

Social Factors That Affect Student  
Achievement

by

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## ABSTRACT

This literature review explores thirty published, peer-reviewed, research-based studies that reported findings concerning a variety of social factors and their effects on student motivation and achievement in literacy. Whenever possible, this review particularly identified studies that researched the effects of social factors on students who identified as Latino/a, African American, male, or living with low income status, as these groups have historically reported the highest levels of alienation from instruction and from the school system. Two major factors emerged that altered student academic behavior and success, including student enculturation and the school and classroom environments. This review examines the effects of students' enculturation on their self-perceptions, on their motivation to pursue literary practices, and on their success in literary activities and in academia. This review, then, examines the effects of school and classroom environments and specified curricular programs on student engagement and academic motivation in general, and particularly on students' willingness to engage in and ability to succeed in literacy practices in the classroom.

*Keywords: achievement motivation, student enculturation, literacy practices*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Over the past thirty years, student dropout rates have been declining in the United States. Compared with a 14.1 percent dropout rate in 1980, in 2009 the United States high school dropout rate of 16 to 24 year olds who were not institutionalized was at 8.1 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009a). However, as ChildTrends Data Bank (2005) described, even though the dropout rates have declined over the past three decades, the numbers include only non-institutionalized people, excluding students who were incarcerated, and skewing the available data.

Coincidentally, Alexander (2012) demonstrated that chronically racialized, powerful federal drug initiatives in the United States have decimated communities of color and that the United States penal system presently acts as a continuation of racial control. Disproportionately high numbers of African American and Latino men are held in prison due to a redesign of historical systems of oppression.

Bridging the education and penal systems does not require concerted effort. Trends in education mean that second-grade reading scores can be used to accurately predict the number of prison beds needed in the next ten to twelve years (Bayh, 2007). Many forces can compel students to drop out of school, but much higher proportions of students who are Latino/a, African American, students who are from the lowest quartile of family income, and male students have dropped out compared to all other groups (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2009b). Skewed data coupled with disproportionately high incarceration rates of African American and Latino men signify that dropout rates associated with these groups have almost assuredly risen.

Discovering the impetus of this demographically-motivated, disturbing phenomenon begins with examining its root causes, namely classrooms and schools and how these institutions impact students' willingness and reluctance to pursue academic success.

The middle-level grades, in particular, play an important role in students' ultimate educational achievements. Students in the middle-level grades are usually between the ages of 11 and 14 and they are experiencing important developmental changes. Typically, this age group seeks to think and act independently from their guardians and also cares extraordinarily about their peers' perceptions and judgments (Wood, 2007). Students in this age group also typically experience puberty, coupling students' experiences of new frontiers of independence and social awareness with the second-most extreme hormonal and bodily changes ever taking place in the human body, second only to infancy (Glass, 2011). The middle-level grades are an extremely important time for students' overall development, and developmentally-inappropriate curricula may hinder students' full growth of their potentials (Wood, 2007).

This literature review looks to academic reluctance and its effects on the middle-level student. In particular, this review will look at the effects on students' academic success of encultured motivation values and academic confidence, the



empowering school and classroom environments, and relevant and critical classroom instruction practices.

### **Rationale**

School reforms such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation have yielded negative consequences such as narrowed curricula due to standardized tests focusing specifically on reading and math skills. Sales of published remedial programs have risen steadily, as programs promise to adequately prepare students to succeed on these tests and meet the standards associated with these reforms (Pearson, 2012). With curricula narrowing to focus on these two subjects, many schools have had to give up unique and favored curricula (Glass, 2004). Defying this trend, research shows that embedding social-emotional learning programs within relevant curricula can increase attendance and decrease overall dropout rates (Wilson, Goffredson, & Najaka, 2001). Clearly, our national school reforms are flawed.

Ravitch (2010) asserted that as NCLB started to take hold in Texas, test scores initially began rising, though they rose alongside the steady increase of students dropping out: “As low-performing students gave up on education, the statistics [for NCLB] got better and better” (p. 96). While the National Center for Education Statistics suggests the national dropout rate is falling, there seems to be an ever-increasing number of students who have remained invisible to the statistics in other ways.

This review will explore the impact of sociocultural factors on low student motivation. The researcher will focus particularly on student academic reluctance

for African American, Latino/a, low-income, and male students in the middle-level classroom. This review will explore various student-centered instruction methods and curricula and structured academic environments that have promised to pull students back into schools and have even helped to reimagine the current United States education system.

