

GAVIGAN, KAREN W., Ph.D. Examining Struggling Male Adolescent Readers' Responses to Graphic Novels: A Multiple Case Study of Four, Eighth-Grade Males in a Graphic Novel Book Club. (2010)

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Although graphic novels are an increasingly popular literary format, there is currently little empirical research that documents their use with struggling male adolescent readers in school settings. The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the ways in which four struggling, eighth-grade, male readers responded to graphic novels during a graphic novel book club. The Adolescent to Read Profile (AMRP) was utilized to determine the motivational effects that reading graphic novels had on the participants' value of reading and their self-concept as readers. Additional data were obtained through observation field notes, audiotapes of book club sessions, teacher interviews, and literature logs.

The findings from this study support the use of graphic novels with struggling male adolescent readers. From the participants' responses to graphic novels, I concluded that reading graphic novels improved their reading engagement, and had a positive effect on their reading motivation. The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that all four participants experienced an increase in their value of reading after the graphic novel book club intervention. Although the self-concept as a reader scores were mixed, there were signs from qualitative data that pointed to evidence of moderate improvement in the participants' reading efficacy. Implications for theory, practice, policy, and future research are discussed.

EXAMINING STRUGGLING MALE ADOLESCENT READERS' RESPONSES TO GRAPHIC NOVELS:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF FOUR,
EIGHTH-GRADE MALES IN A
GRAPHIC NOVEL
BOOK CLUB

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

*And then the whining schoolboy
With his satchel and shiny morning face
Creeping like a snail
Unwillingly to school.*

From *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare (Neilson & Hill, 1970).

Since the early 1960's, studies have documented the gaps in literacy achievement between males and females. Gate's (1961) seminal study of 13,000 U.S. elementary students produced the first hard evidence of female reading superiority. The finding from Gate's study revealed that girls significantly outscored boys on tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary (Zambro & Brozo, 2009). In the 1990's, two major studies pertaining to literacy, gender, and achievement were conducted in the United States. As a result of the first study, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that "the gap in reading proficiency between males and females (favoring girls) is roughly equivalent to about one and one half years of school" for seventeen-year-old students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1995). Another study, *The ETS Gender Study: How Females and Males Perform in Educational Settings*, indicates that the widest current gender gap for

learning achievement, as measured by standardized tests, is in the area of literacy (Cole, 1977).

In an effort to explain the gender gap for learning achievement, a study by the American Association of University Women (Bailey, 1992) hypothesized that the national emphasis on educational inequities for girls may have resulted in apathy towards the academic difficulties experienced by boys. To corroborate this conclusion, the report cited 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results in which females outperformed males in reading and writing (Corbett, Hill & St. Rose, 2008). More recently, a 2004 report by the National Center for Education Statistics provided an analysis of gender differences in reading achievement for the 1992-2003 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The data revealed that females in grades four, eight, and twelve consistently scored higher than their male counterparts in reading achievement. This trend continued in 2005, as female fourth and eighth graders both performed better on average than their male peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Additional studies have revealed that the gap between male and female reading achievement increases over time. For example, in 2004, eighth-grade girls scored an average of 11 points higher than eighth-grade boys on standardized reading tests while twelfth-grade girls scored 16 points higher than boys (Tyre, 2006). Furthermore, Kleinfeld (2006) reported that boys in every socioeconomic and ethnic group are outperformed by girls with similar backgrounds (Educational Alliance, 2007).

The issue of gender differences in literacy achievement is not limited to the United States. Reports on literacy achievement scores from countries around the world

consistently point out that boys are being outperformed by girls in the areas of reading and writing. According to the 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading test, fifteen-year old female students outscored males in all but one of the 41 participating countries (McFann, 2004). Furthermore, there is a growing body of research indicating that boys read less than girls (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Educational Alliance, 2007). For example, a study of contemporary juvenile reading habits indicated that only 16.78 percent of boys in all age groups would prefer to read a book, where 42.44 percent of girls would prefer to read a book rather than watch television (Booth, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Clearly, there is a significant amount of data to document gender differences in reading achievement. Understandably, many educators and researchers from developed countries around the world agree that there is a current “boy crisis” in male adolescent literacy. As William Brozo stated, “It is perhaps this long well-documented history of male underachievement that has helped contribute to an entrenched popular perception, and indeed an expectation that many boys simply will not become thoughtful, accomplished readers” (p. 306).

Today’s educators are struggling with how to attend to the current “boy crisis” in literacy education. There is a need to address this growing gender gap by implementing more research-based pedagogy in classrooms and libraries. Such research can provide insight as to which practices can improve reading motivation and achievement in the literacy lives of struggling male adolescent readers. For example, Brozo (2002) stresses that

the material matters for male adolescents. He wrote, "Teachers need strategies to capture and develop the attention of boys. These strategies....involve connecting to issues and interests that engage boys" (Zambro & Brozo, 2009, p. vii). The idea that material matters is a growing concern that needs to be addressed in today's classrooms. In the words of children's author, Jon Scieszka, "When we say boys don't read, we really mean that boys don't read what we want them to read, what we think of as reading" (Sutton, 2007, p. 446). Educators must identify and honor the texts that male adolescents want to read, in order to help them value reading, and expand their views of themselves as readers (Lapp & Fisher, 2009).

There is a growing belief among literacy educators that graphic novels can be a motivating factor for helping reluctant readers achieve reading enjoyment and success (Botzaiiki 2009; Crawford, 2004; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Gorman, 2003; Krashen, 2004; Lammano, 2007; Lyga & Lyga, 2004). Providing non-traditional texts through formats such as graphic novels, or digital media, can engage male adolescents' interest in a subject. As Frey and Fisher (2004) discovered, "popular culture" or new literacy texts such as graphic novels can serve as tools to motivate and inspire creativity. Furthermore, many literacy theorists believe that when male readers select engaging reading materials, such as graphic novels, it can help them find their reading voices by choosing to read, rather than choosing not to read at all (Brozo, 2002; Ivey & Fisher, 2006; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Although graphic novels are an increasingly popular literary format, there is currently little empirical research that specifically documents their use with male adolescents in school settings. There is a need for studies that examine how male

adolescents respond to graphic novels and the effect, if any, that graphic novels have on their reading motivation. Peterson (2004) stated in her article “Supporting Boys’ and Girls’ Literacy Learning”, “We should always be concerned when one group of students consistently performs less successfully than another group, particularly in an area such as literacy, that is so important in defining who we are as contributing members of society” (p. 33).

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a social constructivist perspective, which contends that learners construct their knowledge and meaning through social interactions. The theorists who have informed my sociocultural perspective of learning are Dewey (1938), Vygotsky, (1978), Bakhtin (1986) and Gee (1990). I introduce the work of these and other theorists followed by summaries of how their work enhances my theory regarding the ways in which graphic novel book clubs support the development of students as readers.

One of the earliest education theorists was John Dewey (1938). Although Dewey’s philosophy is more often associated with pragmatism, he was one of the first theorists to posit the belief that education is an active and constructive process. It was Dewey’s view that learning should be related to the interests of students and connected to current problems. More recently, Vygotsky’s sociocultural lens is based on the belief that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). His theory focused directly on student learning within specific environments, and it stressed the role of language in the

learning process. Vygotsky also examined the difference between what children may be capable of accomplishing independently versus what might be accomplished with the support of more knowledgeable others. The appropriate point for teaching is related to what Vygotsky referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In Vygotsky's words, the ZPD is "The distance between the child's actual development level, as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (McMahon, Raphael, Goatley & Pardo, 1997, p. 86).

The sociocultural theories of Vygotsky are extended through the work of Bakhtin (1986). Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher and linguist, who believed that the meanings of words or signs resulted from both experience and consciousness. He proposed that meaningful learning occurs when speakers engage with one another in a social interaction. It was Bakhtin's belief that we need others to respond to the thoughts we express in order to help us understand ourselves. He put forward that each social group had its own way of interaction, its own set of values, and a sense of shared experiences. Bakhtin further hypothesized that no two students are alike socially; therefore, no two will have exactly the same interpretations of language.

Gee (1990) shares many of the beliefs of these three sociocultural theorists. For example, he proposed that readers and written texts are parts of a larger system made up of other beings, language, symbols and tools through which meaning is constructed. He explained that reading and writing are tools humans use to engage in conversations across space and time, often through discourse communities. These discourse communities

represent different beliefs, values, and social practices. More specifically, Gee argues that membership in any group leads individuals to integrate language and behaviors into a sort of “identity kit” for being a group participant (Gee, 1990).

Many of today’s literacy theorists and practitioners share the belief that learning is a social process. They feel that students should interact with teachers and peers using oral and written language to construct meaning about what they have read (Alvermann, 1987; Daniels & Steineke, 2004; Guthrie, 2008; Maloch, 2004; Raphael, 2001; Raphael et al., 2009). In classrooms throughout the country, an emphasis is being placed on the value of instruction based on social learning experiences (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Students’ interactions around social literary experiences, such as book clubs, can serve to integrate instruction in reading, writing, and oral language.

Book clubs are a natural extension of the theories of Vygotsky, Gee and Bahktin, that language learning is socioculturally based. Book clubs are, by nature, collaborative language-based environments. In sessions such as book clubs, students make public their interpretations of text, exposing their ideas to the influence of conversations with peers and teachers (Seidenstricker, 2000). This type of collaborative discourse makes book clubs ideal settings for Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Additionally, Bahktin’s work supports the theory that students need frequent opportunities to become active participants in small-group discussion-based literacy settings.

Graphic novel book clubs, as other book clubs, can serve as a forum, in which students discuss, refine, rethink, and negotiate the meaning of text (Paterson, 2000). A graphic novel is an original book-length story, either fiction or nonfiction, published in comic

book style (Gorman, 2003). It is by listening to each other discuss graphic novels that students find meaningful ways to develop their understandings of literature and to deal with the tension that often exists between reading for their own purposes and reading for academic purposes. Graphic novel book clubs may enhance reading development by allowing students a venue for constructing meaning through text and becoming members of a literary community.

The literacy value of book clubs has been established by both theorists and researchers; however, there has yet to be a study examining the participation of male adolescents in a graphic novel book club (McMahon, 1992; Paterson, 2000; Raphael, 2001). In this new media age where visual literacies are becoming more dominant, there is a need for further research examining the role that graphic novels may play in the literacy lives of male adolescents. My research builds on the existing body of research pertaining to male adolescent literacy by examining the ways in which adolescent males respond to graphic novels in a graphic novel book club.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which four struggling, eighth-grade, male readers respond to graphic novels during a graphic novel book club. In particular, I will observe what effects reading graphic novels have on the value participants place on reading and their self-concept as readers. I will also examine the patterns of behavior of these struggling adolescent readers to determine if graphic novels are an effective format for addressing their literary needs. In addition, I will examine the ways the

participants construct meaning from the graphic novel format. Finally, I will explore the tensions that the participants experience between their reading of graphic novels and their school-based texts.

Research Questions

In order to better understand the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does reading graphic novels affect the values that struggling male adolescent readers place on reading?
2. How does reading graphic novels affect the reading self-concepts of struggling male adolescent readers?
3. What are the ways in which struggling male adolescent readers respond to graphic novels?

Significance

This study has promising implications for providing findings regarding the potential for graphic novels to improve the literacy lives of male adolescents. Although there is a growing belief among educators that graphic novels can help reluctant readers achieve reading enjoyment and success, further research is needed to support these beliefs. If researchers want to determine additional strategies for enabling male adolescents to become literate men, they need to further examine the effects of graphic novels on reading

motivation. Furthermore, this research on graphic novel book clubs has promising implications for classroom teachers, literacy facilitators, and school librarians. It would be useful for these educators to learn more about graphic novels in order to develop effective literary pedagogy and practices. Finally, the findings of this study can be used to help educators determine whether or not new literacies, such as graphic novels, are a potential tool for a better literary world for male adolescents.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined;

1. *Male adolescent literacy* – literacy practices, such as reading and writing, that pertain to male students in grades 6-12.
2. *Graphic novel* – an original book-length story, either fiction or nonfiction, published in comic book style, or a collection of stories that have been published previously as individual comic books (Gorman, 2003). Graphic novel refers to a format and not a genre. All genres such as biography, science fiction, historical non-fiction, fantasy, etc. are possible subjects for graphic novels.
3. *Book club* - a small discussion group whose members read the same or similar titles and share responsibility for their learning.
4. *Reading motivation* – a reader's beliefs about himself, such as his self concept as a reader, expectancies for reading success, and his value of reading.
5. *Response* – a verbal, written, physical gesture, or other type of response elicited by the reading of text.

6. *Engaged Readers* - engaged readers are described as “motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in using multiple approaches to comprehend, knowledgeable in their construction of new understanding from text, and socially interactive in their approach to literacy (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 403).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the background of my study. First, I introduced the problem underlying my investigation into the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels. I followed with an overview of the research problem. Next, I outlined the theoretical framework that provides the foundation for the research and I stated the questions that guided the research. Finally, I described the significance of the study and defined key terms. In Chapter II, I will present an overview of the literature pertinent to the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding
the literature in the field.*

(Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 3)

In this chapter, I review the body of research that guides this study. First, I review the literature on male adolescent literacy. Then, I describe the theory and research on reading motivation. Next, I provide an overview of the research regarding book clubs. Finally, I discuss the research on visual literacy, and graphic novels, that justifies my reasons for examining the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels.

Research on Male Adolescent Literacy

Given the data from the previous chapter indicating that adolescent males tend to lag behind adolescent females in reading achievement, defining the characteristics of struggling adolescent readers is an important part of this literature review. In this section, I review the literature on struggling adolescent readers. I begin with national statistics regarding struggling readers and end with theories regarding ways to improve their reading motivation.

Students who have difficulty learning to read are often referred to as “struggling readers.” In the United States, approximately eight million young people between fourth and twelfth grade struggle to read at grade level, and some 70 percent of older readers require some form of remediation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), more than six out of every ten adolescents in the United States cannot read grade-level tests proficiently (as cited in Lenski, 2009, p. 37). Furthermore, a recent study revealed that 61 percent of 345 eighth and ninth-grade students had significant deficits in areas such as vocabulary, fluency, decoding, and reading comprehension (Hock, Brasseur, Deshler, Catts, Marques, Marck et al., 2009). Part of the challenge of addressing the needs of struggling adolescent readers is that they are experiencing such a wide range of literacy needs. These reading problems are exacerbated when the students have learning disabilities and / or are English Language Learners (ELL).

Studies indicate that reading progress often begins to decline in fourth grade, when reading becomes more challenging (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004). This pattern of reading behavior is often referred to as the “fourth-grade slump” (p. 469). Since it is likely that these students will continue to struggle in reading as they advance in school, it will be difficult for them to master the reading skills necessary for demanding secondary school requirements, or compete for meaningful jobs in the workplace (Hock et al., 2009). For example, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NCES, 2005), 26 percent of eighth-grade students cannot read material essential for daily living, such as road signs, newspapers, or bus schedules.

Given the data regarding struggling adolescent readers, it is understandable why middle school students are often known for their negative attitudes toward reading and their resistance toward reading school-based texts (McKenna, Ellsworth, & Kear, 1995). Many adolescents choose not to read in the classroom because they feel alienated from in-school reading activities. However, there is also substantial research to indicate that adolescents do read for pleasure outside of their classroom environments (Booth, 2002; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Taylor, 2004). When students' voices and outside interests are honored in the classroom, they become more intrinsically motivated to read (Lapp & Fisher, 2009). For example, in *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write*, Dyson (2003) describes the ways in which students negotiate school-literacy practices by making use of diverse symbolic and communicative experiences such as hip-hop. Adolescents' real-world texts may derive from television shows, movies, websites, text messaging, blogging, and other culturally-related activities. These types of popular media materials can serve as springboards that motivate struggling adolescent readers to read more traditional materials.

It is crucial that adolescents learn to value reading, since a lack of incentive and engagement suggests that struggling readers are less likely to progress in reading and academic achievement in middle and high schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Adolescent readers need interventions that will motivate them to read and help them become more proficient readers. One intervention that should be considered for motivating struggling readers is the use of high-interest, popular culture texts such as graphic novels. High-interest, low-difficulty texts can play a significant role in fostering the reading of struggling readers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. 18). Research

suggests that “when educational environments are facilitative of adolescents’ needs, school can become a place where adolescents are motivated to learn” (Kaplan, Gurian & Maehr, 2002, p. 125). A greater understanding of the types of texts, and reading activities that are valued by adolescents is an important step in addressing the challenge of how to increase their reading motivation and achievement.

From the previous research on the reading achievement of male adolescents, it is apparent that they tend to fall into the category of struggling readers more frequently than their female counterparts. As Booth (2002) suggests, there are definite problems with the ways in which struggling male readers view themselves as literate beings (p. 12).

Oftentimes, struggling male adolescent readers are reluctant to embrace school literacies, since they have a history of failed attempts. Contrary to the conventional wisdom regarding struggling readers, many students are motivated to improve their status as readers, yet they believe that literacy instruction doesn’t address their interests and needs (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

A growing number of literacy theorists, teachers, and librarians struggle with how to motivate reluctant male adolescent readers to reenter into the world of reading (Booth, 2002; Brozo, 2002; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, & Sullivan, 2003, 2009). Many believe that there is a disconnect between the way boys learn and the way classrooms are set up. In his book, *Connecting Boys with Books*, Michael Sullivan (2003) elaborated on this view when he wrote,

There are some boys for whom the written word, whether they are reading it or writing it, is a mystery, a weariness, or even an enemy. This does not mean that boys do not have something to say or a bright future with language, just that they need to develop their skills a little differently (p. 73).

I concur with Sullivan's premise that male adolescents' struggles with reading are not insoluble problems. Although many adolescent males are identified as struggling readers, it may actually be that they are potentially competent readers, who are reluctant to read because of the perceived mismatch between their interests and school literacy practices. I maintain that graphic novels are a promising literacy format that can capture the interests of struggling male adolescent readers, and motivate them to become more engaged in meaningful literacy activities. It is essential that educators identify effective strategies for engaging adolescents who struggle with reading, since increasing the reading motivation of students has been shown to have a positive effect on reading achievement (Guthrie, 2008). My study can help to provide insight into the reading motivation and literacy practices of struggling male adolescent readers.

Theory and Research on Motivation

In this section, I present an overview of the literature pertaining to motivation and reading engagement. I begin with an introduction to motivational constructs, followed by a brief history of the theory behind reading motivation. I end with a more comprehensive overview of the constructs that I contend are the most relevant to my proposed research; self-efficacy, value of reading, and choice.

Motivation is a multifaceted educational concept composed of a variety of constructs. These constructs make reading motivation appear to be a set of characteristics inside the readers (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Within individuals, some types of motivational constructs will be stronger than others. Arguably, two of the most recognized motivational constructs are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students who are intrinsically motivated value an activity for its own sake and because they are interested in the activity. They are also motivated to interact with other students, and they tend to be more engaged in learning. Extrinsically motivated students are motivated for external reasons such as receiving an award, or being told to do an activity (Deci and Sheinman, 1981; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Since intrinsic motivation facilitates the growth of reading skills, and can lead to long-term engagement in reading, many educators try to foster intrinsic reading motivation in their classrooms. Another construct of reading motivation pertains to its social aspect (Gambrell, 1996; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). This relates to children's interpersonal and community relations, such as in peer-based book clubs. Social motivation can lead to increased levels of reading and higher achievement in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Researchers who study motivation define these constructs differently, each believing that their motivational constructs are the most relevant to reading engagement and achievement. Furthermore, many of these constructs are interrelated, making it difficult for researchers and practitioners to focus on only one or two. In order to understand motivational constructs, it is appropriate to examine the history of reading motivation by looking through the lens of literacy theorists.

Historically, literacy studies have focused primarily on the cognitive aspects of reading. It is only recently that motivation has moved closer to center stage in literacy studies (Miller & Faircloth, 2008). Current motivational theory has evolved from decades of research by behavioral, humanistic, cognitive, and sociocultural psychologists. For example, during the early part of the 20th century, behaviorists asserted that motivation was the result of interactions with our environment. It was the behaviorists' view that students are driven by things they want to attain, such as rewards and incentives, or to avoid unpleasant consequences such as punishments. In contrast to the behaviorists' views of motivation, humanistic psychologists such as Maslow (1943) believed that the source of motivation was more internal than external. In short, humanists believe that students are driven by their internal needs and their desire to control their lives. Later, self-determinists shared similar beliefs regarding the value of personal control. These theorists asserted that students are most motivated when they have some control over their academic work (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Deci, Nezlek & Sheinman, 1981).

Another contemporary view of motivation is that of the socioculturalists, who argue that culture is the prime determinant of individual development. Oldfather and Wigfield (1996) presented a social-constructivist view of reading motivation when he asserted that many students are intrinsically motivated to read and find personal meaning in the reading that they do. Oldfather and Wigfield's beliefs are similar to those of Eccles et al. (1983), who introduced a motivational theory that has had a significant influence on the research regarding reading motivation. The Expectancy-Value Theory of motivation proposes that a students' expectancy in performing a task, and the perceived value attributed to the task,

are directly related to the student's willingness to engage in achievement behaviors. This theory describes motivation as readers' beliefs about themselves, such as their sense of self-efficacy, expectancies for reading success, and sense of self as a reader (Eccles et al., 1983).

