data (Bazeley, 2013). As I developed memos and noticed patterns, I began a potential codebook that continuously connected prospective codes back to my research questions (Bazeley, 2013; Richards, 2009). I did this in order to avoid the “coding trap” (Richards, 2009, p. 110) because I am by nature a code splitter rather than a code chunker (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I then used that codebook to create visual networks showing how the codes were interconnected to the research questions and to potential theory. This helped me maintain focus on the research questions I set out to answer. Once I determined some useful prospective codes, I went back to the data for the second stage of analysis.

The second stage of analysis was the first cycle of coding. In the first coding cycle, I attended to a blend of coding methods and types. Richards (2009) proposes that qualitative researchers do several sweeps through the data beginning with what she calls

descriptive coding or coding that maintains record of case information. Next, one does topic coding to categorize what the data is about. Last, the researcher moves through topic codes to develop analytical codes that contain the interpretive acts of analysis. I used this method of coding and color-coded each layer in ATLAS.ti. However, I found Saldana (2009) more useful for terming specific codes. Thus, I use his terminology to describe the various types of codes I applied. Specifically, I used attribute, descriptive, emotion, and value coding (Saldana, 2009). These coding techniques were especially suited for answering research questions involving interpersonal relationships. I used attribute (case) coding to catalog demographic and other participant information, descriptive (topic) to catalog major topics, and emotion and value coding to attend to the emotions, values, and beliefs and or interactions of participants relating to literacy, family and school relationships, struggle, and the context of the accountability era.

The third stage involved the second cycle of coding where initial codes were “shaped and reshaped” as the data were “transformed into findings” (Watt, 2007, p. 95). In the second coding cycle, my mission was to condense and conceptually organize my codes (Saldana, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I created categories, sub-categories, and code families to organize the data. Once the categories were created, organized, and re-organized, I used those categories to construct the themes of my findings.

As mentioned above, I used ATLAS.ti to organize and analyze my data. Specifically, after each month of data creation, I uploaded the Word processed thick descriptions, researcher journals, and photographs of document artifacts to ATLAS.ti. I arranged my documents into categories by type (i.e document artifact, interviews, thick descriptions) and then utilized the memoing feature to record my initial impressions of

the data. I also used the coding tools to create several layers of codes (i.e case, topic, emotion, and value) and the family and color-coding features to visually organize my sub and major categories. For example, all case codes were brown, topic codes were orange, all codes relating to beliefs or values were coded in purple, and all analytical codes were distinguished by pink. This helped me navigate and interpret my data in an efficient manner because I could easily sort through the different codes by looking at the colors. I further organized my codes with capitalized headings to situate codes into hierarchies. For example, I used “READER IDENTITY tracking” to organize sub codes that supported my analytical codes. As I interpreted and condensed the codes in stage three of analysis, I used these headers to collapse previous codes and maintain the analytical trail. In addition, I used the family tools to organize my codes into the major categories of my findings. For example, all codes supporting the findings about family literacy were added to the “Family Literacy” family. Coding through ATLAS.ti was enormously helpful in the analytical process because it made organizing, visualizing, and retrieving data relatively easy as I worked to create the findings from the study. It was an invaluable resource that allowed me to quickly look back and forth amongst data and quickly retrieve and sort through it when I wanted to revisit a quote or idea.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I first provided a detailed account of my positionality in order to make my personal beliefs and motives transparent. My ontologic and epistemic underpinnings were then explicated to provide an account of how I understand truth. This was particularly important for later explaining and supporting my methodological decisions. Next, I explicated my rationale for utilizing an ethnographic case study

methodology to investigate the literacy engagement of struggling adolescent readers and their families in the home and their interactions with the school. Namely, that ethnographic case study attends to the particularity of beliefs, social events and interactions, which is pertinent for the intense study of two families, their literacy practices, and their interactions with a school. I then illustrated how an ethnographic case study method is consistent with my ontological and epistemological beliefs. Finally, I detailed my methods for participant selection, data creation, maintaining reflexivity, and ensuring rigor and quality before outlining my analytical process.

CHAPTER FOUR

Participants

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides rich ethnographic detail about the participants and the sites where the study took place. It describes background information necessary to understanding the families' life situations and personal characteristics. This will prove useful in adequately interpreting their family literacy practices and interactions with the school system, as lived experience directly impacts the choices we make from day to day. I begin this chapter by briefly describing the city where both families reside. From there, I move to describing each family unit separately. I start with describing the struggling adolescent readers, including personality and reader profile information. Following each SAR description, I describe the family home, the family dynamics and conclude with primary participant guardian descriptions. All proper nouns have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Mabontown

According to the city 2010 census, the Southeast city of Mabontown is home to over 29,000 residents. 75.5% of the population is White, 15.8% Hispanic, 6.4% is Black, and 2.3% are of other races. It houses a local community college and two high schools: Mabontown North and Mabontown South. In 2008, according the city improvement plan, the number of residents who did not have a high school degree or General Education Degree was twice the national average with 31.4%. Only 15.4 % of residents have at least a bachelor's degree or higher and 5.7% have a professional or graduate degree. The

median household income was roughly \$31,500 in 2008. City data also states that the unemployment rate in 2013 was 9.7%

The Boyd Family

Julia Boyd: A Struggling Adolescent Reader

Julia Boyd is a spritely and loquacious ten and a half year-old fifth grader with short brown hair and freckles. She is highly active, enjoys riding her bike around the neighborhood and chasing the local ice cream truck for enormous Mississippi Mudslide ice-cream sandwiches. Though her attention span is relatively short and she tends to stare longingly out the glass storm door while sitting at the kitchen table, she is motivated to achieve in school. She selected “strongly agree” to the question, “I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends” and “I try to get more answers right than friends” on the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire for Adolescents (MRQA). However, Julia does not believe that she reads better than her friends. In fact, she does not believe she is a good reader at all (MRQA; Julia, Transcript 1).

Julia’s Reader Profile

Julia is a slow and steady comprehender (Riddle-Buly & Valencia, 2002). This means her fluency is slow, but she tends to understand what she reads, especially when she reads out loud. At the time of her first Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5), Julia scored a Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) of 52 on a fifth grade reading passage (See Table 4.1). She also scored instructional on comprehension for both of her oral fifth grade reading tests. However, when Julia read a fifth grade passage silently, her comprehension plunged to a frustration level because she was only able to get two out of eight questions correct. Julia’s WCPM paired with her frustration level silent reading score qualified her

as a struggling adolescent reader. In addition, at the time of selection, Julia was receiving pull-out- reading services at school for her struggles.

TABLE 4.1

Julia's QRI Results

TEST	Level	Words Identified	Score
WORD LIST	4	18/20	Ind.
	5	18/20	Ind.
	6	16/20	Inst.

TEST	Level	MC	#SC	Total	WPM	WCPM	Total Accur.	Total Accept.	Comp. Correct
ORAL 1	5	3	9	12	58	46	Inst.	Ind.	3E/3I =Inst.
ORAL 2	5	6	4	10	62	52	Inst.	Ind.	4E/2I =I.Inst.
SILENT	5								0E/1I =Frust.

Ind.=Independent, Inst.=Instructional, L. Inst.= Low Instructional, WPM= Words Per Minute, WCPM= Words Correction Per Minute, Total Accur.= Total Accuracy, Total Accept.=Total Acceptability, Comp. Correct= number of comprehension questions answered correctly, MC=number of miscues, SC=number of self corrects, E=explicit questions correct, I=implicit questions correct

According to her Reading Interest Survey, Julia thinks reading is “ok,” at reading and she reads “sometimes.” She enjoys reading “fairy tales, folk tales, ...mystery, [and] poems” (Julia, Reading Interest Survey). However, most of her reading occurs at school for school purposes; she reads at home rarely because she prefers to be outside playing

with friends. At school, she is motivated to read by Accelerated Reader (AR) and reads as many easy books as she can in order to quickly acquire points; however, she finds most of these books boring. When asked how many books she owns, Julia searched the house for every book of hers that she could find and came up with fifteen. Her favorite book is *The Secret Garden*, and she came to know about that book through AR. Julia does not see herself as a strong reader and does not like reading challenging texts, but she does enjoy being praised for her reading by her teachers (Julia, Reading Interest Survey; Julia, Transcript 1).

When asked on the Reading Interest Survey, “What does the word ‘reading’ mean to you,” Julia responded, “to look at words and see what they say. And, keep on reading not the same word over and over again. Once you get done with that page you go to the next page and go the next once. Once the book ends you know what it was about?” (Julia, Transcript 1). She also explained that reading is “where you look at words and try to figure out what they say” (Julia, Transcript 1). At the beginning of the study, Julia had a rather fundamental view of literacy (Pennington, 2004). Reading to her was a decoding act.

Description of Site

Among a row of assorted dilapidated 1960s homes, the Boyd residence sits on a square plot of land void of trees. The house is modest sized, square, and constructed with orange brick. It is not ornate, but it is clean and well kept. A concrete porch leads to the front door adorned with a metal butterfly Jackie, Julia’s paternal grandmother, received as a birthday gift this year. This door opens into a joint living and dining area. The original entrance hall walls have been removed to enlarge the space, yet evidence of

those walls remains visible in unfinished gaps in the ceiling and floors. The dining area houses a plain circle table with three chairs; this is the space where Julia and I spent our tutoring sessions. Immediately beyond the dining space is a rectangular kitchen that leads to a laundry room with a large corkboard over the dryer. To the left of the small laundry room is a back door that opens into the fenced backyard where Julia can often be found jumping on a trampoline with a host of neighborhood girls or romping around with Lucky, the short, long-haired, white and tan ball of loveable dog. To the right of the dining area is the living room where a set of gray microfiber living room furniture frames the television. Stacks of magazines and newspaper, crossword puzzles, and the Bible cover the entire surface area of the coffee table that rests in front of the couch. This room is often poorly lit singularly by the television, which is usually on as Julia and I read together, or the light forcing its way through the window blinds. Jackie is regularly in the center of the couch reading *The Watchtower*, a Jehovah's Witness magazine, with Gibbs, the blind and deaf black poodle she took in as a stray several years ago. She is often up and down letting the ever-entitled calico "Cat" in and out of the storm door at her beckoning call.

The Boyd Family Dynamics

The Boyd family has experienced major turmoil throughout Julia's life. Julia's grandmother, Jackie, acquired full custody of Julia and Julia's sixteen year-old brother, Declan, three years ago. She has been a constant in Julia's life since infancy, as she often kept Julia while her parents were working or, as Jackie puts it, "laid up because of all them pills" (Jackie, Interview 1). Julia's mother, Charity, is currently incarcerated and Julia's father, David, passed away last June due to his addictions. Declan currently lives

with his deceased uncles' prior wife but comes and goes from Jackie's home regularly. Otherwise, it is just Jackie and Julia living in the orange brick home. They recently moved there last year. Thus, Julia is attending a new school, Highland Elementary, her fifth grade year. Everyone in the Boyd family is perceivably "white."

David, Julia's deceased father, was Jackie's youngest child of three children. He struggled enormously in school with reading and did not graduate high school. His elementary school teacher told Jackie he was "spoiled" (Jackie, Transcript 1) and that is why he was having trouble in school. Eventually David was admitted to CDC (Comprehensive Development Classroom for Special Education services), as Jackie terms it, and did better there. However, when it came to passing the high school exit exam, David was able to pass math but not English because his reading skills were so poor. Jackie believed this was when David began getting into trouble. During the last year of his life, he lived with Jackie and Julia and Julia sometimes speaks of her Dad's room, which is located in the house.

Jackie Boyd

Jackie Boyd is a soft-spoken benevolent woman who sports a white pixie cut and monochromatic cotton sweats. She loves animals and every pet she owns was once a stray that needed a home. Jackie often delights in the behaviors of her animals and laughs when they, Gibbs especially, do something perceivably silly. Her home recently became a regular playground for neighborhood children, and I have seen as many as six different girls roaming the yard and house nearly each of the thirty-one visits. Jackie is also a doting grandmother and makes sure that whatever Julia needs, she has.

Jackie values education and wants Julia to do well in school. She makes it to all parent teacher conferences and most school events, she keeps up with Julia's grades and assignments, and she provides rewards and punishments for academic performance. If Julia earns A's on her report card this year, Jackie plans to buy a doll for Julia (Thick Description Entry, 32).

Reading was never something Jackie enjoyed in her own school experiences, she, like Julia, wanted to be outside playing or "doing whatever [her] brother and dad did" (Jackie, Interview 1). Jackie remembers learning to read as a negative experience. She explained:

Well I had one teacher who, she didn't teach you much of anything, she was put fear into you, and if you didn't know the word, she would make you stand up 'till you learn it. And, uh, if that wasn't bad enough, she liked to bring a student from a lower grade to come in and tell you what it is. So, reading experience wasn't that great. (Jackie, Transcript 1)

She also never remembered either of her parents reading or writing unless it was to communicate to family members with a letter. Jackie explained that her parents worked a great deal and did not have much free time, but when they did, they were not reading or writing. However, Jackie's sister was an avid reader and got caught reading books during class. She always had her nose in a book, while Jackie was always outside.

To this day, Jackie does not consider herself a strong reader. She says she has trouble "reading and understanding some things" (Jackie, Interview 1). Though Jackie did not particularly like reading as a child, she did enjoy math and was good at it. She was interested in bookkeeping in high school and graduated. After leaving high school,

Jackie took up work instead of post-secondary school because she could not afford it. She eventually married and started a family of two boys and one girl. Only her daughter is still living.

The Sutton/Johnson Family

Jimmy Johnson

Jimmy Johnson is a taciturn eleven-year old fifth grade boy in love with muscle cars. His dark chocolate brown eyes generally remain expressionless and his voice is soft and low. He is exceptionally skilled at remembering specific facts about topics that interest him, specifically cars, and is able to recall the exact top speed capability of numerous sports cars. Jimmy is motivated to do well in school, so much so that when he does not perform well on a task, he is easily frustrated and angered.

Jimmy struggles immensely to read. He is able to read words in isolation on a fourth grade level. However, when reading longer passages, he does not fare so well. For his first oral reading fluency test on a level three QRI passage, Jimmy scored instructional on total accuracy and instructional on comprehension (See Table 4.2). He had a WCPM of 36, which was an exceptionally low and laborious fluency rate. When reading a level four oral passage, Jimmy's comprehension suffered and he scored frustration, again, his oral reading fluency for total accuracy was instructional. though possibly because of content familiarity and increased comfort. His WCPM went up to 66 for this second level four oral passage, which was his final test of the session. For his silent reading comprehension, which I administered in between the two oral passages to give him some rest, Jimmy scored frustration on a level three passage. This put his silent reading comprehension at least at a second grade level if not lower. I chose not to give

him an additional silent passage because it was already clear that Jimmy was a struggling reader, and he was exhausted and frustrated with all of the reading. I noticed that he tended to skip over, add, or substitute articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Thus, many of his miscues were not significant to meaning making, but these omissions and additions contributed greatly to his overall miscue count.

On Jimmy's Student Reading Strategies Survey at the beginning of the study, he selected "not so good" to describe both his reading ability and overall academic

TABLE 4.2

Jimmy's QRI Results

TEST	Level	Words Identified	Score
WORD LIST	3	17/20	Inst.
	4	15/20	Inst.
	5	Stopped	Frust.

Test	Level	MC	SC	Total	WPM	WCPM	Total Accur.	Total Accep.	Comp. Corr.
ORAL 1	3	12	8	20	56	36	Inst.	Ind.	4E/2I =L.Inst.
ORAL 2	4	5	3	8	74	66	Inst.	Ind.	3E/1I =Frust.
SILENT	3								2E/2I =Frust.

Note. Ind.= Independent, Inst.= Instructional, L. Inst.= Low Instructional, WPM = Words Per Minute, WCPM = Words Correction Per Minute, Total Accur.= Total Accuracy, Total Accep.=Total Acceptability, Comp. Corr.= number of comprehension questions answered correctly, MC = number of miscues, SC = number of self corrects, E = explicit questions correct, I = implicit questions correct

performance. He also responded that he strongly disagreed to the assertion “I am a good reader” on his MRQA. On his Reading Interest Survey, when asked, “Do you like to read,” Jimmy responded, “No.” When asked, “How much time do you spend reading,” Jimmy responded, “Not long.” When asked “What does the word ‘reading’ mean to you,” Jimmy responded, “takes a long time” and “something hard” (Reading Interest Survey). Jimmy struggles with reading, is fully aware, does not enjoy it, and has a poor reader identity.

The Sutton Home

After traveling down a winding hill, the Sutton home is the last house on the right just before one reaches the cul-de-sac in a residential area. The home was built in the 1990s and the Suttons bought it new. It is lined with light brown siding and is adorned with hunter green shutters and a matching front door. A small unlevel concrete walkway leads to the steps of the little wooden porch. There, a festive and colorful flower wreath hangs above a white metal bench. The front door to the left opens into a small living room with a large screen television. Past the living area is a dining room and a closed off kitchen where the cook can just barely peep between the foot wide space left by a row of cabinets and the counter to see into the dining area. The walls are painted two shades of green in a vertical stripe pattern and a vineyard boarder lines the dining area. To the left of the living room is a single bedroom and to the right a hall that leads to additional bedrooms. The first door on the right leads down a beige carpeted staircase to a large finished basement where Jimmy and I conducted our sessions. The basement houses additional beige living room furniture, a pool table, an electric fireplace, a television, a

computer desk with a computer, and directly at the bottom of the stairs, a white chessboard table with four white chairs and a modern standing lamp.

The Sutton/Johnson Family Dynamics

Jimmy's grandparents, Debbie and Richie Sutton, have had primary responsibility for Jimmy and his two half-brothers, Justin, who is in eighth grade, and Peyton, who is in Kindergarten, for at least four years. Everyone in the Sutton family is perceivably white, except for Jimmy, who might be biracial. I never asked him or Debbie about his father because his father did not seem to be in the picture, and it seemed to be a sensitive issue. Therefore, in favor of doing no harm, I did not inquire.

Debbie quit work several years ago to take care of the boys and her elderly mother and Richie is a Team Leader at a factory that makes car parts. A month before the study began, Jimmy's mother, Amber, returned to the Sutton home after four years of incarceration. Jimmy now shares his bedroom with her until she can get her own place. It is my understanding that when she leaves, the boys will be staying with Debbie and Richie. However, Debbie explained that Amber has not been saving the money to do so. There has never been mention of Jimmy's father by Jimmy or any members of the household.

Debbie Sutton

Debbie Sutton is friendly and boisterous woman who smiles a lot but always has an air of business about her. She likes to keep a clean home and is often apologizing for invisible messes. She is usually cooking, cleaning, chasing Peyton around, or having a cigarette on the front porch in jeans and a bright t-shirt. She and Richie have a playful relationship and can often be caught teasing each other.

Debbie wants her grandchildren to succeed in school and seeks out ways to protect and help them from unnecessary emotional upheaval. Specifically, she has been trying to contact the principal of North Mabontown High School so Justin can attend ninth grade there even though he is out of zone. He currently attends an out of zone feeder middle school. She explains that children with ADHD, like Justin, “don’t do well with change” (Debbie, Transcript 1). She is willing to do whatever it takes to make sure her grandchildren are taken care of and she stays cognizant of their grades and educational progress.

Debbie’s father was not a reader or writer and neither was Debbie’s brother. However, her mother loved to read and write and actually won an award in high school for an essay she wrote. Debbie still has that article fastened into a photo book sleeve and allowed me to view it. She said her mother constantly had the Bible in her hand and was always engaging in crossword puzzles in her later years to keep her mind sharp.

In her own educational history, Debbie experienced many “strict” teachers that she tried to stay clear of and a lot of homework (Debbie, Transcript 1). She considered herself an “average student [who] was not all A’s but wasn’t failing either” (Debbie, Transcript 1). Debbie does not remember much about learning to read, but she does remember learning with the Scott Foresman *Dick and Jane* readers when she was in elementary school. She found them funny because of their repetitiveness and sing-songy nature.

Highland Elementary School

Jimmy and Julia both attend Highland Elementary School and share the same teachers though they do not attend class together because of grouping. The state online

school information portal states that Highland serves around 550 K-5 students, is 60% white, roughly 30% Hispanic, and 10% percent Black. The school is comprised of all female teachers, administration, and support staff. 86% of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunches.

When walking through the halls of Highland Elementary, one sees colorful floor tiles lining the path and students' drawings systematically covering the walls. Many bulletins appear to signal student achievement. For example, a gigantic pink frosted cupcake with sporadic candles hangs on the wall leading to the fifth grade hall. Julia explained that students who meet 85% on their performance get a candle, and after that they get to add flames. Teachers at Highland Elementary School seem to have a lot of classroom decorating freedom, and they take great care in doing so. Mrs. Holloway's room, the 5th grade reading and spelling teacher, has soft yellow painted walls and colorful posters and bulletins all around her room. Her white boards display information like "the essential question" in happy-colored dry erase marker. She also has a SMART Board next at the front of the room and a computer on her desk. The children's desks are arranged in squares of four where students face each other. The room has an inviting and warm ambience. Mrs. Holloway's room is characteristic of most rooms at Highland, and overall, the school environment is clean and welcoming.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide rich descriptions of the study's participants and the environments where data was created. I began this chapter by providing background information about Mabontown, a relatively small suburban where the research took place. Then, I described the Boyd and Sutton families, their home

environments, and family dynamics. Finally, I concluded this chapter by describing Highland Elementary School.

CHAPTER 5

Findings

Chapter Overview

The sections that follow in this chapter discuss the findings of the study. They are organized into two major themes that address these research questions:

- a. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy practices at home?
- b. How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive and engage in school to home communication?

By answering these two questions, I can answer the major research question:

- 1) How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy at home and perceive and engage in interaction with a school in the era of accountability?

Organization of Chapter

This chapter is organized into two main sections that address each of the two research questions respectively. Each section begins with a table outlining the major findings related to the research question. The first section details each type of literacy in which the Suttons and Boyds engaged and compares these findings with previous family literacy research (e.g. Rogers, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenchein, 1995; Taylor & Doresy-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Heath, 1983). The second section addresses the types of school to family communication experienced by the Boyd and Sutton families, the families' perceptions of and experiences with school initiated communication quality, how that communication influenced the lives of the families and identities of the adolescents, and finally how the accountability era was present in this

communication and interaction. Here, connections are made primarily with Rogers (2003) and Purcell-Gates (1995), as those studies began to address issues of school to home interaction.

SAR Family Literacy Practices

Similar to the findings of Taylor (1983), Baker, Serpell, and Sonnnechein (1995), Purcell-Gates (1995), Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), and Rogers (2003), the Boyd and Sutton homes engaged in literate activities for an array of reasons and purposes. Table 5.1 illustrates the types of literacy in which the families engaged and provides a description that defines what each type of literacy engagement entailed. The topic codes and sub categories are also included to provide a roadmap for the analytical process that led me to the major category findings. Both guardians regularly engaged in literacy for daily life functioning (what Taylor refers to as authentic experiences), for obtaining information, for entertainment, and for helping their grandchildren with schoolwork, though sometimes in markedly different ways.

Daily Life Functioning

Both the Boyd and Sutton families regularly engaged in literacy in their homes for the purpose of functioning in daily life. This was most evident in the way they recorded and remembered appointments and events and the way they took care of financial obligations. Like many families from previous research on family literacy (e.g Taylor, 1983, Purcell-Gates, 1995, Rogers, 2003), both families regularly used literacy in order to navigate their everyday worlds.

TABLE 5.1

Family Category Table: Family Literacy Practices

Major Category	Description	Sub Category	Topic Codes
Daily Life Functioning	Family literacy engagement that happens in order to function in daily life	Remembering appointments and events	Calendars/Refrigerator display
		Automotive Related Reading	Road signs/Car manuals
		Financial Purposes	Check writing/Bill reading
Information	Family literacy engagement that happens in order to acquire information		Newspaper/Religious text/Online articles
Entertainment	Family literacy engagement that happens for entertainment purposes		Religious texts/Online articles/Video games/No books or magazines
School at Home	Family literacy engagement that occurs for school purposes		Writing in planners/Writing notes/Helping with homework

*Research Question: How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy practices at home?

Remembering appointments and events. Like that of the Treaders and Jenny from Purcell-Gates' (1995) study, the Sutton and Boyd families used calendars to remember important appointments and dates. Jackie and Debbie both spoke of writing on and reading their calendars in order to keep track of important dates, especially doctor's appointments and school events.

Debbie: I've started writing stuff down, like on the calendar. Doctor's appointments and stuff.

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: (whispers) But that's cause I'm gettin' old! (laughs)
(Debbie, Interview 1)

Here, Debbie explained that her calendar was becoming more and more important to use as her ability to remember events without writing them down was waning. It was a tool that helped her function in daily life, so I initially topic coded her statement as “calendar” and then connected this use of the calendar as a literacy tool that helped her maintain her daily life. Without it, she would not be able to remember important appointments. Recording dates in her calendar was a form of literacy engagement that was visible in the home and observed by the children.

In addition to her calendar, Debbie also had a collage of school documents displayed on her refrigerator. She arranged these documents by most recent date and regularly read them in order to keep track of her responsibilities to the school (i.e. sending money to the school for school pictures or field trips, remembering Open Houses, etc.). I topic coded this literate activity as “refrigerator display” and later determined that this activity was used to “remember appointments and events,” like her calendar, and that finding ways to remember important events and appointments was a way of using literacy to function in daily life.

Jackie also regularly used a calendar, which she displayed on a wall next to the dining table. Several times over the course of the study, when regular appointments had to be altered or made up, Jackie retrieved her calendar and asked me to record which days I intended on coming. While writing on the calendar, I noted many full words carefully written out to denote appointments. I say carefully because the calendar was clean and generally free of mark outs or scribbles. Additionally, Julia referenced the calendar when I spoke to her about reading. It was located nearby and within sight during the interview, and she brought it up to tell me about reading.

Sarah: Um what else can you tell me about reading and writing?