### **Historical Background**

The study of motivation and its counterpart, disaffection, have historical connections with school and the workplace. Klein (1999) described “disaffection” as an issue that has been around since the beginning of schools, with higher prevalence since school attendance became mandated (p. xii). In its first formal study, motivation was researched in the workplace. In the later named Hawthorne Effect studies, Vannevar Bush looked at overhead lighting and its effects on motivation in the working environment. While this study has undergone critical review and shows little scientific merit (Carey, 1967, p. 408), its unintended consequences importantly were that it was an opener for studying the placebo effect and observer-expectancy effect (Wickström & Bendix, 2000, p. 363), and it interested other scientists in motivation studies.

Internal and external motivational factors became a focus in motivation studies for educational and psychological theorists. Maslow, Skinner, and Bandura all made significant contributions to this research.

Maslow’s (1943) paper “A Theory of Human Motivation,” though it lacked empirical evidence, provided a groundwork for motivation research. Particularly for his theoretical awareness of the unconscious motivators which drive human

decisions and of the universality of human needs, his work was a starting point for the future study of internal motivation, its contrast with external motivation, and the existence of universal needs (Maslow, 1943, 371).

From his early studies on deprivation and reinforcement, Skinner found that environmental consequences shape behavior, a theme which drove the remainder of his life's work and was the basis for his theory of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1953, p. 68). Skinner's theory was characterized by how subjects received consequences to their behavior and how those consequences affected their chosen behaviors or responses to given stimuli (Miller, 2011, p. 253). Due to his work, particularly his focus on obtaining empirical data, Skinner was monumental in evoking progress in experimental psychology and in understanding how external factors affect human behavior and inform internal motivation.

Bandura and other modern behaviorists saw their subjects as more empowered than the traditional behaviorists did. Bandura believed subjects chose how to interact with their environment, and therefore exhibited less of a purely conditioned response (Miller, 2011, p. 253). Bandura (1969) suggested that internal motivation was a crucial part in learning: a necessary foundation for the subject to respond to modeled behavior (p. 225). Bandura (1977) also emphasized the importance of self-efficacy. Subjects were much more likely to model a behavior if they visualized their own success performing that behavior (p. 191). Bandura's theory had direct implications for understanding motivation in the classroom. Students had to be internally motivated in order to pursue

academic success, and if students experienced success they would be more motivated to push themselves even further academically.

The work of these theorists and researchers has propelled the study of motivation to where it is today. Researchers have built upon the work of their predecessors and the literature available on the history of motivation research points to the work of these contributors.

### **Definitions**

Before examining studies, this review will define and describe key words and terms associated with the research.

For the purposes of this review, the term *motivation* will mean the underlying effects that cause a person to exert effort. Early in the research literature various labels used to describe students' academic motivations often carried evaluative connotations about their capabilities, sometimes irrespective of their effort or their access to economic resources. Labeling students as unmotivated, disaffected, and disengaged tends to place blame on students themselves. Thus, while this review will use the term *motivation* to describe situations or contexts, it will use the term *reluctant* to describe students or will use the above terms in person-first context, such as “students who feel disengaged.” *Reluctant* will be used to describe students who are reluctant to perform academically, are not interested in schools, or are underachieving. Many of the studies used in this review will also use the term to describe students who have been labeled as persistently truant, disruptive, alienated, withdrawn, or any

combination of those. This will include students who have decided to drop out from the school system.

In this review *socioeconomic status* (SES) will be used to describe students' family income levels, access to resources, and sometimes their levels of formal education. Students considered to have low socioeconomic status have income levels significantly lower than the national averages, live in economic poverty, and are typically identified in the research as receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Students who will be considered to have high socioeconomic status are considered to be living above national averages and with margins of economic comfort.

In this review the term *adolescent* will be used to describe students who are ages eleven to nineteen; that is, the typical ages associated with United States grade levels six through twelve. This term will describe students who are in middle school or high school.

### **Limitations**

This review strives to include the most current literature and includes studies within the date range of 1985 to 2012, though one study was published earlier. Evans and Anderson's (1973) study continues to exemplify research important to the field and was, therefore, included in this review. As described earlier, dropout rates show serious implications for male, Latino/a, and African American students, and students who live with low-income status. Thus, whenever possible, this review gives close examination to academic motivation concerning students within those groups.

Low academic motivation is an international phenomenon and has been studied around the globe. This review will include literature from the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Australia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

This review also focuses primarily on adolescent students enrolled in or experiencing instruction in reading, writing, literature, or other language or communication arts. Students represented in this review will range in age from thirteen to nineteen, or from grades six to twelve.