Over the past twenty years, literacy researchers have become increasingly interested in children's motivation to read, as well as how motivation affects the cognitive skills required to read (Turner, 1995; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). A reader with strong cognitive skills may not spend much time reading, if he or she is not motivated to read. Perhaps the most concentrated effort to understand literacy motivation was the research conducted by Malloy and Gambrell (2008) through the National Reading Research Center (NRRC), funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (U.S. Department of Education) from 1992-1997. During this time, the engagement perspective of literacy motivation guided investigations. The initiative of the NRRC was to integrate motivation to read into a broader understanding of reading engagement. NRRC findings highlighted the ways in which values, beliefs, and social factors pertaining to reading engagement and comprehension were interrelated. Finally, the *2000 Handbook of Reading Research* focused on the continued emphasis towards social and cultural dimensions of reading by including chapters such as Guthrie's "Contexts for Engagement and Motivation in Reading" ([Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2000](#)).

It is my view that the aforementioned constructs and theories are valuable tools for advancing literacy research. For the purpose of this study, however, I theorize that the key

to gains in male adolescent literary achievement will be accomplished through the use of the following constructs:

- Self-efficacy
- Value of Reading
- Choice

A description of these three constructs, as well as a justification for their relevance to my research follows.

Self-efficacy

In his work regarding motivation, Schunk (1991) defines *self-efficacy* as an individual's judgment of his or her capabilities to perform given actions. Students with strong self-efficacy have confidence in their ability to accomplish a task, and they are more apt to choose to do it until the task is completed. Self-efficacy beliefs are known to influence student behavior in the areas of task-choice persistence, effort, and achievement (Bandura, 1993).

A student's self-efficacy beliefs are based on how well they have done on tasks and the feedback they receive from others (McKenna, Ellsworth & Kear, 1995).

In terms of literacy, research indicates that students sense that self-efficacy is related to their academic performance, including their reading achievement (Schunk, 1991; Schunk & Miller, 2002). Furthermore, it has been shown that reading motivation is influenced by self-

efficacy. For example, Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich (2004) found that students with high self-efficacy to read are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to read.

When teachers acquire an understanding of the ways in which self-efficacy affects literacy instruction, they will be better prepared to address the challenge of how to increase their students' motivation to read (Schunk & Rice, 1993). Teachers can improve students' reading self-efficacy by facilitating their success in different reading tasks. For example, in a study of self-efficacy, Schunk and Rice (1993) found that children who received training to enhance their reading self-efficacy and strategy use were more motivated to learn and were higher achievers in reading. Adolescents seem especially vulnerable to issues of self-efficacy given the issues of academic, social, and physical changes during the middle school years (Bandura, 1986).

I selected self-efficacy as one of the motivational constructs that will be examined in my research, because of the correlations between self-efficacy, motivation, and reading achievement. Many adolescents begin middle school believing that they are not good readers and, without a change, they will never become good readers. This is affirmed in a study by Pitcher et al. (2007) which found that male adolescents scored higher on their Self-Concept as a Reader scores in their early teens, yet their scores decreased in their later-teen years. The findings from the Pitcher study also demonstrated that female adolescents had significantly higher scores ($p=.000$) on their Self-Concept as a Reader than male adolescents $p=.012$) (p. 391).

Value of Reading

In addition to self-efficacy, I incorporated the value of reading as one of the constructs for motivating male adolescent literacy learners in my research. Students' attitudes towards reading, and their value of reading, can have positive effects on the literacy learning of male adolescents. Attitude can play a significant role in the development of life-long readers. As Zambro & Brozo (2009) wrote, oftentimes boys "learn how to decode text and read words out loud, but they never internalize meaning or become transformed by a good book or character" (p. 8). It is essential that students have feelings of success, and engagement with reading activities, in order for their value of reading to increase.

When students value an activity because it is interesting to them, it means they are likely to engage in the activity for the pleasure of it (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1997; Guthrie et al., 2004). Along with other researchers, Frey and Fisher (2004, 2006, 2008) believe that adolescents will experience success in reading when they are matched with texts on their instructional level. Using high-interest, nontraditional texts, such as graphic novels, can engage male adolescents and help them value reading. However, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found that the texts that boys value, such as graphic novels and humorous books, are less-commonly sanctioned in schools.

To determine the ways in which students value reading, McKenna, Ellsworth & Kear (1995) conducted a study on reading attitudes in two areas: attitude toward recreational reading and attitude toward academic reading. They surveyed more than 17,000

elementary students in grades K -6. The survey contained 10 questions about how the students felt about reading as a recreational activity and 10 questions assessed their academic attitudes about reading. The data suggested that students tend to value reading less as they move through the grades. Attitudes toward reading for all students were relatively high in grade one; however, student indifference toward reading was the norm by grade six. Furthermore, the study revealed that girl's attitudes toward reading were more positive than boys. These findings are consistent with a study that found that younger, third-grade students viewed reading as having a higher value than did the older, fifth-grade students (Gambrell et al., 1996). Both studies have important implications for the field of male adolescent literacy, since the declines in reading attitudes, and the value of reading, were shown to be related to grade level and gender.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) also examined the ways in which students valued reading in their survey of over 1,700 sixth-grade students. When they were asked what made them want to read in class, 42 percent of the participants (740 students) indicated that it was the category of the reading materials that was most important to them. The students also valued personally interesting texts. As one student wrote, "What makes me want to read is getting a very interesting book" (p. 362). Additional findings from the study demonstrated that personal choice in reading materials was also very important to these adolescent readers. Finally, the reading materials that the students valued the most were scary stories, magazines, comic books, and series books. This is parallel to the findings of other literacy educators and theorists who have researched the types of texts that male adolescents value (Booth, 2002; Brozo, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Worthy, 1999).

The Ivey and Broaddus (2001) study also examined the role that teachers can play in helping their students value reading. For example, when asked what reading activities they enjoyed most in class, 63% of the students indicated that they valued time for personal reading, and 62% liked for their teachers to read aloud to them (students could check more than one box). Similarly, Brophy (2008) maintains that teachers need to provide meaningful and challenging tasks that students will value. He contends that teachers need to scaffold students' learning experiences and work within the motivational zone of proximal development (ZPD) in order to help students value their learning. It is Brophy's belief that these types of tasks can result in what Csikszentmihalyi (1978) describes as the "flow experience" - losing track of time and self-awareness when becoming completely involved in meaningful activities. This is an important finding, since another study demonstrated that reading texts for pleasure provided more flow, and texts which provided flow gave the reader personal or intellectual benefits (McQuillan & Conde, 1996). The emotional and intellectual benefits derived from meaningful literacy activities may help to improve a struggling adolescent readers' value of reading.

Choice

One way to facilitate value in reading is to allow students choices. In their study examining reading attitudes, Eccles and her colleagues (1997) found that whether or not students value an activity influences their choices of whether or not to continue doing it. Adolescents have to choose from among many different leisure activities, so their choice of activities becomes an issue. I elected to include choice as a construct in my study because,

as studies show, when students are given choices, such as self-selection of reading materials they are more engaged in learning, which leads to a higher level of reading motivation (Deci, Nevlek & Sheinman, 1981; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Stipek, 2002).

Many motivation theorists believe that students are most motivated when they are given choices and have some control over their academic work (Deci, Nezelek & Sheinman, 1981; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Stipek, 2002). Studies have shown that when students are given choices, such as self-selection of reading materials, they are more engaged in learning, which leads to a higher level of motivation. Frey and Fisher (2007) maintain that teachers in secondary schools have a great deal of influence as to how autonomy will be fostered in their classrooms, since they determine the extent to which students can exercise choice. When teachers allow students more choices through inclusive pedagogy, it will increase their students' perceptions of autonomy and control (Pressley et al., 2003). For example, a study of twenty fifth-grade students by Kunes and Gilman (1999) revealed that allowing students to make choices in their reading programs caused them to increase their self-concepts as readers, and increased their motivation to read.

There are several other noteworthy studies that deal with the issue of choice and its impact on reading motivation. Gambrell, Codling, and Mazzonni (1996) and Baker, Afflerback, and Reinking (1996) found that children believe that the most interesting books and stories are ones that they have selected themselves. Furthermore, Reynolds and Symons (2001) found that students who were offered a choice of reading materials

performed higher on several reading tasks than students who were denied choice.

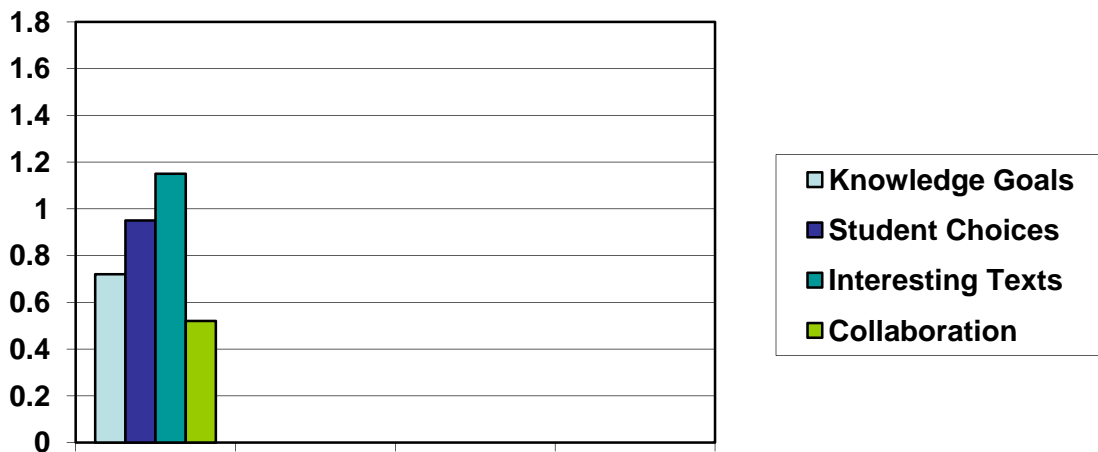
Moreover, research shows that children who are autonomous learners are aware that they can find books that interest them and are empowered to provide themselves with positive reading experiences (Guthrie, Wigfield & Perencevich, 2004).

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) have conducted extensive research with male adolescent readers. In their longitudinal study of forty-nine boys in grades 6-12, they found that the boys' reading assignments were "divorced from their interests." Many of the boys interviewed read voraciously in the "real world", but refused to call themselves readers when it came to reading in school. However, these same boys were very engaged when the books involved topics such as skateboarding or motorcycle repair. Furthermore, this study, and others, revealed that boys became interested in school-based literacy when they had supportive teachers who allowed them choice in their assignments (Brown & Roy, 2007).

As the previous studies showed, choice allows for student interest and can positively impact student motivation. Additional studies reveal that increasing opportunities for student choice can enhance student learning as well as motivation. For example, the Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA) researchers discovered that "when students have more control over what, and how they'll be learning, they tend to exert deeper levels of more extended effort in their work" (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005). In their chapter, "Motivating Students to Read" in *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research*, Guthrie and Humenick, (2004) provide a comparison of the benefits of student choice on reading motivation across a range of studies. When compared to the categories of knowledge goals,

interesting texts, and collaboration, the studies resulted in a mean effect size of .95 on the importance of choice in students' reading motivation (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Benefits of Motivational Classroom Practices for Students' Reading Motivation



(McCardle & Chhabra, 2004, p. 340).

Although there has been a significant amount of research regarding the role of choice in reading motivation, none of the research addresses the use of choice in graphic novel book club settings.

Theory and Research on Book Clubs

In this section, I provide an overview of the research regarding book clubs. Book clubs are a natural extension of Vygotsky's theory that language learning is socioculturally based. They are a forum in which students discuss, refine, rethink, and negotiate the

meaning of text (Paterson, 2000). The students' interactions around authentic literature can facilitate instruction in reading, writing, and oral language. In book club discussions, students make public their interpretations of text, exposing their ideas to the influence of conversations with peers and teachers (Seidenstricker, 2000). Book club practices enable students to hear and use the language of literacy, literature, and critical thinking (McMahon, Raphael, Goatley & Pardo, 1997). Furthermore, the types of collaborative literacy practices practiced in book clubs can help engage students in learning, thus facilitating their reading comprehension.

The following theorists inform our knowledge regarding book clubs by providing a framework of school-based literary discourse. Bakhtin's work supports the theory that students need frequent opportunities to become active participants in small-group discussion-based literacy settings (Bakhtin, 1986). It is through listening to each other that students find meaningful ways to negotiate their understandings of literature and to deal with the tension that often exists between reading for their own purposes and reading for academic purposes. Additional studies by Gambrell (1996) and Oldfather (1996) revealed that social interactions have a positive influence on reading motivation and achievement, in that they promote achievement, higher level cognition, and the intrinsic desire to read.

Book clubs are school-based discourse communities that honor Gee's work regarding classroom interactions and social construction of identities or "identity kits" (Gee, 1990). Through their participation in student-led book club discussions, students often reconstruct their "identity kits" based on the shift in the teacher's role in their literacy learning. Rather than participating in teacher-dominated practices, such as lectures,

students see their role as active participants in their learning evolve into a student-centered approach to learning.

Rosenblatt's reader-response theory echoes many of the ideas of Bakhtin, Gee, and Vygotsky (Rosenblatt, 1978). Although Rosenblatt's concept of reader-response theory was initially developed in 1938, the theory did not gain widespread acceptance until the 1980's (Daniels, 2002). Reader-response criticism is a school of literary theory that focuses on the reader (or "audience") and his or her experience of a literary work. For example, Rosenblatt stated that reading is a transaction, a two-way process between the reader and the text at a special time and with certain circumstances. She made the case that "understanding literary reading is a process whereby personal responses are continually transformed to create an ever widening net of relations connecting individual readers with the world at large" (Faust, Cockrill, Hancock & Isserstedt, 2005, p. 166). Although not explicitly connected to Vygotsky, Bakhtin, or Gee, Rosenbloatt offers a way of understanding how students construct meaning from texts. Together, these theorists provide a foundation for both the uses and the study of book clubs.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of quantitative and qualitative studies examining the ways in which book clubs affect students' literary motivation and achievement. Three major studies that inform book club instruction are described below.

The seminal work in the field of book club research is the *Book Club Plus* project (McMahon, Raphael, Goatley, & Pardo, 1997). This three-year study, begun in 1990, was a collaborative project with literacy professionals from public school, private school and university settings (Raphael, 2001). In this study, teachers organized the instruction around

three literacy units that lasted from three to eight weeks. *Book Club Plus* was based on four key sociocultural principles (Raphael, George, Weber & Nies, 2009):

- Emphasize the centrality of language for developing thinking, and learners constructing meanings, through interactions with others
- Recognition that learning is best facilitated by more knowledgeable others guiding the learner with appropriate tasks
- Belief that individuals construct a sense of self as they participate in social contexts
- Belief that individuals construct meanings for language within their experiences and develop speech genres particular to given social contexts

During *Book Club Plus*, speakers and listeners were engaged in meaningful literary activities that supported their development as readers. The book club framework allowed students time, and a venue to share thoughts, ask each other questions, and collaboratively construct meaning from texts and their own experiences in life (Raphael, 2001; Raphael, George, Weber, & Nies, 2009).

The goal for students' learning included growth in literacy knowledge and skills that could be demonstrated on traditional tests, as well as informal assessments such as reading logs and writing samples. A summary of the findings showed that, over time, students developed their ability to synthesize information, weave conversations around important themes, use a range of ways to represent their ideas in writing, and take different perspectives (McMahon, 1992; Raphael, 2001; Raphael, Goatley, McMahon & Woodman, 1991; Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Students in the *Book Club Plus* classrooms had

standardized test scores as high as those of students in classrooms with traditional reading programs using direct instruction. Furthermore, when students were interviewed a year after the program, those who participated in book clubs were able to remember and discuss at least 9 to 16 titles they had read the previous year. Students who had been in the commercial textbook program had difficulty recalling titles and authors they had read the previous year (Raphael & McMahon, 1994).

Following the *Book Club Plus* study, research on literature circles was conducted by Chicago's Center for City Schools (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles were formed, using a reading-writing workshop approach in classrooms around Chicago from 1995 to 1998. Teacher training was provided in summer institutes as well as through school-year support from peer consultants. Test results showed that students in classes using literature circles outscored their peers using traditional reading instruction. In reading test scores, the schools with literature circles showed higher gains than the control schools: 14 percent in third grade, 9 percent in sixth grade, and 10 percent in eighth grade. In writing, the literature circle schools showed gains of 25% in third grade, 8% in sixth grade and 27% in eighth grade (Daniels, 2002).

A later study by Klinger, Vaughn, and Schumm (1998) examined the implementation of a discussion program based on social studies texts entitled *Collaborative Strategic Reading* (CSR). The CSR program was administered for a year in five heterogeneous fourth-grade classrooms. Upon completion of the program, the data revealed that students in peer-led groups made greater gains than control groups in reading comprehension, and equal gains in content knowledge after reading and discussing social studies material. The

findings were obtained through a standardized reading test, a social studies unit test, and audiotapes of group work.

Although, there is a growing body of research on book clubs as effective literacy practice there are minimal studies examining graphic novel book clubs. My study regarding an eighth grade graphic novel book club can help to provide insight into the literacy practices of male adolescents.

Theory and Research on Visual Literacy and Graphic Novels

I enjoy reading graphic novels such as *Maus* because it is “direct and you can see it”

Yuri, a middle school student (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, p.152)

In this section, I discuss the research on visual literacy and graphic novels that justifies my reasons for examining the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels.

Due to the large influence of television, advertising, and the Internet, 21st Century adolescents are an extremely visual generation of multimedia learners. As Flynt and Brozo (2010) wrote, “Visual culture is a constant in students’ daily lives” (p. 526). Visual literacy is the complex act of meaning making, using still or moving images (Frey & Fisher, 2008). Students today must be able to make connections, determine importance, and process information using both text and images. Literacy educators, argue that visual literacy should be taught in today’s classrooms in order to make the curriculum relevant to the lives of our

students (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Carter, 2007; Monnin, 2008; Ranker, 2007; Schwarz, 2002; Xu, Sawyer, & Zunich, 2005).

Burmark (2002) wrote that the most compelling reason for using visuals in the classroom is that images are stored in long-term memory, which aids comprehension. Additionally, Flynt & Brozo (2010) argue that teaching visual literacy, across the curriculum, can lead to improvement in the following areas:

- Verbal skills
- Self-expression and ordering of ideas
- Student motivation and interest in a variety of subjects
- Chances of reaching the disengaged
- Self-image and relationship to the world
- Self-reliance, independence and confidence

(p. 528).

There is a growing belief among literacy educators that graphic novels can be a motivating factor for helping readers achieve reading enjoyment and success (Botzakis, 2009; Carter, 2007; Hammond, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Lammano, 2007; Monnin, 2008; Mortimer, 2009). As Frey and Fisher (2004) discovered, “popular culture” texts, such as graphic novels, can serve as tools to motivate and inspire creativity. Fans of Archie comics would agree with the finding that graphic novels are motivating to read. In a study by Norton (2003), Archie comic readers indicated that the pictures are “fun to look at” and were “not only engaging, but served as an aid to learning and meaning-making” (p. 143).

Other educators and theorists believe that when male readers select engaging reading materials, such as graphic novels, it can help them find their reading voices by choosing to read rather than choosing not to read at all (Brozo, 2002; Ivey & Fisher, 2006; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). For example, Thompson (2008) writes that graphic novels are skewed towards boys' interests and naturally grab the attention of many male readers. In a longitudinal study of male reading habits, Smith & Wilhelm (2002) found that graphic novels were one of the few types of texts that actively engaged male readers. To quote the authors, "For the boys in our study, the intense importance of the visual, as they engaged with all forms of texts was evident, and we believe it cannot be oversold" (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, p. 151). This was confirmed in a later Canadian study when it was found that males respond positively to images, because they are more oriented to visual / spatial learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004).

The importance of the visual to male readers was confirmed in a study by Ujiie and Krashen (1996), which examined the comic book reading of 571 seventh graders at two California middle schools. Although half of the girls indicated that they did not read comics, 83 percent of the boys reported that they always or sometimes read comic books. A little over half of these comic book readers reported that they liked to read as opposed to 21 percent of the non comic book readers. The idea that boys are more inclined to read comic books, and graphic novels, than girls was confirmed in a study by Smith & Wilhelm (2002).

Furthermore, Haugaard (1973) conducted a case study of her own three sons in which she wrote that the boys were "notoriously unmotivated to read and had to be urged, coaxed, cajoled and threatened" until they discovered comic books and experienced the

joys of reading (p. 85). Haugaard also offered compelling evidence for the power of comics to motivate reluctant readers when she stated, “The motivation these comics provided was absolutely phenomenal ...he (her oldest son) became a simple visual pipeline” (p. 85).

Additionally, some studies have shown that graphic novels appeal to readers regardless of their socioeconomic status, cultures, and personalities (Thompson, 2008). For example, a study by Ujiej and Krashen (1996) found no difference in the amount of comic book reading done by middle-class and lower-income seventh-grade boys.

While previous graphic novel research has not specifically examined the use of graphic novels with struggling male adolescent readers, there have been several studies examining the use of graphic novels with English Language Learners (ELL) and special needs students. In some ways, we would describe ELL and special needs students as struggling readers; therefore, I have chosen to provide an overview of these studies in this review of the literature on graphic novels. For example, several studies found that the high interest topics and visual support found in graphic novels were beneficial to ELL students (Cary, 2004; Chun, 2009; Liu, 2004; Ranker, 2007). Furthermore, Cary’s 2004 study demonstrated that graphic novels include authentic dialogue that can help English Language Learners comprehend everyday English.

