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As a growing body of research, adolescent literacy goes beyond early literacy development to study the continuing literacy development of adolescents. A significant influence on this research, sociocultural theory extends understandings of literacy through examinations of social influences, identity development, and meanings of literacy practices. This research examines *how outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate participation and positioning in a school's social worlds*. How secondary English classrooms promote literacy, how different adolescent identities make meaning of these literacy practices, the figured worlds adolescents participate in, and the literacy practices adolescents adopt out-of-school help to inform how identity and literacy work to position two girls in the multiple figured worlds they navigate. Findings reinforce theoretical implications of identity, New Literacy Studies and Adolescent Literacy.

A CASE STUDY OF THE FIGURED WORLDS OF OUTCAST STUDENTS:  
THE POSITIONING OF ADOLESCENT LITERACY  
AND IDENTITY IN SCHOOL

by

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Dedicated to my grandparents, the late Carol Mason  
and the late Clarence Kobylarczyk.  
“Education, Education, Education.”  
Because of you, this was possible.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

CAFETERIA FRINGE: People who are not part of or who are excluded from a school's or society's in crowd. (Robbins, 2011, p. 6)

An iconic 1980's coming of age film, *The Breakfast Club* depicted five different American High School teens coming together to serve detention on a Saturday. Initially identified by the popularized stereotypes of the social structure within a typical high school (the criminal, the princess, the athlete, the basket case, and the brain), the teens engage in various adventures around the school as they gradually get to know one another beyond stereotypical perceptions. As the day ends, the students must complete the Assistant Principal's assignment to write an essay telling him who they are. One student (the brain) leaves behind a letter response:

Mr. Vernon,  
We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it is we did wrong. But we think you are crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us: in the simplest terms and the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess, and a criminal. Does that answer your questions?  
Sincerely Yours,  
The Breakfast Club

As so poignantly captured by the film, schools are made up of categorizations of students that are stereotypically defined. From *The Breakfast Club's* (1985) Basket Case and Criminal to Penelope Eckert's (1989) Jocks and Burnouts to Paul Willis' (1977) Lads to today's gamers, Emos, Skaters, and Goths, these social categorizations (whether passively ascribed or actively taken up) dominate adolescent identities, positioning them socially and academically.

In my second year of teaching (1999), the tragic events of the Columbine school shootings spotlighted an adolescent identity disenfranchised in schools...the Goths. The quintessential outsider, Goth students can often be seen wearing a copious amount of black: black pants, black shirt, black shoes, heavy black eyeliner, black nail polish, and sometimes black dyed hair. Unfortunately, this signature dress, paired with their non-mainstream activities, has allowed adolescents and adults alike to profile and label Goth students as outcasts that are feared, distrusted, and marginalized. On the surface, Goths are initially associated with issues of depression, suicide and violence (Fritz, 2006; Kennedy, 2006; Martin, 2002; Rutledge, Rimer, & Scott, 2008; Tonso, 2002). With their dramatic style of head-to-toe black, Goths are seen as dark, moody, and emotional and prone to bouts of depression, self-mutilation, and suicide at best (Fritz, 2006; Rutledge, Rimer, & Scott, 2008; Young, Sweeting, & West, 2006), and violent acts reminiscent of the Columbine school shootings and the triple homicide in Medicine Hat, Canada, at worst (Kennedy, 2006; Martin, 2002; Tonso, 2002). Often viewed as a negative influence, Goth culture is viewed as

corrupting members in cult fashion. In short, Goth culture is little understood, thus casting students who take up the Goth identities in schools as outcasts.

Since 1999, various social groups have come to the forefront through the media. For example, Goths were sensationalized through *Saturday Night Live's* Goth Talks. Brian's roommate on *The Family Guy* portrayed Emos as suicidal Goths. Emos are an identity group that has also been mischaracterized as the Goths. With its roots in punk music, Emos are in tune with an "emotional hardcore" style that includes dress, hairstyle, accessories, writing poetry and engaging in online communities. A third group, gamers, is an identity group that prefers to socialize over games. *The Big Bang Theory* has helped reinforce stereotypes of Gamers. Portrayed by media as obsessive, lacking traditional face-to-face social skills, and sometimes as out of touch with reality, gamers are often stereotyped as engaging in violent content with excessive amounts of blood and weapons. However, gamers are engaged in a wide variety of game simulations, can participate in rich face-to-face interactions, and have rich literacy practices of reading manuals, the actual games, and "cheat" sites; collaborating with other gamers in multi-player games; and sharing their own strategies and insights to games. When acts of school or community violence occur, these students tend to become a focus media attend. Students who take up any of these identity groups are often portrayed through the media as outcasts, loners, and individuals to be view with apprehension. Just as studies of diverse groups of learners have shown (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999; Bartlett,

2005, 2007b; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003; Finders, 1997; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005; Hagood, 2000, 2002; Moje, 2000; & Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007), there is more to these students than their outer appearance and surface culture characteristics. As members of outcast identity groups, these students have a shared worldview, social relationships, beliefs, practices, and dress. In actuality, it is often their dress that is their identifying signature. "As a social marker of group membership, clothing style is closely associated with the social and cultural characteristics of groups" (Eckert, 1989, p. 62).

Initially, outcast adolescent identities can be understood as a group that shares a culture.

Culture can be understood as the ever changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion, and how these are transformed by those who share them. (Nieto, 1996, p. 138)

For example, Goth culture is a youth culture that has formed as adolescents have found a shared sense of belonging in a social context where they are often seen as outcasts. Eckert (1989) observes that categorical association emerges in middle school as students engage in behaviors that are labeled as accepted mainstream activities or unacceptable non-mainstream activities. Mainstream activities can be understood as participating in school sanctioned extracurricular activities and unquestioningly participating in the teacher-centered classroom.

Non-mainstream activities can be understood as participating in adult behaviors like smoking and depending on social networks to further learning. Students who begin to delve into non-mainstream activities may eventually find themselves associated with an outcast cultural group by the nature of their activities. By the time outcast students enter high school, whether or not they continue to engage in non-mainstream activities, they maintain their outcast identity and take on the values and views of the cultural group. As Moje (2002a) observed in gang cultures, the misperception of outcast students as part of a violent, deviant culture may be tied to how educational institutions perceive these students' learning practices. Although an understanding of these adolescent identity groups has gained greater attention, as evidenced through Alexandra Robbins *New York Times* bestseller, *The Geeks shall inherit the Earth* (2011), there continues to be a lack of research into the literacy practices of these "cafeteria fringe" (Robbins, 2011) adolescents. The lack of studies of a variety of outcast adolescent identities does not allow for a better understanding of the groups' worldviews, social relationships, and beliefs, nor how these are demonstrated in their learning practices.

Over my years of teaching, I always felt particularly curious about students whom I identified as being Goth. From those who read voraciously and wrote eloquently to those who tuned out most days only to surprise me with their depth of insight and logic when engaged in a class discussion, my Goth students' mediocre success for many other teachers intrigued me. For a class study, I



decided to follow up with a former student who seemed to perform a Goth identity.

The group in school I identify with. Um...The, the outcast people. Um...the, I've been called Gothic a lot, so kinda the more rock/Gothic/outcast people. People that don't blend in very well. Stick out. I get that a lot...Yeah, it's like everyone...either band, sports, or the rest of 'em. And that's pretty much, I'm the rest of 'em.

Summing up those she did fit in with, Alice saw herself as part of a minority—an outcast minority that took in those who didn't look like the others, didn't blend, and didn't fit. Although her social identification should have had no bearing on the academic opportunities available to her and her outcast peers, it did.

Alice's choice to be placed in honors English reflecting her affinity for a literacy rich environment; an environment that may have been available to her peer group. By contrast, where students like Alice's peers may not have been able to access such opportunities (Hagood, 2002), Alice encountered enough success to step outside her own social group and engage in different experiences, but the readings in her honors classes often proved *boring*, *pointless*, and unconnected to her own life. Where Alice did find an interest and connection was poetry and the Internet.

Although Alice stands out as a gifted literacy learner who does not fit in to the accepted mainstream social groups of her school, she is not alone. There are many adolescents who belong to various social groups who do not reflect

mainstream expectations, yet have rich and meaningful literacy practices. Getting away from the off-putting window dressing of Goth culture (Kittle, 2008), Alice is representative of the rich literate lives students that do not reflect mainstream identity groups engage in. From their roots in music (Hodkinson, 2002; Martin, 2002) to their self-expressive style (Hodkinson, 2002; Kittle, 2008; Martin, 2002) to their artistic expressions and poetic writings (Gothic as subculture, 2008; Hodkinson, 2002; Porter, 2008; Robinson, 2008) to their engagement in cyberspace (Hodkinson, 2002; Kennedy, 2006; Whitaker, 2007), students in different adolescent identity groups engage in multiple literacy forms that may or may not reflect literacy practices promoted in school. This study hopes to shed light on the literacy practices of two students that take up an outcast identity; what meanings are mediated, negotiated or manifested through the use of symbolic and concrete tools, by those literacy practice; and how those literacy practices and meanings position outcast students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In her article on integrating youth into literacy theory, Moje (2002a) noted that adolescents have been largely ignored in literacy studies. Furthermore, in her examination of various texts representing 110 perspectives on literacy, Moje (2002a) observed that most of the research has historically examined texts in regard to elementary and adult literacy. Though my conceptual framework shows that adolescent literacy has not necessarily been ignored, it does show that studies of adolescent literacy and the practices that followed from them have

mainly focused on the skill-based areas of content area literacy and secondary reading rather than socio-cultural understandings of literacy. Consequently, socio-cultural studies that examine the meanings adolescents make of literacy have been lacking. This gap in the literature on secondary literacy has teaching and learning implications as there is a scarcity of information in how youths use literacy to make meaning and how schools socio-culturally position adolescents through literacy. Subsequently, research on how adolescents take up meanings of literacy from schooling and how schooling can facilitate literacy instruction in a culturally relevant manner continue to be an important area of study.

For example, Moje (2000) noted that the literacy practices of disenfranchised adolescent identities (like Alice's poetry) are unrecognized as authentic forms of literacy in the secondary English setting. English classes often utilize prescriptive course work, such as formulaic expository essays or poetry, and distantly related readings. This is indicative of the fact that

the social institutions of our schools are based on middle class models, as are our didactic methods of teaching and notions of 'information transfer.' We tend to think of learning as the result of teaching, and of teaching as a simple transfer of knowledge. (Eckert, 1989, p. 183)

As a result, non-mainstream students, who may not see the relevance of teacher-centered methodology to their lives, may become disengaged from the process of learning. Their literacy learning interests and needs outside of the mainstream curriculum are also not being met. When their literacy learning style

is reflected in the English classroom, it is often as a token add-on used to fill in excess time.

The restricted literacy practices of mainstream classes have significant implications for adolescents who enact particular identities (e.g. Goth, gang, jocks) and who may engage in non-mainstream literacy practices to negotiate meaning in their own lives. To further scholarly understanding, there is a need to examine how secondary English classes promote literacy and how diverse culture groups make meaning of these literacy practices and the practices they adopt out of school.

The purpose of this study is to build upon the research on the literacy practices adolescents take up and how these literacy practices position adolescent identities. I am especially interested in outcast adolescents and, subsequently, outcast meanings of literacy practices. I am also interested in how outcasts are positioned in the high school setting, specifically the English classroom, through their literacy practices. In looking at outcasts and their positioning, I also hope to identify and further understandings of ways adolescent social groups help or hinder their members in negotiating in-school and out-of-school social worlds.

### **Summary**

Recent developments in the study of adolescents and their literacies have expanded perspectives on youths to include a more contextualized, socio-cultural approach. Such an approach “emphasizes youth’s social nature, in which

particular physiological facts are interpreted and given meaning within particular historical and social circumstances" (Lesko, 1994, p. 143). By taking up the socio-cultural lens in examining adolescent identities and literacy, my dissertation study's main research question is *How do outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in a school's social worlds?* In answering this question, I will use a socio-cultural lens to examine the following subquestions:

1. What the literacy practices do outcast adolescents use?
2. What are the ways in which an outcast adolescent takes up literacy practices?
3. What meanings do literacy practices hold for outcast adolescents?
4. What are the literacy practices promoted by English teachers?
5. What are the meanings ascribed by the English teacher?
6. How are school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom?
7. What meanings do school-promoted literacy practices hold for the outcast adolescent in an English classroom?

## CHAPTER II

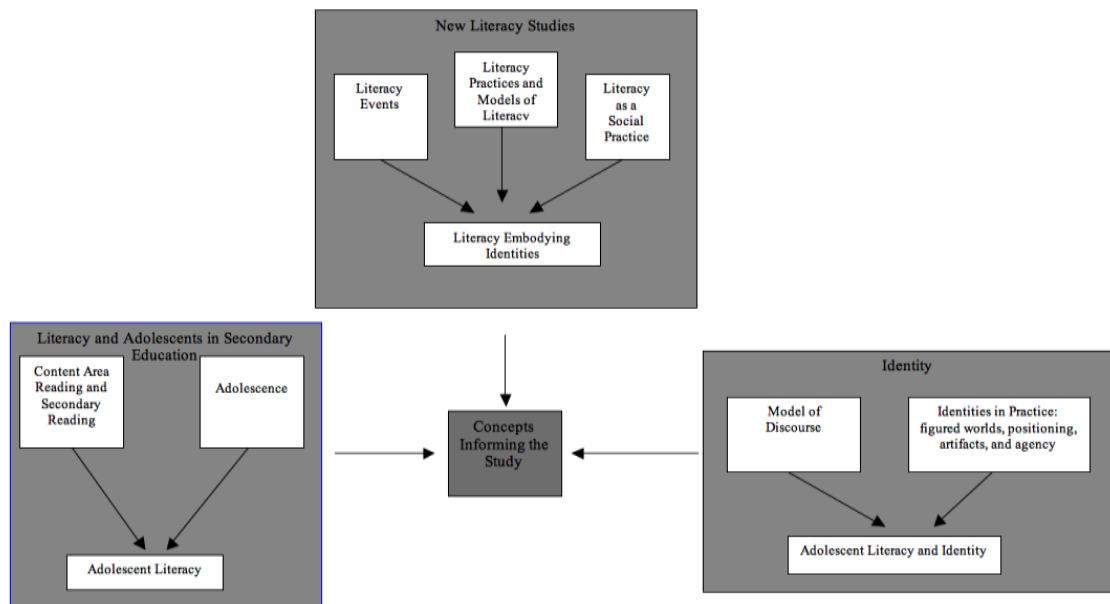
### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I contend that it is neither an individual moving through identifiable stages of development in a linear, predictable fashion, nor an individual welcomed into a harmonious community that prompts learning. Rather it is within the complex weave of social relations that students learn. It is like the ripping apart of fabrics from old clothes and stitching them back together into some new, yet familiar patchwork pattern, designing one's own quilt in which the patches are neither static nor distinct. As children sever old ties and make new connections, turning away from childhood's roles toward adult identities, the teaching and learning of appropriate literate behaviors play an important role in this complex social negotiation. (Finders, 1997, p. 117)

The focus of this study is the literacy practices outcast adolescents take up as members of their identity groups, the literacy practices promoted in their English classrooms, and the way these literacy practices work to position these outcast students in and out of a school's social worlds. This study is based on the contemporary understandings of adolescent literacies, New Literacy Studies, and literacy practices related to schooling. However, because school-based literacy is sedimented by historical practices (Myers, 1996), I begin with the historical development of secondary literacy. Furthermore, in trying to create "a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view" (Geertz, 1983, p. 69), this conceptual framework focuses on the broader theoretical

issues that inform the study, embedding empirical studies within the discussion of theoretical issues.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



In the first section, I touch upon the history of secondary literacy through its focus on content area reading and secondary reading to establish what literacy practices are promoted in school and how these literacy practices have historically concentrated on skills-based learning for struggling students. I then explore prevailing beliefs about adolescence to offer an alternative to biological conceptions of adolescent identity that do not explore the daily practices of socio-cultural influences upon identity formation. Using the expanded socio-cultural conception of adolescence to help expand understandings of secondary literacy beyond skills-based approaches, I then explore how the socio-cultural approach

of adolescent literacy expands what counts as literacy practice and how the socio-cultural approach considers the literacy development of adolescents as continuous rather than static.

In the second section of this conceptual framework I examine the rise and evolution of New Literacy Studies in representing out-of-school literacy development. Through its socio-cultural understanding of what counts as literacy, I demonstrate that New Literacy Studies highlights the daily literacy practices (particularly out-of-school literacy practices) of adolescents and how they are imbued with meanings. I then explore how New Literacy Studies makes visible the connection between literacy development and identity development through the meanings of literacy practices.

The third section of this conceptual framework examines two models of identity development: Gee's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) sociolinguistic model of Discourse and Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain's (1998) anthropological model of Identities in Practice. I first look at Gee's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) prevailing model to review the significance of identity development in Adolescent Literacy and New Literacy Studies. I then explore how Holland et al's (1998) model frames my study and further understandings of the ways in which adolescent literacy practices mediate participation and positioning in and out of a school's social worlds.



## **Literacy and Adolescents in Secondary Education**

Adolescent literacy is a fairly new area of research within education (Harper & Bean, 2006; Moje, Young, Readance, & Moore, 2000). Traditionally, literacy has been defined as reading and has been perceived as the domain of elementary educators. Because the development of reading is tied into emergent literacy prior to formal education, issues of phonics versus whole language have dominated discussions in how best to foster proficiency in reading skills (Gill, 2005; Strickland, 1990). In addition, it has been historically assumed that students have mastered reading skills by the time they enter the secondary level. Consequently the focus of secondary literacy has centered on content area reading with regards to school texts (Armbruster, 1986; Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1989; Draher & Singer, 2001; Moje, 1996; Moje, Dillon, O'Brien, 2000) and secondary reading with regards to struggling readers (Moje et al, 2000).

### **Content Area Reading and Secondary Reading**

Much of the literature, professional development, and pre-service teacher preparation courses regarding literacy on the secondary level have been devoted to content area reading. Content area reading evolved from the “recognition of the fact that readers require various strategies when they study particular subject areas and read many kinds of materials for different purposes” (Moore, Readance, & Rickelman, 1983). Subsequently, with its focus on reading-to-learn and reading-to-perform, content area reading is meant to offer strategies to address these concerns. Furthermore, content area reading has historically

placed the teacher, the content, and teaching materials at the forefront of instruction.

A second focus of secondary literacy is secondary reading. Centering on struggling readers who are at risk for not maintaining grade-level reading proficiency, secondary reading works to address the gap of student specific instruction. Expanding the scope of content area reading to include topics like reading fluency (Rasinski & Padak, 2005; Wexler, Vaughn, Edmonds, & Reutebach, 2008) and motivation (Alvermann, 2001a; Landis, 2002; Fisher & Ivey, 2006; Guthrie, 1996; Lenters, 2006; Sweet, Ng, & Guthrie, 1998), secondary reading addresses the needs of individual learners. Their literacy successes are not well researched, however, and student meanings behind their successes and failures are not well represented in the literature.

Content area reading and secondary reading inform my study as they provide the context from which my two teacher participants were trained in literacy instruction. Their training in these areas does address cognitive and pedagogical issues in secondary literacy learning. However, there is a need to understand how school promoted literacy practices as represented by vocabulary development, questioning strategies, reading materials, and motivation are influenced by socio-cultural factors. Heath noted, "participation in a variety of social patterns of communication broadens literacy engagement" (cited by Guthrie, 1996, p. 434). Guthrie (1996) continues, "If the context supports these motivational goals, students become intensively engaged. If the context

suppresses them, children become disaffected” (p. 436). A socio-cultural perspective of adolescent literacy aims to address the gap in literature between the daily practices of literacy learning and engagement and the cultural contexts of students’ lived lives.

### **Adolescence**

Though the areas of secondary reading and content area literacy worked to bring attention to reading practices within secondary schools, they revealed multiple constraints on beliefs about adolescents and literacy (Moje, Young et al, 2000; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore, & Alvermann, 2006). The shift in perspectives on the construct of adolescence helped to shape current understandings of adolescent literacy. From a historical perspective, the period of adolescence was viewed as biologically determined by hormones (Lesko, 1994; Moje, 2002a; Moje, 2002b), in effect rendering youths as troubled, frustrated and ineffectual while they are “suspended between childhood and adulthood” (Finders, 1997, p. 4). This research on adolescence is often studied via an Eriksonian developmental model where youths proceed through a linear process of becoming a fully formed entity (Besley, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006; Lesko, 1994; Moje, 2002a; Moje, 2002b). In Erikson’s (1968) epigenetic model of identity (where individuals gradually develop through biologically determined stages), adolescence is the fifth stage of eight. In this stage, adolescents are concerned with who they are, engaging in play to try out different identities with different

peer groups. Erikson (1968) posits that with positive role models, adolescents will successfully navigate this period, emerging as contributing members of a democratic society. Otherwise adolescents may become embroiled in subcultures with which they over-identify or from which they may rebel, and engaging in identity confusion. As a result of identity confusion, adolescents may be unable to develop any true sense of commitment and belonging, halting their progression to the sixth stage of intimacy and adulthood.

More recent examinations of adolescence have argued that this model is limited as it is presupposed upon constrained assumptions: that development occurs linearly, that individuals form only one identity, that all individuals begin their development from the same origin, and that there is a single type of identity worth developing. The developmental model does not take into account the multitude of contextual influences (gender, ethnicity, class, environment), the disorder of life's daily experiences, and the plethora of meaningful identities adolescents may enact (Lesko, 2001). Lesko (2001) further argued that a focus on the developmental model influences teachers and policy makers to position such "hormonally burdened" youths as incapable of engaging in substantive intellectual tasks, thus limiting the literacy practices adolescents engage in in schools. She asserted, "Teenagers must prove themselves as obedient, responsible, and serious before they are entrusted with decisions over anything but trivial aspects of their lives" (p. 143). These alternative theories of adolescents have expanded perspectives on youth literacies to include a more

contextualized, socio-cultural approach. Such an approach “emphasizes youth’s social nature, in which particular physiological facts are interpreted and given meaning within particular historical and social circumstances” (Lesko, 2001, p. 143). By looking at adolescents as youth cultures informed by multiple constructs and contexts, adolescents may be recognized as “sophisticated meaning-makers” (Moje, 2002b, p. 215) who can and do engage in a variety of complex communicative practices that may or may not be taken up by the institution of school.

### **Adolescent Literacy**

The emergence of adolescent literacy in the mid 1990s also shifted the focus of the literacies worth studying in school. Up to that time, literacy studies tended to focus on reading through content area reading, and secondary reading tended to focus on struggling readers-students who underperformed on standardized achievement tests (Alvermann, 2001a; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris, 2008). Out-of-school literacies, writing, and students' reading at grade-level went largely understudied, which proved problematic as such perspectives on literacy limited what counted as literacy and failed to “recognize reading development as a continuum” (Moore et al, 1999, p. 97) extending beyond early literacy development. With the focus directed on adolescent literacy, other communicative forms and continued literacy development came under study.