Students represented in this review will range in race, representing the African American (which will be used in place of the identifying term Black), European American (which will be used place of the identifying terms and White and Caucasian), Asian American (which will include Pacific Islanders), and Latino/a (which will be used in place of the identifying terms Hispanic, and will include students who identified as Chicano/a) communities.

### **Statement of Purpose**

This literature review examines research studies that focus on social factors that affect student motivation in school, and, specifically, with literary practices, in order to recommend best practices for classroom instruction and management in the middle-level classroom.

### **Summary**

This literature review will focus on how student enculturation, school and classroom environment, and classroom instruction affect student academic motivation. In particular, this paper will focus on research about students who are

Latino/a, African American, live with low income status, or are male, as is congruent with statistics reporting disproportionately high dropout levels for these groups. This literature review will be most helpful to middle-level language arts teachers who wish to curb low motivation in their classrooms and implement instructional methods that will inspire high academic achievement in students.

## CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

Chapter one discussed the evolution of the study of motivation, looked at possible effects on academic motivation, and suggested various factors for improving academic motivation for adolescent students. The effects of No Child Left Behind and other education reform policies have potentially had dire effects on student motivation, equating school with performance on standardized tests, limiting curriculum and, in some cases, eliminating the arts in school. This literature review will examine the academic motivation and reluctance of the adolescent student. This review specifically focuses on studies that have involved groups that have experienced higher than average rates of school dropout, including students who are Latino/a, students with low-income status, or students who are male. The research presented in chapter two is divided into two sections: student enculturation, and school and classroom environments. The studies presented in chapter two, as well as their findings and implications for classroom practice, will be most beneficial to middle-level teachers and administrators who desire to understand, and even undo, the negative effects that school cultures and environments can have on their students. Understanding the many complex features which lead to student academic reluctance, teachers and administrators can act as advocates for the children who report to their buildings, curbing low motivation in their classrooms and implementing instructional methods that will inspire academic success in all students.



## **Student Enculturation**

The following three sections will explore studies which have captured current understandings about how students' motivation affects their academic success. First, this literature review will examine how students' academic motivations were affected by their self-perceived abilities to succeed. This review will then investigate how students' enculturations affected their desires to pursue literacy practices. Finally, this review will discuss studies that explored how students' motivation in pursuing literacy practices affected their academic successes in literacy practices.

### **Effects of Student Self-Perceptions on Academic Success**

The seven studies in this section analyzed how students' self-concepts and self-motivation affected their willingness to engage with academia. If students felt their sociocultural values were not upheld in the classroom, they were less willing to self-motivate and were more often academically unsuccessful. Ogbu's (2003) ethnography begins this section because of his groundbreaking work in noting subtly unequal treatment of black students, which disenfranchised those students from educational success. Ogbu's (2003) study is followed by Evans and Anderson's (1973) work, which explored Chicano/a students' educational self-concepts compared with their white peers. Jackson, Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Yaish (2007) investigated the academic self-concepts of students from lower socioeconomic status compared with higher socioeconomic-status peers. Bankston and Zhou's (2002) study then explored how differences among major racial and ethnic groups would correlate with

academic success. Horgan (2009) investigated students' self-awareness of low socioeconomic status, asking how it affected students' educational experiences. Hustinx, Kuyper, van der Werf, and Dijkstra (2009) analyzed how self-motivation affected the educational success of students who had low socioeconomic status. Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu (2009) studied the predictive value of high academic motivation on students' actual academic successes.

In a qualitative ethnographic study of an Ohio school, Ogbu (2003) analyzed why black students showed a wide achievement gap compared to other ethnicities of similar socioeconomic status as well as why they were academically reluctant, and found that subtle ways of shutting out black students existed in the school and the community.

Ogbu (2003) and his colleagues moved into Shaker Heights, Ohio, so that they could observe the community from an inward perspective as much as possible. In this way, though Ogbu's subjects were namely students from the various schools, the community as a whole was also included. At the time of their study, the Shaker Heights population was about 30,000. The range of annual income for Shaker Heights families was from below financial poverty status to millionaires; median family income was \$66,000 annually. About 32.6% of African American households and about 58% of European American households earned an annual income ranging from \$50,000 to over \$100,000. An estimated 61% of the community held bachelor's degrees or higher. Shaker Heights residents generally viewed their community as middle and upper-middle class. Shaker Heights had many African American families with "educated" and

“professional” statuses, but the African American students consistently attained academic achievement lower than European American students with the same demographic statuses (Ogbu, 2003, p. xiii). Ogbu and his colleagues focused their research on students and teachers from three elementary schools, one upper elementary school, the middle school, and the high school. He conducted formal ethnographic interviews with a total of 28 individual students.

