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Finding Their Strengths, Dreams and Struggles: A Narrative Inquiry of High School Students Independent Reading Habits

Tori T. Simmons

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FINDING THEIR STRENGTHS, DREAMS AND STRUGGLES:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
INDEPENDENT READING HABITS
by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Shirley Ann Thomas. She gave me my first literacy experience. Without her prayers and sacrifices, I would not be the person that I am. Her constant love, guidance, and support gives me the strength to take on any challenge

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First, I would like to give thanks to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. He gives me strength and peace beyond understanding during this journey.

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ABSTRACT

The ability to read and understand texts are important to student's success in school and life. However, many secondary students enter without the skills needed to handle the rigor and amount of reading they will meet as they matriculate high school. Yet, this is not the case for those who struggle to read most. Allington (2013) found that students who struggle the most to read are also those who given the least amount of time to reading and the most to worksheets (p. 526). Therefore, this study hopes to better understand the reading histories of three high school students and determine the conditions needed to foster, develop, and sustain an independent reading life among high school students.

Using a narrative inquiry method, the study looked at the independent reading habits of three high school students individual reading histories. Self-Determination and Critical Race Theories are used as the theoretical lens for this study as it relates to the choice and cultural relevancy of students' texts.

Study results give insights to researchers, educators, and school leaders that will help them develop steps to increase independent reading among high school students.

Keywords: independent reading, choice, Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT	Culturally Responsive Teaching
CRP	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CSP	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
DAE	Dominant American English
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
RTTT	Race to the Top
SDT	Self-Determination Theory

CHAPTER 1

INTROUDCTION

“Hey, Ms. Simmons, can I talk to you for a minute?” asked Thomas.

“Sure, how can I help you?” asked Ms. Simmons

“Would you buy a book for me?”

“Me?” I asked.

“Yes”

“There’s a Barnes and Noble nearby. You could go there.”

“I can’t buy a book, Ms. Simmons,” Thomas laughed.

“Ok. Well, I can certainly pick up the book for you. When do you need it?” Ms. Simmons inquired.

Thomas laughed, “I don’t need it, Ms. Simmons. I just want to read it. I love the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and the bandleader wrote a book about his life with the band. I can bring you the money on Thursday.”

“Ok, great! Let me check the price of the book, so you know how much to bring Thursday.”

As he hugged me, Thomas remarked, “Thanks, Ms. Simmons. I really appreciate it.”

As I searched Amazon to find *Scar Tissue's* price, Thomas and I talked a little more about his reading interests. I have known Thomas since his freshman year in high school. He is a junior, and this is the first time he has ever shown interest in reading a book. Thomas has never had the reputation of a reader since he started high school. He failed his English class freshman year and repeated the course during summer school. From the outside, Thomas presents as a student uninterested in school, much less reading. However, this brief conversation with him reminded me that we could never judge the proverbial book by its cover.

Unfortunately, this brief conversation does not represent thousands of classroom conversations between students and teachers about reading books. Instead, students look for ways to avoid participation in class while teachers work hard to engage them. The cause for much of this distress is reading. Students' ability to read to learn after the third grade is necessary for school success, yet many students who, by the time they reach high school, are not ready for the rigor and quantity of reading they are required to do. Also, those students who were readers in middle school seemed to lose that passion in high school. This lack of passion is very much the case for Thomas.

Thomas is an eleventh grader at All-American High School (AAHS). He is often walking the hallways of the school. The first time I met Thomas, he was on his way to the bathroom. I saw him walk past my office often. Some days I saw him two or three times a day. One day, I called him into my office, and we talked briefly. After that, Thomas stopped by my office regularly, and I learned a great deal about him. He is the second oldest of three children. Thomas is a Caucasian student and comes from a blue-collar family who believes in education despite Thomas' disinterest. He knows he wants to take

over his father's heating and air business, so he does not see how school applies to his life.

Thomas is one of many students enrolled in college preparatory (CP) courses at AAHS. Counterintuitive to its name, the English CP curriculum is not preparing students for college. Like Thomas, many of these students have experienced repeated school failures over the years. Thomas is on track to fail his English course again this year. However, after speaking with his English teacher, it was determined that Thomas did not do any work in the class, mostly reading and writing about teacher-selected texts. Some educators might believe that Thomas does not care about school or reading. However, my interactions with him suggest this idea is inaccurate.

Eve and Anna are African American females enrolled in honor's classes. Even during my conversations with them, they found little interest in the assigned readings from their teacher. They also lack a robust independent reading life that is separate from school. However, along with Thomas, each of these young ladies spoke of the reading lives they had in elementary and middle school. The more and more I reflected on my conversations with Thomas, Eve, and Anna, the more questions I had about their reading habits and interests.

Though different in many ways, Thomas, Eve, and Anna have one thing in common. At AAHS, they represent a marginalized group of readers and learners whose stories need sharing. Scholars of Critical Race and Latino Race theories argue, "...storytelling, giving voice, or naming one's reality as key elements of legal scholarship and important tools for achieving racial emancipation" (p. 48). For these students to gain this sense of freedom, they need strong literacy skills. As it relates to literacy, schools

need to hear directly from students to help them access and control school discourse. Gee (1987) suggested, “a discourse can call for one to accept values in conflict with other discourses one is a member of” (p. 2). For marginalized populations, school discourse often becomes secondary to the primary one these students acquire at home. He believed that literacy is a skill acquired through exposure to reading in a natural setting (Gee, 1987, p. 5). Despite their efforts, many secondary schools do not provide students with opportunities simply to read. Students need opportunities to develop their reading identities if the school is to ensure students learn to read and love to read.

Topic and Background

A Nation at Risk (ANAR) sparked a movement in education that is still affecting educational policy. The report begins ominously by stating, “Our Nation is at risk.” (Gardner, Larsen, Baker, & Campbell, 1983, p. 5). *ANAR* linked the country’s economic downfall to the decline of schools. Gardner et al. (1983) contended that:

We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the The United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society is eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and people. (p. 5)

The report discussed the decline of students’ ability to read, think, and draw inferences. Out of this report grew several recommendations for the overall improvement of schools. The recommendations that relate most to this study’s focus area are content, standards, expectations, and time. The recommendation that seemed to affect schools is standards and expectations. The accountability movement developed out of that recommendation

came with an increased amount of standardized testing that began to shift the curriculum's focus and teachers' pedagogical choices. Along with the pressure for students to succeed, the increased amount of testing pushed schools to focus on test preparation. Despite ANAR's intent to make meaningful change in educating children, reading test scores increased only slightly. The increased accountability measures forced many districts and schools to pressure teachers to raise these scores. This focus on testing preparation did not make a significant increase in reading comprehension scores. The 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that the reading comprehension scores of fourth and 8th-grade students were slightly lower than in 2017 (NAEP Reading 2019 Highlights). However, prioritizing test preparation for higher test scores did begin to erode the time needed to allow students to read.

The increased need to demonstrate accountability in America's schools has caused educators to lose focus on exactly where their accountability responsibility lies. Since the emergence of reform efforts such as *A Nation at Risk*, *Goals 2000*, and *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, schools have worked tirelessly to prove that they have prepared students for a global workforce. However, much of the promises of these reform movements have yielded less than expected results. The law has led to assertions that have distorted schools in undesirable ways that have led to gaming and unintended outcomes, and therefore, has and will not accomplish its objectives of improving student achievement. In their ethnographic study, Valli and Chambliss (2007) found, "To the extent that a child-centered culture is supplanted by a test-centered culture, it is likely that academic achievement, as well as meaningful school experiences and personal bonds among teachers and students, will diminish" (p. 73). The *No Child Left Behind Act*

(NCLB) of 2001 has been divisive for various reasons. However, supporters of NCLB believe it is a way to raise student achievement in America (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005, p. 297). They believe innovation and standardization can coexist if schools are encouraged to provide high-quality instruction rather than skill and drill, focus on content coverage, or focus on pre-testing (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008, p.196).

Like ANAR, President Reagan's administration, and every administration that followed, tried to create legislation that would improve schools. From the education initiatives of George H. W. Bush to Obama's *Race to the Top* (RTTT) initiative, the federal government has attempted to improve America's schools. During his time in office, George W. Bush enacted the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) education law. With NCLB, there was another push for school reform with even more testing and accountability measures. The *Race to the Top* (2011) initiative also did not live up to its promise. While it has touted help through charter schools and increased testing, it did little to help those students who were already marginalized. These reform efforts leave many secondary students unprepared for basic literacy tasks. Even worse, many of these students also leave without interest to read. None of the reform efforts did much to stoke that passion.

Allington (2002) remarked that the last forty years of research have revealed what educators need to do to help students read. His work with teachers shows that students are more likely to reach their academic capabilities with a good teacher, not any specific curriculum materials (Allington, 2002). More specifically, the teachers Allington and other researchers studied spent significant amounts of time, allowing students to read and write during the school day. Many secondary school students go without these

opportunities regularly. Instead, the focus is on covering the content using a fulcrum text or worse worksheets. Some researchers believe that when teachers or districts focus on a whole-class novel approach, they take away student choice and a teacher's ability to supply texts that allow students to see themselves in a text. Cherry-Paul, Cruz, and Ehrenworth (2020) argued, "When you have a single-novel curriculum, the teacher or school district's text becomes the curriculum. This lack of diversity propagates stereotype and victim narratives and marginalize or make whole invisible groups of people" (p. 40). Mike Schmoker (2020) suggested that there are too many literacy standards. His idea of a radical reset includes time for "...all students to engage in unprecedented amounts of purposeful reading, discussing, and writing across the curriculum" (p. 44). Schools focus on those literacy standards that provide maximum benefit to students (Schmoker, 2020, p. 47).

Research also suggests that educators be mindful of the labels we place on students. Too often, secondary students may be labeled as reluctant, struggling, or even illiterate. Beers (1996) believed that a better word to describe these students would be aliterate. She completed a year-long study of seventh graders, where she identified three categories of aliterate readers: dormant, uncommitted, and unmotivated (Beers, 1996). In her study, Beers discovered that these students are capable of reading, but choose not to read for various reasons. These labels also limit the way teachers see these students and how these students see themselves. Students should read and write independently often. It is a critical part of their education that will help students transform their reading identities from reluctant to successful (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009, p. 6). Skerrett (2012) studied the literacy practices in school attributed to a student becoming a

struggling reader. She found that a teacher's pedagogical practices allowed the students to revise their identities through opportunities to read, write, and talk. These students deserve literacy experiences that will enhance not detract from their educational experience despite any name used to describe them. For I believe, like Mike Schmoker (2020), “Literacy is destiny” (p. 44).

Problem of Practice

In 2019, the International Literacy Association (ILA) created ten tenants on Children’s Rights to Read. The tenants are as follows:

1. Children have the basic human right to read.
2. Children have the right to access texts in print and digital formats.
3. Children have the right to choose what they read.
4. Children have the right to read texts that mirror their experiences and languages, provide windows into the lives of others, and open doors into our diverse world.
5. Children have the right to read for pleasure.
6. Children have the right to supportive reading environments with knowledgeable literacy partners.
7. Children have the right to extended time set aside for reading.
8. Children have the right to share what they learn through reading by collaborating with others locally and globally.
9. Children have the right to read as a springboard for other forms of communication, such as writing, speaking, and visually representing.

10. Children have the right to benefit from the financial and material resources of governments, agencies, and organizations that support reading and reading instruction.

Despite over forty years of literacy research, there is still a need for an organization, such as the International Literacy Association, that supports literacy efforts to sound the alarm on the importance of children's right to read and what and how they read. Like ILA's statement on reading, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) created their position statement. NCTE (2019) defined independent reading as a protected routine in classrooms that allows students to experience texts in a supported reading community that helps build their conscious reading identities. Both literacy organizations fight to protect the right of children to read independently. They fight for students to read texts which interest and move them. Still, secondary students do not experience independent reading regularly. Therefore, this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) focused on those conditions needed to foster a love of reading in secondary students. The study involved a look into the reading histories and habits of three students at All-American High School.

Through observations, surveys, and numerous conversations with students and teachers, it became apparent that many of the students at AAHS have not developed an independent reading life in or out of school. Students reported that they only read what the teacher suggests or have just always struggled to read. In my conversations with teachers, it became clear that they have concerns about implementing independent reading. First, teachers have expressed concern for the lack of structure in how they use independent reading time. Second, teachers have expressed concern about the lack of time to implement an independent reading time. During an interview, one teacher

revealed, "I find it difficult to devote time to silent reading. It is especially hard when I think this time of year the time could be better spent preparing for the EOC." Teacher feedback and the other observational information made me wonder what was needed to help them become readers again. The present action research study will study secondary readers' habits and the condition needed to create an environment where educators can foster, develop, and sustain increased reading engagement.

Background of the PoP

As I approached my fifth year as an assistant principal at All-American High School, I realized that very few of the students in our English classes have any real interest in reading their teachers' assigned texts. They spend even less time choosing and reading texts outside of class. The state of South Carolina recently passed the Read to Succeed Law (R2SL, 2014). The law requires districts and schools to create reading plans that will ensure students from pre-K to twelfth grades receive evidence-based reading instruction (*Read to Succeed Act* of 2014). The law also requires that students from pre-K to twelfth grade be screened for potential reading deficiencies and provided with the necessary intervention. This required intervention time, according to R2SL, must include a thirty-minute intervention class above and beyond a student's current English/language arts class.

Around this same time, South Carolina's Department of Education also changed its standards to include providing students opportunities to read for sustained amounts of time. Specifically, Standard 13 of Literacy Texts and Standard 12 of Informational Texts suggest students read a wide range of texts in varying complexities. Unfortunately, the literacy practices in classrooms depend on a school's emphasis on standardized testing.

Despite their intention, much of the reform movement on reading focuses on increased testing measures to determine students' reading comprehension level. These same reforms push students to remedial reading practices that often include remedial classes and strategies or computer-based instruction if those comprehension levels are low. However, some researchers balk against the idea. Alvermann (2003) suggested that educators resist the urge to "fix students and their reading issues" (p.2). She believed a focus on the conditions for learning set for readers might produce better outcomes than those that rely on a one-size-fits-all approach to help students become better readers. Moje (2000) found, "Adolescents have multiple literacies and must have multiple types of texts that support their interests" (p. 402). These students need the space to experience and examine multiple literacies and receive feedback from their teachers and peers.

Purpose Statement

This present action study's primary purpose is to investigate conditions that create lifelong readers among secondary students. As directed by South Carolina's new R2SL, recent state mandates have required schools across the state to implement reading intervention classes, amounting to an additional thirty minutes of reading above a student's regular English/language arts class. As it relates to this research study setting, the *Read to Succeed* law only accounts for a small percentage of students. It suggests teachers use evidence-based instructional methods in a reading intervention class thirty minutes per week above and beyond their current English course from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. However, the law does not require secondary students to use independent reading as a practice to help students read. The law also lacked professional

development and resources needed to help secondary teachers with strategies to help students identified with reading issues. Moje (2002) stated,

“When literacy policies are made or when funding proposals are advanced, youth culture and literacy almost always remain invisible as most funding efforts are directed at either children's early literacy learning or programs designed to remediate adults who have not had access to literacy instruction” (p. 211).

Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) reminded, “Even when adolescents’ literacy needs are recognized and funding is provided to support students who are two years or more behind grade level, U.S. educators and policymakers seem wedded to a “fix-it remedial mentality” (p.6). This mentality has not produced an effect on reading achievement wanted by educators or policymakers. R2SL does not do enough to encourage teachers to provide students with the time to read. Moje, Young, Readence, and Moore (2000) believe, “Those involved with adolescent literacy deserve a closer look at the daily self-selected reading in the upper grades” (p.404).

As a result, this narrative inquiry will involve three students in the eleventh and twelfth grades. Students in the study take courses in our college preparatory and honor-level classes and the district's technical school. The goal is to discover how educators can help students develop, foster, and sustain engaged levels of reading habits beneficial to their academic and personal lives. The secondary purpose of the present action research study will be to develop a plan of action in conjunction with teachers and the school’s administration to enable AAHS to develop a comprehensive literacy program.