Other recent studies have demonstrated the value of using graphic novels with special needs students (Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009; Young & Irwin, 2005). For example, Young and Irwin (2005) worked with students in special education classes to determine whether or not graphic novels can improve reading outcomes, motivate students to read more, and enhance student achievement. They found that students could visualize

text after reading graphic novels and that some of the previous non-readers became readers once they were introduced to the graphic novel format. The results of the study were inconclusive however, because several of the participants dropped out of the study. Findings from a study of low-functioning male adolescent readers (Lammano, 2007) were also mixed, due to conflicting scores from different tests assessing the students' reading comprehension.

Several graphic novel theorists have touted additional educational and social benefits of using graphic novels with students. For example, Schwarz (2002) believes that graphic novels can be used effectively to teach multiple literacies. Similarly, Miller (2005) lists the following reasons for using graphic novels in educational settings:

1. Graphic novels can help students develop literacy and language skills by reinforcing vocabulary
 2. Graphic novels offer students a chance to explore visual literacy and develop critical thinking skills
 3. Graphic novels can present information about literature, history, and social issues in ways that appeal to reluctant readers
 4. Graphic novels provide stepping stones to full-text classics and spring boards to extra learning activities
 5. Graphic novels can inspire challenged students who lack reading confidence, reading ability, or motivation for self-guided reading
- (pp. 29-30).

Similarly, Gorman (2008) asserts that graphic novels address relevant social issues for young readers, such as bullying and divorce. In an earlier study, Mitchell and George (1996) suggested that comics are effective in teaching gifted children about morals and ethics. Finally, Schwarz (2002) maintains that an important benefit of using graphic novels is that they present alternative views of culture, history and human life.

In regard to the use of graphic novels with male adolescents, there are three key reasons educators feel that graphic novels may affect their reading motivation and achievement:

- Variety and choice
- Visual appeal
- Conduit to other reading materials

Variety and Choice

Many teachers and librarians are recognizing that one way to motivate boys to read is to provide them with the ability to choose more varied and interesting reading materials, such as graphic novels. In the words of the author, Robert Lipsyte, "So, you say, we have to change society first, and then boys will read good books. This is true. But if we can get just a few boys to read a few good books, we will have started the change. Cajole, coerce, do whatever needs to be done to get one book into one boy's hands or back pocket..." (as cited in Brozo, 2002, p. 23).

Research indicates that choice in reading is an effective tool to motivate readers (Guthrie & Hemenick, 2004). Additional studies show that when given the opportunity to

select reading materials, boys often choose graphic novels (Cary, 2004; Krashen, 2004). The non-traditional, visual format of graphic novels appeals to many male readers. They consistently engage readers through humor, heroes, artwork and more (Cary, 2004). Additionally, many graphic novels offer fast-paced action and conflict making them an ideal choice for hooking unmotivated readers (Gorman, 2003).

Visual Appeal

Graphic novels reflect the impact of an increasingly visual culture on today's youth. Visual clues used in graphic novels and other texts make it more likely that students will become engaged as readers and will be motivated to continue reading. The non-threatening visual format of graphic novels often appeals to males better than text alone, and can foster an enthusiasm towards books and reading. In graphic novels, illustrations blend with text, often attracting male readers whose reading motivation tends to wane during adolescence. Graphic novels can offer a stimulating means by which to develop the visual literacy of students (Carter, 2007). As Gene Yang, author of *American Born Chinese* (2006) stated, "The comic's medium by its very nature is a multimedia medium. It is a single unified medium made up of two distinct media: text and still imagery. By teaching your students to read and create comic books, you are teaching them to analyze the very nature of information, a 21st Century skill" (Standen, 2010).

Serve as a Conduit to Other Reading Materials

Samuel Johnson once wrote, "... you have done a great deal when you have brought a boy to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards" (as cited in

Brozo, 2002, p. 77). More recently, Robin Brenner, author of *Understanding Manga and Anime* (2007) stated,

Even if a guy is a natural reader, as guys pass into their teen years, reading becomes a far less “cool” thing to be doing. Comics, represent a widespread and still “cool” way to read that will keep the spark of enjoying reading alive. When they’re ready, they’ll remember that reading can be fun, and will gradually branch out into other formats from traditional prose to poetry” (personal communication, August 28, 2007).

Case studies support the view that reading light materials, such as comic books, is the way many boys develop a taste for reading (Krashen, 2004). For example, Haugaard (1973) reported that her eldest son gave his comic collection to his younger brother when he became more interested in reading the likes of “...Jules Verne and Ray Bradbury, books on electronics, and science encyclopedias” (p. 85). Furthermore, the results of a study of seventh-grade boys showed that reading comics did not inhibit other kinds of reading (Ujjiie & Krashen, 1996). These studies are consistent with the hypothesis that reading graphic novels can facilitate the reading of other, more traditional texts.

Circulation data from public and school libraries further support the theory that reading graphic novels can stimulate readers’ interest in additional reading materials (Brenner, 2009). For instance, some libraries have reported 25% increases in overall collection circulation after adding graphic novels to their collections (Miller, 2005). Allison Steinberg, a school librarian in California, increased her library circulation by 50% after purchasing \$1,000 worth of graphic novels. Her approach is to start students out with

graphic novels and then she directs them to related books in the same genre (Curriculum Review, 2004).

Although theorists, teachers, and librarians tout the benefits of using graphic novels in academic settings, there is currently not a significant body of research to substantiate their uses in schools. There is a need for additional research that examines the use of graphic novels in K-12 settings. This study addresses the gap in the literature by examining the use of graphic novels with male adolescents in a middle school graphic novel book club.

Summary of Related Literature

This literature review provided an overview of the research and theory pertaining to a study examining the ways in which adolescent males respond to graphic novels in book club sessions. The literature pertinent to this research was drawn from the following areas: struggling adolescent readers, motivation, self-efficacy, value of reading, choice, book clubs, visual literacy, and graphic novels. The relevant literature in each of these areas provided an historical and contextual background that informed this study and guided the research questions. Although the research presented served as a guiding framework, few studies have examined issues regarding male adolescents and graphic novels. This study attempted to address the gap in the research literature regarding male adolescents who struggle with reading and their responses to graphic novels. The following chapter, Chapter III will describe the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research has shown the benefits of using graphic novels with English Language Learners (ELL) and special needs students (Cary, 2004; Chun, 2009; Lammano, 2007; Liu, 2004; Ranker, 2007; Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009; Young & Irwin, 2005). However, there is currently little, if any, research to determine if graphic novels can be an effective literacy medium for improving the literacy lives of male adolescents. Furthermore, there is a need for additional studies examining the role of gender differences in adolescent literacy practices. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which adolescent males respond to graphic novels in a graphic novel book club. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How does reading graphic novels affect the values that struggling male adolescent readers place on reading?
2. How does reading graphic novels affect the reading self-concepts of struggling male adolescent readers?
3. What are the ways in which struggling male adolescent readers respond to graphic novels?

In this chapter, I describe the methods used in this study. First, I explain the research design. Then, I describe the setting and the participants. Next, I describe the procedures for data collection and analysis. Finally, I present the limitations of the study.

Design

This study was an interpretative multiple-case study which utilized a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. Both qualitative research and descriptive statistics were gathered. Mixed-methods studies enable researchers to collect “a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be obtained by any single method alone” (Yin, 2009, p. 63). Qualitative research techniques, data collection and analysis procedures were guided by the assumptions of social constructivist research.

A case study was the preferred methodology for this research, because it enables a researcher to experience the setting of the study in depth. Case study methodology also allows for detailed descriptions so that the reader can get a true feel for the setting and experiences that transpired in the study. It enables investigators to retain the meaningful and holistic characteristics of authentic situations in natural settings (Yin, 2009). Since case study can be used in combination with other methods, it can cover both the process and the outcomes. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data enabled me to provide a rich account of the phenomenon of adolescent males’ participation in a graphic novel book club. One of the characteristics of case studies is that they strive towards an intensive, holistic analysis of a phenomenon or social unit (Merriam, 1998). The social and contextual nature of my research means that the design needs to be descriptive. My goal is to gather rich accounts of the male adolescents and the dynamics that take place in the fluid setting in which the book club sessions occur.

In my research, I used multiple case studies (Stake, 2006) to study four adolescent males in the social setting of a graphic novel book club. Multiple-case studies should be used when numerous cases are examined in order for the researcher to build a stronger understanding of the phenomenon. Specifically, I examined the patterns across these eighth-grade adolescent males' use of graphic novels. These data provided me with insight into the behavior of four different male students in a graphic novel book club, rather than limiting the study to data collected from one participant. Furthermore, my case study was descriptive, which means that I provided a detailed rendering of the people, places, and events in the setting (Creswell, 2003). This is another element that is unique to case study methods. Triangulating these data made my study more rigorous, since it enabled me to corroborate data from a variety of sources.

Today's educators are struggling with how to attend to the current "boy crisis" in literacy education. Addressing the reading needs of male adolescents may be one of literacy educators' toughest challenges. Graphic novels are quickly evolving as an engaging literary format that may effectively motivate male adolescents to become literate men. They can provide comic relief to struggling male adolescent readers by allowing them to choose visually appealing, high-interest literature that captures their imaginations. Yet, there are currently no studies that examine the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels in a graphic novel book club. This study addresses this gap in the literature. For the reasons provided, this research is best served by the methodology of a descriptive multiple case study.

Setting

A middle school, located in a rural school district in the Piedmont area of North Carolina, will serve as the research site for this study. Western Middle School (pseudonym), a traditional public middle school built in 1999, serves grades 6-8 with a student population of 859. The student body is categorically described as 77.9% white, 13.9% African American, and 8.2% nonwhite. Furthermore, 34% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Less than 5% of the students are classified as English Language Learners and 9% are identified as having specific learning disabilities in reading and writing, receiving specialized services that meet their individual needs. In addition, 21% of the students are identified and placed in the gifted education program. Western Middle School was a School of Excellence with Honors in 2003-2004, and received High Growth status on the North Carolina School Report Card in 2007-2008. The school used the Accelerated Reader program, as part of their language arts curriculum, for eight years before moving to a Sustained Silent Reading Program (SSR) in 2007. Sustained Silent Reading time is a school-based, voluntary reading time, in which students read silently for a designated period of time. Western Middle School currently implements a daily school-wide SSR time, which is thirty minutes in length.

Western Middle School was selected as the setting for the study due to the fact that the school implements an SSR program. The school was also selected because I previously worked as the Lead Media and Technology Specialist in the district. In that position, I provided professional development sessions and collaborated with the administration and faculty on literacy and technology projects at the school. I have developed a positive,

professional relationship with the language arts teacher, who previously served as a teacher on loan at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). She is a fellow doctoral student at UNCG, and her focus is also in the area of adolescent literacy. Furthermore, she is nationally board certified and was the 2003-2004 North Carolina Teacher of the Year.

Participants

The participants in this study were four eighth-grade male students from Western Middle School. The number was selected because it provided adequate data, but remained manageable for analysis. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is intentionally selecting individuals to understand a central phenomenon (Cresswell, 2005). The participants were members of an eighth-grade language arts class that meets during the school's designated Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time. Everyone in the school community participates in SSR time, which is held during the same class period throughout the school week. The participants were identified and referred for participation in the study based on information provided by their language arts teacher. One of the criteria for the study was that each of the participants was a Level One reader. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction defines a Level One reader as one who "does not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful in the next grade level" (NC DPI, 2009).

The participants' parent / guardian signed and returned the form, *Consent for a Minor to Act as a Human Participant*, in order for their son to participate in the study. Each participant agreed to take part in the study and signed and returned the *Assent Form for a*

Minor to Participate in a Study before the study began. A description of each participant is provided below. Pseudonyms are used in all references to the participants, and the classroom teacher.

Frank

Frank was a white, male adolescent who lived with his mother in a single-parent home. Mrs. Huth reported that Frank read at a fifth-grade reading level. He was enrolled in the SRA (McGraw Hill) reading program at school, and he attended sessions for 30 minutes a day / four times a week. Frank had a strong interest in dirt bikes and occasionally raced them on weekends. He wore an earring and enjoyed classic rock music. Frank was the most enthusiastic of the participants throughout the book club sessions. He enjoyed describing the graphic novels he read, and he often became animated when describing them in the sessions. Although Frank was extremely well-behaved in the book club sessions, he had to miss two of the sessions while he served two days of In-School Suspension (ISS) for inappropriate behavior.

Matthew

Matthew was a black, adolescent male who lived with both parents, in what his classroom teacher referred to as a very supportive home. He played a trumpet in the school band, and he participated in band competitions. Mrs. Huth reported that Matthew read on a sixth-grade level, which is the highest reading level of the four participants. She also indicated that Matthew read at home and his parents were readers. Matthew was enrolled in the SRA (McGraw Hill) reading program at school, and he attended sessions for 30

minutes a day / four times a week. He played middle school football and he was a member of the school's wrestling team. Although he was the strongest reader in the group, he was also less reluctant to discuss his books than the other boys. As the shyest participant, he often replied with one word responses or head shakes, rather than speaking in complete sentences. He was extremely well-behaved and polite throughout all of the book club sessions, which Mrs. Huth indicated was consistent with his behavior in the classroom.

Bob

Bob was a white, male adolescent who lived with his mother in a single-parent home. Mrs. Huth reported that Bob read on a third-grade reading level, the lowest level of the four participants. She also characterized him as a non-reader, or aliterate reader. Bob was a hunter and liked to read hunting magazines. He was extremely interested in 4-wheelers and he rode them on the weekends. Bob commented that his father was an auto mechanic and he spent time with him when he worked on vehicles. As I wrote in my field notes, Bob was often fidgety and preoccupied during the silent reading part of the book club sessions. Mrs. Huth reported that Bob was ADHD and that his mother took him off of his medications before the study began. She indicated that he had a habit of blurting out answers in class. During the study, Bob also had to serve time in In-School Suspension, which caused him to miss one of the book club sessions. Although Bob was not as shy as Matthew, he was less reluctant to participate in the book discussions than either Frank or Jim.

Jim

Jim was a black, adolescent male who moved back and forth between his two parents' homes. His mother was his primary guardian. Jim read on a fifth-grade reading level. His reading scores were the second highest of the participants in the book discussion group. Like Matthew and Frank, Jim was enrolled in the SRA (McGraw Hill) reading program at school, and he attended sessions for 30 minutes a day / four times a week. According to Mrs. Huth, Jim expressed an interest in becoming a builder or architect. His father told Mrs. Huth that Jim liked to "tinker" with car and machine parts. Although Mrs Huth reported that Jim was unmotivated in language arts class, he was an enthusiastic participant during the book club sessions. He appeared to be more confident when responding to questions than the other three boys.

Data Collection

This study sought to examine the ways in which four eighth-grade male adolescents responded to graphic novels, while participating in a graphic novel book club. Multiple data sources were used in the research. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the following sources:

- Survey results and interviews collected and tallied using the instrument provided with the *Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile* (Pitcher, Albright, Delaney, Walker, et al. 2007).

- Field notes and audiotapes obtained from observations during the book club sessions
- Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) Literature Logs completed by the participants and turned in to the 8th grade language arts teacher at the end of the semester.
- Teacher interviews

This research design had the advantage of using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Collecting both types of data throughout the study allowed for different perspectives from a variety of sources.

The study took place from September through December of 2009 during twelve graphic novel book club sessions. The sessions were held in a room down the hall from the participants' language arts classroom. During the book club sessions, the participants read graphic novels of their choice from a collection of over ninety titles, that I brought to the school. The books were kept on a cart that was brought to the room where the study took place. The cart was left in the language art teacher's classroom in between book club sessions. The participants had access to this collection throughout the semester. They were also able to access a large graphic novel collection available in their school library.

Twenty minutes of silent reading time were included in each book club session, followed by ten minutes of discussion. I facilitated the participants' discussion after allowing time for them to read the graphic novels. Probe-based interview questions were used to help maintain the focus of the discussion during the sessions. This semi-structured interview approach enabled me to probe, as needed, to elicit the most complete answers to the questions (Cresswell, 2005).

In order to study these phenomena, I collected information through the following means.

Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile

The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) was designed in 2006 by a team of eleven researchers to be used with adolescents at eight sites in the United States and Trinidad (Pitcher, Albright, DeLaney, Walker, Seunarinensingh, Mogge, Headle, Ridgeway, Peck, Hunt & Dunston, 2007). The AMRP is based on the original Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) designed to assess the reading motivation of elementary students (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996). Several of the questions from the MRP were redesigned in the AMRP instrument in order to make the language more appropriate for assessing the reading motivation of adolescents.

The AMRP includes two instruments: the reading survey and the conversational interview. The reading survey is a self-report instrument administered to a group and the conversational interview is administered on an individual basis. Since it combines both the group-administered survey and individual interviews, the instrument is a useful one for more fully examining the participants' reading motivation (Gambrell, Codling & Palmer, 1996). The reading survey assesses two dimensions of reading motivation; self-concept as a reader and value of reading. I used the original AMRP survey questions for this study (Appendix A). A table listing all of the participants' responses to the AMRP survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

The conversational interview instrument provides information about additional aspects of students' reading motivation (Appendix C). As suggested by the authors of the MRP and the AMRP, I modified and adapted the conversational interview questions to better meet the needs of this study. These questions were designed to assess adolescents' responses to graphic novels. Both the survey and the conversational interviews were administered with my assurance to the participants that I was soliciting their honest opinions and that there were no right or wrong answers.

The initial MRP reading survey and conversational interview instruments were validated through field testing using construct validity, factor analyses, reliability of subscales, and pre and post test reliability (Gambrell et al., 1996). The AMRP instrument has been field-tested and validated through three factor analyses to assure reliability and validity (S.Pitcher email - personal communication, May 20, 2009).

Prior to the first book club session, I introduced myself to the participants, explained the study, and administered the survey section of the *Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile* (AMRP). The survey is a Likert-type, self-report, group-administered instrument (Gambrell, Codling & Palmer, 1996). This instrument elicited information about the value students placed on reading activities by focusing on the frequency of reading tasks. Another part of the instrument, a Self-Concept Scale, sought quantifiable information about students' self-perceived competence in reading.

The first time I met with the participants, I administered the Self-Concept and Value Scales of the Motivation to Read Profile. The instrument addresses the issue of poor reading skills by having the researcher read the items aloud two times. The students

marked each item on the second reading. Each participant responded to the twenty-question survey.

During the next session, I met individually with the participants to conduct the second part of the instrument, the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Conversational Interview. The open-ended interview questions were designed to probe the participants' motivation to read. The questions pertained to general and specific reading experiences, home and school reading, and narrative and informative reading (Gambrell, Codling & Palmer, 1996). The primary purpose of the conversational interviews was to gain authentic insight into the participants' experiences. A description of the interview process follows.

The pre and post AMRP interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Each participant was interviewed individually before and after the intervention. As with the survey instrument, I read the interview questions aloud to the participants in order to ensure that their reading ability did not influence the results. The interviews were conducted during a session following the administration of the AMRP survey instrument. The first interview occurred prior to the start of the graphic novel book club. The final interview took place one week after the participants completed the graphic novel book club. The interviews ranged from 10 to 15 minutes in length.

The AMRP has twenty items based on a four-point scale. Some items are listed positively and some are listed negatively. I recorded the items and totaled the scores for each of the four participants. The total number of possible points for both scales combined was 80. The Self-Concept scale and Value scale each had 10 items with a total possible score of 40. The Self-Concept and Value scales were combined to give the Total Score. The

survey was administered prior to and following the intervention. Survey scores were compared for self-concept as a reader, the value placed on reading, and combined self-concept and value scores. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected from the AMRP instrument allowed for a rich account of the participants' reading self-efficacy and value of reading; key elements in this study.

Observations

The qualitative data collection included my observations of the participants throughout a series of twelve graphic novel book club sessions. The qualitative phase of data collection did not begin with any a priori hypotheses about the outcomes of the book club discussions. The observations enabled me to examine the specific ways in which the participants responded to the graphic novels while reading them and discussing the titles. Each thirty-minute session was designed for twenty minutes of silent reading followed by ten minutes of discussion. This time was adjusted sometimes due to the authentic nature and social dynamics of the book club setting. Since case study research is a fluid process, I was able to change the amount of time spent reading and the time spent discussing the titles. These changes were made because I realized that there was rich data that I could acquire simply observing the ways in which the participants' read the novels and interacted with each other before we began the discussions. I was also able to change and refine the questions as I learned what to ask, and to whom it should be asked. This enabled me to become a part of the book club dynamics and highly involved in the experiences of the participants.

I took detailed field notes during each session. I tape recorded the participants' responses to questions, as well as any additional comments they made throughout the book club discussions. Additionally, all of the book discussion sessions were audio taped and transcribed so that I could compare the responses from each participant. This also enabled me to revisit the data as needed. The confidentiality of the participants was assured, and the names of the participants and teacher were not provided on the transcripts.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) Log

One of the strengths of case study methodology is that it relies on multiple sources of potential evidence to understand the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). In this study, a literature log was used as an additional source of data. A Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) Log (Appendix D) was used by the 8th grade language arts teacher to determine what books her students read throughout the semester. The participants in this study filled out these forms in their language arts classroom. These logs were used to examine what types of books the participants read, and their reactions to them, before, during and after their participation in the graphic novel book club. The SSR reading logs allowed me an additional opportunity to examine the reactions of the participants to the graphic novels they were reading, both in and outside the context of the graphic novel book club.