Ogbu (2003) used the cultural-ecological theory of schooling as his major framework. This theory understands that the schooling of students of color includes the school system as well as community and societal factors. Ogbu's research methodologies consisted of formal ethnographic interviews as well as daily interactions and rapport with school and community members. Formal ethnographic research consisted of group and individual discussions, individual interviews, formal documents, and participant observation. The researcher and his colleagues conducted 110 classroom observations and 28 interviews with students. Discussions were tape- and video-recorded and then transcribed. Research focused on two goals for the duration of the study: first, to understand people from within the community and their ideas about schooling; and second, to observe how students practiced receiving their educations, as well as how their parents and the school personnel contributed to students receiving their educations. Ogbu's data collection within the community lasted eight months. Ogbu analyzed the interrelationships between different categories of summarized data using a codified conceptual framework that focused on assessing student academic reluctance and below-average academic performance.

Ogbu's (2003) groundbreaking ethnographic study of Shaker Heights found that the school and community, including the African American community, had subtle ways of alienating African American students from academic achievement. On an institutional level, this academic obstruction included student tracking into and within classes; gatekeeping, both by school personnel and by African American students' guardians; and student self-elimination, including internalized racial inferiority. In the Shaker Heights school system, tracking, which was inextricably racial, began at the elementary school when students were placed in reading and math groups. As students progressed through the school system, counselors and other school personnel continued to design students' schedules based on their previous academic experiences and performances. Tracking into skills-based or general education classes became a common experience for African American students in the Shaker Heights school system. This phenomenon had two dynamic results on students' schooling experiences. Some African American students became motivated to prove their intelligence through academic success and, simultaneously, other African American students became skeptical of the importance of academia. The internalized racial inferiority of these students resulted in their limited academic effort, and their reluctance to perform academically. Ogbu contributed a perspective to the debate about the academic achievement gap between European American and African American students that has received limited study in the literature. First, Ogbu focused on the suburbs and African American families who had a middle to upper-middle class socioeconomic status, instead

of an inner-city setting with African Americans living with low-income status. Second, Ogbu studied the residual effects on African American students of historical African American disenfranchisement within European American-centric institutions, namely the complicated effects of internalized racial inferiority complex.

Ogbu's (2003) study had a variety of factors that established strong confidence in his findings. Ogbu thoroughly described his relationship with the Shaker Heights community. He described how he first became involved with Shaker Heights and that the research project was funded by the Shaker Heights school district. These inclusions added to the credibility of the study and strengthened Ogbu's overall research. Ogbu studied the Shaker Heights community, not just the school system, and included the demographics of the research site, especially in relation to the income levels of the African Americans living in Shaker Heights. Even when African American and European American families had similar socioeconomic statuses, there remained an academic achievement gap between students in these groups. The detailed demographic context strengthened the transferability of the study, as the findings and implications are relevant to demographically similar contexts.

Ogbu's findings were consistent with Jackson, Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Yaish's (2007) findings, which attributed historical academic failure to students' willingness to pursue academically ambitious paths. Importantly, Jackson et al. used economic status as an indicator, whereas Ogbu used race as an indicator. Ogbu's findings were also consistent with Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu's (2009)

findings, which suggested that students who attributed their academic success to their effort achieved higher academic success than students who did not attribute their academic success to their efforts. While Liu et al.'s study looked at internal motivation, Ogbu's findings explain the historical internalized racial inferiority that African American students experienced. These consistent findings added to the dependability of Ogbu's study and strengthened his results. Another strength, is Ogbu's inclusion of comments from subjects whenever possible. He represented the subjects using their own words and also provided raw data so that readers of his study could understand his analyses and interpretations of subjects' responses. By continually providing his readers access to raw data, Ogbu's study demonstrated very strong confirmability.

Evans and Anderson's (1973) qualitative study, measuring the effect of variations in self-concept of ability, achievement motivation values, and aspirations on achievement, showed that, of the student population in Las Cruces, New Mexico, Chicano/a students had lower self-concepts of ability, experienced less democratic parental independence training, had fatalistic present-time orientations, had a high striving orientation, and held lower educational aspirations than their European American peers.