Research Questions

1. How does a narrative inquiry research methodology reveal participants' reader identities?
2. How can teachers use a student's reader identity to strengthen their independent reading habits and scaffold them higher levels of achievement in all content areas?

Theoretical Framework

Three significant research areas form the theoretical framework of this study. They are Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Ladson-Billings and Tate's Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Gee's Primary and Secondary Discourses. Each of these theoretical frameworks will support portions of this study; however, the overarching theory will be Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Both Critical Race Theory and Gee's Discourse Theory will support the critical aspects of SDT.

The first area is the Self-Determination Theory, developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985). The theory suggests that people will achieve their ideal potential in the presence of certain conditions. Unlike other theories on motivation, Self-Determination Theory posits that people do not work towards a goal for just any reason. Instead, the goal must meet a particular need. "... a full understanding of goal-directed behaviors and psychological development and well-being cannot be achieved without addressing the needs that give goals psychological potency..." (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 228).

Furthermore, the theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) find that when people practice autonomous motivation, "They

experience volition or a self-endorsement of their actions” (p. 182). The theory centers on three qualities that they claim must be present for a person to be fully engaged in a task: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1985). While other theories suggest more profound components embedded in intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) believed each of these needs is universal as not to need further investigation into an individual's strengths (p. 183). Competence suggests that people need to know things and feel they are moving towards mastery. As it relates to reading, students need to feel confident in their skills and potential as a reader. Increased amounts of reading can help with this. Relatedness speaks to the need for humans to belong and feel connected to others. The need to feel connected is to the student's reading choices and reading at large. Students who choose what they want to read find that relevance. Human beings feel a need for autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated, “People must not only experience perceived competence (or self-efficacy), they must also experience their behavior to be self-determined if intrinsic motivation is to be maintained or enhanced” (p. 58). They want to feel in control of their lives. Therefore, the choice of text is a crucial part of a student’s independent reading development. Combining these factors can help create the conditions students need to be successful as independent readers. Increased opportunities to operate through autonomous motivation can lead to more permanent and long-term behavioral change (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 186). Therefore, students must receive opportunities to choose texts they want to read to develop independent reading lives.

The second theory is the Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was born out of the Critical Race Legal Scholarship developed in the 1970s to place race at the forefront of legal work scholars were doing. Minorities in the legal field wanted to ensure that their

scholarship efforts were not diminished or deleted. In a study of the events leading up to the U.S. Constitution, Bell (1995) discovered a tension between property rights and human rights. This tension is rooted in the institution of slavery, which labeled African Americans as property, a label whose dimensions still linger generations after emancipation—considering them as property systematically excluded African Americans from issues of human rights. One such human right is education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) wanted to take this idea of race and use it as a lens to identify ways to improve the educational experience for minority students. They believed class and gender did not provide sufficient evidence to explain the difference in school experiences between African American students and white students. DeCuir and Dixon (2004) examined two African American students' school experiences in a majority white private school. They concluded that counter storytelling, which includes a theory of whiteness as property, must occur to activate the full potential of Critical Race Theory (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 27). Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested whiteness as property manifests in schools as poor curriculum choices and a lack of access to curriculum that adequately prepares African Americans for college. She asserted, "Critical Race Theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designated to maintain a White supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). Included in this script is an intentional muting and erasure of African Americans.

For marginalized students, the silencing of their stories ultimately leads to a silencing of their identities. Some researchers refer to this as identity capital. Paul Gee (2000) purported, "...all people have multiple identities" (p. 99). He suggested that these identities are often placed upon us. He wrote, "The source of this trait—the "power" that

determines it or to which my friend is “subject”—is the discourse or dialogue of other people” (p.103). The school curriculum is representative of a “dialogue of other people.” To combat this, students deserve time to create their identities through independent reading.

Hughes-Hassel, Koehler, and Barkley (2010) studied the prevalence of stories that feature students of color's life and cultural understandings. They believed the decline in reading pleasure that often happens with students after the third grade was related to a lack of multicultural texts provided to them. Hughes-Hassel et al. (2010) suggested,

Children of color, on the other hand, find it almost impossible to locate transitional books that show their faces or cultures, especially if they are Native Alaskan, American Indian, Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or biracial. This lack of transitional books featuring children of color denies these children a vital resource for developing into proficient readers (p.10). Other researchers also found adverse effects on children of color when a lack of relevant reading materials is available. Moje et al. (2000) argued, “Marginalized readers are those who are not connected to literacy in classrooms and schools” (p. 405). These students, according to Moje et al. (2000), are those “who have language and or cultural practices different from those valued in school” (p. 405). So, it is essential that schools intentionally implement practices that value the literacy identities students bring to school.

The third part of my theoretical framework is Gee’s theory of Primary and Secondary Discourse discusses the ways people belong to certain linguistics groups. These distinct discourses include “...a socially accepted association among ways of using

language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network” (Gee, 1987, p.1). Gee (1987) refers to this as one’s identity kit. He believes each discourse, “...comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (p. 1).

Gee describes Primary Discourse as one that is developed from birth to school age. During this time, students are introduced to their Primary Discourse through socialization with their immediate family and close intimates. Secondary Discourse is the one that relates to those social circles that are outside of your Primary Discourse. Some examples of secondary discourses are a school, church, and government buildings. Success in a Secondary Discourse is dependent upon the relationship between their Primary and Secondary Discourses. If a person's Primary Discourse is closely related to the Secondary Discourse they are trying to reach, they will have more success. When the two discourses are different, students left outside the school discourse are left outside the schools, often resulting in their academic disinterest. The lack of control of the school's discourse can leave these marginalized students outside of the power structure. Students can develop these discourses in one of two ways. They can gain this knowledge through experiences in their natural surroundings, or they can learn it. According to Gee (1987), those who acquire knowledge of any kind will do so as their Primary Discourse and subconsciously. Learning requires students to make a conscious effort to gain knowledge from someone knowledgeable about a topic (p. 4). Gee (1987) suggests those who acquire knowledge have better use of it than knowledge; however, they may be unable to explain any nuances regarding that knowledge.

Each theory has varied purposes in educational research. However, both Critical Race Theory and Primary and Secondary Discourse Theory fit within the umbrella of Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Critical Race Theory connects to SDT through two of its tenets – relatedness and autonomy. Students need opportunities to see themselves in what they read (relatedness) and choose the texts they want to read (autonomy). Gee's Discourse Theory explores the social implications of student's literacy needs (competence). Together, these theories lay the groundwork for this study.

Research Design

Setting. The research study took place in a large urban high school in the central part of South Carolina. Demographics vary in this school. Students in this school come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Some students live in million-dollar homes, while others are homeless. Large percentages of the student population perform well academically. However, a significant part of the student body performs poorly in their day-to-day classes and on standardized assessments. AAHS currently has 1390 students. The school's student body consists of 50% white/Caucasian, 39% African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 3.4% who identify as multiracial, and less than 1% Asian-American. There are 87 teachers, six administrators, five guidance counselors, two resource officers, one media specialist, and 30 classified staff members. The school offers various academic courses that students can take on the main campus and at our local technology center. Courses range in rigor from remedial courses to the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual credit classes.

Sample Size. The participants for this study were three students enrolled in College Prep and Honor's English classes. This sample was a convenience sample because of their enrollment in English courses in the study setting.

Sources of Data Collection. It was necessary to collect data from various sources. Data collection occurred through surveys, questionnaires, interviews of the three students and their teachers. Students and their teachers were interviewed after school and over the phone. This action research study provided the opportunity to affect immediate change in this professional context since the researcher part of the study's setting,

Beginning in the spring of 2020, I conversed with several students regarding their participation in the study. Out of the five students, I asked, three students and their parents returned the signed permission forms. To begin the study, I surveyed 200 students about their reading habits and experiences. I surveyed these students because of their enrollment in the courses with the three teachers I interviewed. Then, the three students who returned the permission slip completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire and survey will give the researcher initial data to prepare other data collection instruments such as interview questions. Next, the participant researcher will interview each student individually. The participant researcher will use semi-structured and structured interviews to gather data. Some interview questions will be asked for the first time, while other interview questions will be follow-up questions from the collected survey data. Data will be analyzed and added to the interview questions created. Finally, I interviewed the teachers of three study participants. The teachers also took a survey about their beliefs about independent reading.

Potential Risk and Benefits

The potential for risk to students, teachers, or the school is small. Students are enrolled in the school, so there will not be any interruption to their schedule. Additionally, students enrolled in any End of Course (EOC) exams will not have continued preparation for those exams hampered since each of the students drives to school. Therefore, interviews can occur after school to ensure that students do not miss critical classroom instruction. Teachers meet weekly each Monday during their Professional Learning Communities. I conducted the interview during their PLCs to ensure teachers did not have to give up any additional time.

The results of this study will help the school by providing insight into the strategies and possible structure needed to help all English teachers with conditions needed to include independent reading time in their classes. These benefits are critical for several reasons. First, students may find increased motivation to continue their pleasure reading. Second, students' motivation and confidence to read texts in their other classes may increase. Third, the increased time to read may improve a student's overall literacy skills. Finally, this study's findings can also add more data to further research on independent reading among high school students. Agee (2005) suggested, "Reading remains the doorway to a more meaningful world. It is a skill that is lost if not practiced" (p.248). It makes independent reading a crucial time for students to practice and refine their reading skills. More importantly, developing independent reading habits helps students like Thomas, Eve, Anna see themselves, find purpose, and prepare them for their life beyond high school. They deserve to experience a school that values him.

It should be a place where Thomas sees schools differently than this:

“I’ve figured it out that if it’s got anything to do with school, it’s probably boring.”

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Each fall, many 9th grade students enter high school ill-equipped to handle the reading demands they will encounter in their classes. Vacca and Vacca (1983) and Duffy and Anderson (1984) found that increased pressure to prepare for standardized tests influences teachers' decision-making about curriculum. Despite recognizing the low reading skills of their students, teachers feel pressured to cover copious amounts of content that students do not necessarily ascertain to ensure a cursory understanding of the content before standardized testing. Lawmakers have attempted to remedy issues connected to adolescents' literacy; however, the policies they create often become unfunded mandates. Reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core State Standards have increased the amount of accountability teachers, and schools face as they attempt to close opportunity gaps described by Olszewski-Kublius and Clarenbach. These researchers define it as a gap between academically promising but culturally diverse population of students. Olszewski-Kublius and Clarenbach (2014) suggest, "schools provide these students with challenging and enriching curriculum" (p. 5). As Ladson-Billings suggests, students need a curriculum that includes them and their experiences. So, students need to choose what they want to read.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) suggested there was no strong correlation between independent reading and students' reading achievement. The problem with the 2000 NRP report was the type of studies they chose to use as evidence. The NRP report

focused on experiential studies where there was manipulation to the amount of reading students completed (Allington, 2013). Despite the lack of randomized field trials, Pearson (2007) felt the NRP did not acknowledge a variety of small-scale studies and other independent inquiries that all pointed to the positive effects independent reading has on a student's overall reading ability and academic achievement.

Choosing not to learn is different from having the ability to learn. Kohl (1994) discovered, “Deciding to actively not learn something involves closing off parts of oneself and limiting one’s experiences” (p. 5). Students often mask their inability or lack of interest in reading in behavioral ways. As a result, teachers can sometimes offer texts and assignments that do not enrich student’s lives. Allington (2013) found that students who struggle the most to read are also given the least amount of time and choice to read and the most worksheets (p. 526). Gee (2015) found this even more prevalent in most impoverished communities. For some, not learning is a way to protect the adolescent's identity and how others see them. This idea of “Others” is a Lacanian ideal. Alcorn (1995) posited, “The human subject is an entity “subjected” by discourse to ideology” (p. 331). Students create their discourses through a compilation of their environments and how others (families, teachers, and peers) see them. If students are to develop individual lives, they must have an opportunity to create and develop reading identities that allow them to grow.

The ability for students to read is paramount to the level of success they have in life. To foster a love of reading, students need diverse, high-quality books and time to read. Bintz (1993) argued that much of the research on reading failure views it as a permanent state rather than changes with the right support. This study researched the

factors that support the reading habits of secondary students. The literature review will focus on research related to independent reading, choice reading, quality texts, reader identity, relevance, and representation.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories undergirded this study. The first theory is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) created by Deci and Ryan (1985). As a macro theory of human development, SDT examines the role motivation plays in peoples' lives. More specifically, Deci and Ryan (1985), found three areas that play an essential role in influencing motivation. They are competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Unlike other theories of motivation, SDT focused on two types of motivation—autonomous and controlled. Controlled motivation comes from the idea that people receive their motivation externally or outside of themselves. However, in autonomous motivation, people find their personal drive through their own goals. Autonomous motivation tends to yield greater psychological health and more effective performance on heuristic types of activities (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The second theory is Critical Race Theory. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) examined the effects race has on students in school. They based their findings on three ideas. First, race plays a critical role in the education of minority students. Second, U.S. society uses property rights and the intersection of race and property to create an analytic tool to understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity. Bell (1970) argued that property rights withheld from minorities are equitable educational ones withheld from many minority and marginalized students. She believed the lack of diverse curricular

experiences manifests in an environment that lacked texts representing students' cultural backgrounds.

The third theory is Gee's Primary and Secondary Discourse. In this theory, Gee explores the social aspects that are naturally embedded in learning. He discusses the importance of "identity" in a student's language (Discourse) learning. Students come to school with the primary discourse that they have acquired at home. Those whose primary discourse more closely relates to the discourse school are largely more successful than those whose discourse does not resemble the one used at school.

Neglected Secondary Student

Historically, research and education communities have focused on improving reading instruction in the elementary school (Edmonds et al., 2009, p. 262). Doing so ensures students learn to read so they can read to learn in upper grades. Reading difficulties among secondary aged students is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, increased accountability measures have raised the stakes in the amount and rigor of text students must digest. Still, there is little research on the most effective strategies to use with high school students to encourage them to read. Beyond single studies, there have also been even fewer multi-year studies that focus on the interventions needed to improve reading outcomes among high school students in content area classrooms (Vaughn et al., 2015, p. 546). Researchers often neglect this population due to scheduling and compliance issues.

Much of the research on effective reading comprehension instruction has neglected older students. Those studies that mention secondary students do so in the context of special education and learning disabilities. The few studies that have focused

on secondary students reading habits neglected high school-aged students in place of fourth – 8th-grade students. Still, these studies have yielded implications for at-risk reading students at the secondary level. Vaughn, Roberts, Wexler, Vaughn, Fall, and Schnakenberg (2015) discovered that older students who struggled with reading comprehension required more than nine months of intervention to achieve success with grade-level text. Solis, Vaughn, and Scammaca (2015) noted that secondary students who had reading difficulties persisting past elementary school required many hours of intervention to remediate (p. 387).

Edmonds et al. (2009) studied the effects of reading interventions on older students. A primary finding from this synthesis was that struggling readers could improve their reading comprehension when explicitly taught reading comprehension practices (p. 292). Morgan and Fuchs (2007) suggested that students who read just below grade level can comprehend grade-level texts with direct vocabulary and comprehension support. Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, and Ciullo (2010) found that despite small increases in reading skills, it is never too late for older students to improve their reading through intensive instruction (p.191). Despite the promise of these studies, suggestions for increasing student reading achievement through instruction on reading skills and comprehension strategies do not discuss the benefits of independent reading. Allington (2002) argued that students spent as little as four minutes a day reading in typical elementary classrooms. Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) discovered that students in the intermediate grades spend little time reading in school or at home. The disheartening part of this is the decline in reading among older students.