Teacher Interviews

In order to obtain data regarding the participants' responses to graphic novels, when I was unable to observe them, I interviewed the language arts teacher three times throughout the study (Appendix E). These interviews enabled me to experience the setting

of the study in more depth. My questions focused on the ways in which the participants responded to graphic novels during their SSR sessions in the classroom, as well as their responses to graphic novels during class visits to the school library. Semi-structured and open-ended interview questions guided the interviews, to allow the most opportunities for a natural conversation to unfold. The findings of a case study are more convincing and accurate if they are based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2009); therefore, these fluid, authentic conversations with the participants' teacher were critical to the study. The conversational interviews allowed me to further examine the participants' literacy behaviors in the context of their classroom and school library when I was not in these settings. All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis for my study is defined as four cases which represent the four individual participants. I examined four individual cases to develop an understanding of the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels. These four cases were examined as individual studies and then as a collective unit of study. To this end, I examined the data for each participant, and then did an analysis to determine how these findings fit or contradicted the other case studies. The analysis of multiple cases provided more rigorous results than if I had analyzed a single case study.

A descriptive analysis was developed to provide a detailed rendering of the people, places, and events in the setting (Creswell, 2003). Comparisons between participants' pre and post test scores on the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) were made. The

quantitative data obtained from the survey instrument was used in the analysis to corroborate the qualitative data. Qualitative data was obtained from the participants during their pre and post AMRP interviews as well as through the additional means previously described.

The study's data analysis consisted of both descriptive analysis and thematic development. The goal was to produce a high-quality analysis by attending to all of the evidence that was collected, display and present it separate from any interpretation, and consider alternative interpretations (Yin, 2009, p. 126). To analyze data, I utilized color coding, note taking, post-it notes, and worksheets such as *Analyst's Notes While Reading a Case Report* (Appendix F) and the *Themes (Research Questions of the Multiple Case Study)* (Stake, 2005, pp. 43-45) (Appendix G). These worksheets help me organize and synthesize the data.

Throughout the study, I took handwritten field notes. I wrote my observations on a regular basis in order for my notes to augment the reflective nature of the study. I consistently examined my field notes from the current and previous sessions. I used my memory to fill in what I was not able to document during the book club sessions. This reflective process enabled me to connect my thoughts with larger themes and issues emerging from the study. Through the field notes and transcripts, I was provided with detailed descriptions of the book club sessions as well as the teacher interviews. I read and re-read the data, coding it until patterns and themes emerged. I also reviewed the self-reporting SSR reading logs in order to determine patterns regarding the participants' responses to the graphic novels they read. In order to maintain objectivity, I looked for

similarities as well as differences in the data. I reflected on my own biases and assumptions and included those self-reflections in my data analysis in order to create an open and honest study.

Limitations

The nature of this study presented several limitations. First, the participants in the study were limited to four males from one eighth-grade classroom. Due to the small number of participants and the fact that the setting was limited to one classroom, findings may not generalize to larger populations and settings. Time is another limitation to this study. The duration of the study was one academic semester, which may be considered by many to be too brief of a period of time in terms of both quantitative and qualitative research. The value of using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies comes with the understanding that quantitative data may be less sensitive to change during the short duration of the study. Furthermore, a hallmark of high-quality qualitative research is long-term involvement in the field (Maxwell, 2005).

Furthermore, the AMRP instrument also has limitations, as defined by the authors of the original Motivation to Read (MRP) instrument. In the words of Gambrell et al.(1996), “Although there is support for the reliability and validity of the MRP, it is a self-report instrument and it has limitations that are commonly associated with such instruments” (p. 531).

Finally, this was a qualitative study and as the principle instrument in the study’s data collection, I brought my personal lens. To quote Anais Nin (2002), “We don’t see things

as they are; we see things as we are.” My objective was to maintain quality control of the data at the same time that I exhibited a regard for the privacy of all of the study’s participants. It was my intent to conduct quality case study research that advanced the understanding of the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels; therefore, multiple sources of data were used to mitigate my beliefs and biases.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methods used in this study. First, I introduced the methodology and discussed the design of this multiple case study. Then, I described the setting and participants. Next, I addressed how the data in this study were collected and analyzed. Finally, I described the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Despite the fact that graphic novels are gaining increasing popularity in schools, there has been little research to document their use in academic settings. Although there have been studies examining the use of graphic novels in free, voluntary reading time, there has not been any research that examines their use with male adolescents in a book club setting. In this study, I used multiple case studies to examine the ways in which four eighth-grade males responded to graphic novels, while participating in a graphic novel book club. In addition to conducting pre and post surveys and conversational interviews with the participants, I observed their patterns of behavior during twelve book club sessions. I also conducted three conversational interviews with the cooperating language arts teacher. This chapter presents the results of the findings by answering each of the three research questions guiding the study. For all questions, I discuss the results within individual cases. At the end of the chapter, I describe the results I discovered across all cases.

Research Question 1

The first research question guiding this study was, “How does reading graphic novels affect the values that struggling male adolescent readers place on reading?” Data from this study examined the ways in which struggling male adolescents valued reading in twelve graphic novel book club sessions, in their language arts classroom, in their school library,

and in their responses to the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). To answer this question, I begin with the quantitative data, reporting results from the Value of Reading scores obtained from the AMRP.

Following the results of the quantitative data, I will report the qualitative data obtained from the following sources: transcripts of graphic novel book club sessions, conversational interviews, teacher interviews, field notes, and the participants' literature logs. In reporting both the qualitative and the quantitative data, I will discuss the results within individual cases. I will then describe the results across the cases.

The AMRP survey instrument helped to define the participants' value of reading in quantitative ways. Specifically, ten questions in the survey were designed to procure information about the value the participants place on reading tasks and activities, particularly in terms of frequency of engagement and reading-related activities (Gambrell et al., 1996). The quantitative results include a table displaying the pre and post AMRP survey results for the participants' values of reading.

Individual Cases

Frank. The AMRP survey data indicated that the reading of graphic novels in a graphic novel book club had a positive influence on the value that Frank placed on reading. Over the course of the study, Frank's Value of Reading Raw Score increased three points, from 16 out of a possible 40 points to 19 out of a possible 40 points. In terms of percentage scores, Frank's Value of Reading score increased from a total of 40 percent to a total of 48 percent over the period of the twelve sessions.

Although a three point increase is a modest gain, the qualitative data indicated that Frank valued reading graphic novels. Most notable were the positive comments he made about the visuals in the graphic novels he read. For example, Frank stated, "Graphic novels are good books. I just like to read and see the pictures. Graphic novels are good for viewing." The sequential art in graphic novels helped Frank comprehend the text. It was common for him to refer to the ways in which the combination of the words and the pictures advanced his understanding of the plot. Consider, for example, the following comment regarding vocabulary development, "...and like big words that you really don't understand, you just look at the pictures and they'll tell you what they're doing, about the word." When I asked, "So, you think the pictures help you with vocabulary?" he responded, "Yeah!"

Frank also discussed vocabulary when he talked about the book, *The Z-Boys and Skateboarding* (Anderson, 2008). The book describes the birth of the Z-Boys skateboarding team, and how they influenced modern skateboarding. Frank informed the group that the book included information on urethane, "a hard part they used to make skate board rails (wheels)." He also said that the word, *urethane*, was in the book's glossary, along with the words *asphalt* and *carve* (able to make sharp turns on a skateboard). The fact that Frank acquired new vocabulary when reading graphic novels supports the finding that an effective way for readers to learn new words is through the use of visuals (McCormack & Pasquarelli, 2010). Furthermore, it is apparent that Frank valued graphic novels because he believed that his vocabulary and reading comprehension improved when he read them.

Frank's positive feelings toward graphic novels are in contrast to the ways in which he valued classroom-sanctioned texts. He verbalized, on several occasions, that he preferred graphic novels over textbooks. For example, after reading, *The Attack on Pearl Harbor* (Sutcliffe, 2006), Frank commented that "it made him understand the battle better than his textbook." When prompted to explain his comment, he said, "It shows more pictures to show what actually happened." I asked Frank if he would enjoy history more if he could read graphic novels in class, as opposed to reading only a textbook. He responded, "Yeah, pictures make it more readable." The fact that Frank valued the readability of the graphic novel format was also apparent during the final conversational interview. He commented that graphic novels are easier to read and said, "I like them better than reading regular books." The contrasts between his comments regarding graphic novels versus traditional texts suggest that Frank valued graphic novels more than school-based reading. It is apparent that Frank is not alone in his feelings, given that, "the proportion of students who are not engaged or motivated by their school experiences grows at every grade level and reaches epidemic proportions in high school" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. 9).

Mrs. Huth offered several comments indicating that Frank's value of reading improved throughout the study. Specifically, she noted that Frank was actively engaged in selecting and reading graphic novels during the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) sessions in her classroom. She also commented that Frank was frequently seen looking at the graphic novels on the graphic novel carousel in the school library, when their class went to check

out books. On one occasion, she observed Frank asking the school librarian to help him locate a particular graphic novel.

Bob. Bob's raw and percentage scores on the AMRP demonstrated that his value of reading showed noticeable improvement from the beginning to the end of the study. Specifically, his Value of Reading Raw Score increased a total of six points, from 14 out of 40 points to 20 out of 40 points. The percentage scores showed a 15 point increase. The initial score rose from 35 percent to a total of 50 percent after the graphic novel book club intervention. This was the largest increase in the Value of Reading scores among the four participants.

When the study began, I often observed Bob looking around the room or flipping through the pages of his books without reading them. In my field notes, I wrote comments such as, "Bob is looking out the windows and pulling the blinds." and "Bob keeps turning around to see what others are doing." Mrs. Huth and I agreed that Bob exhibited the reading behaviors of a struggling, unmotivated reader, both in the book club sessions, and in her classroom. As the quantitative data indicated, however, Bob's interest in reading improved considerably over the course of the study. He appeared to be more engaged in reading the graphic novels that he selected. He began making positive comments that demonstrated his appreciation for graphic novels. For example, during the fifth book club session, I asked Bob if he would be interested in checking out graphic novels in the school library and he answered, "Yes, there are so many good ones."

The turning point for Bob's interest in reading seemed to come when he read the book, *Shaquille O'Neal* (Finkel, 2004) during the fourth book club session. I wrote in my

field notes that he participated in the discussions in this session, more than in previous ones. Furthermore, in one of the following sessions, he reported that the students shared books in their language arts class, and he told his classmates about the graphic novel. He was eager to tell me that he showed his classmates the fold-out replica of Shaq's size 22 shoe. Mrs. Huth also described the event and commented that Bob seldom cared enough about a book to share it with his classmates. At the end of the final graphic novel book club session, I asked the participants if they liked reading graphic novels, and Bob responded, "I just like having pictures and I like the captions. I don't like reading paragraphs."

Matthew. Although Matthew's personality was such that he was often reluctant to share his feelings about graphic novels, the quantitative data indicated that his value of reading improved during his participation in the study. Matthew had a four point increase in his Value of Reading scores over the course of the twelve sessions. Specifically, his score on the pre survey was a 26 and he had a raw score of 30 on his final survey. Matthews Value of Reading Percentage Score increased 10 points, from a total of 65 percent to 75 percent.

Since Matthew was painfully shy, it was often difficult to get more than a "Yes" or "No", or a head-shake from him in response to questions and prompts. He did make a few comments, however, that characterized his feelings regarding the value of reading graphic novels. These comments suggest that the visuals in graphic novels helped him to extend the meaning of the text. For example, when comparing graphic novels to other reading materials, he stated that graphic novels had more pictures and that was good, because "It helps to know what they're talking about. It helps me to understand it." When asked, at the

end of the study, how he felt graphic novels compared to other books, he reported that he liked graphic novels “better.”

Further evidence of Matthew’s positive experiences with print occurred when he read *Ultimate-Spider Man [Volume One] Power and Responsibility* (Bendis & Bagley, 2005). Although Matthew is a struggling reader, the 180 page graphic novel kept him engaged throughout the three to four weeks it took him to complete the book. When one of the other participants laughed about how long it was taking Matthew to read the book, he ignored the comment and read the book until the very end.

Jim. As was the case with the other three participants, Jim’s Value of Reading scores increased over the course of the study. He had a three point increase, beginning with a raw score of 28 out of 40 and ending with a score of 31 out of 40. The results reflected an eight point percentage increase, from 70 percent to 78 percent. Although his Value of Reading scores showed only modest increases, Jim’s appreciation for graphic novels was apparent in comments he made regarding the value of the information he learned from them. Like the other participants, he liked the idea of being able to use graphic novels in his classes. For example, when I asked the participants if they would talk to their science teacher or history teacher about using graphic novels in class, Jim replied, “Yes. They would be good for information.”

Jim also indicated that he valued graphic novels more than traditional texts. He commented that he was able to understand things more quickly when he read a graphic novel. When I asked him if that was the case when he read textbooks, he replied “Not really.” Similarly, Frey & Fisher (2004) reported that graphic novels have less text than

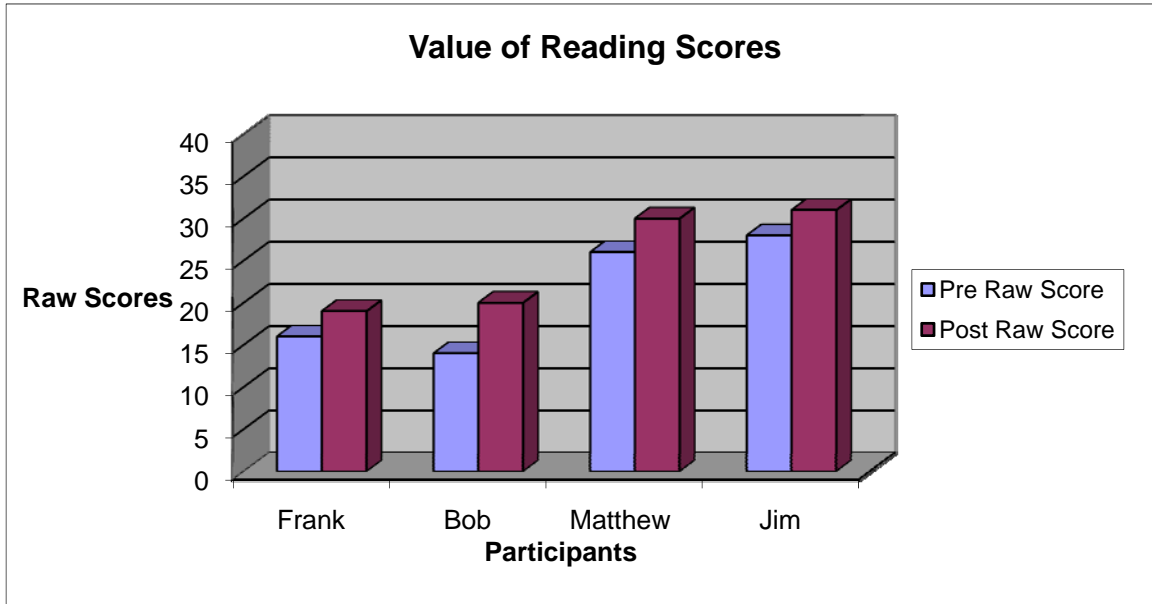
traditional texts; therefore, they are less threatening to read for struggling readers. As the book club sessions neared the end, Jim summarized his overall impressions of graphic novels by saying, “I like them. They are more funner [sic] to read than a regular book.”

In contrast, Jim’s negative feelings toward “regular” or school-based books, are echoed by literary theorists who believe that textbooks “may actually mask what is interesting about a particular subject and make content area reading seem unappealing” (Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore, & Alvermann., 2006, p. 57). Offering Jim, and the other participants, an opportunity to read graphic novels that they enjoyed reading, as opposed to books that they resisted, appeared to have had a positive effect on the ways in which they valued reading. This is an important finding, because when students think that texts are challenging to read, they lose confidence and become less motivated to read them (Yudowitch, Henry & Guthrie, 2008).

Cross Case Analysis, Quantitative Data

The quantitative scores from the AMRP survey instruments demonstrated that all four participants experienced an increase in their value of reading after the graphic novel book club intervention. The pre and post scores are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Value of Reading Scores



The average increase in the Value of Reading raw scores was 4.25 for the four participants. This score represented an average increase of 10.25 percent. The increase in scores for all of the participants is noticeable, especially given that is in contrast to the findings from a previous study examining the reading motivation of elementary students. The findings from the earlier study demonstrated that students' Value of Reading scores diminished as they grew older (Gambrell et al., 1996). Significant differences were found for the Value of Reading scores between third and fifth grade students, indicating that value of reading appears to be related to age. The differences in the findings between the two studies suggest that more research is needed to fully comprehend students' perceptions of the value of reading and the role that it plays in reading motivation (Gambrell, Codling & Palmer, 1996).

Cross Case Analysis, Qualitative Data

Results from a pilot study of the Maryland Comic Book Initiative showed that the elementary students who participated in the study believed graphic novels helped them develop a new appreciation for reading (Hudson, 2008). Furthermore, educators involved in the study reported that they had seen more engaged and excited students, since the project began in 2005. The positive comments about their experiences with graphic novels, made by Frank, Bob, Matthew and Jim are aligned with the results of the Maryland study.

The results from this study also build on the findings of an earlier study by Ujiie and Krashen (1996), which found that middle school boys who read comic books read more in general than the boys who did not read comics. Additionally, over half of the comic book readers at one of the schools told researchers that they liked to read, compared to only 21 percent of the non-comic book readers who reported that they liked to read. Although data was not collected, in this study, regarding whether or not the boys read more in general than students who did not read graphic novels, the fact that all of the participants' Value of Reading scores increased over the course of the study suggests that they developed a greater appreciation for reading than they had before the graphic novel book club intervention. Furthermore, the participants read a total of over fifty graphic novels during the two month study. Given that the participants are struggling adolescent readers, this would be considered by many to be a large number of titles, read over a short amount of time. (A complete list of the titles each participant read is provided in Appendices H-K).

Listed below is a qualitative thematic breakdown of the findings pertaining to the ways in which the participants valued reading. The themes are Value of Visuals, Value of

the Book Club Sessions, and Value of Reading in the Classroom. These themes represent elements of graphic novels that promoted the participants' value of reading.

Value of Visuals

It was apparent from the participants' comments that both their comprehension and motivation to read were enhanced by the illustrations in the graphic novels they read. As McVicker (2007) found, visual literacy can open the door to reading for the challenged student because they help the reader comprehend the text, even when print alone fails. Specifically, graphic novels help struggling readers make meaning from the text, by examining the details in the illustrations and inferring what the artist intended (Ivey, 2008). The participants' engagement with the visuals in graphic novels is supported by a previous study, which revealed that color visuals increase willingness to read by up to 80 percent (Burmark, 2002).

Furthermore, the congruence of pictures and text in graphic novels served as a scaffold that helped to facilitate the participants' reading comprehension and motivation. For example, Frank valued his reading experiences with graphic novels, because he believed that they improved his vocabulary development. He stated that he was a better reader after reading graphic novels, "...because I can understand it more. Vocabulary discussion makes you a better reader." Frank's remarks seemed to demonstrate his awareness that the vocabulary in the graphic novels facilitated his reading comprehension. This supports previous findings that demonstrated that motivation heightens students' interest in reading which in turn leads to increased vocabulary and comprehension. Finally, the combination of

sequential art and text seemed to help Frank make meaning of vocabulary that he may not have been able to comprehend in text-only literature.

Value of the Book Club Sessions

The participants valued their time in the book club sessions. They found the discussions to be meaningful, and they appreciated the time away from the larger class setting. For example, because of scheduling issues, it was necessary to meet twice a week for the fifth and sixth book club sessions. After the sixth session, Frank asked if we could continue meeting twice a week. He commented that he enjoyed the sessions and could “read better” than when they were in their classroom for SSR time. The other boys echoed his comments and the boys voted to change our schedule, so that we could meet biweekly. We began doing so the following week.

When Mrs. Huth met with me before the seventh book club session, I learned more about the ways in which the boys valued their shared reading time. She reported that the boys “really look forward to participating in the sessions.” They asked her repeatedly, “When is that lady coming back?” On another occasion, when Frank was suspended from school on the day of a book club session, Mrs. Huth said that the other three participants came to her because they were concerned that the session would be cancelled and they did not want to miss it.

The participants appeared to value the time they spent reading graphic novels, as well as the literary discussions with their peers. The socially-situated book club sessions were something that they looked forward to each week. So much so, that they requested

more frequent sessions, and were consistently engaged in their silent reading time and discussions during their time together. This supports the findings of Wentzel and Wigfield (1998) who reported that students will remain engaged in a task, if they perceive it to be important. Finally, the boys' enthusiasm about participating in the book club discussions suggests the importance of a reading community for adolescent readers. This builds on a recent Canadian study of teen readers, which showed that the participants exhibited positive attitudes toward the act of reading for pleasure in a social context (Howard, 2010).

Value of Reading in the Classroom

In order to extend the analysis beyond the framework of the graphic novel sessions, I turn to Mrs. Huth's observations regarding the participants' behavior in language arts class. Her comments supported the previous results indicating that the participants' value of reading increased over the course of the study. For example, Mrs. Huth commented that the participants were "eager to get their books" when they came into language arts class for their SSR time. She added, "They pull the graphic novel cart out as soon as class starts." Although she noted that, in the beginning Bob was not always as enthusiastic as the other three participants she went on to state, "I've seen more eagerness with the students. They are more in tune (*inaudible*)...that motivation to read, since the study began. They ask in class, 'When are we getting ready to read?'"

As the participants' comments indicated, the literate demands of school-sanctioned reading assignments were not always relevant to them. Although textbooks and "regular" books were less than engaging to the participants, the boys were motivated to read graphic

novels on a variety of topics. Through the use of graphic novels, the struggling readers in this study were able to revisit reading's value to them, and their responses demonstrated a newly inspired willingness to make time to read.