Evans and Anderson's subjects were 87 Chicano/a and 39 European American students. The population site, Las Cruces, New Mexico, had grown from 29,000 in 1950 to over 47,000 by 1968. About 40 percent of the persons residing there were of Mexican origin, some of whom were descendants of families who lived in the area before New Mexico became a state. Families

identified had at least three children in the public schools, one at each level. The fathers' occupations and education levels and the mothers' educational levels were obtained through family interviews and were used as indices of students' socioeconomic status. Twenty percent of the Chicanos were employed in professional, managerial, and administrative occupations.

When conducting their study, Evans and Anderson (1973) accessed mathematics and English grades for the fall semester of 1967 along with scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which was administered in the spring of 1968. Questionnaires included questions designed to measure language usage in the home, students' self-concept of their abilities, students' achievement training, students' independence training from parents, achievement motivation, achievement value orientations, and their educational aspirations. Evans and Anderson did not describe the test format, nor whether they were Likert-scale or open-ended questions.

Evans and Anderson (1973) found little difference between Chicano/a families and the European American families in terms of the amount of academic achievement training that took place in the home. Chicano/a students were found to come from homes where education was stressed and the parents encouraged their children to do well in school. Simultaneously, Evans and Anderson found that Chicano/a students experienced less independence training in the home than their European American counterparts, and that the amount of independence training that took place in the home rose as participants' fathers' education levels rose. Evans and Anderson also found that Chicano/a fathers

generally disciplined their daughters more democratically (explaining the unacceptable behavior and the reason for punishment) than their sons. Chicano/a students' depressed academic achievement was found to be related to values and experiences associated with the culture of poverty, specifically low self-concepts of ability, fatalistic present-time orientations, and non-democratic child rearing practices.

Evans and Anderson (1973) used a research question and employed data-gathering measures characteristic of qualitative research, but they used data-analysis techniques characteristic of quantitative research. These different characteristics led to compatibility problems within the study. Evans and Anderson described their data-gathering procedures in general terms, but did not include the actual questions from their questionnaires, nor did they include information regarding the test format. The process of their research cannot be confirmed without this information. Both the incompatible features of their research, and the data that Evans and Anderson excluded from their study diminished the credibility and confirmability of their study. Another weakness with their study was that Evans and Anderson's findings did not align with other studies in this literature review, limiting the dependability of their results. Evans and Anderson's findings relied on a theoretical framework using a deficit mode approach; that is, Latino/a students' academic failures were a result of their families' cultural values as opposed to schools being out of synch with their Latino/a students' cultural values and literacies. This framework places responsibility for culturally appropriate classroom behavior on students, their



families, and their cultural values rather than the mismatch between academia and academic cultures and the students in the classroom.

Despite the major weaknesses in Evans and Anderson's (1973) study, the researchers provided very specific context information describing the setting and subjects of the study. Their context data increased the transferability of their study.

A longitudinal quantitative study by Jackson, Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Yaish (2007) measured how sociocultural differences in students' socioeconomic class levels affect their decisions to pursue academic or vocational paths after formal school. Jackson et al. found that students from less financially advantaged backgrounds were less likely to take educationally more ambitious options than students from more financially advantaged backgrounds, even when their academic performance made those options feasible for them. Jackson et al. used three samples of students who were sixteen and lived in England or Wales at the time of their participation.

Jackson et al. (2007) used two data sets. For the first wave of their study, the researchers used the data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS). This birth-cohort study included all children who were born in Great Britain in one week in March 1958 and reached the age of 16 in 1974. Jackson et al. focused this data to a sample of children who were born in England or Wales or who had moved there before age five. Jackson et al. also used data from the Youth Cohort Studies (YCS) data set, which comprised data from a series of cohort studies of young people in England and Wales aged 16 and upwards.

This data was collected under the administration of various governments since 1984, the researchers limited their samples to data sets from 1986 and 2001. The samples within the NCDS and YCS data sets were nondescript, bearing only the common demographics of age and residence.

Jackson et al. (2007) based their study on Boudon's distinction between *primary* and *secondary* effects in the creation of class differentials in educational attainment. The primary effects were all those, whether genetic or sociocultural, expressed through the association between the children's class backgrounds and their actual levels of academic performance. Secondary effects were those expressed by the educational choices children from differing class backgrounds made within the range of choices that their previous performance allowed them. Jackson et al. (2007) analyzed the class differentials in one crucial transition within the English and Welsh educational system, when children at age 16 determine if they will pursue higher level academic qualifications that are used for university entry. Jackson et al. produced quantitative estimates of the relative importance of primary and secondary effects as they operated within the transition.