Secondary Student Reading Identity/Attitudes

Smith (2006) believed, “Everything we do depends on the way we make sense of the world and our place in it” (p. 1). Adolescents are no different. Although the label *adolescent* is the source of some debate (Lesko, 2001), the research community generally accepts that people between the ages of ten and twenty are within the range of adolescence. However, adolescents cannot be treated as a homogenous group (Fisher & Ivey, 2007). In her work, Hall (2009) asserted that educators who employ reading practices that avoid a reader's identity are not likely to improve their literacy skills. Researchers have come to believe these students have varied needs. Some refer to them as reading identities (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Gee, 1987). Gee (1987) believed that students wear specific identities based on the discourse they bring from home. He describes discourses as “ideological” identities that come with a set of rules and distinctions (Gee, 1987, p. 2). These identities come with expectations students need to fulfill requirements to be part of a community. The use of texts that reflect minority groups’ experiences allows them to see themselves and grow into their identities.

Alvermann (2001) and Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) discovered, through their work with a community of Latino adolescents, that adolescents are a varied group of readers who have differing reasons for reading a text. Hall (2009) studied the role identity can have in shaping the reading life of an adolescent. She purported struggling readers want the privilege of being a good reader, such as being smart and contributing to the conversation in a more meaningful way; however, these students are more afraid of someone finding out about their lack of skills. This lack of confidence

causes students to work harder to conceal reading struggles instead of gaining the necessary reading skills (Hall, 2009).

Despite an evolving definition of the secondary reader, many definitions are short-sided, simplistic, and inaccurate. Researchers have expanded the struggling reader label. Moje (2000), believed “labels also carry with them the baggage, or connotations, that people ascribe them to them” (p.401). Guthrie and Davis (2003) found that “struggling readers often procrastinate and deliberately avoid putting forth effort. By avoiding academic tasks, they protect their self-image” (p. 60). Bintz (1993) posited that students' strengths were needed rather than one focused on their deficiencies. Many students with reading difficulties struggle not because of a reading deficiency, but because they do not practice reading enough. Morgan and Fuchs (2007) suggested that many students reduce their reading struggles with by avoiding reading.

Nevertheless, many research studies have focused on students' cognitive ability to read rather than their desire to read. Mckenna, Conradi, Jung, and Meyer (2012) studied middle school students (p.212). They found, “Assessing—and, consequently, working to improve – student’s reading attitudes could lead to increases in both the amount and proficiency of their reading” (p.473). A better understanding of adolescent reading attitudes helps researchers and educators understand the complexities of these readers.

One such complexity is students and their teachers' ability to negotiate a student's out of school literacy with the one needed to succeed in school (Bintz, 1993). Students bring a personal literacy of their own from home (Moje, 2015; Alvermann, 2001; Ivey and Broadus, 2000). Gee (1987) and Lex (2001) referred to this as their discourse. They argued that schools honor the discourse students with them to school while

simultaneously ensuring students learn the school's discourse. In her study, Lex (2001) discovered students' dispositions about themselves changed as readers as teachers shifted their pedagogical choices to help students with reading improvement. Vacca and Alvermann (1998) suggested that we use the literacy practices students bring to school to help them become to improve as readers. They believe the way schools respond to students' home literacies directly affects how adolescents view literacy and its usefulness in their lives. Lenters (2006) believed the lack of value schools place on students' home literacy has led to students' disinterest in the reading done in school. Horowitz (2001) asserted, "students need to feel good about themselves as readers" (p. 114). Adolescent readers are more than their ability level. O'Brien et al. (2007) suggested that adolescents can create a positive reading identity when they feel that what they read is relevant to them and their peers. To help them, educators must view adolescents as more than their ability level.

Teachers must know about each student's needs as a reader and writer. Ivey and Broadus (2000) referred to this as a student's developmental stage (p. 71). According to Stromman and Mates (2004), students must see themselves as part of a community of readers. They are aware of when they struggle, and they will respond in one of two ways. These readers will either ask for help or ignore the task altogether. Classrooms require students to take on specific identities to be successful; however, struggling readers may not believe that they can or should take on those identities (Hall, 2009). Gee described this as school discourse. He stated, "...a discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language or thinking of acting that is used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network." (Gee, 1987, p. 1). Schools

have one discourse, while many students bring a different one from home. Due to this struggle, teachers may not realize the very task they ask students to complete goes against their identity and discourages them from engaging in the classroom experience.

It is also essential to underscore adolescents in terms of their development. Just as students enter a time of life when increased autonomy is their desire, they simultaneously enter an instructional space with little or no choice in their school-based reading. Manuel (2012) suggested, “If individuals do not readily identify with the text or belong to the prevailing culture of their school, they may become disengaged in anything relating to school” (p. 45). Some educators find it essential to help students build their reading identity because it allows students to see themselves as deserving of literacy (Parker 2020, p.58). Struggling reader's identities can shift depending on the context. Teachers can shift their pedagogy is to include diverse text options as a way to help these readers with their identity.

When teachers limit the type of books offered to children, the curriculum can be identity-silencing (Cherry et al., 2020, p. 41). Alvermann (2001) wrote, “Readers locked into special identifications know all too well which side of the enabling or disabling binary they occupy and the consequences such identities carry” (p. 677). Despite their agreement with other literary scholars that literature can help students find and see themselves, literacy leaders have not found any particular text that does provides this experience for every student in a class at the same time (p. 46). Therefore, intentions efforts are needed to ensure students have access to diverse texts to improve their reading ability.

Teachers play an essential role in developing students' interest in reading and their reader identity (p. 292). Bintz (1993) characterized these readers as resistant. He suggested these students have negative attitudes towards reading because of secondary school's inability to challenge students at the level their intelligence requires (p. 605). Despite encouragement to read, many students remain reluctant to do so. While many researchers view these students as struggling, Beers (1996) described these students as alliterate. These students can read, but they choose not to do so. Alliterate readers choose not to read for several reasons. As students mature, they often become involved in other activities and feel they do not have time to read, and other students do not believe that reading is something they will ever enjoy. Alvermann (2001) suggested that all these labels for readers who struggle tell us nothing useful about this group of readers. She aptly referred to these attempts to describe this group of readers as "like trying to nail gelatin to a wall" (p. 679). Manuel (2012) discouraged educators from grouping these students into one group. Doing so may reduce teachers' efforts to know these students as individuals so they can provide them experiences that make education meaningful and useful to them.

Independent Reading

Large portions of American schools use basal texts or anthologies as their core reading program. According to Allington (2011), the problem with this is the amount of [independent] reading students complete while using a basal text. Allington (2011) stated, "Core reading programs do not allow students to select what they want to read" (p. 3). Researchers warned teachers against using other literacy practices in place of time to allow students to read independently. In 2005, the National Reading Panel reported that

the studies they analyzed did not show that children who participated in an independent reading program increase in achievement. After the release of the NRP report, Krashen (2005) countered the conclusion that independent reading may not substantially affect a student's reading ability. Although the report's assertion that sustained silent reading is not valid, Krashen argues (2015) that the studies the report used to make its case were limited. Members of the NRP used studies conducted over a short time, and some constrained the length of time students could read (Krashen, 2005, p. 445). Independent reading, sustained silent reading (SSR), leisure reading, (Hughes and Hassell, 2007), drop everything and read, free voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004), no matter what we call it, the last thirty years of reading research has encouraged schools to incorporate some form of independent choice reading. While researchers disagree on the definition of independent reading, each share features such as time to read, giving student choice, book clubs or literature circles, time to confer with their teacher, and opportunities to gain additional skills through reading.

Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw (2000) described sustained silent reading as reading a self-selected text for an extended period. Horne (2014) researched the effectiveness of independent reading and self-selected reading on the reading achievement of 8th-grade students. She used Accelerated Reader as her independent reading model. She found, “When faced with the pressures of high-stakes testing within the content area classroom, many secondary teachers do not consider reading instruction their responsibility” (p. 11). Nancy Atwell (2010) made a case for reading literature in the wake of the Common Core State Standards. She expressed, “Our thirteen-year-olds aren't reading well because they are not reading enough. It is a frequent voluminous book reading that makes readers” (p.

2). She added, “They find their interests, dreams, needs, and struggles are spoken for in the crafted stories that fill their library” (p. 32). She asserted that reading good books by serious authors allows students to build fluency stamina, vocabulary confidence, critical abilities, habits, tastes, and comprehension. Other researchers also suggested making time for independent reading. Wessel et al. (2020) believed teachers must treat “...immersive reading times as a sacred priority not to be skipped or shoved aside” (p. 34). Other researchers focused more on the time and atmosphere provided for independent reading. Pilgreen (2000) cited research that found, on average, 15 to 30 minutes per session is optimal for SSR. Fielding (1986), revealed that reading frequency significantly predicts reading comprehension. According to Wilhelm and Smith (2016), leisure reading is vital for school success. “Free voluntary reading means reading because you want to and what you want to, without book reports or any kind of accountability” (p. 2). Students need time to read that is intentional and provides them with space to be with a text without fear of completing an external task such as an assignment or assessment.

Fisher and Ivey (2007) discussed the need for teachers to limit the whole-class novel's use. They believed, “Class novels may limit, or restrict the variety, depth and quantity of student's reading” (Fisher and Ivey, 2007, p. 495). Cherry, Cruz, and Ehenworth (2020) found that “classrooms committed to a whole class approach to reading miss out on opportunities to live vicariously through the stories they [students] choose” (p.40). Wessel, Bucholz, Rust, Husbye, and Zanden (2020) purported,

“Children today not only need to learn about how to read across print and digital texts, they also need to learn rituals for slowing down and intentionally allocating

time to the processes needed to experience reading as an immersive activity in an even busier world filled with distractions” (p. 33).

However, Bacus, Dayagbil, and Abao (2015) suggested, “The amount of time students read is not as important as their choice to read daily.” (p. 2). Manuel (2012) studied the habits of teen reading lives. She determined that teens need space to read. They need uninterrupted time to “...linger, reflect, speculate, wonder, imagine, awaken possibilities, contemplate, be receptive to the new, and be invited into another's world” (p. 2). Survey results showed that students enjoyed free time to read, and the teacher read aloud (Ivey & Broadus, 2000, p. 360). Ivey (1999) also discovered that avid readers could become disinterested readers when they have no control over what they read and write. Kasten and Wilfong (2005) helped one teacher create a bistro-like atmosphere that engaged her students in independent reading because it mimicked an atmosphere they would see in real life. Individuals must see themselves as competent readers and understand that their reading identity must reach beyond the classroom (p. 657).

Book clubs and literature circles are literacy practices that invite students to share similar reading experiences in a small group setting (Allen, Moller, & Stroup, 2003; Daniels, 2002). Daniels (2002) describes literature circles as "... small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. Some researchers have found many educational benefits from books clubs (p. 3). McMahon (1997) presented evidence that “students help one another construct meaning, fill in missing background knowledge, analyze and synthesize information, and solve problems” (p. 90). Researchers have also discovered that students need time to talk about the books they read (Daniels, 2006; Casey, 2009). Casey (2009) found students extending their conversations beyond a single text to other texts and even to the community (p. 292). “Simply

put, student book clubs give teachers another classroom option for helping students find meaning in the literature awaiting them in the curriculum” (Seitz, 2006, p.87).

Children learn best when they have scaffolded support to help them achieve their goals. Therefore, reading conferences are a critical part of any independent reading program. Goettelman (2012) believes, “Teachers need to be aware of the impact their one-to-one targeted support can have on a child (64). She found students attended to their reading needs more when they routinely conferred with their teachers (Goettelman, 2012, p. 64) Goldberg and Serravello (2007) suggests the time teachers spend one on one with students is a critical time students can receive important instruction that moves their reading achievement forward (p. 7). Some teachers see independent reading time as a time for instruction. When students spend time conferring with their teachers, they can strengthen the reading skills they already have, learn how to choose books, and deepen conversations (Zapata and Maloch, (2012), p. 11). Lain (2017) reflected on her classroom practice and found, "When students start to read silently, I walk among them, conferring: redirecting, asking questions, taking a few notes, or seeking teachable moments." (p. 163). Akmal (2002) believes that reading conferences can allow teachers to meet students' needs by hearing directly from them.

Teachers should believe books can help adolescents work through a variety of issues that are important to them. Ivey and Johnston (2017) studied adolescents in reading communities to determine what happens when students choose what they want to read. They believed books could help adolescents work through a variety of issues that are important to them. “Reading about characters at the far edge of student's own experiences is quite useful because it creates the opportunity to think through the consequences before

encountering similar situations head-on” (p. 161). Like Radway (1986), others argued that mass-produced literature, like romance novels, does not ruin the reading of a more canonical text. He believes it makes it better.

In a study of her English Language program designed to help family members of students studying in America learn English, Constantino (1994) suggested her students read for pleasure to improve their English/language reading skills. She also discovered that these students had already developed a love reading. To improve their English/language reading skills, Constantino suggested her students read for pleasure. She found that these students gained confidence in themselves as readers and gained a more robust grammatical understanding of the English language. Krashen (2016) asserted that independent reading, “is the source of our reading ability, our ability to write with an acceptable writing style, much of our vocabulary knowledge, our ability to handle complex grammatical constructions, and most of our ability to spell” (p. 2). His assertions suggest that the more we read, the better we become in all other literacy areas. Kirby (2003) discovered that increased sustained reading increased student knowledge about sentence structure. It is plausible that one reason independent reading is so compelling is that it helps students improve academically.

Choice of Reading Materials

Students also want more choice of what they read. Their reading interest often declines as students enter secondary school (Anderson, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 1985). Students’ positive reading identity often depends on their ability to read texts that interest them. In her study of adolescents’ reading habits, Creel (2007) found that students need better and more diverse reading materials. Ivey and Broadus (2000) discovered middle

school readers' ability to read strategically changed depending on the support provided by their teacher and if they were able to choose to read that text (p. 69). Fisher and Ivey (2007) discussed the need to "de-emphasize" the whole-class novel and the assignment. They contended that high-achieving students were often discouraged from reading texts, not because of the text itself, but because they did not enjoy the assignment (p. 494). In her look at middle school readers, Ivey (1999) discovered that most middle school students have reading preferences. Their choice in the text does not always resemble school expectations. They often read texts in a comfortable reading zone or an area of interest.

Moreover, teachers further exacerbate an already negative situation by testing students on their knowledge of a text. Students often see the reading curriculum in secondary education as a static one predetermined by their teachers (Bintz, 1993). Instead of the mundane tasks often associated with reading, Fisher and Ivey (2007) proposed that students read widely and often on interest topics. Mercurio (2005) suggested that choice eliminates many reasons students do not choose to read. Swanson, Wanzek, Vaughn, Fall, Roberts, Hall, and Miller (2017) believed that teachers diminish the child when reading choices are diminished. They suggested choosing texts that matter to students. Teachers could also teach using a theme. They could offer various texts based on the theme and allow students to choose a text that speaks to their interests and lives.

Students who choose their reading material become more engaged in reading. Ivey and Broadus (2000) discovered texts as an essential reason students read. Ivey (2000) researched the benefit of using Young Adolescent (YA) literature to increase reading engagement. In her effort to increase student-selected reading, Ivey (2011)

encouraged students to read outside their comfort zone. She suggested that engaged reading connects to improved reading achievement and the reduction of reading achievement issues. Creel (2007) suggested that students' choice of YA literature can connect to teens as the main characters. Some researchers determined that exciting texts, choice, peer collaboration, and teacher involvement enhances reading engagement (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000 & Allington, 2011). Ivey and Johnston (2017) wanted to know what happened when middle schoolers had a wide range of books on interesting topics. Their goal was not to offer a list of books students should read and learn from them to inform teacher practice. Pitcher, Albright, DeLaney, Walker, Seunarinensingh, and Mogge (2007) stressed, "...we know that young people reject literacy tasks lacking in purpose and interest, we need to become more aware of students' personal uses of literacy and what is important to them." (p. 380).

Students who possess high intelligence and the ability to go through school without recognizing their talents are problematic (Brozo, 2009). Additionally, students who resist school-related reading choose to read texts of their choice outside of school. Students should choose from a variety of exciting reading materials at every reading level (Pilgreen, 2000).