Research Question 2

The second research question guiding this study was, "How does reading graphic novels affect the reading self-concepts of struggling male adolescent readers?" To answer this question, I begin with the quantitative data. I report results from the Self-Concept as a Reader scores obtained from the survey instrument in the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). The AMRP survey instrument contained 10 questions that were designed to procure information about the participants' self-perceived competence in reading and their self-perceived performance relative to peers (Gambrell et al, 1996). The quantitative results include a table displaying the pre and post AMRP survey results for the participants' self-concepts as readers.

Following the results of the quantitative data, I report the qualitative data obtained from the following sources: transcripts of graphic novel book club sessions, conversational interviews, teacher interviews, field notes, and the participants' literature logs. In reporting both the qualitative and the quantitative data, I discuss the results within individual cases. I then describe the themes that I discovered across all cases.

Individual Cases

Frank. The AMRP survey data indicated that the reading of graphic novels in a graphic novel book club had a positive influence on Frank's self-concept as a reader. Over the course of the study, his Raw Score for the Self-Concept as a Reader increased two points, from 24 out of a possible 40 points to 26 out of a possible 40 points. In terms of percentage scores, Frank's Self-Concept as a Reader score increased from a total of 60 percent to 65 percent over the period of the twelve sessions.

Although a two point gain is modest, the qualitative data from the study offered additional insight as to the relationship between Frank's self-concept as a reader and his reading of graphic novels. From comments he made throughout the study, it is apparent that reading graphic novels had a positive influence on his reading efficacy. For example, Frank said that graphic novels made "reading better." During the final book club session, he elaborated on this point by saying that he would continue reading graphic novels when the study ends "because my reading is better, because the other books, there are not pictures and you don't really see nothing." In the final conversational interview, I asked Frank why he liked the graphic novels he had read so far. He responded, "I felt like I was a better reader than I would reading a regular book...because I can understand it more." Frank's comments indicate that reading graphic novels interested him more than reading other books. This is important in terms of Frank's self-concept as a reader, since Yudowitch, Henry and Guthrie (2008) write that an important step in improving the self-efficacy of struggling readers is to provide them with books on their reading level, and that are of interest to them.

Bob. The results of the data obtained from the AMRP surveys indicated that the reading of graphic novels did not influence Bob's self-concept as a reader. Over the course of the study, his Raw Score for the Self-Concept as a Reader remained the same. In both the pre and post surveys, he scored 22 out of a possible 40 points. It is important to note the contrast between Bob's Value of Reading scores and Self-Concept as a Reader scores. Although, Bob's value of reading score showed the greatest gains of the four participants (six point increase), there was no improvement in his Self-Concept as a Reader score. Since by Mrs. Huth's accounts, Bob was the most reluctant reader in the group, it is possible that it would take longer to rebuild his reading efficacy than the other participants. O'Brien & Dillon (2008) describe the challenges of improving the self-concept of disengaged, struggling readers, when they write, "...educators who work with adolescents can't turn back the clock to intervene in early grades, or easily change some students' negative self-perceptions about ability" (p. 88). Conducting a longitudinal study may have been beneficial to Bob, and the other participants, in terms of seeing gains in their Self-Concept as a Reader scores.

In contrast to the quantitative data, however, an analysis of the qualitative data revealed some signs of improvement in Bob's reading efficacy. For example, in the first conversational interview, Bob said that he felt graphic novels were easier to read than other books. When I asked him why, he said "Because they have pictures and stuff." I followed with the question, "Does that make you feel like a better reader?" and he replied, "Yes." In the second conversational interview, Bob was asked if reading graphic novels made him feel like a "good reader." His response was, "Yes...it's just shorter, a lot of the books are shorter and stuff and I don't like reading a lot." When asked if he would feel more confident

reading a graphic novel than a text book, or other books, he said, “Yes...because it’s not as hard to read and better.”

Additionally, as previously reported, Bob was delighted that he had the opportunity to share the graphic novel biography about Shaquille O’Neal with his peers in language arts class. Mrs. Huth observed his presentation to the class and remarked that, although she thought of Bob as a “non-reader,” he was pleased to share the book in class and show the students the cutout of Shaq’s size 22 shoe. Furthermore, when the study ended, Mrs. Huth reported that she was pleasantly surprised that Bob signed up to be a part of a book club group in his language arts class. She believed that he would not have joined this book club, prior to participating in the graphic novel book club. She attributed Bob’s positive experiences reading graphic novels to his willingness to participate in the newly-formed book club. This desire to continue discussing the books he read with others is further indication that Bob’s self-concept as a reader improved in qualitative ways, as a result of the intervention.

Matthew. Over the course of the study, Matthew’s Raw Score for the Self-Concept as a Reader increased two points, from 24 out of a possible 40 points to 26 out of a possible 40 points. In terms of percentage scores, Matthews Self-Concept as a Reader score increased from a total of 60 percent to 65 percent over the period of the twelve sessions. As with Frank’s Self-Concept as a Reader scores, these were moderate gains.

It is difficult to offer qualitative data that supports the modest increase in Matthew’s Self-Concept as a Reader score, largely due to his reluctance to talk about himself and the books he read. Matthew was the shyest of the four participants, and it was

an ongoing challenge to get him to speak up in the book club sessions and interviews. He preferred to answer many questions with a one-word reply or shaking his head in response. Although he replied, “Yes” when I asked Matthew if he felt he was a good reader when he read graphic novels, he did not give me an answer when I asked why he felt that way.

An examination of the books that Matthew read offers an additional means of measuring his self-concept as a reader. He read a total of ten books, throughout the study. One of the titles, *Ultimate Spider Man* (Bendis & Bagley, 2005), was over 180 pages, a number which would intimidate most struggling readers. When it took Matthew several weeks to read the book, another participant mocked Matthew. However, Matthew had the confidence to continue reading the book, until he completed it. In addition to the titles he read, during the study, Matthew also reported that he had previously read 16 of the books in the *Whistle!* series.

It is my belief that, although modest, the two-point increase in Matthew’s self-concept as a reader reflected his feelings of engagement with the books he read and his success in making meaning from them. Furthermore, the fact that Matthew read a variety of graphic novel and manga series titles, both in and outside of school, indicated that the books were aligned to his reading interests, an important element for engaging struggling adolescent readers (Kaywell, 2009).

Jim. As was the case with Bob, Jim’s reading self-concept remained the same over the course of the twelve graphic novel book club sessions. His Raw Score for the AMRP Self-Concept as a Reader was 31 in the first survey and it remained at 31 when the post

intervention survey was administered. Qualitatively, however, his comments suggest that Jim's perception of his reading abilities improved during the study.

Jim's comments relating to his self-concept as a reader were similar to the other participants, in that he had positive things to say about his reading experiences with graphic novels. When I asked him, for example, if he felt like he was a good reader when he read graphic novels, Jim replied, "Yes." He went on to describe why he felt that graphic novels made him a better reader, "I know most all of the words and I read fast." In his final conversational interview, Jim reiterated his feelings that reading graphic novels helped him improve his reading skills. He described why he believed he was an effective reader, when he read graphic novels, "Because I can understand mostly what's happening right away."

Jim enjoyed reading several graphic novels based on historical events, such as the *Trojan Horse: The Fall of Troy* (Fontes & Purcell, 2007), *The Battle of the Alamo* (Doeden, 2005), and *The Red Badge of Courage* (Crane & Vansant, 2005). When describing *The Red Badge of Courage*, he commented, "It showed a lot of the details. It showed like where they are and all the people who were there. I liked it." Graphic novel versions of battles, and other historical events, can help struggling readers like Jim feel more confident in their interpretation of factual details. The sequential art in graphic novels often engages readers more effectively than the expository information found in textbooks, and other school-based materials. Graphic novels can serve as supplementary trade books in content classrooms. For example, Fuhler (1991) touts the benefits of using supplementary trade books to help students understand history, and he recommends using them in the classroom with social studies textbooks to motivate student learning. Yodowitch et al.,

(2008) believe that using these types of supplemental texts, in the classroom, results in improved reading efficacy for students. Jim's positive comments about his ability to understand and enjoy graphic novels pertaining to historical events, confirm the findings of the study by Yodiwitth et al.

Cross Case Analysis

The importance of the role that reading efficacy plays in the literacy lives of male adolescents cannot be underestimated. Readers who experience success are more likely to continue in their reading. As Bandura (1993) states "It is difficult to achieve much, while fighting self-doubt" (p.118). Furthermore, Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) determined that students who have high self-efficacies toward reading show evidence of higher reading achievement.

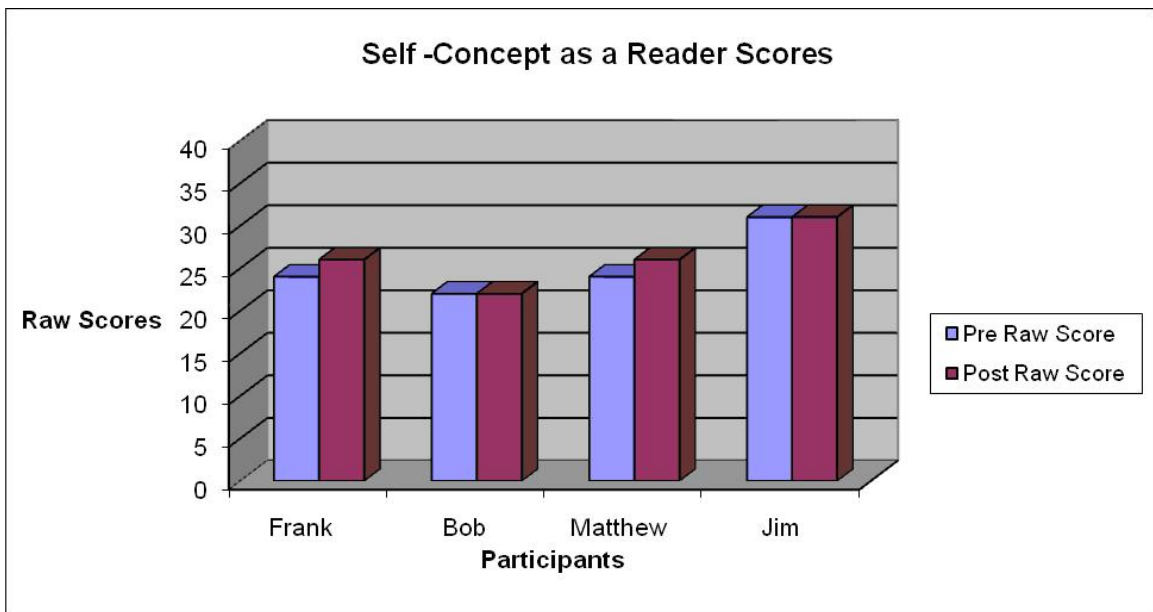
Reading efficacy is particularly important in the literacy lives of struggling, or illiterate, adolescent readers (Frey & Fisher, 2007). Since the participants, in this study, are labeled as Level-One readers, they may be approaching high school with the belief that they are not capable readers, and the fear that they may never read on grade level. One way to break this cycle is to provide students with a wide variety of reading materials that interest them, motivate them to read more, and enable them to experience reading success. The benefits of reading often and widely are touted by Allington and Cunningham (2007), in their book, *Schools that Work*. They believe that students show gains in vocabulary development and reading achievement, when they read a lot, and from a variety of texts.

As a result of their experiences reading and discussing a wide range of graphic novels in this study, the qualitative findings suggest that the boys developed feelings of competence that positively influenced their reading efficacy. The patterns of behavior guiding this cross case analysis of self-concept as a reader are described below.

Quantitative Data

As indicated in the table below, Frank and Matthew had increases of two points in their raw scores for self-concept as a reader. However, the raw scores of Bob and Jim remained the same.

Table 3. Self-Concept as a Reader Scores



The fact that the increases for the participants' Self-Concept as a Reader scores were not significant is consistent with a previous study's finding that boys tend to think they

are bad readers (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). The concept of low academic self-esteem in males parallels the findings of a Canadian study that examined the academic motivation of male and female students. The study investigated gender-related differences in motivation for 538 elementary students, 1,519 high school students, and 2,434 junior college students in Canada (Thibert & Karsenti, 1996). Results showed that, from grade six to junior college, females were more self-determined and motivated toward academic activities than males. The findings from these two gender-based studies suggest that the modest gains in the participants' Self-Concept as a Reader scores are representative of research demonstrating that motivation and self-determination are different for males and females (Thibert & Karsenti, 1996).

An additional study sheds light on struggling readers' perceptions about their reading abilities. Using the Reader Self-Perception Survey (Henk & Melnick, 1995), the study assessed the reading efficacy of students in a school in Boston (Biancarosa, Palinscar, Deschler, & Nair, 2007). The findings showed that it was consistently the poorest readers who reported negative feelings about their self-concepts as readers. The findings from the Boston study are consistent with the finding, in this study, that Bob was the poorest reader in the group and he also had the lowest Self-Concept as a reader scores. Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer (1996) had similar findings using the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) with 330 third and fifth graders in Maryland. They found that the more proficient readers had more positive self-concepts than the less proficient readers. The finding that less proficient readers have lower reading efficacy is consistent with the finding, in this study, that two of

the participants' Self-Concept as a Reader scores did not increase, while two of the participants' scores only increased by two points.

Furthermore, Pajares & Valiante (2003) conducted a study that demonstrated a decline in academic self-efficacy, when students progressed from elementary to high school. Given that the research shows evidence of lower academic self-efficacy among secondary students, it is not surprising that only two of the participants in this study had two point increases, while the Self-Concept of the Reader scores for the other two participants exhibited no growth. However, even though the two point increase was not a significant gain in Frank and Matthew's Self-Concept as a Reader scores, it did indicate the potential for growth in reading efficacy. Finally, although Bob and Jim's Self-Concept as a Reader scores did not increase, it is conceivable that there would have been greater gains if this had been a longitudinal study.

Responses to Interview Prompts

Even though two of the participants did not show an increase in their Self-Concept as a Reader scores, their comments reflected their beliefs that their experiences with graphic novels helped to improve their reading. One of the prompts used in the conversational interview was particularly helpful in soliciting responses regarding their self-concept as a reader. The prompt was, "Do you feel that you are a good reader when you read graphic novels?" The probes, "Why" or "Why not?" followed the prompt. Each of the participants responded that they were better readers when reading graphic novels. Their

comments suggest that the unique and engaging format of the graphic novels provided meaningful and active reading experiences for the boys.

As evidenced from previous comments, the participants believed that reading graphic novels facilitated their comprehension and provided them with a higher level of understanding than more traditional classroom texts. The boys' comparisons of graphic novels with traditional print are best summarized by Frank's comment, "I felt like I was a better reader than I would reading a regular book...because I can understand it more." These, and similar comments, suggest that the boys experienced a greater sense of control over their reading comprehension, when reading graphic novels. As Deci and Ryan (1985) found, when an individual's sense of control is supported, it can lead to greater internal motivation, which, in turn, affects self-concept. It is important that the participants exhibited signs of improved self-efficacy, during the study, since adolescents' self-efficacy beliefs affect the "instigation, direction, persistence, and outcomes of achievement-related actions" (Schunk & Miller, 2002, p. 48).

Another prompt used in the conversational interview was, "Do you feel more confident reading aloud when you read graphic novels?" Interestingly, there were fewer positive responses to this question, as compared to the previous question. In the first conversational interview, all of the participants responded "No" to this question. In the final conversational interview, Bob's answer was "Yes." Frank's response was a lukewarm, "Kind of." Both Matthew and Jim responded, "No" to the question, in the final interview.

Their comments suggest that these Level-One readers lack the confidence to read aloud to their peers. The literature shows that oral reading can be particularly worrisome

for struggling readers. For example, Allington (2006) writes that, when asked to read aloud, struggling readers are

- more likely to be reading material that is too difficult for them
- more likely to be asked to read aloud in class
- more likely to be interrupted when they mispronounce a word
- more likely to be interrupted more quickly
- more likely to pause and wait for a teacher to prompt them, and
- more likely to be told to sound out a word when interrupted (p. 94).

Since they may not possess adequate decoding and comprehension skills, struggling readers' efforts to read aloud may be more hesitant and disjointed than their more fluent classmates. Tyler and Chard (2000) reflect on the pressures that struggling readers face when asked to read aloud, "...they are not motivated to engage in this laborious process... nor are they inspired by a tangible record of their struggle" (p. 165).

Motivation and Engagement

When adolescents believe that literacy activities are too challenging or unfulfilling, they can become non-readers or aliterate (Pitcher et al., 2007). In contrast, when adolescents are engaged and active readers, they are more motivated to develop reading success and an enjoyment of reading that will, hopefully, follow them through life. As Wigfield (1996) stated, "...when children believe they are more competent and efficacious at reading, they should be more likely to engage in reading" (p. 2). Perhaps the most notable trend that emerged regarding the boys' self-concepts as readers was the apparent

improvement in their reading motivation. Gambrell (1996) asserts that students are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to discuss what they read with others. Brozo (2007) advocates for boys only book clubs, since he has found that participation in book clubs can elevate boys' self esteem, and lead to greater leadership and independence. Both Gambrell's and Brozo's beliefs were affirmed in this study, since the boys' conversations with their peers in the book club sessions seemed to pique their interest in reading additional titles and discussing what they read with others.

During my interviews with Mrs. Huth, for example, she commented that the participants frequently recommended graphic novels they had read to their classmates. The boys were apparently proud to share their knowledge of books with others, which helped to improve their self-concept as a reader. This builds on a recent study demonstrating that the support of peers who value reading has proven to be a significant factor in motivating adolescents to read (Lapp & Fisher, 2009).

As Mrs. Huth noted, the participants' involvement in the book club sessions helped them begin to identify themselves as readers. She reported that the boys took pride in being selected as research participants. She also indicated that the boys were aware that other students in the class were envious of their participation in the book club, and wanted to be included in the study. Furthermore, the ability to display their comprehension of the graphic novels, and to communicate their feelings about them, gave the participants more responsibility and authority in the classroom. It helped them experience the unique role of being knowledge-providers, which positively affected their reading self-concept. This builds on the findings of Schunk & Pajares (2002), which demonstrated that academic socialization

in peer groups had a positive influence on the group's academic self-efficacy and motivation.

In contrast, struggling readers are often given books designed for younger readers in an effort to improve their reading comprehension. These types of reading materials are considered "baby" books by many reluctant readers who are concerned about what their peers think of them. Understandably, male adolescent readers are disengaged by these low-level texts and embarrassed by the stigma of reading them in front of their classmates. The graphic novel format, on the other hand, offered a welcome alternative to low-level texts, since the visuals in graphic novels enabled the participants to make meaning of text that they might otherwise struggle to read. It is important that the boys felt successful when reading graphic novels because, as Zambro & Brozo (2009) found, success motivates male readers to try harder, whereas failure threatens their motivation and drive.

Choice and Autonomy

Another trend that emerged from the data was the noticeable role that choice played in adolescents' literacy lives. Choice in reading has long been proven to be an effective tool for motivating readers (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996, Pitcher et al., 2007). As Joe, a male adolescent in a previous study stated, "I don't like it if I have to read it, but if I can read it on my own then it would probably seem a little better" (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002, p. 33). I theorize that the participants' reading efficacy improved, throughout the study, partly because they were able to select the titles they read during the book club sessions. Allowing the participants to select the graphic novels they

read helped them to develop a sense of ownership of the texts. The participants' feeling of autonomy over what they were reading is described as autonomous motivation by Deci & Ryan (1985).

Similarly, the autonomy that the participants experienced in negotiating their book club conversations enabled them to feel good about playing an active role in their literacy learning. They were fully engaged when reading graphic novels, which gave them a feeling of confidence when discussing them in a book club setting. The positive feelings that readers exhibit when they discuss self-selected books is often distinctly different from their feeling when they are trying to second-guess what teachers want them to say about school-sanctioned texts (Norton, 2003).

Additionally, since Frank, Matthew, Bob, and Jim were allowed to candidly discuss their responses to the books they read, they felt that their interests were being honored, and this made them feel more successful as readers. Furthermore, because the boys were allowed to read an alternative literacy format outside of their traditional school curriculum, their views of themselves as readers were expanded. This was in contrast to their feelings about reading school-approved texts, which many students view as "abstract and unconnected to their everyday lives" (Norton, 2003, p. 145). As was proven in a previously described study, allowing the participants to make choices in their reading caused them to increase their self-concept as readers and increased their motivation to read (Kunes and Gilman, 1999).

Research Question 3

The third research question guiding this study was, “What are the ways in which struggling male adolescent readers respond to graphic novels?” In order to answer this question, I drew upon the following data sources: transcripts of graphic novel book club sessions, conversational interviews, interviews with the cooperating teacher, field notes, and the participants’ literature logs. In all, I identified five themes that exemplified the ways in which the participants responded to graphic novels. The themes are:

- Theme One - Importance of visuals
- Theme Two – Action
- Theme Three – Series
- Theme Four – Connections (literary / popular media)
- Theme Five - Easier to read (fun /cool factor)

An introduction to each theme is provided followed by a cross case analysis of the data. The analysis used to answer this question builds on the data analyzed in research question 1 and 2. The results for Research Question 3 follow.

Theme One – Importance of Visuals

This theme included the comments that the participants made regarding the visuals in graphic novels. Their remarks represented the ways in which the visuals helped the participants make meaning from the text. The use of visuals in the graphic novels was the most common of the five themes identified in the study. The importance of this theme was evidenced by the fact that the participants referred to the visuals in graphic novels over

sixty times in their book club discussions and conversational interviews. The attraction of these struggling readers to the visuals in graphic novels affirms the work of Michael Gurian, a neuro-biologist who specializes in gender research. Gurian (2005) feels it is important to expand the use of visuals with boys because it often “fits the minds of boys who are not as good at reading, writing, and literature” (p. 141).