Jackson et al. (2007) found that Boudon's secondary effects reinforced the primary effects to a substantial extent, accounting for at least one quarter, and possibly up to one half of class differentials as measured by odd ratios. Jackson et al. found it a serious error to concentrate their attention entirely on class differences in academic performance, whether these were seen as primarily genetic or sociocultural in origin. Overall, Jackson et al. found that class

differences occurred in the choices that were made by students, in conjunction with parents, teachers, and peers, regarding their educational careers. Students from less financially advantaged backgrounds were less likely to take educationally more ambitious options than students from more financially advantaged backgrounds, even when their academic performance would make such options entirely feasible for them.

Jackson et al. (2007) used established national data sets which complicated the strength of their study. This type of data limited the researchers' abilities to control for assessment reliability, collection procedures, and coding procedures, and limited the analyses of their study. Using this established data set also strengthened their study, as it strengthened the accessibility of their data. Jackson et al. also included no p-values of their analyses. Without a p-value, one cannot conclude that the results were not due to chance, limiting the reliability of this study. During their analyses of the data, Jackson et al. frequently used subsets of the data set, which heightened the subject attrition rate and weakened the overall internal validity of their study.

To the strength of their study, Jackson et al. (2007) created external validity by constructing variables as comparable as possible across the data sources for students' class backgrounds, academic performances, and choice in school transition at age 16. Jackson et al. also used public data sets, thoroughly explained their coding and analysis procedures, and graphically organized their data, findings, and analyses. These facets of their study enhanced the observability of their work and strengthened the objectivity of the study.

Bankston and Zhou's (2002) quantitative study, measuring the connections between self-esteem and academic achievement, found that, for a random, stratified sample of seventh through twelfth graders from all high schools in the United States, differences among major racial and ethnic groups in school outcomes could not be attributed to group variations in feelings of self-worth, but family structure was a major trait associated with school performance.

Bankston and Zhou (2002) used a random, stratified sample of seventh through twelfth graders, taken from all high schools in the United States, through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The researchers then conducted in-home interviews with adolescents and their families. Finally, the researchers selected a random sample of 6,504 cases to focus analyses on from the initial interviews.

Bankston and Zhou (2002) surveyed their subjects using a self-respond index which included items that tested for self-esteem, intelligence, and respondents' psychological statuses. Bankston and Zhou measured self-esteem by deriving factor scores from principal components analysis. All self-esteem items had five values on a Likert scale (except for self-rating of intelligence, which had six values to choose from). The researchers also constructed an index for measuring angst on a 4-point Likert scale by combining items from a psychological-state scale with items from a scale similar to a depressive-symptoms scale. From the initial sample, the number of respondents was 6,383. Demographically, this group broke down as 3,861 European American students,

212 Asian American students, 1,575 African American students, and 735 Chicano/a students.

Bankston and Zhou (2002) correlated respondents' scores on their surveys with respondents' academic achievement. The researchers found the respondents' mean scores of the four core subject areas (English or language arts, math, history or social studies, and science). The researchers also correlated these measurements with respondents' race, family structure, socioeconomic status (measured by family income, parental education, and parental occupation), and immigrant status.

From survey responses and academic and demographic measurements, Bankston and Zhou (2002) examined frequencies of socioeconomic, familial, immigration, and angst characteristics by race and ethnicity. They then employed regression models to look at self-esteem and measured predictors of school performance. Overall, the researchers measured standard error in the difference of the slopes using a formula which represented the square of the standard error of the relevant coefficient, which enabled the researchers to calculate the statistical significance of the difference in coefficients across models.

From their study, Bankston and Zhou (2002) found no evidence that low self-esteem produced a creative anxiety (or angst) that drove students to excel academically. The researchers also saw no support for the corresponding view that excessive self-esteem led to poor academic performance. The differences among major racial and ethnic groups in school outcomes could not be attributed to group variations in feelings of self-worth. Instead, racial differences seemed to

be slightly suppressed by these types of variations. The black-white gap was smaller than it would have been if student-reported self-esteem for Black students had not been so strong. The researchers also found that parental immigrant status had complicated relationships with both self-reported self-esteem and school performance. Students whose parents had immigrant status faced special problems in maintaining their self-worth. They also tended to show higher academic achievement. Overall, Bankston and Zhou found that family structure was a major trait associated with school performance, more influential than race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Bankston and Zhou's (2002) study has several strengths which increase the validity of their findings. Though subjects self-reported their academic grades, Bankston and Zhou (2002) were confident of the external validity of their measure because the relative ranking of racial and ethnic groups on self-reported grades in their data closely resembled the ranking of these groups on other measures of achievement, such as national reading tests, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), and the American College Test (ACT). Another strength in their study was that 19 of their measurements had p-values at  $p < .001$ , making their findings very significant, and increasing the reliability of the study. Three of the p-values reported for their study, however, were at  $p < .05$ . Though the researchers found this number significant, this relatively high p-value raises questions about the significance of these findings and limits the reliability of the study. Bankston and Zhou also created high levels of objectivity. Within the study, Bankston and Zhou shared a website address which publicly housed their