Gardiner (2001) looked at the independent reading practices of his students. He discovered that students felt more like adults because they had a choice in what they read. Guthrie and Wigfield (2003) found that choice has to be "motivating because it affords student control" (p. 61). Researchers often define motivation in terms of "beliefs, values, needs, and goals that individuals have" (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2003, p. 59). When students are motivated, "reading [can become] intensely personal and fundamentally social"

(Wessel-Powell et al., 2020, p. 36). Thus, the closer that literacy activities and tasks match these values, needs, and goals, the higher the likelihood that students will expend the effort to read. Heflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) believed that readers find the motivation to read when they connect to characters in the stories.

Relevance, Representation, and Identity

Students are often discouraged from reading because of the text given to them, not because of reading. Bintz (1993) found that routinely assigned reading students chose not to read because it was not relevant to their lives. Students often viewed it as an "arbitrary" set of reading tasks. During adolescence, students are often searching for themselves and wondering how they fit into the world (Landt, 2006). Students provided with opportunities to read, she believed, about the issues they are facing and how others from various cultures handle the same thing, they will begin to see commonalities that might help them not feel alone. She also found that Black youth are complete and multifaceted; they deserve literature and literary experiences equally complex (Landt, 2006). Some urge more teachers to feature authors that mirror the ethnic identity of the students they teach. Parker (2020) wrote, "I've found if black students can see themselves depicted in a range of texts they read, they are generally more likely to read" (p. 61).

Ladson-Billings (1992) argued that students need opportunities to see themselves in what they read by creating a more closely related pedagogy to many African American students' circumstances. While other researchers created terms such as *culturally congruent* and the like to help non-white students with literacy, many of these terms do not account for African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 313). Culturally

Relevant Teaching (CRT) was coined by Ladson-Billings to help was intended to help teachers connect school culture to the students' home culture, but it also urged teachers to use students' culture to teach them. Ladson-Billings posited,

Culturally Relevant Teaching is a pedagogy of opposition that recognizes and celebrates African American culture. It is different from an assimilationist approach to teaching that sees fitting students into the existing social and economic order as its primary responsibility (p. 385).

CRT can provide marginalized students with a way to access books more like them.

Rosenblatt (1994) stated, "a book without a reader is just words on a page." Her theory discussed the transactional nature between the reader and the text. She expressed,

"There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers or the potential millions of individuals literary works. A novel or a poem or a play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (p. 24).

This transaction is particularly important to minority children whose images and lives are often not reflected in the literature they read. Landt (2006) looked at the effect multicultural literature had on the way minority children saw themselves. She found that students became more confident about their reading; they saw themselves in the texts they read (p.697). Heflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) found that bombarding students with images of animals and White people may have students "wonder whether they, their families and their communities fit into the world of reading" (p. 810). Paris (2015) noted that textbooks and other popular literature often leave references to women and African Americans. Boutte, Hopkins, and Watlaski (2008) discussed the lack of literature

representing African Americans and their families' lives in children's books. Boutte et al. (2008) found, "Without changes like literature and other school content, schooling will continue to reinforce the status quo that does not give validity to diversity (p. 933). Their study discovered that part of the attraction to these multicultural texts is authentic characters who have been well developed and who use authentic language (Heflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001).

For students to receive diverse texts in their classes, teachers must make intentional instructional decisions to include them. Bishop (1990) noted, "When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, and they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part" (p. 1). By opening students to the explorations of culturally diverse literary texts, students can use them to supplement their identities' growth and construction. Ladson-Billings (1995) explored the use of culturally relevant strategies to help minority students succeed. She studied teachers who work with African American students. Some have described what she found as just "good teaching;" however, Ladson-Billings believed it is more than that. She explained that the pedagogical decisions teachers make can be described as culturally relevant. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is based on three fundamental premises (Ladson-Billings, 1995). First, students must experience success. Second, students must develop and maintain cultural competence. Third, students must develop a critical consciousness to challenge their current social order's status quo. CRP would be challenging to use without access to texts that invite students to see their value and place. Byrd (2016) examined how the use of CRP affected middle and high school students. His study

results supported the use of CRP in the classroom. Byrd found that students felt more connected to their school when teachers use real-life examples related to them in the classroom. He wrote, "...the findings also indicate that a direct focus on race and culture in the classroom is beneficial" (Byrd, 2016, p. 6). In her updated discussion of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2014) discusses the changes that must come to CRP if it is to stay true to scholarship ideals. She shares her frustration with educators who have presented distorted views of CRP as representations of her work. Still, she simultaneously makes room for those researchers who push CRP to scholarly realms befitting today's times. For example, Paris (2012) argued that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy does not go far enough to explore students' linguistic and cultural needs. In his view, any cultural pedagogy needs to create ways to promote a linguistically plural society in place of a monolingual society.

However, Paris (2012) believed this model would help teachers move past a deficit model of teaching when working with minority students. His term Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) suggests educators move past the idea that success in Dominant American English (DAE) comes from a white middle-class lens. According to Paris (2012), "CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change" (p. 88). Paris and Alim (2014) present the case for updating the tenets of Ladson-Billing's CRP. They put forth a pedagogy that they believe serves as an "asset" to a youth's culture. For Paris and Alim (2014) believed, "Pedagogies can and should teach students to be linguistically and culturally flexible across multiple language varieties and cultural ways of believing and interacting" (p. 96).

Furthermore, students should be allowed to use their culture and language to learn instead of using that discourse to meet the standards of White middle-class America Paris and Alim, 2014, (p. 95).

Athanases (1998) found that student engagement increased when provided with ethnically, diverse texts. Some literacy experts suggest that all students benefit from diverse literature curricula. Athanases (1998) looked at the use of diverse literature with two 10th grade classes during a yearlong study. She found that culturally diverse literature is positive for all students. It helps these students connect on a human level. Thomas (2016) asserted, “Lived experiences across human cultures include realities about appearance, behavior, economic circumstance, gender, national origin, social class, spiritual belief, weight, life, and thought matter” (p.112). Therefore, students need to experience literary texts that are personally relevant and substantive to their lives, (Tovani, 2001, p 657.) Furthermore, students need texts that relate to and understand others while finding their place (Bishop, 1990, p.2). Bishop (1990) argued, “If they [white students] only see themselves, they will grow-up with an exaggerated sense of their importance and value in the world – dangerous ethnocentrism” (p. 19). She believed children needed to experience the lives of others. More importantly, all must see the intersection of each other's lives to honor one another. While some researchers discuss the importance of students having access to diverse texts, educators Kimberly Parker and Tricia Ebarvia suggest we focus on teachers' pedagogical decisions in classrooms. One idea is for teachers to reflect on their own reading identity to understand better the text choices they make. (Parker, 2020, p. 58). According to Ebarvia (2020), “When our teaching practices are not inclusive, we perpetuate systemic inequalities”

(Heinemann Blog). She asserted that these practices include both curricular materials and teaching practices.

Conclusion

Adolescence is a time of identity development – including students' reading identities. The reading discourse students bring with them from home is different from the established school discourse, so some students find themselves on the outside looking in. Therefore, students need choice in the texts they read. Also, students need texts that reflect them and their cultures and use that culture and language to make sense of the world. More studies that focus on high school students' reading identities and habits are needed to understand how to increase their reading engagement. This literature review supports the idea that students need increased opportunities to read independently about topics that interest them. This study seeks to find ways to increase engaged reading among secondary students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In chapter two, the literature review addressed the idea that adolescent readers need the opportunity to read books they choose about topics in which they have a keen interest to increase engagement. However, there has not been enough research that focuses on the independent reading lives of older adolescents. This research study focused on effective ways to develop, foster, and sustain increased levels of independent reading in secondary students. This chapter aims to supply an understanding of the research method and design utilized in this action research study.

According to Mertler (2019), “Action research is a systematic process where educational stakeholders study their practice for improvement in their specific context.” (p. 5). He also described, discussed the idea that action research is a collaborative process, where educators work in their settings to answer questions that are important to them (Mertler, 2019, p 10). Others have characterized action research as “teacher inquiry” (Dana & Yendel-Hoppy, 2014, p. 6). They described it as a way for teachers to develop questions around critical issues to their practice rather than outside researchers. Action research supplied the best framework to address the research question because it focuses on an area of improvement in the participant researchers’ professional context. The specific qualitative research method used was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry helps researchers explore and explain the human experience through a story (Connelly & Clanidine, 1990; Bignold & Su, 2013; Bell, 2002). “However, Bogden and Biklen

(2007) warned that the immersion of the research participant could affect the behavior of the research subjects, thereby influencing the results of the study.

The participant-researcher conducted the study in the spring of 2020 in a large urban high school found in the central part of South Carolina. Study participants consisted of three students enrolled in College Prep and Honor's English courses. Each study participant was in a different English class taught by three English teachers with varying years of experience. A full description of each teacher and their classroom setting will appear in the classroom discussion section of this chapter.

Role of the Researcher

The participant-researcher, who is an administrator at All-American High School (AAHS), conducted the study. In the tradition of action research, the researcher is embedded in the study as it occurs. The participant-researcher did not have a role in selecting the teachers. As a participant-researcher, my administrative role with the students and teachers may have skewed results. To impress their administrator, students could have taken liberties with their answers that tainted the data. Once students realized they were taking part in a study with their administrator, their behavior may have changed. According to Bignold and Su (2013), "Understanding the role of the narrator in interpreting the story is important here." (p 6). They recommended researchers "recognize his/her bias and identity and remind readers that the narrative account has been created by him/her and is not direct observation, but a narration" (Bignold & Su, 2013, p. 7).

It is essential to be aware of these study limitations to minimize them as much as possible. One way to mitigate these limitations was to explain to the students that their

participation in the study was voluntary, giving them a choice to abstain from the study if they chose. Students received the opt-out notice in writing.

Research Design

During the planning phase, identifying and limiting the scope of a topic is critical. As a variation to previous studies, this study focused on students in high school. Many research studies before this one focused on the independent reading choices of elementary students. A few turned their attention to middle school readers while even fewer focused on ninth graders. Few studies, however, have looked beyond the reading habits of ninth-grade students.

The researcher used relevant research from the literature review to narrow the study's guiding question during the planning phase. The researcher also determined the most right context in which to situate the study. Besides, the researcher grounded related literature in the theoretical backgrounds that provide insight into the research study's historical context. The final part of the planning stage was to develop a research plan that outlined how the researcher designed the study to collect relevant data for the research questions.

Research questions developed from survey results and conversations with students at the high school where the study occurred. The watershed moment occurred when a student asked the researcher to buy him a book he was interested in reading. Flattered he trusted the researcher to do this for him, more critical questions began to surface such as:

1. Why is this student asking me, his administrator, rather than his English teacher?
2. Why does this student want to read this book?
3. Why won't this student purchase this book for himself?
4. How might independent reading practice impact a student's willingness to read now and later in life?
5. How might choice in reading, access to quality texts, reader identity, and relevance and representation improve a student's independent reading habits?

After formulating the research questions, I developed a research plan. This six-week qualitative study included a variety of qualitative data sets. Qualitative data lends itself to narrative research than quantitative data because it can help find the story behind the numbers. The study occurred in the researcher's high school, and within classrooms of teachers, the researcher supervised. Since the researcher was a participant, her involvement occurred indirectly and directly. Part of the study relied on the teachers' willingness to administer the reading survey to their students. The other part of the study included work between the participant-researcher, teachers, and three students. The chart below is an outline of the six-week study.

Table 3.1 *Study Timeline*

Date/Week Of	Activities	Person(s) Responsible
January 24 - Week 0	Participant researcher contacted each student and then asked if they wanted to take part in the study. Next, parents were contacted by phone. The study was explained to them and the take part researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants • Parents of study participants

	<p>asked if their student could take part in the study. All parents and students agreed to the study. Permission slips were sent home with students. Permission slips were due by February 6, 2020.</p> <p>The English teacher of each student was also asked to participate in one interview and administer a survey to their classes. Each teacher agreed to take part.</p>	
February 10 - Week 1	Teachers administered surveys to their classes. Participate researcher interview each teacher. Data collected was review for any insight that might guide the remaining data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Teachers
February 17 - Week 2	Each study participant completed the multipage Reading and Interests Survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants
February 24 - Week 3	The participant researcher will use data from the <i>Reading and Interests Survey</i> to create questions for the semi-structured interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants
March 2 - Week 4	The participant researcher interviewed each student using the Burke Interview Modified for Older Readers (BIMOR).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants
March 9 – Week 5	The participant researcher will interview each participant using interview questions based on data from the student surveys, Reading and Interests Questionnaire, and the BIMOR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants
***The participant researcher paused the study to all students, families, and the schools to adjust to school changes caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic.		
March 30 – Week 6	Based on data review, the participant researcher reached out to student participants for follow-up interviews to fill gaps on the research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants

April 6 – Week 7	Based on data review, the participant researcher reached out to student participants for follow-up interviews to fill gaps on the research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant researcher • Study participants
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Acting. The research plan started with data collection. Mertler (2014) referred to this as the acting stage. During this stage, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted that narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience (p 2). During this stage, the participant-researcher worked with students to explain and understand each participant’s purpose and role in it. The study began with a survey of 3 teachers and the 200 students they taught. The information from this data determined the best instruments needed to complete the study. Using data from those mentioned above, the participant researcher also decided to use questionnaires and structured and semi-structured interviews to gather data from students.

Setting. The research study occurred at All-American High School (AAHS). AAHS is a suburban school situated in the heart of South Carolina. Currently, there are 1390 students enrolled at AAHS. The demographic breakdown is 50% Caucasian, 39% African American, 8% Hispanic, and 6% other. The three student participants enrolled in the College Prep and Honor's English courses served as the sample for this study. The students in the study were in the eleventh and twelfth grades. The three primary students, along with students from the survey, are all students at AAHS. Therefore, it was a convenience sample. Next, you will find an overview of the classrooms and student participants.

Classroom Descriptions. Participants in this study were enrolled in three English classes taught by three different teachers. Teacher A (Anna) has been teaching for three

years. Except for one reading intervention class, she has only taught honor's level courses. Teacher B (Eve) has been teaching for eight years, and she teaches a mix of AP, Honor's, and College Prep courses. Teacher C (Thomas) has been teaching for 15 years and has only taught College Prep courses. None of the teachers use a pure workshop method in their classrooms where they use read aloud, independent reading and writing, shared reading, and conferring consistently. Teacher B and teacher C made efforts to include independent reading in their classrooms. They each started with 10 minutes of reading time. By March of 2020, both teachers B and C had abandoned independent reading to begin test preparation. However, teacher B did report increasing her independent reading time to 15 minutes before stopping the practice. Teacher A did not implement independent reading in her classroom.

Each teacher had a small classroom library. Teacher C took her students to the media center at least once a week to check out books. She is familiar with enough Young Adult (YA) literature to help her students with book recommendations. Teacher B occasionally took her students to the media center to check out books. She is an avid reader of YA books, so she had a slightly more extensive classroom library. Therefore, she would typically send the two or three students who could not find a text to read in her room to the media center for books. Teacher A did not have strong knowledge of YA texts, so she rarely took her students to the media center for books. While each teacher had a desire to allow students to read texts independently, they each had other forces at play that did not allow them to include independent reading as a permanent component of their classroom practice.

Participants. This study focuses on three high school students' reading identities and habits. Initially, I met each participant in quite different ways for different reasons. However, each encounter centered on a unique literacy experience. They each wanted to discuss a struggle they were having in a class. After several conversations about their interests and hobbies, I discovered that these students are readers. They did not discuss the texts read or assignments completed in their English classes with any passion; however, these students did discuss texts they read in middle school. Listening to these students reminded me that secondary students do not have reading lives; however, they may not be the reading lives welcomed in school.

As the participant-researcher and assistant principal in the research setting, I must not use any undue influence on the participants. I used pseudonyms have to protect the anonymity of the participants. For this study, the name of the changed to protect the research participants and the other students, staff, and administrators.