Julia: Reading, you have to find something to read. And, you read it. Like the calendar, it says January; you read it. (Julia, Interview 1)

In this excerpt, Julia used the calendar as an example of something one reads. This showed she was fully aware of the calendar as a tool for reading; therefore, I also coded it as “calendar” and added it to “daily life functioning.” It was a form of literacy regularly used and displayed in plain sight in the home for daily life functioning and, like the Suttons, had a prominent place in the literacy of the Boyd family.

Automotive related reading. Automotive reading was another form of Boyd Family literacy use described by Julia. When asked if Julia’s brother, Declan, read, Julia responded that he probably read road signs because he drives. I coded with the topic code “road sign” and later also coded “car manual” when Julia explained that Declan had to read those in order to learn how to drive. These codes later became “automotive reading,” which fit into the “reading for daily life functioning” category. Reading for automotive purposes was a form of literacy for daily life functioning because it was something most people relied on in the twenty-first century in order to survive. As people moved farther away from inner city locations, driving a vehicle became more important to obtaining life’s necessities. Automotive related reading was not a form of family literacy use discussed by previous family literacy research (e.g. Rogers, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenchein, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Heath, 1983; Chall & Snow, 1982), so it adds to the list of family literacy activities.

It was interesting that Julia attributed this type of literacy only to Declan, considering the fact that Jackie drove and was Julia’s primary chauffeur. However, Julia did not attribute such reading practices to Jackie, she attributed them to her brother and

her male cousins. Regardless, the fact that Julia mentioned this type of reading further demonstrated her broad conceptualization of reading. Jimmy never mentioned automotive reading as a form of his family's literacy uses, which was also interesting because of his strong admiration for cars. His conceptualization of reading did not seem to be as broad as Julia's because he named far fewer examples of literacy.

Financial purposes. Both Jackie and Debbie wrote for financial reasons in order to function in daily life and Jackie specifically mentioned reading bills as a literate activity she participated in for financial purposes. I topic coded both "check writing" and "bill reading" as literate activities in which the adults participated and then funneled these into the sub-category "financial purposes" because both were used in order to accomplish financial tasks. This fit into the major category "daily life functioning" because reading and writing for financial purposes were tasks that people heading a household had to do in order to maintain the home. Neglecting to read bills and pay them by writing and sending checks would eventually cost a family their financial and physical well being (e.g. home repossession, water and heat shut off).

Check writing helped Jackie and Debbie manage their finances, and this was a writing activity Julia noticed her grandmother carry out.

Sarah: What does your grandma have to write?

Julia: Checks.

Jackie: (laughs)

Sarah: That is true, she does have to write on checks and...

Jackie: Yeah.

Sarah: That's a good example.

Jackie: Them bills.

Julia: Yeah, she reads bills. (Julia, Interview 1)

Here, Julia described check writing as a form of writing in which Jackie participated, in fact, it was the first thing she thought of when asked what kind of writing

her grandmother did. After Julia mentioned check writing, Jackie chimed in and further explained that she also must read bills, and in turn Julia confirmed that Jackie read bills as well.

Debbie also wrote checks in order to function in everyday life. Writing was an activity she had to do in order to carry out her financial responsibilities.

Sarah: Um what about any kind of writing that you do?

Debbie: I don't.

Sarah: At all?

Debbie: No.

Sarah: You never pick up a pen at all?

Sarah & Debbie: (laugh)

Debbie: The only time I pick up a pen in to sign the boy's homework stuff. That I have to sign their planners. Uh. Write a check, you know.

Sarah: Yeah.

Debbie: Just stuff like that. (Debbie, Interview 1)

Here, when asked about her daily writing activities, at first Debbie did not believe she ever wrote, so I reframed my words to ask if she ever simply picked up a pen. This helped Debbie to widen her conceptualization of writing, and she was then able to tell me about the everyday activities that required she write, including writing checks.

Both Julia and Debbie mentioned writing checks as forms of writing the guardians undertook. In addition, Jackie added that she read for financial purposes when she read bills. Reading and writing occurred specifically in order to maintain financial functioning in daily life for both Debbie and Jackie.

Information

Reading for informational purposes was the second major category of family literacy in which the Boyd and Sutton families engaged. This category shared some overlap with reading for entertainment, but I felt it necessary to include it as its own major category because it was clear that the families read with the intent of acquiring

specific information. Jackie, Debbie, and Richie all read in front of their grandchildren to with the purpose of acquiring information. This was primarily achieved through the newspaper, a text both adolescents observed their grandparents read daily. In addition, Jackie read religious texts and Debbie and Richie read online articles with their phones with the purpose of obtaining information. I topic coded each of the reading activities by the genre of text the read and combined them to create the major code of literacy engagement for “Information” purposes. I did not develop subcategories for these literacy practices because the common denominator was the informational purpose for reading. However, some of these topic codes were part of multiple major categories because they were read for informational as well as entertainment purposes in some instances.

Newspaper. The newspaper was an informational medium read often in both the Boyd and Sutton households. I regularly observed Jackie sitting on the living room couch reading the newspaper as Julia and I carried out our sessions; this was nearly a daily event.

I also noticed throughout my session with Julia that Jackie sat on the couch reading a newspaper with Gibbs sprawled out next to her (Thick Description, Entry 33).

I noticed and recorded these events in my thick descriptions because Jackie consistently modeled reading as a worthwhile endeavor, and Julia was regularly present to see this. I found this to be an important activity because parental modeling, as most heavily noted by Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein’s (1995) study, was one of the most effective ways of teaching literacy to family members. Jackie may not have read to Julia, but by reading the newspaper herself, she was demonstrating that reading was an important activity for acquiring information, and that the newspaper was a tool for accessing such information.

Sometimes Jackie got up from the couch to show me something interesting she read and brought it over to me to talk about it while Julia and I were working. She demonstrated how the newspaper was not only a tool for personal reading and learning, but as a tool for sparking conversation and informing others.

Debbie and Richie also read for informational purposes and read the newspaper regularly. Jimmy mentioned this in his first interview and Debbie also named it as a text she read often.

Sarah: Um. Tell me about some family members who read.

Jimmy: The newspaper.

Sarah: The newspaper, and who reads that?

Jimmy: My Papaw and my Mamaw.

Sarah: How often do they read it?

Jimmy: My Papaw reads it everyday.

Sarah: Everyday?

Jimmy: Everyday. (Jimmy, Interview 1)

Jimmy explained that his papaw read the newspaper everyday and later explained that he sometimes shared this information with Jimmy if he thought Jimmy would like it. This is significant because Jimmy saw his grandparents read for informational purposes daily and sometimes learned new information from the newspaper with his grandparents. Reading the newspaper was a consistent form of family literacy Jimmy noticed his family members participating in regularly, they, like Jackie, were modeling good reading behaviors for Jimmy.

Religious texts. In addition to reading the newspaper, Jackie regularly read the Bible and other religious texts, such as *Watchtower*, a Jehovah's Witness magazine, as informational texts for informational purposes. Jackie explained that every Tuesday, a Jehovah's Witness came to the Boyd home to study the Bible. Julia was usually around when this happened and, though she did not participate, she observed the literacy

interactions between the adults. Julia noted these events, and mentioned them in her initial interview.

Julia: But, the woman, she was sittin' right there and she asked my grandma to read somethin' out of the Bible. And, so she read some. (Julia, Interview 1)

Here, Julia demonstrated that she had observed Jackie reading with the Jehovah's Witness woman. This was the first example that came to her mind when asked about family members who read, and the Bible readings were a regular oral event. Reading was an activity Jackie did often and mentioned that she enjoyed, and Julia was aware of these activities. Again, reading religious texts for informational purposes was an indirect way of teaching Julia the importance of reading and these adult to adult reading interactions demonstrated how reading for information could be a joint social activity as well as an individual endeavor.

Jackie explained that she likes reading and specifically enjoys reading *The Watchtower* magazine.

Sarah: Um, what kind of literate, like reading and writing, activities do you participate in now?

Jackie: Well now I do like to read, I read, you know, these books. Um, like *Watchtower*, you know. (Jackie, Interview 1)

This is significant because guardians often transmit their reading values and habits to their families (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). I often observed Jackie reading *The Watchtower* on the couch in the living room with Gibbs. *The Watchtower* and the Bible were texts readily available on the coffee table and Jackie usually had one of these or, as explained earlier, the newspaper in her hand when I came to visit. Julia witnessed her grandmother reading on a daily basis and was

surrounded by a print rich environment, so she had many opportunities to observe Jackie's literacy values and behaviors.

Online articles. Unlike Jackie, Debbie did not mention any current reading of religious texts, but Debbie did read online articles, for information. This was something Jackie did not do because she did not have a computer or a smart phone.

Debbie discussed reading online articles that sparked her interest, specifically articles that informed her of unusual events happening in the world.

Sarah: So what literate activities do you participate in now as an adult?

Debbie: Um. I really don't other than reading the newspaper. Uh, readin' articles online.

Sarah: That's a literate activity! (laugh)

First Debbie responded that she did not participate in literate activities, but then she explained that she did read the newspaper and online articles. Debbie's initial conceptualization of reading did not include reading the newspaper and online articles, but she decided to add those as possible reading events. Reading articles on her phone for informational purposes was something she and Richie did often enough to be noticed by Jimmy.

Sarah: Okay, do they read anything else?

Jimmy: Not except on their phones when they're lookin' up somethin'. (Jimmy, Interview 1)

Jimmy described how Debbie and Richie used their phones to look up and read information. Online article reading was a part of Sutton family literacy, and Debbie and Richie modeled using their phones as a means to "look up" information. I topic coded "online articles" and added it to the "informational" purposes category for this reason. People tend to "look up" information for informational purposes rather than only for

enjoyment, so “online articles” became a part of both reading for information and for entertainment.

Furthermore, Debbie read online informational texts to further her understanding of topics she wanted or needed to understand better. This became evident when Debbie researched Dyslexia online and read articles after it came to the surface that Jimmy often flipped letters when he wrote and seemed to be having trouble processing words.

Debbie said that she had answered some questions for an online behavior indicator test and that Jimmy had a moderate likelihood of having dyslexia according to the test. The test asked questions about his sleeping patterns, his moods, etc. (Thick Description, Entry 16)

In this thick description, I noted an event where Debbie used the information gleaned from reading and partaking in a “test” to make a decision about the likelihood of Jimmy having dyslexia. Her phone was a tool for accessing informational reading.

Entertainment

The third major category for literacy practices in which the two participant families engaged was for “entertainment.” Both families engaged in literacy for entertainment, from reading interesting articles online, to reading while playing video games. However, notably not much book reading occurred at home for entertainment purposes unless it was a required school assignment.

Online articles. Debbie and Jimmy both spoke of her and Richie’s fondness of reading intriguing articles online. This seemed to be both for information and personal enjoyment. Reading about strange happenings and taking tests for fun was a form of

literate entertainment, so I added the topic code “online articles” to the major category reading for “entertainment.”

Debbie: Yeah. And, I love to read about unusual stuff. You know thing, that it’s no-it’s real, but you know, not like ghosts or anything yeah.

Sarah: Right

Debbie: You know, but unusual stuff happenin’. In different places around the world. And, me and my husband took a test last night, and, it says just because you live in a certain place doesn’t mean that you were meant to live there.

In this excerpt, Debbie further added that she “loves” to read about “unusual stuff.” She spoke of these texts quite strongly using the word “love” to talk about reading, so Debbie was also modeling reading for enjoyment in her home though she did not initially realize it. Though the Suttons usually did not read novels or other books for fun, they did read interesting online articles and tests for personal enjoyment, and Jimmy observed this style of literacy engagement of his grandparents as evidenced by his interview response included above. .

Video games. Julia discussed reading in which her older brother engaged for entertainment. She explained that Declan often reads usernames while playing video games.

Sarah: What about your brother? Does he read?

Julia: Yeah

Sarah: What does he read?

Julia: Whenever he plays a game. Like someone pops up, their username, ss ss like someone’s online cuz like you cannot pronounce it cuz they’re like G F H R

Sarah: Uhuh

Julia: eight, seven, six and like is online.

Sarah: So he is reading things online?

Julia: Yeah

I topic coded “video games” and later added this code to the category “entertainment”

because this type of reading was necessary in order to participate in the games. If Declan

had not been able to read the video game text, he would not be able to easily participate in this activity that he enjoyed.

Similarly to her mention of the road signs, Julia demonstrated a wide conceptualization of reading and noted the things that her brother did read even if she never saw him reading books or magazines. Again, reading video games was a form of reading not discussed by Jimmy, though I had observed him briefly participating in video games and had often heard how much he enjoyed them.

Furthermore, reading of video games was not a mode of family literacy discussed by many of the previous studies of family literacy, possibly because this level of technology had not made its way into those homes at the time of data collection.

Novels and other books. Similarly to the Roadville and Trackton families described by Heath (1983), neither the Boyds nor the Suttons engaged in joint family story reading for entertainment with the children. Neither guardian spoke about any current reading of novels or stories on their own, nor did they speak of reading stories to their family members, so I coded the absence of reading novels and other books as “no books or magazines.” This was later added to “entertainment” because this was a form of reading for entertainment in which the families did not participate. All reading they currently participated in for enjoyment was informational text.

Jackie did mention previously having enjoyed reading novels as an adult and loving fairy tales in her childhood, but she had not read a novel in a long time, nor did she read fairy tales or novels with or to Julia. Julia did not read books at home for enjoyment, she did like reading some books at school, but she did not read at home until I became her literacy tutor and even then it was considered school related reading. She did

it because she had to. Once, late into the study, her friend Jade (pseudonym) was over and they had a joke book, so Julia read me some jokes, but this was the only time I ever witnessed Julia reading a book of any sort on her own accord.

Unlike Jackie, Debbie never mentioned enjoying reading books at any point in her life. Her mother enjoyed reading and writing, but Debbie explained that she never cared for writing or reading long texts. She preferred to read the newspaper and online articles. Debbie also did not mention reading stories to the boys. When stories were read in the Sutton home, they were assigned by the school and read by the boys. The Sutton household included Jimmy's youngest brother, Peyton, a Kindergarten child, yet Debbie and Jimmy did not mention reading to or with him. Debbie did, however, mention that in the past, Justin and Jimmy had to read books to her as a school assignment, but she did not speak of reading to or with Jimmy as a child.

Debbie: We signed 'em up for that um (service) from (a foundation).

Sarah: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Debbie: But, they got a book a month. We signed 'em up for that so when Justin, we signed him up, he's the oldest.

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: When he got through the books, we pushed them down to Jimmy, and Jimmy was getting' his own at that time. He was getting' extra.

Sarah: That's nice!

Debbie: And we passed 'em down to the little one. And um couple-of a couple of years ago, each one of the kids had to read a book a week. It was part of their program at school. (Debbie, Interview 1)

Here, Debbie informed me that she received books for free from a local foundation, however, she never mentioned reading those books to or with the boys. Her language suggested that the boys read the books on their own. Jimmy also did not recollect ever having been read to as a child by family members. He remembered being read to a lot at school but not at home.

Sarah: Okay, um, do you remember um like being read to as a young kid?
 Jimmy: Mmm. Yeah, in the class we read a lot.
 Sarah: What about before class? Like when like at home?
 Jimmy: I don't remember.
 Sarah: You don't remember? Does your grandmother er, I mean, your mamaw ever read to you now?
 Jimmy: (shakes head no)
 Sarah: No? Not really?
 Jimmy: No. (Jimmy, Interview 1)

It is significant that Jimmy does not remember being read to by his family members because it characterizes the family literacy engagement of the Suttons. Story reading did not seem to be a literacy event that occurred often, if at all, in the Sutton home. This was very similar to the lower income families described by Heath (1983), Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), and Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein (1995) whose participants did not read stories to their children, though they did read for a variety of purposes in front of their children. The homes had plenty of rich literacy occurrences, but they were simply different from those of middle-income families.

Likewise, Julia also did not remember being read to as a child by family members. She remembered being read to at school and enjoying it, but could not recall her parents, who had custody of her when she was younger, ever having read to her.

Sarah: Okay. Do you remember being read to before school?
 Julia: Cuz we. Well, yeah but see like no I don't remember reading before school.
 Sarah: You don't remember reading at all? Do you remember your parents reading to you?
 Julia: Mmm mm (no)
 Sarah: Before you went to school? No? Okay. So your first real memory in- was in the first grade when you were reading that Crazy Caterpillar book?
 Julia: Well, um, my teacher I forgot what book, she like read a book to us after we went to lunch. (Julia, Interview 1)

In this exchange, Julia could not recollect being read to by family members, but she did remember being read to by her teachers at school and enjoyed it. However, like the

Suttons, story reading was not a method of family literacy engagement at the Boyd home. Jackie also did not speak of reading to or with Julia as a child, nor did Julia recollect ever having been read to by any family member, and Jackie had been heavily involved in raising her throughout the entirety of her life though she did not obtain custody until 2010.

School at Home

As mentioned above, little book reading occurred at home by children or adults for any purpose. However, a significant amount of literacy engagement by both the adolescents and the adults occurred because of homework. Thus, the fourth major category of family literacy involved “school at home.”

Like the Treaders from Rogers’ (2003) study and the families from Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein’s (1995) and Taylor’s (1983) studies, school brought literacy into the Boyd and Sutton homes in many ways. Reading paperwork, newsletters, planners, and other school distributed information regularly happened at both the Sutton and Boyd homes. Each adolescent had to have her or his planner checked and signed each night, and the school sent home written communication, such as notes and newsletters that the guardians were to read. This type of literacy engagement was frequent in both homes and occurred in direct response to school communication. I topic coded “planner,” “notes,” and “handouts” from the school because they were discussed by both guardians and the adolescents. These topic codes were later grouped into the major category “school at home” because they were all evidence of literacy events that took place in response to and for the purpose of school. In addition, the guardians were involved in helping Jimmy and Julia with their homework, though this is somewhat of a burden,

especially for Jackie because she felt so inept at helping Julia with her schoolwork. The homework help was a consistent family literacy event at the Boyd and Sutton homes, so these events were topic coded as “help with homework.” Because the family effort to complete homework was a school-mandated task, it was again evidence of “school at home” and became a part of the larger category. School initiated literacy made up a significant amount of the literacy events that occurred at home.

Writing notes and in planners. When asked about family members who wrote, at first, similarly to Debbie, Jimmy explained that his family did not write. He initially conceptualized writing as something more extended, like a letter or a paper, rather than simply putting pen to paper to communicate. However, once his conceptualization of writing was broadened by a follow up question, he explained that Debbie had to write in his planner each night.

Sarah: Um. Tell me about family members who write and what they write.

Jimmy: Um. I don't think anybody writes.

Sarah: Never?

Jimmy: Like out of the blue they don't.

Sarah: Well can you think of anytime that your Mamaw picks up a pen? What does she pick it up for?

Jimmy: To sign my planner.

Sarah: Okay, she signs your planner. What else does she pick it up for?

Jimmy: When she's got to write a note when uh we missed outta school when we're sick. (Interview 1)

Here, he explained that Debbie wrote in his planner each night and added that she also had to write a note to the school when he and his brothers were absent. His family did not write “out of the blue;” they wrote for a purpose, usually for brief communication. In the Sutton home, Debbie rarely wrote, but when she did, she wrote to convey quick messages that usually dealt with correspondence to the school. This was the type of writing Jimmy was familiar observing Debbie engage.

Comparably, Jackie often wrote because of needed correspondence with Highland Elementary. On more than one occasion, Jackie showed me Julia's planner, and I observed her signing it. She showed me how Julia must write her spelling words in a box at the edge of her planner each week and explained how she must record everything that happened that day, including her homework assignments, so Jackie could see what was due. Jackie read the planner every night and wrote her signature to communicate to the school that she had read Julia's planner. This was a school-mandated activity that was required of guardians at Highland Elementary School, and it was not one that Jackie or Debbie would have participated in outside of the school's requests. The planners and notes to the school brought specific kinds of literacy events into the family literacy practices.

Helping with homework. Both Debbie and Jackie talked about their experiences helping children with homework and how chaotic or difficult that could be for them. Homework, like the planners and notes, also brought schooled literacy events into the home, much of which Debbie and Jackie said they were not equipped to handle because school had changed much since they or their children were enrolled. Homework was a regular home event, like that of the Treaders, except Debbie and Jackie did not require the adolescents to read for extended periods of time if they did not have homework. If Julia and Jimmy did not have homework, they could relax as they pleased. They did not create a schooled literacy space the way June did with her mini-library, instead, schooled literacy at home occurred only if it was required by the school.

Jackie explained that homework was hard on her because it had been years since she was in school and the curriculum had increased in difficulty.

Jackie: Well I know at Fairhills, the teachers didn't—they send home a lot of homework. In ever' class. And uh, that's hard on me. Because it's been years. I've not been in, uh, I graduated high school in 62! And what they're having in the fourth and fifth grade, I didn't have it 'til I was on higher up in school. And some of it, I didn't have at all! (Jackie, Interview 2)

In this excerpt, Jackie conveyed that at Fairhills, Julia's previous elementary school, there was a lot of homework and it made it difficult on her. This required schooled literacy at home became a part of family literacy and was a burden to Jackie because she did not have the skills to assist Julia. Jackie further explained that in the past she coped by relying on Declan, Julia's older brother, to help with what she could not.

Jackie: Um, because she always had a lot of homework. And, a lot of it, if it hadn't been for Declan, he would, you know, uhh from uh he's sixteen now and she's nine (Julia is actually ten). So, he could always help her better than I could...so if it hadn't been for him, so what I couldn't help her with, I'd always holler for him. He'd come help her. (Jackie, Interview 1)

Jackie's comments show how schooled literacy shaped entire family literacy events at the Boyd home because Declan had to assist where Jackie could not. Now that Declan no longer lived with her, Jackie did her best to help Julia when Julia needed it, but she found it difficult nonetheless.

Whereas Julia and Declan were six years apart and Declan was able to help Julia with her homework, Jimmy and Justin were only three years apart in age. Thus, Justin was less of a resource in this way. Instead, Debbie explained that she and Richie worked together to help the boys with homework. Homework help in the Sutton home was a major undertaking with three boys in the home.

Debbie: But yeah, we used to have to spread out the kids, put one in each room. And, my husband would say okay I'm taking this one with homework tonight and I'd go with the other one with the homework and we'd run into the middle with the little one, you know?

Sarah: Yeah (laughs)

Debbie: Get him a game or somethin' – get him busy watchin' cartoons or somethin'. You know, but that's the way we had to do it when they were smaller.

Sarah: Uhuh

Debbie: Because they both had homework.

Debbie explained that she and Richie spent a lot of energy and time working with the boys on their schoolwork. Again, schooled literacy shaped the way the families engaged in literacy at home. However, the older the boys got, the less apt they believed she was at assisting.

Debbie: I'm old school. You know, and a lot of that doesn't work anymore. And, I've seen that with the fourteen-year-old. It's like—

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: Justin will get really flustered with what he's doin' cuz if he didn't know how I say well let me look at it; let me see. He said, 'No way! You don't know how!' You know, and he don't mean it to be mean. It's like 'Okay, you didn't have this in school. So, you know, don't sit here and tell me you can help me!' (Debbie, Interview 1)

Overtime, she explained that the family schoolwork events changed, as she could no longer assist the boys the way she used to, but she and Richie still helped with homework when they could.

Debbie and Jackie both explained that they were often involved with homework, though less than in the past. The regular presence of homework is an example of how their family literacy was impacted by schooled literacy. Besides literacy practices for everyday life, take-home assignments from school made up most of the literacy events that occurred at home.

A Final Comment on SAR Literacy Practices at Home

Before this study, Jimmy and Julia's literacy practices at home were mostly bound to homework. Jimmy explained that he would never pick up a book or a pen just for entertainment. And, Julia explained that reading and writing could be fun at school,

but it was not fun at home and it was not something that she did for enjoyment or entertainment. The adolescents seemed to mainly observe others engage in literate activities that they would sometimes become a part of, for instance, with Richie sharing newspaper content with Jimmy that he thought Jimmy would enjoy. Otherwise, the family literacy events of the SARs revolved mainly around schooled literacy. Neither Jimmy nor Julia believed they were good readers or had any intrinsic motivation to read, thus, they only read when their schoolwork demanded it.

Conceptualizations of Literacy and Reader Identities

Though the following findings were not labeled as major categories answering what types of family literacy engagement happened in the participant homes, they were important to understanding factors that may have influenced the way adults and adolescents engaged in literacy and to better understanding the participants themselves.

Adult Conceptualizations of Reading and Reader Identities

Because literacy values and behaviors are often passed down from guardians to offspring (Auerback, 1995), I thought it important to consider guardian conceptualizations of reading and reader identity in order to fully analyze family literacy engagement in the Boyd and Sutton homes. I coded instances where Debbie or Jackie described themselves as readers or writers or spoke of reading and writing in a way that I felt uncovered their conceptualizations with codes like “Debbie reader identity,” and “Jackie conceptualization of reading.” These codes were then categorized as “adult conceptualizations of reading and reader identities” in order to look at how the adults’ conceptualizations and reader identities played out in their family literacy.

Notably, my findings suggested that both Debbie and Jackie did not initially conceptualize their everyday reading and writing events as literacy events, and both constructed themselves as mostly non-readers and writers.

Sarah: Okay. Um, what memories do you have about reading as a child? If you can, if you have any at all.

Jackie: Well, I never have been one that likes to read a lot.

Sarah: Uhuh

Jackie: I was more of the one that wanted to be outside.

Jackie explained that as a child, she did not care for reading and preferred to be outside helping her parents. While Jackie did not enjoy reading much as a child, her identity shifted and she explained that today, she enjoys reading but still is not particularly good at it.

Jackie: I've not read in a while, Julia keeps me hoppin' now.

Sarah: (laughs)

Jackie: And, uh, but I'm still not a great reader.

Jackie conveyed that, though she enjoyed reading, she had not read in a while because Julia kept her busy. And, even though she likes reading, she still does not believe that she is good reader.