Following a brief introduction to the visual theme, I discuss three recurring sub-themes as a means of organizing the findings. These sub themes are: Visuals and Reading Enjoyment, Visuals Facilitating Comprehension, and Manga.

Visuals and Reading Enjoyment. All of the participants commented on their enjoyment of the visuals in the books they read. For example, when asked, “How did the art affect how you felt about the book, *Tyrannosaurus: The Tyrant Lizard?*” (Shone & Field, 2008), Frank replied, “I liked it because you could see what they were doing.” When referring to the title, *Velociraptor: The Speedy Thief* (West, 2007), he commented that he “liked the pictures with the facts.” Additionally, when asked why he enjoyed reading the graphic novel, *Little Lit: Strange Stories for Strange Kids* (Spiegelman & Mouly, 2001), he stated, “I liked it because, after a story, it will tell you to find something in the pictures”

Similar responses were shared by the other participants, as when I asked Matthew why he liked to read graphic novels and he replied, “Because it shows the pictures.” Jim also referred to his engagement with the visuals in graphic novels, throughout the study. In commenting on *The Red Badge of Courage* (Vansant & Crane, 2005), for example, Jim said: “It showed a lot of the details. It showed like where they are and all the people who were there. It’s in black and white and it’s pretty good art work. I liked it.” Moreover, Jim

demonstrated his enthusiasm for the pictures in *The Trojan Horse, the Fall of Troy* (Fontes & Purcell, 2007). After he described the plot, I asked Jim about the pictures, and he said, “Oh, they’re really good. I like them. There’s a lot of detail in them.” Rather than viewing reading as a set of tedious tasks, the boys’ positive responses about their enjoyment of graphic novels suggested that they enjoyed the engaging combination of visuals and text.

These findings, regarding the visual benefits of reading graphic novels, resonate with the findings of other literary researchers and theorists. For example, Thompson (2008) touted the advantages of using graphic novels in schools when he wrote, “graphica often motivates readers when other texts fail to do so” (p. 51). Furthermore, in their studies, Frey and Fisher (2004, 2007, 2008) found that the visuals in graphic novels enabled students to have positive reading experiences, which makes them more likely to want to read more.

Visuals Facilitating Comprehension. Visualization is often recommended as a literacy teaching strategy, since images have proven to be important tools in scaffolding students’ reading comprehension. For example, one comprehension strategy that has been found to be effective is the Visual Image Strategy, which helps students create “mental movies” of the text they read (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. 16). Frey and Fisher (2008) argue that if readers cannot see in their mind what is occurring in print, they cannot comprehend the text. With the unique combination of text connoting image and image connoting text, graphic novels can work in multiple ways to facilitate the reader’s ability to make meaning of the text they read. Visual images allow readers to process information differently than through text alone, since the images call on emotional associations in the reader’s brain (Hassett & Schieble, 2007).

In addition to piquing their reading interests, the participants understood that the images, in graphic novels, made reading visible and helped them derive meaning from the text. It was very common for them to point out and respond to the illustrations found in their graphic novels, since they valued the importance of “seeing” the text they were reading. Consider, for example, Bob’s response to the book, *Shaquille O’Neal* (Finkel, 2004). He was extremely engaged while reading the title and, when I asked him why he liked the book he said, “Pictures.” The following week he commented that the book “showed” how many points Shaq gets in a game, and it had “a picture of how big his shoe is.” When I asked “Did the pictures help you learn the facts?” he responded. “Yes.”

Additionally, in the last conversational interview, Frank elaborated on the role that visuals played in helping him comprehend the text.

The pictures tell you a lot more and it’s written like novels... when I see the pictures, it tells you a lot more of what’s happening and like when there are words that you don’t know, you just look at the pictures and it tells you what they’re doing. And like big words that you really don’t understand, you just look at the pictures and they’ll tell you what they’re doing, about the word.

Frank’s belief that graphic novels can facilitate vocabulary development, and comprehension, is affirmed by Terry Thompson, author of *Adventures in Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension* (2008). Thompson believes that vocabulary development occurs when students read graphic novels, due to the combination of motivation and visual support. He writes, “...by encountering vocabulary in graphica through wide reading – even vocabulary that might otherwise be difficult – students can learn many new words (p. 92). Similarly, Krashen (2004) suggests that reading comics, and

other kinds of light reading, may serve as a bridge from “conversational” language to “academic” language.

Franks’ comments also build on the findings of an earlier study (Millard & Marsh, 2001) in which students in the United Kingdom indicated that they enjoyed comics because the pictures helped them read the words. Thompson (2008) found similar results when his fifth-grade students read, *The Battle of Gettysburg: Spilled Blood on Sacred Ground* (Abnett, 2006). Not only did Thompson’s students enjoy the graphic novel format and the opportunity to view Civil War battlefields, but they learned new words such as *brigade*, *bayonet*, and *skirmish*.

Additionally, after Jim did an excellent job summarizing the plot in the *Battle of the Alamo* (Doeden, 2005), I asked him about the illustrations and he said “Yeah, they were good” and referred to a “map that shows where the people were at...it shows where he got shot.” When asked if the map helped him understand the story of the Alamo, he said, “Yeah, it helped a lot.” He added that the pictures helped him follow the story. At the end of the study, I asked him if the pictures in graphic novels made a difference in his understanding of the books and his reply was, “Yes...because if you don’t understand something, maybe the pictures can help you out a little.”

The participants’ descriptions of their reading practices offer insight into the relationship between the visual mode of graphic novels and their effect on reading comprehension. The analysis builds on the findings of previous studies demonstrating that the combination of pictures with text facilitates reading comprehension for all types of learners (Edwards, 2008; Lamano, 2007; Mortimore, 2009; Carter, 2007; Liu, 2004;

Thompson, 2008; Xu, 2003). In their book, *Teaching Visual Literacy*, Frey and Fisher (2008) write, "As with reading comprehension, visually literate learners are able to make connections, determine importance, synthesize information, evaluate, and critique (p. 1). Finally, Wigfield (1996) noted that interest in text improves comprehension because readers attend more closely to what they read. Since the participants in this study were interested in the graphic novels they read, they were more likely to keep reading them and to comprehend what they read.

Manga. Matthew was the only participant who showed significant interest in reading manga titles, during the study. Manga titles are Japanese graphic novels in a series that read from back to front, and right to left. Many manga titles are illustrated in black and white, and they use an exaggerated Japanese style to represent characters in the series.

Manga titles are often gender-specific. For example, *shonen* comics are written for males, from ages twelve to eighteen years, while *shojo* is written for females (Brenner, 2007). The manga titles Matthew read included several shonen titles such as *Whistle!* (Higuchi, 2004), *Prince of Tennis* (Takeshi, 2004). He also read the manga titles, *Pokémon: Diamond and Pearl Adventure* (Shigekatsu, 2008), and *Dragonball Z* (Toriyama, 2008).

Manga has been used successfully in classrooms to teach multiple literacies, vocabulary, and writing skills (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003, Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). In several of the book club sessions, Matthew commented that he liked the pictures in the manga titles. However, when he described the *Prince of Tennis* (Takeshi, 2004), a title illustrated in black and white, he said he did not like the fact that the book was "not in

color.” This was the only reference, in the study, that a participant made about black and white versus color illustrations.

Although reading manga can be counter-intuitive to adults, 21st century adolescents, such as Matthew, have an instinctive understanding of how to comprehend the text and visual clues. Furthermore, the storylines in manga often include adventure and fantasy stories, which appeal to many male readers. The appeal of manga to adolescents was confirmed by a study of adolescent literacy during which many of the participants read manga and viewed anime (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008). As the authors of the study wrote regarding manga and other nontraditional materials, “...we cannot ignore the role of other forms of representation that shape how young people read and write print and other symbols” (p. 119).

Theme Two – Action

This theme included all of the comments that the participants made regarding their enjoyment of the use of action in the graphic novels they read.

The participants in the study were active young eighth-grade male adolescents, and their selection of titles consistently reflected a desire to read action-oriented text. The boys referred repeatedly to the action-oriented scenes in the graphic novels they read. As was the case in a previous study of male adolescent literacy (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002), the emotional and high-impact story lines engaged the boys’ interest in reading. Gorman (2003) writes that graphic novels offer fast-paced action, and conflict, making them an ideal choice for hooking unmotivated readers. Although not all graphic novels contain action, high-

action scenes played a prominent role in a majority of the graphic novels the participants selected.

Frank, in particular, gravitated towards graphic novels that contained a lot of action. He commented several times on the action scenes, when describing the books he read. For example, when he discussed the books that he read in the Graphic Dinosaur series, he continually referred to the dinosaurs' fights with each other. Frank became fixated on the action in the books, repeatedly referring to the fighting scenes. When asked why he enjoyed the dinosaur books so much, Frank said "the action was of interest." Additionally, when asked "What was the best thing about the book?" Frank animatedly described the action "when the last dinosaur was born, when he got into his first fight and he won!" From the comments he made, and my observations of him reading, it was evident that the action in the graphic novels enhanced his reading engagement during the book club sessions.

Bob also chose to read several high-action graphic novels throughout the study. Examples include, *The Sinking of the Titanic* (Doeden, 2005) *Velociraptor* (West, 2007), and *The Battle at Antietam* (Hama, 2006) all of which contained action-oriented scenes. When Bob summarized the plots, he did not discuss the action scenes as much as the other participants. However, he referred positively to the action in some graphic novels he read before the study began. In his first conversational interview, Bob spoke about reading books in the *Pokémon* graphic novel series. When I asked him why he liked them he said, "... the stuff that they did." I asked, "Did they have a lot of action?" and he replied, "Yes."

As indicated previously, it was difficult to get Matthew to discuss his readings during our book club sessions. His responses were typically limited to one word replies or head

shakes. The exception was when we discussed the action in some of the books he read. For example, when another participant was describing the action in his book, I asked Matthew “Is there a lot of action in your book [*Ultimate Spider Man*]?” He responded, “Yes...there was a lot of excitement.” In a later session, when I asked Matthew why he liked *Dragonball Z* ([Toriyama](#), 2008) so much, he responded “The action” and, “There’s a lot of fighting.” Matthew also read several manga titles which are known for their action and sport sequences (Brenner, 2007). Matthew’s responses to manga are described in greater detail, later in this chapter. During the final conversational interview, I asked Matthew to tell me about the things that got him excited about reading and he said, “I think the action.” I then asked, “Do the graphic novels you read have a lot of action?” He responded “Yes.”

Like the other participants, Jim showed a preference for action-oriented graphic novels. Specifically, he enjoyed the fighting that was prevalent in two of the graphic novels he read. The first title he read was *The Superman Chronicles* (Siegel, 2006). Jim appeared to be very engaged when reading the book. When I asked why he liked it so much, he said “It had fighting.” I then asked, “Do you like action in a book?” and he responded, “Yes.” During the second book club session, I asked him why he enjoyed reading *The Red Badge of Courage* (Vansant & Crane, 2005) and his reply was “It’s about war.” I asked if he liked the action in the book and he again replied, “Yes.” When I asked him to describe the action, he said “It’s a lot of fighting.”

The participants’ positive responses to the action and fast moving story lines, builds on the research of literacy theorists (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Sullivan, 2003, 2009). For example, Frey & Fisher (2004, 2007, 2008) assert that the action-oriented storylines in

graphic novels engage readers' interests, even when the action is slow, because of the power of the visuals. They describe the process in their book, *Teaching Visual Literacy* (2008), "A student *reads* the words, *sees* the action, *comprehends* the meaning, and is motivated to read more" (p. 28). Similarly, Michael Gurian, author of *The Minds of Boys* (2005), found that boys gravitate toward reading material that is "filled with spatial-kinesthetic action" as well as "graphic and visual, such as comic books" (p. 39).

Theme Three – Series

This theme included all of the findings pertaining to the graphic novel series titles that were a part of the study. The findings include the participants' comments regarding the series books, as well as data regarding the titles that they read.

The popularity of series books cannot be underestimated, as evidenced by the fact that publishers sell millions of them in book stores and school book fairs around the nation. For example, Scholastic Book Fairs sold over four million graphic-novels, at school-based book fairs, from 2004-2007 (Gorman, 2008). Many of these were graphic novels from popular series such as *Bone*, *Goosebumps*, and the *Magic Pickle*. Series books are often maligned, however, by literacy stakeholders who contend that they are mediocre and take time away from reading "better quality" books. Series titles seldom make the literary award lists, even though many literacy theorists recognize their value for helping struggling readers develop an understanding of higher-order literacy skills, such as character and plot development (Allington, 2006; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Additionally, many reluctant readers are drawn to series books because the familiarity they offer helps to limit the struggles they associate with reading (Sullivan, 2009). Moreover, series titles can scaffold reader's engagement by enabling the reader to anticipate the characters and plot in the next book in the series (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). The reader often becomes comfortable with the series' characters and wants to read more about them to find resolutions to conflicts. This familiarity with books in a series can facilitate reading competencies. Several of the book club participants exhibited a pattern of reading graphic novels in a series. Frank, for example, was particularly interested in each of the four titles he read in the Graphic Dinosaur series. When I asked why the dinosaur titles interested him so much, he responded "It's just like I read the first book and I liked that one so I just read the other ones." During three different book club sessions, he asked me if there were any other titles in this series that he could read. He also read two of the four titles in the *Little Lit* series.

As the only experienced manga reader, Matthew had an established history of reading titles in a series. In his first conversational interview, Matthew told me about reading books in the *Whistle!* manga series. He reported that he had read sixteen of the titles in the series. He also read *Prince of Tennis* (Takeshi, K., 2004), another manga series book. When I asked if he likes series books, he said, "Yes." He had the same response for the *Pokémon* series books. When I asked him, however, why he likes series books, he responded "Don't know." During the final conversational interview, I asked Matthew if he knew of any other graphic novels he wanted to read and he said "*Whistle!, Volume Six*"

(Higuchi, 2005). Apparently, that was one of the few titles in the series that Matthew had not previously read.

As was the case with Frank and Matthew, Jim chose to read additional titles in a series. In particular, he was interested in reading the titles in the Graphic Classics series. These included *The Red Badge of Courage* (Vansant & Crane, 2005), and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson, 2008). Other examples included the NBA All Star series from which he read *Greatest Stars of the NBA: Shaquille O'Neal* (Finkel, 2004) and *Greatest Stars of the NBA: Kevin Garnett* (Kaftan, 2005). The NBA All Star series was popular with several of the participants. Additionally, Mrs. Huth reported that several of the other boys in her language arts class were interested in the NBA All Star series and read the books when the participants were finished with them. They learned about these titles after Bob shared the book, the *Greatest Stars of the NBA: Shaquille O'Neal* (Finkel, 2004) with them in class.

Bob responded to series books in a different manner than the other participants. Although almost every book that Bob read was a title in a series, he seldom chose to continue reading the other books in the series. On four occasions, he was asked if he would like to read another title in the series of books he read. He always responded that he would; however, on all four occasions, he inevitably switched to a title in a different series. The exception was the books in the NBA All-Stars series. After reading the book about Shaquille O'Neal, I showed him the biography on Kevin Garnett and he read that title as well.

It is likely that the boys in this study valued the graphic novels books in series since, like many struggling readers, reading series books helped to simplify the act of reading for

them. As Allington (2004) wrote, reading books in a series helps reduce the word recognition load, particularly proper nouns (e.g.; characters, locations). The reduced word recognition load, common elements in the text, and the visual support found in graphic novels series titles made them particularly appealing to the participants in this study. The fact that the participants' were attracted to series books supports the findings of Gambrell et al. (1996). The researchers found the compelling nature of series books to be a recurring theme in their study examining the reading motivation of elementary students in Maryland.

Theme Four – Connections (literary / popular media)

This theme included all of the responses that the participants made regarding the connections between the graphic novels they read, and other literary and popular media works. For the purpose of this study, literary connections refers to the associations the participants made between graphic novels and traditional text, whereas the popular media responses were connections made between graphic novels and movies, anime, and video games. Anime are Japanese animated cartoons, typically shown on television. Three of the participants made connections between the books they were reading, and other texts and / or popular media connections. Their responses follow.

Literary connections. One reason many teachers use graphic novels in the classroom is to steer students toward more prose-oriented texts such as the classics (Frey & Fisher, 2008). The engaging illustrations and lower reading levels attract reluctant readers and are a means of exposing them to visual adaptations of the literary canon. Furthermore, reading the graphic novel counterpart of a title may inspire a reader to move on to the original

version. For example, Frank enjoyed reading the graphic novel version of the *Jungle Book* (Kipling & Mitildjiian, 2008), and went into great detail when describing the plot. When I asked if he had read the original version of the book, he responded, “I’ve seen *George of the Jungle*, a comedy film based on a cartoon series about a boy raised by monkeys in the jungle (Hoberman & Weisman, 1997). I told Frank that Kipling wrote the original version of the *Jungle Book*. Although I do not know if Frank will ever read the original title, he may never have been exposed to Kipling’s great classic if he had not read the graphic novel version.

Jim frequently selected graphic novel adaptations of classics to read. His reading preferences, throughout the study, were for more traditional than contemporary literature. He selected more graphic novel renditions of classics than any other participants in the study. Some of the classic adaptations that he read included *The Invisible Man* (Geary & Wells, 2008), *The Red Badge of Courage* (Crane & Vansant, 2005), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson, (2008), *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (Irving, 2008), and *The War of the Worlds* (Wells & Ruiz, 2008). Each time he read a graphic novel adaptation of these titles, I asked Jim if he would be interested in reading the original versions, and he responded that he would; however, he did not do so during the course of the study.

An additional literary connection was made when Jim indicated that he would like to read another biography about Bob Marley, after reading the graphic novel biography of the famous reggae singer. Jim reported that he enjoyed Marley’s music, so a popular media connection was made based on Jim’s interest in reggae music. Matthew also made a literary connection when he read the graphic novel version of *Redwall* (Jacques, 2007). I asked him

if he had read the original version of the novel and he said “No.” When I asked him if he would like to read it, his response was, “Yes.”

Popular media connections. Graphic novels frequently contain references to television, movies, video games, trading cards, and anime, all popular media materials, with which adolescents are already familiar. As Vasquez (2000) writes, “Popular culture texts such as Pokémon cards and games are the kinds of materials that many kids read, have access to, and participate with as literate beings in the new millennium” (p. 124). The rising popularity of graphic novels can, in part, be attributed to these associations with popular culture media. Students bring to school a knowledge of and interest in popular culture media, whether schools honor them or not. A growing number of literacy educators believe that popular culture can be effectively integrated into literacy pedagogy in order to engage students in learning (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Moje et al. (2008), Xu, 2005).

The motivation to read a book after seeing a film based on the book was a common theme among the adolescent participants. They frequently made comments regarding popular culture connections. Bob, for example, connected his reading of graphic novels with popular media twice during the study. The first was a reference to reading Pokémon graphic novels. This series of books is based on the wildly popular Pokémon media franchise, which includes video games and trading cards. When discussing Pokémon in the sessions, Bob and Matthew indicated that they played the video game, thus their interest in reading the graphic novels. The second example occurred when I asked the participants if they were interested in superhero books. Bob said that he liked the film, the *Fantastic Four*. I asked, “Since you’ve seen the movie, would you like to read the book?” and he responded

“Yes.” Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a copy of the book for him before the study ended.

Although Matthew was one of the slowest readers in the group, he selected one of the longest graphic novels on the cart to read during the study. The title was *Ultimate Spider-Man* (Bendis & Bagley, 2005) and it took him several sessions to complete it. Another participant commented twice on how long it was taking Matthew to read the book; however, Matthew refused to stop reading it until he finished the title. He said that the reason he wanted to read the book was because he saw the Spider-Man film, and really liked it. Matthew was influenced to read another graphic novel, as a result of viewing anime shows on television. He told me that he wanted to read the manga title, *Dragon Ball Z* (Toriyama, 2008), after viewing the popular anime program. As shown in these responses, three of the participants directly referred to literacy popular media connections, during the study. Frank was the only participant who did not make any connection to literary and popular media works.

Many literary theorists argue that integrating popular culture texts and media into the classroom offers students opportunities to extend their literary experiences and to demonstrate their reading and writing skills in meaningful ways (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Xu, 2005). With the exception of Frank, the participants in this study read graphic novels that had several connections with popular media culture. Their ability to relate to popular culture text and media in the graphic novels provided them with meaningful literacy activities that seemed to enhance their affinity for reading. This builds on the findings of an adolescent literacy study by Moje et al. (2008) in which participants

were repeatedly motivated to read a book after viewing the film or anime based on the book. For example, when the participants in the longitudinal study were taken to a local bookstore, many of them went immediately to the manga section of the store where one participant showed the researcher a variety of manga and graphic novel titles based on television shows she watched.

Theme Five - Easier to read (fun /cool factor)

In his book, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, Allington (2006) contends that students need to read books that they can read accurately and with “comprehension right at their fingertips” (p. 85). The concept that graphic novels are easier to comprehend than traditional texts was common throughout the study. Previous studies have shown that graphic novels have less text than a traditional novel, therefore, making them less threatening for struggling readers (Frey & Fisher, 2004). Analysis of the book club sessions revealed that all of the boys commented on the readability of graphic novels. From their comments it was also apparent that they comprehended the story plots and the details in the graphic novels they read. For example, Bob provided a detailed description of the plot of the graphic novel, *Guard Dog* (Wooderson, 2008). Among other descriptions of the book, he stated,

There is a guy that stole this kid’s dad’s stuff and the kid and his friends have been going around (inaudible) the guy who stole it and they were selling it, the ones that stole it. And they went around and found this guy and got in the back of the truck and rode around while the guy was driving. They backed into this garage and they were trapped in there.