Thomas. I met Thomas when he was in ninth grade because he walked by my office often. One day, I asked him to talk. Thomas walks into my office fast forward two years and asks me to buy a book for him. During conversations, Thomas has often discussed his lack of value in education. He understands the need to finish high school and earn his diploma, but he does not see a connection between the education he receives and the life he wants. Thomas is a below-average student. Historically, he has earned below-average grades and performed below average on standardized assessments. Thomas failed each of the three End of Course (EOC) examinations he took in 9th grade. Table 3.2 details his scores for the EOC exams.

Table 3.2 2018 End of Course Exam Scores

Course	Score	Level
2018 Algebra I	49	F
2018 Biology	48	F
2018 English I	41	F

Eve. I met Eve because she was having trouble with a teacher, and she stopped by the office to talk. She noticed the books in my office and asked if she could borrow one. The book she borrowed was *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas. The movie recently released, and many African American girls wanted to read it before seeing the film. I gladly gave it to her. After that encounter, Eve stopped by to talk often.

Academically, Eve does well in school. She has good grades and has been enrolled in our honor's level classes throughout high school. However, her standardized test scores indicate Eve could take courses in our Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Despite her strong academic ability to read, Eve admits that she has not chosen to read regularly since middle school. Table 3.2 details her scores for the EOC exams.

Table 3.3 2016-2017 End of Course Exam Scores

Course	Score	Level
2017 Algebra I	95	A
2017 Biology	100	A
2017 English I	96	A

Anna. Anna is the oldest of three children. She enjoys movies and spending time with her friends. Anna is a good student and shows concern for her grades. Nevertheless, she admits she does not always work to her full potential. I met Anna last year as a sophomore. She came to see me because she struggled in her English class to find a real connection to her classmates, and the text she reads in class, her life experiences and struggles still seemed out of reach. Table 3.3 details her scores for the EOC exam

Table 3.4 *2018 End of Course Exam Scores*

Course	Score	Level
2018 Algebra I	55	F
2018 Biology	78	C
2018 English I	78	C

Methodology

“Life's narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations” (Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). A narrative inquiry approach helps tell the story of students’ reading histories and interests. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) purported the main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who lead storied lives individually and socially. To best understand these participants’ reading lives and interests, the participant researchers believed a narrative inquiry method is best. Webster and Mertova (2007) believed, “Stories relate the life journey of the human species and the changes that have marked our development as thinking beings” (p. 13). Therefore, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). As the

participant researcher, I must present each participant's stories in a way that accurately represents their lives. In order to do that, I needed to collect a variety of data points. I collected information from questionnaires, surveys structured and semi-structured interviews as well as field notes. Information from the questionnaires helped create questions for the semi-structured interviews. These forms of data are crucial to providing a well-rounded picture of study participants. It is essential to understand that these participants live their stories while simultaneously reflecting upon their lives as they tell their stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 4).

Similarly, "What makes narrative particularly appealing to research (compared with other more traditional research methods) is its capacity to deal with the issues of human centeredness and complexity in a holistic and sensitive manner" (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 24). Narrative inquiry ultimately allows researchers to delve into the lives of study participants and tell the stories of their lives as it relates to a particular subject. Webster and Mertova (1990). "...that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 3). Narrative inquiry provides researchers an opportunity to listen to study participants, record the data, and use that information to share their stories. Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study, which is appropriate to many social science fields (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 8).

Data Collection

Analyzing qualitative data allows for a holistic view of the data presented (Mertler, 2019, p. 172). I used questionnaires, surveys, structured and semi-structured

interviews were used to collect data. When collecting data, either in the form of semi-structured interviews or through written documents, the researcher is presented with texts or oral accounts situated in time and place, as reconstructed, or told by the participant (Bignold & Su, 2013, p 5). Therefore, this type of data can provide direct insight into the participant's beliefs, ideas, and independent reading notions. Bell (2002) further noted, "Narrative inquiry involves working with people's consciously told stories, recognizing that these rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware" (p. 209). One of the study goals is not only for the participant-researcher to learn more about these secondary students' reading lives. It is hoped that each of these students learns a little more about themselves as readers and individuals. This research design allows the participant researcher to gather the data needed while remaining embedded in the study's overall fabric. Miller (2000) described narrative analysis as having a "triangular structure," the respondent, the researcher, and the responses to the researcher's questioning (p 25). To ensure the research findings' validity, the research participant triangulated data from the surveys, questionnaires, and structured and semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaires and Surveys. At the beginning of the research study, teachers administered a survey to 200 students, and 123 completed the survey. Mertler (2019) stated, "Surveys and questionnaires permit the practitioner-researcher to gather lots of information quickly" (p. 144). Surveys "...refers to a collective group of quantitative data collection techniques that involve the administration of a set of questions or statements to a sample of people" (Mertler, 2019, p.144) He warned that surveys are most effective when the researcher creates survey questions that are closed and unambiguous (p.149). The three students at the center of this study completed one questionnaire. The *Interests*

and Reading Survey from Reading Apprenticeship is part survey and part questionnaire. It allowed me to learn more about each student's likes and dislikes personally and related to their reading habits. It also allowed me to learn more about their family experiences related to students' literacy histories. *The Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory* was used to determine students' reading strategies while reading. Understanding their strategy use provided further information regarding students' attitudes and confidence in reading and understanding texts. Knowing their strategy use was vital because I needed to know whether a student's reading interest connects to their ability or something else.

Structured Interviews. To understand how these three high school students, view reading, I conducted the *Burke Interview Modified for Older Readers* (BIMOR). In this structured interview, Goodman, Watson, and Burke (2005) developed a way to understand older readers' reading beliefs. This instrument's questions allowed the interviewer to establish a student's reading background and approach to reading. Using the BIMOR, I interviewed each study participant after they completed the Interests and Reading Survey. The data gained from both instruments helped me develop individualized questions for each study participant semi-structured interview questions. These simple questions provided unique reading perspectives from the students, and it allowed me to create a thorough reading profile for each student.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Bignold and Su (2013) suggested, “It is through narrative and dialogue that experiences and stories are constructed, perhaps in a formal interview or in a passing conversation, both enabling a researcher to build a story and adopt the role of constructor and narrator” (p.5). To dig deeper into the lives and read

each student's beliefs, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Mertler (2019) believed that semi-structured interviews allow participant-researcher to gather truly qualitative data (p. 134). This type of interview allowed me to investigate students' unconscious beliefs about independent reading. This interview type also allowed me to ask follow-up questions that further probed students' attitudes, needs, and perceptions about independent reading and how best to foster and develop it in secondary readers.

Data Analysis

Mertler emphasized the unique characteristics of qualitative data. He emphasized, "...the process of analyzing qualitative data attempts to view the phenomenon of interest from a holistic perspective" (p. 172). One way to achieve this perspective is through coding. Coding is a way to analyze and organize data to reveal thematic ideas (Gibbs 2007 & Saldana, 2016). To begin data analysis, I read each student's questionnaires to determine any similarities among the research participants. I wanted to determine any if there were any gaps in information. For the gaps that existed, I created interview questions for the student to investigate those areas further. Next, I interviewed each student using structured and semi-structured interview formats. Once that data was collected, I used an inductive analysis method to organize the data into various categories to explain what the data meant through a coding scheme.

During the next phase of data analysis, I listened to the interviews on the recording application *Rev*. I transcribed each of the four sets of interviews for each student participant by hand. Doing so allowed me to understand the words students used, but it also allowed me to understand the tone and other voice nuances that could provide further insights. Then, I used the recording application's transcription service to get an official transcript of each interview. Each transcript was reviewed and coded. Saldana

(2019), suggested the first round of coding may look at individual words, sections of texts, or the entire page (p. 3). During this round of coding, I inputted the typed transcripts into the coding program *NVivo*. *Nvivo* is a computer program that allows researchers to disaggregate a great deal of data in many ways. Some researchers believe computer programs such as *Nvivo* can be an essential tool in analyzing qualitative data. Welsh (2002) noted, “This [*Nvivo*] can, in turn, improve the rigor of the analysis process by validating (or not) some of the researcher's impressions of the data” (p. 3). I used the word cloud feature of this program to determine any keywords. The program highlighted the following keywords: reading, books, teacher, and talking. Those keywords led me to dig deeper into the sections of the transcripts that deal with the keywords. The second round of coding involved reading the sections related to these keywords. A review of those sections revealed five themes – reading as a social activity, reading mentors, reading environment, and matching text to readers and the role media center. The third round of coding determined that there was not enough data to support the theme of the reading environment and the media center’s role. While one participant commented on the environment, the other participants did not.

Similarly, students did not say anything of significance about the media center's role in increasing students' desire to read. After coding and organizing the data, I reviewed each theme for what the data says. Next, after analyzing this first set of data, I realized there were areas of the data that were incomplete. Therefore, I created new questions and re-interviewed the students and collected the final data needed.

After collecting the final set of data, I analyzed the results, and the implications of the research discussed. First, I coded each data set for initial findings and connections.

Second, the data was re-coded for final determinations, and as a result, themes emerged. Next, I connected the data found to my research questions. Finally, I analyzed the data for relationships to highlight those ideas that did not align with my research questions. Doing so ensured that the findings were representative of the student's experiences, useful to the broader research base, and provided recommendations that model ways to increase students' independent reading in schools.

Conclusion

“Narrative inquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structure” (Bell, 2002, p.207). Therefore, it makes it an effective method to tell the reading stories of each participant. Chapter 3 outlined the method used to conduct this qualitative research study. Specifically, the chapter detailed the researcher's role, the research setting and context, the research sample, method, plans for data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Some researchers believe that disengaged adolescents are poor readers. However, current literature supports the idea that many of these students choose not to engage in the reading process for various reasons. The findings of this study intend to provide further insight into the reading habits of resistant secondary readers. More importantly, the findings may shed some light on the ways schools can merge the multiple discourses students possess with the one they need to succeed in school.

Three students were studied. Information from questionnaires, surveys, and interviews was analyzed using an inductive analysis process. Themes emerged from the coded data collected from interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. Through deliberate coding of the data, themes can emerge naturally rather than attempting to fit the data against pre-set theories. The remaining part of this chapter will provide a narrative about each student's reading histories, backgrounds, interests, and habits. The chapter will also present findings that emerged from the data in each of the following themes: Reading as a social activity, reading mentors, matching texts to readers.

Thomas

Thomas is a junior in high school this year. I have worked off and on with him as his administrator since his freshman year. When you meet Thomas, you think you have a sense of who he is. Dressed head to toe in camouflage, he does not leave much to the

imagination. During many of our conversations, he has often remarked, “School just ain’t my thing.”

Unfortunately, his grades support this belief. However, Thomas does excel at the district’s career and technical school. He is enrolled in the welding program there. As we discussed his experiences at the career center, he said,

“I’ve made all kinds of stuff. I’ve made a little airplane that I was supposed to give to someone special. I made uh a duck call hanging that I gave to my friend for his birthday.”

There is more to Thomas than what he presents on the surface. Just over a year ago, he walked into my office and asked if I would buy him a book. He loves the *Red Hot Chili Peppers*, and the lead singer wrote a book about his life in the band entitled *Scar Tissue*. The appeal of the *Red Hot Chili Peppers* may seem obvious, but Thomas demonstrates the multiple layers of his personality once again. He explained,

“All you know about an artist is just know about the music and see you really start reading about them. Then you get to see their lives and stuff like that.”

That afternoon, I ordered the book for Thomas, and he gave me the money for it the next day. Thomas presents as a young man who does not care about school, much less reading, so buying a book for himself was not an option. Laughing as he told me,

“I can’t go buy a book, Miss Simmons. My friends would make fun of me.”

After this brief exchange, I had other questions about Thomas. What motivated him to read *Scar Tissue*? What keeps him from reading in class? That day, I decided I needed to know more about Thomas and other adolescents’ reading habits.

A year later, Thomas and I are sitting in my office discussing the book *Scar Tissue*. To my surprise, he read the entire book. We discussed his favorite parts of the book. Thomas affirmed his book choice by saying,

“Well, when he was real young his dad stepdad he used to like teach him about how to sell drugs and stuff like that, and like then, they started doing them. And I thought it was kind of interesting because like you got you to know you got a 12 The 13-year-old kid out here selling drugs and doing drugs.”

However, it was not the drug use that was the real appeal for Thomas. Instead, he explained,

“It’s just interesting to see how the world is, how someone else lives their lives, and the stuff they go through.”

Ivey and Johnston (2018) found that students can often learn about themselves and their lives when given opportunities to see how others like them deal with difficult issues. Thomas was able to find connection and solace in the stories he found in *Scar Tissue*.

Thomas’s paternal grandmother raised him. Over the years, he spoke of her often. He spent most nights at her house because his dad often worked sixteen-hour days as a heating and air contractor. She was the only mother figure he had in his life. During an interview, he recalled his earliest reading memories with her.

“My first memory of reading, I was in bed, and my grandma used to tell me bedtime stories when I was four or five years old, and I looked at her and said I wanted to read to her.” There was one book he fondly remembered. He recalled,

“The Ugly Duckling. We read that one a lot.”

It was clear early on the critical role Thomas’ grandmother played in his life. Ms. Shirley, as I fondly referred to her, kept Thomas in line. During his freshman and sophomore years, Ms. Shirley is whom I called when it came to Thomas’ education. We spoke most often during his freshman year. As Thomas adjusted to high school, he needed added support to ensure he remained focus on his grades. He passed everything except English that year. The following year Thomas passed all his classes. I thought he had turned a corner. However, earlier this school year, Thomas lost his grandmother. Since her passing, his grades have dropped, and he has lost focus. During an interview, Thomas began talking about his grandmother. I told him he did not have to, but he said he needed to do it. Thomas said,

“She believed in me. Granny thought I could do anything.”

In this quote, Thomas makes it clear the vital role his grandmother played in his life.

Thomas does not live in a home devoid of print resources. It is quite the opposite. Nonfiction texts surrounded Thomas growing up. He discusses different magazine subscriptions in his home. He reported,

“Yeah, there’s a bunch of hunting magazines that my dad gets in the mail once a month.”

His grandmother received the newspaper daily. Thomas often reviews *Carolina Trader*—a paper that allows readers to list items for sale and buy them. Still, in school, Thomas never showed any interest in reading what his teachers assigned in class. He did not seem connected to the reading he was assigned. Chuckling, Thomas said,

“I’ve figured out that if it’s got anything to do with school, it’s probably boring. So, I took it upon myself to get some stuff that I like to read, and it’s pretty interesting.”

His detachment to reading appears to center on the difficulty he has with specific vocabulary. During different interview sessions, Thomas discusses the idea that students need books they can read. When asked what schools can do to help students become more interested in reading, he responded,

“...you get them something that they’re commonly interested in, it’s not too hard reading the words make, sense and it’s just all-around interesting. You would just want to keep reading it because you want to know what happens next.”

In middle school, Thomas read a little more. However, *Scar Tissue* is the first book he has read in high school. He said,

“I guess you just a little kid; you’re curious about things. But now in high school, you’ve done lived 14, 15, 16 years. You’re just kind of like, “Ah, whatever.” You’re not as curious about things.”

Thomas’s concerns with how others view him extend to the classroom too. He explained,

“Because every now and then, I’ll get started on a word or something, and I can’t pronounce it. It just kind of bugs me a little bit.”

Thomas is keenly aware that his place in school is different from others. He lacks the confidence that he can “do” school like other students. Gee (1987) defined this as a student’s secondary discourse. He wrote, “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network” (p.1). Even though Thomas

does not control his secondary (school), he is in full control of his primary (home) discourse.

Part of Thomas' home discourse involves hunting and fishing. Right now, he has a negative self-image of himself as a reader. This negative identity keeps Thomas from participating fully in his classes. He would instead look disengaged than look stupid. He explained,

“I get kinda weirded out if everybody's looking at me then. So it's easier just to say nothing.”