Though Jackie did not believe she was a great reader, she did regularly read for daily life, for information, and for entertainment. Almost each day I visited the Boyd home for tutoring, Jackie sat on the couch in the living room and read the newspaper and *The Watchtower*. When she was not reading on her own, she was usually listening to Julia and me pair read. On one occasion, she was so interested in the book, she actually expressed her disappointment that Julia and I stopped in the story where we did because she also wanted to know what happened. She said she might have to pick up the book herself, and this demonstrated a genuine interest in the books Julia was reading.

Furthermore, Jackie read the Bible at least weekly with the Jehovah's Witness visitor and in-so-doing practiced her oral reading skills in front of Julia. Though Jackie did not believe she was a good reader and had never liked reading as a child, she was a consistent role model for reading in the Boyd home because she enjoyed reading as an adult and valued literacy acquisition for Julia.

Debbie explained that as a child she was in the middle. She was not an avid reader or an excellent student but she was not a struggler either. Most recently, Debbie read for entertainment when she found something interesting, especially online articles or tests, but as explained earlier, Debbie never wrote unless it was to write a check, a note to the school, or to sign a planner. Her reading and writing activities revolved mostly around daily life and accessing information. The only times I witnessed Debbie reading, which is very well due to the fact Jimmy and I conducted our sessions in the basement, was when she read information about Dyslexia and when she showed me her refrigerator document method and explained what the documents were about. Debbie believed she was okay at reading and enjoyed reading specific types of texts, but she did not see herself as someone who read or wrote often. In addition, she had a relatively narrow conceptualization of literacy and did not initially include her daily life activities as literate events. Despite the fact that Debbie did not feel that she read or wrote much, Jimmy did witness her reading the newspaper and online articles on a regular basis, and he did see her write for daily life functioning and school at home purposes.

SAR Literacy Conceptualizations

Jimmy's conceptualizations of reading seemed to mirror those of Debbie. When I asked him what family members read, he spoke of newspaper reading and reading articles

online. When I asked Jimmy what family members wrote, he initially explained that he did not believe anyone in his family ever wrote. It was not until after I helped to expand his conceptualization that he spoke of Debbie writing checks and signing his planner. Before I expanded his conception, he seemed to believe “reading” meant reading books and “writing” meant writing extended pieces like letters or other documents.

On the other hand, Julia’s conceptualizations of reading seemed to be broader than Jackie’s; Julia noted reading and writing events that included every day tasks. While Jackie initially spoke of reading the newspaper and *The Watchtower*, Julia spoke of more extended forms of reading that included the calendar, video games, and road signs. While Jackie explained that she rarely wrote, Julia explained that Jackie wrote checks and signed her planner. She also explained that someone might write in order to give directions to put something together, like kitchen cabinets. She also explained that her aunt reads books for entertainment because she was ill and had to sit most of the day, and she discussed reading video games and road signs as forms of reading in which her older brother engaged. Those examples made it clear that her understanding of what constitutes reading was outside fundamental notions.

Interaction Between the School and Family of a SAR

This second section of findings focuses on the ways Highland Elementary School communicated information to the participant families, how the adult participants perceived the effectiveness and quality of this communication, how the communication influenced student scholastic identity, and how the accountability era was present in this communication. Table 5.2 illustrates the categories of findings related this theme,

Table 5.2*Family Category: School to Home Interaction*

Category	Description	Sub Category	Topic/Belief Codes
Coming to Know of Reading Struggles	Ways the guardians discovered their adolescents were struggling in reading		Study informed participants of students' reading struggles
Communication of Services		No Communication	Summer reading program/Pull-out reading services/
		Written Communication	After-school test preparation/Pull-out reading services
Communication of Academic Achievement	Ways the school communicated about a student's academic achievement	B Group/C Group Distinctions	Tracking=Group placement/Jimmy's potential demotion from B group to C group/Group placement communication
		Grade Communication	Grades/Planners/Progress reports/Report cards
		Testing Communication	Benchmark testing/State testing
		Face-to-Face Communication	Parent teacher conferences/Car lines
		Written Communication	Newsletter
		Electronic Communication	ParentPortal
Communication of Behavior	Ways school staff communicated a student's "good" or "bad" behavior	Written Communication	Yellow slips
		Other Communication	Phone calls
		Face-to-Face Communication	Parent teacher conferences
Communication of School Happenings	Ways the school communicated events happening at school	Written Communication	Newsletter/Handouts
		Face-to-Face Communication	Orientation open house/Open house/School signs
		Electronic Communication	School website
Influencing Student Identity	Ways school communication influences student identity		Tracking=Group placement/Jimmy's potential demotion from B group to C group/Group placement communication/Group construction
Guardian's of struggling readers' beliefs about school to home communication	Ways guardians of struggling readers felt about the effectiveness of communication from their school	Beliefs about Communicating Struggles	Jackie-beliefs about communication/Debbie-beliefs about communication/Poor academic achievement communication/Good communication
		Beliefs about Communicating Academic Achievement	Jackie-beliefs about communication/Debbie-beliefs about communication/Poor academic achievement communication/good communication
Guardian's approaches for School Interaction	Ways the guardian's interacted with the school		Debbie- approach to school interaction Jackie-approach to school interaction
Accountability in Interaction	Ways the accountability era was present in school to home interaction		Testing/Newsletter/Handouts/ Services/Website

*Research Question: How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive and engage in school to home communication?

describes each category, and shows how the codes supported and informed sub category and category construction in order to make my analytical process transparent.

Coming to Know of Reading Struggles

The first significant finding and category of this study had to do with the way the guardians were informed about their adolescent's reading struggles, or the lack there of. I coded "coming to know of reading struggles" for the instances where Debbie and Jackie discussed the point at which they found out their adolescent was a struggling reader. This was a holistic code that did not start with topic coding because the answers came from the direct interview question: "When did you remember realizing that ____ was struggling with reading." Debbie and Jackie explained that were never contacted by the school about their grandchildren's reading struggles and had no professional knowledge about their reading abilities before this study. They each came to know about Julia and Jimmy's struggles when the gatekeeper for this study contacted them, though Jackie had some of her own inclinations several years back when she was helping Julia with homework.

Sarah: Um. When did you realize or when do you remember realizing that Julia was struggling with reading?

Jackie: When I had to move in with them in 2010.

Sarah: Okay and how did this realization come?

Jackie: Trying to help her with her homework.

Sarah: Okay. So, when you were helping her and she was trying to read.

Jackie: Well and Charity tried to help her. Now, David never could help her.

Sarah: Right

Jackie: Mhm. But Charity, if you could catch her not high on pills, she would help her.

Sarah: Um but when you were helping her you were hearing the struggle?

Jackie: Yeah, because I was struggling right along with her. (Jackie, Interview 1)

Here, Jackie explained that she initially believed Julia might have been struggling with reading because she heard Julia stumbling when she helped her with her homework.

However, the school never contacted Jackie by phone to discuss Julia's reading difficulties, so she trusted that they were helping Julia. Highland sent her a document with Julia's reading assessment results and explained that she was receiving Tier II services (See Figure 5.1). However, Jackie was not sure exactly what those entailed and she did not really understand the assessment results. The correspondence explained that Jackie could call if she needed clarification, but it was not Jackie's interactional style to contact the school, as will be discussed in further detail in an upcoming section. Therefore, Jackie never called the school and remained uneducated about Julia's reading struggles. Two months into the study, Jackie received notification that Julia was being moved out of those services because of her reading improvements (See Figure 5.2). Again, the communication was paper communication only.

This letter is to notify you of the progress your child has made in reading. Your child is currently receiving services in Tier II. Listed below you will find the scores from diagnostic testing, DIBELS benchmarks, and other assessments. You will also find a graph, which will give you a visual idea of your child's progress.

If you have any questions, or would like to schedule a conference with your child's teacher, please call _____ to schedule one.

See Attached

Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____
Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____
Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____
Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____
Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____
Date: _____	Assessment: _____	Score: _____

Figure 5.1. Julia's Initial Reading Tier Information Letter

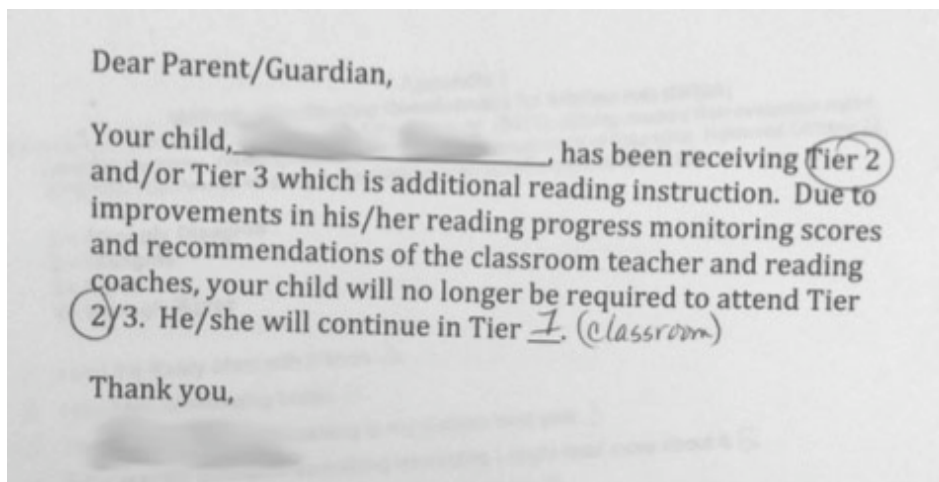


Figure 5.2. *Julia's Final Reading Tier Information Letter*

Before Debbie was contacted for this study, she had absolutely no inclination that Jimmy was a struggling reader let alone two grade levels behind. She explained that when he was reading to her for homework in third grade, she noticed that he stumbled and skipped words, but she did not believe it was anything unusual.

Sarah: That makes sense. So, he, when he was reading to you, you weren't noticing any issues at that point?

Debbie: Uh no. He was a little bit slow. You know, he was tryin' to sound out the words and stuff.

Sarah: But, he was in the third grade.

Debbie: Yeah

Here, Debbie conveyed that she had no idea Jimmy was struggling like he was. As a grandmother, she could hear him stumble, but she did not have the professional knowledge to realize the extent of his struggles. To her, the struggle did not strike her as unusual. She believed because he was in third grade, the slow reading was normal. In the following year, the oral reading homework ceased after third grade and Debbie had not heard Jimmy read much since then. She was shocked to find out that Jimmy was reading

at a second grade level in silent reading and a third grade level in oral reading and comprehension because the school never communicated this with her. She did not know how much he was struggling until I shared his QRI results with her. A week after I shared those results with her, she explained that she mentioned Jimmy's QRI results to the principal in the car line, while waiting to pick up Jimmy, and the principal seemed baffled. I followed up about this event in her first interview. Debbie described the situation:

Sarah: Well, you didn't apparently know about the literacy struggles. Can you tell me a little bit more about how that came about?

Debbie: How I found out?

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: You (laughs)

In this excerpt, Debbie explained that she had no idea Jimmy was struggling with reading until she was contacted to participate in the study. However, she did notice his grades were beginning to fall.

Sarah: Okay

Debbie: Uh, honestly I I've seen little things like on his grade card. Or on his, um, on one of his papers or somethin' it would say 'Jimmy could do better.'

Sarah: Mhm

Debbie: Uh, this last grade card was: 'I'm worried about Jimmy's grades.' Which is the first I've ever heard of that. Um. His, uh, principal stoppin' me that one day and sayin' that she feels he could do better. His grades were not where they needed to be.

Here, Debbie conveyed that she noted Jimmy's grades slipping on his grade cards, yet his teachers attributed this to their belief that he was not trying hard enough in school.

Sarah: So, when you had the conversation that you were tellin' me about-where you were talkin' about what like-him bein' on the, you know, what I had shared with you about the second slash third grade level with some things. Did that interaction occur in the car when you were drivin' through?

Debbie: Yeah

Sarah: Okay. I was wondering if you called or what happened.

Debbie: No no. She was tellin' me that he needed to try harder. I said, 'uh, did you realize that some of his reading skills is on the second grade and he's in fifth grade?' And, she's like kind of blank, of like she wanted to say 'uhhhhhh.' Uh, she say 'well he just needs to work a bit harder. He can do it, and I know he can do it' kinda deal. (Debbie, Interview 1)

In this excerpt, Debbie explained that the day after I called her about Jimmy's QRI results, Highland's principal initiated a conversation with her in the car line about Jimmy's work habits and attributed his poor academic performance to his lack of effort. Debbie countered this assumption with evidence of his reading struggles, and the principal was at a loss for words. Debbie explained that the principal reacted to this news as if she was also shocked. This demonstrated a lack of communication at Highland regarding struggling adolescent readers. According to Debbie, the principal was aware that Jimmy's grades were not good because she approached Debbie in the car line, but she did not seem to be aware of his reading struggles and Debbie was never informed that he was struggling. Jimmy seemed to slip between the cracks because his performance on standardized tests indicated that he was an above average achiever.

This later became even more evident toward the end of the study when Debbie contacted the principal for an in-person meeting about testing Jimmy for dyslexia. According to Debbie, the principal listened to her and validated her concerns. She wrote notes as Debbie talked to her and explained that she would call for an additional meeting with his fifth grade teachers to address the issue. However, this meeting never panned out because, according to Debbie, the principal later explained in a follow up phone call that she did not think it was necessary. Instead, Debbie later received a phone call from the school psychologist about the testing process:

Debbie told me she had some news for me. The school psychologist called her today and told her that it takes sixty days to do the paperwork and there were only

forty-five days left of school, so it didn't make sense to start the paperwork now. She also said that she didn't understand why Debbie wanted to have Jimmy tested when he was in the second highest level at school (B group) and he scored so high in math and science. Debbie said that she responded by explaining that his math and science scores had nothing to do with his reading and his reading was the problem. I affirmed her thoughts by saying that dyslexia sure didn't have anything to do with science and math scores. Debbie explained that she said she told the school psychologist she would just wait until she got Jimmy in the middle school and the psychologist said she thought that was a good idea. Debbie said she guessed she was on her own, that was the feeling she got from the conversation. (Thick Description, Entry 28).

Debbie's experienced reality of this particular interaction was a key moment that demonstrated her lack of cultural capital. Similar to the experiences of Jenny and June from Purcell-Gates' (1995) and Rogers' (2003) studies, Debbie was unable to convince school staff to honor her wishes for her child despite her persistence. The school psychologist conveyed to Debbie that she did not understand why Debbie would want Jimmy tested for dyslexia since he had high science and math test scores and was in a high achieving group. In return, Debbie explained to the school psychologist, and later to me, that she did not understand what his math and science scores had to do with his reading ability. Finally, the school psychologist that there was no time for such testing and then suggested Debbie wait until next year. At this point, Debbie felt defeated and caved instead of continuing to demand the school test him. She simply wanted the school to identify his reading ability and needs. However, according to Debbie's recap of events, I believe the school psychologist might of thought Debbie was requesting Jimmy be tested for admittance into special education, which may have been why she referred to his standardized test scores in science and math. There seemed to be a gap in communication and Debbie left the conversation feeling helpless and alone because she did not have the educational, experiential, and positional power possessed by the school psychologist.

Because Jimmy was still struggling to read in the fifth grade, it seemed Highland Elementary did not address Jimmy's reading problems early on in his education. It also seemed, specifically because of Debbie's interactions with the school psychologist, that the school was unwilling to address Jimmy's reading problems now that Debbie requested something be done. They opted to pass the problem on to the middle school instead of offering to at minimum assess him. Debbie's request remained unfulfilled by the conclusion of the study and she was never informed of the school's professional assessment of Jimmy's reading abilities.

Though Debbie shared similar struggles to those of guardian's from previous studies, Debbie's lack of information regarding Jimmy's reading struggles was a phenomenon unlike any other experience documented in studies of family literacy. Neither Jenny, from Purcell-Gates' (1995) study, nor June, from Rogers' (2003) study lacked information about the struggles of their children. They were quite aware of where their children stood with reading. However, like both Jenny and June, Debbie experienced considerable resistance to her requests from the school and eventually gave in to the pressure.

Communication of Services

Over the course of the study, it became apparent through that Highland Elementary offered at least three services for struggling readers. They had a summer reading program, in-school pull out services that replaced gym class, and after-school tutoring twice a week for two straight months before statewide testing. Communication of services was the second major category of the second theme. I topic coded these services by name and sub-categorized them by mode of communication before compiling

them into the major category “communication of services.” Each service was communicated or not communicated differently, but together they told the story of how Highland Elementary School communicated services for struggling readers.

Jimmy was denied two of the three services offered by Highland. It came to light that this may have been due to the fact that Jimmy was in B group, the second highest tracked group. Though, according to his QRI results and his STAR Reading assessment results, his reading struggles were much greater than Julia’s, he never received additional reading supports at any point let alone access to expert instruction from a reading specialist, as advised by the IRA (1999).

Debbie was aware of a summer reading program offered to a next door neighbor’s fourth grade child through the school that was not offered to Jimmy. Debbie conveyed her desire for the school to better communicate about these services:

Debbie: Let them know ‘hey, you know, maybe you wanna get a tutor’ or ‘we have an after-school program’ or somethin’ like that. Um, to communicate a little bit better. You know, cuz I do know that they had a program this summer. Um, I’m too old school callin’ it summer school. Uh, for reading. And, my neighbor, her daughter is in fourth grade this year because Jimmy is in fifth. And, they told her that they felt like it was-would be good for her, so she went all summer to summer school in a reading program that helped her reading. But, yet I never got that on Jimmy or I woulda sent him. I woulda said, ‘hey Jimmy, you know, you can go with her.’ Cuz they’re big buddies. And, you know, ‘you can still go on vacation, you can still get to have your summer.’ You know, and but they never offered it to Jimmy. (Debbie, Interview 1)

In this response, she explained that if she had known Jimmy was struggling with reading, she would have been happy to send him to that program last summer. Though Jimmy was two to three grade levels behind in many aspects of his reading, the school did not identify him as a struggling reader and did not offer the summer reading program to him. Debbie only found out about this program through her neighbor and was not aware at the

time that Jimmy was a struggling reader. Later in the school year he was offered the two-month pre testing tutoring, but did not take advantage of it because he was already receiving tutoring from me in reading and his math benchmark scores were already proficient (See Figure 5.8). Debbie wished Highland would have informed her of Jimmy's reading struggles earlier and offered him the summer reading program last summer because she would have been glad for him to receive the assistance.

Unlike Jimmy, Julia did not attend Highland until fifth grade, thus Highland did not offer her the summer reading program. Fairhills Elementary, her previous school, did not offer her a summer reading program either.

However, after acclimating to Highland in the fifth grade, Julia did receive pull-out services for her reading struggles instead of attending gym class. Jackie was informed of this at some point when she received a letter and attached reading assessment data explaining that Julia would be in Tier Two (See Figure 5.1). Mid-way through the study, Jackie received a notification in the mail from the school that Julia was being moved from Tier Two to Tier One and would no longer be receiving these pull-out services because of her recent reading improvements. Tier One entailed in-class assistance for reading from the classroom teacher (See Figure 5.2). Jackie was happy that Julia was moved up from Tier Two to Tier One and did not seem to be bothered by the fact that she did not know Julia had been missing gym for reading pull-out.

Both Jimmy and Julia were informed of an afterschool pre state assessment tutoring opportunity from a letter home specifically sent to students the school thought should receive the tutoring. The letter stated that they had been "identified as needing these special sessions to boost their achievement to either proficient or advanced" (See

Figure 5.3). The letter further explained that even though the child may have scored proficient or advanced on prior state mandated tests, the tests were now harder and it would be more difficult for the children to obtain those scores.

Julia participated in the after-school pre statewide testing tutoring for math, but Jimmy did not. Unlike Jimmy, Julia struggled in math, according to her grade cards and benchmark testing (See Figure 5.8), and it was beneficial for her to get this additional tutoring specifically in that subject. Thus, she participated in these sessions twice a week for math before I came to visit for literacy tutoring. The tutoring was offered for both reading and math, but the adolescents were already receiving reading tutoring from me, so their guardians opted not to have them participate in the pre state assessment reading tutoring. However, the reading tutoring was a service offered to both adolescents in preparation for state testing and this service was communicated with a letter home.

Communication of Academic Achievement

The school and individual teachers communicated academic achievement in a number of ways and this made up the third major category of the second theme. First, the school used groups to track students into four homogeneous sectors of students based on state mandated testing results, according to the adolescents. Letters labeled these groups where “A group” was the highest achieving group and “D group” was the lowest achieving group. The school also communicated academic achievement through progress reports every six weeks and grade cards every nine weeks. A monthly newsletter communicated academic achievement in the form of awards, and individual teachers regularly sent home graded work that sometimes contained notes of pride or

disappointment in the work. Furthermore, parent teacher conferences were held once a semester and all the teachers met together with interested parents on those nights

Elementary School

Principal
Assistant Principal
Secretary

2014

Dear Parent,

In an effort to ensure better achievement by our students, we are offering free reading and math enrichment. These intensive study sessions are designed to challenge our students through small group instruction. Teachers in your child's grade level will lead these study sessions.

Your child has been identified as needing these special sessions to boost their achievement to either proficient or advanced. Even though your child may have scored proficient or advanced on previous _____ the proficient score has been raised. It is now more difficult to reach this goal. We want to offer your child all the opportunities and assistance that we can. I am strongly encouraging you to let your child participate in this program.

These enrichment sessions will be every Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00-4:00 from _____. Transportation is not provided. Your child is welcome to bring a snack. Please sign and return that your child will attend and you will provide transportation. Your child must be picked up at 4:00 P.M.

Thank you,

Principal

My child, _____, will attend the study sessions. I understand I will provide transportation.

Parent's signature _____

FIGURE 5.3. *Tutoring for State Standardized Tests Services Letter*

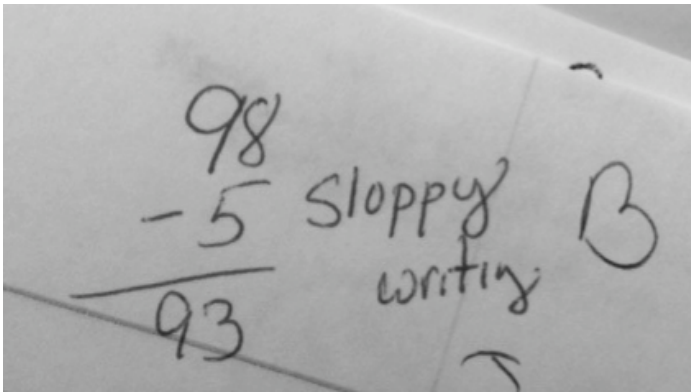
in order to convey academic progress. Informal conversations about achievement also occurred between the principal and guardians in car lines. Last, mandated testing results were given to parents one summer and most of one semester after they were taken.

B group C group distinction and decisions. I initially topic coded all mention of the homogenous grade groups as “tracking” but refined this topic code and separated it into three codes. The codes were “B group C group placement” to catalog data that explained how group decisions were made, “Jimmy’s potential demotion from B group to C group” to define a noteworthy event regarding Jimmy’s grouping, and “group placement communication” to account for instances describing how group placement was communicated to guardians. Each of these separate codes made up the sub category “B Group C Group Distinctions” because together they showed how students were separated based on academic performance. In the last phase of analysis, I determined that these groups were used as a means of informing guardians and students of student academic standing, though this was not necessarily the intention of the school. These groups were a force that influenced the way students saw themselves as learners, thus they communicated academic achievement. According to Julia, the state mandated test determined the group in which a student was placed.

Julia: Then we go, like, I’m in C group cuz that’s what grade I made on the (state test) so I made a C, so I’m in C group. (Julia, Interview 1)

Here, Julia explained that she believed she was in C group because she made a C on the state test. Regardless of how the decisions were made, Julia was placed in C group and Jimmy was placed in B group, and both students were highly aware of what group they were in and what it meant to be in that group. In essence, the groups communicated a message about the students’ academic abilities. This message was so prominent in their academic lives that students were required to write which group they were in on every assignment they submitted to their teachers (See Figure 5.4). If they failed to write the group on their papers, points were docked from their grades, so not only was their

academic status communicated to them by group placement, the groups visibly defined their academic ability on all of their assignments.



* He wrote the “B” for his group as required by his teacher. Five points were also deducted from his grade for “sloppy writing.”

FIGURE 5.4. *The Top Left Corner of One of Jimmy’s Assignments*

In response to informal conversation over the course of the study with all the participants about this grouping phenomenon and artifacts like Figure 5.4, I decided to directly ask participants about their beliefs regarding student group placements in their closing interviews. I belief coded these thoughts as “group placement beliefs” and through my analysis, added this code to the major category “student identity” because of the way the academic communication seemed to influence the academic identities of Jimmy and Julia. Jimmy was happy to be in B group and felt that it was an appropriate place for him.

Sarah: You are in B group. How do you feel about that?

Jimmy: I’m in it.

Sarah: Do you think that you are in the right place?

Jimmy: (Shakes head yes)

Sarah: Would you rather be in A group, C group, or D group?

Jimmy: They would have already moved me.

Sarah: But, where would you wanna be? If you could be in any group, which group would you pick?

Jimmy: B (Interview 2)

He explained that if he could be in any group, he would be in B group because it suited him. He later described A as moving the fastest and D as moving the slowest. He did not want to be in A group because it moved faster and he was happy with the speed at which B group learned, and as will be further described, Jimmy believed he was too smart to be in C group.

Julia, on the other hand, was not happy with her placement in C group. In our initial meeting at the beginning of the study, she conveyed that she wished to be in B group rather than C group for a number of reasons. She believed students in B group cared about their grades more and got in trouble less. According to Julia, C group students talked a lot, passed notes, and got in trouble often. This made it difficult for her to get her work done. After she brought up her placement in her first interview, I further investigated her feelings about C group.

Sarah: Like your placement? Being in the C group. What do you think about it?