In response to a Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) survey, 39.3 percent of the 14 year-old male participants revealed that the number one reason they chose not to read was because reading was “no fun” or “boring” (McFann, 2004). In contrast, participants in this case study were motivated to read because they considered graphic novels easier to read, or in their words, “fun” or “funner [sic].” For example, when asked whether or not he would recommend the Graphic Dinosaur books to other students, Frank responded “Yes! They’re cool books and I like to read them. Probably other kids would like to read them too.” The “cool” factor that Frank refers to cannot be underestimated when evaluating what types of reading materials to use with struggling adolescent readers. In the words of Csikszentmihalyi, “There cannot be any learning, unless a person is willing to invest attention” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

Frank showed that he was invested in graphic novels when he commented that they “...helped him understand it (reading) more...because it’s like I can see what they’re doing and it’s easier.” After reading *The Attack on Pearl Harbor* (Sutcliffe, 2006), he said the graphic novel helped him understand the battle better than his textbook did, because “it shows more pictures to show what actually happened.” In her article entitled, “Graphic Novels for Multiple Literacies” (2002), Gretchen Schwarz further articulates the contrast between graphic novels and textbooks when she states, “Graphic novels can bring new life beyond bland textbooks” (p. 2). Unfortunately, the frustration with textbooks is one that only gets worse, as struggling readers advance in school. Guthrie (2008) reports that, for students in grades 10 – 12, the typical gap between class textbooks and the reading level

students bring to the textbook is two to four years. He asserts that when students are asked to read texts beyond their reading level, they lose their self-efficacy.

The participants' comments echoed the view that graphic novels are more readable than textbooks, and other traditional texts. For example, they selected graphic novels that covered a variety of topics they might not choose to read in traditional print materials.

Furthermore, there were three occasions in which Bob indicated that he valued graphic novels because, among other things they were easier to read than other texts. The first occurred when he was asked if he liked the pictures in the graphic novels. Referring to the captions in graphic novels, Bob responded "I like these because they just like spot out the words and you don't have to read everything." In the first conversational interview, he said that he felt graphic novels were easier to read than other books. When I asked why, he said "Because they have pictures and stuff." In the final book club session, I asked Bob if he would continue reading graphic novels and he said "Yes." When I asked him why, he responded "Because they're better to read...easier to read." At the end of the study, I asked Matthew how graphic novels compared to other materials he read and he replied, "They're easier to read."

Of all of the participants, Jim had the most enthusiastic responses to the readability of graphic novels. His comments included a number of comparisons between graphic novels and traditional texts. For example, when asked how he likes graphic novels compared to other reading materials, Jim's response was, "They're kind of fun to read...they're more funner [sic] to read than a regular book...they're easier to read. It's like it's shorter but it's kind of more information in a way." Later, I asked Jim how the graphic

novel, *The Explosive World of Volcanoes with Max Axiom, Super Scientist* (Harbo, C. & Smith, T. (2007) compared to reading information about volcanoes in a textbook. He replied, "I like it. It's more funner [sic] and...it's got easier information in it than like reading a whole paragraph. It's easier to find since it's shorter." When I prompted Jim to elaborate, he responded, "Because if it's fun to read, I can focus more on it and I won't stop reading the book. If it's too hard, I won't really like it and I might give up on it." These comments are similar to those made by fans of Archie comics. In a study by Norton (2003), Archie comic readers indicated that the pictures are "fun to read" and, "They are fun and I like stories I can't put down." (p. 142).

Gurian (2005) writes that textbooks "may not be engaging enough to keep boys (or girls) interested" (p. 140). Some of the participants' comments affirmed Gurian's belief that students are unmotivated to read many school-based texts. Given that, "A less motivated reader spends less time reading, exerts lower cognitive effort, and is less dedicated to full comprehension than a more highly motivated reader" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 406), the participants' engagement with graphic novels has promising implications for the reading motivation and achievement of marginalized male adolescent readers.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study which included data from the following sources: transcripts of graphic novel book club sessions, AMRP surveys, AMRP conversational interviews, interviews with the cooperating teacher, field notes, and the participants' literature logs. The next chapter will present a summary of the study, as well

as the results of the study. I will also discuss the implications of this study for theory, for practice, for policy, and for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

Graphic novels are an increasingly popular literary format among adolescents; however, there is little existing research that examines whether or not graphic novels offer engaging and purposeful reading experiences for male adolescents. Furthermore, there is currently minimal research to document the ways in which male adolescent readers respond to graphic novels. This study examined male adolescents' patterns of behavior in a graphic novel book club. Specifically, the study explored two constructs of reading motivation: value of reading and self-concept as a reader. Since research indicates that students with positive attitudes towards reading are more motivated to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999), the findings from this study are an important step in determining whether or not graphic novels are a promising literary format for male adolescents, especially those who struggle with reading.

Using a mixed-method multiple case-study design (Stake, 2005), I examined the ways in which four, eighth-grade, struggling male readers responded to graphic novels during twelve graphic novel book club sessions. The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) instrument was used to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the participants' value of reading and self-concept as a reader. The participants' and teacher's

own words were used to add descriptive data to the quantitative results. Transcripts of the book club sessions, field notes, teacher interviews, and the participants' literature logs provided additional data to complete the study's findings.

This chapter will provide a summary of my findings, based on the research questions that guided this study. Next, I will discuss the theoretical implications from the study and describe how the findings contribute to the literature on male adolescent literacy, reading motivation, book clubs, and graphic novels. Then, I will explore the findings and their implications in regard to current educational policy. Finally, I will recommend additional areas of research to build upon the theory and findings of this study.

Summary of the Findings

Overall, the findings support the use of graphic novels with struggling male adolescent readers. The qualitative data, in particular, indicated that the participants' responses to graphic novels were overwhelmingly favorable, and their interest in reading them appeared to increase throughout the study. Moreover, these findings suggest that the reading of graphic novels improved the participants' reading engagement, and had a positive effect on their reading motivation. Although the quantitative data was not as strong as the qualitative data in this study, there was an increase in the participants' Value of Reading as indicated on the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). Specifically, the results from the survey instrument of the AMRP indicated that the Value of Reading raw scores showed an average increase of 4.25 points for the four participants. This was a noticeable gain of 10.25% percent. Additionally, the qualitative data substantiated the

findings that the participants' value of reading increased as a result of the study. For example, one way the participants showed that they valued reading was by their ongoing interest in reading additional graphic novels at home, and during their SSR time in language arts classes. Furthermore, they sought out the graphic novel collection during their class visits to the school library. These reading experiences were beyond the boys' required reading activities. Since Frey and Fisher (2007) describe motivation as "the individual's motivation to read when he is not compelled to do so by academic assignments," it follows that the participants reading motivation increased as a result of their interest in graphic novels (p. 10).

In contrast to the increase in the Value of Reading scores, the quantitative findings regarding the participants' self-concepts as a reader were mixed. Two of the participants' scores remained the same, while the other two participants had a moderate increase of two points in their Self-Concept as a Reader scores. These mixed findings for male adolescents are not surprising when compared to a recent study assessing 384 adolescent students' motivation to read (Pitcher et al., 2007). The researchers administered the AMRP survey instrument at eight sites, around the United States and the Caribbean. Results from the surveys demonstrated that female adolescents had significantly higher scores ($p=.000$) on their Self-Concept as a Reader than male adolescents ($p=.012$). Furthermore, male adolescents scored higher on their Self-Concept as a Reader scores in their early teens, yet their scores decreased in their later teen years (p. 391).

The descriptive information gleaned from the qualitative data offered more positive indications than the quantitative data that the participants' reading efficacy improved

during the study. The boys' comments about their experiences with graphic novels implied that they became more active and engaged readers. For example, all of the participants made favorable comments regarding their enjoyment of graphic novels. Since literacy competence can be attained through the enjoyment of reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), it follows that the participants felt more competent when reading graphic novels, which positively influenced their self-concept as a reader.

Implications for Theory

Male Adolescent Literacy

Recently there has been a significant increase in the amount of research regarding male adolescent literacy and how gender affects the ways in which boys view themselves as readers. Many literacy theorists contend that there is currently a "boy crisis," since by the time males enter high school over half identify themselves as non-readers (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). As Brozo (2002) states, "It is perhaps this long well-documented history of male underachievement that has helped contribute to an entrenched, popular perception, and indeed an expectation, that many boys simply will not become thoughtful, accomplished readers" (p. 306).

This study offered additional insights into male adolescent literacy practices. First, the findings from this study confirm some of the previous theories suggesting that male adolescents choose not to read in the classroom because they feel alienated from school-sanctioned reading (Booth 2002; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Taylor, 2005). For example, the participants in this study openly showed their disdain for "regular" books. In

contrast, they remarked that graphic novels were “fun,” “cool” and more readable than traditional texts that they were required to read in school. Additionally, the fact that the graphic novel publishing industry is dominated by males in the positions of creators, editors, executives, and readers suggests that graphic novel publishers offer a number of storylines that appeal to male adolescents (Brenner, 2007).

Frey and Fisher (2008) also discovered the motivating potential of reading graphic novels when they observed their students reading ahead and rereading comic books when they were allowed to read them in school settings. The benefits of using graphic novels in school settings were echoed by the participants in this study. When Jim was asked if he would tell his science teacher or history teacher about the graphic novels he read, he replied, “Yes. They would be good for information.” As these and other comments from the participants imply, struggling male adolescent readers may become more willing to engage in reading when teachers and librarians allow them to utilize nontraditional texts, such as graphic novels, that adolescents are motivated to read.

Social constructivists, and literacy theorists, offer a variety of explanations as to why male adolescents typically do not read as much, or as well, as female adolescents (Brozo, 2002; Gurian (2005); Haycock, 2003; Krashen, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). They hypothesize that curriculum and social issues impact the differences in academic success between males and females. Male adolescents experience a feeling of disconnect between the reading materials honored in schools and those that they value in their literacy lives. Gurian (2005) asserts that our school systems contribute to the increasing gender gap in

reading by denying boys the “content, curricula, teaching strategies, and multimedia techniques they need in order to gain some parity in verbal learning” (p. 39).

Today’s 21st century adolescents are influenced by new literacy materials such as the Internet, television, anime, trading cards, and other culturally-related activities (Frey & Fisher, 2007; Xu, 2005). Yet, regrettably, many teachers are reluctant to embrace these popular media practices. Rather, there is still a widespread tendency for teachers to teach to the literary canon in their classrooms. The results of this study affirmed the previous studies’ findings that students’ literacy practices are influenced by popular media. For example, several of the graphic novels the participants read had connections to popular media, such as movies, anime, video games, and trading cards. Additionally, the findings of this study build on the work of other literacy scholars who have studied the benefits of using popular culture texts in schools (Bucher & Manning, 2004; Dyson, 2003; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Schwartz, 2002). They found that using popular culture texts to address reading motivation can enhance literacy learning, particularly for struggling readers (Xu, Perkins, & Zunick, 2005).

This study supports previous studies’ assertions that educators need to identify and honor the reading preferences of male adolescents, in order to make informed decisions regarding effective literacy practices. As Brozo (2002) wrote, “Teachers will never make significant progress toward eradicating boys’ difficulty with reading and learning unless they dedicate themselves to discovering boys’ interests and acquainting boys with quality books related to those interests” (p. 78).

Reading Motivation

Along with male adolescent literacy, this study supports theories regarding reading motivation. The conclusions build on the findings of Krashen (2004) who asserts that three factors are keys to reading motivation: free choice, opportunities for recreational reading, and access to preferred materials. Additionally, the findings support previous studies demonstrating that when students are motivated to read, they will be more likely to read frequently and to develop positive attitudes toward reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; McKenna et al, 1995; Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996). The participants in this study demonstrated repeatedly that they were motivated to read graphic novels in their book club, classroom, and library settings. The ways in which the participants responded to graphic novels reflected an enthusiasm for reading that they implied they seldom experienced in their classrooms. For example, the participants were asked the following question in both the pre and post conversational interviews, "Have any of your teachers ever done something with reading that you really enjoyed?" Five of the eight responses to the question were "No." In contrast, when asked, "What do you think about using graphic novels in schools?" all eight of the responses were positive. Matthew, for example, said he thought that it would be "good...so that people can understand more about books." (For a table listing all of the responses to AMRP survey questions, please see Appendix B).

Other reading theorists have demonstrated that an increased motivation to read is associated with positive reading efficacy and value of reading, while a decreased motivation to read is associated with negative reading efficacy and low value of reading (Gambrell et al.,1996; Pitcher et al., 2007). This study builds on these previous reading motivation

studies. As evidenced in the AMRP survey results and the book discussions, the participants in this study valued their reading experiences with the graphic novel format. For example, when asked, during the final book club session whether they would continue reading graphic novels, all four of the boys responded, "Yes!" The boys' elaborated on their motivation to continue to read the books, when Bob, Jim, and Matthew replied that they were "better to read," "easier to read" and "fun to read." Frank's response was, "because my reading is better." The idea that motivated readers are more willing to continue reading is supported by Ganske (2010), "Texts that challenge readers without frustrating them facilitate this willingness to persevere..." (p. 99). In addition, Allington (2005) writes that readers with low reading motivation and interest "often simply terminate the reading activity sometimes with obvious symptoms of frustration" (p. 51).

Allowing the participants to select the graphic novels they read during book club, helped to re-engage the struggling readers in this study. The boys' comments indicated that they disliked many school-sanctioned texts, and preferred to select their own reading materials. It appeared that self-selected reading had a positive influence on their reading motivation. These findings build upon those of motivation theorists who believe that students are most motivated when they are given choices and have some control over their academic work (Deci, Nezlek & Sheinman, 1981; Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999; Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Stipek, 2002).

Regrettably, studies show that declines in reading interest and intrinsic motivation become more pronounced as students enter middle school (Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996; Wigfield, 2004). However, a growing body of research suggests that by changing

instructional practices, students' motivation can be enhanced so that the decline does not have to occur (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks & Perencevich, 2007). Therefore, it is more important than ever for research to identify ways we can help struggling readers enjoy the pleasures of reading. Best literacy practices should include texts that engage the interests of male adolescent readers, and sustain their attention. The importance of understanding reading motivation and engagement as a cornerstone of reading comprehension and achievement cannot be underestimated. Arguments for the development of competent adolescent readers must be informed by studies of reading motivation and engagement (Moje et al., 2008). The findings from this study are promising since they suggest that graphic novels are a viable format for engaging otherwise reluctant readers.

Book Clubs

Findings from this study demonstrated that it was a meaningful experience for these struggling readers to become a member of a literacy community in which they could share their thoughts about reading. The participants in the study felt comfortable discussing their opinions about the graphic novels they read. The book club setting provided valuable space away from the classroom which enabled them to read quietly and receive more individualized attention regarding their literacy practices. As indicated from responses to the AMRP surveys and conversational interviews, most of the participants did not choose to share their opinions about books with other family members. However, the book club venue offered them the opportunity to openly discuss their readings with their peers, and an adult other than their teachers and librarians. Their discussions also helped them to

develop understandings about their readings, and helped them learn about other titles they might be interested in reading. Furthermore, the participants expressed the desire to meet more frequently, since they valued their time in the small group setting. This supports the findings of theorists who found that book clubs offer students time and a venue to share thoughts, ask each other questions, and collaboratively construct meaning from texts and their own experiences in life (Raphael, 2001; Raphael, George, Weber & Nies, 2009).

Taylor (2005) describes the advantages of boys-only book clubs in his article, *"Not just the boring stories": Reconsidering the gender gap for boys*. He writes that boys-only book clubs provide males an opportunity to choose their topics and materials which enables them to discuss their unique interests. Other theorists share the view that boys-only book clubs are a way to engage boys in positive reading experiences, provide them with a sense of identity and ownership, and help them to develop into lifelong readers (Brozo, 2007; Lingo, 2007; Sullivan, 2003, 2009). Book clubs offer theoretical, empirical, and practical solutions for improving the literacy lives of male adolescents. Book club discussions also allow students to respond to literature in ways that are uncharacteristic of their responses in whole class discussions of literature. Backed by the significant body of research regarding the benefits of student book clubs, a growing body of teachers and librarians are coming to the realization that quality book club practices can facilitate reading motivation and achievement. There are few studies examining male-only graphic novel book clubs. An implication of this research is that teachers and librarians need to identify ways in which small group literary venues such as graphic novel book clubs might improve the literacy lives of male adolescents.

Graphic Novels

Today's adolescents have grown up in a mediasphere world filled with visual images such as the Internet, television, and video games; therefore, they eagerly embrace multimodal formats such as graphic novels that combine visuals with text. Although a great deal has been written about adolescents' motivation to read, little has been written about the effects that graphic novels have on the reading motivation of male adolescents. This study supports the findings of previous research suggesting that graphic novels can be a valuable literacy format for engaging students in positive literacy experiences (Carter, 2007; Cary, 2004; Chun, 2009; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Hammond, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Lammano, 2007; Liu, 2004; Monnin, 2008; Mortimer, 2009). The ways in which the participants in this study responded to graphic novels suggests that when male readers read graphic novels, it can help them find their reading voices by choosing to read rather than choosing not to read.

Graphic novels can also serve as entry points or bridges to other literacy experiences. For example, when the study began, Mrs. Huth referred to Bob as a "non-reader"; however, after the study ended she informed me that Bob voluntarily signed up to participate in another book club. It was her belief that reading and discussing graphic novels fostered Bob's literary learning and stimulated his interest in pursuing additional reading activities.

It is unlikely that struggling adolescent readers will improve their literacy skills, unless they become engaged readers. It is promising, therefore, that previous studies have demonstrated that graphic novels actively engage male readers (Botzakis, 2009; Smith &

Wilhelm, 2002; Thompson, 2008). Further evidence of the popularity of graphic novels was found when Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) examined the reading preferences of 419 sixth-grade students at a middle school in Texas. They found that the two most popular reading preferences of these middle school students were scary books (66%) and comics (65%). Similarly, the participants in this study valued the graphic novels they read and they were actively engaged in reading, talking about, and sharing graphic novel with their peers throughout the study.

Furthermore, the wide range of texts and storylines in graphic novels is appealing to students who may have difficulty reading linguistic text (Wilber, 2008). This, along with the visuals in graphic novels make the text less threatening and can help to increase engagement and motivation (Gorman, 2003; Krashen, 2004; Lyga, 2004). As detailed in the lists of books read in the book club sessions (Appendix H, I, J, K), the large variety of storylines and information, available in graphic novels, met the diverse reading needs of the four participants, in this study. Jim, for example, was drawn to classic adaptations, while Matthew enjoyed reading manga titles and books about superheroes. Bob enjoyed the NBA All Star books and high-action titles, and Frank enjoyed reading series titles such as Little Lit and Graphic Dinosaurs. The participants read across a variety of genres, including nonfiction, biographies, mythology, and fantasy. As Frey & Fisher (2008) found, "...this medium (graphic novels) fulfills a wide range of our students reading interests" (p. 103). From the ways they responded to these texts, it appeared that the graphic novel format made the information and storylines more accessible and comprehensible to these struggling readers.

Through the data collected during this study, I contend that graphic novels are a promising avenue for motivating adolescent males to read. Adolescents who struggle with reading need effective interventions, such as graphic novel book clubs that can facilitate their literary learning and help them become lifelong readers. Therefore, there is a growing need for more empirical research to justify the use of graphic novels in classrooms and libraries. This study is an important step in providing scientifically-based research that examines the ways in which male adolescents respond to graphic novels, and the effect that graphic novels have on their reading motivation.

Implications for Practice

Clearly there has already been a significant amount of research conducted in the area of male adolescent literacy. However, since the gaps in reading achievement between males and females are increasing rather than decreasing, there is obviously a need to implement more research-based pedagogy that will have an impact on the literacy lives of male adolescents. The findings from this study have promising implications for fostering the reading motivation of struggling male readers in today's classrooms. Utilizing more meaningful literacy resources, such as graphic novels, can engage struggling readers and help them to become motivated and active readers. As stated by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), "The degree to which students can read and understand text in all formats and all contexts is a key indicator of success in school and in life (AASL, 2008).

Allington (2004) believes that we should not be surprised if struggling adolescent readers show few signs of literary achievement, when all they experience in school is a

“steady diet of difficult, boring (in their view) books.” (p. 177). Yet, many educators are dismissive of nontraditional texts and ambivalent about the pleasure that students derive from reading them. Furthermore, although most educators are well-versed on how to teach students to comprehend text, they are less familiar with visual literacy pedagogy. As pointed out in *Misreading Masculinity* (Newkirk, 2001), individualized education plans (IEP’s) often identify students as visual learners, and recommend multimodal forms of literacy instruction, yet few educators actually have the visual literacy skills required to implement these practices. If in-service teachers and librarians are expected to use popular media materials, such as graphic novels, in schools they should be provided with effective, ongoing professional development opportunities such as workshops, required readings, and discussion groups to develop expertise in teaching best visual literacy practices. Such professional development sessions should also educate content area teachers on the ways in which graphic novels can be used to enhance adolescents’ literacy skills. For example, the Comic Book Initiative in the state of Maryland can serve as a model for using graphic materials in standards-based classrooms (Hudson, 2008). Information about these, and other exemplary programs, should be disseminated to literacy stakeholders. Furthermore, administrators should provide additional and sustained funding for school libraries, in order for students and teachers to have access to quality graphic novel collections.