Some researchers found that even those students who struggle with reading want to talk in class and contribute in some meaningful way. However, they do not participate because they do not want others to know they may lack specific skills (Hall, 2010). Like other students, Thomas may struggle with reading, participating, and being involved in the class. Hall (2010) wrote,

Struggling readers do not necessarily avoid reading tasks because they do not want to read or are uninterested in becoming better readers. Instead, they may make the decisions they do to keep a certain level of dignity and respect within their classrooms (p. 1820).

However, if these students must choose between avoiding embarrassment and reading, they often choose to avoid embarrassment.

Eve

Eve is a senior and will graduate in just a few short weeks. During her high school time, she usually could be spotted in the courtyard during lunch with her friends. Eve is quiet and unassuming. She is not a star athlete or the student getting a perfect score

on her SATs. Nevertheless, school has always been easy for Eve, as shown by her good grades. Enrolled in all honor's level courses, she could take Advanced Placement (AP) courses, but as she put it,

“I'd prefer to coast through my senior year.”

Despite her ability to read, Eve chooses not to read for pleasure. Furthermore, she does not find joy in reading what she is assigned in class.

“If the book is about something I'm interested in, then, yes, but if not, I do the bare minimum. Well, usually when I read books that I enjoy... I read them slower, and I take my time, and I visualize what's happening in my head. I like to make the books into movies in my head. But if I'm reading for a class or something, I just read them to do what I got to do. Get through it.”

Eve's use of the visualization strategy proves that she has some reading strategies in her belt. Still, she does not employ them for assigned readings in class.

Eve lives with her mother; however, most of our conversations have been about her grandmother. She calls her grandmother her best friend. Like Thomas, she credits her grandmother with teaching her to read. When asked how she learned to read, Eve said,

“My grandma read a lot when I was little. They ain't make me read, but it was like, I like to read, so it started when I was young.”

Learning to read came easy to Eve. She had plenty of material to help her practice. Eve grew up in a print-rich environment also. Books and magazines were readily available. Based on her lack of interest in her teacher's assigned readings, her teachers might be surprised that Eve had any reading interests. She saw both her grandmother and mother

read. Eve's grandmother also has a significant influence on what Eve reads. As a young girl, Eve spent time with her grandmother, perusing the book section in Sam's. She said,

“While shopping, my grandmother and I always stopped by the book section to see what they had. She would look at the cooking and gardening books, and I would look at the fiction books.”

Eve describes her experience, choosing one book in particular. She recalls,

“The cover was dark. It was gray and had a flower on it. My mama likes flowers, so I like the flowers. So, I was like, “Okay, little flower on it.” Dark background, and I read the little description thing, and it was “kidnapped” and all this stuff that I like. I was like, “Okay, I might read this book.” And read it, and she has other books, too, that I want to read.”

Eve found a book to read for the moment, and she also found several books for future reading.

In elementary and middle school, Eve recounted the different books she read. She remembered,

“I didn't read all of the Twilight books. I think I read two of them. Don't ask which ones because that was middle school. I know I read two of them. I think my first memory reading would be Diary of Wimpy Kid.”

Even now, Eve still has those books in her room.

“All of them are still in my room. I have a little bookshelf, and a couple of good books on it... a good little bit of books.”

However, despite each of these positive reading memories, Eve does not choose to read books anymore. She reads the required texts for her classes since she started high

school, but she does not pick up other books. According to the *Reading and Interest Survey* from Reading Apprenticeship, Eve has a clear idea of the books she enjoys reading. Eve is even familiar with a few authors. On the *Reading and Interest Survey*, she wrote,

“Stephanie Meyer and Natasha Preston.”

Even in her honor’s English classes, Eve is not encouraged to read things that reflect her interests.

“Yeah, I probably would have paid more attention or been more interested in reading if the books reflected people like me more. But I can’t say for sure because I’ve never had the opportunity in class to read about black people.”

Eve’s comment saddened me, but it does not surprise me. Ladson-Billings (1988) stated, “Members of a minority group internalize what certain elements of society have constructed in order to maintain their power” (p. 14). Boutte et al. (2008) might suggest the lack of representation in books Eve has experienced started as early as the picture books read to her elementary school. Like any student, Eve needs texts that promote positive cultural images, and she believes teachers should provide this. She stated,

“So, you can’t please everybody in the classroom, but you can at least try to get something that they all could relate to.”

Eve's comment suggests she might be interested in developing an independent reading life with texts she enjoys and her teachers' encouragement. Eve does not have a full independent reading life, yet she is a reader and periodically engages with texts she is interested in reading. Teachers must make an intentional effort to support students as they develop their reading identity and habits.

Anna

Anna is a junior this year. She is a bright student who receives decent grades. She does not work too hard for those grades. She stated,

“I could probably take AP classes, but I have friends who take them, and they complain about them all the time. Why would I want to do that?”

Anna lives with her mother and younger siblings. Print material was available in her home growing up, and her previous experiences with reading have been positive ones. Anna’s first memory of reading a book she chose was *Junie B. Jones*. She also remembered reading a set of books from the *Bluford* series, a series of books about inner-city students in California's urban high school. Anna recounted,

“In middle school when we read the high school books. Yeah, those. I used to read all of those.”

Anna's 7th-grade teacher introduced her to the books in the Bluford series. She remembered,

“My teacher would do this thing call a book pass. We would pass the books around and decide which ones I liked. Then, I would put the books [titles] on my paper.”

Despite these positive literacy experiences, Anna no longer sees herself as someone who chooses to read. Instead, she sees reading as something for younger kids to read. Anna said,

“It’s basically for my siblings. Yeah. We would go to the library and get books for them.”

Even though books are accessible to Anna when she visits the public library, she still chooses not to read.

During her sophomore year, Anna took English II Honors. Even though she could do well in the course, Anna felt animosity from the teacher. Anna felt out of place in the class. By the time she spoke with me about the class, she wanted to drop the course and move down an academic level. She recalled,

“I don’t belong in that class.”

“Why?” I asked. Anna remarked,

“I don’t get what we’re talking about in the books? The teacher and the other kids talk about things I don’t know. And the stuff we’re reading has nothing to do with me.”

Instead of agreeing with Anna or giving in to her desire to get out of the class, I encouraged her to express how she felt by writing it down. I wanted her to be clear about her concerns so she could have a conversation with her teacher.

Her teacher that year was a young, passionate teacher who cared deeply about her students. She was full of great ideas, and she knows her subject matter. At that time, Anna was the only African American student in the English II honor’s class, and her teacher was white. While her classmates and teacher spoke of places they have vacationed or beach houses they own, Anna was left feeling like an outsider. Though capable, Anna felt less-than in this class. She could not find what Rudine Sims Bishop refers to as her mirror. Researchers have found that students need to see reflections of themselves in the texts they read. Boutte et al. (2008) argue, “In addition to teaching children to love stories and books, educators can also actively help their young charges recognize and deconstruct prevailing negative images and information’ (p. 959)

Anna could not find a connection in her English class that year. However, I knew that if Anna could have a conversation with her teacher, she could address her concerns. I asked Anna to go home that weekend and think of her top two concerns to speak with her teacher on Monday. I am the participant-researcher and the supervising administrator for the English department at the study's location. I did not want to insert myself into this situation too much. I did not want either of my roles or the fact that I am an African American woman to influence the teacher's reaction or treatment of Anna. The following Monday, Anna prepared to speak with her teacher. She recalled,

“I was really scared to go and talk to her. I mean, she’s nice, but she already thinks

I’m stupid. This might make it worse.”

However, Anna did speak with her teacher, and the result of that conversation was illuminating. Yelling my name down the hall,

“Miss Simmons! Miss Simmons!”

I turned around, and Anna was standing in front of me with a huge smile. She explained,

“Miss Simmons, Ms. K., doesn't think I'm stupid. She actually wants me to talk more. She told me she thought I didn't care about her class because I never

said anything. I told her I feel out of place because they are always talking about stuff I don't know about.”

I told Anna how happy I was that she had spoken to her teacher and discovered an entry point into that classroom community. She went on to say,

“I told her I don't think I fit in with the other white kids in the class, and that I wanted to drop her class. But she told me not to.”

Anna's struggle in her English class connects to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Theory of Self-Determination because she did not believe in her ability to take part in the class successfully. Anna's ability to relate to the students or texts in the course, coupled with academic confidence, caused Anna to retreat and want to give up. However, Ms. K. told Anna,

“Together, we can find space for you.”

As Anna moved through the course, she reported,

“I still don't like the stuff we're reading, but I don't feel so left out.”

I asked Anna what they were reading and why she did not like it. She said,

"It's Chaucer and Shakespeare and stuff like that. I mean, it's ok, but I like stuff for today's time. You know, like the *Hazelwood High Trilogy* or *Tyrell* I read in middle school.”

According to Anna, her love for these books is connected to her interest in the characters' lives and their relation to her life. She explained,

“Because it was real life. It was just the teenage life, and it's the hood life. I see me in them.”

Anna's ability to connect with the characters in those texts supports the assertions from Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT asserts that race should be at the center of education policy, research, and curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As it relates to literacy, CRT suggests that students of color must have opportunities to read literature that honors and celebrates their cultural voice. Garth-McCullough (2008) argued that schools must tap into students' cultural prior knowledge to motivate students of color (p. 212.). Anna's reading history is supported by two beliefs of Deci and Ryan's SDT. Her

successful reintegration in this educational community requires she feel confident (competent) in her ability to perform and feel connected (related) to the students and content in the course. By year's end, Anna felt a connection to the community in her English class. Still, Anna did not leave that class wanting to read more.

Themes

Reading as a Social Activity

Humans are inherently social creatures (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000, p. 486). As such, they need opportunities to interact with each other when reading a text. Rosenblatt (1938) argued that reading occurs as a transaction between the reader and the text. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), people need to “relate” or connect to things. Their theory of Self-Determination describes the three tenets necessary to achieve optimal motivation: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. During each of their interviews, Both Anna and Eve discussed times when a social interaction led to a new book recommendation and, more importantly, a unique opportunity to engage with a text. In a description of the first time she read serially, Eve stated,

” Probably the popularity at the time because when I was in middle school, I think they was real popular, and I was really into reading, so I wanted to know why everybody was going crazy over these books.”

Eve wanted to emulate what her friends were doing. She had no way of knowing if she would even like the books her friends were reading, but she was willing to take the chance. High school changed this for Eve. She made new friends, but as she reported, “They don’t really read. They talk about boys and hanging out.”

Anna's social influence was a little closer to home. When Michelle Obama's book *Becoming* hit bookstores, Anna remarked,

"Every now and then, you will hear about a book like Michelle Obama's book. Everybody had it. You saw it everywhere. It would be on people's desks."

Anna further explained that she watched her mother and grandmother read and talk to each other about the book. They encouraged her to read it. Anna remembered,

"I knew if I wanted to get in the conversation, I had to read it too."

Anna did not read the book in its entirety. Instead, she read the parts of the book she heard her family discussing. She recalled a conversation between her mother and grandmother. She said,

"They talked about how smart Mrs. Obama is. How she started with nothing, and now she's been in the White House. They never thought they would see a black family in the White House and how important that image is to the rest of us [other African Americans]. I'd never thought about that before, but I knew I wanted to talk to them about it."

Anna had a socially motivated reason why she wanted to read Michelle Obama's book. She wanted to read, connect, and learn with her family.

Teachers often want students to become independent readers. They even expect them to read at a proficient level in their classes, but they do not always provide students with opportunities to create positive reading habits. One way to create these opportunities is through social interactions like classroom talk, book talks, and other book recommendation forms. Some researchers believe students could benefit from the addition of talk into their silent reading practices. Parr and Maguiness (2005) studied

teachers who found, "...reading as social practice and the conversations as a way of supporting students, but their aim was for the teacher to move from initiating and controlling the conversation to facilitating the interaction with and among the students (p. 100). Anna said,

"I prefer to have discussions, but it's also like you want to read it by yourself first, then you wanna go talk to someone about it."

Eve recalled,

"When *The Hate You Give (THUG)* movie first came out, I went to see it. I talked to my friends about the movie, and they told me I had to read the book. I mean I'd already saw the movie. I did read the book. They were right. The book is better."

Eve could have watched *THUG* and left it at that. Instead, the students in her classroom community that year urge her to do more to read. Ivey and Johnston (2013) found, "Closely tied to engaged reading in the data was evidence of widespread talk inspired by students' experiences with books, both within and outside of school and with peers, teachers, and family members" (p. 261). Gee (1987) suggested, "identity which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk to take on a particular role that others will recognize," comes from how others view us. (p. 2). He believed people want to belong to a particular social group. Eve wanted to belong to the discourse that read and discussed the book version of *THUG*, and she was willing to read to do so.

Thomas also found purpose in social interactions with someone about the books he read. He said,

“I could talk about what I read to see if you know me, and that person thinks about the same way or what we have in common about the book and whatnot.”

These students found inspiration to read from the social interactions they have had with others about reading. The encouragement and support from students, friends, family, and teachers can significantly impact their willingness to read independently and begin steps toward helping students acquire the school's discourse.

Reading Mentors

People often seek help from experts when they begin a new process, from losing weight to starting a business. It is no different for students. Like an apprentice to an expert, students need a more experienced reader like teachers or family members. Some researchers have suggested that students need guidance and support from their teachers to grow as independent readers. Morrow (1996) discovered, "teacher roles in modeling and facilitating, and active involvement of children helped students manage the decisions they had to make" (p. 80). When working with students to develop their reading skills and habits, it is the teacher's job to encourage and show the way to reading enjoyment. In a study on her implementation of a sustained silent reading program, Lee (2011) found, “Teachers need to make reading recommendations, using any resources, and talk about reading during SSR time.” Lee (2011) also believed, “Encouragement also includes investigating why students are not reading” (p. 213). It is not enough that books are accessible. Students need their teachers to encourage and prompt them to read. During each study participant’s interview, I asked students about the last time they were encouraged to read. Eve, remembering her time in middle school, remarked,

“Well, what I will say... When I was younger, I was, I don’t know how to explain this. I would say they do a better job at promoting [books].”

A student also knows when teachers are excited about reading. Thomas described his experience with reading between elementary and high school. He commented,

“They’re [elementary teachers] more open, and they seem a lot more happy about it. Now in high school, teachers are just like, “You got to read this.” Let’s go to elementary school. Teachers would be like, “All right, kids. Let’s turn to chapter four and find out what happened to the lost duckling.”

Anna’s experiences further support the idea that students can sometimes gain their excitement and love of reading extrinsically. When discussing the role, she believed her teachers play in her independent reading life, Anna stated,

“So, you’re even looking at not just what you’re reading, but how interested do your teachers seem and want to do it.”

It is also essential that teachers are aware of their students’ hobbies and interests. Having this information can assist teachers in guiding their students toward the perfect book for them. Thomas remembered a visit to the media center,

“We went to go get a book, and then I’ll pick up a book that seems a little bit interesting, but it’s not my cup of tea.”

When this happens, teachers must encourage students to find the right reading materials. As Lee (2011) purported, “Encouragement also includes investigating why students are not reading” (p. 213). A little encouragement from his teacher that day might have sparked an interest in reading.

Even with classroom libraries, students may go day in and day out without a book recommendation from their teacher. I surveyed 123 students in grades 9-11. 59% reported they did not have books in their English classrooms they want to read. 71% responded that their teachers rarely, if ever, offer or suggest books for them to read. Anna talks about this when describing one English classroom library,

“No, I thought it was just for decoration. When teachers want to decorate their classroom, they would put a bookshelf up.”

When students see the libraries in their classrooms as nothing more decoration, something more intentional must urge them to read. To combat that, one urban high school created a forum to invite other adults to talk to students about the book (Fisher, 2004). He learned that students need intentional, specific reading instruction, but more importantly, he learned they need time to practice those skills. Students rely on their teachers to provide recommendations for what to read when they struggle to do so independently.