Julia: I wish I was in B. That's why I'm trying to work harder-to get in B because I really want to be in B and see new people maybe and if they don't get in trouble as much. So yeah. (Julia, Interview 1)

Julia explained that she wanted to be in B group because she would be able to focus on her work. Additionally, she believed that students in B group had less homework because they knew how to do the work and got done with it in school faster. She was highly aware of what the different groups were like and had very specific beliefs about the students in each group. She explained that her math teacher told her if she continued to

work hard she knew she could make it to B group, but Julia's continued placement in C group communicated to her that her academic achievement was not up to par with students in B group, she thought students in B group were smarter than her.

Jimmy's demotion meeting. As explained by Jimmy and Julia, there was little movement between groups. In order for one student to be moved to another group, there had to be another student to switch places. Yet, early on in the study, Jimmy was confronted with the possibility of being demoted to C group. The following day after Debbie talked to the principal in the car line about Jimmy's reading struggles, a teacher approached Jimmy about moving him to C group. She told Jimmy that if he did not start working harder to pick up his grades, he would be moved to C group.

Debbie came in and sat down on the couch. She had a look of despair in her eyes when she told me she needed to talk to me real quick. She explained that Jimmy may be a little emotional today because of what happened at school. She explained that Jimmy's teachers had approached him and told him they were going to move him down from B group to C group. This highly distressed Jimmy, and Debbie told me he came home explaining to her that he wasn't stupid. She told me that she reassured him that the tutoring would help him and he would be back in B group very soon. Debbie felt this was the direct answer to her conversation with the principal this week about what she had learned about Jimmy's reading struggles, and, without consulting Debbie, the teachers told Jimmy at school that he would be moved down. (Thick Description, Entry 11)

This event much disturbed Jimmy, who fretfully conveyed to his grandmother that he was 'not stupid' as soon as he returned home from school. I gave this episode its own code "Jimmy's potential group demotion" because of the way it stood out to me. Jimmy felt that being put in C group meant that the school thought he was stupid. His feelings further support my interpretation that the homogeneous groups influenced participant beliefs about their academic ability. Moving Jimmy 'down' from B group to C group was a statement about his intelligence. Jimmy was greatly disturbed by the incident, yet

Debbie said Highland Elementary School never contacted her about the meeting nor did the school system discuss the possibility of Jimmy's move to C group, and Jimmy never was moved. This was another significant finding. There was an obvious failure to communicate group placement on behalf of the school. I found it shocking that the teacher conveyed such information to a fifth grader and sent him home distraught yet failed to mention such a serious circumstance to his guardians.

Communication of group placement. The lack of communication about group placement presented itself in additional ways beyond Jimmy's potential reassignment to C group. I coded these instances as "communication of group placement." Both Debbie and Jackie explained that they had no idea how the students were placed into groups and the decision had never been discussed or conveyed to them. They were aware that their grandchildren were in groups, but they did not know how the adolescents were placed.

Sarah: Can you tell me how Julia was, um, placed in C group?

Jackie: (Look of confusion)

Sarah: So you know how she is in C group.

Jackie: Yeah

Sarah: Can you tell me how she was placed?

Jackie: They never informed me, so I don't know. (Jackie, Interview 2)

Sarah: Tell me about how Jimmy was placed in C group, or not C group, B group.

Debbie: Um. I have no clue.

Sarah: You have no idea? Okay.

Debbie: They just did it on their own and placed him and then he came home and told me that 'hey, I'm in this group.' (Debbie, Interview 2)

Jackie had no inclination of how the decisions for grouping were made. Not only was the group placement never conveyed to her, but she was also unaware of what factors informed decisions about placement. According to the children, the decisions were made based on state test achievement data, but Debbie believed the decisions were made based on how quickly children learned and did not mention testing as a possible determiner.

Sarah: Okay. Um, what does it mean to be in B group as opposed to the other groups?

Debbie: I think it is just uh dependent on your, um, how fast you pick up on things. And the B group is one that's like A would be the highest and then B right under it. Uh so, and then if you go lower, like C and D, those children need a little bit more help. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Debbie had to construct her understanding from conversations she had with Jimmy rather than hearing directly from the school about how group placement decisions were made.

The school did not clearly communicate about the academic performance that led to decisions about group placement, a decision that greatly impacted which children their grandchildren learned with and how they saw themselves as students. Group designations not only communicated academic achievement to the students and the guardians, they also functioned as identity markers that indicated what kinds of students the adolescents were.

Communicating grades. Both Julia and Jimmy regularly came home with graded work from school, and this graded work served to inform the guardians of their student's academic performance. I topic coded data that had to do with graded tests, quizzes, and daily assignments as "graded assignments," data that had to do with official progress report grades that came home every six weeks as "progress reports," and "grade cards" for final grades sent home every nine weeks on grade cards. I added these topic codes to the sub category "grade communication" because they were all ways to communicate grades. Finally, I added this sub category to the major category "communication of academic achievement" because the grades informed parents about the academic progress their adolescents were making.

Sometimes these grades were accompanied with short feedback about how well the student did followed by praise or disappointment (See Figure 5.5), and this feedback

added more detailed communication about the student's academic achievement. Progress reports and report cards also regularly came home from the school and were anticipated by the guardians. However, as will be discussed in greater detail, sometimes the grade cards contained confusing information about performance and did not align with the results from benchmark testing.

Graded assignments. Most days I visited the Boyd and Sutton homes, the adolescents had some form of graded work in their backpacks to communicate academic achievement with the students and guardians. Jimmy regularly showed me graded spelling tests, worksheets, projects, and occasional vocabulary quizzes and Julia usually showed me her spelling tests because we worked so much together on her spelling. The assignments, graded in red ink, marked the places where errors were made or bonus points were acquired. At the top of the assignment, the grade was figured showing the initial grade with deductions for failing to write one's group at the top, sloppy writing, and punctuation errors, regardless of the purpose of the assessment, and additions for bonus points (See Figure 5.4). Sometimes this work was accompanied with a short note about the work if it was particularly good or poor and sometimes this work had to be signed and returned.

Debbie: And they'll send home his work after they've graded it. And some of it I have to sign and send back some of it showing that I did see it and some of it is just like do with it whatever, you know.

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: Um, the only time I get any note is like I said, say we would like to speak to you about Jimmy's attitude or we would like to speak to you about Jimmy's grades. (Debbie, Interview 1)

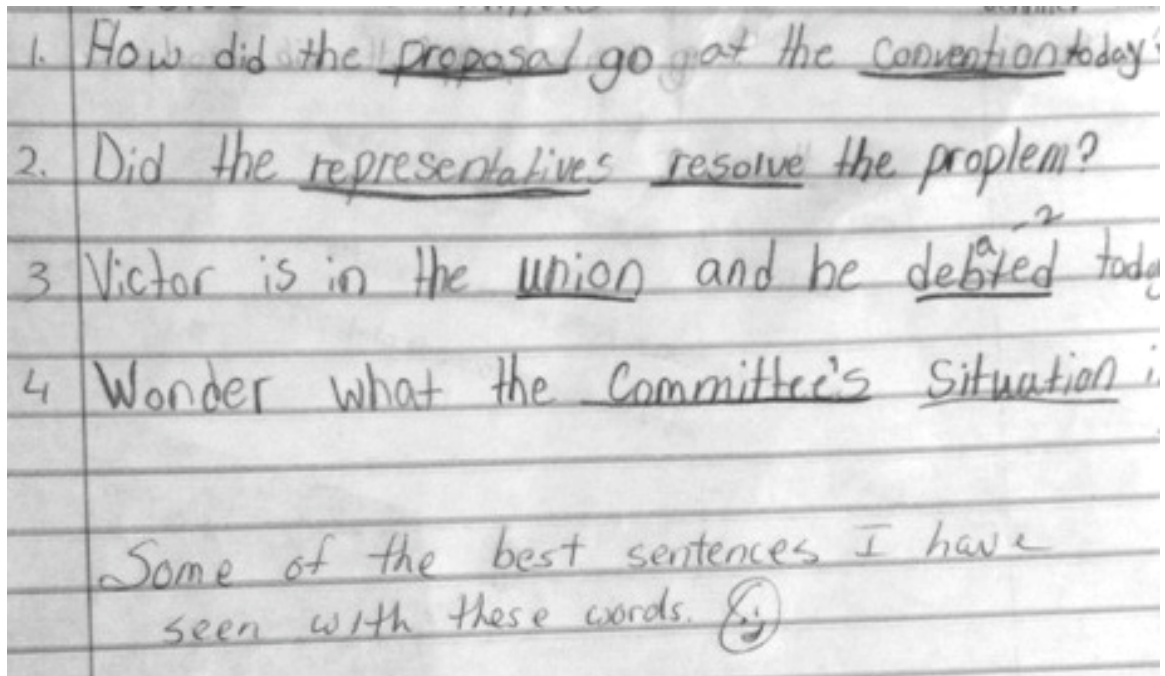


FIGURE 5.5. *Julia's Vocabulary Quiz from Reading Class*

Debbie explained that graded work was used to communicate academic achievement and that the school ensured this communication through guardian signing of the work. Debbie further noted that graded work was sometimes used as a method for sending messages to her about setting up future meetings regarding academic performance or behavior. Debbie and Jackie routinely expected and viewed graded work as a form of communication to see where Julia and Jimmy stood in their academic performance. Graded work seemed to make it to the students' backpacks, and both grandparents regularly searched the backpacks for graded work and other correspondence, but this was not necessarily a reliable form of communication, as sometimes the guardians were unaware of specific forms with academic information, such as the ThinkLink charts, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Electronic communication of graded assignments. The county and school offered a number of ways guardians could keep track of student progress using technology. For example, according to Debbie, the school website, and the newsletters sent home, they offered a system called ParentPortal to keep up to date with grades and school lunch funding as well as email communication and class websites. Online websites and ParentPortal were topic coded by name and then merged into the sub category of electronic communication. This electronic communication was primarily used to keep parents informed about academic achievement, but it was also minimally used to stay up to date with school happenings. The sub code “electronic communication” was therefore split into the major codes “communication of academic achievement” and “communication of school happenings” because it served to fulfill the needs of both.

Parent Portal is an online tool that the county used to provide parents with access to their children’s real-time grades, lunch balance, and absences. Each guardian had a password that linked her or him to the children’s files. Debbie explained that she checked ParentPortal regularly to keep on top of Jimmy and Justin’s grades.

Debbie: They have ParentPortal that you can pull up and check their grades, their absentee, their lunch, stuff like that.

...

Debbie: the prin um um parent portal we use a lot. I check it every so often through the six weeks to see if their grades are droppin’ or whatever. I do it with Justin too (Debbie, Interview 2).

Here, Debbie demonstrated that she was aware of ParentPortal and its uses, and she explained that she checked it ‘every so often.’ Conversely, Jackie did not have access to ParentPortal because she did not own a computer. However, Jackie was aware that ParentPortal existed and knew that her daughter-in-law used it to keep track of Declan’s grades because he lived with her.

Sarah: Uh, do you know if she (the daughter-in-law) checks ParentPortal at all?
Jackie: Yeah (Jackie, Interview 2)

She explained that for a while her daughter-in-law could not check ParentPortal because Declan had recently moved in with her and she was not associated with his account. However, the problem was resolved and now her daughter-in-law checks it and takes away his phone when he has not done his schoolwork. Though Jackie was not a user herself, her extended family used the resource and she was aware of it. ParentPortal was an effective means of communicating grades to parents who had computers and were willing to regularly log on to check those grades. However, the site was only able to display the assignment and the grade a student made on the assignment as well as the current cumulative grade, it did not display information about specific student struggles.

Debbie and Jackie conveyed that email was a form of communication the school used to get in touch with many guardians. However, Debbie preferred to communicate with teachers in person as opposed to email. She thought in-person communication was more effective.

Sarah: Um, and you said, I think before, that you don't have an email address? So you don't, like, communicate with the teachers back and forth?

Debbie: No.

Sarah: Okay. Okay. Have they offered that at all?

Debbie: Yeah, you can, but I prefer to talk in person because if there's an issue, I think you can get your point across better in person. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Debbie knew that she could email teachers with questions or comments, but explained that she preferred not to use technology as a means for communicating.

Jackie did not have a computer and did not want one. Thus, emailing with school staff was not an option for her.

Jackie: Yeah, but school, everybody they think everybody's got a computer and and then email. And, I don't have any of that, and I don't really wish to have it. (Jackie, Interview 1)

Jackie seemed to feel annoyed that 'everybody' assumed she would have a computer and knew how to use it. She did not want a computer and did not plan to learn to use one, so emailing with Julia's teachers was not an option. Thus, neither grandmother used email to converse with school personnel. Instead they preferred phone calls and in person interaction.

Websites developed by teachers were available for each classroom and offered information about assignments. Debbie explained that she rarely used these websites and that she only used them when the boys were required to use them for a school assignment.

Debbie: Occasionally they send home a um a website that you can go to for special projects and stuff that they're doin.'

Sarah: Okay

Debbie: Um, other than that, I don't think they really have a lot.

Sarah: Right, okay and do you use those services at all?

Debbie: I do when he has, when it, when his homework and stuff required that I do.

Sarah: Oh okay, okay. So about how often do you think that happens?

Debbie: Umm not really not that often. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Debbie knew the websites did offer a little information about some specific assignments the students had to complete but did not find it useful or important to monitor otherwise. Unlike, Debbie, Jackie did not mention the school websites at all, presumably because she did not have a computer and did not have access to the sites.

Debbie and Jackie's use of technology for communication. Debbie and Jackie varied pretty greatly when it came to the ways they used the technological modes of communication offered by the school. Jackie did not own a computer or smart phone and

therefore had no access to the Internet. She was not able to use technology and found it frustrating that school seemed to expect that she have such technology.

Jackie: Well, uh the school and everybody seems to think that everybody has computers. And, they want your email, you know.

Sarah: Mhm. Are they aware that you don't have a computer?

Jackie: Well you tell 'em and it doesn't do any good. Now she (Julia) uses a computer at school. They just presume that you've got one at home she can get on and practice and everything. (Jackie, Interview 2)

Though Jackie did not want a computer, she was concerned about Julia's ability to practice with a computer because she knew it was a skill Julia needed to acquire, however, she was not ready to purchase one because she was not able to monitor how Julia used it. She later explained that she was waiting to buy one until Julia was older and mature enough to use a computer without heavy supervision.

Debbie used technology lightly to communicate with the school. She used ParentPortal to keep up with Justin and Jimmy's grades and infrequently utilized the class websites when the school required she do so. Otherwise, she did not communicate with school personnel using email because she preferred to talk with people in person. She did not have an email account and explained that she would rather be called.

Sarah: Um, okay, so what would be the, I think you've kind of talked about this, but just one more time. What would be the best form or way to communicate with you. And, are they doing that? So ideally, what would be the best way?

Debbie: Ideally, I would probably say a phone call. Even if it was just to say, 'you need to come in.' But, a phone call to say, 'okay his grades have slipped.'

...

Sarah: Um, so are they doing that?

Debbie: No. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Debbie conveyed that she wanted to be contacted more often about Jimmy's academic standing and she wanted this to happen in the form of phone calls, but this was not currently happening.

Student Multi-Section Report					
Final Grade	Teacher	Reporting Term	Letter Grade	Percentage	Final Grade Comment
Class					
Writing 05 2		M5			
2 Reading 05		M5	C	82%	
1(A) Self-Contained 05		M5			
Social Studies 05 2		M5			
Music 05 Major 2		M5			
Guidance Counselor 05 2		M5	C	78%	
2 Mathematics 05		M5	D	74%	
2 Language Arts 05		M5			
Library/Media 05 400+ 2		M5			
Physical Education 05 Major 2					
		M5	C	84%	
6 Spelling 05		M5	C	84%	
2 Science 05					

FIGURE 5.6. *Jimmy's Progress Report*

Progress reports. A less frequent but still regular communicator of academic performance were progress reports. According to Jackie, progress reports came out every six weeks at Highland and informed guardians of their children's current class grades (See Figure 5.6). The report included the name of the class, the teacher who taught the subject, the letter grade and the percentile grade. These progress reports had to be signed by the guardians and returned to the school the next day. This was a form of communication between school and home that indicated guardian awareness of the grades their child was earning. Progress reports were effective markers of student achievement that parents expected every six weeks, though they did not always make it home on time. When they did come, Debbie and Jackie either gave praise or

disappointment remarks to Jimmy and Julia, and they made adjustments to home activities based on those grades (i.e. reduction in free time, extrinsic rewards, taking away something the student enjoyed). Neither Debbie nor Jackie emphasized the progress reports as a tool for keeping record of academic achievement in their interviews, rather, I observed them reviewing the cards and interacting with Jimmy and Julia about their grades.

Report cards. Report cards came home once every nine weeks to inform guardians of final nine-week grades. Each final nine-week grade would be averaged in to an eventual semester grade. Report cards contained the same information as progress reports plus a box at the bottom that indicated whether the student was below grade level, on grade level, or above grade level in math and reading (See Figure 5.7). It also contained information about absences and behavioral conduct. For instance, on Jimmy's grade card, the number two was written in under days absent at the fourth six-week period and there was a space to either circle satisfactory or unsatisfactory for behavior, but on the grade card I collected, neither had been circled. Furthermore, the report card contained two informational blurbs about state testing and ParentPortal. The card informed readers that state testing would count for 20% of the student's second semester grade and that ParentPortal was available for the guardian to "monitor [you child's] progress from home" (Figure 2.8). ParentPortal was use by Debbie to review Jimmy's grades, but Jackie did not use ParentPortal because she did not have a computer and was not familiar with technology.

A striking finding from Jimmy's grade cards was that his reading indicator box was highlighted a two or "on grade level" (See Figure 5.7).

Jimmy was making a D in reading, yet his card said that he was on grade level in both reading and math. This was highly confusing information for Debbie, especially considering what she had learned from me about his reading ability. (Thick Description, Entry 11)

Period	Term	COURSE	TEACHER	1-6wks Grd	2-6wks Grd	3-6wks Grd	4-6wks Grd	5-6wks Grd	6-6wks Grd	TC Sc
2	13-14	Music 05 Major		0	0	0	0	0	0	
3	13-14	Physical Education 05 Major		0	0	0	0	0	0	
8	13-14	Writing 05		0	0	0	0	0	0	
9	13-14	Social Studies 05		86	83	87	90	0	0	
10	13-14	Mathematics 05		95	90	81	79	0	0	
11	13-14	Science 05		79	78	84	73	0	0	
12	13-14	Spelling 05		77	50	69	80	0	0	
13	13-14	Reading 05		78	81	73	81	0	0	
14	13-14	Language Arts 05		78	76	77	80	0	0	

Reading Scale:
 Excellent (93-100)
 Above Average (85-92)
 Satisfactory (75-84)
 Below Average (70-74)
 Failing (Below 70)

the 2012-2013 school year, scores will count 20% of the student's 2nd semester grade. scores will count for 20% of the student's 13-2014.

Don't forget our ParentPortal system that lets you monitor progress from home. The Internet address is You can obtain n your child's school.

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Your child is working: BELOW Grade Level = 1 ON Grade Level = 2 ABOVE Grade Level = 3	Math	Attendance	Conduct Satisfac Unsatis
	1 2 3	Absent 2	
	Reading	Tardy 0	
	1 2 3		

FIGURE 5.7: Jimmy's Report Card

Whereas his QRI scores suggested he was at minimum two grade levels behind in reading ability. There was no information given on the grade card to suggest how it was decided that Jimmy was on grade level in reading for his grade card, and there was also no invitation from the school to discuss the grade card with teachers. According to Debbie, there was also never any communication from the school about Jimmy's reading abilities. Thus, there was no room to reconcile confusion about his reading. Like the progress report, the grade card had to be signed and returned to the school to communicate its

review by the guardian, but there was no subsequent action on the part of the school. It was an effective means for distributing final grades, but not effective for communicating detailed understanding of student performance.

Planner. In addition to the graded work that was sent home, each student in fifth grade at Highland was required to record everything they did in school in addition to all their homework assignments in their planners. These planners were to be checked each night by their guardians and signed. The planners helped guardians keep track of academic assignments to ensure their student was completing the work. Jackie explained in her closing interview that not signing the planner had consequences. If Julia did not get Jackie to sign her planner, she got a frowning face at school. It was unclear if further repercussions ensued following repeated behavior.

Jackie: And I try to look at it (planner) every night when she gets home. And, you have to initial, you know, every night.

Sarah: Every night?

Jackie: (shakes head yes)

...

Sarah: It has to be initialed every night?

Jackie: And, if you forget, she gets uh a frowny face or somethin' (laughs) (Jackie, Interview 2).

The planner was an additional method for communicating academic work with guardians in an attempt to keep students accountable for their homework and to keep parents informed about what their students were learning. This seemed to be an effective way of communicating work with guardians, as the students knew they were going to be held accountable for getting the signatures of their guardians. It provided expected communication to the homes and ensured that this communication happened via a guardian signature. Both Jackie and Debbie anticipated the planner checks every night and made sure to look them over. Both Jackie and Debbie seemed to know when the

adolescents had homework and made sure that this homework was completed. As will be further explained, the planners were also used to communicate information about a student's behavior.

Benchmark and state testing. Benchmark and state testing were other modes of communicating academic achievement to students and guardians. I first topic coded any mention of state assessments as “testing” but later thought it important to separate “benchmark testing” and “state testing” because the two were used to communicate different assessments and the results were communicated in different ways. I added these topic codes to the sub category “testing communication” and then to the major category “communication of academic achievement” because the testing outcomes were a measure of academic achievement and were used to make high stakes decisions about group placement. I found that benchmark testing was not adequately communicated with guardians and state testing was communicated after much delay. Neither Debbie nor Jackie claimed to know about benchmark testing, though the ThinkLink charts could be found in the students' bags and it was conveyed through the school newsletter (See Appendix E3). However, neither guardian knew what ThinkLink was nor were they aware of the chart. As for state testing, guardians did not receive their student's scores until mid-way through the following school year, far past any window of usefulness.

Benchmark tests. In addition to progress reports and grade cards, benchmark testing was conducted regularly to document student progress. The testing results were communicated by highlighting the progress chart. Students were responsible for keeping these charts until the next set of scores came in and teachers highlighted that next set of boxes (See Figures 5.8 and 5.9). Neither Jackie nor Debbie ever saw these testing results

until I asked them about benchmark testing and the respective adolescent provided the paper. These benchmark tests did not have to be signed and returned to the school as progress reports and grade cards did, and Jimmy and Julia never thought it necessary to show their grandmothers the document. Furthermore, though Highland repeatedly communicated in the newsletter when the ThinkLink tests would occur and when to look for the highlighted charts (See Appendices E1-E5), but neither Jackie nor Debbie were aware of these tests or the results. Therefore, the method of sending important information home with students, especially when they were not required to provide guardian signatures, fell short and so did the newsletter. Jackie and Debbie had not seen the charts, did not know what they were for, and did not fully understand the purpose of benchmark testing.

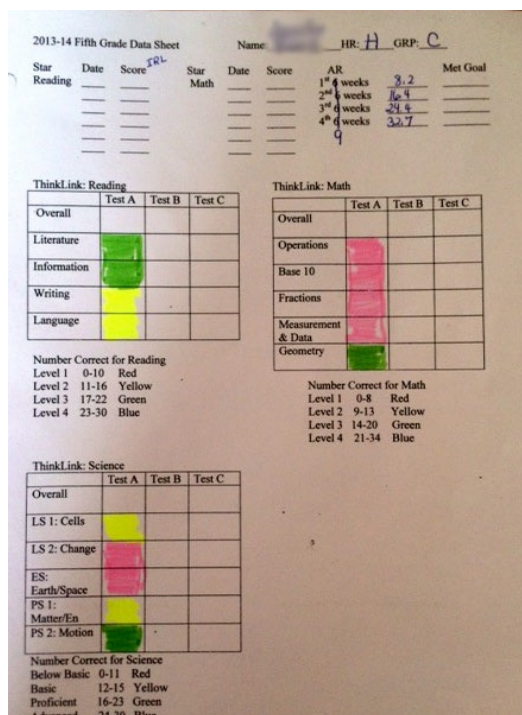


FIGURE 5.8: Julia's ThinkLink Chart

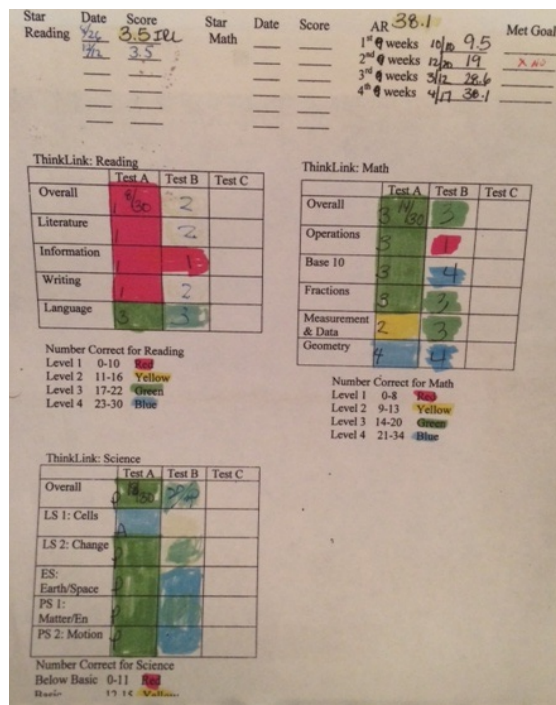


FIGURE 5.9: Jimmy's ThinkLink Chart

Debbie was somewhat miffed when she realized she had not been privy to the benchmark assessments because Jimmy did not show her the document.

I told her I knew many elementary schools had testing that happened more regularly than state tests to see how students were hitting benchmarks. She said she had never heard of that. At this time, Jimmy was sitting on the ottoman playing a game on his iPad. He chimed in and explained that he has a paper with his ThinkLink testing on it. He brought in this color-coded sheet. I asked Debbie if she had ever seen this before and she said that she had not. She asked Jimmy why he had never given this to her and he said because she had never asked. At that point, there was some obvious tension in the room and I began to look at the document. (Thick Description, Entry 19)

Here, Jimmy explained that Debbie never asked for the document, so he never gave it to her. Somehow, Debbie did not see or did not process the information about ThinkLink included in the newsletters. This was not surprising considering the fact that the newsletters were visually over stimulating. They were four pages long and completely covered with text. It took great effort to sift through all the information, and I believe it would be easy to gloss over it, as Debbie and Jackie seemingly did.