With the advent of adolescent literacy as a field of study, eight principles and practices have been identified in helping with the continued development of

adolescent learners (Alvermann, 2001a; Moje et al, 2000; Moore et al, 1999; Sturtevant et al, 2006). As principles related to contexts for learning, instructional practices, and connections between literacy in and out of school, the eight principles posit that adolescents need opportunities to:

1. participate in active learning environments that offer clear and facilitative literacy instruction,
  2. participate in respectful environments characterized by high expectations, trust, and care,
  3. engage with print and nonprint texts for a variety of purpose,
  4. generate and express rich understandings of ideas and concepts,
  5. demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and learning,
  6. assess their literacy and learning competencies, and direct their future growth,
  7. connect reading with their life and their learning inside and outside of school,
  8. develop critical perspectives toward what they read, view, and hear.
- (Sturtevant et al, 2006)

Directing the call for the future of adolescent literacy, Alvermann (2001a), Moje et al (2000), Moore et al (1999), and Sturtevant et al (2006) represented a shift in research of adolescent literacy that interweaves the focus on strategy instruction (such as vocabulary development, reading fluency, motivation, texts, questioning strategies, and materials) with conceptions of identity, expanding the definition of literacy to include out-of-school literacy practices (which does not always reflect school promoted literacy practices) and that points toward the lived culture of today's youth.

Historical conceptions of secondary literacy guide my study as they 1) explain the literacy practices promoted by teachers in school and 2) suggest

meanings that schooling may promote through school-based literacy practices. The socio-cultural shift of literacy research and practice informs my study by 1) pointing to the literacy-rich lives adolescents engage in out-of-school and 2) suggesting that social interactions within the classroom are more important to students' literacy development than previously understood. Using a socio-cultural perspective to build upon historical conceptions of secondary literacy, in my study, I intend to 1) explore what are the literacy practices promoted by an English teacher, 2) what are the meanings ascribed by the English teacher, 3) how are the school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom, and 4) illustrate what meanings school promoted literacy practices hold for the outcast adolescent in the English classroom.

### **New Literacy Studies**

The socio-cultural shift to adolescent literacy has not only expanded the field of secondary literacy to include adolescent identities as sophisticated meaning makers, but it has also expanded traditional notions of literacy. The average student in the US today lives in an information rich environment. The latest world or community news is but seconds away through newspapers, phone calls, text messages, email, television, and even neighbors. From t-shirt sayings to lunchroom debates to classroom PowerPoint presentations to visual art, how students take up and incorporate information is limited only by their access to social networks, experiences, and imagination. With continued technological advancements and global mindsets, students today could be considered more

socially connected than any generation before. In connection to the multiple forms of communication and the social demands of being in the world, traditional forms of literacy and their meanings have increasingly been challenged and re-envisioned.

Traditionally, literacy has been viewed within the confines of reading and writing print materials in schools (Street, 1984). This view of literacy, as seen in educational policy and in the media, has come to be viewed as an endangered skill, leading to a perception that there is a literacy crisis in the nation (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Street, 1984). As a result, numerous reading programs and studies targeting discrete skills and strategies have been proposed as “quick fixes” (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Street, 1984). Yet what these quick fixes eventually revealed is that there are no quick fixes. Literacy is a complex construct that cannot be defined strictly by the reading and writing of print texts, nor can it only be examined solely within classroom contexts. In response and through its exploration of literacy events, literacy practices, models of literacy, literacy as a social practice, and Multiliteracies, the New London Group (1996), an international group of scholars, focused these various concepts under the umbrella term “New Literacy Studies.” This perspective on changing literacy practices centered on the multiple communicative practices people engage in for various purposes and in various contexts.



## **Literacy Events**

New Literacy Studies has been a theoretical conception waiting to be recognized for the last twenty years. As politics and the media lamented the literacy crisis and the “harmful” effects of technological advances like music and television, scholars following a more ethnographic tradition of research were revealing a dynamic side to literacy. Shirley Brice Heath (1983), with her influential study into the communicative practices of three Piedmont communities, challenged popular conceptions of literacy. During her study, Heath identified the different communities as participating in different literacy events, which were “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes” (p. 93). Through these literacy events, Heath offered three general points: patterns of language use reflect and reinforce local cultural patterns; preparing children for school success is complicated by more than “differences in formal structures of language, amount of parent-child interaction, and the like” (p. 34); “patterns of interactions between oral and written uses of language are varied and complex, and the traditional oral-literate dichotomy does not capture the ways other cultural patterns in each community affect the uses of oral and written language” (p. 34). With her groundbreaking study, Heath helped to inspire new directions of research within education. Specifically in my study, literacy events help to frame the literacy practices promoted in the English classroom.

## **Literacy Practices and Models of Literacy**

In *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Brian Street (1984) built on Heath's work and crafted a foundation for New Literacy Studies. Drawing on his ethnographic study into the communicative practices of an urban and a rural community in Iran, Street recounts an understanding of the then prevailing model of literacy, what he terms the autonomous model, and frames a model for the future direction of literacy, what he terms an ideological model. The autonomous model of literacy argues that literacy has been conceived as a set of discrete skills whose development and meanings are independent of social structures (Street, 1984; Street, 1998; Street, 2003). Synonymous with literacy as practiced in schools, the autonomous model holds literacy to be reading and writing print materials reflective of the white, middle class, male canon (a model that is still reflected in schools today). Presupposing a single form of literacy, the autonomous model ignores literacy rich practices outside school contexts. As a result, students are perceived as being blank vessels that must be "educated" about discrete grammar skills, phonetic awareness, and specific literary genres. Because what counts as literacy within the autonomous model is standardized and universal, students are also expected to conform to a standard of uniform behavior and control where they are willing receivers of knowledge as imparted by master teachers (Lankshear & Lawler, 1987).

In contrast to the autonomous model, Street (1984) frames an alternative, ideological model. First defining literacy practices as the "social practices and

conceptions of reading and writing” (p. 1), Street posits that literacy practices are “embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as ‘neutral’ or merely ‘technical’” (p. 1). The ideological model is a more culturally responsive view that recognizes literacy as a social practice and knowledge as socially constructed and contested (Street, 2003). In outlining the ideological model, Street (1984) detailed it as having the following characteristics:

1. It assumes that the meaning of literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded;
2. Literacy can only be known to us in forms which already have political and ideological significance and it cannot, therefore, be helpfully separated from that significance and treated as though it were an ‘autonomous’ thing;
3. The particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification (such as where certain social groups may be taught only to read), and the role of educational institutions;
4. The processes whereby reading and writing are learnt are what construct the meaning of it for particular practitioners;
5. We would probably more appropriately refer to ‘literacies’ than to any single ‘literacy’;
6. Writers who tend towards this model and away from the ‘autonomous’ model recognize as problematic the relationship between the analysis of any ‘autonomous’, isolable qualities of literacy and the analysis of the ideological and political nature of literacy practices. (p. 8)

Taking into account Heath’s (1983) literacy events, the characteristics of Street’s literacy practices (Heath & Street, 2008) have proved to be enduring tenets in New Literacy Studies as they have influenced researcher perspectives on “what counts as being literate; what [researchers] see as ‘real’ or appropriate uses of reading and writing skills; [and] the ways people actually read and write in the course of their daily lives” (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993, p. xviii).

## Literacy as a Social Practice

After Street's (1984) seminal text, it was nearly a decade before New Literacy Studies made its next big steps in the seminal texts of James Gee (1992, 1996). In these texts Gee incorporated Street's ideological model of literacy as being socially situated and called for a model of social practice to be applied to the study of literacy. Social practice theory explores how groups create meanings in everyday practices (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). Even though a social practice lens could look at autonomous literacy as it exists in institutional structures, it also goes further by not determining categories *a priori* and by looking at the divisions within those categories (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). For example, within literacy, instead of literacy being categorized as print versus nonprint, different types of print and nonprint literacy might surface. By getting at different categories of literacy through a social practice lens, Gee (1992) anticipated analyzing the meanings of literacy practices.

These meanings did not focus on cognitive skills, rather they were considered social practices, and Gee (1992) foresaw social practices as being part of Discourses. "A Discourse integrates ways of talking, listening, writing, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling (and using various objects, symbols, images, tools, and technologies) in the service of enacting meaningful socially situated identities and activities" (Gee, 2001b, p. 719). In contrast, discourse (with a lower case d) is how two mediating forces interact. It is the practices engaged to communicate (Gee, 2001a; Gee, 2001b; Gee, 2004).

In Gee's framework, these practices are no longer confined to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; they were expanded to include differing mediums of technology, television, oral texts, and visual representations, to name a few (Gee, 2001a, 2001b; Hinchman & Moje, 1998). Different types of discourses act as bridges between the multiple facets of literacy (Roth, Speece & Cooper, 2002). Hence, Gee furthered New Literacy Studies by putting forth the premise that previous conceptions of reading, writing, speaking, and listening were no longer able to adequately convey the increasingly wide array of literacy practices and the depth of thought, learning, and interactions that supported them.

### **Multiliteracies**

The next significant step in the evolution of New Literacy Studies emerged from the New London Group (1996). The New London Group was a cadre of ten literacy scholars who met in New London, Connecticut, to discuss the future of literacy teaching as "disparities in educational outcomes" persisted (New London Group, 1996, p. 63). The results of the meeting consisted of an article presenting "a theoretical overview of the connections between the changing social environment facing students and teachers and a new approach to literacy pedagogy" (New London Group, 1996, p. 60). In the article, the group took up Street's (1984) and Gee's (1992) conceptions of the ideological model of literacy and literacy as a social practice. In furthering New Literacy Studies, the group called for literacy pedagogy to take in the "variety of text forms," what they termed multiliteracies, brought about through information and multimedia

technologies (p. 31). In doing so, the group personified multiliteracies as creating spaces where identities could be enacted in daily practice.

In looking to the future of literacy, the group called for a pedagogy incorporating four factors: situated practice based on the “iterative nature” of meaning making; overt instruction where students come to make meaning for themselves; critical framing, where meaning can be connected to social contexts outside of the classroom; and transformed practice where students are able to transfer meanings and create new meanings between contexts (New London Group, 1996). Influenced by Gee’s (1992) *Discourse*, the new, re-envisioned pedagogy of literacy with its four factors made synonymous the study and teaching of literacy with concepts of identity.

### **Literacy Embodying Identities**

The most recent shift in the evolution of New Literacy Studies was initially brought forth by the New London Group (1996), but has recently been expanded by Knobel and Lankshear (2007). In 1996, the New London Group noted how changing visions of work affected the social meanings of language. Specifically, the group spoke to the changing nature of work from Fordism, where workers went from engaging in “mindless, repetitive unskilled work on the industrial production line” (New London Group, 1996, p. 66), to PostFordism, where workers are involved in

teams and collaboration, based on the idea that in a fast-changing environment, where knowledge goes out of date rapidly and technological

innovation is common, a team can behave more smartly than any individual in it by pooling and distributing knowledge. (Gee, 2004, p. 91)

Paralleling this development was the advancement, and subsequently meaning, of digital technology. Until the dot.com crash of 2001, digital technology existed as independent and autonomous products, artifacts, and commodities (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007), much as Fordist workers worked in independent and autonomous units. Embodied as Web 1.0, technology during this time was unidirectional with users consuming information from sources like Encarta online, or played autonomous games saved on disks and CDs (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007). Just as PostFordism found workers joining forces to work in teams, Web 2.0 found technology as more interactive with users constructing shared knowledge through wikis, joining online communities such as FaceBook, and playing multiplayer games with users around the world. With Web 2.0, literacy emerging out of digital technology no longer consists of private consumption but rather a social space creating new meanings and supporting multiple identities.

Hailing a paradigm shift from how literacies have been studied in the past using an autonomous model to a more ideological conception (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 1992; Gee, 1996; Knobel and Lankshear, 2007; Street, 1984), New Literacy Studies examines literacy through a theory of social practice, looking at the day-to-day lived experiences for emerging literacy practices and the meanings they embody, not only those instructional practices promoted in school. Subsequently, New Literacy Studies reflects how literacy as

promoted in schools may not be reflective of the lived literacy practices adolescents experience out-of-school. By investigating the day-to-day lived experiences of adolescent identities, New Literacy Studies directs my study's focus to the out-of-school literacy practices adolescents engage in. Just highlighting how the literacy learning interests and needs outside the mainstream curriculum are not being met (Hull & Schultz, 2001), New Literacy Studies further guides my study in looking at how non-school spaces are places of important literacy development. Such literacy development may consist of traditional print texts, but may also expand to include oral texts, nonprint texts, and digital literacies, which have not been literacy practices regularly promoted in the classroom. Furthermore, my study examines how literacy development is supported or constrained by the identity groups adolescents are a part of.

### **Identity**

Underlying the works of New Literacy Studies and adolescent literacy studies are understandings of identity. As the study of youths has traditionally taken up developmental models, adolescents have been portrayed as trying to navigate a natural stage of development towards a unified identity (Besley, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006; Lesko, 1994; Lesko, 1996). Yet with a paradigm shift in the advent of adolescent literacy, the study of youths has also taken on socio-cultural understandings in examining adolescence as a social construct rather than a biological determination (Lesko, 1994; Lesko, 1996). In line with an understanding of adolescence as a social construct is the recognition



that adolescents enact multiple identities rather than develop a single cohesive one.

Within literacy studies, Street (1984), Gee (1992, 1996), and the New London Group (1996) redefined literacy from the autonomous model that has persistently dominated schooling toward an ideological model that is situated in practice. In this paradigm shift the New London Group (1996) closely tied literacy to identity through Gee's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) model of Discourse. And though Gee (1992, 1996) first introduced Social Practice Theory to the study of adolescent literacy and identity through New Literacy Studies, his primary focus on texts opened the field of adolescent literacy and identity to alternate models, such as identities in practice as proposed by Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain (1998).

### **From a Model of Discourse to Identities in Practice**

In his groundwork for New Literacy Studies, Gee (1992, 1996) interwove literacy with identity as he calls for literacy to be attended to through a study of social practice. As the prevailing model for nearly a decade, Gee's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) sociolinguistic model of Discourse is widely used to explore adolescent identities and their literacies. "A Discourse integrates ways of talking, listening, writing, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling (and using various objects, symbols, images, tools, and technologies) in the service of enacting meaningful socially situated identities and activities" (Gee, 2001b, p.

719). Furthermore, in positing why *Identity Matters* in the study of literacy, McCarthy and Moje (2002) explain how

As people develop what Gee called primary Discourses, which are embedded in the cultural models available to them, they also develop identities and identifications. The link between cultural models and identities is important. Identities, following such a perspective, are at least in part culturally situated, mediated, and constructed... Furthermore, as people work to learn secondary Discourses, those Discourses that derive from cultural models different from their own, people come up against other identities. (p. 232)

“Characteristic ways of being in the world” (Gee, 2001b, p. 35), Discourses are influenced by a student’s identity; in return literacy helps to shape the multiple identities of a learner (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

Although Gee’s (2001a, 2001b, 2004) sociolinguistic model has been the dominant identity model used in adolescent literacy and New Literacy studies, a complementary, anthropological model (Bartlett, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Blackburn, 2003; Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006; Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte & Cain, 1998; Wortham, 2004, 2006) provides different insights that go beyond sociolinguistic text to day-to-day practices and the improvisations that occur as identities develop in practice. Just as Gee (2001a, 2001b, 2004), Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain (1998) utilize a social practice framework to explain how “identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice” (p. 5). Essentially, “behavior is better viewed as a sign of self in practice, not as a sign of self in essence” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 31). This conception of identity contends that identity is

not a static conception of self, but rather a dynamic making of self shaped by a multitude of contexts. Identity, as framed by Holland et al (1998), adds to my study through four concepts: figured worlds, positioning, artifacts, and agency.

**Figured Worlds.** Figured worlds are narrativized worlds where identity is constructed in practice (Holland et al, 1998). Collectively formed and interpreted, figured worlds are “as if’ realms” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 49) where “particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 52). Traditionally conceived through cultural/subcultural groups, adolescents could better be understood through figured worlds as it focuses on lived experiences because what gives meaning to a figured world are the daily practices members engage in.

Though his work was constructed with a social reconstructionist lens, Paul Willis’ (1977) seminal study of working class adolescent males in Britain can also be understood through the concept of figured worlds. Though ‘the lads’ are boys who are considered outcasts, Willis (1977) does not identify all working class or outcast boys as one of the lads. It is the daily practices of those who have membership that create and recreate the figured world of the lads. For the lads, such daily practices include dosing, blagging, and wagging: “being free out of class, being in class and doing no work, being in the wrong class, roaming the corridors looking for excitement, being asleep in private” (Willis, 1977, p. 27). These daily practices also include instances of having “a laff”: “The ability to

produce it is one of the defining characteristics of being one of ‘the lads’ – ‘We can make them laff, they can’t make us laff’” (Willis, 1977, p. 29). A laff can take the form of pranks and jokes (pretending to be a new student with a new teacher), or “marauding misbehavior” (Willis, 1977, p. 30) (vandalism by switching gates). Through dosing, blagging, wagging, and having a laff, the lads create their own meanings and develop dispositions in response to structural institutions and other figured worlds.

Such construction of identities in figured worlds involves an actor participating in day-to-day practices that reflect his/her dispositions. Dispositions are beliefs, perspectives, and predispositions that govern the individual’s actions (Bourdieu, 1977). In understanding these dispositions, one must first understand one of the foundational blocks of social practice theory: Leont’ev’s (1974/5) conception of activity. Leont’ev notes that psychological theories in understanding behaviors do not work because they only deal with two components: the person and the environment. As a result, behavior is conceived within a stimulus-response model. Leont’ev (1974/5) expands this model toward a more social practice lens by incorporating a third component: activity. As a result, behavior is conceived within a stimulus-activity-response model:

The process of life is the totality or, more precisely, the system of interchanging activities. In activity an object is transformed into its subjective form or image, while at the same time activity passes into its objective results and products. In this regard activity emerges as a process that effects a reciprocal transformation between the subject-object poles. (p. 9)

Moreover, by focusing on activity, Wertsch (1991) notes,

human beings are viewed as coming into contact with, and creating, their surroundings as well as themselves through the actions in which they engage. Thus action, rather than human beings or the environment considered in isolation provides the entry point into analysis. (p. 8)

In addition, tools and language act as “mediational means” in embodying meanings and shaping activities (Holland et al, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wertsch, 1991). Subsequently, activities (like dosing, blagging, wagging, and even writing) mediate reactions to the environment and reinforce the dispositions of the social groups one belongs to.

One way in which individuals develop dispositions to the discourses in figured worlds is through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation is the space where “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Lave and Wenger (1991) explain legitimate peripheral participation through apprenticeships in communities of practice. As one masters the dispositions of a community of practice (which can also be viewed as a figured world), one is enrolled and positioned within this figured world. Lave and Wenger (1991) illustrate legitimate peripheral participation as learning and identity formation through the apprenticeship of Yucatec midwives. A Yucatec girl is not born into the culture of midwifery, though her mother and grandmother may be midwives themselves. It

is through her enculturation by observing, running errands, listening to stories, giving birth to her own child, helping in the birthing room, and taking on the acts of midwifery that the girl becomes a midwife. Accordingly, it is through the maturation of becoming part of a community (e.g. Goths, gangs, jocks) that an adolescent learns which performances enact which identities. Essentially, “learning involves the construction of identities” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

Mastering dispositions of a figured world illustrates how “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 31), which reflects Mead’s (1913) perspective of self as always forming in social conduct.

It is only as the individual finds himself acting with reference to himself as he acts towards others, that he becomes a subject to himself rather than an object, and only as he is affected by his own social conduct in the manner in which he is affected by that of others, that he becomes an object to his own social conduct. (p. 375)

According to Mead (1913), the self treats itself as it treats others as it sees itself as it sees others because an individual’s inner speech thinks of itself within relations to others. As a result, the self coordinates its actions with others. Such a conception of self has implications in adolescent identity formation as adolescents are submerged in the social relations of their schools and communities.

**Positioning.** Mead’s (1912, 1913) conception of self in relations to others draws attention to positional aspect of the self in relations to others. Although

figured worlds point to the narrativized worlds where adolescent identities are formed and acted out, positioning points to issues of status and power within and between figured worlds.

Within figured worlds, positioning is indicative of Bourdieu's (1977) concept of social field. Social field addresses how some members maintain greater symbolic capital and are thus positioned with greater power over others (Holland et al, 1998). Symbolic capital is the honor or prestige that positions actors within and between identity groups (Bourdieu, 1977). Such honor or prestige may be dependent upon abstract (e.g. knowledge, confidence) or concrete qualities (e.g. gender, ethnicity). For example, within the figured world of the lads, masculinity and nonconformity acted as symbolic capital to position members (Willis, 1977). Engaging in practices of dosing, blagging, wagging, and having a laff worked to enroll members within the figured world of the lads, but it is the connotative value of these practices that positioned a member as one deserving deference. As a result, to become a member of the figured world of the lads, one had to develop dispositions and practices to gain symbolic capital within that world.

In looking at the dispositions and practices that work to position students in the figured world of a padeia seminar, Stanton Wortham (2004, 2006) illustrates how students reflexively position (how individuals position themselves) and interactively position (how others position individuals) themselves (Davies and Harré, 2000). Through a yearlong ethnographic study, Wortham

demonstrated how the social identification of students and the cognitive models used in schools overlapped to create localized learning identities for students. Through Erika and William, for example, Wortham (2006) illustrated how the dichotomy of “promising girl, unpromising boy” was a result of continued interactive positioning by the teachers. As these social identifications of “promising girl, unpromising boy” were reinforced across time, they became thickened to marginalize Erika and William in the class.

In another occurrence, Wortham (2004, 2006) showed how a student, Tyisha, who was interactively positioned as an outcast, reflexively took up this positioning. Tyisha began the year embodying the social identification of “promising girl.” As the school year progressed, Tyisha was increasingly positioned by the teachers (and subsequently the class) as a disruption. In one particular instance, Wortham illustrated how the curriculum was utilized to reinforce the outcast identity fashioned through the discursive practices of the classroom. In a discussion on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the teachers used Tyisha and another student (an “unpromising boy”) as participant examples in embodying Aristotle’s notion of the “beast,” thickening Tyisha’s marginalization. Eventually, in another instance (over halfway through the year), Wortham described how Tyisha reflexively took up the positioning as a disruptive student by purposefully interjecting an unrelated response to the classroom discussion. Repeated positioning (as disruptive) acted to thicken the social identifications (as “beast”) that were interactively imposed and reflexively taken up.



The amount of symbolic capital an individual may possess (e.g. participating in discussions in a desired manner) may not only position that individual within a particular adolescent identity, but also position figurative identities within institutional structures. For example, in her study on adolescent “gangstas”, Moje (2000) notes how an ability to tag worked to privilege individuals within gang cultures. Yet an ability to tag also acted as an unsanctioned literacy practice to disenfranchise the same individuals within the historical structure of school. Moje (2000) did not frame these literacy practices as symbolic capital, but an understanding of these literacy practices as symbolic capital would help further understandings of how and why these students were positioned within the institutional structure of school.