Having reading mentors are essential. Reading mentors can alter the discourse in which a student participates. Thomas, Eve, and Anna described people in their lives who have served as mentors for them. They have described mentors who were their teachers and their peer groups, but one mentor model stood out—their grandmothers. Both Thomas and Eve recounted memories of their grandmother playing a significant role in their early reading experiences. These experiences can help students choose or even create a new community. According to Gee (2000), “The ‘kind of person’ one is recognized as ‘being,’ at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or

unstable” (p. 99). Increasing these interactions between students and a supportive reading mentor can increase the likelihood that students begin to see themselves beyond how “Others” like parents and teachers, as Lacan (as cited in Wolfe, 2010) described, see them (p.154). Lacan also suggested, “Through shifting patterns of interaction, however, participants can begin to understand how their reality is constructed and therefore reflect on how they have been positioned by the symbolic order” (as cited in Wolfe, 2010). If educators want students to see themselves as readers, more interactions with reading mentors are needed, so they see themselves as part of a community of readers.

Matching Texts to Readers

Hunsberger (2007), wrote “Connectedness—a stronger link between what children learn and what they live, harnessed in the classroom to develop critical consciousness—is accomplished through culturally relevant teaching” (p. 422). It is this idea of connectedness that many adolescents seek in what they read. Behind his resistant approach to school, much less reading, even Thomas has reading interests and reasons for reading. He said,

“I’ll look through there [Carolina Trader] just to see what people have to sell. Pretty good deal on stuff.” This trade newspaper fits a specific purpose in Thomas’s life, unlike the other classic texts assigned to him in class. Despite Shakespeare’s works’ timeless themes, Thomas does not find many interests or see a connection to these texts. He said,

But all the teachers, my whole high school career, whatever teachers have read it.

Hasn’t had a single cuss word in it. That’s not the only thing. My English teacher,

She's got these books, "Thou Has Arrived." Do what? That don't even make no sense.

Studies on school and home literacies show students often need opportunities to use literacy practices at home to support their school literacy needs. Hull and Schultz (2002) found, "This research shows that teachers can successfully engage students in high levels of reasoning about literary texts by drawing on their tacit knowledge about cultural forms of out of school discourse" (p. 35). Eve does not find the classics interesting either. She stated,

"Because usually, they're not something I'm interested in... Like the Classics. The Classics are more history-based."

However, Eve finds on-line blogs, celebrities, and social media sites more interesting than the text her teachers assign her. She said,

"I mean, I like reading about celebrities. I follow their Instagram and other social media sites, but my favorite is a blog called *Celebrity Juice*. I get all the good info there."

The emphasis on the classics has left Thomas, Eve, and Ann with the idea that school reading is not for them. Though the inappropriate language Thomas seeks does not top the list of essential things one finds in a book, books that challenge the dominant culture presented in canonical texts are essential to develop student's reading and personal identities. Lycke (2014) found that many texts found in the canon represent "ideals of power, dominance, heterosexuality, and masculinity" (p. 25). However, he suggested it not be left there. He purported, "While these themes are important if

critiqued, too often they are presented through the canon as the only cultural narratives worth knowing" (p 25).

Countering these canonical narratives can help students who are marginalized most by them. Students like Thomas, Eve, and Anna need opportunities to see reflections of themselves and others like them in texts they read. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy can provide teachers with strategies that help them reach students in these groups. Ladson-Billings (1992) found, "They [multicultural texts] supported this attitude of change by capitalizing on their students' home and community culture" (p. 382). Teachers can help students by including more diverse literature in their classrooms. Meacham (2000) argued, "...narrow concepts of literacy do not include social and cultural factors" (p. 195).

Therefore, teachers must include diverse texts in their classrooms and curricula. "Teachers must construct pedagogical practices in ways that are culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful for their students" (as cited in Howard, 2003, p. 197). Furthermore, teachers must move beyond the idea that the inclusion of diverse texts is the end goal. Moreover, researchers of these pedagogies urge educators to be open to sustaining them [various cultures] in both the traditional *and* evolving ways they live and used by young people (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Alim & Paris, 2012). As the world changes, so must the curricula and pedagogies we use with students. Remaining flexible about the instruction we use is essential if we are to meet the students' needs in front of us because if we approach students with opportunities for them to learn rather than ways to fix them, we might see these marginalized students as Schuster (2006) does,

poor whites, blacks, and Hispanics, economic and social outcasts- are not illiterate within their own cultures. In their communities, they can speak and be heard and often have the power to write and be read. Once they move outside their communities; however, their brand of illiteracy becomes felt (p. 44).

Along with providing students with an expanded view of literature available to them, students want to read texts that, according to Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), mirror their lives or open a window to a world they want to know. Books with more mature content are often appealing to students. Ivey and Johnston (2018) wrote,

“When adolescents can choose young adult books that are personally relevant, that draw them into complex moral dilemmas, the lives they build at school and home is more fulfilling and results in greater social, moral, and intellectual maturity, as well as academic competence” (p. 149).

Eve discussed a book she read about the abduction in middle school. She writes,

“It was about this girl who gets kidnapped by a man and then he has three... I think he had four girls in his cellar, and they had to [escape. ...].”

Ivey and Johnston (2018) found, “...students who chose to read disturbing texts were drawn to the moral complexities of the narratives more than to any graphic details” (p. 143). Eve explained,

“[The book] was more so about the girls and how they overcame what they went through with their bond, [than] where it showed the other parts of being kidnapped.”

Some researchers support the idea that students should grapple with mature issues "... the books tend to reveal the consequences of bad choices through the eyes of characters with whom students identify" (Ivey & Johnston, 2018, p.149).

Beyond mature content, students also need to see themselves reflected in what they read. Right now, Thomas does not feel connected to school, much less a reading identity. He believes he sees the world differently than most people. While some in his peer group obsess over the latest star, athlete, or social influencer, Thomas is more concerned with other things. He explained,

"Everybody cries about Juice World dying and all that, but we got soldiers dying every day, and nobody ever thinks about that. So, I think I think differently than other people."

Thomas attends the district's Career and Technology school because he wants to become a welder. Thomas needs texts that meet his unique interests, hobbies, and life experiences. As educators, we need students to "...read because their reading results in successful meaning-making, support their interests, and encourages exploration for further knowledge, they are likely to continue reading" (Lycke, 2004, p.25). Moje (2015) suggested, "Rather than expecting youth to arrive in the classroom with a preexisting motivation to learn a discipline, teachers can apprentice and guide students into their understanding of the value and purpose of disciplinary reading, writing, and speaking" (p.255). However, if we do not create a social context that encourages reading, provides students with reading mentors, or matches the right text to the right reader, we may have fewer students choosing to read.

Findings

1. Students are reading. The key to their reading is choice. Both *Self-Determination Theory* and *Critical Race Theory* support the idea that choice in our pursuits. Deci and Ryan's *SDT* posit that autonomy is a critical part of one's motivation. This idea of choice was necessary for each of the subjects in this study. Thomas' need for choice brought him into my office in search of help to buy a book he wanted to read. He laughed,

"I don't need it, Ms. Simmons. I just want to read it. I love the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and the bandleader wrote a book about his life with the band". Anna remarked during an interview,

"Just being a teenager not even like being a black teenager but just being a teenager, in general, a lot of stuff that we read It's like kind of outdated Like I know the Shakespeare and stuff is important for us to read, but I feel like that's all the reading at a certain point. Sometimes you need to just read something you wanna read".

Ann, Eve, and Thomas are reading. When possible, they seek opportunities to read about topics that matter to them.

In *CRT*, Ladson Billings and Tate argue that for students of color to realize themselves fully, they must see themselves in texts they choose to read. Students are reading more than we think. However, many of them are not reading texts assigned to them in school—they are reading blogs, emails, magazines, poetry, trade books, and books independently. Eve, Anna, and Thomas all regularly read texts that were either important or meaningful to them. More specifically, Eve and Anna discussed novels related to pop culture that they chose to read independently. Eve says,

"I read more in middle school because I able to choose what I read, and I was able to choose books that included characters that look like me."

Unlike Ann and Eve, Thomas' choices centered more on nonfiction texts like autobiographies and newspapers. Each of these students is willing to engage in reading texts. They want the texts they read to have personal meaning, deal with current topics and events, and be useful to their overall lives.

2. Teacher support and guidance matter. Students need to feel confident in their ability to read independently. Teachers play a critical role in ensuring students develop the necessary skills needed to be a good reader. Deci and Ryan (1985) describe this as competence. In their SDT, they discuss the need for people to feel they are mastering a skill. Students gain these skills through the intentional and unintentional actions of their teacher. Gee (1985) describes this as learning and acquiring knowledge. In his theory of Primary and Secondary Discourse, Gee argues that people become literate first through their primary discourse, typically developed in the home environment. Gee believes these first literacy experiences are modeled through the actions and behaviors of one's family. He calls this process acquisition. When these literacy practices mirror ones found in the school setting, most students find success. Eve, Ann, and Thomas all describe experiences where they were read to by a family member. They also reported instances where they saw their family members reading for a variety of purposes. These reading experiences indicate that these students have print materials available to them. Eve discussed the books she had and still has in her room.

"All of them are still in my room. I have a little bookshelf, and a couple of good books on it... a good little bit of books."

However, those students with literacy practices less connected to the dominant school discourse are likely to have difficulty in class. However, with support from a teacher, students can gain the necessary literacy skills and confidence to become readers. Having this confidence can create a sense of expectation that students can and should read. In this study, each student noted that their reading engagement is increased with support and recommendations from their teachers. Eve recalls a conversation about a book with one of her English teachers.

“I’ve seen it [*The Hate You Give*] in her room so I was talking to her about it. I mean I knew I wanted to read it because I heard some friends discussing the movie, but it was when Ms. Beamon said she read the book before going to see the movie that I decided to do that too”.

3. Student’s literacy practices begin at home. An important finding from the study shows that students' literacy practices begin at home. These practices help shape the literacy identities students bring to school. Identity is an integral part of a child's development, but it is an incredibly integral part of adolescence. During much of this age, adolescents spend time trying to discover who they are. Researchers try to label those who fall into this group, but, as Alvermann (2001) noted, the labels do not tell us anything about this group of readers (p.679). Gee (1987) asserted that these identities are first formed at home, the primary discourse. Anna, Eve, and Thomas each developed their first or primary discourses from family members like their grandmother. There is an assumption that students who struggle in school or who do not choose to read texts in school come from homes devoid of print materials. Eve, Anna, and Thomas do not come from homes devoid of print materials. They were read to as children by an adult in their

lives. Also, the adults around them read for a variety of reasons. They each described family members who sparked their engagement with reading. Eve recalls,

“My grandmother read to me when I was little. She and I would buy books while at Costco. Sometimes we talked about the stuff we read”.

Thomas shared memories of several memories about the role his grandmother played in his life and his education. He said,

“My grandmother always read to me when I was little. When I got older, she encouraged me to read. Sometimes I would read but not always.

These literacy experiences help create what Gee refers to as someone's "primary discourse." Gee (1987) believes we acquire what we know about language from these experiences in our primary learning environments.

However, the primary discourse students bring to school is often diminished by the school or secondary discourse's demands. Still, Gee (1987) found that students need to use their acquired discourse to learn their secondary or school discourse. Therefore, teachers should create space for students to use their home discourses to maximize their school learning. If we do not do something different, many more students will think the same way Thomas does,

“I’ve figured it out that if it’s got anything to do with school, it’s probably boring.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This narrative inquiry sought to study ways to foster, develop, and sustain an engaged level of independent reading in secondary students. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, including the study's limitations, where this study fits into current research, recommendations for practitioners and school leaders, and recommendations for future research.

Overview

This qualitative study aimed to discover possible strategies educators can use to help students develop an independent reading life. This study's literature review presented research supporting providing students with time to read, choice in the materials, and the importance of ensuring a student's interests, culture, and identity are acknowledged and respected. Researchers determined that text choice, peer collaboration, and teacher involvement enhance reading engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Allington, 2011); Ivey & Johnson, 2013). However, many students matriculate high school without developing an independent reading life. Many of the earlier studies also focused on younger students. Therefore, this study aimed to discover the following:

Research Questions

3. How does a narrative inquiry research methodology reveal participants' reader identities?

4. How can teachers use a student's reader identity to strengthen their independent reading habits and scaffold them higher levels of achievement in all content areas?

To best answer these questions, qualitative methods were used. The research design process followed the action research cycle of planning, implementing, reflecting, and revising based on data.

Summary and Discussion

This study focused on the ways to foster an increased level of independent reading life for secondary students. The analysis of this study's findings is through the theoretical lens of Self-Determination Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Gee's Theory of Primary and Secondary Discourse. The study contributes to the discussion of adolescent reading because it provides insights into secondary readers' reading lives and habits. The findings, also supported by the research of Gee (1998), Ladson-Billings (1995; 2014), and Deci and Ryan (1985) can help educators find ways to help adolescents develop independent reading lives. Findings were generated and categorized into the following themes: Reading as a Social Activity, Reading Mentors and Matching Readers to the Right Texts. These are important considerations because it gives teachers and school leaders ideas on ways to increase the reading engagement secondary students need to read independently at the high school level.

As previously mentioned, the participant-researcher surveyed a small percentage of AAHS students' reading identity and habits. Data collection for the study included surveys, questionnaires, structured and semi-structured interviews. The focus of this study included three students who presented unique reader identity stories. They were surveyed more deeply with a questionnaire and interviewed on four separate occasions.

The following sections discuss the themes that emerged from the data and how this study adds to current research on secondary students reading habits.

Theme One – Reading as a Social Activity

The data revealed that engagement in independent reading has an inherent social aspect. Yes, the natural part of reading occurs in solitude, but it requires a conversation between the text and the reader (Rosenblatt, 1994). Students also need to interact with others to push them beyond the text in ways that can aide in a better understanding of themselves and the world.

Using Talk to Develop Readers. The social aspect of reading refers to the social interactions that can occur when students make book recommendations. These recommendations can lead to the excitement that propels students to read a new text or series of texts. Interactions around text can occur through teacher-student discussions, and student-student discussions of thought-provoking and engaging issues centered in which students are engaged (Reutzel, Jones, & Newman, 2010, p..135). In her study of two teachers using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), Ladson-Billings (1995) discovered teachers who used CRP created spaces where "Students are apprenticed into a learning community rather than taught isolated and unrelated skills." Adding a social component to an independent reading program can positively affect a student's independent reading engagement.

Using Talk to Understand Themselves and Others. Teachers can also use talk to help students process what they read to understand themselves and others better. Some researchers find that teachers who used social interaction in their classrooms increase engagement. Sanden (2014) believed in these classrooms' socially engaged atmosphere,

including numerous opportunities for student-to-student and teacher-to-student learning, encouraged reading-related noise and movement (p. 173).

Intrigued by complex topics, students need opportunities to talk about these difficult subjects after reading about them. Ivey and Johnston (2018) suggested,

When adolescents can choose young adult books that are personally relevant, that draw them into complex moral dilemmas, the lives they build at school and home are more fulfilling and result in greater social, moral, and intellectual maturity, as well as academic competence (p.149).

Through these stories and conversations, students learn about themselves and others. According to Thomas, “It’s just interesting to see how the world is, how someone else lives their lives, and the stuff they go through.” Like other students, Thomas needs books that reveal the consequences of bad choices through the eyes of characters he identifies (Ivey & Johnston, 2018, p. 149).

Theme Two – Reading Mentors

Providing Access to Texts. The data also revealed that adolescents need reading mentors. Students need to know that an expert in the room can help them find something to read because some students believe they cannot find good books at school. Students need more than access to texts and time to read. During an interview, I asked Eve about books she has found to read at school. She reported she was never really introduced to texts by teachers in high school. Instead, Eve found books in other places. She said,

“...because Costco has newer books. Netflix had the movie *To All The Boys I Loved*, and then I went to Costco and I seen the book, and I’m like buying that

book because I had watched the movie on Netflix, and I was like it [the book] has to be better more detail.”

Like Thomas and Anna, Eve could have benefitted from having access to diverse, high-interest books and a reading mentor who helped her discover them.