The ThinkLink testing showed that Jimmy was below grade level in reading (See Figure 5.9), yet his grade card explained that he was on grade level. As discussed earlier, this was confusing information because it directly contradicted the information conveyed in Jimmy's grade card. Jimmy's grade card conveyed that he was performing on grade level, but his benchmark testing indicated that he was below basic in reading in all areas except language, which I deduced meant grammar skills, though this was not entirely clear. In addition, Jimmy's ThinkLink card included STAR testing information, but the scores were not explained, and Julia had no STAR data on her card, though she and Jimmy had the same teachers. Furthermore, I researched Jimmy's results on the STAR Assessments parent information page (Renaissance Learning, 2013), and his score of 3.5 placed him in between a third and fourth grade level, which matched the QRI assessments I conducted. Julia's STAR testing results, on the other hand, were between 300-900, which matched the Early Literacy Assessment Scale and put her in the emergent reader stage. This did not reflect her abilities according to my QRI assessments. This score might have been for her Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) score, which was supposed to suggest a book difficulty range. However, this was not communicated on the

results page. Needless to say, Highland did not provide enough information on either child to be completely clear on the meaning of their assessments.

While Jackie was not aware of the ThinkLink data, she was aware of Julia's STAR testing results and retrieved a data sheet when I asked about benchmark testing. The data sheet included a note that explained Julia was "so smart she should never go below this line" indicating a score of 452 (See Figure 5.10).

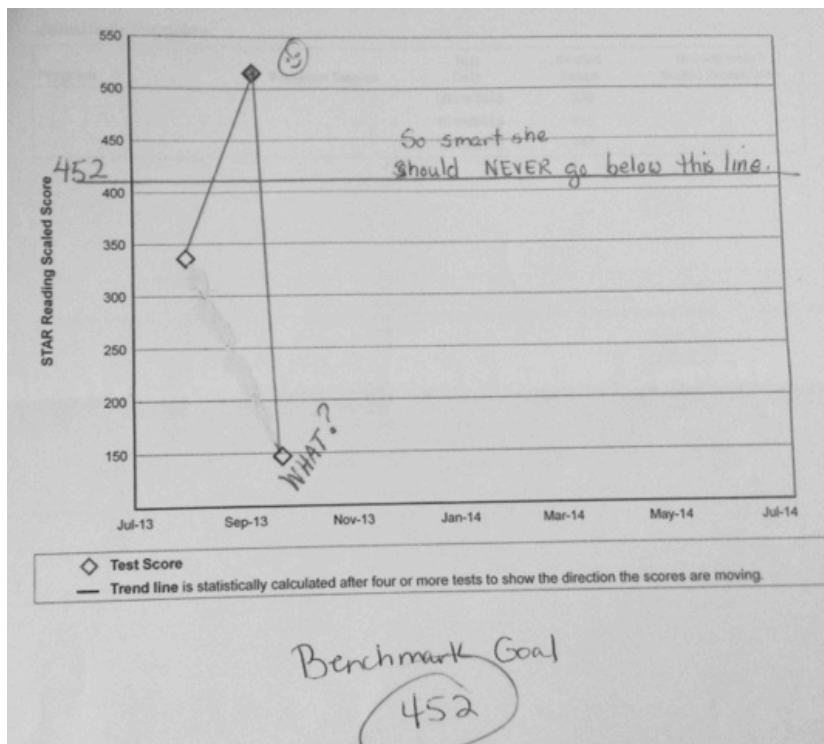


Figure 5.10: Julia's STAR Testing Chart

The data was not only used to communicate Julia's reading test results, but also her intelligence and the teacher's dissatisfaction with an uncharacteristic test score. Julia's

score sunk over 350 out of 500 points from her last test, yet it was unclear if the teacher believed this to be a testing error. The STAR Reading tests were used to track Julia's reading progress, but I was unaware if they were used to make decisions about her enrollment in pullout services at the school. Debbie did not provide Jimmy's STAR testing chart nor did she mention any knowledge of STAR testing, though it was evident he had been tested on his ThinkLink chart. The ThinkLink charts were supposed to record pertinent information, but they were not effective communicators of performance because they did not make it to the guardian's eyes, and they were not easily discernable to those unfamiliar with benchmark testing.

State tests. Individual student achievement data for state testing were communicated to families a complete summer and nearly an additional semester after tests were given in late April. The testing data were distributed to students the following year and conveyed individual student academic achievement by distinguishing each student as below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced in the areas tested.

Jackie: It had you know, if she was average and above average and (whisper) below average.

Sarah: Okay. Yeah. And, what did the paper look like?

Jackie: It's just one sheet of paper.

Sarah: And, did it have-

Jackie: And it had what she made on it.

Sarah: And, did it have a chart or anything like that? Do you remember a chart on there or did it just list where like basic, below basic, advanced.

Jackie: Just listed that way (indicating the last way described).

According to Jackie, guardians were given one sheet of paper that categorized students into the four groups outlined above. Information about specific areas of need was left wanting. The document provided very little useful information for targeting specific areas of need because a student was either proficient or she was not and that was the extent of

the data provided. The results did not explain directly what skills needed to be improved. Even so, guardians were not informed of the testing results until mid-way through the following school year, yet those tests were used to make group placement decisions. The information was obviously available to the school systems much sooner than guardians, but the basis for decisions about group placement were not communicated to guardians. Providing guardians with state testing results seemed to be an afterthought.

Written communication. Highland Elementary School sent out a newsletter once a month that included information about important dates, upcoming events, winners of awards and contests, fund raising, parent resources, and information about what each grade level was learning in school each month (See Appendices E1-E5). I topic coded newsletter data as “newsletter,” but refined this as a part of the sub category “written communication.” The letter went home with students and Debbie and Jackie expected these letters, though some months they did not receive one. It was a major source of information about what was happening at school and Debbie and Jackie both noted it as a strong method of communication that they appreciated. This newsletter was a form of communication of academic achievement because it listed individual academic awards, so I included it in the major “communication of academic achievement” category. For example, Jimmy received an honorable mention for a book he wrote about muscle cars for a writing contest, and his achievement in creating this book was recognized in the newsletter. Since the newsletter was sent home with every child once a month, it was a method for communicating some forms of individual student academic achievement.

Face-to-face communication. Car lines were an opportunity for informal conversation between the principal and the parents waiting to pick up their children. I

topic coded data related to car line conversing as “car line communication,” and added this to the “written communication” sub category, which later was added to the major category “communication of academic communication.” I did this because Debbie explained several events where the principal discussed Jimmy’s academic performance with her in short interactions while she waited for Jimmy to get in the car. According to Debbie, the principal stood outside with a radio to bring the appropriate children to the appropriate cars. In the time it took for the child to walk to the car, the principal sometimes tapped on the window of the car and had short conversations with her. This was the mode in which Debbie first communicated her concerns about Jimmy’s reading abilities when the principal suggested he was not working hard enough. While this was a regular form of informal academic communication for Debbie, Jackie did not benefit from this it because Julia usually rode the bus home from school.

Parent teacher conferences were another type of face-to-face communication and occurred once a semester at Highland Elementary. I initially topic coded these events as “parent teacher conferences” then, as with the car line communication, merged this code into the “face-to-face communication” sub category. The code later became a part of “communication of academic achievement” because the parent teacher conferences occurred for two primary reasons: to convey information about academic achievement and to convey information about behavioral performance. During these conferences, parents arrived between pre-described time frames, but they did not have appointments. It was a first come first serve basis for meetings and the meeting were held at a table in a classroom with each teacher and the guardians seated together. Once all members were present for the meeting, teachers explained academic achievement, but as will be further

explained later in this section, most of the conferences focused on behavior rather than academic standing. Debbie explained that the conferences were very routine:

Debbie: And, um the parent teacher conferences are—they're very duh duh duh duh duh (iambic pentameter indicating routine). They're, 'okay this is what Jimmy's makin' in this subject. Uh, we feel like he can do a little bit better, so he needs to work on that.

Sarah: And that's pretty much-

Debbie: What you get. And, they go down, the teacher does whatever subject they teach and that's it.

Sarah: So grade, I think you can do better, he needs to work harder.

Debbie: Or somethin' like, 'he's not payin' enough attention in class. He, um, is kinda zoned out' you know? (Debbie, Interview 1)

The conferences, according to Debbie, seemed to provide little information about exactly what skills Jimmy needed to work on and primarily focused on his behavior problems as a major factor in his learning problems. Jimmy simply needed to “work harder,” according to his teachers. Much of the conversation focused on what Jimmy was not doing as a student rather than with what skills he was struggling. This talk conveyed that Jimmy's struggles were due completely to his lack of effort rather than his abilities, including his reading skills that were long overlooked.

Julia's parent teacher conference began with short teacher to guardian exchanges about her work. The talk mostly involved comments about her work being adequate, except in math where she was struggling. However the math teacher did not indicate specifically with what Julia was struggling. From there, the conversation moved to her behavior and focused on her hard work and desire to learn as well as her sweet nature. Jackie was given the opportunity to ask questions, but she did not have any. She was told she was doing a great job with Julia, and that closed the conversation. As explained by Debbie, most of the interaction with Jackie revolved around behavior and work ethic rather than skill acquisition.

Communication of Behavior

The fifth major category of the second theme concerned the quality of school to home communication of students' behavior. This was made particularly relevant by Debbie, who compared the quality and speed of communication from the school when concerning matters of Jimmy's behavior to the quality and speed of communication concerning his academics.

Face-to-face communication. Debbie explained that in parent teacher conferences, a significant amount of time was spent talking about academic behavior issues rather than academic achievement issues. Because the parent teacher conferences focused primarily on student behaviors, I split the "face-to-face communication" code and added it to "communication of behavior" in addition to "communication of academic achievement."

Though there were regular parent teacher conferences that were supposed to be focused on academics, additional parent teacher conferences could ensue as a result of behavior problems. This occurred mostly when Jimmy was younger.

Debbie: And, the trouble when he would get in trouble and I would have to go out there, it was basically a parent teacher conference. It was like, 'okay, Jimmy pushed a little boy today, didn't hurt him, didn't knock him down, but pushed him. So we are gunna give him time out in like in school suspension. You know, for puttin' his hands on another child. (Debbie, Interview 1)

Debbie explained that she was called in on more than one account for Jimmy's behavior problems, yet the school never called for extra meetings to discuss Jimmy's academic achievement though he struggled significantly in reading. This further demonstrated that the primary goal of school staff in face-to-face meetings seemed to be to discuss behavior problems. Most interactions regarding the student's academic achievement were in

writing unless initiated by the guardian, as Debbie did when she was concerned that Jimmy might have dyslexia.

This was further exemplified by Julia's parent teacher conference. In that conference, much of the talk revolved around her desire to learn, her hard work, and her sweet nature, rather than her learning or specific skill acquisition. The math teacher mentioned how Julia liked to talk, which was another indicator of behavior, and her reading teacher mentioned a recent event where she thought Julia behaved very mature when she asked to have her seat moved so she would not be distracted from her work by others at her current table. Unlike Jimmy, Julia never had additional parent teacher conferences about her behavior because she was never in serious trouble.

Behavioral observations were also communicated by Highland in a number of ways, apart from parent teacher conferences. Behavior issues were imparted through written communication in the form of special yellow slips home attached to planners and through phone calls.

Written communication. At one point in the study, Julia had a yellow slip fastened to her planner that had to be signed by Jackie. The slip indicated that Julia was in trouble for continuing to talk after the lunch lady told her to stop. Jackie read the note and signed it for return, but no further action ensued. The yellow slip was used when a student was unruly enough to inform parents, but not necessarily unruly frequently or severely enough to warrant a phone call. I coded this event as "yellow slip" and added it to "written communication" because the yellow slip was written to indicate that Julia had misbehaved. The "written communication" sub category, like the "face-to-face" category, was split and attributed to both the "communication of academic achievement" and

“communication of behavior” major codes because written documents were used to communicate both types of information.

Other communication. Phone calls were reserved for more serious behavioral issues and Debbie described having received those in the past for Jimmy’s behavioral issues. I initially topic coded data that had to do with phone calls home as “phone calls” but this later became “other communication” because it was not face-to-face or a written form of communication. The school only initiated phone calls in order to discuss poor behavior at school. I did not code the one phone call from the school psychologist as a form of school to home communication because Debbie instigated that communication. It was a method of communication in reaction to Debbie, rather than a phone call to initiate contact. Debbie explained that Jimmy had occasionally been in trouble for student-to-student infractions, such as pushing another child, and the school was always quick to inform her of these problems.

Debbie: Uh, when there is a behavior problem they are (snaps loudly) right on the phone. (Debbie, Interview 2)

She snapped in order to emphasize how quick the school was to initiate communication about behavioral issues and then later lamented that the schools did not demonstrate such zeal for contacting her about Jimmy’s grades or reading struggles. Jackie on the other hand, never received phone calls about Julia. Since she received custody of Julia in 2010, she never had any serious behavior problems at school.

Communication of School Happenings

Besides communication regarding academic achievement and behavior, Highland Elementary School regularly communicated school happenings through notes home, Open Houses, Orientations, and most notably through a monthly newsletter, and this

form of communication became the sixth major category of the second theme of findings. This communication, according to Debbie, was an area of strength for Highland. These communications were topic coded by name (i.e “open house”) and then morphed into sub categories. Open House and Orientation were forms of face-to-face communication and notes home and the monthly newsletter were forms of written communication. Both were used to communicate about events happening at or with the school. There was also minimal electronic communication that kept parents up to date on school happenings and this code was split with “communication of academic achievement” because technological means of communication were primarily used to disseminate knowledge about student grades.

Written Communication. According to Debbie, Highland Elementary communicated test dates and preparation suggestions in a note home to parents just before testing began.

Sarah: Um, how do they communicate that about that test with you and like the results?

Debbie: Um, when they first started them they send a note home and they say that they’re gonna be tested certain days and make sure the children get lots of rest, lot’s to eat. You know, send ‘em a snack cuz they will be allowed to have a snack during testing. And then when it’s over with, you don’t get the results until the following year. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Debbie explained that the school communicated that rest and diet were important to test performance and requested that parents make sure students came to school with those in tow. They sent home special notes to make sure that parents knew when the state tests were happening and what they could do to help their child succeed. The fact that special notes were sent home for the state testing occasion signified the importance of communicating this particular school happening.

Testing was also communicated in the center of the front page of every monthly newsletter collected over five months in the “Principal’s Message,” which prominently displayed its importance and place in Highland Elementary School (See Appendices E1, E2, E4). These messages contained information about the “testing improvements” in each subject area on last year’s testing, information about the many ways parents can help their children study for the test, and the provisions being made to the curriculum in order to meet the rising expectations of the state tests (See Figure 5.2). The principal made sure to communicate the significance of testing, along with ways that guardians could help their children succeed. Additionally, dates for ThinkLink tests could be located in the far left side of the page and reminders about testing were strewn about the entire document in some form or another.

Outside of conveying messages about testing, the newsletter also included information about upcoming fund-raisers, sports games, and field trips. It was the primary and most reliable distributor of school happenings information; though special notes or handouts were sent home to offer additional information about events each student needed extra information about. For example, Jimmy and Julia both came home with information about trips to Washington D.C they earned as a safety monitors. The handout offered information about expenses as well as the itinerary.

Face-to Face Communication. Open House occurred once a year towards the beginning of the year and was a time for students to introduce their parents to their teachers and show them around the school. It was an informal meet and greet situation where parents could get a sense of the school and the teachers.

Debbie: They have Open House every year.

Sarah: Okay. Is it that he can attend?

Debbie: Yeah.

Sarah: Okay.

Debbie: Yeah. Anybody and their parents can attend on Open House. That's for everybody's family to go through and look at the school. And, uh, the children can show 'em 'hey, this is my desk, this is my class.' (Debbie, Interview 2).

Debbie explained that Open House occurred every year and that it was an event that everyone could attend to get acquainted with the school and the teachers. This event allowed an extended opportunity for the school and teachers to communicate the way the school functioned along with other school happenings. It was a yearly event that Debbie usually attended.

Orientation Open House was different from a regular Open House because it only occurred each time a student transitioned to elementary, middle, or high school. It served to familiarize students and parents with the new school and staff and help student acclimate to their new surroundings. Jackie tended to refer to this as Open House, but she was unaware of the other Open Houses that took place, which might have been because this was Julia's first year at Highland.

Debbie: And uh, but usually they take 'em through and show 'em the school. They show 'em where their classes are gunna be. Um, and their teachers. Um, where the cafeteria is. The principal talks a little bit to 'em. (Debbie, Interview 2)

In this comment, Debbie explained that Orientation Open Houses were meant for students transitioning to new schools. During this time, the staff acquainted students with the building and teachers. Orientation Open House afforded students familiarity with the school that would help ease the transition. That way students would not be walking into a completely unfamiliar building while trying to get from class to class. Both Debbie and Jackie explained that they attended these Orientation Open House events.

Electronic Communication. Finally, minimal electronic communication was used to convey information about school happenings. Debbie explained that Highland offered class websites but that those websites mainly functioned for sporadic information about assignments. Debbie did not regularly check the websites because they were not reliable sources of information. However, once in a while they would include blurbs about events that occurred at school. I triangulated Debbie's claims by exploring the school web pages myself and found her analysis to be spot on. The teachers offered information about one or two assignments over the course of the entire school year in addition to short biographies, but the only school happenings information I noticed was a tab for inclement weather updates. It seemed a resource largely untapped.

Guardians of Struggling Readers' Beliefs About School to Home Communication

While the previous major categories addressed the participants' realities of the types of communication initiated by the school. This category centered on their beliefs about the quality and effectiveness of that communication. The second research question focused on the families' perceptions of and experiences with Highland's communication practices, so this category was particularly important to answering that question.

Debbie and Jackie held very different beliefs about the effectiveness of communication at Highland Elementary School. Jackie seemed to be very happy with the communication at Highland, especially when compared to Julia's previous school. On the other hand, Debbie was predominantly unsatisfied with communication and had many complaints about the ineffectiveness of information distribution, especially when it came to academics. I topic coded their feelings about the effectiveness of Highland's communication from their interviews and my thick descriptions of informal interviews as

“Jackie beliefs about communication” and “Debbie beliefs about communication” and then split these initial codes into specific belief codes in the second phase of coding such as “poor academic achievement communication” and “good communication.” I created the sub categories “beliefs about communicating struggles,” and “beliefs about communicating academic achievement” because these were the major subjects both Debbie and Jackie spoke about, though they felt very differently. Finally, the sub categories were later combined to make the major category “guardians of struggling readers’ beliefs about school to home communication” because the sub categories worked together to create this holistic picture of Debbie and Jackie’s beliefs about Highland’s school to home communication.

Communicating struggles. Debbie felt dissatisfied with the communication of Highland, especially regarding Jimmy’s reading struggles. She never knew Jimmy was struggling so much with reading until she was called about this study. She explained in both her initial and closing interviews that she would like the school to do better communicating the struggles of students to the guardians so they can get the extra help their child needs.

Debbie: I think that maybe the school-

Sarah: Mhm

Debbie: -could um (long pause) communicate a little bit better-

Sarah: Mhm

Debbie: -to parents uh of children, not all children, but children who are havin’ a hard time.

Sarah: Yeah

Debbie: Let them know that, ‘hey, you know, maybe you wanna get a tutor.’

Sarah: Mhm

Debbie: And, we’ll work what we can here.

Sarah: Mhm

Debbie: Or we have an after-school program or somethin’ like that. Um to communicate a little better. (Interview 1)

Here Debbie explained that she felt the school could improve in their communication with parents of students who are struggling. She was frustrated that the school did not contact her about Jimmy's reading struggles because she would have sought out tutoring for him earlier had she known. She also emphasized that the school should let parents of struggling students know they are struggling so both the parents and the school can offer solutions, particularly tutoring, to the student.

Even though Jackie was also not contacted about Julia's struggles until she was called to participate in this study, she was much less bothered about it than Debbie. This may have been due to the fact that, according to Julia's QRI results, her struggles were relatively small when compared to those of Jimmy, or it could have been due to Jackie's relaxed personality. She may not like to stir up trouble. Regardless, Jackie only had good words to say about Highland and their methods of communication.

Sarah: Okay, well I think that um, well is there anything else you can tell me about the communication with the school? Anything else you can think of?

Jackie: Well now the communication is pretty good. If there is a problem, they let you know. And, that's good too because if they don't, then I'm sittin' here blind not knowin' what's goin' on. (Jackie, Interview 2)

Whereas Debbie was frustrated with the school about their lack of communication regarding Jimmy's struggles, in this excerpt, Jackie explained that she had no complaints. Jackie believed Julia had improved a lot in her studies since she transitioned from her previous school to Highland this year, and Jackie was happy with the results. She felt the school had been helping Julia more and that Julia's grades were going up. She explained that she was happy the communication was so good at Highland because if it were not, she would be unaware of problems. Jackie seemed confident that she had all the

information she needed, though there was much about the school process and decisions she was not privy to.

Communicating academic achievement. While Jackie seemed to be happy with the modes of academic achievement communication at Highland, Debbie was mostly unsatisfied. She explained that the school spent too much time communicating with parents about behavior problems and not enough time on academics.

Debbie: too much focus on behavior and not enough on academics (Debbie Interview 2)

...

Debbie: I think that the teachers or the principal or the assistant principal, somebody needs to communicate a little bit more, other than when there is a behavior problem. Uh, when there is a behavior problem they are (snaps loudly) right on the phone. Sorry (apologizes for loud snap). They they're they're right on the phone right then. But, when their grades are bad or they need a little extra help, they wait 'til it's too late to say, or they say, they're not tryin' hard enough. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Here, Debbie conveyed that she believed if the teachers had the time to immediately pick up the phone and call her about Jimmy's behavior, they should have enough time to pick up the phone and call her about his reading struggles, but they always waited to communicate until it was too late to help Jimmy improve or they attributed his poor performance as a lack of effort. She wanted the school to approach her equally as quickly about Jimmy's academic performance and work with her to solve the problem.

Though Debbie felt Highland needed to improve on their communication of academic achievement, she believed their communication strength was in their monthly newsletter. She believed the school did a good job communicating what was happening at school.

Debbie: The best thing would be that they send home a monthly paper that tells about all the activities and all the grades. That gives you an update on what the kids are doin' and stuff. That don't pertain to their grades though. (Debbie, Interview 2)

Here, she explained that the monthly newsletter was good at updating her about what Jimmy was doing in his classes at school, but the newsletter did not provide her with information specific to Jimmy's academic performance. Furthermore, it seemed that Debbie did not always read every bit of the newsletter, as she missed important information about ThinkLink testing and parent teacher conferences included in those letters.

Debbie also mentioned that the way the school handled the distribution of state testing results was ineffective. She found it rather frustrating because the communication was so delayed that it could not be used to do anything productive. By the time she received notice of Jimmy's scores, he had already been back in school for almost an entire semester and had no way of knowing if he was struggling. She conveyed that she would prefer to have the results much sooner so she can react with tutoring or other services if Jimmy is behind. However, the lack of communication made it impossible to really know where he stood.

Debbie believed communication would be greatly improved if assessments were communicated in a timelier fashion and if teachers contacted parents about their student's academic achievement quicker and more frequently. She also explained that she believed teachers should reframe the way they suggest guardians help with struggling students:

Debbie: It's never 'okay we need to get her in here and sit down and figure out all of us what WE can do to help him.' Because it's always like 'okay why don't you try at home makin' him read an extra thirty minutes. Why don't you try AT HOME to make him do this or try takin' somethin' away from him until his grades come up. You know, it's always 'why don't YOU.' It's never 'okay well if

you try this, we will try this at school. And, with both of us working together we'll get him back on track.' And, um, that don't happen' a lot. (Debbie, Interview 1)

Here, Debbie conveyed that she was irritated that the school seemed to always ask her to fix the problem rather than explain what they were going to do to help her grandson. She was frustrated that the school never offered to work with her and devise a plan for mutual effort to improve Jimmy's academic performance. The school's communication tended to suggest the parent was the one who needed to fix the problem, and never offered to collaborate with the guardian to get the student back on track. Highland communicated in a way that suggested Jimmy's struggles were Debbie's problem and not the problem of the school, whereas Debbie wanted the school to work with her like a team and take some responsibility for giving Jimmy the extra support he needed.

However, Highland Elementary School did not provide Jimmy with the literacy supports that he needed. Jimmy was struggling in school, yet the school staff seemed to chalk up his struggles to behavior issues rather than his abilities. This was particularly evident in the comments made about his sloppy writing and the points deducted (See Figure 5.3) when Jimmy clearly had difficulty putting pen to paper. Over the course of four months, I observed Jimmy write during nearly every session. I observed the painstaking effort it took for him to write legibly and Jimmy conveyed that he sometimes wrote sloppy because it took too much time for him to write neatly.

Sarah: What do they (the teachers) say about your writing?

Jimmy: If I had a paper, I would show you. They write, 'it's sloppy' on it.

Sarah: Who?

Jimmy: My writing teacher, READING teacher (in an effort to correct).

Sarah: Your reading teacher, Ms. Hopson?

Jimmy: Hopson

Sarah: Hopson. She's the one that says you're sloppy right? Do the other teachers ever say you are sloppy?

Jimmy: (shakes head no)
Sarah: They never say anything about your writing?
Jimmy: (shakes head no)
Sarah: Oh, okay. What do you think? Do you think your writing is sloppy?
Jimmy: Yeah
Sarah: Do you do your best?
Jimmy: Yeah!
Sarah: So it's your best and it's sloppy.
Jimmy: Yes.
Sarah: I see, Does it, it is...
Jimmy: When I write my best it takes forever.
Sarah: Oh, okay. And, that's sometimes why you just do it as quickly as you can?
Jimmy: (shakes head yes)

In this exchange, Jimmy explained that he did his best to write as well as he could, but it took a long time for him to write legibly, so he sometimes sped up to try to write in a reasonable amount of time. However, increased pace meant a decrease in legibility, and he was penalized with point deductions for this on many assignments, which had nothing to do with handwriting. He was aware that his writing was not the best, but he had to keep up with the work and this meant that his best writing at the speed he felt necessary to keep up was sloppy.