Other aspects that may influence a student’s positioning are his/her habitus and history-in-person. Habitus encompasses “our unconsciously enacted, socially learned dispositions, which are not natural or inherent or prior to the social organization of class inequality, but are in fact produced by it” (Bettie, 2003, p. 51). Here Bettie is building on social practice theorist Bourdieu’s conception of habitus. Habitus embodies the objectivist ideas of culture (beliefs about the world and rules for action) within time to form practice (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus intersects with history-in-person to build our “sense of self” (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 31), interactions, and meanings within particular times and places (Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006).

History-in-person is “a constellation of relations between subjects’ intimate self-making and their participation in contentious local practice” (Holland and Lave, 2001). Within figured worlds and history-in-person, identity is not a static sense of self to which one becomes, but an ever-evolving pool of selves from which one can pull from. This pool of selves can readily be seen as students enact identities that are amalgamations of cultural influences because students are able to call upon a repertoire of different selves to enact. For example, in a study of first graders, Dyson (2003) described how Marcel drew upon his sports self to make connections with map reading and geography. Similarly, DeStigter (2001) described Hector, an ESL high school student, enacting his Mexican self in the drawing and prayer he created in place of the Tesoros literacy project’s *santos*. One must understand a person’s habitus and history-in-person in order to get at the meanings of these practices.

**Artifacts.** “Cultural worlds [as embodied in habitus and history-in-person] are continuously figured in practice through the use of cultural artifacts” (Bartlett & Holland, 2002, p. 153). Inscribed with meaning, tools and artifacts mediate participation in identity groups (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Leont’ev, 1974/5; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Leont’ev (1974/5) notes, “A tool mediates activity that connects a person not only with the world of objects but also with other people” (Leont’ev, 1974/5, p. 19). For example, in a study of the figured world of Alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous, Holland et al (1998) demonstrate how members use poker chips to mediate their identities as alcoholics in sobriety

(Holland et al, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). The different colored poker chips an alcoholic possesses represent the length of time since the alcoholic's last alcoholic drink, taking on symbolic meanings and positioning members in specific ways. Youths may also use different literacy practices (writing poems, short stories, and essays) to mediate and enact identities (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999; Bartlett, 2005, 2007b; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003; Finders, 1997; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005; Hagood, 2000, 2002; Moje, 2000; & Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007). Different literacy practices signify different meanings dependent upon the individuals' dispositions and the contexts within which they engage.

Several studies of youth literacies illustrate the uses of artifacts in enacting and positioning identities. In her study into the figured world of "Social Queens" in a junior high school, Finders (1997) identified zines and notewriting as two of the literacy artifacts that populated adolescent girls' literate underlife. Reinforcing one another, reading both zines and notewriting were regarded as social acts that were used to assign special status and positioning within the group. Furthermore, the experiences reported in the zines were taken up by the girls as their own while the meaning of notewriting was often dependent upon the act of passing the note. Consequently, Finders illustrated how zines and notewriting were used to mediate meaning and reinforce social identification. A series of related studies underscored the importance of artifacts, literacy, and identity. For example, Besley (2003) noted that youths consume artifacts presented by popular media,

Moje (2000) described how gang youths were able to “write themselves into the story” of Salt Lake City through unsanctioned literacy practices, Bartlett (2005, 2007a, 2007b) described how a stamp pad symbolized a voter’s illiteracy, and Hatt (2007) explained how “the artifacts of smartness within schools include grades, ‘papers’ (diplomas), labels (i.e. gifted or honors), standardized test scores, books, large vocabulary, and participation in college prep math courses” (Hatt, 2007, p. 151). As seen through these studies, an analysis of artifacts that evoke the narrativized worlds of adolescents can reveal enacted identities, illustrate how worlds and their members are positioned, and identify how a space is opened for self-authoring--where adolescents make meaning of the world by drawing upon the dispositions and practices of the figured worlds they currently participate in to fashion new worlds (Holland et al, 1998).

**Agency.** When tensions exist between individual identities and larger, historical structures, a space opens for self-authoring and hence agency (Holland et al, 1998).

This space is formed, both within us and outside us, by the very multiplicity of persons, who are identifiable positions in networks of social production, and of worlds of inner activity that are also scenes of consciousness. When we act, whether that act is instrumental or imaginative, we “move” through this space figuratively. None of us is occupied singularly: we are not possessed by one identity, one discourse, one subject position. Each act is simultaneously a social dynamic, social work, a set of identification and negations, an orchestration or arrangements, our “styles” of saying and doing through others. The freedom that Bakhtin calls authorship comes from the ways differing identification can be counterposed, brought to work against one another, to create a position, our own voice, from which we work. (Holland et al, 1998, p. 210-211)

Besley (2003) furthered this conception of agency in his study of Luke. “Luke suggests that growing up involves a ‘hybridisation pastiche process of stitching together an identity like trying on of new types of clothes, becoming your own hybrid, blending and shaping and putting together something that’s a range of cultures’” (p. 170).

In volunteering with LGBTQ youths, Molly Blackburn (2003) noted how the meanings of a young woman’s literacy practices worked to empower her within the figured world of a youth run center. In her work at the center, Blackburn ran a voluntary literacy group. Confusing a composition notebook as being for school, Blackburn (2003) describes how Justine, an African American, lesbian young woman, maintained a personal journal that was “just [her]” (p. 316). When asked if she would share something from her journal, Justine read a powerful poem she had written in response to being called a “dyke” in the streets. Holland and Lave (2001) would frame this conflict through the contentious moments that arise as history-in-person (being a lesbian) intersects with history-in-institution (a heterosexist, homophobic environment). Justine’s response to this contentious moment was to write a poem that embodied how she saw herself at that time—a recognition of her gender and race, and her connection with her sexuality. As a result, Justine was able to use her writing as a measure of agency by authoring who she was.

On a separate note (in contrast to the heterosexist, homophobic environment) Blackburn (as a former teacher) could be seen to characterize the

figured world of school by associating the composition notebook as an artifact of school. With the figured world of school embodying the objectivist history-in-institution that “infuse and restrain local practices” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 3), literacy practices can be seen as artifacts managed by the institution of school. Yet Justine demonstrated that appropriating what is often viewed as an artifact of school literacy, literacy practices may also become an agentic artifact managed by adolescents to author themselves in different figured worlds.

### **Adolescent Literacy and Identity**

Braiding conceptions of adolescence and literacy with that of identity, scholars can examine the meanings of literacy practices as enacted by different identities, which has important implications for adolescents who enact particular identities (e.g. Goth, gang, jocks) and engage in out-of-school literacy practices to negotiate meaning to self-author their own lives. To further scholarly understanding, there is a need to examine how different figured worlds make meaning of literacy practices and how schools position the out-of-school literacies of adolescent identities. My study examined English classrooms and an adolescent identity group by addressing the following research question: *How do outcast adolescents’ literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in and out of a school’s social worlds?* By looking at the English classroom and adolescent identity group as a figured world, I aimed to a) identify the literacy practices the different figured worlds engage in (research questions 1 and 4), b) the meanings the different figured worlds ascribe to their literacy practices

(research questions 2 and 5), and 3) how one figured world positions another through the use of literacy practices (research questions 3 and 6). The focus on literacy practices as artifact of figured worlds will hopefully help to illuminate how literacy practices act as mediating tools to position identities and as artifacts for individuals to self-author themselves in new ways. A study into the literacy practices of particular adolescent identities adds to the literature on adolescent identities and on adolescent literacy practices.

### **Summary**

In my conceptual framework I examined how adolescent literacy has evolved from secondary literacy to a socio-cultural understanding of adolescents and their literacies. This body of work informs my study by grounding it in school promoted literacy practices and the meanings associated with them. I then examined the evolution of New Literacy Studies for its influence on what counts as literacy and literacy's tie to identity development. I will draw on this literature as I conduct a case study that examines outcast adolescent literacy practices and the meanings associated with them. Finally I examined two models of identity development in adolescent literacy and explored Holland et al's (1998) model of Identities in Practice in order to frame my study's focus on how adolescent literacy practices mediate participation and positioning in and out of a school's social worlds. These theories provided the lens through which I investigated the role that literacy practices play in mediating the participation and positioning of outcast adolescents in school and in their figured worlds.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

Cases are constructed, not found, as researchers make decisions about how to angle their vision on places overflowing with potential stories of human experience. (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 2)

As suggested by the name acquired through reflexively and interactively positioning, outcast adolescents are not members of a particular popular social group, nor are they defined by their gender, race or ethnicity. Rather, their identities are the antithesis of socially accepted categorizations. Even though the term outcast is a larger categorization for the wide variety of individuals who do not fit in and sit as the “Cafeteria fringe” (Robbins, 2011), understanding these literacy learners is best achieved on a case-by-case basis. My main research question is *How do outcast adolescents’ literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in a school’s social worlds?* The subquestions are as follows:

1. What are the literacy practices outcast adolescents use?
2. What are the ways in which an outcast adolescent takes up literacy practices?
3. What meanings do literacy practices hold for outcast adolescents?
4. What are the literacy practices promoted by an English teacher?
5. What are the meanings ascribed by the English teacher? How are



school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom?

6. What meanings do school-promoted literacy practices hold for the outcast adolescent in an English classroom?

### **Research Design**

This study was a case study into the figured world of adolescent outcasts and the figured worlds of two English classrooms to illuminate how outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in and out of a school's social worlds. As a type of ethnographic design, the case study is a qualitative research procedure that is an "in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection" (Cresswell, 2005, p. 439; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

In a case study, any descriptor that might be attached to a child become a socially accomplished construct enacted in particular physical settings, in certain kinds of events or practices, and with particular materials and is infused with certain ideologies or assumptions about how the world works. (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 11)

The use of ethnographic methods in crafting this case study helped develop "insight into some of the factors that shape, and the processes through which people interpret or make meaning" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3).

Consequently, using a case study method focuses on the figurative identities and literacy practices of adolescents. The resulting insights and

knowledge generated from case studies are considered more concrete, more contextual, more developed by the reader's interpretation, and based more on reference populations determined by the reader (Merriam, 1998). The value of this experiential knowledge is in the way it illuminates the complexities and refining of theory (Stake, 2005). For this study, a case study design helped to further illuminate not just the "sophisticated purposes for literacy that all people bring to literacy practice, purposes that can be incorporated into the teaching of multiliteracies" (Moje, 2002, p. 118), but also how these identities and practices are positioned (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998).

### **Research Site**

High school is the study setting because it is during this time of adolescence when youths participate in peer based figured worlds they most identify with. As noted by Eckert (1989) in regards to outcast cultures in the past, youth culture affiliations begin in the middle school years and thicken at the beginning of the high school experience. As a result, how a particular adolescent identity takes up literacy practices to make meaning would best be observed in the secondary setting.

Located in the heart of North Carolina, Kleinville High School is the only high school in the Kleinville City school district. Yet Kleinville City Schools is situated within Central County Schools, which includes seven high schools (the closest of which is 6 miles from Kleinville). As a result, students can easily

transfer between Kleinville High School and Central County Schools just by moving one mile in any direction.

Kleinville High School, a comprehensive 9-12 high school, consistently averages approximately 1300 students. Kleinville High Schools' 2009-2010 ethnic profile included 2.7% Asian Americans, 26.2% Hispanic Americans, 14.8% African Americans, and 51.6% Whites. The 2009-2010 population data included 9.01% exceptional children, 19% academically and intellectually gifted, 10.2% limited English proficient, and 47.6% free/reduced lunch. 2009-2010 had a dropout rate of 5.1% and a graduation rate of 76.1%.

During this time, North Carolina required high school students to complete End of Course (EOC) exams in ten subject areas (English I, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Physics, Civics and Economics, US History, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II). EOCs impacted students in the reporting of proficiency levels (levels 3 and 4 were proficient) and 100 point converted scores. In Kleinville City Schools, the converted scores made up 25% of students' final grades.

A graduation requirement of Kleinville City Schools was the Graduation Project. The Graduation Project consisted of four parts: paper, product, presentation, and portfolio. Students initially began by selecting a topic they were interested. These included hobbies, future vocations, and service learning. Students wrote an 8-10 page paper, including five references documented in a work cited page. Students then contacted a mentor that was an expert on their

topic (could not be a family member). Students had to spend a minimum of fifteen hours over three separate face-to-face meetings with their mentor.

During this time, students had to develop a product with the guidance of their mentor. These products could include brochures, cooking dishes, restoring an aircraft, designing and sewing a costume, and creating a business plan. Once completed, products were evaluated by the mentors. The various elements of the graduation project were gathered in a portfolio (including mentor consents, photos, paper, evaluations, journals, etc.). Each semester, students in the English IV classes presented to a community panel of four judges. Students were judged on aspects including pacing, dress, idea progression, evidence of new learning, and speaking skills.

In 2006-2007, Kleinville High School launched a smaller learning community (SLC) focused on science, technology and math. The SLC was situated at a local animal and wildlife conservation and education center and consisted of 4 teachers (math, science, English, and social studies) who facilitated the learning of approximately 120 students through project-based learning activities. Students had to apply and undergo an interview to be accepted to the SLC. All students attended the main campus during first period. After that period, some students attended the SLC for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> period, while others only attended for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> period.

I selected Kleinville High School because I had previously worked there as an English teacher. Having interacted with a wide variety of students, I felt

confident that I could enroll three participants who identified with the Goth identity. As my interests in beginning this study was to look at the literacy practices of localized identity groups as they participated in school, I asked various teachers at Kleinville High School for the names of students whom they identified as part of the Goth social identity. Without first asking students which identity construct they identified with, I recruited three adolescents who matched aesthetically the social group I wanted to understand better (Goths). I first had the teachers approach the students regarding the study. Once they agreed, I reviewed the consent forms with the students.

During interviews I learned that none of my participants identified with Goth identity. A small identity group whose numbers have increased and decreased in the years I have interacted with Kleinville High School, I came to better understand that Goths were not the stabilized social group I envisioned. Rather, it was an interactive positioning by those who noticed these students because they seemed to be “loners” in a community where the importance of social identification (as a band geek, athlete, gangster) impacted individual positioning.

### **Participants**

I initially began this study with three student participants (Chloe Johnson, Brianna Parker, and James Blanco) and their two English teachers (Abigail Harrison and Robert Whitman). Two months into the study and after a number of

absences, James Blanco transferred to a school district an hour south of Kleinville for medical reasons.

### **Chloe Johnson**

Seniors at Kleinville High School, Chloe Johnson and James Blanco were best friends until he moved. With her bright red hair and his dyed black hair, enhanced by their dark clothing, piercings, skull motifs, and pointed studs, Chloe and James appealed to my research interest.

Seventeen years old at the start of this study, Chloe had always been a student in the Kleinville City School system. Consequently, many of her classmates had known Chloe for years, though they did not socialize together. From a white, lower middle class background, Chloe's mother was a secretary at a local church and her father (who worked in the declining textile industry for over a decade) was a technology technician in the school system.

During her sophomore year, Chloe became a member of the SLC at the satellite campus. In the SLC, she found a sense of independence and belonging. During her senior year, most of her friends had graduated and her best friend moved. In addition, many organizational changes occurred at the SLC. As a result, she became disenchanted with the setting and school administration. Having already returned to the main campus to take her English IV AP course, Chloe expressed a desire to leave the SLC.

Chloe's main influences at this time were her participation in theater and anime fan conventions and her involvement with her boyfriend. Two years

younger than she, her boyfriend shared her enjoyment of reading, mostly fantasy novels he shared with her. He and his family were also instrumental in introducing her to the North Carolina Renaissance Festival. From this experience, she became increasingly involved in the North Carolina Renaissance Festival and local Shakespearean festivals.

In June 2010, Chloe graduated from Kleinville High School and enrolled in a local university to study Theater. She continues to study theater, is an undergraduate assistant in the costume shop, and a crew member of the theater group.

### **Brianna Parker**

A junior at Kleinville High School, Brianna most closely epitomized a Goth student with her dyed black hair, piercings, tattoos, kohl rimmed eyes, and black clothing. Sixteen years old at the start of this study, Brianna joined Kleinville High School at the beginning of the second semester the previous school year (2008-2009). Prior to that, Brianna had been a student in the county school system where she hinted that she had made poor choices in friends with negative habits. Brianna was the only child of her working class mother, who had her when she was 14 years old. Her mother worked as a waitress and was currently married to a man with whom Brianna did not get along.

During this study, Brianna worked two different jobs: one at an auto service/car wash station, and one at a local restaurant. Her main peer influence during the first semester was her boyfriend, whom she met and worked with at

the auto service station. He was a Jehovah's Witness and shared his religion with Brianna.

In January 2011, Brianna graduated from Kleinville High School as an early graduate. Having felt little connection to Kleinville High School, Brianna chose to not walk at the June graduation. Brianna intended to pursue a degree in cosmetology, but she entered the job market instead, working as a waitress/hostess at various local restaurants. During one informal follow-up, Brianna indicated an interest in attending the local community college to pursue a degree in nursing. As of yet, she has not enrolled in a post-secondary class.

### **Abigail Harrison**

Ms. Harrison was Chloe and James' twelfth grade AP English teacher. White and in her early 50s, Ms. Harrison was a well-meaning teacher. As a veteran teacher, she was the English department chair and had taught all of the AP English courses for a number of years. Ms. Harrison was also instrumental in developing and establishing the Graduation Project at Kleinville High School. A 1982 graduate of Elon University, Ms. Harrison's teacher education training emphasized the use graphic organizers and content area reading strategies. After over ten years working at Kleinville High School, Ms. Harrison moved the summer after this research because her husband took a job in a different state.

### **Robert Whitman**

Mr. Whitman was Brianna's eleventh grade Honors English III teacher. White and in his mid early 30s, this was Mr. Whitman's second year in public



education. Prior to teaching at Kleinville High School, Mr. Whitman taught English courses (developmental reading and creative writing) at a community college. As a result, he brought with him an understanding of the expectations for college level writing.

### **Data Collection**

In order to create a “comprehensive and complete picture” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 89), I collected multiple forms of data to answer my research questions (Appendix A): observations, unstructured individual interviews, and artifacts.

#### **Observations**

Observations collected through passive participant observation consisted of recording fieldnotes of participants in their natural settings (Cresswell, 2005; Heath & Street, 2008; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Spradley, 1980). I observed the two participants and the school-based figured worlds they were a part of from September 2009 to June 2010. My observation protocol (Appendix A) consisted of a running script in the form of fieldnotes. I recorded what students did, what the teacher did, and incremental time stamps. In my fieldnotes I initially incorporated Spradley’s (1980) Grand Tour. Spradley’s (1980) Grade Tour directs the observer’s focus toward broad, sweeping categories. For example, I began my observations by looking and describing the classroom, students, and activities. What did the classroom look like? Where did my participant sit in relation to other students? What activities did students engage in? Once patterns

started to emerge, I started to incorporate Spradley's (1980) Mini Tours by directing my focus towards specific instances of the domains. For example, once the domains literacy events and literacy practices were identified, I directed subsequent attention towards what literacy events were promoted in the English classroom and what literacy practices the teachers promoted . For example, what kinds of readings were assigned? What kinds of writings were accepted? These observations were included in my research fieldnotes. In whole, my fieldnotes included "activities, events and sequences, settings, participation structures, behaviors of people and groups, conversations, and interactions" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 128).

"Ethnography forces us to think consciously about ways to enter into the life of the individual, group or institutional life of the 'other'" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 31). Similarly, classroom observations shed light on literacy practices and meanings of participant practices that may have been overlooked during individual interviews. In addition to fieldnotes, observations accompanied by memos (Maxwell, 2005) helped to preserve my immediate responses to the social situation of actors, activities, and setting (Spradley, 1980).

### **Individual Interviews**

Brianna, Chloe, Ms. Harrison and Mr. Whitman were individually interviewed to examine individual meanings of literacy practices (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I conducted three formal, semi-structured interviews with each of the student participants: once near the beginning of the study to learn about

participants' background information and to gain information about their dispositions and literacy practices, once at the middle of the study as a way to member check the data collected through observations and artifact collection, and once at the end also to member check the data collected through observations and artifact collection. The initial interview consisted of initial protocols (Appendix A) that were then reviewed using Spradley's (1980) Grand Tour. Subsequent protocols were developed based upon observations, informal interviews, and collection of artifacts. I also interviewed the teachers of observed English classrooms to get at meanings of the figured worlds of their classrooms. Both interviews were structured around eliciting meanings of literacy practices and positioning of adolescents and literacy practices as observed in classroom observations and artifact collection. The interviews were Mini Tours (Spradley, 1980), consisting of questions based on observations and the collection of artifacts. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

I also conducted informal, unstructured interviews after class and in response to events during participant observations. These interviews were unstructured as they allowed for other qualitative data to inform interview questions, and the open-ended format provided a greater variability of response (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). For example, when Chloe gave a presentation by herself and other students gave their presentations in pairs, I asked why. When Brianna chose to design her PowerPoint presentation in a particular manner, I asked what caused her to focus on color. By basing these questions on

observations and participant self-report during interviews, these informal, unstructured interviews gave immediate (or as close to) feedback on literacy practices and dispositions that were observed.

### **Artifacts**

Artifacts are physical objects that can capture meanings in figured worlds and guide ethnographers to new understandings (Cresswell, 2005; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The artifacts I collected as evidence of literacy choices and products (both personal and teacher assigned) in which Brianna and Chloe engaged included writing samples, PowerPoint presentations and literary selections.

### **Data Analysis**

Fieldnotes, transcripts, and artifacts were coded, classified, sorted, and arranged. Data analysis was ongoing to ensure that subsequent observations and interviews delved into deeper understandings of analyzed data. Once memos, fieldnotes and transcripts were typed, I used units of analysis as identified during the research using Spradley's (1980) domain analysis. I used Spradley's method because, as a novice researcher, it's structure helped to chunk the data and guide the process. For example, figured worlds, positioning, and literacy practices were key domains to guide the coding of the data. Semantic relationships were determined in order to analyze domains for hierarchical cover terms and included terms for coding. For example, in analyzing figured worlds, I used Spradley's (1980) strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y). The

English classroom is a kind of figured world. Brianna’s matriarchal family is a kind of figured world. When identifying positioning, I used Spradley’s (1980) means-end (X is a way to do Y). Completing one’s homework is a way to position oneself as a good student. Scoring non-proficient on the history End-of-Course exam is a way to be positioned as a struggling learner.

Table 1. Domains Organized by Strict Inclusion

Y	X
Ways of Being	A good student An actor A granddaughter An English student Different Religious Right
In School Literacy Practices	Texts Writing Strategies Digital Literacy Discussions
Out of School Literacy Practices	Writing Texts Strategies Self expression Oral Story Telling Digital Literacy
Figured Worlds	Family School English Classroom Kleinville High School

The entirety of fieldnotes and transcripts were coded according to discovered domains. As coding and domain analysis were completed, domains were selected for Spradley’s (1980) taxonomic analysis. Taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1980) examines the relationships between terms within a domain to determine which terms can be merged and incorporated. For example, Brianna

engaged in figured worlds with her mother, her aunt (mother’s sister), and her cousin (on her mother’s side). In completing a taxonomic analysis, I merged these as a matriarchal familial figured world.