Despite the fact that literacy theorists support the use of graphic novels with adolescent readers, there is a need for additional scientific-based research to support their use in classrooms and libraries. The findings from this study can help educators develop an understanding of how images and text in graphic novels work together in multiple ways to

produce meaning for male adolescent readers. As Flynt & Brozo (2010) write, “We must design instruction that reflects the mediasphere in which children and youth live.” (p. 528). Information obtained from this study may strengthen and stimulate the field of adolescent literacy, by helping educators develop graphic novel activities that will support male adolescents in their literacy learning. Furthermore, once new strategies are determined, changes will also need to be made in the way pre-service teachers are taught to use graphic novels and other nontraditional materials in schools of education. Teaching Resource Centers and university libraries need to develop quality graphic novel collections, in order to support pre-service teachers’ access to graphic novels for their assignments, and use with students in K-12 schools. Finally, if researchers want to determine additional strategies for enabling male adolescents to become literate men, they need to further examine the effects of graphic novels on reading motivation. If, as this study indicates, graphic novels are a promising format for supporting male adolescent literacy learning, changes in curricula and the way teachers implement literacy instruction are warranted. This study is an important step in addressing the use of graphic novels and the ways in which male adolescents respond to them.

Implications for Policy

In its report, *Time to Act* (CCAAL, 2010) the Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy stated that “adolescents need a higher level of literacy than ever before, both for college-readiness and employment in the new global knowledge economy” (p. x). If educators are expected to implement change in the teaching of male adolescent

literacy, they need additional empirical research that will inform policy, as well as practice. These policies need to address the range of male adolescents' literacy interests and skills. However, there are increasing literacy demands on all teachers and students due to the assessment-heavy climate created by *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Even teachers and librarians who are enthusiastic about using graphic novels in schools face the reality of the high-stakes testing culture driven by federal and state legislation. Allington (2006) writes that thirty years of research on effective literacy instruction is "being systematically ignored in the current wave of high-stakes reform (p. v).

When teachers are mandated to teach politically correct, prescriptive literacy programs, thoughtful literacy practices in the classroom are often discouraged. Additionally, opportunities to use nontraditional materials, such as graphic novels, for instructional and recreational reading purposes are less likely. These formats may be considered risky business by educators who are consumed with measurable outcomes and state standards. Furthermore, since federal funding is tied to scientifically-based programs such as Reading First, it is unlikely that administrators will be willing to invest time and resources for literary experiences outside the mandated guidelines. Finally, the opportunities to conduct research in settings outside the traditional classroom may become more and more limited, given that many administrators expect teachers to use such time for high-stakes testing practices.

Male adolescents need strong literacy skills to succeed in school and in the 21st century workplace. Since adolescent readers represent the future of reading, there is a need for additional research regarding male adolescent reading practices and what influences

their reading choices. As Flynt and Brozo 2010) stated, "...moving beyond content instruction based on traditional print media is one significant step teachers and schools can take toward stemming the tide against the large number of disengaged students." (p. 528). This study has promising implications for offering a broader view of male adolescent literacy learning than the current climate of skills-based literacy research.

Implications for Research

This study advances research on graphic novels by examining their use with struggling male adolescent readers. The research has laid the foundation for future studies on the ways in which graphic novels affect the reading motivation of male adolescents. The findings from this study fill a gap in the research literature because, in spite of the fact that literacy scholars have examined the use of popular media in schools, no research has examined the use of graphic novels in a male adolescent book club.

This study found that when the participants read graphic novels in a book club setting, there was an increase in the ways they valued reading. However, the participants' self-concept as reader scores yielded little, if any gains. A next step in this line of research is to examine the relationship between male adolescents' values of reading and their self-concept as a reader. What are the relationships between the two motivational constructs, in terms of future graphic novel studies? Furthermore, since reading motivation is often linked to academic achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie, 2008), it is important for future studies to examine whether or not reading graphic novels affects the reading achievement of adolescent males.

Additionally, future research should include an increase in the study's sample size. The outcomes for the male adolescents in this study may not be typical for all students. Studies conducted with larger populations would enhance the research by assessing whether or not the findings from this study are generalizable. Additionally, similar studies should be conducted in different middle and high school locations, across districts and states. Specifically, the settings for future research should be in schools with varying socio-economic populations and geographic settings (urban versus rural), in order to determine whether or not graphic novels are an effective literacy tool for diverse populations. It would also be beneficial to examine the ways in which high school males respond to graphic novels, in order to determine whether or not the findings are age or grade-level specific. Similarly, similar studies could be conducted with boys in elementary schools to determine if graphic novels affect their literacy lives.

Moreover, developing longitudinal studies to examine the use of graphic novels with male adolescents would be helpful in obtaining additional data. A study conducted over an entire academic year would likely yield richer results than a study administered over one semester. For example, in terms of this study, I theorize that the participants' self-concept as a reader scores may have increased, if more time had been allowed for the students to continue their experiences in the graphic novel book club setting.

In order to determine whether the findings from this study are gender-specific, future studies should examine the ways in which female adolescents respond to graphic novels. It would advance the field of adolescent literacy to compare and contrast the findings from additional gender-based studies examining graphic novels in schools.

Moreover, this study examined the use of graphic novels with one student population, struggling male adolescent readers. Future research should build on studies that use graphic novels with additional populations, such as English Language Learners (ELL) and special needs students. Findings from my pilot study build on the studies using graphic novels with special needs students, given that one of the participants was a highly-functioning autistic male. Both the quantitative and qualitative data from the pilot study indicated that graphic novels were an effective format for improving this participant's motivation to read. His raw score for the Value of Reading showed a noticeable increase of nine points, a 23% increase. In addition to studying ELL and special needs students, consideration should also be given to conducting research with academically-gifted students in middle and high school settings. Examining the ways in which a variety of populations interact with graphic novels offers further insight into whether or not they should be used for educational purposes.

This study shed new light on the use of graphic novels in instructional settings, specifically, graphic novel book clubs. Further research is needed to extend our knowledge regarding the ways in which graphic novels are used in additional academic settings. For example, exploring the use of graphic novels in content area classrooms, as well as school libraries, would be helpful in learning more about the ways in which graphic novels affect the literacy lives of male adolescents. The future of graphic novel research should also include studies that examine after-school or lunchtime graphic novel book clubs. Observing students using graphic novels in these types of voluntary literary communities puts a different lens on graphic novel literacy practices.

Future research should also examine the ways in which graphic novels can serve as a literary bridge to other print and popular media literacies. Researchers should ask questions about the connections between graphic novels and traditional curricular texts. Questions to consider are, “How can graphic novels be used to support the curriculum?” and, “How can we engage students in reading other materials, after they experience success reading graphic novels?” For example, when a social studies class is studying the Civil War, a study might examine the ways in which students respond to a series of graphic novel titles on Civil War battles. Such a study would inform the theory behind content area literacy pedagogy.

As stated in the article, *The Complex World of Adolescent Literacy* (Moje et al., 2008), “...a stronger research base is needed to understand the relationship between what, why, and how youth read and write on their own and in school” (p. 146). This study was important because it provided educators, policymakers, and other literary stakeholders an introduction to graphic novels, a format that adolescents value, and the reasons for which they read them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the implications of this study for theory, for practice, for policy, and for future research. This research found that male adolescents responded favorably to the use of graphic novels in a book club setting. The findings from this study support the use of graphic novels with struggling, male adolescent readers. During the course of the study, reading graphic novels improved the participants' reading engagement and had a positive effect on their reading motivation. The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that all four participants showed an increase in their value of reading, after the graphic novel book club intervention. Although the self-concept as a reader scores were mixed, there were signs from qualitative data that pointed to signs of moderate improvement in the participants' reading efficacy. This study also showed that the use of graphic novels helped to aid the participants' knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Addressing the reading needs of male adolescents may be one of literacy educators' toughest challenges. The quest to improve the literacy lives of male adolescents must examine the texts that these young men value, i.e. the ones that they use in their everyday lives. It would behoove literacy educators and theorists to attend to these texts, as well as the literary practices that motivate male adolescents. This findings from this study shed new light on male adolescent literacy practices. It is the first study of its kind to provide teachers and librarians with scientifically-based research that examines whether or not graphic novels can effectively motivate struggling male adolescent readers to become literate men.

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Appendix A

AMRP SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Figure 1
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Sample 1: I am in _____.

- Sixth grade
- Seventh grade
- Eighth grade
- Ninth grade
- Tenth grade
- Eleventh grade
- Twelfth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.

- Female
- Male

Sample 3: My race/ethnicity is _____.

- African-American
- Asian/Asian American
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic
- Other: Please specify _____

1. My friends think I am _____.

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

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

- Never
- Not very often
- Sometimes
- Often

3. I read _____.

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

4. My best friends think reading is _____.

- really fun
- fun
- OK to do
- no fun at all

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

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

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

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

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.

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

8. People who read a lot are _____.

- very interesting
- interesting
- not very interesting
- boring

9. I am _____.

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

(continued)

Figure 1 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

10. I think libraries are _____.
- a great place to spend time
 - an interesting place to spend time
 - an OK place to spend time
 - a boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
- every day
 - almost every day
 - once in a while
 - never
12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
- not very important
 - sort of important
 - important
 - very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
- can never think of an answer
 - have trouble thinking of an answer
 - sometimes think of an answer
 - always think of an answer
14. I think reading is _____.
- a boring way to spend time
 - an OK way to spend time
 - an interesting way to spend time
 - a great way to spend time
15. Reading is _____.
- very easy for me
 - kind of easy for me
 - kind of hard for me
 - very hard for me
16. As an adult, I will spend _____.
- none of my time reading
 - very little time reading
 - some of my time reading
 - a lot of my time reading
17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.
- almost never talk about my ideas
 - sometimes talk about my ideas
 - almost always talk about my ideas
 - always talk about my ideas
18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes _____.
- every day
 - almost every day
 - once in a while
 - never
19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
- poor reader
 - OK reader
 - good reader
 - very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
- very happy
 - sort of happy
 - sort of unhappy
 - unhappy

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

Appendix B

PARTICIPANTS' SCORES ON THE AMRP

**Participants' Scores on the Adolescent Motivation to Read Survey (AMRP)
(For a list of the questions, please see Appendix A)**

Question	Motivational Construct Measured	Frank Pre Score	Frank Post Score	Matthew Pre Score	Matthew Post Score	Bob Pre Score	Bob Post Score	Jim Pre Score	Jim Post Score
1	Self-Concept	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2
2	Value of Reading	1	1	3	4	1	2	3	4
3	Self-Concept	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	3
4	Value of Reading	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	2
5	Self-Concept	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
6	Value of Reading	1	2	3	3	1	2	3	3
7	Self-Concept	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4
8	Value of Reading	1	2	3	3	1	2	1	3
9	Self-Concept	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	3
10	Value of Reading	1	1	2	3	1	2	4	3
11	Self-Concept	4	4	3	2	4	4	2	4
12	Value of Reading	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	4
13	Self-Concept	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4
14	Value of Reading	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	2
15	Self-Concept	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
16	Value of Reading	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	3
17	Self-Concept	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2
18	Value of Reading	4	3	4	2	2	2	2	4
19	Self-Concept	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
20	Value of Reading	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	3

Appendix C

AMRP CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile: Conversational Interview

Name _____ Date _____

A. Emphasis: Narrative Text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): I have been reading a good book. I was talking with...about it last night. I enjoy talking about what I am reading with my friends and family. Today, I would like to hear about what you have been reading and if you share it with others.

1. Tell me about the most interesting book you have read recently. Take a few minutes to think about it (wait time). Now tell me about the book.

Probe: What else can you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this book?
3. Why was this story interesting to you?

B. Emphasis: Graphic Novels

1. Have you ever read a graphic novel?
2. If so, how do graphic novels compare to other materials you have read?

Probe: How do they compare to books? magazines? newspapers? Internet?

3. Do you feel that you are a good reader when you read graphic novels?

Probe: Why or why not?

4. Do you feel more confident reading aloud when you read graphic novels?

Probe: Why or why not?

5. What do you think about using graphic novels in schools?

Probe: Anything else?

6. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences reading graphic novels?

Emphasis: General Reading

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? What?
2. Do you have anything at school (in desk, locker, book bag) that you are reading?

Tell me about them.

3. Tell me about your favorite author. Anything else?
4. What do you think you have to learn to be a better reader?
5. Do you know about any books right now that you would like to read?

Tell me about them.

6. How did you find out about these books?
7. What are some things that get you really excited about reading?

Anything else?

8. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading?

Tell me more about what they do.

Emphasis – School reading in comparison to home reading

1. In what class do you most like to read?

Why?

2. In what class do you feel that the reading is the most difficult?

Why?

3. Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you really enjoyed?

Could you explain some of what was done?

4. Do you share and discuss book, magazines, graphic novels, or other reading materials with

your friends outside of school? What? How often? Where?

5. Do you share any of the following reading materials with members of your family: newspapers, magazines, graphic novels, religious materials, Internet articles?.

Appendix D

SUSTAINED SILENT READING (SSR) LOG

Name: _____

Grading Period: 1 2 3 4



Sustained Silent Reading Log

	Title	Author	Genre / Text Format	# pages	Date Begin	Date End	Rating 1-5 Stars	Recommendation
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

Fiction
Adventure
Realistic Fiction
Historical Fiction

Suspense
Fantasy
Graphic Novels

Humor
Science Fiction
Inspirational

Sports
Multicultural
Short Stories

Genres / Text Formats
Non Fiction
Autobiography
Biography
Essay

Graphic Novels
Newspaper / Magazine Article(s)
Speech

Other Genres/ Formats
Poetry
Drama
Reference (Encyclopedia, Almanac)

Appendix E

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher: Mrs. Huth (Pseudonym)

Setting: Western Middle School (Pseudonym)

Date:

1. What types of behavior have you observed with the participants in their responses to graphic novels
 - ...in your classroom?
 - ...in the media center?
 - ...in the book club sessions with their classmates?
2. Do the participants discuss graphic novels, and if so, what do they say?
 - ... with their classmates?
 - ... with you?
 - ... with the media specialists or other teachers?
 - ... in the book club sessions with their classmates?
3. Do the participants talk about the visuals in graphic novels? If so, what do they say?
4. Have you observed any changes in the reading self concept of the participants since they began participating in the graphic novel book club? If so, please describe the changes you have observed.
5. Have you observed any changes in the ways the participant value reading since the graphic novel book club began? If so, please describe the changes you have observed.
6. Do you have any other comments regarding graphic novels and the ways in which the participants respond to them?
7. Do you have any other comments regarding this study?

Appendix F

ANALYST'S NOTES WHILE READING A CASE REPORT

Analyst's Notes While Reading a Case Report

(Adapted from Stake, 2005, p. 45)

Examining Adolescent Males' Responses to Graphic Novels:
A Multiple Case Study of Four Eighth-Grade Males in a Graphic Novel Book Club

Case ID – Case 1 - Frank

<p>Synopsis of case: This set of notes is based on Frank's pre and post AMRP conversational interviews and transcripts of conversations during 12 graphic novel book club sessions.</p>	<p>Case Findings: I. II. III. IV.</p>
<p>Relevance of case for cross-case Themes: Theme 1 _____ Theme 2 _____ Theme 3 _____ Theme 4 _____ Theme 5 _____ Theme 6 _____</p>	<p>Possible excerpts for cross-case report: Page Page Page</p>
<p>Commentary:</p>	

Appendix G

THE THEMES (RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE MULTIPLE CASE STUDY)

Themes of the Multiple Case Study
(Adapted from Stake, 2005, p. 43)

Theme 1: Importance of visual
Theme 2: Action
Theme 3: Series
Theme 4: Connections to other reading / media
Theme 5 – Easier to read - Fun / cool factor

Appendix H

FRANK'S READING RECORD

Graphic Novels Read During Book Club Sessions

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Little Lit: Strange Stories for Strange Kids	Spiegelman & Mouly	Joanna Cotler Books	Fantasy	Yes
Tyrannosaurus: The Tyrant Lizard	Shone & Field	PowerKids Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Velociraptor: The Speedy Thief	West	PowerKids Press	Nonfiction	Yes
The Attack on Pearl Harbor	Sutcliffe	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Pteranodon: Giant of the Sky	West	PowerKids Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Bob Marley	Jeffrey	Franklin Watts	Biography	Yes
Shaquille O'Neal	Finkel	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
Ultimate Spiderman: Power and Responsibility	Jemas & Bendis	Marvel Comics	Science Fiction	No
Odysseus: Escaping Poseidon's Curse: a Greek Legend	Jolley	Graphic Universe	Fiction	Yes
Jungle Book	Kipling / Blaise-Mitildji	IDW Publishing	Fantasy	Yes
The Z-Boys and Skateboarding	Anderson	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Triceratops: The Three-Horned Dinosaur	Shone	PowerKids Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Big Fat Little Lit	Spiegelman & Mouly	Joanna Cotler Books	Fantasy	Yes
Into the Volcano	Wood	Blue Sky Press	Nonfiction	No

Sustained Silent Literature Log
(Books read during his classroom SSR time)

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Little Lit: Strange Stories for Strange Kids	Spiegelman & Mouly	Joanna Cotler Books	Fantasy	Yes
Bone	Smith	Scholastic	Fantasy	Yes
The Z Boys and Skateboarding	Anderson	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes

Appendix I

MATTHEW'S READING RECORD

Graphic Novels Read During Book Club Sessions

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Whistle!	Higuchi	VIZ Media	Fiction	Yes
Pokémon	Ihara	VIZ Media	Fantasy	Yes
Prince of Tennis	Takeshi	VIZ Media	Fiction	Yes
Ultimate Spider-Man	Bendis & Bagley	Marvel Comics	Science fiction	Yes
Redwall	Jacques / Blevin	Philomel	Fantasy	Yes
Jellaby	Soo	Hyperion Books for Children	Fantasy	No
The Last of the Mohicans	Cooper / Thomas	Marvel Comics	Fiction	Yes

**Sustained Silent Literature Log
(Books he read during SSR time)**

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Whistle!	Higuchi	VIZ Media	Fiction	Yes
Prince of Tennis	Takeshi	VIZ Media	Fiction	Yes
Pokémon	Ihara	VIZ Media	Fantasy	Yes
Jellaby	Soo	Hyperion Books for Children	Fantasy	No
Z Boys and Skateboarding	Anderson	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Shaquille O'Neal	Finkel	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
Ultimate Spiderman: Power and Responsibility	Jemas & Bendis	Marvel Comics	Science Fiction	No
The Sinking of the Titanic	Doeden	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes

Appendix J

BOB'S READING RECORD

Graphic Novels Read During Book Club Sessions

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Shaquille O'Neal	Finkel	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
Kevin Garnett	Kaftan	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
Henry Ford and the Model T	O'Hearn	Capstone	Nonfiction	Yes
Guard Dog	Wooderson	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
The Sinking of the Titanic	Doeden	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
The Battle of Antietam: The Bloodiest Day of Battle	Hama	Rosen	Nonfiction	Yes

**Sustained Silent Literature Log
(Graphic novels read during SSR time)**

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Shaquille O'Neal	Finkel	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
Twilight Zone: The Big Tall Wish	Serling	Walker Books for Young People	Fiction	Yes
Hurricanes	Jeffrey	Rosen	Nonfiction	Yes
Velociraptor: The Speedy Thief	West	PowerKids Press	Nonfiction	Yes

Appendix K

JIM'S READING RECORD

Graphic Novels Read During Book Club Sessions

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
Ultimate Super Man: Power and Responsibility	Bendis & Bagley	Marvel Comics	Science fiction	Yes
The Red Badge of Courage	Crane / Vansant	Puffin Graphics	Fiction	Yes
The Invisible Man	Wells / Davis	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
Jake Burton Carpenter and the Snowboard	O'Hearn	Capstone Press	Biography	Yes
Shaquille O' Neal	Finkel	Tokyopop	Biography	Yes
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	Stevenson / Perez	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
Hit It!	Hardcastle	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
The Battle of the Alamo	Doeden	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
The Explosive world of volcanoes with Max Axiom, super scientist.	Harbo	Capstone Press	Nonfiction	Yes
Twilight Zone: The Big Tall Wish	Serling	Walker Books for Young People	Fiction	Yes
Bob Marley	Jeffrey	Franklin Watts	Biography	Yes
The Trojan Horse: The Fall of Troy	Fontes	Graphic Universe	Mythology	Yes

**Sustained Silent Reading Literature Log
(Books he read during SSR time)**

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	SERIES
The Red Badge of Courage	Crane / Vansant	Puffin Graphics	Fiction	Yes
Sam's Goal	Hardcastle	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
The Attack on Pearl Harbor	Sutcliffe	Capstone	Nonfiction	Yes
The Invisible Man	Wells / Davis	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow	Irving / Zornow	Magic Wagon	Fiction	Yes
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	Stevenson / Perez	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
The War of the Worlds	Wells / Ruiz	Stone Arch	Science Fiction	Yes
Guard Dog	Wooderson	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes
Invaders from the Great Goo Goo Galaxy	Hoena	Stone Arch Books	Fiction	Yes

Appendix L

Permission Form



July 29, 2010

Karen Gavigan, Ph.D
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Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

RE: The International Reading Association gives Karen Gavigan permission to use the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile in her dissertation, *Examining Struggling Male Adolescent Readers' Responses to Graphic Novels: A Multiple Case Study of Four, Eighth-Grade Males in a Graphic Novel Book Club*.

"Pitcher, S.M., Albright, L.K., DeLaney, C.J., Walker, N.T., Seunarinesingh, K. Mogge, S., Headley, K.N., Ridgeway, V.G., Peck, S., Hunt, R. Dunston, P.J. (February 2007). Assessing adolescents' motivation to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(5), 378-396. Reprinted with permission of the International Reading Association."

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