The way Jimmy's reading teacher handled the sloppy handwriting issue acted like a microcosm of Jimmy's school experiences. Jimmy was punished for his literacy struggles rather than supported in a way that would help him grow, as the IRA (1999) suggested. Whereas Julia was told she was a smart girl and was given additional literacy supports at school, Jimmy had points taken off his papers for "sloppy handwriting" and Debbie was told that he was not trying hard enough. Because he was in "B" group, no supports were provided to help him with his writing or reading struggles.

Guardian's Approaches for School Interaction

Because cultural capital became a central guiding theory to this study, it also became relevant to interpret the guardians' approaches to interacting with the school. As Lareau (1989) posited, a guardian's cultural capital can influence her or his level of comfort and confidence when interacting with school personnel. Understanding how Debbie and Jackie interacted with schools allowed me to interpret if or how cultural capital influenced those interactions. Thus, it occupied another major category of findings.

Though Debbie and Jackie were both grandmothers with custody of struggling adolescent readers, they had notably different methods for interacting with the school. While Debbie took an assertive, hands-on approach to communicating with schools, Jackie's approach was more reactive, as she believed the schools would contact her if there were any problems.

In the first cycle of analysis, I topic coded data that showed how each grandmother interacted with the school or said she interacted with the school using the codes "Debbie-approach to interacting with the school" and "Jackie-approach to interacting with the school." I did not feel it necessary to further merge into sub categories because Debbie and Jackie had such different methods for interaction. In many ways, they were direct opposites. Thus, I maintained the topic codes and only merged them into the major category "guardian's approaches for school interaction," as they were both guardians and both had their own ways of interacting.

Debbie and her in person, hands on approach. Debbie did not wait for the school to initiate communication with her. When she felt communication was necessary, she scheduled appointments or went directly to the school office to request meetings with teachers and principals, much like that of Jenny from Purcell-Gates' (1995) study. She had many such meetings in her attempt to advocate for her grandchildren or respond to behavior problems. For example, she experienced regular contact with schools over the years because Justin had ADHD and Jimmy had behavior problems. In fact, during the time of the study, Debbie went to the local high schools several times trying to get Justin enrolled in his middle school feeder though he was out of zone. Though she did not succeed in getting Justin enrolled out of zone, she made a concerted effort, and it demonstrated her persistent and hands on approach. Furthermore, Debbie made contact with Highland several times in an attempt to get Jimmy's reading abilities assessed. She contacted them to schedule meetings, went for meetings, and had phone conversations. Again, her efforts did not pan out in the way she had hoped, Jimmy's testing was put off until the following year, but she was not afraid to initiate contact with the schools and voice her opinions for her grandchildren. This was very similar to Jenny's interaction style from Purcell-Gates (1995). Though June came to Donny's school to advocate for him often, the school ignored her. It took Purcell-Gates stepping in with her cultural capital to get Jenny's wishes honored.

Jackie and her hands off, reactive approach. Unlike Debbie, Jackie tended to let schools make the first move when it came to communication. She believed the school would call if there was a problem and trusted they would do so. Of course, Jackie did not have near as many reasons as Debbie for initiating contact with the school because Julia

struggled less with reading and did not have the behavioral problems Jimmy was proposed to have. Thus, she may never have had a reason to contact the school, as she explained in her closing interview.

Sarah: How do you feel about contacting the school when you think there is a problem and they haven't talked to you about it?

Jackie: I just pick up the phone and I'll or I'll go down there.

Sarah: Tell me about a time that that's happened.

Jackie: Well, so far I haven't had to do it. (Jackie, Interview 2)

In this excerpt, Jackie conveyed that she was more than willing to call or visit the school if she thought there was a problem to be addressed, but thus far she had not because she never had a reason. Jackie did not seem to find it troubling that she was never officially informed of Julia's reading struggles by the school. She believed Highland Elementary was doing a better job with Julia than her previous school and trusted that everything was under control. The fact that she never felt she had a reason to contact the school, despite the fact she conveyed that she knew very little about Julia's reading struggles, illustrated her hands off approach. Jackie seemed to have a greater tolerance for lack of communication than that of Debbie. Thus, she and Debbie had very different beliefs about Highland and different styles of interaction.

For Jackie in particular, this seeming lack of concern for concrete information from Highland about Julia's reading ability also may have been a matter of cultural capital. With little knowledge about the inter-workings of modern school, she seemed to have little understanding about the ways in which tracking, reading intervention, and testing played out in Julia's education. This lack of knowledge left little room for her to critique school practices.

Presence of Accountability Era in the Lives of Struggling Reader Adolescents and their Families

Finally, the last major category concerned how the accountability era manifested itself in the lives of the SAR families through a heavy focus on state mandated testing in much of initiated communication. It was present in the way the school communicated school happenings, in the ways that services were rendered to struggling students, and in the parent teacher conferences. Testing and accountability seemed to provide a backdrop for many school to SAR family interactions. In order to capture this presence, I topic coded every utterance, written documentation, or observation that showed the presence of the accountability era in school to home interaction. This data was initially coded as “testing” because the presence of the accountability era was manifested in testing communication; it seemed to be everywhere. Through double coding the types of communication such as “newsletters” and “handouts” with “testing” communication, I created the major category “accountability era in interaction” to catalog all the different ways the accountability era was present in the lives of struggling adolescent readers and their families.

As explained earlier, the newsletter was a major source of communication between the school and the home. A significant amount of content in the letter was committed to discussing testing. This was most predominantly displayed in the “Principal’s Message” section but could also be located in blurbs from teachers following their updates about what was happening in the classroom (See Appendix E1-E5). Teachers consistently encouraged parents to help their children study for the test and they

often explained how the course curriculum prepared students to meet the expectations of the tests. The “Principal’s Message” content ranged from information about how Highland previously scored on the state tests, to parent resources for helping students prepare to the test, to information about the test and changes to the test (i.e computer writing tests). Testing was mentioned on nearly every page of the multi-page newsletter. It shaped the way the school communicated with families in that it became the major topic of discussion.

In addition to the newsletter, a special handout went home to the adolescents when testing time arrived and the school website had special resources available for test preparation. The handout informed guardians of the testing dates and encouraged them to help their children succeed by making sure they got a good night of rest, had a good breakfast, and ate a snack, and the school website had links for both parents and students regarding state testing preparation. In fact, nine out of the eleven links for parents had to do with state standards or state testing.

While tutoring services had not been offered for the rest of the school year, roughly two months before state testing would ensue, both Jimmy and Julia received communication about free after-school tutoring that would be offered twice a week for students who were in need. The letter explained that it would be more difficult for students to perform at expectations on this years’ test because it had increased in difficulty. Thus, specific children were “strongly encouraged to participate in the program” (See Figure 5.3). These services were offered directly in order to improve testing performance rather than simply to help struggling students. Testing characterized

the services offered to students who struggled and painted a picture that their improvement was only important because of test scores.

It seemed that nearly every avenue of communication from the school to the parents mentioned state testing in one way or another. Even student report cards had a blurb in bold font about how much the state tests would count toward the student's grade. The only mode of communication that included no interaction about testing was the phone calls for behavior. The accountability era was certainly present in the lives of the struggling adolescent readers and their guardians and was most evident in interaction about state standardized testing.

Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrated the findings and analytical processes of this research study. The first theme or family of findings answered the first research question: How does the family of a struggling reader engage in literacy practices at home? I found that the literacy practices of the Boyd and Sutton families largely mirrored the literacy practices of the families studied in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. e.g. Rogers, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenchein, 1995; Taylor & Doresy-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Heath, 1983). Like the families from previous studies, the Suttons and Boyds engaged in literacy for a number of purposes and in a number of ways. Specifically, they engaged in literacy primarily for functioning in daily life, but also for information, entertainment, and school at home purposes. A notable difference, however, was the way the Sutton grandparents regularly used technology as a medium for literacy engagement by seeking out interesting articles and information on their smart phones. Also, guardian reader identities and literacy conceptualizations informed a deeper

understanding of the family literacy environment. While there was much overlap between how the guardians and adolescents felt about their literate selves, the difference between Jackie and Julia's literacy conceptualizations (i.e. the breadth) supported the pliability of offspring reader conceptualizations.

The second section of this chapter addressed the research question: How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive and engage in school to home communication? The first set of major categories explored the various school to home communication practices experienced by the families. Highland Elementary School communicated with the families in a multitude of ways (i.e. written communication, face-to face-communication, and electronic communication) for a number of purposes (i.e. communicating academic achievement, behavior, and school happenings). However, the effectiveness of this communication was varied and the guardians' perceptions of this communication polarized. While Jackie trusted Highland Elementary and their decisions and did not question the lack of information she had about Julia's reading struggles, Debbie was highly unsatisfied with the communication practices. She believed the school could greatly improve the timeliness and effectiveness of communication, specifically concerning Jimmy's academic achievement, and was frustrated that she had not known the extent of Jimmy's reading struggles prior to this study. Furthermore, some important communication sent home regarding Jimmy's academic achievement was contradictory (i.e. his STAR testing and grade card) and the modes in which the school transmitted this information—sending STAR tests results home in student backpacks and visually overloading the newsletter so that important information was buried in less important information— was sometimes ineffective. In addition, the communication of academic

achievement practices, specifically concerning grouping, largely influenced Jimmy and Julia's scholastic identities. Both Julia and Jimmy constructed their scholastic identities in line with and seemingly in result of their grouping placements. The guardians' interactive styles and reactions to their perceptions of the quality of school communication were also very different. While Debbie took a hands-on, assertive approach, Jackie never believed there was a reason to contact the school, though she explained she would if she ever thought there was a problem.

Finally, in answer to the overarching question about school to home communication in the context of the accountability era, discourse related to standardized testing infiltrated nearly every facet of communication initiated to Debbie and Jackie from Highland Elementary School. This demonstrated a strong presence of the accountability era in school to home communication and interaction.

CHAPTER 6

Implications

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is first to discuss the findings and then to consider their implications for research and practice. In the first section, I discuss the findings related to the first research question and explain how the theories that framed the study connect to my findings and extend previous family literacy research. The next section addresses the findings related to research question two and similarly connects to theory and previous research. The remaining sections address suggestions for future practice, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

Family Literacy Practice

Research Question 1: How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader engage in literacy practices at home?

Introduction

There are many circumstances and events that can influence a student's scholastic identity and motivation, but families and schools play a pivotal role. Families are the first teachers of literacy, and literacy is often a social activity. Previous studies have found that children often model their literacy values and practices after those of their family members (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983). However, as students enter schools, their previously formed literate identities and conceptualizations are subject to influence from school experiences. If students do not perform schooled literacy to the expectations of the school, they quickly learn that they are not good readers, even if they are highly proficient in their families'

literacy uses. The schooled literacy experiences they encounter can shape the way they conceptualize literacy (Davis, 2009).

Family Literacy Practices of Two Modern Lower-Socioeconomic Families

Though this study took place more than twenty years after Heath (1983) and Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), and more than fifteen years since Purcell-Gates (1995) and Rogers (2003) collected their data, the Sutton and Boyd families engaged in literacy practices very similar to the lower socio-economic families described in those studies. Both families engaged in literacy for a variety of purposes, but the majority of those literacy practices, especially in the Sutton home, occurred for daily life functioning and school at home purposes.

The Sutton and Boyd families wrote at home primarily to correspond with Highland Elementary School or for financial reasons. Debbie Sutton wrote notes to the school when the boys were sick or when she needed to sign planners, and she wrote checks to pay bills. Jackie also read bills, wrote checks, and signed Julia's planner every night. Debbie and Richie read the newspaper daily and looked at online articles to acquire information and Jackie regularly read the newspaper and religious texts for information. Neither family read novels or stories on their own or to the children, and the children only read when it was assigned by the school, such as when Jimmy had to perform oral readings to Debbie for homework until third grade. Like the Trackton and Roadville families of Heath's (1983) study and like the urban poor families with which Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) worked, the adults did not engage in story time with their children, but they did engage in literacy for an array of purposes on a daily basis.

One major difference in the literacy engagement between the Sutton family and the families of previous studies was the use of technology for literacy purposes. Debbie and Richie Sutton used their smart phones and computer to look up information online and entertain themselves with quizzes or articles about ‘unusual stuff.’ This was a mode of family literacy not addressed by researchers such as Heath, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, Purcell-Gates, and Rogers because technology has advanced drastically since the 1980s and 1990s when they collected their data. It is a relatively new way to engage in literacy at home, as information is readily available at one’s fingertips through electronic devices and seems to be a form of family literacy engagement that remains minimally explored. In the Sutton home, technology provided an easily accessible medium for interacting with text. Rather than having to visit a library to look up information, the Suttons could quickly find information using a search engine. As they engaged with literacy through technological mediums much more than through books, I would speculate that their literacy engagement increased as a result of this access.

Family Literacy Influences

Like previous studies on family literacy (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995; Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983), Jimmy and Julia seemed largely to draw their level of engagement with reading from their families. The Suttons preferred to read informational texts, and this was also the case with Jimmy, who enjoyed reading about cars and racing. As a child, Jackie always preferred to be outside playing than inside reading, and this was also true for Julia. Both Julia and Jackie enjoyed a good fantasy or fictional book on occasion, though Julia would not engage in reading one unless it was assigned. Both adolescents seemed to largely mimic the literacy practices of

the adults in their families, further supporting the idea that family literacy is the first and most influential factor in developing an individual's own literacy practices (Auerbach, 1995).

Family Literacy and Reading Conceptualizations

Though it appeared that the adolescents modeled their reading practices after their guardians, their conceptualizations of reading were not dependent on those of their guardians. An interesting finding from Julia was that her conceptualizations of reading were much wider than Jackie's. While Jackie's conceptualizations did not initially include reading and writing for daily life functioning, Julia's conceptualizations included these experiences, including: reading video games, reading road signs, and reading and writing on calendars. This finding showed that children can develop their conceptualizations from resources other than their guardians, and further supported the findings of Davis (2009), who suggested that schooled literacy practices have the power to influence a child's conceptualizations of literacy.

An implication of this finding is that, though little seemed to change in the way the families engaged in literacy practices at home since the 1980s and 1990s, the bridge between family and schooled literacy first discussed by Taylor (1983) and later by Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995) was not present between the Sutton and Boyd families and Highland Elementary School. Most of the schooled literacy experiences Julia and Jimmy described did not correlate with their family literacy practices and were not particularly positive experiences.

Similarly to the findings of previous studies on lower income family literacy practices (e.g. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Heath, 1983) which documented that

many of these families do not participate in storytime, but rather engage in literacy use for authentic purposes, reading books to children was not a family literacy practice. The Boyd and Sutton families mainly engaged in literacy to complete daily life tasks, to keep up with current events via the newspaper, or entertain and inform themselves with religious texts or online articles that were interesting or served some informative purpose.

Family Literacy and Schooled Literacy Disconnect

The literacy practices of the Boyd and Sutton families did not translate to the literacy events Jimmy and Julia described as happening at school (Bordieu, 1977). According to Julia and Jimmy, in reading class, students usually read a brief passage and answered questions afterward. Furthermore, most of the graded work I reviewed from reading class were the workbook passages and questions the adolescents described. They usually had to do with social studies or science and there seemed to be very little overlap with the daily life literacy in which Jimmy and Julia observed their grandparents engage (See Appendix F1-F3). Jimmy and Julia did not speak of learning literacy skills that correlated with what they observed at home, such as reading a newspaper, learning how to read for financial practices or reading online articles for enjoyment, nor did I see any work that evidenced such a correlation. Reading passages for information, for which the students later answered questions, was the most closely related activity. Yet, at home, adults never used the information they read to simply answer a list of questions. This made schooled reading seem like a useless task unconnected to the real lives their families were living.

Schooled Literacy Influences

Schooled Literacy and Motivation

Julia and Jimmy's schooled literacy experiences also did not seem to foster a desire to engage with texts at home. The students had almost no choice in what they read at school, had few positive experiences with books they read at school, and had poor reader identities. The IRA (1999) suggestions for providing adolescents with books they can and want to read did not seem to be a practice utilized by the fifth grade-reading teacher at Highland. On occasion, if there was time, Jimmy and Julia could choose to read an Accelerated Reader (AR) book and answer questions about it. Jimmy explained that they almost never read books in reading class and could only recall reading one book in class the entire year. As can be explained by the Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), he chose not to participate in AR because he did not see a point; he was not able to quickly acquire points like the other children. Julia claimed that most AR books she read were boring, and she seemed to mostly participate because she was motivated by the points and external rewards for those points. AR books were the only types of books Julia was allowed to choose to read at school, and those choices were limited to what was available within Julia's determined book range. Julia may have been able to choose from an array of preselected books for AR, but she rarely found those books interesting, thus she had few positive experiences with reading and her poor reader identity stayed intact. Clearly Glasser's (1997) Choice Theory proposition that coercion is ineffective in fostering motivation rang true for her. Reading did not become a part of Julia's quality world as a result of extrinsic rewards from the program because her choices were relatively limited.

Identity is heavily intertwined with motivation and motivation is often greatly influenced by one's expectations for success (Stanovich, 2009; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation seemed to explain much of Jimmy's reading behaviors. He did not believe he could be successful with AR because he was a slow reader, and he expressed that the other kids had many books read where he had none, so he did not participate. This was also characteristic of his overall attitude toward reading. He did not like reading because he rarely had positive experiences with books and was rarely successful when reading. Like the boys from (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004), Jimmy enjoyed doing what he was good at, like learning about muscle cars, and reading was not on this list. Over the course of the study, I completely raided the local library for every age-appropriate book I could find that related to muscle cars, NASCAR, and tractor pulling for tutoring. These were the only books he was interested in reading and, according to Jimmy, they were not offered at school. Jimmy did not perceive school as a place that valued his reading interests (Glasser, 1997), and he did not expect to do well (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Therefore, he did not read often at school or at home, which meant that he continued to do poorly and his reader identity remained stagnant (Stanovich, 2009).

The lack of positive schooled reading experiences seemed to contribute to Jimmy and Julia's overall low reading motivation and poor reader identities. They did not enjoy the type of reading activities they did at school and they very rarely came into contact with a book they wanted to read or enjoyed reading. Thus, reading was "boring" and "hard."

Schooled Literacy and Reading Conceptualizations

These schooled reading experiences also seemed to shape the way Jimmy and Julia formed their conceptualizations of schooled reading (Pennington, 2004). Both struggling adolescent readers believed that schooled reading meant reading passages and answering questions, a somewhat narrow view of reading. The purpose of reading at school was singularly to answer the questions correctly, either for an in-class assignment or for participating in AR. Luckily for Julia, she picked up an expanded conceptualization of reading from somewhere, but Jimmy's conceptualization of reading remained narrow.

Perceived Interactions Between School and Home

Research Question 2: How does the family of a struggling adolescent reader perceive the school's communication practices?

Because families so strongly influence the reading behaviors and values of offspring (Morrow, 1995; Auerbach, 1995), the bridge between schooled and family literacy described by Heath (1983) is a necessary connection for developing a literate individual. Students are more likely to believe that literacy is a worthwhile endeavor when they see the school teaching literacy skills in which they have observed their guardians engage.

Technology Access and Communication

Technology has become an increasingly important tool for communicating. The Internet has opened up an array of ways to disseminate information quickly and effectively through email, websites, and text messages. However, as schools continue to utilize technological resources for communication, they must not forget that some families do not have regular access to computers and may not be technology literate.

Highland Elementary School provided several means for families to communicate using such technologies, but Jackie did not have access to these modes of communication and was unable to personally benefit from resources like ParentPortal, class websites, and email. She was frustrated that the schools seemed to assume she had access though she repeatedly informed them that she did not, and there were no other means for her to acquire this type of information.

Highland communicated with families through technology in several ways, and this was no doubt a positive mode for providing school to home interaction for many, but this method also excluded the participation of families like Julia's with no computer or Internet at home. Families that could not afford a computer or that were not technology literate were thereby receiving less communication than those privileged enough to have access to such technology because there was no alternate route to access the same information.

Cultural Capital and School to Home Interaction

Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) is reinforced through school institutions in multiple ways. For one, the privileged have the power to determine what information, experiences, and behaviors are valuable. What is considered "good" or "valuable" culture in public schools reflects the values, practices, and experiences of the privileged. Thus, it is privileged children who are most prepared to transition into public school. Second, and importantly to school to home interaction, school staff in power positions, such as administrators and teachers, hold cultural capital through their level of education. Therefore, parents who do not have this level of education or do not have monetary or political power are less willing or apt to engage in interaction with school staff (Lareau,

1989). Cultural capital is a force that provides privileged parents or guardians with the confidence and wherewithal to interact with schools (Rogers, 2003; Lareau, 1989; Bordieu, 1977). Like Jenny from Purcell-Gates (1995) and June from Rogers (2003), Jackie and Debbie had similarly little cultural capital (Bordieu, 1977) to aid them in school to home interactions. They were not wealthy, they had only high school educations, and they had no experience working in or for schools, so they did not have much knowledge about school processes or the clout to negotiate with Highland Elementary. Like June from Rogers' (2003) study and Jenny from Purcell Gates' (1995) study, Debbie had strong feelings about Jimmy's literacy struggles and the lack of communication about those struggles on behalf of Highland, but she was unable to win a battle with the school staff.

Debbie wanted to have Jimmy formally tested by the schools so he could get the support services he needed, yet, also like June and Jenny, what she set out to accomplish was cast aside and neglected by the school system. Instead of beginning the testing process as Debbie wished, promises like that of an in-person meeting with the principal and Jimmy's teachers were unfulfilled, and instead a school psychologist phoned to tell her she did not think testing was necessary. The school psychologist, who had much cultural capital in her title and assumed level of education, was able to come up with numerous reasons not to test Jimmy, though none of them seemed rational. She began the argument by suggesting that Jimmy did not need to be tested because he was in B group and performed well in math and science. When Debbie resisted these assumptions on the basis that they had nothing to do with his reading ability, the school psychologist repeatedly suggested that Debbie wait until the next school year to start the assessment

process because the school year was coming to a close and there was not enough time to start the process. Eventually, Debbie conceded and said she would start the process at the beginning of Jimmy's sixth grade year. However, Debbie was completely unsatisfied with this decision and explained that it was now apparent she was on her own. If Jimmy were to get the additional help he needed, she would have to do all the work. It seemed that Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation also presented itself in this situation, as Debbie tried but was unsuccessful in achieving her goals, she became unmotivated to continue trying because she no longer believed she could expect the outcome she had hoped for.

Unlike Debbie, it was not Jackie's interactional style to be aggressive about her communicative desires. She believed that Highland Elementary School was doing its best and did not question their practices. Jackie trusted the school would call her if there were any problems. However, the school never called Jackie about Julia's reading struggles, nor did they explain to her how or why Julia was placed in C group versus another group. There was a lot of information about Julia's education and the way high impact decisions were made that Jackie did not know, and Jackie's lack of cultural capital made it difficult for her to realize that she should even have this information. Jackie had not been a student herself in a long time, and it had also been a long time since she parented a school-aged child, so she was not personally privy to the changes in U.S public schools and how those changes could ultimately influence Julia's future. She assumed that the school system knew best, and left it to them to make decisions.

Debbie and Jackie's lack of information and agency regarding the weighty educational decisions made for Jimmy and Julia were problematic. They came to school

interactions with little to no cultural capital, but the school withheld any capital that could be gained by limiting their access to important information. Highland Elementary School was not transparent about the results of state tests and how they were used to place the children in groups, nor were they transparent about Jimmy and Julia's academic struggles or how decisions about services were made. Because Debbie and Jackie were left out of the conversation for so long, they had little influential power to advocate for their grandchildren.

The implication of these findings is that, if guardians of struggling readers are not adequately informed of their student's academic performance, especially if they lack cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977), their autonomy to provide extra resources and to advocate for their student's academic well being is heavily compromised. As explained by Laureau (1989), lower income families are less likely than middle class families to challenge the authority of schools because teachers and principals have cultural capital through education and position. And, in the case of Jenny from Purcell-Gates (1995) study and Rogers (2003) study, and the present study, even when lower income families do challenge the authority of schools, they are disenfranchised and their wishes disregarded.

The results of this neglect can be disastrous for students, as evidenced by the case of Jimmy. Jimmy was a casualty from the lack of communication from Highland. Because Debbie was unaware that Jimmy struggled, she was unable to get him the help he needed before this study began, and he was receiving no services from the school. Jimmy was a fifth grader reading at a second and third grade level at the beginning of the study, yet his struggles remained unaddressed and they were already manifesting

themselves in other academic areas as evidenced by his drop in grades, yet Debbie was completely clueless that Jimmy struggled with reading. What is most interesting about the lack of prior communication is that at minimum his reading teacher knew he struggled with reading because she gave my gatekeeper Jimmy's name as a potential participant, but she never felt it necessary to contact Debbie before this study began. Additionally, she continued to highlight "on grade level" on Jimmy's report cards, though it was audibly apparent that Jimmy was absolutely not reading on par with his peers. By the end of the study, Jimmy made progress, but he was still lagging around one and a half grade levels behind in oral fluency; he had much ground left to gain. Julia, on the other hand, was reading with word recognition at an upper middle school level, oral fluency on grade level, and reading with exceptional prosody. She seemed to only need the extra practice, motivation, and identity shift to get on track.

So, in partial answer to Research Question Two, Highland elementary failed to interact effectively with the families of two struggling adolescent readers because they did not communicate or ineffectively communicated important information about student struggles, they sometimes conveyed confusing information about the students' academic achievement, they did not inform guardians about their children's state test scores until it was too late for them to be useful, they did not communicate how those scores were used to make weighty educational decisions, and they avoided acting on Debbie's wishes to assess Jimmy's reading ability.