Once a taxonomy analysis was completed, a data matrix was developed to determine comparisons, contrasts and relationships between the taxonomies.

Table 2. Data Matrix

Who and When	Line	Notes	Identity in Practice	Literacy	Figured World	Positioning	Other
6/9/20 10 BP	368-372	a good student is “someone who studies enough...has their homework done, pays attention, takes notes, tries to interact with the teacher more than someone who doesn’t care as much, has stuff turned in on time, asks questions, helps other students if they don’t understand.”	Ways of Being: good student	In School Literacy Practice	School	A good student is more about behavior	Meaning of good student
12/6/2 009 AH	206-207	“I’ve noticed in class, like if we have a class discussion or something like that, when she’s ready to say something, she splurts it out.”	Ways of being: Good student	In School Literacy Practice: pedagogy	School: classroom	positioned as lacking soft skills; Not being a good student	
12/6/2 009 AH	228-233	“I think I’ve already mentioned this too, but I think that one thing that I kind of struggle with is because she’s so articulate and she does have good things to say. I’ve kind of expected more in the written part of her work and that’s kind of--I can’t decide if she’s not putting as much into that because that’s not what she likes to do or if maybe she’s lacking a little bit in her ability to express herself in the written word.”	Ways of being: Good student	In School Literacy Practice: writing	School: classroom	how expectations of In School Literacy Practice position students	expectations
12/6/2 009 AH	238-239	“she’s very careful to do everything right. She follows the rules and she’s going to do the parenthetical documentation the right way. Her work cited page is going to be the right way.”	Ways of being: Good student	In School Literacy Practice: writing	School: classroom	getting it right	

11/17/09 BP	68-71	Ideal student: "always has their homework, always ask questions, participates in class, turns in their work on time, pays attention, isn't disruptive, helps their classmates."	Ways of Being: good student	In School Literacy Practices	School: classroom	A good student is more about behavior	
12/7/2009 RW	191	"She will always ask, 'I was thinking about doing this.' 'Is is OK if I do this?'"	Ways of Being: good student		School: classroom	Reflexive Positioning that influences Interactive Positioning	
12/7/2009 RW	175-176	"I like students who are not afraid to ask questions, that aren't afraid to be wrong, that trust themselves."	Ways of Being: good student		School: classroom	how fear and taking risks position students	questions BP asked were more about clarification
10/12/2009 CJ		CJ asks teacher to look over generated riddle for feedback and approval	Ways of Being: good student	In School Literacy Practice	School: classroom	getting it right	

As I reviewed the matrix, I positioned different domains at the forefront to help me analyze the nuances of Brianna's and Chloe's identities, figured worlds, and positioning. For example, situating identity in practice X literacy X positioning led to me to understand how performing an identity in practice (ways of being a good student) would intersect with a literacy practice (class discussions) to reflexively position a student (quiet). In contrast, situating literacy (worksheets) X identity in practice (ways of being a good student) X positioning led to a different understanding of how certain literacy practices fostered particular identities in practice to interactively position a student (loner). These frameworks are presented in the findings chapter. Emerging patterns and frameworks from the matrix helped to narrate the findings and inform the research questions.

### Situating the Researcher

I chose Kleinville High School because based on my prior history, I believed I would be able to enroll three student participants that identified

themselves as Goth. An initial disadvantage to this study is my history of involvement with Kleinville High School. As this study began, I had been working as an Assistant Principal at Kleinville High School for four months. But even before then, I was an English teacher in 2003, before working as a part-time curriculum coach. As a result, I had interacted with a wide variety of students in multiple contexts and was familiar with at least one of the teacher participants prior to the study. Being a school administrator placed me in a position of power regarding my teacher and student participants. But having previously been an English teacher and curriculum coach made me known as an advocate to the teachers. Having not been their English teacher myself, I did not have a prior relationship with Brianna or Chloe. As a result I had to carefully craft a connection without intimidating them because I was in a perceived position of power. At first it was awkward and interviews were very structured. But as the study continued and I was able to interact with Brianna and Chloe on a daily basis and in a variety of contexts, we were able to form a more interactive relationship and our final interviews were more dynamic.

A shortcoming to the use of case study methods stems from researcher bias. As a person of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic background, I have preconceptions about what counts as school-based and out-of-school literacy practices, good pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching. Going into this study, I believed in expanding school-based literacy practices to incorporate multiliteracies, and as a teacher and school administrator, I have notions about



what counts as cognitive development, engagement, and achievement. I also hold opinions about equity and empowerment of diverse cultural groups. For example, I believe all students should have access to rigorous courses (like honors level courses) regardless of social identification (athlete, emo, Goth). My interactions with Alice promoted a belief that Outcast students were treated differently (I'd even say unfairly). Because of these predilections, my subjectivity must be taken into consideration during the study as I tease out the meanings I made of the data and their relation to my beliefs (Cresswell, 2005; Heath & Street, 2008; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Another shortcoming is that this is a case study designed to research three students (of which one dropped out). As a result, the number of participants does not lend itself to make generalizations about adolescent identities, literacy practices, or figured worlds. As a sociocultural study into the figured worlds of an adolescent identity that is scarce within individual schools, it does, however, guide us to "listen more closely to what [individual] students have to say about school, friends, and family; about what they hope for their futures; and about how they might get there" (Fairbanks, Crooks, and Arial, 2011). Because it is through "the most local of local detail" (Geertz, 1973, p. 69) that we as educators can reframe how we see individual students enact agency (Fairbanks et al., 2011) to position and reposition themselves in school.

## **Summary**

Just as Dyson & Genishi (2005) noted, how I construct Brianna's and Chloe's stories are a result of various methodological decisions. I chose ethnographic case study because I am telling the stories of two outcast students within the bounded system of Kleinville High School. By presenting Brianna, Chloe, Mr. Whitman, Ms. Harrison, and Kleinville High School, I have set the stage and introduced the players. By sharing my own researcher subjectivities and how I analyzed the data, I have also shared how I "angle[d]" my vision (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) in crafting their "narrativized" worlds (Holland et al, 1998). Chapter IV will present my findings as I share Brianna's and Chloe's stories. Chapter V will begin with a discussion of the two cases before leading to implications, limitations, and future research.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

To emphasize our reliance on her words and her perceptions, we have italicized Esme's words and allowed them to flow with the text. (Fairbanks et al, 2011).

In this chapter I will present the case study of Brianna and Chloe. I present each young lady separately to present her experiences in multiple figured worlds. I share out-of-school and in-school literacy practices as they are revealed through the different figured worlds. Although I do not italicize their words, I do rely heavily upon their words and perceptions to tell their own stories.

#### **Brianna Parker**

As we began the study, Brianna Parker was a Junior that had been attending Kleinville High School since the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. 5'5" tall, with dyed black hair often styled with a razor cut, and heavy black eyeliner contrasting her pale skin, Brianna's appearance often presented itself as different in a school where she did not conform. Having previously attended a county school, Brianna was an outsider who had not grown up or gone to school with the majority of students at Kleinville High School. "There is a lot of people in there and it seems that they've known each other for a long time so they're all just – they just talk a lot and they're all friends." Consequently, how Brianna was positioned and how

she positioned herself worked in how she was/failed to be enrolled in the school and classroom environments.

The strongest influences on Brianna during this time were her family and a former boyfriend's family. With only a 14-year age difference between the two of them, Brianna's mother was one of the three greatest influences in Brianna's literacy development and identity formation. The second set of influences on Brianna was her grandparents as they influenced her interests in history and helped formed her religious beliefs. The third set of influences on Brianna was a former boyfriend and his family as she participated in alternative religious practices and subsequently empowering literacy practices.

### **Out of School Literacy Practices**

Out of school, Brianna was an avid reader. She liked to buy cookbooks, read about Elvis, and consumed historical romance novels set in the early 1900s. For Brianna, romance kept stories interesting. Brianna's literacy practices extended beyond print texts to movies and the Internet. She liked to watch movies that were funny, scary, or based on true stories. Although these overt literacy practices were engaging parts of her daily practices, further probing into the different figured worlds Brianna participated in revealed literacy practices that were more in the background.

Just as looking at the figured worlds of school will give an understanding of how literacy instruction worked to position Brianna in-school, looking at the

out-of-school figured worlds Brianna participated in gives an understanding of the literacy practices Brianna engaged in that may or may not have been supported and nurtured in school.

**Family.** Some of Brianna's out-of-school literacy practices were influenced by her matriarchal line and her grandparents.

***Matriarchal Line.*** Brianna had a strong community within her matriarchal line. Living in a single parent home with her mother, Brianna noted her mom had been the greatest influence on her literacy development. Brianna commented,

I mean growing up, whenever I would go to bed, she would let me go like an hour early 'cause I would just read the whole time until I went to sleep. I would get like piles of books just to read and she'd always read to me and she will buy me different kinds of books.

A point of pride in describing their home, Brianna noted how their family had two entire bookshelves full of books.

Even though many of these books reflected her mother and her shared love for romance novels, there were also motivational texts. "She buys me books that are for entertainment, but also books that help me learn how to...well, not to be respected...but things that would make me think a little bit more about the person that I wanna be." For example, her mom got her a book by Steve Harvey (*Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*). Some of these books impacted Brianna for years to come.

I read a book, Dr. Phil's son wrote it...I got it when I was 13. My mom got it for me. He always talked about how being in your comfort zone was the worst place to be. I'm like, that's stupid. Why won't you always want to be somewhere you're comfortable? But now that I'm getting older, it's like I wanna be able to do more than just average.

Not only did Brianna's mom impact her literacy development through the texts she selected, but also through the talk she promoted. "If I read a book, my mom will ask me how I liked it and I'll tell her what I liked about it and what my favorite parts were and stuff like that." Discussions were a regular part of Brianna's and her mom's relationship, one she began to miss when she moved out at the end of the study to live with her aunt and cousin.

I do miss things like, when I come home from work, it'll be like 9:30/10:00 and sometimes she'll still be up or she'll be going to the bathroom and see that I've got home and we'll sit and talk like about how work was. I miss that kind of stuff but we get along a lot better when we're not around each other all the time. We'll drive each other crazy. We're just so alike.

And yet, despite the text and discussion rich environment Brianna and her mother shared, Brianna would rather show her mom she loved her than saying it, thus using actions to mediate meaning.

In addition to her mother, Brianna's grandmother and aunt also influenced her literacy development. For all that Brianna only noted that her grandmother often gave her books to read, she also noted how her aunt helped to expand her literacy development beyond print text. In one interview, Brianna shared how her mom, aunt and her went to see the film *Sex in the City* and were going to see the second one. In another interview, Brianna reflected on how her aunt convinced

her to open a Facebook account. Eschewing email communication, Brianna began to use Facebook as a way to keep abreast of family and friends.

Once I figured out how to actually use it, I found I've made a lot of friends and I have gotten to where I have more connections with people like instead of just seeing them every now and then, you can say something to them on there and talk....It's easier than getting together all the time or if you don't see somebody or you have family that live far away, like my aunt and her husband...in Texas. I can communicate with them better 'cause I can't talk on the phone all the time and they're an hour behind us. I always stay up late so it's too late to talk on the phone, but if I'm on the computer, we can talk then. And so I love it now.

Although Facebook was never a medium through which she reflexively positioned herself, it was a part of her community of practice in which she engaged with others. And as evidenced through her reposting of a description by her cousin onto her profile page, it was a medium through which she internalized how others interactively positioned her.

Brianna is "my oldest cousin and she is one of my greater inspirations. when i was younger i wanted to be just like her and do everything she did. she hated it when i followed her around so we were always arguing and i never got to tell her the truth. she is very independent and she is gorgeous. i still want to be just like her, but we're too different and we live to far apart now. i can still remember the one summer i came to texas and we talked to each other on the phone. we always ended up crying and we could never figure out why. since then we have become closer..but still not very close. i talk to her as often as i can, but it feels like its not often enough. i wish i could be there to see her graduate, but instead im gonna be halfway across the country. i love her to death and she is in the top 3 for being my favorite cousin."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All texts have been reproduced verbatim.

**Grandparents.** A strong influence on Brianna was her grandparents.

Brianna passionately spoke how she valued them and interacted with them on a regular basis, going so far as to reserve Sunday evenings to always have dinner with them. Through her engagement with her grandparents, particularly her grandfather, Brianna developed a love for history.

My Papa [is] really into history and all that so that kind of got me interested in it too....we like to like go and look at antiques and he knows a lot of stuff about it and so he'll just tell me all about stuff and I just love it. I think it's so interesting.

At a separate point, she stated,

I'm very interested in like antique stuff and like all like older things. I really wish I could live in the 1900s, like the big dresses and the big hair and all that. I just find it so interesting like to see how people were back then.... I think it was a more respectable world back then, like traditional 'cause it's not like that now.... And I much rather live back in the old days than now.

Brianna's interest in history, particularly the 1900's, was reflected through her choices of texts as she preferred historical romance novels and her favorite romance novels were set in the 1900's.

**Jehovah's Witness.** At one point in the study, Brianna engaged a figured world through her boyfriend and his family.

I'm studying to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses, which is what his family is. And when I first started, was just doing it to learn about it I wasn't thinking of, you know, converting or anything else. Like oh, this is just going to be a learning experience and it was not.



But Brianna's participation with the Jehovah Witness didn't just influence her theologically, but also through literacy.

They have a lot of literature that I studied a lot. It's just – it will teach you about a certain subject and you read and underline and I read a lot of those books and they have magazines and other publications that I read a lot of those of...It's not like this with all of them but they'll have like the paragraphs here and then numbered and then they'll have a question for each paragraph.

Through her participation with the Jehovah Witness, she learned new literacy practices like underlining, self-questioning, and rereading to help her comprehend and remember what she read.

It helps you understand it better because you can go back and whenever I'm reading sometimes I'm not paying attention. I'll be like, 'What did I just read?' I have to read again. So the underlining when I'm studying really helps to kind of concrete it to remember it and know that – I'll know that if I ask myself the question and I don't know the answer and then I'll need to reread it.

But when asked if she applied the same strategies to reading personal or school texts, Brianna response did not indicate complete transference of strategy use across figured worlds.

If I'm – occasionally I'll stop and ask myself whatever just to make sure that I've been reading it because I'll come across something and be like, I don't remember that and so I'll go back and read. I don't underline or anything but I'll stop and ask myself and reread if I need to.

**Friends.** Another literacy practice Brianna engaged in outside of school was personal writing.

I keep a diary when I can. ... if a day is just kind of boring, I'm not going to write about my boring day. But, occasionally, like if I feel like I need to write and I don't want to talk about it, I do that. Last year I wrote a lot, like I would write poetry, not like the rhyming kind, but-you know- just write out whatever I'm feeling.

For Brianna, writing was cathartic, allowing her to vent her emotions without the risk of opening herself to others.

It's kind of like an outlet. And I don't always like to talk about problems because it's a problem and I don't like to reflect on it. I don't like to think about it and whenever you are talking about something that makes them uncomfortable with another person, you know, there is always judgment or trying to give you advice. And whenever you're writing, you can just say exactly how you feel. You don't have to censor anything. You don't have to leave parts out. You can just – it's a stress reliever, I think.

To share her thoughts, feelings, and emotions was to risk being interactively positioned.

By writing, Brianna was able to control if, when and how she was interactively positioned.

Whenever I first write it, I won't show it to anybody. But I have things from... six months ago that I'll show somebody if they're interested. But usually I'll keep it to myself for a while. I don't – I don't –only if...I just have to get comfortable with it first or – I don't know – sometimes it's hard to share personal things with other people even when you are close to them.

When she was ready to share her personal writings with others, it was more often with close friends or her boyfriend. “Well, I have this friend Sarah. We've been friends for almost seven years.... She writes and sometimes we would just get together and show each other what we've written. I'll show my

boyfriend sometimes....” Ultimately, it was Brianna’s desire to open up more and share more of her writing with others.

I’m trying to get more comfortable with sharing exactly how I feel with other people that I am not as close with but generally they are different. They’re probably a little bit more personal when I write them for myself than I like to get with other people.

Understanding Brianna’s out-of-school literacy practices helps to contextualize Brianna’s in-school experiences and positioning. How she and her English teacher defined literacy helps bridge these understandings.

### **Defining Literacy**

As we first began to talk, Brianna Parker was hard pressed to succinctly define literacy. Instead she described the practices she engaged in in her English class, demonstrating an understanding of literacy as reflecting Street’s (1984) Autonomous Model of Literacy consisting of reading and writing. “Vocabulary every week....We’d have sentences to correct, ...[and do] a lot of group work. And we’d read books. ....We would read the book and then watch the movie. Or if we watch the movie, it’d be about what we’re studying.” Consistently concerned with understanding text and “getting it right” when writing, Brianna consistently positioned In School Literacy Practices in relation to expectations of what her English class was supposed to be like. And when she was probed to think about what she would consider to be part of her literacy book bag, Brianna responded, “a discussion about what you read or what you watch. I don’t know.” At the

beginning of this study, Brianna had a hard time considering literacy to be much beyond print texts and the practices directly associated with print texts.

Further complicating such understanding of literacy, Brianna's English teacher, Mr. Whitman, demonstrated tension within his own definition of literacy. In discussion, Mr. Whitman first defined literacy as "the ability to read and write...reading in terms of being able to comprehend something." "Literacy is used for being knowledgeable of really any field of study." Reflective of an autonomous model of literacy, Mr. Whitman's definition initially aligned with Brianna's definition of literacy. And yet, Mr. Whitman subverted the expected definition reflecting the autonomous model when he noted, "My definition, it's just the ability to take in information, really any information and then to do something with it to get something out of it that's meaningful." In qualifying his definition, Mr. Whitman opened his understanding of literacy to be more reflective of an ideological model of literacy. Although Brianna's understanding and expectations of literacy in the English classroom reflected an academically accepted definition of literacy as Mr. Whitman first posed, how his initial definition was unintentionally contrasted by his ideological interpretation then worked to position her differently. Consequently, how Brianna and her literacy practices were reflexively and interactively positioned worked to engage and disenfranchise her from this particular English classroom figured world.

Ultimately it was in the ways Brianna entered into this English class as a Figured World that she in turn altered her own understanding of literacy as

different ways people express themselves. After taking Mr. Whitman's English class, Brianna noted,

It's interesting to see how many different kinds of people there are that can write about so many different things and it still turns out to be this work of art. Someone is expressing themselves and their ideas and so I think I see it may be as a little more of an art now than I did before.

As a result of Mr. Whitman's pedagogical choices, Brianna came to define literacy differently than when she began the class.

### **Pedagogy**

Brianna's and Mr. Whitman's differing meanings of literacy often manifested themselves through the ways pedagogy, practice, and Figured Worlds were juxtaposed against one another, thus positioning Brianna in different ways. For example, examining how Brianna and Mr. Whitman's expectations of ways of being a good student influenced Brianna's practices in class illustrates Brianna's positioning differently than when examining how the pedagogical choices of Mr. Whitman allowed Brianna to respond with her understanding of ways of being a good student. To capture how an understanding of Brianna's positioning was reached, I titled each section by the variables through which I filtered the data (Ways of Being a Good Student X Pedagogy X Positioning, Pedagogy X Ways of Being a Good Student X Positioning, etc.) to clarify the focus my analyses and interpretations in these sections.

**Ways of Being a Good Student X Pedagogy X Positioning.** Brianna consistently defined a "Good Student" in terms of behavior. A good student

“always has [his/her] homework, always ask questions, participates in class, turns in [his/her] work on time, pays attention, isn’t disruptive, and helps their classmates.” A good student is

someone who studies enough...has their homework done, pays attention, takes notes, tries to interact with the teacher more than someone who doesn’t care as much, has stuff turned in on time, asks questions, and helps other students if they don’t understand.

A good student is “someone who is dedicated, who does the work even if they don’t particularly enjoy the class...” Consequently, Brianna’s practice reflexively positioned her to embody a good student as she saw it. Ready to take notes, Brianna would have a notebook on her desk, she would watch and pay attention to teacher and student presentations, and she tried to not be disruptive by not socializing with other students. Trying to live up to the expectations she understood for a good student, she tried to be “Someone who does everything the way they were supposed to even if they don’t enjoy the class, is motivated and goes to class ready and prepared. Pays attention.”

In contrast, Mr. Whitman’s “ideal student would be one that’s not afraid to be wrong. That’s not afraid to try and to stretch themselves some.” In addition, he stated, “I like students who are not afraid to ask questions, that aren’t afraid to be wrong, that trust themselves.” For Mr. Whitman, evoking this type of student was part of his lesson planning. “We try to get them to use this higher order of thinking skills but it’s almost like some of them are afraid to.” Mr. Whitman often planned collaborative inquiry projects where students presented their products to

the whole class. He would have students explore American authors and literature from different historical eras; investigate, compare, and contrast literary movements; and analyze themes across self-selected poems. He concluded, “An ideal student is not afraid to just dive into something and to do something with it. That’s why I like this [poetry project] so much because they went into, most of them went into it without any fear.”

In reflecting upon Brianna, Mr. Whitman noted that she was a “very concerned student. She will always ask, ‘I was thinking about doing this.’ ‘Is it OK if I do this?’” “She wants to make sure that she’s doing what she’s supposed to, that she’s doing things in the right way.” The subtext underlying Mr. Whitman’s perception that what Brianna or he believed she was “supposed” to do may not have manifested in portraying her as a good student because she was overly concerned with doing things correctly, rather than taking risks to “stretch” herself, even if that meant “being wrong.” In addition, Mr. Whitman noted, “she doesn’t interact with the others in a way that I would hope that students would. She does when it’s necessary, she’ll work with other students. Or when it’s required.”

Even though Brianna conscientiously tried to position herself as a good student, Mr. Whitman’s meaning of what it meant to be a good student worked to position her otherwise because while she was trying to “get it right,” Mr. Whitman was hoping for a student who overcame her fears and took greater risks.

### **Pedagogy X Ways of Being a Good Student X Positioning.**

Alternatively, Brianna’s expectations of the literacy practices within her English

class were often unrealized. Brianna commented that she “would be more engaged in English if the class were to correct things more often” and that she liked “learning new words and expanding my vocabulary.” She also wished for the class to visit the library to check out books more frequently and to have silent reading built into the class structure. She felt she performed better when there was more direct instruction and when she worked by herself. Although she found “worksheets and notes as tedious work,” she liked to have discussions. Where such dispositions toward literacy may have acted as capital in a class patterned after an autonomous model of literacy, for Brianna, a girl who “like[d] to be grammatically correct,” it was not enough to interactively position her as a good student.

**Habitus X Pedagogy X Positioning.** Brianna’s habitus subtly interwove with her learning experiences to engage and disengage her. In her own reading and visual habits, Brianna liked scary and suspenseful texts as represented by VC Andrews, JD Robb, Janet Evanovich, and John Grisham.

Not always the ones that are, like, gory... I like the ones that are not always the things that happen but the things that could happen or... that's scary to me. I like to be scared but not really, because, you know, I'm watching a movie. I like anything – I like based on a true story and that kind of stuff I like to read or to watch.