data sets, and they thoroughly described their coding procedures. This transparency made their analyses observable. Bankston and Zhou (2002) used a correlational model for their study. This type of study has natural weaknesses in internal validity, as correlations are susceptible to spurious causation. To control for this factor, Bankston and Zhou used intercorrelated factors in their analysis. For all bivariate relations  $r > .400$ , showing a moderate relationship.

Horgan's (2009) qualitative study measured how family poverty impacts student's experience of school in terms of school importance, school enjoyment, student awareness of socioeconomic-status factors, engagement, and nonacademic activities. Horgan showed that students from schools in Northern Ireland who had low socioeconomic status had a clear understanding of their status; students understood that status affected their schooling, and they understood how it affected their schooling. The lower the student's socioeconomic status, Horgan found, the more likely it was that the student's experiences of school were impacted by that status.

Horgan's subjects were 220 students from selected schools in Northern Ireland, who were receiving education in schools in both high-poverty and low-poverty areas. Horgan intentionally avoided schools with mixed socioeconomic status to avoid stigmatizing students. Socioeconomic status was determined by free school meal (FSM) entitlements (synonymous with United States' free and reduced-price lunch program). Students were put into 56 groups based on age (five to eight years old; nine to eleven years old), and socioeconomic status (based on FSM figures).

Horgan (2009) performed small-group interviews of students, generally with four students per group. Students were shown illustrations of three different houses and asked questions about how the students who lived there and their parents would differ in school experience. Horgan analyzed interview transcripts using QSR-N6 qualitative data analysis software.

Overall, Horgan found that students from low socioeconomic status generally had a clear understanding of their status, both that it affected their schooling and how it affected their schooling. These students were more apt to experience difficulties from teachers and felt disengaged with instruction and classroom practices. The lower the socioeconomic status, Horgan suggested, the more likely student experience of school was affected by status in society.

Horgan (2009) created strong credibility throughout the study by specifically describing her motivations and techniques for conducting the study and gathering data on participants of the study. For instance, Horgan explained that she relied on FSM as an indicator of poverty, rather than governmental definitions of poverty “which place the poverty line far lower than anti-poverty campaigners do” (Horgan, 2009, p. 362). Horgan also grounded her study in a number of contexts, including education policy and reform, the impact of poverty on educational achievement, and the socioeconomic context of schools, again adding to the credibility of the study. Another strength, Horgan thoroughly described methods for choosing subjects, and used a relatively large and diverse sample for her research. Thus, Horgan created high levels of transferability within her study. Horgan’s study also had strong indicators of confirmability. The



researcher included transcriptions from interviews with subjects as well as the questions and scenarios she asked subjects. Horgan's analyses were easy to follow and transparent. Finally, Horgan included transcriptions of subject responses. The researcher displayed responses of subjects with different socioeconomic statuses, clearly showing the differences in students' understandings of their status and the impacts of their socioeconomic status on their academic experiences.

Horgan's (2009) study confirms findings from other studies in this literature review. Jackson et al. (2007) showed that students who came from less economically advantaged backgrounds were less likely to pursue educationally ambitious options, even when their academic performance made those options feasible. Jackson et al.'s study supports Horgan's findings that students who were from economically less advantaged backgrounds understood that their socioeconomic status affected their education and how. For both groups of subjects, socioeconomic status greatly dictated their willingness or self-capacity to pursue educationally ambitious activities.

Hustinx, Kuyper, van der Werf, and Dijkstra's (2009) quantitative study, measuring how achievement motivation contributed to the predictability of students' scholastic achievements and their progress through educational systems, found that Dutch secondary students who had low socioeconomic status and who exhibited high academic motivation ultimately attained higher status positions in the workforce than their less motivated peers who had both low socioeconomic status and low academic motivation levels.

Hustinx et al. (2009) studied the Dutch secondary school population, based on two large samples totaling roughly 40,000 cases. These participants were representative of the Dutch national population of students, and included two different birth cohorts, separated in age by four years. The first cohort began their first year of secondary school in 1989 and the second cohort began their first year of secondary school in 1993.