Identity Theory and Communication of Academic Achievement

In this study, Highland played an important role in influencing the scholastic identities of Jimmy and Julia through an indirect mode of communicating academic achievement.

Highland Elementary School communicated academic achievement in a variety of notable ways. They sent home graded work, which sometimes included teacher notes, and they sent home progress reports and report cards on a regular basis. For parents who had access to technology, they also provided information about grades through ParentPortal and teachers could be contacted via email. There were many explicit ways guardians could stay informed about the grades their child was earning. But, there was also a less direct mode of communicating academic achievement, one that influenced student identity. A relatively inflexible indicator of academic achievement was communicated through group placement and movement. Students were sorted into groups that suggested academic ability, and Jimmy and Julia internalized these placements as reflective of their scholastic identities. Once a student was placed into a group, there was minimal chance for moving to another group because someone from the other group had to be available to switch. Thus, the placements communicated a fixed identity that was only moveable on rare occasion. For Jimmy, the threat to be moved down to “C” group was especially troubling since movement was so rare.

The way Highland Elementary communicated academic achievement to students influenced the way they felt about themselves as scholars. Jimmy and Julia were placed in a hierarchy of groups with names that indicated level of performance. Just as an “A”

on an assignment indicated the highest level of achievement, belonging to “A” group meant that a student was the highest achiever.

Julia was in “C” group, thus she believed she was a “C” student. She believed that students in “B” and “A” group were smarter, learned information easier, and got in trouble less because they valued completing their schoolwork. Julia aspired to be in “B” group, but she realized there was little fluidity between groups even though her math teacher told her she could be in “B” group if she tried hard enough. It seemed Julia’s group placement was used to motivate her to work harder, but it also shaped her beliefs about her academic ability.

Similarly, Jimmy’s group placement was used to motivate him to work harder, but in a negative way. Jimmy’s teacher threatened moving him “down” to “C” group if his grades did not improve. She told him that he needed to work harder. This was a serious blow to Jimmy’s identity as a smart student. He came home upset about the incident and assured Debbie that he was “not stupid.” Jimmy was never moved to “C” group, and Debbie was never contacted about the incident, but it influenced his self-perception no less. These findings suggested that the way a school communicates academic achievement to students, particularly in the form of tracking, could influence their identities.

Therefore, in further response to Research Question Two, although Highland Elementary explicitly communicated academic achievement to guardians through grades and parent teacher conferences, they also indirectly communicated academic achievement through group placement, and this placement influenced the scholastic identities of Jimmy and Julia. On the other hand, Highland did not adequately communicate all

aspects of academic achievement because they never explained the purpose or process of group placement or how and for what state testing results were used, nor did the teachers interact with Debbie about Jimmy's potential move from "B" to "C" group. Instead, they interacted directly with Jimmy, using group movement as a motivator or threat. Through group assignment and labeling, though it may not have necessarily been the intention, Highland communicated student academic ability and place on the scholastic totem pole.

Based on his prior performance, Jimmy did not believe he was a good reader or writer, and he did not expect to perform well when he engaged in either task. In the past, he had experienced difficulty reading and writing, and his handwriting was repetitively critiqued and punished for its perceived sloppiness. Jimmy was also often frustrated when engaged in literate activities because they were difficult, which made them unpleasant. Furthermore, his schooled literacy experiences were not particularly positive and did not encourage independent reading because he was not able to choose texts he enjoyed, and he saw no purpose in reading the materials assigned by school. Moreover, there was little link between the types of reading his family did and the schooled reading in which he participated, thus there was little expected value in schooled reading.

The Presence of the Accountability Era in Interaction Between School and Home

This study set out to understand how families of struggling adolescent readers engaged in literacy at home and interacted with their respective school systems, specifically within the context of the accountability era. I wanted to know if and how the accountability era shaped the interactions of struggling adolescent readers and their families, and I found that it was largely present in the interactions between school and home in the way state standardized testing infiltrated most communication. Nearly every

mode of school to home communication (i.e newsletters, notes about services, report cards, websites) had some remark, information or opportunity for test preparation. Of most pertinence for struggling adolescent readers, extra reading tutoring services were provided for Julia and Jimmy with the sheer purpose of improving test scores. A communicated desire to improve test scores seemed to replace communication of an authentic desire to help struggling readers succeed for personal enrichment.

So, in a final additional answer to Research Question Two, Highland Elementary School interacted with families of struggling readers in a way that propelled the significance of standardized testing and performance. Standardized testing was the subject or the sub-subject of a great deal of school initiated interaction with families, though the families did not necessarily understand much about testing or the high-stakes associated with the testing as a result of the communication. Instead, the communication focused on what parents and guardians could do at home to help their children prepare. This resonated with Debbie's major complaint about the style of communication from Highland when she said:

Because it's always like 'okay why don't you try at home makin' him read an extra thirty minutes. Why don't you try AT HOME to make him do this or try takin' somethin' away from him until his grades come up. You know, it's always 'why don't YOU.' (Debbie, Interview 1)

It seemed that Highland mainly communicated with guardians in order to seek some action on their part, to ask for assistance. The communication was relatively void of pertinent information for understanding their children's individual needs.

Implications for Practice

The findings and implications of this study suggest that schools should offer more transparent, frequent, and high quality communication about student achievement and

services, especially for students who struggle. Guardians should be made explicitly aware of their child's individual strengths, needs, and academic performance, so they can support their children in the best way they see fit. This means that schools should explain exactly how their children will be assessed, what their scores mean, and how those scores will be used to inform educational decisions; they should not wait for guardians to contact them.

In particular, assessment results should not only be disseminated in terms of scores, but in terms of skills. According to Debbie and Jackie, state standardized testing results explained where their child fell on a below basic, basic, proficient or advanced level, but the results did not explain exactly in which areas of the subject their child could improve. This left them completely unable to weigh in on the child's performance. Furthermore, schools should be more transparent about how they will use those scores to make important decisions. Debbie and Jackie had no idea how group placement decisions were made or how those decisions affected their children. Withholding such information from guardians is a direct means of withholding guardian cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

Moreover, schools should be forthcoming about the types of services they provide to struggling readers. Once a school has determined a student is struggling with reading, guardians should be immediately contacted and informed of the school's plan to assist that student. Explanation of assistance should go deeper than communicating that the child will receive pullout assistance. Instead, guardians should be informed of exactly how that assistance would meet the individual needs of their child and exactly what the instruction will be. If a school is using a scripted program, the school should be upfront

about the program being used and not mask it simply as a “reading group” or as “Tier Two” services. Guardians have a right to be cognizant of the instruction their child is receiving, a right to research that instruction as they please, and a right to remove their child from those services if they believe them to be ineffective. Tackling a student’s reading struggles should be, as Debbie proposed, a team effort where the school and family work together to meet the needs of the student.

In regards to expert assessment of reading difficulties, it should never be assumed that because a student performed well on a standardized test, that the student is a proficient reader. Jimmy’s struggles long flew under the radar because he performed well on standardized tests. However, Jimmy’s reading teacher knew he struggled with reading because she gave the gatekeeper her input on his selection for the study. If a teacher has an inclination that a student is a struggling reader, regardless of that student’s previous academic performance, an expert evaluator should assess that student’s reading ability. Jimmy’s reading struggles were largely ignored because he was tracked into “B” group, and his academic performance began to reflect that neglect.

The identities of students should be protected and nurtured, and schools and school staff must be careful in their influence of these identities. Highland Elementary was particularly haphazard with student scholastic identity in the way it so carelessly sorted and identified students by groups. If a school feels it absolutely necessary to track students, there should at minimum be some effort to mask the meaning of the groups. Identifying groups in relation to letter grade performance in no way attempts to protect the scholastic identities of students. Jimmy and Julia were highly aware of what their group label meant for them, and it unsurprisingly influenced their identities as they were

made to record the letter in the upper right hand of each submitted assignment. Schools should reflect on this practice and consider what it means to students, their perceived abilities, and their future motivation.

Schools should also consider building the bridge between family and schooled literacy proposed by Taylor (1983) and Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein (1995). If schools make the relationship between family and school literacy more apparent, students may develop a greater regard for schooled literacy because it is applicable to their lives and shows value for their culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This improved regard could then be used as a bridge to foster additional types of reading and writing. Concerning fostering intrinsic reading motivation, if schools aim to foster life-long readers, some semblance of choice and intrinsically motivating reading must be part of the curriculum. The IRA suggested that adolescent students have “access to a variety of reading materials they can and want to read” (IRA, 1999, p.4). Yet, Highland Elementary did not provide materials of that nature, and Jimmy and Julia had not developed positive reader identities or habits by the middle of their fifth grade year. While Accelerated Reader is designed to steer students towards reading materials they can read, the variety of books available were generally uninteresting to Jimmy and Julia. Thus, Julia read the easiest books she could to wrack up points, and Jimmy chose not to participate at all because the books were not books he wanted to read, nor did he expect to be successful reading them or taking the tests.

Finally, schools should make a strong effort to tame the testing talk in their school to home communication. Though educational reform has placed an exceptional amount of weight and stress on testing accountability and schools, schools should attempt to re-

focus some of their communication away from testing and back on to children. As suggested, transparent communication of the testing process, the scores, and the way the results are used should be explicitly conveyed to guardians. Also, information about preparing for those tests is a great way to keep parents informed about resources, but schools should keep a check on how much of their communication revolves around state testing. When nearly every form of communication with guardians mentions state testing preparation, it gives the impression that the school only cares about test scores. Surely this is not the message schools want to convey; the well being of children is more important than standardized tests.

Limitations

This study was conducted with two families over a four-month-period with one researcher. Thus, the study was limited to the observations, interviews, and interpretations carried out from a singular perspective. Furthermore, I entered the homes as a literacy tutor, so observations of home literacy practice were tertiary to the purpose of helping the struggling adolescent readers. While I was able to witness many of Jackie's literacy engagements because she situated sessions in the living room, I was unable to witness such engagements at the Sutton residence because Debbie suggested that the tutoring occur in the basement where Jimmy and I would remain undisturbed. Therefore, for the Suttons, information about their literacy practice was mainly derived from interviews and minimal observation as I came and left from sessions.

Also, in regards to findings on school to home communication, the study was limited to the information provided only from the families. I relied on documents, websites, and interviews to determine the nature and effectiveness of school to home

communication. Staff from Highland Elementary were not interviewed to provide an account of their communication methods and further triangulate this data.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research on family literacy should further explore the use of technology mediums such as phones and computers for literacy engagement. As the world continues to change, so do the means for accessing and engaging in literacy. Studies specifically focused on better understanding the changing modes in which families engage with literacy could produce important information useful for establishing the bridge between family and schooled literacy.

A second avenue for continuing research on family literacy includes analyzing the aforementioned bridge between family and schooled literacy. Future studies should examine family and schooled literacy in order to determine existing alignment and where additional alignment might be warranted. Studies of schools that do an exceptional job bridging literacy instruction between home and school might also provide valuable information about best practices for doing so.

Finally, future research on school to family communication should further examine the discourses used to communicate with families of students. This includes document analysis of paper communications, discourse analysis of parent teacher conferences, and research regarding the methods in which schools communicate students' reading struggles. Studies of this nature would shed additional light on the ways in which schools communicate with families and help them reflect on those practices.

Conclusion

Not only do our communities and our federal government need to increase financial and political support for adolescent literacy, families must work especially hard to show their children that they value literacy. Intrinsic reading motivation is often driven from the home, and students are more likely to value reading when their families' value reading and provide literacy rich environments (Guthrie et al., 2006; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Worthy, Patterson, Salas, Prater, & Turner, 2002). Parents, guardians, and teachers have enormous influence over their children's intrinsic motivation to read. Demonstrating value in reading cannot be solely accomplished by making children do their homework and read books. Actions do indeed speak louder than words and parents and teachers alike must take the time out of their busy lives to read in front of their children and show them the value through their everyday activities. Reading the newspaper, novels, bills, blogs, websites, and cooking instructions shows children how literacy is useful (Rogers, 2003). Every act of literacy counts.

If parents, teachers, communities, and the government can come together with the time, legislation, and funds necessary to construct literacy as a valuable cultural asset, we might have a chance at improving student literacy rates. However, until adolescents get the support they need from all stakeholders, the right support, we will continue to see the majority of our adolescents underachieving in reading and writing; this is an outcome we simply cannot afford to let continue.

References

- Albright, L. K., & Ariel, M. (2005). Tapping the potential of teacher read-alouds in middle schools. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48 (7), 582-591.
- Allen, J. (1999). *Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Allen, J. (2000). *Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to independent reading*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Allington, R. L. (2011). What at risk readers need. *Educational Leadership* 68(6), 40-45.
- Allington, R. L. (2006). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs* (2nd ed). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Allington, R. L. (2005). Ideology is still trumping evidence. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(6). 462-468.
- Alt, S. J., & Samuels, S. J. (2011). What is it and how should it be measured? In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Disability Research* (pp.173-181). New York: Routledge.
- Alvermann, D. E., Hagood, M. C., Hughes, P., Williams, K. B., & Yoon, J. (2007). Telling themselves who they are: What one out-of school time study revealed about underachieving readers. *Reading Psychology* 28(2), 31-5.
- Alvermann, D. E., Young, J. P., Green, C., & Wisenbaker, J. M. (1999). Adolescents perceptions and negotiations of literacy practices in after-school read and talk clubs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(2), 221-264.
- Anfara, V. A., Brown, K.M. & Mangione, T.L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making research process more public. *Educational Researcher*, 31(28). 28-38.

- Angers, J., & Machtmes, K. (2005). An ethnographic case study of beliefs, context factors and practices of teachers integrating technology. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(4), 771-794.
- Auerbach, E.R. (1995). Which way for family literacy: Intervention or empowerment? In L.M. Morrow (Ed.) , *Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities* (pp.11-27). New Brunswick, NJ: International Reading Association.
- Baker, L., Serpell R., & Sonnenschein, S. (1995). Opportunities for literacy learning in the homes of urban preschoolers. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.), *Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities* (pp.236-252). New Brunswick, NJ: International Reading Association.
- Bakken, J. & Whedon, C. (2002). Teaching text structure to improve reading comprehension. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 37(4), 229-233.
- Barone, D. (2011). Case study research. In N. Duke & M. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy Research Methodologies* (pp.7-27). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*. London: Sage.
- Booher-Jennings, J. (2006). Rationing education in an era of accountability. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(10). 756-761.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel & A.H. Hasley (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education*. (pp. 487-511). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bransford, J., & Johnson, M. (1972). Contextual prerequisites for understanding: Some investigations of comprehension and recall. *Journal of Verbal Learning & Verbal Behavior*, 11(6), 717–726.

- Bromley, K. (2007). Nine things every teacher should know about words and vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(7), 528-537.
- Bush, B. (1995) Forward by Barbara Bush. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.) , *Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities* (pp.ix-x). New Brunswick, NJ: International Reading Association.
- Caskey, M.M., & Anfara, V.A., Jr. (2007). *Research summary: Young adolescents developmental characteristics*. Retrieved December 20th, 2013 from, <http://www.nmsa.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/DevelopmentalCharacteristics/tabid/1414/Default.aspx>
- Cantrell, S.C., Almasi, J.F., Carter, J.C., & Rintamaa, M. (2011). *Striving readers final evaluation report: Danville, Kentucky*. Washington, D.C: United States Department of Education. Retrieved October 22, 2013 from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/danvilleeval32011.pdf>
- Chall, J. & Jacobs, V. (2003). The classic study on poor children's 4th grade slump. *American Educator*, 27 (1), 14-15.
- Chall, J. & Snow, C. (1982). *Families and literacy: The contribution of out of school experiences to children's acquisition of literacy*. Final report. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.
- Channell, M.M., Loveall, S.J., & Conners, F.A. (2013). Strengths and weaknesses in reading skills of youth with intellectual disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 34, 776-787.
- Clary, L.M. (1991). Getting adolescents to read. *Journal of Reading*, 34(5), 340-345.

- Common Core State Standards. (2012). *Common core state standards initiative: Preparing America's students for college and career*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/>
- Compton-Lilly, C.F. (2012). *Reading time: The literate lives of urban secondary students and their families*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Creswell, J. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cummins, J. (2008) Pedagogies for the poor? Realigning reading instruction for low-income students with scientifically based reading research. *Educational Researcher*. 36(9), 564–572.
- Daggett, W.R. & Hasselbring, T.S. (2007). *What we know about adolescent reading*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, International Center for Leadership in Education.
- Daniels, H., & Steineke, N. (2004). *Mini-lessons for literature circles*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Daniels, H., & Zemelman, S. (2004). *Subjects Matter: Every Teacher's Guide to Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Davis, H.S (2009). Student and teacher conceptualizations of reading: A metaphor analysis study of scripted reading interventions in secondary classrooms. (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest LLC*. Retrieved from ERIC
- Deeney, T. A. (2010). One-minute fluency measures: Mixed messages in assessment and instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(6), 440-450.

- Dennis, D. (2009). "I'm not stupid": How assessment drives (in)appropriate reading instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(4), 283-290.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Edmunds, K., & Bauserman, K. (2006). What teachers can learn about reading motivation through conversations with children. *The Reading Teacher*, 59 (5), 414- 426.
- Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S., Stahl, S., & Willows, D. (2001). Systematic phonics instruction helps students learn to read: Evidence from the national reading panel's meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(3), 393–447.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Erickson, B. (1996). Read alouds reluctant readers relish. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(3), 217-221.
- Erwin, J. (2005). "Put back the fun in classrooms." *The Education Digest*, 70(5), 14-19.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman.
- Fairhurst, A.E., & Good, L.K. (1991). The ethnographic case study: An experiential approach to teaching retail management. *Development in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises*, 18, 16-18.
- Faggella-Luby, M., Ware, S., & Capozzoli, A. (2009). Adolescent Literacy—Reviewing adolescent literacy reports: Key components and critical questions. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 41, 453-475.

- Fetterman, D.M. (2010). *Ethnography step by step*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 3.
- Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S., & Wong, L. (2000). For whom? Qualitative research, representations and social responsibilities. In N. K Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed, pp.107-132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2003). Writing instruction for struggling adolescents: A gradual release model. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(5), 396-405.
- Fisher, D. & Ivey, G. (2007). Evaluating the interventions for struggling adolescent readers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(3), 180-189.
- Fitzgerald, J. & Graves, M. (2004/5). Reading supports for all. *Educational Leadership*, 62, 68-71.
- Foorman, B.R., & Torgesen, J. (2001). Critical elements of classroom and small-group instruction promote reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 16, 203-212.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glasser, W. (1997). A new look at school failure and school success. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78, 596-602. Retrieved from Education Full Text database.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Goodall, H. L., Jr. (2000). *Writing the new ethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.
- Guthrie, J.T., Hoa, L.W., Wigfield, A., Tonks, S.M., & Perencevich, K.C. (2006). From spark to fire: Can situational reading interest lead to long-term reading motivation? *Reading Research and Instruction*, 45(2), 91-117.

- Hall, L. A. (2012). The role of reading identities and reading abilities in students' discussions about texts and comprehension strategies. *Journal of literacy Research, 44*(3), 239-272.
- Hall, L. A. (2008/2009). Understanding youth who struggle with middle school reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(4), 353-355.
- Hall, L. A. (2007). Understanding the silence: Struggling readers decisions about reading expository texts. *The Journal of Education Research, 100*(3), 132-141.
- Hall, L. A. (2006). Anything but lazy: New understandings about struggling readers, teaching, and text. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(4), 424-426.
- Hardy, K., & Sher, A. (2013, June 22). Teacher pay plan OK'd by Tennessee state board of education. *The Chattanooga Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2013/jun/22/teacher-pay-plan-okd-by-board/>
- Harkinson, J. (2008). Hooked on phonies: When pentagon contracting came to the education department, randy best cashed in. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2008/09/hooked-phonies>
- Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report, 17*(2), 510-517.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. (2003). The early catastrophe. *American Educator, 47*(1), 4-9.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Hauptli, M. & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2013). The federal role of adolescent literacy from Johnson through obama: A policy regimes analysis. *American Journal of Education, 119*(3). 373-404.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hildebrandt, D. (2001). But there's nothing good to read. *Media Spectrum: The Journal for Library Media Specialists in Michigan, 34*–37.
- Hua, Y.H., Woods-Groves, S., Kaldenberg, E.R., & Sheidecker, B.J. (2013). Effects of vocabulary instruction using constant time delay on expository reading of young adults with intellectual disability. *Hamill Institute of Disabilities, 28*(2), 89-100.
- International Reading Association. (1999). Adolescent literacy: A position statement. Retrieved June 22, 2013, from http://www.reading.org/downloads/positions/ps1036_adolescent.pdf
- Jacobs, V.A. (2008). Adolescent literacy: Putting the crisis in context. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*(1), 7-39.
- Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A Practice Guide* (NCEE #2008-4027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc.intervention.practices>.

- Kohn, A. (2000). *The case against standardized testing: raising the scores, ruining the schools*. Retrieved from <http://partnershipforsmarterschools.org/Case%20Against%20Testing%20Kohn.pdf>
- Kozen, A.A., Murray, R.K., & Windell, I. (2006). Increasing all students' chances to achieve: Using and adapting anticipation guides with middle school learners. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 41*(4), 195-200.
- Kuhn, M., Schwanenflugel, P. J., & Meisinger, E.B. (2010). Aligning theory and assessment of reading fluency: Automaticity, prosody, and definitions of fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly, 45*(2), 230-251.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LaBerge, D., & Samuels, S. J. (1974). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading. *Cognitive Psychology, 6*, 292-323.
- Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage*. NY: Falmer.
- Leslie, L., & Caldwell, J.S. (2011). *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370-396. Retrieved from <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>
- McKee, Ann Marie. (2011). "A story of high school inclusion: An ethnographic case study." (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Iowa, 2011. Retrieved from <http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/1247>.

- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, D., & McGrath, D. J. (2004). Who teaches reading in public elementary schools? The assignments and educational preparation of reading teachers. *Education Statistics Quarterly*, 6(3), 47-50.
- Moje, E.B., Young, J.P., Readance, J.E., & Moore, D.W. (2000). Reinventing adolescent literacy for new times: Perennial and millennial issues. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43, 400-410.
- Moje, E.B. (1996). "I teach students not subjects": Teacher student relationships as contexts for secondary literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(2), 172-195.
- Morrow, L.M. (1995). *Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities*. New Brunswick, NJ: International Reading Association. National Institute of Child Health and Development (2000). Teaching children to read: *An evidence based assessment of scientific research literature on reading and its implication for reading instruction*. (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Morrow, L.M., Paratore, J.R. & Tracey, D.H. (1994). *Family literacy: New perspectives, new opportunities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Newkirk, T. (2010). The case for slow reading. *Educational Leadership*, 67(6), 6-11.
- Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar10/vol67/num06/The-Case-for-Slow-Reading.aspx>
- Nichols, S.L., & Berliner, D.C. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high-stakes testing corrupts America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

- Nilep, C. (2006). "Code switching" in sociocultural linguistics. *Colorado Research in Linguistics*, 19.
- Olhausen, M.M., & Jepson, M.(1992). Lessons from Goldilocks: "Somebody's been choosing my books but I can make my own choices now!". *The New Advocate*, 5, 31-46.
- Paige, D., Rasinski, T.V., & Magpuri-Lavell, T. (2013). Is fluent, expressive reading important for high school readers? *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(1), 68-76.
- Paige, D. (2011). Engaging struggling adolescent readers through situational interest: A model proposing the relationships among extrinsic motivation, oral reading proficiency, comprehension, and academic achievement, *Reading Psychology*, 32(5), 395-425
- Pennington, J. L. (2004). *The colonization of literacy education: A story of reading in one elementary school*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Piantanida, M., & Garman, N. B. (2009). *The qualitative dissertation: A guide for students and faculty* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Purcell-Gates, V. (1995). *Other people's words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Reading First: Student Achievement, Teacher Empowerment, National Success*. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/reading/readingfirst.html>
- Priebe, S.J., Keenan, J.M., & Miller, A.C. (2010). How prior knowledge affects word identification and comprehension. *Springer Science + Business Media*, 25. 131-149.

- Ravitch, D. (2009). The future of No Child Left Behind: End it? or mend it? *Education Next*, 9(3), 48-56.
- Renaissance Learning (2013). *Parent's guide to STAR Assessments*. Retrieved from <http://doc.renlearn.com/KMNet/R0054872491706A8.pdf>
- Richards, L. (2009). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide* (2nd ed.), London: Sage.
- Riddle-Buly, M., & Valencia, S.W. (2002). Below the bar: Profiles of students who fail state reading tests. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24, 219-239
- Rissman, L. M., Miller, D. H., & Torgesen, J. K. (2009). *Adolescent literacy walk-through for principals: A guide for instructional leaders*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.
- Roberts, G., Torgesen, J.K., Boardman, A., & Scammacca, N. (2008). Evidenced-based strategies for reading instruction of older students with reading disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 23(2), 63-69.
- Rogers, R. (2003). *A critical discourse analysis of family literacy practices: Power in and out of print*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rupley, W. H., Logan, J. W., & Nichols, W. D. (1998/1999). Vocabulary instruction in a balanced reading program. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 336-347.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Sands, R. R. (2002). *Sport ethnography*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics
- Sinatra, R. (2000). Teaching learners to think, read, and write more effectively in content subjects. *The Clearing House*, 73(5), 266-273.

- Smith, C., & Kornblum, W. (1996). *In the field*. Westport, CT: Praeger
- Smith, M.W., & Wilhelm, J. (2004). "I just like being good at it": The importance of competence in the literate lives of young men. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 47(4), 454-461.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanovich, K.E. (2009). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Journal of Education* 189(2), 23-54.
- Stein, J. (2001). The magnocellular theory of developmental dyslexia. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 7, 12-36.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel and L. W. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33(1), 1.
- Taylor., D. (1983). *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write*. Exeter: NH: Heinemann.
- Taylor, D., & Dorsey-Gaines, C. (1988). *Growing up literate: Learning from inner city families*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Tedlock, B. (2003). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2, 165-213.