This preference helped to further engage Brianna when her class read scary texts. “I like the Edgar Allan Poe poems we've been reading. Those are interesting.” And Mr. Whitman noted Brianna’s engagement with the Emily



Dickenson project, where “some of Emily Dickenson’s poems are really dark.” He noted, “I think that was one thing with the Emily Dickenson poem, that she found one that spoke to her on that level.”

During one interview, Brianna commented, “I don't like change. I'm very anxious.” This aspect of Brianna’s habitus dominated Brianna’s approach to her out-of-school experiences, but also transferred to her in school experiences. Having been relatively new to a school based on a block schedule where courses changed at semester, it took Brianna a while to find a measure of comfort. This discomfort was most evident during collaborative and cooperative group assignments. At the beginning of the semester, during observations and from her teacher’s report, Brianna did not interact fluidly with her peers. Mr. Whitman noted, “She doesn’t interact with the others in a way that I would hope that students would.” Brianna countered, “I just like to get to work.” During observations, Brianna would work on her part alone or just discuss the work at hand in a serious fashion. And even though Brianna stated that she “like[d] to have the class discussions,” she struggled with “trying to get more comfortable with sharing exactly how I feel with other people that I’m not as close with.”

Yet as the semester progressed, Brianna was able to gain a sense of stability and comfort. As Brianna identified herself, “I can be outgoing around people that I'm comfortable with,” Mr. Whitman “noticed her open up a little more just recently in the past few weeks with some of her other classmates.” Even though Brianna’s interactions with collaborative and cooperative groups were

never observed as close or easy, by the end of the semester, Brianna appeared more willing to interact with group members, smile, and even socialize a little. Unfortunately, after 90 days, Brianna had to change courses and classmates for the next round of the block schedule.

A third aspect of Brianna's habitus that impacted her positioning was her struggles with her memory. From our first interview to our last, Brianna consistently noted how she struggled with her memory. She often commented, "I cannot retain information very well"; "I have a terrible memory." As observed in class, when classroom pedagogy incorporated question and response interactions, Brianna could not help but be inadvertently positioned as struggling learner when she couldn't respond immediately. "I don't know off the top of my head," she asserted. When summative End-of-Course tests focused on knowledge based recalling knowledge or information, Brianna was positioned as not proficient:

I learned so much and I did really good in all tests and everything in this class. I really enjoyed it when I got to the test and I was like they are really specific questions. That's when I got like...I didn't remember any of it.

Because her community presentation of her graduation project required her to speak in an extemporaneous style, Brianna's memory worked to position her as not successfully learning about her topic to the community judges. Her response to the project suggested her frustration:

So I think I just wanted to get everything said that I was thinking of that would apply to the speech and I couldn't always remember all of it. So it was hard... I couldn't write down every single thing that I wanted to say and just have like certain points to touch on so I think not being able to memorize it hurt me there.

Though Brianna was consistently engaged in most of her classes and the learning experiences she was offered, her obvious struggles with her memory to recall facts and information ultimately helped to not only position her as not proficient, but also as what Mr. Whitman described as a nice student: "They're mild-mannered polite students. I'd lump her in with those students."

**Figured Worlds X Pedagogy X Positioning.** Just as her habitus and ways of being a good student worked to position her in different ways, the intersection of the figured worlds Brianna inhabited and the pedagogical practices she engaged in positioned her in different ways. In the next three subsections of school, Kleinville High School, and English class, I will show how navigating the figured world of school, and specifically Kleinville High School, was challenging as Brianna repeatedly found herself positioned as struggling learner. Though she was able to access greater opportunities to reposition herself in the figured world of Mr. Whitman's English class, Brianna was unable to use any of her capital to successfully enact any agency or to reposition herself.

**School.** Within the figured world of school, Brianna unexpectedly found herself positioned as a struggling learner due to what Holland and Lave (2001) identify as "enduring struggles" that are "historically institutionalized." As part of the state's graduation standards, Brianna was required to meet proficiency as

measured on state End-of-Course (EOC) exams in five mandated courses: Algebra I, English I, Civics and Economics, Biology, and US History. Her performance on these tests surprised her:

I like history...I was really surprised that I didn't pass that exam because I did really good in the class. I did really good on the test. So I don't know what happened there....You learned so much and I did really good in all [in-class] tests and everything in this class. I really enjoyed it and when I got to the test and I was like they are really specific questions. That's when I got like...I didn't remember any of it.

Brianna had to retest in order to demonstrate proficiency in US History. Ironically, through her out-of-school figured world of family, Brianna had a personal interest and passion for history. "I like to learn about older things...I really wish I could live in the 1900s." Yet in the figured world of school, Brianna was identified as struggling due to her scores on the EOC exam. This instance illustrated that Brianna's positioning became "engaged with others in local struggles animated at least in part by the power, if not by the representatives, of pervasive translocal institutions and by discourses widely circulating locally and beyond" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 13). Although Brianna had the availability of calling upon her different selves that engaged in learning history, the institutionalized practice of EOCs to determine proficiency positioned Brianna as a struggling learner at risk for graduation.

Reflecting that "anthropologists tend to think of people as living 'in' culture or 'in' history" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 217), Linger repositions this perspective to look at "history in [a] person." For Holland and Lave, history in

person is the “multiply authored and positioned selves, identities, cultural forms, and local and far-reaching struggles, given together in practice...thus “index[ing] a world of identity, action, contentious practice, and long-term transformative struggles” (2001, p. 30). Brianna’s out-of-school interest in history and in-school engagement in her US History class are aspects that compose her history in person. In contrast, Brianna’s experiences with standardized tests (EOCs) became an enduring struggle within the educational landscape. Holland and Lave differentiate enduring struggles as “struggles of large scope in space and time in part because of the riveting force of such struggles and their undoubtedly urgent impact on practices that affect the authoring of local lived identities” (2001, p. 21). This intersection of History in Person and Enduring Struggles provided the space for Local Contentious Practices where Holland and Lave (2001) see the potential for agency and self-making to occur. But because Brianna was not able to capitalize on her different selves, and her teachers were not aware of her memory struggles, neither she nor her teachers were able to better position her locally or beyond.

***Kleinville High School.*** Because Brianna did not attend Kleinville High School during the ninth grade and half of the tenth grade, Brianna struggled within the figured world of Kleinville High School. In understanding figured worlds as “as if realms” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 49) where “particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 52), schools as figured

worlds are places where particular participants and practices become part of a school's culture. Consequently, students do not experience seamless transitions when they transfer between schools because each school has constant participants (teachers, administrators, and support staff) with localized practices and performances that differ from school to school.

One way this manifested itself for Brianna was in her participation in the Spanish Language Program. Having successfully taken Spanish I and Spanish II, Brianna elected to take Honors Spanish III, where she struggled. Brianna did note the lapse in time between when she took Spanish II and Honors Spanish III as being a factor: "I think that really messed me up." But, a pedagogical practice of the Kleinville High School's Spanish program nonetheless worked to position her as struggling even more so. "Her way of teaching, I just didn't like really get it ... 'cause I have to have somebody like really, really hands on like. ... I just didn't really adapt to her teaching style." Kleinville High School's Spanish program focused on an immersion experience where Brianna's prior experiences appeared to be more focused on isolated skills.

With my other teachers, they did vocabulary like you would get your list and then they would say the word, and you would say it with them. Then you go over by what it is and whatever. But we didn't do that here. I think that kind of – and there was a lot of group work and I work better by myself. I can do group work fine. It's just in some things like – I need to have like the teacher like give...instruction.

In addition, Brianna had developed a relationship with her previous Spanish teacher: "We already knew each other and everything. He was really good."

Because Brianna's experiences at her previous school's Spanish Program utilized different pedagogical practices and valued alternative performances than what she experienced at Kleinville High School, Brianna found herself negatively positioned and disengaged.

**English Class.** When asked to describe herself within the context of her English class, Brianna's response was, "I read a lot. I love to read. I like to write...I don't know – I like doing anything that has to do with English." Despite Brianna's passion for reading, this was not enough capital for Brianna to be able to distinguish herself in her English class. From in-class texts to strategy use to the Graduation Project, Brianna met with mixed opportunities in being able to position herself as a good literacy learner.

**Texts.** In looking at the texts Brianna encountered in her English Class, I am drawn to the contrast of her own summary of the texts read, "We've read some things that I like, just not all of it is interesting," with Mr. Whitman's observations of Brianna, "She's engaged when it's something that I think she can relate to." Brianna's own reflections and Mr. Whitman's observations both illustrate how texts worked to position Brianna as engaged and unengaged.

In a couple of instances, Brianna noted the frequency of use of the English textbook. "We use the [textbook] a lot. I find that kind of boring." Likewise, Brianna found herself unengaged in the texts of *A Separate Peace* and *Pride and Prejudice*. "Some of the things we read are older or... we read the *Declaration of Independence* and that doesn't interest me." With *A Separate Peace*, Brianna's

class watched a war movie and commented, “it just doesn’t interest me.” Brianna never did finish reading *Pride and Prejudice*. Initially, Brianna also struggled to become engaged in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. It took a few chapters before she did become fully engaged. “After I got into them, I liked them.” What drew her in was getting to know the characters, their motivations and behaviors. Likewise, it was often the characters that drew Brianna’s interests with other texts, like *The Canterbury Tales* and *Macbeth*. Brianna found the different characters interesting in *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Macbeth* turned out to be one of her favorite in-class texts. Brianna liked *Macbeth* because of all the complex characters. She was particularly interested in Lady Macbeth. “His wife was the one with the power and then it completely switched. I just felt that was so interesting how she goes from being this conniving person to you know, once they get it done, it ruins her.”

In addition to her interest in assigned texts, opportunities did arise to better position Brianna in the English classroom. Another text Mr. Whitman assigned that engaged Brianna was *1984* by George Orwell.

We read George Orwell in English. We did *Animal Farm*. I wasn’t really a fan of that one, but we read *1984* and I loved that one. And I was telling my grandpa about it and he’s like I read *Animal Farm* and I really liked it and I was like, well I didn’t like that one, but we also read *1984*. He was like, ‘I never got to read that.’ So I got him that for Christmas and he started it and he likes it so far.

Unfortunately, Mr. Whitman did not capitalize on Brianna utilizing an in-school text to further position herself in her relationship with her grandfather as Mr. Whitman did not invite Brianna’s out-of-school literacy practices back into the



classroom. Brianna was not given the opportunity to bring her interactions around 1984 with her grandfather into the classroom, nor was she encouraged to develop artifacts of learning in connection to her grandfather. Another opportunity to better position Brianna as a literacy learner was through a project where Mr. Whitman noted Brianna as engaged with the poems of Emily Dickenson. "I think that was one thing with the Emily Dickenson poem, that she found one that spoke to her on a religious level." Mr. Whitman noticed Brianna's interest in religion through the personal reading he saw her bring in. "If I see a title or something, it usually is something that I assume as in that genre." But, even though Mr. Whitman often saw Brianna as engaged in texts and assignments with religious connections, he never engaged her on that level.

Yet in looking at what caused Brianna to be more engaged in particular in-school texts over other texts could be directly tied to how reading some of the complex texts within the English class helped her to be more successful and further her literacy understanding. "If I had read *Macbeth* on my own, I mean I could get it, but it probably wouldn't make as much sense as it did." Ultimately, it was through the in-class activities of vocabulary development, character analysis and discussion, making predictions, and summarization that helped Brianna become engaged and successful with many of the texts selected for classroom reading, though her out-of-school literacy practices could have helped to better position her as a literacy learner.

*Strategies.* Aligning with The Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2013), the pedagogical strategies Mr. Whitman utilized drew from the student outcomes of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as represented by Life and Career Skills; Learning and Innovation Skills-the 4 Cs; Core Subjects-3Rs and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes; and Information, Technology, and Media Skills. The incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, most specifically technology, collaboration, and higher order questions, worked to position Brianna in the classroom both positively and negatively.

Technology enhanced learning allowed Brianna to utilize 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills of creativity to be engaged and demonstrate her knowledge. During classroom observations where laptops were used, Brianna used technology to find images evoked by poems, incorporate sounds, and utilized presentation formats to create PowerPoint presentations to demonstrate her learning about literary movements, characters, and themes. Brianna would painstakingly try different colors, pictures and the Paint software program to create the backgrounds of her PowerPoint slides to help convey tone and mood.

Mr. Whitman's technology enhanced learning strategies worked to not only help Brianna access knowledge but to also demonstrate her knowledge. In one observation she used the Internet to conduct research and document sources on Realism beyond what was offered in the textbook and Media Center. During another observation, Brianna identified pictures that helped her to make connections in reading Edgar Lee Master's poems *Lucinda Matlock*, *Douglass*,

and *Richard Bone*. Mr. Whitman noted, “it just allows them to do all these things but still have them analyze and be insightful and to come up with different things.” In doing so, Mr. Whitman “had them explain all of these things as they were presenting the images and descriptions.” “We try to get them to use this higher order of thinking skills.”

Furthermore, technology enhanced-learning empowered Brianna to demonstrate her own knowledge and learning. As noted previously, Brianna struggled with her memory. Yet when I observed her during her presentation of Realism and Naturalism, she utilized the PowerPoint she had created as a guide in organizing her presentation and what she wanted to share. Brianna did not just read from her slides, but she also further explicated key details by accessing her memory. Mr. Whitman saw technology empowering all students as it “open[ed] up the door to all the things that they can do that it’s having them do the same time-honored skills that you used in this sort of class, but you know, to bring in other mediums,” although he never commented on Brianna’s use of technology to her or in our interview.

Another pedagogical strategy that worked to position Brianna as an outcast student was collaboration. A self-proclaimed introvert, Brianna noted, “there’s a lot of group work and I work better by myself.” During my classroom observations, at the beginning of the semester, Brianna kept to herself. When assigned to a group with two other students, Brianna briefly consulted with the other two members before working by herself on her part while the other two

students worked together. As a result, Brianna's positioning was that of loner rather than collaborator. But Mr. Whitman's persistence to have students collaborate in a variety of groupings allowed opportunities for discussions. Brianna's "a very quiet student, but then sometimes she'll just throw her hand up and just say something." As a result, Brianna was able to sometimes reposition herself as insightful. Eventually, with Mr. Whitman's persistence in fostering a collaborative classroom, by the end of the semester, Brianna could be observed talking with different group members more and working together with them, thus repositioning herself as more of a member of the community of practice.

But a pedagogical strategy that continued to reinforce an isolationist positioning was the use of worksheets. During my observations when worksheets were given, Brianna was always observed as quietly working alone as she answered her worksheet questions. A few other students would whisper back and forth, but Brianna did not. And even though Brianna said she preferred to work alone, she found "worksheets and notes as tedious work." Consequently, this pedagogical practice worked to position Brianna as unengaged.

Another pedagogical practice that positioned Brianna as an unengaged learner was when Mr. Whitman asked questions. The questioning strategies were typically question-response, question-response, with students providing a choral response. At such times, Brianna was positioned as a non-participant as she remained quiet.

*Writing.* Within the classroom figured world, Brianna had an unrealized potential to be positively positioned because of writing. Brianna's habitus included personal writing. In our first interview, Brianna shared how she used to write in a diary and even wrote poetry for herself. At one point, she even registered to take a Latin class, finding it "interesting 'cause it's all writing." A favorite prior classroom practice was correcting sentences—"I like being grammatically correct." Mr. Whitman's writing intensive courses (graduation project paper, journals, poetry, analytical essays) would appear to have been an ideal opportunity to capitalize on Brianna's writing capital, yet it didn't.

Mr. Whitman liked students to have opportunities to write without strict conventional guidelines. For example, Mr. Whitman provided multiple journal writing opportunities. One observation had student students create journal writings from a character or historical person's point of view. Another asked students to write about "What is the American identity? How does literature from past eras relate to my life?" Another journal opportunity asked students to take a stance,

Do you believe humans control their own destiny (future), or are we simply following a path that is controlled by fate or a higher power, such as God, or is a combination of the two? Explain your answer and then write about how your answer affects the way you live your life, view the world, or view others (how does this apply to your life?).

Given these opportunities, Mr. Whitman saw that Brianna was more comfortable with the journal style of writings. "There's more of her in it...I've noticed that there

is a difference between [formal] type of writing and journal writing and more personal writing.” “I guess, writing that’s more personal, whether it’s coming from like creativity or if it’s just from a personal essay, are more, those stand out more than just formal writing she does for me.” Mr. Whitman’s perception of Brianna’s writing calls forth Brianna’s own reflections of the personal writings she rarely shared: diaries and poems that were saved for those whom she felt more comfortable with, although she did indicate trying to change and thus enacting some sense of agency. “I’m trying to get more comfortable with sharing exactly how I feel with other people that I’m not as close with, but generally they are different” than what she writes for herself. Consequently, Brianna did turn two of her personal poems in to her English class, though there was no indication whether they were positively or negatively received.

In contrast to the journal writings and informal writing opportunities, Mr. Whitman’s students also engaged in more privileged formal writings like literary analysis- where students were expected to draft a “written response [that] are about interpretation and not recollection”- and argumentative writings-where “students examine and compare writing techniques of the past to the present to see enduring qualities of persuasive appeals.”

Mr. Whitman’s students were also required to complete an eight to ten page research paper as part of the school’s graduation project. As part of the district’s requirements, the graduation project consisted of four parts: paper, product, portfolio, and presentation. The paper was completed during Junior

English and required students to utilize five textual resources and one expert interview documented by MLA protocol. The importance of the paper was so valued that students who did not complete the process often failed the class and were not allowed to enroll in English IV until the paper was completed.

With Brianna's expectation that English focused on correcting sentences and her need to often check with Mr. Whitman on whether her performances were correct, one would expect that Brianna would have excelled on the graduation project research paper, but once again she did not.

The graduation project topic was selected by each student and approved by a committee of teachers. This allowed students to select a topic of interest to them, but allowed the committee to ensure the project was feasible, rigorous, and would be a learning stretch. Some students selected topics that they would like to pick up as a hobby (ie. Pottery, scuba diving, golfing). Other students selected a topic of vocational interest (pediatrician, mortician, EMT). Brianna's graduation project's topic was Small Business Entrepreneurship and Cosmetology. For Brianna, this topic allowed her to explore a future profession she was interested in (owning her own hair salon). Throughout the semester, Brianna could be observed working on various stages of her graduation project. Near the beginning of the semester, she'd be with the class in the media center conducting research. On one occasion, after forgetting her notecards the day before, Brianna was trying to catch up. In another observation, Mr. Whitman was returning a draft with descriptive feedback. On another day, Mr. Whitman

collected the works cited page. After a couple months, Brianna reflected on her project, “I really enjoy writing the paper. It wasn’t as hard as I thought it was going to be.” Yet despite Brianna’s engagement with the paper and topic, Mr. Whitman noted, “her research paper which was fine...it’s good writing...nothing that really wowed me.”

In reflection on the Junior English course, Brianna felt that the course did not do as much as she would have liked it to. “It’s more focused on the paper.” With the time and energy spent on students completing the paper, and with Brianna’s investment in the topic and activity, one may question why and how Brianna’s positioning within the class did not improve. Although observations demonstrated that students were given time and guidance on the completion of the paper, never was I able to observe time spent on the craft of writing...either for the paper or another writing assignment. Consistently, Mr. Whitman noted how Brianna’s writing was technically correct, yet failed to incorporate her voice. And yet Brianna, with a topic that was very much about her and her interests, was unable to bridge that expectation without assistance.

### **Summary**

On the surface, Brianna appeared to share Mr. Whitman’s definition of literacy. As a result, Brianna tried to enact traditional literacy practices that historically positioned learners as engaged literacy learners. Consequently, one could logically expect that Brianna would have been positively positioned as an engaged and successful learner. And yet, despite Brianna’s love for reading,



desire to be correct, ways of being a good student, and enjoyment of discussions, how these interacted with different Figured Worlds and pedagogical practices consistently worked to position her as an unengaged, struggling learner. As the study ended, Brianna went on to become an early graduate because she did not feel like an engaged member of Kleinville High School. Though she had the opportunity to walk at graduation, with no meaningful connections at the school, she chose not to. As of yet, she has not continued with going back to school.

### **Chloe Johnson**

When Chloe Johnson was a participant of this study, she was a senior in Kleinville High School. 5'7" tall, with naturally curly red hair, and a thrift store sense of style, Chloe was always sure to stand in contrast to anyone near her. Another disposition that helped to set Chloe apart from others was her penchant to read for pleasure whenever given the opportunity. Whenever there was downtime in class, Chloe was often absorbed in a science fiction/fantasy novel while other students were engaged in conversation. And although Chloe had grown up in the area and was a long time member of the school community, she had spent part of each day of her Sophomore through Senior years as a member of the high school's smaller learning community at a satellite campus. As a member of the smaller learning community, Chloe only attended classes at the main campus 1-2 class periods a day. Chloe had lunch and spent the rest of her

day at the satellite campus. Consequently, in conjunction with her interests and disposition, Chloe's social positioning in school was often on the outside.

The strongest influences on Chloe during this time was her participation in the figured world of Anime as enacted in Anime Fan Conventions and the figured world of the theater.

### **Out of School Literacy Practices**

**Theater.** Out of school, Chloe had a passion for theater and costuming. "I've been in theater ... since like 7<sup>th</sup> grade." Chloe participated in the before school theater club, helped as a stage hand for the school's theater productions, and even made costumes. Out of school, Chloe attended various community theater productions, like *Midsummer Nights Dream* and *MacBeth*. Chloe was particularly fond of Shakespearean plays, going so far as attending various local renaissance festivals while in full costume. For Chloe, the theater had two appeals. One was that "It's not something that everybody does." Chloe was not a student to follow the crowd or do what was popular. The second appeal was that it provided a form of escape.

I can imagine how it must be for a professional actor. It's almost like they get paid to play dress up. I don't really think about it. And then it's like I can put on a costume and run around like I'm a fairy or I don't have to be me for however long.

For Chloe, the theater allowed her to practice multiple identities, many of which were not available to her on a daily basis.

Yet despite this passion, Chloe felt she was not an actor. “And for a while, I had deluded myself into thinking I was going to be a professional actor. Then I realized I'm not that good.” As a result, Chloe focused her passion to theater costuming. “Yes, but there's a certain amount of natural talent like I'm not a singer and you have a better chance of getting into musicals because they're a bigger cast. And costuming is like an extension of that.” For Chloe, costuming allowed her to become fully enrolled into the theater figured world. For school theater productions, Chloe would help manage the costume department. A way that Chloe brought her out-of-school literacy practices into school was through her Graduation Project. For her Graduation Project, Chloe made two costumes for the school's production of *Les Miserable*. Designed for the character of Fantine, Chloe had to consider elements of stage production in her design. The director

need[ed] a sort of worker type costume and then another costume for when she becomes a prostitute. So I had to do these two costumes and one was like a more dirty type of a dress with like a corset -- because I was going to do an actual corset when it comes to the stage. She wore that and she put the blue dress off over it because it has to be a very quick change.

Even though Chloe had taken an introductory apparel class in high school, she gained a lot of technical sewing skills by reading texts on sewing. “I taught myself a lot of it and I took the class here just to learn the application. I pretty much go with the concept of reading various books.” Chloe had become skilled enough to adapt existing patterns to her own needs.