Bridging Home and School Literacies. Findings from this study suggest that teachers should learn more about a student's reading interests and hobbies outside of school. Teachers should also take the time to learn more about the literacy lives of students outside of school. When possible, teachers should also bring these outside interests and home literacies into the classroom. Doing so will show students that teachers honor the literacies they bring from home in school. Vacca and Alvermann (1998) believed that knowledge of a student’s home literacies helps teachers make better decisions about ways students might engage them in school literacies. Gee (1998) purported, “Control over certain discourses can lend to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society” (p. 3). Students need their teacher to know them and help them find texts where students see themselves and find an entry point into the school discourse.

Theme Three – Matching Readers to the Right Text

The data revealed that all adolescents do not shy away from reading because they cannot read. Instead, they chose to become disengaged in independent reading because the reading they are asked to do in school does not match their interests, nor is it relevant to their lives.

Reader Interests. Part of the attraction to multicultural texts is the use of authentic characters who have been well developed and who use authentic language

(Heflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). Hunsberger (2007) suggested, “Connectedness—a stronger link between what children learn and what they live, harnessed in the classroom in order to develop critical consciousness— is accomplished through culturally relevant teaching” (p. 422). Each of the participants in this study has demonstrated that they have reading interests. Thomas finds solace in the non-fiction world. He has interests in texts that help him learn about the lives of others. He also uses texts that for practical reasons – like purchasing items from *Carolina Trader*. Eve and Anna reported interest in narratives that represent real-life situations that mimic aspects of their own lives. However, after entering high school, these students reported they did not read as much as they once did. Instead, they barely read, if at all, the texts assigned by their teachers.

Culturally Relevant Texts. In middle school, Thomas, Anna, and Eve read about topics that interested them. These students engaged in reading texts that included characters that look and talk like them or did things they liked. These texts, which were outside the standard school curriculum, provide the opposite of what some Critical Race Theory researchers refer to as the “White Supremacist” master script. Swartz (1992) wrote,

Master scripting silences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily by legitimizing dominant, White, upper-class, male voicings as the “standard” knowledge students need to know. All other accounts and perspectives are omitted from the master script unless they can be disempowered through misrepresentation. (p. 349)

Students also need teachers who help them find texts that reflect their lives and personal experiences. Some CRP scholars recommend that teachers do more than that. Paris

(2012) suggested that teachers create a linguistically pluralistic classroom rather than a monolingualistic one. Classroom spaces should represent the students and the society in which they live by providing access to diverse texts that meet their needs, interests, and cultural background.

Limitations

Certain limitations frame this study's findings. The first and most obvious limitation of this study is its small sample size. Therefore, generalizations cannot be made to larger populations of secondary students. However, the sample size does represent students with different academic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds.

Another limitation was my role as a participant-researcher. Considering my role as an administrator in the research setting, participants may distort the information they provide. Participants may want to try to impress or please the participant researcher because I am one of their administrators.

A final limitation was the timing of the study. The last part of the study's data was collected during the current Coronavirus Pandemic, so schools in my district were closed, while students continue their learning from home. Therefore, my final interview with each student was conducted over the phone. This limitation may have altered students' interview responses due to distance.

Recommendations for Practitioners and School Leaders

Adolescent readers consist of a wide range of student reading identities. Many adolescents have rich reading lives. Other adolescents have reading lives outside of school, but they choose not to engage in reading, independent, or otherwise. The selected participants in this study are no different. Data from each participant uncovered reading

histories that first developed during their early years at home. However, as these students have matriculated through school, they have significantly reduced the amount of reading. However, their data also revealed that these students are willing to read when provided with certain conditions.

First, students need opportunities to be social when reading. They need opportunities to talk about the texts they are reading to their peers and their teachers. Talking about texts can help students process what they have read, and it provides other students with new ideas on the next text they might want to read. Creating this social atmosphere can create.

Second, students want their teachers to be more involved in their independent reading. They do not want them to tell them what to read. However, they do want recommendations from those teachers. They want to know what others are reading so they can determine their next reading moves. Students also need their teachers to accept and support the reading identity they acquired at home. More importantly, those marginalized groups of students need recommendations for and access to texts relevant to their lives. Teachers must familiarize themselves with texts that vary in topic and diversity to help students make these choices.

Third, teachers need to match students with the right text. They need texts they have an interest in reading because it represents some part of their lives or ones that will help them deal with stressful situations. Some of these texts include mature content; some would consider it too much for young people. However, some researchers like Ivey and Johnson have found that students need these texts to understand others' lives or to cope with their lives. Adolescent readers also need a wide variety of texts. Therefore, schools

need to honor the texts students read outside of school and incorporate those reading practices in school.

Finally, school leaders should support teachers who implement independent reading in the classroom. Supporting teachers will encourage them to take more risks in the amount of time they give to independent reading. Also, school leaders should support a teacher's desire to bring diverse texts in the classroom. They can support teachers by providing funding for classroom libraries. Keeping classrooms and school libraries book collection updated is an expensive endeavor. Therefore, school leaders who commit to literacy must commit to funding literacy practices. Below is a chart that outlines the action steps necessary I will take to ensure my school increases students engagement with independent reading.

Table 5.1 *Action Plan Timeline*

Month	Activities	Person(s) Responsible
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with the administrative team to present the findings of the study and recommendations. The administrative team, including the participant researcher, decides on the specific recommendations they would like to implement. Meet with the Literacy Team members to look at the participant researcher's recommendations and begin planning how they will implement them. <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers will use one Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting to discuss ways to implement an independent reading program. English teachers set aside 20 minutes of independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Researcher Other members of the admin team Literacy Team

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. English teachers will begin a book study of Young Adult (YA) literature and nonfiction texts to become more versed in the texts they can offer students to read. 4. Content area teachers will use one Professional Learning Community meeting to discuss ways to implement time for students to read text appropriate for the content they are studying. 5. Media Specialist will re-start the book club. 6. Teachers from each discipline will allow students to read texts connected to the content they are studying. Teachers will supply choices in the text to read when possible. 	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English teachers will meet in their PLC groups discuss ways to implement independent reading time in their classrooms. • Content teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss ways provide to students who can read connected to what they are studying. • The literacy team, which includes the participant researcher, will begin advertising for a book club run by the media specialist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • Literacy Team • Media Specialist • Teachers
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English teachers will begin with 10 minutes of independent reading. • Content teachers will provide time for students to read text connected to their current unit of study. • The media specialist will contact the students interested in the book club and prepare for the first meeting. The media specialist will conduct the first book club meeting. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • Literacy Team • Media Specialist • Teachers

November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • Literacy Team will meet to discuss progress goals implemented so far—adjustments to plans made as needed. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • Literacy Team • Media Specialist • Teachers
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • English teachers will meet to discuss the books they will read during the Young Adult book study in the spring. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • English Teachers • Media Specialist • Teachers
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English teachers will use their PLC time to begin their YA and nonfiction book study. • English teachers will increase independent reading time to 20 minutes. • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • English Teachers • Media Specialist • Teachers

February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Team will meet to discuss progress goals implemented so far—adjustments to plans made as needed. • English teachers continue their YA and nonfiction book study. • English teachers will increase independent reading time to 20 minutes. • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Team • Participant Researcher • English Teachers • Media Specialist • Teachers
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English teachers continue their YA and nonfiction book study. • English teachers will increase independent reading time to 20 minutes. • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • English Teachers • Media Specialist • Teachers
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English teachers continue their YA and nonfiction book study. • English teachers will increase independent reading time to 20 minutes. • Teachers will continue their independent reading time. • The media specialist will continue book club meeting. • All teachers will meet in their PLC groups to discuss the progress of the implementation of the independent reading times. They will use any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • English Teachers • Media Specialist • Teachers

	information discussed to make improvements to their independent reading time.	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Course (EOC), Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate testing will occur throughout May. • Literacy Team will meet to discuss progress goals and results. The literacy team will also make goals for the next school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Researcher • Literacy Team

Suggestions for Further Research

Continued research in the field of adolescent reading is still needed. While this investigation focused on independent reading lives of three secondary students, more research is needed to push the field of independent reading in high school forward. This study focused on ways to foster, develop, and sustain independent reading habits among secondary students. Future research could include talking to independent reading programs, the role of a teacher's involvement in independent reading success, and access to texts representing student cultures and interests. The study's three participants make it difficult to generalize findings to a larger population sample. Therefore, the following is recommended for further study:

1. Conduct a qualitative study with a larger sample size with data collected in actual classrooms during independent reading time. Data collected could look at student reading choice and teacher instructional moves.
2. Conduct a mixed-method study that looks at the effect independent reading has on reading achievement. This study would determine the impact of independent reading on students' reading engagement and how that translates to reading achievement.

3. Conduct a qualitative study on the independent reading habits of gifted students. The study would aim to determine ways to engage gifted students in reading texts they chose.
4. Conduct a qualitative study on school leaders' role in implementing an independent reading program in secondary schools.

There are numerous potential topics to study in connection with the reading habits of adolescents. Researchers could also explore the impact of culture on independent reading in a predominately white school versus a predominately black secondary school. Researchers could also delve deeper into the bridge between home and school literacies.

Conclusion

This study attempted to address a gap in the literature on secondary students' independent reading habits, particularly students who resist the school discourse. The study's guiding questions searched to understanding student's reading histories and viable ways to help adolescents engage in increased levels of independent reading. Using Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the Theory of Primary and Secondary Discourse as a theoretical lens, the study aimed to determine if students would engage in independent reading practices if students were able to read texts that related to them (SDT and (CRT) and connected them to others (SDT), and how their primary discourses affect their ability to engage in independent reading.

Data from this study suggest a need to include or expand an independent reading program in high schools. Much of the research on independent reading programs in schools focus on elementary and middle schools. A study on the inclusion of high school independent reading programs and its effect on student achievement could provide vital

insight into how schools can increase engaged independent reading habits among secondary students.

Providing opportunities for students to participate in discussions is critical. Students want to discuss what they read. Having these opportunities to talk provides students with the validation of their thoughts and feelings. It also allows students to hear the perspectives of others. Thomas indicated,

“I could talk about what I read to see if you know me and that person thinks about the same way or what we have in common about the book and whatnot.”

This small validation from a peer or teacher could be enough to encourage students to read.

As noted by the research participants, students become excited about new texts when their peers become excited. Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory rests on the idea that students need three things to improve their motivation. They are competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Deci and Ryan (2008) found, “... social environments can affect motivation, affect behavior, and wellbeing” (p. 182). In his study on what motivates adolescents to read, Knoester (2010) found that social interactions increased students' motivation to read. Therefore, teachers must create a real community of readers where students talk and share their reading experiences.

More importantly, increased independent reading engagement is to help students like Thomas, Eve, and Anna find their place in and out of school. They each bring unique reading identities, interests, and discourses with them to school. It identifies them. Currently, these identities and interests are not included in their current school discourse.

So, the challenge is to bridge home and school literacies and provide a curriculum that is inclusive no matter the discourse or culture a student brings to school.

All students deserve to see themselves in the world. They need to see themselves in books and art presented in a positive light in books and art. However, students marginalized in educational spaces must have these opportunities specially created for them. They need stories that remind them of themselves and introduces them to the world. For as John Dewey once said,

“The aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education — or that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth.”

Dewey viewed education, itself, as a way to free oneself from any negative situations in their lives. He also viewed it as a toward social change. Reading, therefore, is an opportunity for students to begin further their education in ways that one day allows them to achieve their individual pursuits.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT PRE-STUDY SURVEY

Please provide an answer for each part of the survey.

1. Have you ever been enrolled in a reading class?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe

2. Do you think you are a good reader?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe

3. In your own words, describe the characteristics of a good reader.

4. Answer each statement below by choosing always, sometimes, or never.

Always Sometimes Never

How often do you read outside of school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you struggle to understand what you read?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you ask your reading teacher for help with your reading?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often will you need to read in the future?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you see family members reading?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5.Which of the characteristics below describe you as a reader? Choose as many answers as needed.

I read silently.

- ☐ I try to pronounce all of the words right
- ☐ I get distracted while I read.
- ☐ I have trouble remembering what I read.
- ☐ I try to figure out the meanings of words I don't know.
- ☐ I try to read with expression.
- ☐ I picture what's happening when I read.
- ☐ I think about things I know that connect to my reading
- ☐ I read a section again if I do not understand it.
- ☐ I try to read with expression.
- ☐ Talk about what you read.

6.List any reading strategies you have learned in this class this year?

7.Do you feel you have learned about yourself as a reader in this class?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

8.Are there books in your classrooms you want to read?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9.How often does your class go to the media center?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

10.How often does your teacher suggest books to read?

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

11.Do you enjoy when your teacher reads aloud to you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

APPENDIX B

INTERESTS AND READING SURVEY

Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other

1. What is your favorite subject in school?

2. What is your favorite pastime or hobby?

3. What obligations do you have besides school?

Work	If so, how many hours per week? Where
------	---------------------------------------

Sports	If so, what sports?
--------	---------------------

Music	If so, what?
-------	--------------

Family (taking care of siblings, chores, etc.)	If so, what?
--	--------------

Community/School Activities	If so, please list:
-----------------------------	---------------------

4. What are your talents? Sports? Music? Drawing? Interacting with others?

Making friends? Studying? Reading? Other (describe)? Please list:

5. What is a possible career or occupation you are considering pursuing after completing your education?

6. What kind of writing do you do besides school writing? Letters? Poetry?

Notes to people? Journal writing? Email? Other (describe)? What is your favorite kind of writing? Please list:

7. What is your favorite movie?

8. What type of music do you like best

9. Name one of your favorite musicians/musical groups:

10. Do you have a favorite poet? Yes No

If yes, please tell me who?

Part 2: Getting to Know Each Other as Readers

11. How many books are there in your home?

0–10 More than 10 More than 25 More than 50
More than 100

12. How many books do you own?

0–10 More than 10 More than 25 More than 50

More than 10013. Does your family get a newspaper regularly? _____ If yes, what is the name of the newspaper?

14. Does your family get any magazines regularly? _____ If yes, which magazines? _____

15. Is there a computer in your home? Yes No

If yes, who uses the computer most often? _____ For what? (Check *all* the ones that are true)

Internet browsing email business school work
games other (explain) _____

16. Does your family read in a language other than English? Yes No

If so, which language(s)? _____

17. Who reads a lot in your home? _____

18. What do they read? _____

19. What are some different reasons people read? _____

20. Do you think you are a good reader?

Yes No It depends

Explain why:

21. Do you think reading will be important to your future?

Yes No

Explain why:

22. From what you can remember, learning to read was

very easy for you easy for you

hard for you very hard for you

23. Do you read in a language other than English?

If yes, which language(s)?

In which language do you read best?

Part 3: Final Reflections

24. Write any comments or concerns you have about this class.

25. What do you hope to achieve in this class

APPENDIX C

BURKE INTERVIEW MODIFIED FOR OLDER
READERS (BIMOR)

Name_____Age_____Date_____Sex _____

Occupation_____Education Level_____Interview Setting _____

1. When you're reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?
2. Who is a good reader that you know?
3. What makes_____a good reader?
4. Do you think_____ever comes to something that gives him/ her trouble when he/she is reading?
5. When_____does come to something that gives him/her trouble, what do you think he/she does about it
6. How would you help someone having difficulty reading?
7. What would a teacher do to help that person?
8. How did you learn to read?
9. Is there anything you would like to change about your reading?
10. Describe yourself as a reader: What kind of reader are you?
11. What do you read routinely, like every day or every week?

12. What do you like most of all to read?
13. 13. Can you remember any special book or the most memorable thing you have ever read?
14. 14. What is the most difficult thing you have to read?
15. For readers who live in bilingual or multilingual communities or households, it is important to gather information about their reading in their various languages. Ask readers: “Do you ever see or read any materials in languages other than English?” Probe to remind the readers that they might read newspapers and signs in the environment or on food packages, as well as letters or text messages from relatives or businesses in other countries, etc.

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