- Tierney, R.J. & Readance, J.E. (2005). *Reading strategies and practices: A compendium*, (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Topping, D., & McManus, R. (2010). *Stuck in the Middle: Helping Adolescents Read and Write in Content Areas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading? Content comprehension, grades 6-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- U.S. Department of Education (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act* (Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425). Retrieved June 16, 2013, from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>
- Valencia, S.W. (2010). Reader profiles and reading disabilities. In R. Allington & A. McGill-Franzen (Eds.), *Handbook of reading disabilities research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Valencia, S. W., & Riddle Buly, M. (2004). Behind test scores: What struggling readers really need. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(6), 520–533.
- Valencia, R.R., & Soloranzo, D. (1997). Contemporary deficit thinking. In R.R. Valencia (Ed). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Abingdon, Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Watt, D. (2007). On becoming a qualitative researcher: The value of reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 82-101.

- Wickstrom, C. D. (2004). High school students need more than mandated phonics instruction. *English Journal*, 93(5), 66-71.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J.S. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25. 68-81.
- Worthy, J., Patterson, E., Salas, R., Prater, S., & Turner, M. (2002). More than just reading: The human factor in reaching resistant readers. *Reading Research & Instruction*, 41, 177-202.
- Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research design methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT AND GAURDIAN PERMISSION FORM

Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Interaction in the Home and School

INTRODUCTION

You and your family are invited to become a participant in a study on family literacy interactions in the home and school. The purpose of this study is to gather information about how families of struggling adolescent readers interact around literacy while at home and when communicating with the school. Information will be gathered over the course of four months.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Adults: As an adult participant, you will be formally interviewed by Sarah Swauger two times for 30-45 minutes over the course of a four-month period. These interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The audio recordings will be protected in a secure location for four years and then destroyed. One interview will take place at the beginning of the study and another at the conclusion. In addition, you will be engaged in informal interviews and observations while I am in your home coming to and from the tutoring sessions or on the phone discussing study related matters. These informal interactions will not be audio recorded or videoed. You may also choose to allow me to accompany you to school meetings/events where your child's literacy skills are discussed. A separate informed consent will be signed if you elect to allow my observation of any specific meeting.

Struggling Adolescent: I will visit twice a week for four months. Each visit I will provide one-hour personalized tutoring sessions for your child. I will begin the study by assessing your child's literacy skills and interviewing her/him about her/his thoughts about reading. Your child will be formally interviewed two times. The first time will occur at the beginning of the study and the second at the closure of the study. These formal interviews as well as oral assessments and tutoring sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed. The audio will be protected in a secure location for four years. After four years, the audio will be destroyed.

Children: Any additional children in the home may become a part of the study of your family's literacy interactions. Other children in the home will be minimally observed within the home during tutoring sessions. They will not be interviewed. Children may only be observed if they sign an informed assent and have your consent.

RISKS

There are no risks of bodily injury, harm, or mental stress to any participant in this study. You are allowing me to interview and observe you and your struggling adolescent reader by your own choice and free will. You have been given a study information form to make an informed decision about your participation in this study. If at any time during this process you wish to discontinue, the researcher will immediately cease data collection and destroy all data collected in relation to you and your family.

BENEFITS

Public education policy makers and school personnel will benefit from further understanding regarding student and family experience with adolescent literacy struggles in the home and with the school system in the accountability era.

This study has the potential to be rewarding in that it will provide participants with opportunities to be heard. It also has the potential to be rewarding especially for the

adolescent struggling reader in that she or he will receive 32 hours of free bi-weekly expert literacy tutoring.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All participants will be given pseudonyms (fake names) to protect their identities. Hard copies of collected data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the principal investigator (113 Jane & David Bailey Education Complex, University of Tennessee) for four years. Digital copies of collected data will be kept on a password protected external hard drive for four years. Data will only be accessible by the principal investigator and her faculty advisor during this time.

_____ Participant's initials

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Sarah Swauger, at 113 Jane and David Bailey Education Complex, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37993, by phone at 423-839-7470 or by email sswauger@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your and your family's participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw yourself and your family from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, the data associated with you and your family will be destroyed.

CONSENT AND PERMISSION

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form and the research information form. I agree to participate in this study and I agree to the participation of my children.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMED ASSENT STATEMENT

Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Interaction in the Home and School

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to become a participant in a study on family literacy. The purpose of this study is to gather information about how families interact around literacy at home and at school. This study is four months long. We will begin the study by learning about your reading skills. Then, I will interview you to learn what you think about reading and school. From there, we will meet two times a week for one hour each session to work on your reading and writing skills. At the end of the study, I will interview you again.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

As a participant, you will be interviewed by Sarah Swauger two times for 30-45 minutes over the course of a four-month period. One interview will take place at the beginning of the study and another at the end. **Our sessions and interviews will be audio recorded, but I will protect your identity with a fake name so no one will know who you are.**

RISKS

There are no risks of bodily injury, harm, or mental stress to you. You are allowing me to interview, observe, and tutor you by your own choice and free will. You have been given an information form explaining the purpose of this study. Our sessions and interviews will be audio recorded for transcription (a write up of everything that was said). If at any time you want to stop being a part of the study, you can tell me and/or your guardian, and I will immediately stop the study and destroy all the information I got from you.

BENEFITS

People who make decisions about schools, teachers, and principals will benefit from knowing more about how you and your family interact around literacy at home and at school. This study has the potential to be rewarding because it will provide you with opportunities to be heard. It could also be very rewarding for you because you will get free literacy tutoring.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will give you a fake name to protect your identity so no one will know who you are. Paper copies of the information I get from you and your family will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the principal investigator (113 Jane & David Bailey Education Complex, University of Tennessee) for four years. Computer copies of the information will be kept on a password protected external hard drive for four years. The information will only be accessible by Sarah and her faculty advisor during this time.

_____ Participant's initials

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decide to stop without consequences. If you decide to participate, you may stop being a part of the study at anytime without getting in trouble or hurting anyone's feelings. If you stop participating, the information I get from you will be destroyed.

ASSENT

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign this paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH INFORMATION FORM

Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Interaction in the Home and School

The University of Tennessee Letterhead

Dear Participant:

I am conducting a research study to explore the interactions of families of struggling adolescent readers in the home and in the schools. As the principal investigator, I am writing to ask you and your family to consider participating in a four-month long study where I will become a bi-weekly visitor in your home as a literacy tutor for your struggling adolescent. As part of the study, I am also asking that you allow me to unobtrusively observe your family in meetings and other school functions that focus on the scholastic well being of your adolescent. This is not a requirement of the study, and you may choose to opt-out of this portion, but attendance to those meetings would help me make more meaningful interpretations of your interactions with the school. In addition to tutoring your student and observing school interactions, participation in the study will require two formal interviews with you and your student, as well as many informal interviews that will occur as I come and go from tutoring and visiting the school. Your interviews will focus on your thoughts about your adolescent's literacy practices and your interactions with her or his school. The interviews with your adolescent will focus on the same material from her or his perspective as well as reflection on the tutoring process. The information gained from this study will be used to submit for publication. Attached is a consent form that will provide you with important information to consider as you make a decision regarding your family's participation.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please feel free to contact me (423-839-7470).

If you decide to participate in the study, please sign the enclosed informed consent form and either mail or email the signed document to the addresses listed below.

I would like to extend my appreciation for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Sarah Swauger
Doctoral Student
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
The University of Tennessee

Mail:

Sarah Swauger
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
113 Jane & David Bailey Education Complex
1122 Volunteer Boulevard
Knoxville, TN 37996-3442

Email: sswauger@utk.edu

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 
KNOXVILLE
Office of Research & Engagement
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

1534 White Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697
fax 865-974-7400

March 6, 2014

IRB#: 9417 B

Title: Families of Struggling Readers in the Accountability Era: A Collective Ethnographic Case Study of Interaction in the Home and School

Sarah Swauger
Theory & Practice in Teacher Education
113 Bailey Education Complex
Campus - 3442

Stergios Botzakis
Theory & Practice in Teacher Education
A220 Bailey Education Complex
Campus - 3442

Your project listed above has been reviewed and granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is good for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project.
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,





Brenda Lawson
Compliances

Enclosure

Big Orange. Big Ideas.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER SAMPLE DECEMBER PAGE 1

[REDACTED] Connection

**Important
Upcoming
Dates:**

December 9th:
ThinkLink testing for K-2
DAR American History
Essay Contest Deadline
[REDACTED] at Home, 6:00
p.m.

December 10th:
ThinkLink testing cont. for
K-2

December 11th:
Police Pals - 3rd Grade

December 12th:
PTO - Winter Holiday
Program, 6:00 p.m.

December 13th:
[REDACTED] Spelling Bee


December 18th:
AR Movie Reward
Beta Club Initiation
Ceremony, 4:00 p.m.

December 19th: Day Game
[REDACTED] 11:30 a.m.
At [REDACTED]

December 20th:
Early Dismissal - 11:15
a.m.

December 23rd - Jan. 3rd:
WINTER BREAK

January 6th:
Return to School



Principal's Message


Each year the [REDACTED] Department of Education releases the state Report Card. This report gives grades to each school system and individual schools based on achievement and student growth data from one year to the next. Grades are given in the areas of reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Over the past three years, [REDACTED] has steadily shown improvement in all subject areas. This year was our best report card! Grades for [REDACTED] are:

Achievement:
Reading/LA - B
Math - C
Science - A
Social Studies - A

Student Growth:
Reading/LA - A
Math - B
Science - A
Social Studies - A

More information can be found at:
[REDACTED]

We are so proud of our students and teachers. Thank you for encouraging your child on this journey of continuous improvement!



[REDACTED] Romp


[REDACTED] Romp was a huge success this year! With the help of our community, parents, students, teachers, and staff we raised:


\$7,628.00!!!!

We have so many people to thank for helping to make our [REDACTED] Romp a great event, beginning with our community partners:

Shoney's Restaurant
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
K-Mart
Walmart
Walmart Distribution
Tom's Sporting Goods
[REDACTED]
OfficeMax
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
RadioShack



We had some terrific gifts to use as incentives this year!





APPENDIX E2

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER SAMPLE FEBRUARY PAGE 1



Connection

Elementary School
February 2014

Important Upcoming Dates:

February 3-28: Writing Assessment

February 6: 5th Grade Writing Assessment

February 7: Second Grade Nutrition Program, Fourth Grade Baking Contest

February 10-28: ELDA Testing

February 11: Meeting 7:00 P.M.

February 13: Valentine's Parties, 1:45 P.M.

February 13: First Grade Nutrition Program

February 14-17: President's Day Holiday, **NO SCHOOL**

February 17-21: Third Grade Writing Assessment

February 17-28: CRA Test, Phase 2

February 21: Spring Pictures and Class Pictures


February 24-28: Think Link, Test C-Grades 3-5

February 24-March 1: Fourth Grade Writing Assessment

February 28: End of Fourth Six Weeks

Principal's Message

Wow! It is hard to believe that the first month of 2014 is over. During February, our students in grades three through five will be involved in taking the state Writing Assessment. In past years, fifth grade students have been given a prompt to read and then asked to respond by writing a narrative story. This year students will read two complex informational texts and write two essays in response to the texts. In addition, students will be taking the assessment online. Our students have been preparing for online tests since the beginning of this school year with keyboarding instruction. Mrs. [redacted] has been teaching keyboarding classes to our students. This instruction has allowed our students to obtain the knowledge and skills needed for this assessment and also prepares students to be college and career ready. A strong elementary foundation put in place today will give our students the necessary tools to be successful and competitive in the 21st century. We believe preparing our students for a better today will lead to a brighter tomorrow.




Mrs. B. [redacted] Wins Teacher of the Year

Mrs. [redacted] is this year's Teacher of the Year for [redacted]. Mrs.



B. [redacted] has fifteen years of teaching experience. She has been at [redacted] 14 years. Mrs. [redacted] recently represented [redacted] County at [redacted] Leadership Summit where she presented to a group of 600 administrators. The title of her presentation was [redacted]. Her classroom is a model in [redacted] County for Common Core instruction. Mrs. [redacted] holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from [redacted] College and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of [redacted]. Congratulations Mrs. [redacted]. We are proud of you!

Spelling Bee Winners

This year our [redacted] Spelling Bee winners are [redacted], runner-up and [redacted] 1st place. [redacted] went on to represent [redacted] at the countywide Spelling Bee and placed 3rd in the county. Congratulations to our winners!



SCHOOL NEWSLETTER SAMPLE FEBRUARY PAGE 4

Connection

Elementary School

February 2014

predicates and reviewing skills from the first of the year.

Fourth Grade

Science: Earth science/ weather, climate and erosion


English: Adverbs and adjectives

Writing: Students are preparing for the writing assessment online, February 25, 26, and 27

Social Studies: Revolutionary War

Math: Multiply by 2 digits and divide by one divisor

Special Events:



4-H baking contest
Friday, February 7th


Fifth Grade

In Mrs. C's math class, the students are adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions. They are learning different solution paths to solve mathematical problems. In Mrs. 's writing class, the students are preparing for the writing assessment. In addition to language, comma usage, and verb tense. Dr. 's social studies classes began learning what "Life on the Great

Plains" was like and how homesteaders built houses without trees and stones. Mrs. H's reading class is focusing on the genre of fairy tales. Skills will be: making predictions, compare and contrast, simile and metaphor. Ask your child to show you their color-coded paper with scores for THINK LINK tests, AR goal progress, and STAR reading growth.

Fifth grade reminders:

- Safety Patrol, Flag Detail, and Recycle Team: All
- Candy money and candy due Monday, February 3rd.
- Be prepared each day for instruction.
- Read 20 minutes a day at home.
- Do assigned homework.
- Be good leaders.




Counselor's Corner

Healthy self-esteem is like a child's armor against the challenges of the world. Kids who know their strengths and weaknesses and feel good about themselves seem to have an easier time handling conflicts and resisting negative pressures. In contrast, kids with low self-esteem can find challenges to be sources of major anxiety and frustration. Those who think poorly of themselves have a hard time finding solutions to problems. Self-esteem is similar to self-worth (how much a person values himself or herself). Self-esteem also can be defined as feeling capable

while also feeling loved. Parents and caregivers can promote healthy self-esteem by showing encouragement and enjoyment in many areas.

Parents can help to foster healthy self-esteem in a child by:


- Being careful about what you say.
- Being a positive role model.
- Identifying and redirecting inaccurate beliefs.
- Being spontaneous and affectionate.
- Giving positive, accurate feedback.
- Creating a safe, loving home environment.
- Helping kids become involved in constructive experiences.




Stomp!

Mark your calendars now and get your Giddy-up on for the Stomp! Friday, March 14th. This year, instead of paying a fee at the door, we will be asking for donations of non-perishable food items for FOOD ON FOOT. So sashay on over to the gym for a stompin' good time!

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER SAMPLE MARCH PAGE 1



Connection



March 2014

Important Upcoming Dates:

March 3-21: Yearbook Sales

March 3-7: ThinkLink for Grades 3-5

March 4: End of Fourth Six Weeks, Fifth Grade Field Trip - _____ Symphony at _____

March 6: Parent-Teacher Conferences, 3:15-6:15

March 9: Daylight Saving Time Change

March 10-14: ThinkLink for Grades K-2

March 12: Grade Card Day, Deadline for AR Pizza Reward

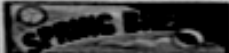
March 14: Fourth Grade Trip to _____

March 14: _____ 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Jump Rope for Heart Money Due

March 18: Modern Woodmen Speech Contest

March 19: AR Pizza Reward Party

March 21: Third Grade Trip to _____

March 24-28: 

Principal's Message


As we approach the end of the fourth six weeks and prepare for _____ tests in April, many parents ask how they can assist their child at home. Schools traditionally have given parents recommendations, like using flashcards, for reinforcing learning at home. Teachers' recommendations now include technology - apps and websites that students can use to practice math, reading and other skills.

Many online resources have been purchased and are available to all of our students at any time. We encourage our parents to make time for your child to use these mobile applications. Your child has used these at school and is familiar with the content.

Here are websites available 24/7:

www.studyisland.com
www.tickettoread.com
www.bxl.com
www.myon.com
www.readingeggs.com (only for Kindergarten)

Encourage your child to practice tested skills at home with these fun and engaging sites. The results will be amazing!




Planning for Your Child's College Education

It is never too early to get started planning for your child's future education. In fact, a 2011 research study conducted by the Center for Social Development at Washington

University in St. Louis concluded that "youth who expect to graduate from a four-year college and have a college account are approximately seven times more likely to attend college than youth who have no account". _____ is a way to put aside a little money every month to help save money for college. For further information, check out the _____ website at _____

Pennies for Patients



Thanks to each of you for making Pennies for Patients a successful program this year. Pennies for Patients mission is to cure blood cancers and improve the lives of patients and their families. It is amazing that we were able to collect over \$1,855 in donations. The winning classrooms were Mrs. _____ class and Ms. _____ class. Three other classrooms had donations in excess of \$100: Mrs. _____ class, Mrs. _____ class, and Mrs. _____ class. Thank you for your generosity! Each and every penny counts!

APPENDIX E5

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER SAMPLE MARCH PAGE 2



Connection

March 2014

Coming March 14th



Please make plans to join us for a stompin' good time on March 14th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. This year we are asking each family to bring a non-perishable food item to give Food On Foot. Food on Foot is a faith-based organization that helps needy families in the community by providing food and other necessary items. There is no fee at the door so plan to come and "dance the night away".

Grade Level News

Kindergarten

Kindergarten skills assessed during fifth six weeks:

- *Simple addition
- *Identify sounds in words (phoneme segmentation)
- *Use sensible beginning/ending sounds in writing.
- *Sequence of events

*Recognize value and name of coins (quarter, dime, nickel, penny)

Ongoing Skills:

- *Number and number word recognition (0-25)
- *Counting (Goal - 100)
- *Identify and produce rhyming words
- *Color words
- *Sight words

Please practice at home.

We are also preparing the students for the SAT-10 test that will be given during _____ week for the upper grades. There will be word reading, sentence reading, letters/sounds, math, and listening comprehension. We are working hard to make sure your child is prepared for this assessment. Please continue to practice sight words and read with your child at home. Practicing just 15 or 20 minutes each night will have a great impact on your child's reading and writing skills. Evidence of practice is supported by their success in the classroom.

We need your support and dedication at home to help your child be successful in the classroom!

First Grade

We are currently working on adding and subtracting double-digit numbers, and main idea/key details from a story. Also, students are being encouraged to read and complete AR tests. We are doing SAT 10 test preparation for our students to help them feel more comfortable with the format and the testing environment.

Second Grade

- *2-Step Word Problems, Measurement of Length, Asking and Answering Questions
- *Reading-Opinion Writing
- *Language-Prefixes and Suffixes

*Science-Cultural Diversity

Third Grade

Science: Matter and its states, energy and mixtures
Social Studies: Conflict and cooperation, citizen impact on community, state and world, global concerns
Math: Measurement, elapsed time, charts and graphs
Reading: Distinguishing our own point of view from that of the narrator or characters in a third grade text, asking and answering questions to improve our comprehension
Writing: Third graders are working hard reviewing skills learned throughout the year in language and writing. Please see and review nightly skill practice assignments with your child. Review games will be on Thursdays with tests on Fridays. Our third grade authors are working on writing analytic summaries and compare / contrast and opinion pieces based on text.

Fourth Grade

Reading: Text Features, Character Analysis, Close Reading in Literature
Social Studies: Westward Expansion (Lewis and Clark), Economics (Supply and Demand), and the Industrial Revolution
English: Adjectives and Adverbs, Homophones
Writing: Research, Define and Narrow a topic, Different Sources, Rank Reliability of Sources

APPENDIX F1

JIMMY'S READING CLASS POST PASSAGE QUESTIONS SAMPLE 1

Questions for Love That Chocolate!

1. At what time during the year are chocolate beans harvested?
all year long.

2. How long does it take for a pod of chocolate beans to ripen?
about 6 months.

3. Could you grow a cacao tree where you live? Why or why not?
No because it is not hot.

4. Before the Spanish came to Mexico, the Native Americans who lived there made a special drink with chocolate. How else did they use chocolate beans?
as money

5. What ingredients did the Spanish use to make chocolate drinks?
orange water, white rice powder
cloves, and spices.

6. In what section of the food pyramid does chocolate belong?

The diagram is a food pyramid divided into six sections. The top section is a triangle labeled 'fats and sugars'. The second section is divided into two parts: 'dairy' on the left and 'meats' on the right. The third section is divided into two parts: 'vegetables' on the left and 'fruits' on the right. The bottom section is a rectangle labeled 'grains'. A red circle and arrow point to the 'fats and sugars' section.

APPENDIX F2

JIMMY'S READING CLASS WORD TEST SAMPLE

Devising a Dam		Word Test
Dams have helped (1) <u>people</u> use water as a resource (2) <u>since</u>		82
ancient times. Dams harness water for such things as irrigation, flood control, water		+1
storage, conservation, and power. Water power is particularly (3) <u>important</u> .		83
Water is (4) <u>sent</u> through gigantic turbines to generate electrical		
(5) <u>energy</u> . Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia (6) <u>River</u> is one of		
the greatest power producers in the (7) <u>would</u> (8) <u>It's</u> made of	-2	
concrete and, like other (9) <u>strong</u> dams, the convex side is by the water		
source. The dam curves, or bows, in a half (10) <u>circle</u> (11) <u>toward</u>		
the water. Engineers (12) <u>always</u> (13) <u>plan</u> the construction of a		
dam in this way for a (14) <u>simple</u> reason. Why does the convex side of the		
dam need to be next to the water source (15) <u>rather</u> than		
(16) <u>its</u> concave side? Why don't they (17) <u>build</u> dams		
(18) <u>straight</u> (19) <u>across</u> the water supply? Please		
(20) <u>present</u> a (21) <u>bright</u> explanation for why dams are		
(22) <u>built</u> this way. Explain your answer by drawing a (23) <u>picture</u>		
to make your idea (24) <u>clear</u> <u>February</u>		

LEVEL FIVE May be reproduced for students within your classroom. All rights reserved. SPELLING SOURCEBOOK® Series © 2002 Eggo Publishing, Inc., 888-WE-SPELL

APPENDIX F3

JIMMY READING CLASS VOCABULARY TEST SAMPLE

100

Creating a Nation
Unit 2 Week 1

- C 1. How did King George III of Great Britain raise the money he needed to rule his empire?
a. stamps b. tea
C taxes d. selling land
- b 2. With the Stamp Act colonist had to pay a tax on:
a. stamps b paper
c. tea d. taxes
- d 3. Most colonist thought it was unfair to tax them if the did not get:
a. tea b. land
c. freedom d representatives
- b 4. Repealed means: a. tossed b canceled c. returned d. acted
- a 5. When cloth from Britain was taxed, women:
a made their own b. sent it back
c. didn't have new clothes d. wore men's clothes
- d 6. One tax remained in 1773, the colonist held a protest called the:
a. Boston Massacre b Boston Tea Party
b. Boston Marathon c. Boston Symphony
- C 7. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
a. Alexander Hamilton b. George Washington
C Thomas Jefferson d. King George III
- a 8. Which country helped fight on the American's side against Great Britain?
a France b. Canada
c. Germany d. Mexico

9. What are militias? militias is a groups of
volunteers willing to fight

Explain the difference between Patriots and Loyalist.

10. Patriots wanted to fight for independence

11. Loyalist wanted peace with the king

12. When did Congress approve the Declaration of Independence?
July 4 1776 (Write the complete date.)

APPENDIX G

ADULT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your experiences in school.
2. What memories do you have about reading and writing as a child?
3. What do you read or write now as an adult?
4. Tell me about your family's history with school.
 - a. Tell me about the literacy history of children in your family.
 - b. What kinds of reading and writing have you seen the adults in your family do?
 - c. Tell me about reading and writing at home.
 - d. What about outside of the home?
5. Tell me about your (child's/children's) school(s).
6. What does communication with the school look like?
 - a. How do they communicate?
 - b. How often do they communicate?
 - c. Why do they communicate?
7. Tell me about how (struggling reader's name) was prepared for kindergarten.
8. Tell me about the time you realized your child was a struggling reader.
9. Tell me about your (child's/children's) relationship(s) with school.
 - a. What about specifically with reading and writing?
10. Is there anything you would like to add about literacy practices in your family?
11. What questions have I missed that I should have asked?

APPENDIX H

STRUGGLING ADOLESCENT READER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What kind of a person do you want to be when you grow up?
 - a. How do you plan to become that person?
2. Walk me through your typical school day.
 - a. How do you feel about school?
 - b. What are your teachers like?
 - c. What are your classes like?
3. What is a typical day in English/Language Arts class like?
 - a. Tell me more about AR.
 - b. How do your teachers know which AR group you belong in?
 - c. What do you think about your AR placement?
4. What kinds of books do you like?
5. Tell me about your favorite book.
6. What do you remember about learning to read and write?
7. How do you feel about reading and writing?
 - a. If you had to explain what “reading” or “writing” is to someone who didn’t know, how would you explain it?
8. Tell me about some things you have written.
9. Tell me about family members who read or write.
10. What else can you tell me about reading and writing?
11. What questions have I missed that I should have asked?

VITA

Sarah L. Swauger was born in Pontiac, Michigan on August 12, 1986 to James E. Swauger Sr. and Lisa A. Swauger. Her family moved from Clarkston, Michigan to Morristown, Tennessee in 2000 where she attended Morristown-Hamblen High School East and earned her degree in 2004. She then studied English literature and secondary education at The University of Tennessee and earned a Bachelors of Arts degree in May 2008. The same year, she entered a full-year combined internship and masters program at The University of Tennessee in Theory and Practice in Teacher Education and earned a Masters of Science degree in Education with a concentration in English Education in May 2009. Before pursuing a terminal degree, she worked in public schools for three years where her passion for adolescent struggling readers was ignited. In July 2014, she obtained a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Literacy Studies and an emphasis in Reading Education as well a qualitative research certificate, also from The University of Tennessee.