My renaissance costume was a pattern that I adapted to my own purposes....It was sort of like the overdress had boning in it, some sort of corset and lace stuff, but it wasn't a true corset because it was a dress. The bodice alone was like 24 different pieces because it was three layers.

Chloe's sewing skills and ability to use the technical vocabulary opened greater future pathways. After high school, Chloe was able to pursue her love for theater and costuming by interning with a professional costume designer during the summer, and taking a makeup and costuming class in college.

**Fan Conventions.** In addition to theater, Chloe was an active participant in the figured world of anime. Two to three times a year, Chloe would attend different fan conventions on the East Coast. In particular, Chloe was interested in anime conventions like the Aniwave in Wilmington, NC. "Another reason why I do costumes is for [anime] conventions because it's almost the same thing without a script, or a director, or a set." Just as the theater offered a venue for escape, so did the anime conventions. "People know you by who you dress up as." Chloe and a friend would dress as various anime characters and attend the conventions in full character. "We did Ash and Gary from *Pokemon*. And everybody treats you like your character so it's fun."

Chloe's participation in the anime figured world also included reading manga's (anime graphic novels). Her two favorite manga's were *Death Note* and *Ouran High School Host Club*. In addition, Chloe watched various anime's, but often found them frustrating.

I like to watch the series which are in Japanese, but I don't like the dubs for a lot of them. But then you have to just sit and watch, you can't do anything else. And I'm a big multitasker while I watch TV.

And as a result of her interest in anime and manga's, Chloe had an interest in learning Japanese. "I know enough to say that, 'Hi, my name is this,' 'Where's the bathroom?,' 'You're an idiot,' and a couple of those swear words." Chloe was also able to market her costuming skills by selling hats at some of the conventions. Chloe's interest and practices at the conventions enrolled her into the figured world of anime, leading her to make new friends she would revisit as she travelled to the different conventions.

Even though Chloe had a penchant for anime fan conventions, she was also engaged by the collective power of fan conventions. A fan of Nathan Fillion, Chloe enjoyed watching the short-lived series *Firefly*.

It is the only TV show in history to ever get -- cancelled TV show in history to ever get a movie made....because of the fans, yeah. They formed this huge internet group and made petitions, and sent letters, and sent money. And they all got together at Comic-Con which is like -- it's in California, it's one of like the biggest conventions in the country. It's more of TV shows rather than anime but they had like a big auction and raised all those money to Fox and it was like, "Okay, we're not going to bring it back but we'll give you a movie if you leave us alone." They even call themselves the "Brown Coats". It was called the Brown Coat Movement.

Furthermore, Chloe noted how "they had the premiere of *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* at Comic-Con," which then "hijacked the Emmy Awards." In contrast to Chloe's engagement in the figured world of her English class, Chloe's enrollment in the anime figured world, and by extension the world of anime

conventions and fan conventions in general, let to greater engagement, participation, and collective power.

### **Defining Literacy**

For Chloe Johnson and Ms. Harrison, English and literacy were synonymous. In discussing literacy, Chloe referred to “reading and writing” as literacy skills. And even though Ms. Harrison perceived literacy to be everywhere in school, not just English, she saw English as the foundation for literacy throughout the school.

I think that [literacy is] everywhere. It's not just something that's in the English classroom because students are expected to be able to do so many things that overlap into other disciplines, not just the English classroom. So in some ways you might look at the English classroom as sort of being the foundation and now it can definitely tie back into the things that we do but, you know, they have to practice those skills in all of their classes. And I think with this push toward technology and project based learning and all the things that we're doing, I think it overlaps even more than it ever has.

Although such concurrence may appear to promote alignment of a student and teacher's expectations, practice, and performance, there persisted a disconnect between Chloe and Ms. Harrison. Very much reflective of an autonomous model of literacy, Ms. Harrison's pedagogical practices mainly consisted of worksheets, reading from the textbooks, essays and the Graduation Project. Although opportunities for discussion and presentation existed, Chloe was consistently judged as not performing to the expectations because of her written assignments. Even though she technically “got things right,” according to

Ms. Harrison, Chloe's writing lacked the insight and voice she often demonstrated in discussions.

Ironically, Chloe's prior experiences were very different from those she had in Ms. Harrison's Advanced Placement Language and Literature class. Prior to this year, Chloe had Honors English 10 and Honors English 11 with the same teacher in a smaller learning community (SLC) at a satellite campus. This smaller learning community's pedagogy was focused around project-based learning. Consequently, Chloe often spoke about how literacy practices often consisted of discussions and projects instead of tests and worksheets. The contrasting pedagogical practices often positioned Chloe's engagement in an autonomous model of literacy negatively. Furthermore, an assumption that Chloe should have known how to put into writing practice what Ms. Harrison often admired is class discussions worked to limit Chloe's enrollment and success in class.

### **Pedagogy**

Although Chloe and Ms. Harrison had synonymous meanings of literacy, how those meanings presented itself through pedagogy, practice, and figured worlds positioned Chloe in different ways. For example, how Chloe was positioned in the Figured World of Kleinville High School differed from how she was positioned within Ms. Harrison's English class. Such differences were illuminated through the pedagogical strategies utilized through the different Figured Worlds. To capture how an understanding of Chloe's positioning was reached, I titled each section by the variables through which I filtered the data

(Ways of Being a Good Student X Pedagogy X Positioning, Pedagogy X Ways of Being a Good Student X Positioning, etc.).

### **Ways of Being a Good Student X Pedagogy X Positioning.**

I like students who are personable, who interact. They're not too confident, they're eager to learn, they know they have things that they can offer, that they can put on the table, they have experiences and learning experiences that they can share but they're also open to new ideas and new experiences as well.

Ms. Harrison's idea of what made a good student was shown through the qualities of a learner. Consequently, Chloe's dispositions were more likely to positively position her with Ms. Harrison than the curricular skills she may have demonstrated. For example, even though Chloe did embody expectations of working quietly on worksheets and sometimes raising her hand to participate in class discussions, she also allowed her impetuosity to too often overtake her by speaking out of turn during discussions or trenchantly held on to opinions, thoughts, and beliefs. And where Ms. Harrison "prefer[ed] the student who will talk, who will ask questions, who will engage in conversation and that sort of thing," too often, Chloe failed to interact in a manner Ms. Harrison desired. "Her people skills are a little bit lacking... I've noticed in class, like if we have a class discussion or something like that, when she's ready to say something, she splurts it out."

Furthermore, Ms. Harrison's idea of good students were ones who know that they, 'I don't know everything.' you know, that there's still a lot for them to explore and a lot for them to learn and who are eager to do that. I



don't want them to monopolize the conversation and discussion, but I do like those that will contribute and interact with each other and with the teacher.

Yet from the beginning of the year, in discussing the summer reading, Chloe positioned herself in contrast to Ms. Harrison's meaning of a good student when "she was quick to say what she liked and what she didn't like or if she liked elements, parts of things." When other students were talking, Chloe would interrupt a speaker and not let them finish. "She really doesn't take into consideration that she might be interrupting someone else or not waiting her turn; if she wants to say it, she just says it. But then she's not loud." Consequently, Chloe was not only positioned negatively with the teacher but also with her peers.

I don't find that they're mean to her but sometimes you'll see somebody roll their eyes or give that little of--because like she interrupted or she took the words right out of their mouth, maybe they were saying something and she jumps right in there. And they don't say anything, they're not mean, but she shouldn't do that.

### **Pedagogy X Ways of Being a Good Student X Positioning. Ms.**

Harrison's pedagogical practices and subsequently expectations also worked to position Chloe as other than "Good Student." Chloe noted how she completed a lot of worksheets in English, which she found "interesting." Even observations illuminated learning practices where the students "did the worksheet for a couple of minutes then we talked about it like together as a class. We do discuss a lot of stuff." And yet these discussions often centered around answering questions

from a worksheet or teacher. Student generated questions were often not included. Frequently, when observations of the class occurred, students were reading independently, completing worksheets, taking or reviewing tests, or teacher talk dominated the time. And even though Chloe conscientiously performed as a good student by being quiet, completing her work, and trying to be correct, it was often in discussions that Chloe was best able to demonstrate her insights and learning. Even Ms. Harrison noted, "...when she has something to say it's usually something we should all pay attention to." But when it came to written work, Chloe did not live up to *Good Student* expectations. "Some of her writings, some of her journals and written, assignments have been a little bit disappointing to me because I've expected more just from hearing talk about the literature, or the comments that she makes, with connections that she makes."

She much more enjoys a project or acting out something or getting involved in a hands on kind of way, more so than reading or answering a question. She grasps the information with ease but she doesn't like the traditional ways like if you give study questions or something like that, she's not as--she'll do it, if she's assigned to it--I don't mean that but I mean, that's not what she enjoys.

This tension in what Chloe liked to do and what she was good at in contrast to teacher expectations rested within the pedagogical practices Chloe engaged in. Ms. Harrison expressed,

I think that one thing that I kind of struggle with is because she's so articulate and she does have good things to say. I've kind of expected more in the written part of her work and that's kind of--I can't decide if she's not putting as much into that because that's not what she likes to do or if

maybe she's lacking a little bit in her ability to express herself in the written word.

By contrast, Chloe was also a part of a small learning community at the satellite campus of the school. Chloe's previous two years of English were taken within the context of this SLC. In reflection upon her prior English class experiences, Chloe noted

I remember last my English class where there was only nine of us. It was wonderful but instead of having tests on books, we'd have discussions. And the teacher wouldn't even talk; she'd just sit there. One person was in charge of being a mediator. And we just talked and we did great about what we said. That was nice because there were only so few of us like we could actually do that and not interrupt each other and not get loud. And we did great on that rather than having to sit down and take a test. It was wonderful.

Chloe's reflection upon her previous English course experiences suggest Ms. Harrison's speculation that Chloe may have been "a little bit lacking in her ability" to write in the manner expected may have had merit. Each figured world has its own norms and practices that may be taken up through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1997) or strategic instruction. Ms. Harrison's assumptions that Chloe's participation in other English classes would reinforce Chloe's participation in the figured world of this particular classroom were limiting. In actuality, Chloe's participation in the figured world of the English class of her smaller learning community hindered her transition to the English figured world of Ms. Harrison's classroom. Chloe actually did need explicit instruction to be better able to write as Ms. Harrison expected even though her

discussion skills demonstrated that she had the critical thinking skills. Yet Chloe never noted that Ms. Harrison never provided this explicit instruction nor did any observations demonstrate so.

**Figured Worlds X Pedagogy X Positioning.** Chloe's navigation of the figured worlds of school, Kleinville High School, and her English Class was awkward. Despite being academically positioned for success, Chloe struggled to find a sense of acceptance.

**School.** Within the figured world of school, Chloe found herself positively positioned for success. With mostly proficiency levels of IVs, Chloe's End of Course exams structurally positioned Chloe as being potentially successful for the variety of academic levels and programs offered in school.

A student in Honors Calculus, Chloe was enrolled in the second highest Math course offered at Kleinville High School. As reflected through the North Carolina, Honors Course Implementation Guide (Department of Public Instruction, 2005), Chloe's Honors Calculus course curriculum integrated opportunities for her to participate in engaging projects that facilitated problem solving and problem seeking skills in contrast to the skill and drill, recall assignments indicative of standard level courses. "It's Math but I get to draw Mario pictures so it's less bad. Of all the projects I have to do, it's probably the least bad or annoying one to work on." In this assignment, Chloe had to create a storyboard utilizing a Math concept.

You have to apply character's problem to it so the situation was he's traveling to one of those green pipes he's always in. And it's a trap and the area suddenly began shrinking. And he has to figure out, use the Calculus, how long he has to get out before the area shrinks and crushes him.

Consequently, Chloe was able to creatively engage her own interests in drawing Anime in solving for Math concepts. Afforded such learning opportunities, Chloe could be engaged by pulling in her own talents and interests, building a positive relationship with her teacher (whose favorite video game was Mario Brothers), and becoming academically successful.

Another program in which Chloe participated was the Advanced Placement Program. Even though high EOC levels were not a pre-requisite for enrollment in AP courses, they were often utilized to identify students who would be successful and would benefit from the rigorous coursework of an AP program. The benefits of a successful AP program could result in better preparation for college level coursework, better positioning for the college application process, and the ability to earn college credit while still in high school (dependent upon student performance on the culminating AP exam near the end of the course). These opportunities were best realized if either the student was predisposed to being a critical thinker who often questioned the status quo or was a typical honors student (compliant, well-behaved, rule follower) engaged in a rigorous program where scaffolds were in place to facilitate critical thinking and questioning. Chloe took two AP courses in her senior year of high school: AP Language and Literature and AP Earth and Environmental. For Chloe, the AP

English exam was “pretty easy,” even though the AP Earth and Environmental exam “was hard.” An avid reader and theatrically inclined, her AP English exam seemed less of a learning stretch than her AP Earth and Environmental exam. “I was able--I at least wrote something for every essay question which I know half our class just kind of drew pictures.” Despite scoring “qualified” at a level 3 on her AP English exam, Chloe scored “well qualified” at a level 4 on her AP Earth and Environmental exam.

Though Chloe was able to take advantage of every academic opportunity available to her due to her performance on standardized assessments, her navigation of Kleinville High School and her AP English class posed greater challenges.

***Kleinville High School.*** Though Chloe attended all four years at Kleinville High School, she was also a member of a smaller learning community placed at a satellite campus. Focusing on Science, Technology and Math, the smaller learning community utilized resources unavailable on the main campus through its partnership with a local animal and wildlife conservation and education center. As one of approximately 120 students at this smaller learning community, Chloe regularly spent one half to three fourths of her school day at the satellite campus, being taught by one of four teachers. Though Chloe herself felt that she “didn’t like science,” Chloe was very much invested in the closely knit learning environment with outdoor learning space in which to engage in nontraditional learning strategies, including project based learning activities,

looping with classmates and teachers from one course sequence to the next, and independent learning opportunities.

Consequently, while reflecting during an interview on her high school experience, Chloe saw it as, “Different, I guess, because -- I don't know -- it's been, I guess it's the not typical one because I've been out here for three years. But I don't know, it's just been interesting. I'd say it was... good I suppose.” In a written reflection, Chloe noted,

In its inception [the smaller learning community] was a place where students could learn in an alternative environment and experience learning in a different way. The students who took part proved to the faculty how capable they were of handling their responsibilities, and in turn those students were given more freedom than those on the main campus.... At the main campus there are fewer freedoms and less opportunities for alternative learning.

Part of being different was Chloe's greater participation in online courses because of the limited course offerings at the satellite campus. Chloe was currently taking Medieval Studies through the state online learning program. “It was more history than I had originally anticipated,” she said,

And the way it was set up was just different from other online classes. Because it was -- most classes you have a cool lesson and then that's written out for you, then you have other worksheets or something with the lesson but this one there aren't any lessons. It's just kind of like, 'Here are your assignments, go Google it.'

By her senior year, Chloe had taken enough online courses that she knew the norms of online coursework and what to anticipate. Unfortunately, this course

was “kind of boring.” As Chloe had noted, “It was just, ‘Here's your assignment and I give you—they would give you a couple of things to read but for the most part you have to Google all the stuff yourself.”

Another aspect that made Chloe’s learning experience different was the opportunities for project based learning activities. Students were not confined to the satellite campus building for learning. Students were able to go to various plant and animal habitats to read texts, observe animal behaviors, or research entire ecosystems. Whether independently or collaboratively, Chloe was able to participate in inquiry, problem solving, and ongoing discussions. The smaller learning community nurtured Chloe’s independence and non-traditional learning style, despite the fact that she didn’t like science.

Socially awkward, Chloe struggled to find a sense of belonging on the main campus where she was required to blend in with close to 1300 students.

I definitely liked being out here [at the Zoo School] in sophomore and junior years. This year, if I could repeat it, I might have done it on the main campus ...a lot of my friends already graduated, so I don't have a lot of people. And then Preston moved so I basically don't really have any friends out here anymore. So I think it's depressing this year.

Being part of the smaller learning community allowed Chloe to build consistent relationships with shared norms that allowed her a greater sense of belonging than she experienced on the main campus. Although her peer network did change by her senior year, Chloe’s teacher support within the smaller learning



community did not, providing a contrast to her positioning within her main campus Senior English class.

**English Class.** Chloe's out-of-school interests in reading and theater arts steeped her in literacy rich practices that had the potential of positively positioning her in her English class. And avid reader and theater-goer, Chloe's text choices had the potential of positioning her engagement and performance within class texts and the graduation project. In addition, Chloe's SLC classroom experiences with collaboration also suggested positive positioning within the collaborative environment of her main campus English classroom. Unfortunately, Chloe's positioning in her English class had mixed results.

*Texts.* With the possibility to position her as a strong literacy learner, Mrs. Harrison recognized Chloe as an enthusiastic reader.

I think she's one of those who has more [insight]... a tremendous amount on her own, so she can make connections and she can see into things that some other students can't just because of her reading background. I think she's had some experiences too that lend themselves very well to enjoying literature.

Noting here Chloe's love of theater and penchant to read for pleasure ("She reads and she reads quickly."), Ms. Harrison saw Chloe as full of potential. "I think she's just one of those students. I think it would not matter what I assigned her to read, she would read it, she would give it a fair shake." Furthermore, Ms. Harrison assumed that Chloe received the literature well, that "she enjoyed the

books,” because “if she does like something she is very vocal.” Consequently, Ms. Harrison had preconceived expectations of Chloe’s performance around text.

Throughout the semester, Chloe engaged in multiple texts as a member of Ms. Harrison’s AP English class: *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *King Arthur’s Legends*, *MacBeth*, *Hamlet*, *1984*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Frankenstein*, and *the Invisible Man*. Chloe’s level of engagement differed according to the text. Ms. Harrison commented, “Obviously her personality and all that comes into play: She likes what she likes.”

At one point during the semester the class was reading Chaucer in class and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston out of class. “I hate that book. That book was miserable to read.” For Chloe, Hurston’s text was unenjoyable because of the writer’s style. “Good story, but it’s not English. It’s like, I believe the phrase was Southern black vernacular.” In a class discussion, Chloe further notes how it’s difficult to get used to the language. Despite Chloe’s lack of affinity for the text, she continued to be engaged in classroom activities regarding the text: completing a reading guide and orally sharing her answers to the questions during review. Ms. Harrison noted that Chloe “really does try to get into all of her assignments.” During the class review of the reading guide worksheet, Chloe offered nine different responses to various questions. Whether she had to go back to the text to recall specific answers (i. e., the main character reflecting on when she was little and didn’t realize she was black) or analyze the text as a whole (i. e., Janey was spending every minute with the tree and how the

tree blooming is a metaphor of her own sexual and self awakening), Chloe was an active participant within the classroom community.

Simultaneously to reading Hurston, Chloe's class was also reading Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Just as Hurston's text reflected the vernacular of the text's setting, Chloe and her friend noted that *The Canterbury Tales* reflected the language at the time of Chaucer. "It's like German threw up on the English language." But where Hurston's use of language caused Chloe difficulty, Chaucer's language did not daunt her: "I kinda love Chaucer." With the Chaucer text, the class engaged in numerous worksheets and a class presentation. During one observation, Chloe quietly completed first one worksheet on the Wife of Bath before being given a second worksheet on the Nun's Tale. Questions ranged from knowledge-based recall questions to explaining various allusions, and updating allusions for modern references. Chloe's class presentation was a character summary of the squire. Even though most students worked with a partner, Chloe's partner was absent so she worked and presented alone. Chloe saw herself as more engaged with Chaucer than Hurston. And yet, Chloe's interaction with the class around Chaucer's text was more subdued and isolating as she consistently positioned herself as alone. At one point, when Chloe finished her worksheet, she pulled out a book for personal reading rather than engage with other students regarding the text.

Other texts Chloe recalled enjoying in class were *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*. She had not yet read *MacBeth* and looked forward to reading

it with the class because she “loved Shakespeare.” As the class read *Beowulf*, Chloe was also actively engaged in answering riddles and writing modern Anglo Saxon kennings<sup>2</sup>. In describing that year’s Powder Puff cheerleaders, Chloe wrote “muscle men maneuvering with minimal masculinity.”

Even though Chloe noted greater engagement with texts that reflected her own text preferences of fantasy and Shakespeare, her continued interaction with classroom texts that challenged her never deterred her from participating in class, though not always as expected.

*Strategies.* Although Chloe and different classroom texts interactively and reflexively positioned her as engaged or disengaged in her English class, the strategies utilized with those texts and within the class worked to position Chloe academically as a learner. The three strategies most widely utilized in class were worksheets, discussions, and collaborative assignments.

Worksheets were a staple in Chloe’s English class. At one point Chloe reflected, “the class does a lot of worksheets,” which she found “interesting.” “We sort of did the worksheets for a couple of minutes. Then we talked about it together as a class. We do discuss a lot of stuff.” Various classroom observations confirmed a repeated use of worksheets as reading guides or checks for understandings that were then used in whole class reviews of texts. Once worksheets were distributed, Chloe often withdrew to herself to quickly and diligently complete the worksheet.

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<sup>2</sup> A compound expression in Old English Poetry with metaphorical meaning. For example, battle-sweat means blood.

She grasps the information with ease, but she doesn't like the traditional ways. Like if you give study questions or something like that, she's not as...she'll do it if she's assigned to it...I don't mean that. But I mean, that's not what she enjoys.

Even though both Chloe and Ms. Harrison noted how Chloe was not actively engaged with worksheets, Chloe still performed as expected academically.

In contrast, discussions academically positioned Chloe more positively. Having become accustomed to student-led discussions in the SLC, Chloe noted that her current English class also engaged in discussions as follow-ups to worksheets or assignments. One planned discussion Chloe repeatedly brought up was the dinner theater scheduled for the end of the semester. "Everyone has to dress up like a character and bring a food. We have to talk like the characters and stuff. That's fun." Chloe planned to dress and act as Lady MacBeth.

During one observation, the class participated in a question-and-answer discussion on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. During the discussion, Chloe actively participated and offered responses to various questions or to other students' responses. Chloe's responses ranged from the importance of Janey wearing overalls and the reasons no one likes her to the significance of her friendship with Phoebe and the metaphor of Janey and the tree. Throughout the discussion Chloe successfully offered her opinions and insights to further her understanding and that of the class.

During another observation, Chloe responded to a journal prompt that asked, "If someone could foretell your future, would you want the person to

describe what will happen to you or would you rather not know? Why?" When the substitute teacher asked for student responses, Chloe noted, "Ignorance is bliss. If we were meant to know, God would have made us a way to know. If we were to know we wouldn't get to experience the pleasure of the new." Chloe's response reinforced Ms. Harrison's perception that "we can learn something from what she wants to say."

Yet despite Chloe's enjoyment and participation of discussions, her academic insights did not always position her positively socially, which influenced how well Chloe collaborated with her peers. Ms. Harrison noted,

Her people skills are a little bit lacking.... She really doesn't take into consideration that she might be interrupting someone else or not waiting her turn; if she wants to say it, she just says it.... I have noticed sometimes that when she does that, that it irritates other kids. They don't like that. She'll sit there and listen but then as soon as she has a thought or she has something she wants to say, she says it, even if she wants to ask questions about something. She not good about being observant of others and what their needs are or what they're doing. It's kind of like what she needs at that moment or what's on her mind. I don't think she's consciously doing like, 'I'm more important than everybody else,' but that's like of the way it comes across to the other kids. And I think that kind of plays into her not fitting in and not being accepted sometimes.

During one assignment, Chloe was observed working alone while all the other students worked in pairs or small groups. Her partner had been out for a number of days due to an illness. Rather than collaborate with another group, Chloe completed the project presentation on her own. During another observation, the class was engaged in observing different students practice their graduation project presentation. After one presentation, Chloe gave some critical feedback

regarding a speaker's PowerPoint presentation that the rest of the class quickly negated. After her own practice presentation, the class offered her feedback and missing portfolio artifacts (photos of her product taken during the musical production) that she in turn did not take up. At one point in the semester Chloe noted that she had felt lonely that school year as most of her friends had graduated the previous year and were attending college. Her closest friend in Ms. Harrison's class moved partway into the school year. The different interactions and observations suggested a struggle in Chloe's enrollment in the of Ms. Harrison's English Classroom.

Ultimately, Ms. Harrison's integration of worksheets, discussions, and collaborative assignments was part of her intention to "try and tap into different learning styles. Not to always give the same concepts of an assignment because I think students have different strengths." But such intentions were not always realized as Ms. Harrison noted that as much as she enjoyed Chloe's insights during discussions, she was often disappointed in how Chloe's verbal skills did not transfer to her writing skills. "I expect a bit more from her writing than I actually get." She continued, "Some of her writing, some of her journals and written assignments have been a little disappointing to me because I've expected more just from hearing her talk about the literature, or the comments that she makes, with connections that she makes."

*Writing.* Though Ms. Harrison planned a variety of pedagogical strategies to accommodate different learning styles, the nature of the course curriculum

centered around writing, most specifically writing essays in preparation for the AP exam and the Graduation Project. Ms. Harrison noted that the “Graduation Project is a big [literacy project] that’s housed here in my classroom and it involves all kind of skills: writing, reading, thinking, interacting with people.” Consisting of a research paper, product (which could include shadowing a mentor, creating a brochure, creating an artifact, etc.), portfolio, and presentation, the Graduation Project constituted 25% of the semester’s final grade.

Guided by her love of the theater arts and sewing, Chloe’s Graduation Project topic was costuming. In particular, she chose costuming for the musical of *Les Miserables*. Part of her research included the time period of the setting of *Les Miserables* in designing two dresses for the character of Fantine: one which was soiled with a corset and the other a blue dress that “had to go over the first dress for quick costume change.” Although Chloe certainly enjoyed the process of developing the product, the research paper was a major component that was intended to tie her passion to a research foundation. For Chloe, she felt “Nine and a half pages of study paper were enough. Those are research papers, so it wasn’t original thought.” Unfortunately, although the Graduation Project had the potential of positioning her positively, Chloe’s Project paper did not because Ms. Harrison did not feel Chloe’s paper showed the voice and style about costuming that Chloe was able to demonstrate verbally.

In reflecting on Chloe’s writing skills, Ms. Harrison noted, “I can’t decide if she’s not putting as much into that because that is not what she likes to do or if



maybe she is lacking a little bit in her ability to express herself in the written word.” It wasn’t Chloe’s technical skills that concerned Ms. Harrison. “She’s very careful to do everything right. She follows the rules, and she’s going to do the parenthetical documentation the right way. Her work cited page is going to be the right way.” The disconnect between Chloe’s verbal skills, analytical insights and passion did not transfer to her writing skills as far as Ms. Harrison was concerned.

Even Chloe noted of her own writing, “I’m not a great writer.” Despite the dominance of Graduation Project and AP exam in curriculum goals, Chloe also noted at one point that “we don’t do a lot of writing in class.” Consequently one is left to wonder if Chloe’s academic positioning in relation to her writing skills was due to her own perception of the meaning of the writing tasks or her actual writing skills and development. Would specific instruction in the craft of writing (not necessarily the process or format) have allowed Chloe to reposition herself?

### **Summary**

Just as Brianna, despite Chloe’s love for reading, desire to be correct, ways of being a good student, and enjoyment of discussions, how these practices interacted with different Figured Worlds and pedagogical practices consistently worked to position her as an unengaged, struggling learner. Even though she and Mrs. Harrison had similar meanings of literacy, the literacy practices utilized within the English classroom and how Chloe took them up positioned her negatively. Regardless, upon graduating from Kleinville High

School, Chloe went on to study at a local university where she continued to pursue a degree in theater.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It's interesting to see how many different kinds of people there are that can write about so many different things and it still turns out to be this work of art. Someone is expressing themselves and their ideas and so I think I see it [literacy] may be as a little more of an art now than I did before. (Brianna)

#### **Discussion**

How Chloe and Brianna navigated their respective Figured Worlds

(narrativized worlds) and engaged in pedagogical practices was often dictated by how they reflexively (how individuals position themselves) positioned themselves. For example, throughout the study, both Brianna and Chloe chose to not fully engage with their peers during collaborative assignments. Even during paired and group settings, both girls would take their parts of the assignment and work independently. Practices such as these in turn interactively (how others position individuals) positioned them within the figured world of their English classrooms in ways that reinforced their identities as the loner outcast. This is but one example of how Mr. Whitman's and Mrs. Harrison's expectations and practices of literacy, participation and writing, and Chloe and Brianna's expectations and practices of literacy, participation, and writing intersected to engage and

sometimes disenfranchise Chloe and Brianna within the Figured Worlds of their English classes.

The purpose of this study was to build upon the research related to literacy practices and the positioning of adolescent identities. The broad research question that guided this study was *How do outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in a school's social worlds?* The sub-questions were...

1. What are the literacy practices outcast adolescents use?
2. What are the ways in which an outcast adolescent takes up literacy practices?
3. What meanings do literacy practices hold for outcast adolescents?
4. What are the literacy practices promoted by an English teacher?
5. What are the meanings ascribed by the English teacher?
6. How are school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom?
7. What meanings do school-promoted literacy practices hold for the outcast adolescent in an English classroom?

Findings from this study suggest that the intersection of Figured Worlds, identities in practice, and pedagogy work together in complex configurations to position adolescents reflexively and interactively (Davies & Harré, 2000). In this chapter, I will discuss the significance of the findings from the previous chapter.

First I will discuss meanings of literacy. Next, I will discuss identities in practice and how they mediate and are mediated by literacy practices to position adolescents. Finally, I will discuss how Figured Worlds engender various pedagogical/literacy practices to position and reinforce identities in practice.

### **Defining Literacy**

Understanding how Chloe and Brianna define literacy helps to explain the meanings literacy practices hold for outcast adolescents (sub-question 3) and the meanings ascribed by the English teacher (sub-question 5). It is important to understand how Chloe and Brianna and their teachers define literacy as these meanings influence the literacy practices these students performed, the literacy practices these teachers assigned, and the resulting positioning of enacted identities in practice.

Chloe, Brianna, and their teachers initially expressed an Autonomous Model of Literacy (Street, 1984). Rooted in traditional notions of basic reading and writing of print texts, the Autonomous Model of Literacy evokes images of literacy practices consisting of Daily Oral Language, worksheet drills, and reading from a primer or textbook. Accordingly, Chloe and Brianna expected literacy practices to consist of vocabulary worksheets and quizzes, correcting grammatical errors, and writing correctly. These practices could have positioned both girls as successful literacy learners because Mrs. Harrison and Mr. Whitman expressed similar definitions of literacy. But – subliminally - the classroom literacy practices and expectations of both teachers went beyond the

Autonomous Model. Even though Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's classroom literacy practices most closely reflected an Autonomous Model of Literacy, their writing expectations for Brianna, Chloe and their other students demonstrated greater depth and voice beyond just "getting it right", thus contributing to Brianna and Chloe being interactively positioned as struggling writers.

Educated through historical conceptions of literacy with limited professional development on the current state of adolescent literacy, Mr. Whitman and Mrs. Harrison had little training and support to verbalize an Ideological Model of Literacy or how to incorporate it into their classroom. Understanding such historical conceptions helps provide insight about how literacy has been traditionally practiced in schools. For example, Chloe and Brianna's definitions of literacy reflected content area reading strategies of vocabulary development and skill centered instruction that has dominated secondary literacy practices since the 1980's (Moore, Readance, & Rickelman, 1983). Literacy events promoted by the teachers were also reflective of content area reading with content centered instruction, vocabulary development, and reading materials as supplements to main texts (Moore, Readance, & Rickelman, 1983). These conceptions of literacy aligned with Street's Autonomous Model of Literacy and dominated the meanings ascribed to literacy with a focus on "discrete skills" (Street, 1984; Street, 1998; Street, 2003), both of which reinforced Brianna's and Chloe's expectations of "getting it right."

Despite the dominance of the Autonomous Model of Literacy in this study, Street's Ideological Model offers hope for structural changes that would recognize literacy as a social practice and knowledge as socially constructed and contested (Street, 2003). During the study, there were moments during our out-of-class interviews that brought to mind Street's Ideological Model of Literacy. For example, despite Chloe and Mrs. Harrison's espoused definition of literacy, their reflections of desired classroom literacy practices and practice expectations evoked the Ideological Model with its notion of multiple literacies and of reading and writing being dependent upon social structures and the role of educational institutions. Unfortunately, suggestions of an Ideological Model in the classroom remained unrealized. Mrs. Harrison was not able to provide Chloe with the strategy instruction that could have repositioned Chloe as an accomplished writer. In addition, Chloe was unable to utilize her multiple literacies strategically to reposition herself within the English classroom.

In contrast, though Mr. Whitman first expressed a definition of literacy that supported the Autonomous Model, he then contested it when he said, "My definition, it's just the ability to take in information, really any information, and then to do something with it to get something out of it that's meaningful." Furthermore, through her participation in Mr. Whitman's English class, Brianna's own definition of literacy expanded over the semester to be more reflective of an Ideological Model as she participated more actively in her English classroom (to be discussed later in this chapter).

Ultimately, it was through what Mr. Whitman, Mrs. Harrison, Brianna, and Chloe believed that literacy should mean that dictated their practices in the English classroom because “understanding and defining literacy lies at the heart of ‘doing’ literacy” (Street & Lefstein, 2007). But the unresolved tension between what Brianna and Chloe felt literacy meant and the teachers’ expectations for more resulted in missed opportunities to “assess their literacy and learning competencies, and direct their future growth” (Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore, & Alvermann, 2006).

### **Literacy as a Social Practice**

Despite espoused beliefs in defining what literacy is, how Chloe, Brianna, Mr. Whitman, and Mrs. Harrison used literacy in daily practices reflective of the ways literacy is contextualized by social practices. As Social Practice Theory looks to how groups create meaning through daily practices (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990), literacy as a social practice helps to frame my understandings of the literacy practices outcast adolescents use (sub-question 1) and the literacy practices promoted by an English teacher (sub-question 4).

Through different pedagogical practices selected by their teachers to facilitate student learning, Chloe and Brianna engaged in various literacy events and practices that worked to position them in different ways. With its expanded conceptions of literacy extending beyond reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Gee, 1992, 1996), literacy as a social practice looks to meanings of literacy practices as being steeped within “socially situated identities and activities” (Gee,



2001b, p. 719). Literacy practices fostered by the teachers in the English classroom included reading canonical texts and textbooks, vocabulary development exercises, taking notes, question-response classroom talk, research writing, essay writing, oral presentations using PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, tests, and quizzes. For Chloe and Brianna, literacy wasn't limited by reading, writing, listening, and speaking in school-mediated texts, but also included stylistic expression of clothing and hairstyles, journal writing, poetry, costuming, and anime. Literacy practices Brianna and Chloe engaged in outside of school included reading romance novels, fantasy and science fiction; engaging in religious literacy practices of highlighting, underlining, and summarizing; oral histories with grandparents; attending and engaging in fan conventions rooted in animes and mangas; and attending and participating in theater productions based on plays and texts. "As literacies [that] are positioned in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them" (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000), these literacy practices were socially mediated by the identities Chloe and Brianna took up (Jehovah's Witness, granddaughter) and by the social contexts (fan convention, theater) that mediated their opportunities. The literacies Chloe and Brianna enacted reflected their day-to-day lived practices, but within the figured worlds of school and their English classrooms, they were constrained by the traditional Autonomous Models of Literacy they and their teachers espoused and in which they had historically engaged. This tension between Brianna's and Chloe's out-of-school and in-

school literacy practices is reflective of what the New London Group sees as a need for transformed practice where students are able to transfer meaning and create new meanings between contexts (1996). Through the Graduation Project, Brianna and Chloe were able to do so, but with mixed results.

### **Identities in Figured Worlds**

As discussed in the literature review, figured worlds are spaces where “particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 52). Figured worlds are spaces where identities are enacted within social practices to position actions and individuals. Understanding the figured worlds Brianna and Chloe engaged in addresses the ways in which an outcast adolescent takes up literacy practices (sub-question 2), the school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom (sub-question 5), and the meanings school-promoted literacy practices hold for the outcast adolescent in an English classroom (sub-question 7).

Out-of-school, the literacy practices Brianna and Chloe took up were reinforced by their participation in different figured worlds. In the figured world focused around Jehovah’s Witnesses, Brianna took up the literacy practices of highlighting and close reading to better comprehend the Bible. In the figured world of her family, Brianna became an avid reader of romance novels and developed an appreciation of history through antiques. For Chloe, the figured world of fan conventions further immersed her into anime and fantasy-science

fiction, and the figured world of theater productions engaged her further into plays and costuming. These different literacy practices then had the potential to act as capital to better position Brianna and Chloe in school through the courses they took (US History) and the Graduation Project.

An important in-school literacy event Brianna and Chloe engaged in was the Graduation Project. The Graduation Project consisted of four components: Paper, Product, Portfolio, and Presentation. Both Chloe and Brianna had to develop a topic proposal (on a topic of interest to them) and then submitted it to the Graduation Project Committee for approval. Brianna's topic was "owning one's own beauty salon" and Chloe chose costuming. Once the topic was approved, they had to write an 8-10 page research paper, incorporating at least five outside sources and one interview from an expert. As a topic they were personally invested in, writing the paper could have positioned them positively, but the lack of voice in the papers left their teachers feeling disappointed. However, although observations showed opportunities for the students to improve their writing conventions or to verbally share their insights, strategies about incorporating voice into writing were never observed. Consequently, writing the Graduation Project paper reinforced Brianna's and Chloe's perception of the craft of writing as one based on technical correctness.

The product phase consisted of Brianna and Chloe each finding a mentor to shadow, consult, and interact with for a minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of three meetings. From these interactive meetings, Brianna and Chloe each

had to develop an artifact to represent what she learned. Brianna developed a business plan and Chloe sewed a dress for the school musical. Brianna and Chloe then put together a portfolio including documentation of their graduation project process (proposal, letter of intent, mentor consent, journals, photos, clean draft of research paper, and evaluations).

At the end of the Graduation Project, Brianna and Chloe had to develop a 6-8 minute presentation including a visual PowerPoint presentation to deliver to a panel of 4-5 community judges. A practice of these presentations was for students to dress professionally (which constituted 10% of the scoring rubric). For Chloe, the presentation was able to showcase her sewing talents, as she was able to wear her costume during the presentation, thus being able to position herself positively as professional dress/costume was a component of the grading rubric from which the community judges rated her. By contrast, Brianna was not able to position herself positively as she chose to dress informally in jeans. Through the multiple figured worlds (English classrooms, beauty salon, theater, community judges) they engaged in during their Graduation Project, Brianna and Chloe became enrolled in multiple communities of practices that fostered different literacy skills through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For example, Chloe worked with a costume designer at a local theater group. She helped design costumes, dress characters according to a theater productions' needs, and execute wardrobe changes during a production. As a result, Chloe was able to realize a passion for costuming, which she continued to

pursue after high school. Brianna worked with a local hair salon owner, learning about the day-to-day management of a successful salon. Brianna was able to realize the challenges of entrepreneurship and chose not to pursue owning her own beauty salon after high school. As a literacy event, The Graduation Project provided an occasion to engage in “writing [that] is integral to the nature of the participants interactions and their interpretive processes” (Heath, 1983, p. 93). The institutionalized literacy practices used by Mr. Whitman and Mrs. Harrison also reinforced Brianna’s and Chloe’s perception of what school-based literacies were, but did not help to empower or reposition them as good writers.

Even though the Graduation Project is but one literacy event, other events and practices in the figured world of the English classroom also worked to position Brianna and Chloe as a struggling student and/or outcast. For Brianna and Chloe, participation in the English class literacy practices mediated their understanding of what it meant to be a good student. From their interactions (questions and verification) with the teachers to their technically correct papers, both students expressed how certain literacy practices reflected the actions of good students. In addition, collaborative work and discussions could have potentially brought both students further into the figured worlds of their classrooms. Brianna’s loner behaviors and Chloe’s impulsiveness, however, led both to be further outcasts. By the end of the semester, Brianna did appear to open up with her classmates and become more engaged with her peers.

*So how do Outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in a school's social worlds?* In most cases Brianna's and Chloe's literacy practices had the potential to further engage both girls into the figured worlds of their respective English classes. Both girls' desire to be good students and to "do it right" led them to be active participants in the English classroom, but their unrealized challenges with writing and their peers often resulted in them being positioned as struggling students and continued outcasts.

### **Implications**

Chloe's and Brianna's out of school literacy practices were very much steeped in the figured worlds they connected to and participated in. For Chloe, the figured worlds of anime fan conventions and the theater invited her into communities of practices that nurtured her literary interests in fantasy and plays. Furthermore, learning to sew allowed her to gain further entrance into these communities of practices, as she was able to perform as different characters, thus enacting an identity of cosplayer<sup>3</sup> or costume designer. For Brianna, the figured worlds of family, friends, and Jehovah's Witnesses provided her with opportunities to engage in a wide range of literacy practices (reading and highlighting the *Bible*, reading romance novels, writing poetry and journals, discussing history). In turn, these literacy practices allowed Brianna to perform identities of student of Jehovah's Witness, involved granddaughter, sharing friend, and connected daughter. Despite being rich and meaningful, Chloe's and

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<sup>3</sup> Participants of fan conventions that wear costumes to role-play a character.

Brianna's out-of-school literacy practices were unable to position them in-school as successful writers (both), proficient student (Brianna), respected peer (Chloe), or enrolled member of a school-based community of practice (both). To me, Chloe, Brianna, Mr. Whitman, and Ms. Harrison highlight how literacy and identity are interdependent with positioning. How these multifaceted elements are then themselves positioned may have implications for sociocultural analysis, adolescent literacy classroom practices, defining literacy, teaching the craft of writing, and agency.

### **Positioning Literacy and Identity (and Positioning, Literacy, and Identity)**

As illustrated through the structure in the findings chapter and noted in the discussion, how literacy (along with associated pedagogy) and identity are positioned provides nuanced insight to understanding the positioning of the learner. For example, understanding *Ways of Being a Good Student X Pedagogy X Positioning* provides insight to how Chloe and Brianna enacted their own senses of agency in trying to position themselves reflexively as good students in relation to the pedagogical strategies Ms. Harrison and Mr. Whitman utilized. For Brianna, that meant taking notes, doing her work, and getting it right. For Chloe, that meant being right, participating in discussions, and sharing experiences.

In contrast, *Pedagogy X Ways of Being a Good Student X Positioning* provides insight into how Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's pedagogical choices for/using literacy interactively positioned Brianna and Chloe as good students.

For example, the choice to use worksheets often resulted in both girls choosing to work independently and quietly as they tried to position themselves as good-behaving students. The graduation project and its related expectations also resulted in both girls being interactively and reflexively positioned. In regard to the paper, their writing style and voice were seen as lacking and deficient even though both girls' technical writing skills were proficient. And although the professional appearance component of the presentation rubric allowed Chloe to be positioned as appropriate because she dressed in costume, it also allowed Brianna to enact her own sense of agency in positioning herself as inappropriate because she chose to dress in jeans (thus reinforcing an outcast positioning). Juxtaposing literacy, identity and positioning in different configurations helps to "make explicit how identity, agency and power matter in people's opportunity to learn literacy" (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) and opportunity to use literacy for learning.

### **Adolescent Literacy Development**

In trying to bridge the way literacy is taught and the way it ought to be taught, Sturtevant, et al. (2006) proposed eight principled practices to support adolescent literacy growth. Of the eight, the literacy learning experiences of Brianna and Chloe reflect a need for two particular principles:

*Participate in active learning environments that offer clear and facilitative literacy instruction.* Although Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's English classes were figured worlds with shared norms and practices, there lacked consistent



opportunities for Brianna and Chloe to participate in these worlds and the literacy strategies they valued. Because Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison taught eleventh- and twelfth-grade students, there may have been an assumption that the students already mastered and could self regulate using literacy strategies for learning. For example, Brianna, with her struggles with her memory, could have benefitted from learning about some close reading strategies and graphic organizers. It may have benefitted Brianna to annotate texts in class as she did in her Jehovah Witness studies. Before having class discussions, Ms. Harrison could have reiterated norms of turn taking and active listening. Ms. Harrison could have also posed higher order question types with less teacher talk during responses. Such changes in teacher practices could have provided Brianna and Chloe opportunities to reposition artifacts of learning less as “getting it right,” and reposition themselves in school or the English classrooms as proficient or valued.

Mr. Whitman’s and Ms. Harrison’s practices are not a commentary about their individual teaching practices as much as they are a reflection on the history-in-institution (nee history-in-person) of teaching. Although teacher preparation does address early literacy development, adolescent literacy development was not widely addressed in teacher preparation nor professional development at Kleinville High School during this study or the years prior to this study. Consequently, accomplished teachers such as Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison may assume students can monitor their own literacy strategy use. As Brianna illustrated, however, adolescent literacy development needs continued support.

Furthermore, structural practices, such as the standardized tests that labeled Brianna as non-proficient reinforced teacher practices of question and response, followed by teacher commentary with the desired response. These practices, in turn, reinforced teacher positioning as “sage on the stage,” deterring students like Brianna and Chloe from taking risks in case they might have been wrong.

*Connect reading with their life and their learning inside and outside of school.* Out-of-school, Brianna and Chloe both were ardent readers—historical romance, fantasy, mangas, Elvis, and religious texts. Often, when there was downtime in the classroom, Brianna and Chloe would pull out a book to read until the next classroom activity. Despite Mr. Whitman’s and Ms. Harrison’s observations of the girls’ rich literacy interests, neither teacher delved with any depth into what the girls read with any depth. Mr. Whitman assumed that most texts Brianna brought to read were religious, when she often brought other genres as well. Ms. Harrison recognized that Chloe had a wide reading background but did not engage Chloe’s interests in the classroom. Neither teacher knew how in-class texts might connect to the girls’ out-of-school lives. Brianna was able to use Owell’s *1984* to connect with her grandfather in discussions. Chloe went to see *Macbeth* and *Midsummer Night’s Dream* when they were performed by local theater companies.

Without connections to their lives, adolescent students will not be intellectually engaged in the subject matter we wish to teach, and they will be less likely to develop sophisticated literacy skills and strategies that allow them to bring their experiences to bear on unfamiliar texts in the

service of learning content in deep and meaningful ways. (Lewis, et al, 2007, p. 124)

The missed opportunities for Brianna's and Chloe's engagement of text in-school and out-of-school are not necessarily due to Mr. Whitman's or Ms. Harrison's planning or lack of interest. With each teacher teaching at least eighty students in a pervasive school culture focused on time-on-task, opportunities for the teachers to get to know their students to any depth is limited. Their limited knowledge were exacerbated as Brianna had transferred to the school halfway through the year before and Chloe regularly attended the school's satellite campus. Consequently, institutional demands and practices positioned both students (especially as disenfranchised students) and teachers at a disadvantage to connect meaningfully through literacy.

### **The Craft of Writing**

Brianna's and Chloe's expectations of their English classes included vocabulary development, correcting grammatical errors, and writing research papers free of technical errors. Despite a focus on the technical skills of writing, Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison often noted how both girls' writings did not meet their expectations. Even though neither teacher noted any major errors, both teachers described the girls' writings as "fine" or "follow[ing] the rules." Furthermore, each teacher found each girl's writings underwhelming and lacking personal voice. Each girl had a lot to offer during class discussions, but their writings reflected a distinct lack of engagement. One reason may have been the

lack of meaningful connections to in-school texts or out-of-school experiences. Meaningful connections to in-school texts or out-of-school experiences may have fostered their voices into their writings; however, a greater disservice was the lack of instruction on the craft of writing. Outside of lessons on writing conventions, explicit instruction around how to incorporate voice into formal writings was missed. Neither Brianna nor Chloe discussed participating in lessons focused around writing development, and it was never observed during observations. Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's classrooms were certainly figured worlds that had the potential to also be communities of practice where Brianna and Chloe were able to engage with experienced writers in the process of writing. As writers themselves and guides of other student writers, Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison could have led and facilitated writer's workshops and writing conference. Such events could be sites for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Their literary exposure to mainly published literature reinforced a perception of writing as an end product rather than a process. With such a perception classroom based literature alone was unable to help guide either Chloe or Brianna in how to develop a piece of writing that reflecting their own personal meanings and connections to text.

### **What is Literacy?**

Brianna's, Chloe's, Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's multiple definitions and practices reveal how contextually bound literacy is. Even though all four individuals expressed a belief of literacy as reading, writing, speaking and

listening, such promotion of an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) seemed to be more habit than advocacy. Despite similar statements defining literacy, Mr. Whitman did also share a personal view of literacy that reflected a more ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984). As Brianna expressed the greatest change in what she believed literacy to mean by the end of the study, I cannot help but speculate if it was due to Mr. Whitman's own emerging beliefs regarding literacy.

Despite espousing similar views of literacy, within each dyad (Mr. Whitman-Brianna, Ms. Harrison-Chloe), one member's practices reflected a more ideological model, which in turn positioned Brianna and Chloe as different types of students. The implications of this suggests that teachers

1. Need to define what is literacy for themselves,
2. Be reflective regarding the literacy practices they promote in their classroom and how they align with their definitions of literacy,
3. Be conscious of the literacy practices they leave out,
4. Get to know how individual students define literacy and how their practices influence their positioning in the classroom.

Without making their beliefs visible, teachers' and students' belief and practice constrains adolescent literacy development will continue to be disconnected.

### **Agency**

Initially, the temptation to view Brianna and Chloe as "enacting little personal agency at the mercy of a system that neither knew [them] nor attended

to [their] needs” is great (Fairbanks et al, 2011). Such temptations are reflective of a deficit view of identity development. Just because Brianna and Chloe did not enact agentic practices that would have positioned themselves more positively as students and peers does not mean they did not enact any sense of agency. Brianna chose to wear jeans to her Senior Board Night presentation, even though she knew it did not meet the professional dress requirement (and I had seen her dressed in outfits that would have met the requirement). Chloe chose to work independently as often as possible, rather than work with her peers. Such choices positioned both girls as non-conformists and loners, and they were choices the girls made. As a result, educators have a responsibility to accept the choices students make, yet not lower expectations in response nor constrain the opportunities that are available to them (for example, not recommending students to honors level coursework due to behavior rather than cognitive ability).

### **Limitations**

In the methods chapter I discussed my researcher subjectivities and the limitations of the case study method. Another limitation was losing the third participant. As Chloe’s close friend, James’ participation in the study could have revealed shared meanings of two outcasts engaged in many of the same figured worlds (the SLC, Ms. Harrison’s English class, as a peer group). Unfortunately, two months into the study, after excessive absences, James transferred from Kleinville High School and moved to a metropolitan district where he was seeking medical care. Despite James’ transfer, Brianna and Chloe as a case studies

nonetheless tell us something about the consequences of literacy, and does so by locating literacy practices and their meanings within their broader social contexts (Maddox, 2007, p. 255).

### **Future Research**

As I have revisited the experiences of Brianna, Chloe, Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison, I am constantly reminded of future opportunities with this type of research. Data collection with Brianna, Chloe, Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison was limited to two semesters while Brianna and Chloe were in their high school, English classes. One research opportunity would be to follow up with Brianna and Chloe beyond high school. I interact informally with both girls as they have navigate work, school and life, and I often speculate how their positioning and experiences in high school have influenced their opportunities and experiences after high school.

This research's focus was on the literacy practices of two students through their various figured worlds. A second future opportunity would be focusing on just the figured worlds of Mr. Whitman's and Ms. Harrison's English classrooms. I often wondered what meanings other students in the classroom made of the literacy events and practices promoted in Mr. Whitman and Ms. Harrison's classes. I also wonder how sustained professional development in the craft of writing and in developing communities of practices would have opened new opportunities for Brianna's and Chloe's writings and positioning. Two writing experiences I have always valued were the Writers in the School Institute and

The Writing Project. Establishing a teacher-based mini-writing project institute within a school could help develop a writing community of practice. Research in how that influences teaching practice and student writing development could help further understandings in adolescent literacy development.

Brianna, Chloe and their separate experiences are illuminating for me with regard to their identities, the figured worlds they have interacted with, and the literacy practices they have engaged in. But their experiences were always separate. They did not share any classes and they were not friends. A future opportunity to this research would be to replicate this study with a peer group.

### **Conclusion**

This case study has explored the figured worlds of two outcast adolescent identities, the literacy practices these girls took up, and how these literacy practices positioned them. Through the findings and discussion, I traced how their navigation of out-of-school and in-school figured worlds promoted and reinforced certain literacy practices, which in turn led to their reflexive and interactive positioning as good student, engaged reader, struggling learner, accomplished/struggling writer, loner, and unpopular. In concert with the principles of adolescent literacy and New Literacy Studies, this study reinforces the promotion of adolescent literacy development that requires active learning environments, incorporates explicit literacy instruction, and recognizes the need to bridge in-school and out-of-school figured worlds. Although I believe communities of practices are figured worlds, not all figured worlds are



communities of practices. A narrativized world with recognized actors, a figured world does not require experts and novices as members. A community of practice is dependent upon the experts that guide the novices in learning through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As a result, I contend that by moving beyond figured worlds towards true communities of practices, adolescent literacy learners may move beyond technical writing skills towards a development in the craft of writing. Finally, I recognize that agency may not necessarily mean changing one's positioning to reflect my own subjectivities, but may rather be a reflexive positioning toward certain desired identities.

Ultimately, my study is about Brianna and Chloe at Kleinville High School. Neither representative of all outcast identities nor generalizable to all adolescent literacy learners, their stories carry elements of a wide variety of adolescent identities and literacy experiences in-school and out-of-school. As a result, they provide insights and new questions to help us understand others' stories.

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## APPENDIX A

### PROTOCOLS

#### **Observation Protocol for Classroom Observation**

Project: A Case Study of the Positioning of Adolescent Literacy and Identity

Question: What are the literacy practices promoted in the English classroom setting?

What promoted literacy practices are taken in and/or rejected by Goth students?

Setting:

Observer:

Role of Observer:

Time:

Length of Observation:

#### **Classroom Description:**

Seating (Focus on where student participants are seated. Is this self selected or assigned seating? If self-selected, follow up with why student participants selected that seat? If assigned, follow up with how does the teacher assign seating arrangements? How are participants physically positioned in relation to other students and the teacher?):

Walls (Are there student samples on the wall? Do any belong to student participants?

What kinds of literacy practices do the classroom decorations emphasize/reinforce? What literacy practices are not represented?):

Misc:

**Classroom Observation (a running script of what's going on in the classroom):**

Time	Teacher Does	Students Do



### Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Students

Project: A Case Study of the Positioning of Adolescent Literacy and Identity

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this interview is to gather data on 1) how students see themselves, 2) literacy practices students utilize, 3) how much do students see their literacy practices reflected in English classrooms, and 4) how students see themselves positioned in the English classroom. Students and English teachers will be observed and interviewed. Pseudonyms will be utilized to protect student and teacher privacy. Each interview should take place in approximately 30 minutes.

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form]

[Turn on the tape recorder and test it]

Questions:

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. How would others describe you?
3. What's an ideal student? List some characteristics.
4. Do you share some of these characteristics?
5. How would others describe you as an English student?
6. What do you like to read? Why?  
What's a recent book that you've liked? Why?  
Is there an author that appeals to you?  
What do you look for in a good book?  
How do you select a book to read?  
What makes you decide you will read a certain book?
7. What are your impressions of the readings English teachers assign? Why?
8. What readings have English teachers assigned that have appealed to you?
9. What kind of writing do you do for yourself?
10. What kind of writing do you experience in English classes?
11. What is your perception of writing done in English class?
12. How do you think English classes could better engage you?
13. When did you find you started to identify with your social group?
14. What made you a part of this group?
15. What does it mean to be \_\_\_\_\_?
16. How is your educational experience impacted by your affiliation with the \_\_\_\_\_ group?

(Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Your responses will be held confidentially.)

### **Interview Protocol for Teachers**

Project: A Case Study of the Positioning of Adolescent Literacy and Identity

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this interview is to gather data on 1) what literacy practices are utilized in the English classroom 2) how out-of-school literacy practices are perceived by the English teacher. Students and English teachers will be observed and interviewed. Pseudonyms will be utilized to protect student and teacher privacy. Each interview should take place in approximately 30 minutes.

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form]

[Turn on the tape recorder and test it]

Questions:

1. Reflect on the last unit the class completed?  
What readings did you select for the unit? Why?  
How do you think the readings were received? By Goth students?  
What writing opportunities did you provide? Why?  
How do you think those writing opportunities were received? By Goth students?  
What would you have changed?
2. What are your plans for the next unit?  
What readings have you selected? Why?  
How do you think the readings will be received? By Goth students?  
What writing opportunities will you provide? Why?  
How do you think those writing opportunities will be received? By Goth students?
3. What's an ideal student? List some characteristics.
4. What literacy practices do Goth students engage in?  
How are these incorporated in the English classroom? Why or Why not?
5. Are Goth students engaged? Why or why not?  
How could they be engaged?
6. Reflect on the social interactions of your English class.  
Where do Goth students fit in?

(Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Your responses will be held confidentially. I hope that you may meet with me for potential, follow up questions.)

Data Collection Matrix: How do outcast adolescents' literacy practices mediate their participation and positioning in and out of a school's social worlds?

Questions?	Why do I need to know this?	What kind of data will answer the questions?	Where can I find the data?	How will I analyze the data?
What are the literacy practices a group of outcast adolescents use?	To establish out-of-school, group-based literacy practices outcast students use.	Observation fieldnotes, student interview transcripts, informal conversation notes, and artifacts	Out-of-class	Fieldnotes, artifacts and transcripts were coded and analyzed to identify literacy events and literacy practices.
How are group-based literacy practices learned in the adolescent's social world?	To establish how literacy practices work to enroll/position members of the different figured worlds.	Observation fieldnotes, student interview transcripts, artifacts, and informal conversation notes	Out-of-class	Fieldnotes and transcripts will be coded and analyzed.
What meanings do literacy practices hold for outcast adolescents?	To establish the meanings of literacy practices of adolescents to be compared to the literacy practice meanings of a current secondary English classroom.	Observation fieldnotes, student interview transcripts, artifacts, and informal conversation notes	Out-of-class	Fieldnotes and transcripts will be coded and analyzed. Artifacts will be analyzed for genre, cognitive skills, and interest.
What are the literacy practices promoted by an English teacher?	To establish school-based literacy practices promoted by an English teacher	Observation fieldnotes, teacher interview transcripts, and artifacts,	Secondary English Classroom	Fieldnotes, artifacts and transcripts will be coded and analyzed to identify literacy events and literacy practices
What are the meanings ascribed by the English teacher?	To establish the meanings of literacy practices as ascribed by teachers to be compared to the literacy practice meanings of adolescents.	Observation fieldnotes, teacher interview transcripts	Secondary English Classroom	Fieldnotes and transcripts will be coded and analyzed. Artifacts will be analyzed for genre, cognitive skills, and interest.
How are the school-based literacy practices taught in an English classroom?	To establish how literacy practices work to enroll/position adolescents in the figured world of an English classroom.	Observation fieldnotes, teacher interview transcripts	Secondary English Classroom	Fieldnotes and transcripts will be coded and analyzed.
What meanings do school-promoted literacy practices hold for the adolescent in an English classroom?	To establish the meanings of literacy practices of a current secondary English classroom to be compared to the literacy practice meanings of adolescents.	Observation fieldnotes, teacher interview transcripts, student interview transcripts, and informal conversation notes	Secondary English Classroom	Fieldnotes and transcripts will be coded and analyzed.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORMS**

Teacher Presentation Script to Recruit Participants

There is a doctoral student from UNCG who is interested in doing a study to learn about high school student identities and literacy practices. Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools is not sponsoring this study and is not involved in conducting this study. Your decision to participate will not impact your grades or your standing in the school.

The researcher is looking for three friends that are currently in English classes, though it doesn't have to be the same English class. Would you be interested in participating in a series of interviews and a series of observations during class and out of school? You don't have to participate; this is completely voluntary. If you choose to, your identity will remain private. If you agree, please take this parental consent form and this student participant assent form, and return them both to me as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please direct them to the researchers listed on the consent/assent forms. Thank You.

### **Student Participant Assent Form**

My name is Penny Crooks and I am a doctoral student at UNCG. I am doing a study to try to learn about the social groups you are part of and the reading and writing practices you use. I am asking you to help because I don't know very much about the adolescent identities that make up your social group or the reading and writing practices you use. Your parent(s) said it was ok for you to be in this study and have signed a form like this one. If you agree to be in my study, the study will consist of

1. You taking part in two 60-minute group interviews, once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end. These group interviews will be completed before/after school or during lunches and will be tape recorded and written out.
2. You being observed in your English class from April 2009, to the end of the year.
3. You being formally interviewed three times over course of the study. Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes. These interviews will be completed before/after school or during lunches and will be tape recorded and written out.
4. You being observed out of class/out of school at least once a week from April 2009, to September 2009.
5. Examples of your reading/writing will be collected from the English class and from your own life throughout the study.
6. You taking photographs of what you identify as literacy practices.
7. You and I engaging in informal conversations that will be tape recorded throughout the study.

All Interviews will be tape recorded and written out. During the interviews I am going to ask you some questions about adolescent identities and literacy practices. I want to know your social group and the literacy practices you use. For example, you will be asked about the kinds of things you like to read/write.

You will not receive any compensation for being part of this study, but hopefully you will get a better understanding of yourself as a literacy learner. Also, nothing bad will happen to you. You can ask questions at any time that you might have about this study. Also, if you decide at any time not to finish, you may stop whenever you want.

Remember, these questions are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

- There is minimal risk to you in this study in that interviews will be audio recorded. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, confidentiality for things said on the tape cannot be guaranteed although I will try to limit access to the tape as described below. I will minimize the risks by using pseudonyms when transcribing the interviews and by keeping the digitally recorded interviews stored in a locked, secure location in my home, off the UNCG campus.
- There is minimal risk to you during observations as fieldnotes may contain identifiable descriptions, but fieldnotes will use pseudonyms to maintain participant privacy.
- Forms, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet, off the UNCG campus, in my home for ten years after the closure of the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
- Forms, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information

collected during this study will be shredded, digitally deleted, and destroyed ten years after the closure of the study.

- To protect your identity, a pseudonym you will be used in all written documents.

I am a current employee of Kleinville City Schools, but Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools is neither conducting nor sponsoring this study. Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools are not involved in this research. Whether you decide to participate or not, your relationship with the school and your grades will not be impacted.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign the paper. Remember, being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you don't sign this paper or even if you change your mind later.

If you have any concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research and Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Penny Crooks who may be contacted at (336) 629-5422 or Pamason@uncg.edu.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT**  
**Parental Consent**

Project Title: A Case Study of the Positioning of Adolescent Literacy and Identity

Project Director: Colleen Fairbanks (colleen.fairbanks@uncg.edu)

Student Researcher: Penny Crooks (Pamason@uncg.edu)

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES:**

This study is to learn about the social groups adolescents are part of and the reading and writing practices adolescents use. Your child was selected because he/she is part of a social group whose reading and writing practices are not understood. The purpose of this study is to look at:

1. how high school students see themselves,
2. what high school students like to read and write,
3. the meanings reading/writing has for high school students,
4. what meanings reading/writing has in an English classroom.
5. how are student meanings of reading/writing supported or not supported in an English classroom.

During the course of this study, the researcher will use observations, interviews, and artifacts to find out how students see themselves and what reading and writing practices they see and use.

The sequence of the research is as follows:

1. Students who self identify as sharing a cultural group will be recruited.
2. These students will take part in two 60-minute group interviews, once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end. These group interviews will be completed before/after school or during lunches and will be tape recorded and written out.
3. Students will be observed in their English class from April 2009, to September 2009.
4. Students will be formally interviewed three times over course of the study. Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes each. These interviews will be completed before/after school or during lunches and will be tape recorded and written out.
5. Students will be observed out of class/out of school at least once a week from April 2009, to September 2009.
6. Examples of participant reading/writing will be collected from the English class and from his/her own life throughout the study.
7. Students will take photographs of what they identify as literacy practices.
8. Student participants will engage in informal conversations between researcher and participant only that will be tape recorded throughout the study.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

- There is minimal risk to the participants of this study in that interviews will be audio recorded. Because your child's voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, confidentiality for things said on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below. The researcher will minimize the risks by using pseudonyms when transcribing the interviews and by keeping

the digitally recorded interviews stored in a locked, secure location in the student researcher home, off of the UNCG campus.

- There is minimal risk to the participants of this study during observations as fieldnotes may contain identifiable descriptions, but fieldnotes will use pseudonyms to maintain participant privacy.
- Forms, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet, off the UNCG campus, in the student researcher's home for ten years after the closure of the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
- Forms, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information collected during this study will be shredded, digitally deleted, and destroyed ten years after the closure of the study.
- To protect the participant's identity, a pseudonym for each participant will be used in all written documents.

If you have any concerns about your child's rights or how you are being treated, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research and Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Penny Crooks who may be contacted at (336) 629-5422 or Pamason@uncg.edu.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

- Student participants in the study will benefit by being able to think about how they see themselves, and what they choose to read and write.
- Others will benefit from this research study through the discovery of the relationships between the classroom culture, adolescent identities and literacy practices.
- This study will add to the knowledge of why and how adolescents are engaged in reading and writing.

#### Consent:

By signing this consent form, you agree that you understand the procedures and any risks and benefits involved in this research. You have the right to refuse to allow your child to participate or to withdraw him or her at any time, without penalty. If your child does withdraw, it will not affect you or your child in any way. If you or your child chooses to withdraw, you may request that any data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. Participant privacy will be protected because the participant will not be identified by name as a participant in this project.

Kleinville City Schools and Kleinville High School have given their approval for this study to be conducted at Kleinville High School. Though Penny Crooks is a current employee of Kleinville City Schools, Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools is neither conducting nor sponsoring this study. Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools is not involved in this research. Neither student participants' relationship with the school, nor their grades will be affected in any way by your decision as to whether or not to allow them to participate.

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to allow your child to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you have read it or it has been read to you.



You fully understand the contents of this document and consent to your child taking part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are the legal parent or guardian of the child who wishes to participate in this study described to you by Penny Crooks.

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Custodial Parent(s)/Guardian Signature(s) Date

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Custodial Parent(s)/Guardian Signature(s) Date

**CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT**  
**Teacher Participant**

Project Title: A Case Study of the Positioning of Adolescent Literacy and Identity

Project Director: Colleen Fairbanks (colleen.fairbanks@uncg.edu)

Student Researcher: Penny Crooks (Pamason@uncg.edu)

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES:**

The purpose of this study is to look at:

1. how high school students see themselves,
2. what high school students like to read and write,
3. the meanings reading/writing has for high school students,
4. what meanings reading/writing has for an English classroom.
5. how are student meanings reinforced or contested in an English classroom.

During the course of this study, the researcher will use observations, interviews, and artifacts to find out how students see themselves and what reading and writing practices they see and use.

The sequence of the research is as follows:

1. Students that self identify as sharing a cultural group will be recruited.
2. Student participants' English teachers will be recruited.
3. Students will be observed in their English class twice a week from April 2009, to the end of the 2008-2009 school year. As these observations will include student responses and actions to teacher directives and assignments, teacher interactions with students will be part of the observations.
4. Teachers will be formally interviewed twice over course of the study. Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes. These interviews will be completed before/after school or during lunches and will be tape recorded and written out.
5. Examples of participant reading/writing will be collected from the English class and from his/her own life throughout the study.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

- There is minimal risk to the participants of this study in that interviews will be audio recorded, thus increasing chances that participants can be identified based on their voice and interactions. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, confidentiality for things said on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below. The research will minimize the risks by using pseudonyms when transcribing the interviews and by keeping the digitally recorded interviews stored in a locked, secure location in the student researcher home, off the UNCG campus.
- There is minimal risk to the participants of this study during observations as fieldnotes may contain identifiable descriptions, but fieldnotes will use pseudonyms to maintain participant privacy.
- Forms, surveys, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information

collected will be kept in a locked cabinet, off the UNCG campus, in the student researcher's home for ten years after the closure of the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

- Forms, surveys, digital recordings, transcription notes, and any other research information collected during this study will be shredded, digitally deleted, and destroyed ten years after the closure of the study.
- To protect the participant's identity, a pseudonym for each participant will be used in all written documents.

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- This study will add to the knowledge of why and how adolescents are engaged in reading and writing.

**CONSENT:**

By signing this consent form, you agree that you understand the procedures and any risks and benefits involved in this research. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. Participant privacy will be protected because the participant will not be identified by name as a participant in this project.

Kleinville City Schools and Kleinville High School have given their approval for this study to be conducted at Kleinville High School. Though Penny Crooks is a current employee of Kleinville City Schools, Kleinville High School and Kleinville City Schools is neither conducting nor sponsoring this study.

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you have read it or it has been read to you. You fully understand the contents of this document and consent to taking part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Penny Crooks.

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Participant's Signature

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Date