Hustinx et al. (2009) used self-report questionnaires that were inspired by Hermans' Achievement Motivation Test for children (PMT-K). This test was chosen because it reliably correlated teacher ratings of motivation, student pleasures in learning, and overachievement versus underachievement. The researchers administered surveys to students three times during secondary school (equivalent to grades seven, nine, and eleven in the U.S.). Hustinx et al. correlated responses with students' yearly academic performances, based on standardized test results for the first and second measurements (students in the equivalent of seventh and ninth grades) and based on self-reported grades for the third measurement (students considered in the equivalent of eleventh grade). Hustinx et al. also used demographic and socioeconomic information reported by parents and guardians of students.

Hustinx et al. (2009) conducted regression analyses to calculate results. The researchers found several factors could be used to predicting academic achievement. First, the researchers found that students' tracking positions in the previous year predicted their success. Students who were recommended for or tracked into advanced classes were more academically successful than peers

peers recommended for or tracked into remedial classes. The researchers found that academic achievement motivation was the next major predictor of actual student academic success. Students who had a higher fear of academic failure, also had the lowest grade point averages (GPAs). The researchers also found a difference between students' intelligence (based on standardized measures) and their reported GPAs. Generally, GPAs did not correlate with students' intelligence levels. Importantly, the researchers saw no significant contributions of students' demographic data to the predictability of their academic performances. Overall, Hustinx et al. found that students who were tracked into academically rigorous classes with high expectations and who exhibited high academic motivation predictably achieved higher academic success than their peers who were tracked into remedial classes or who exhibited low academic motivation.

Hustinx et al. (2009) used a very large sample for their subject group ( $n = 19,524$ ) which totaled more than 10% of the entire secondary school population in the first year of their study. This large sample size increased generalizability to the entire Dutch secondary school population and contributed to increased external validity of their study. Hustinx et al. found significance at the  $p < .001$  level for the differences in time as they measured the group means of achievement motivation. Significance at the  $p < .001$  decreased the possibility that their findings were due to chance and increased their reliability. In their study, the researchers graphically presented their regression analyses and the correlations of the years under study in relation to the variety of predictions their study measured, and they included the p-values associated with each

measurement. This availability of data increased the study's accessibility and objectivity.

Hustinx et al.'s (2009) study had a complex internal validity. Hustinx et al. used self-report questionnaires to collect data, which limited changes to the instrumentation due to researcher administration. This factor strengthened the study's internal validity. Hustinx et al. had a relatively high subject attrition rate, due to schools leaving the study and students repeating grades. This feature of the study threatened its internal validity. The researchers controlled for this variable by comparing the demographics of their remaining sample to their original sample, showing minor deviations.

Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu's (2009) quantitative study, measuring the predictive value of student achievement and long-term academic success based on students' educational expectations, used a large random sample of Taiwanese secondary students to show that academic expectations were positively predictive of academic achievement; Liu et al. encouraged teachers to suggest that adolescents hold higher educational expectations and attribute successful learning to effort.

Liu et al. (2009) used a subject sample from the Taiwan Educational Panel Survey (TEPS) from 2007. The TEPS researchers selected participants from 333 junior high schools and had an initial base of 20,004 Taiwanese secondary students. The first follow-up included 18,903 students, and the second follow-up included 4,172 students. Liu et al. selected a sample of 2,000 adolescent subjects from the TEPS data collection, choosing subjects that

participated throughout the entire study. The only demographic variables provided about the subjects were their common residence in Taiwan and status as junior high students.

Liu et al. (2009) used information from all three periods of data collection from the TEPS. During the base year (2001) the subjects were seventh graders, during the first follow-up (2003) the subjects were ninth graders, and during the second follow-up (2005) the subjects were eleventh graders. Participants answered survey questions addressing their personal educational expectations (e.g. how far in the education system students believed they could reach) and their achievement attributions (e.g. what factors students thought most likely determined their academic achievement). From the TEPS data, Liu et al. also collected student scores on the General Analyzing Ability Test, which measured students' general abilities in science, math, inference, and reading. Liu, et al. then analyzed data through two phases of hierarchical linear modeling. First Liu et al. used a random-coefficient regression model for variances of residual term significance. When variances were found to be significant, students' educational expectations and achievement attributions served as predictors for explaining the variances.

Liu et al. (2009) found that students with high expectations of personal academic success (students who believed they could advance the farthest through the education system) exhibited a predictive tendency to achieve higher academic success, irrespective of the attributions (effort, ability, or support from others) they made to their academic achievements. The mean academic

achievement among those with effort attribution was higher than that of students with ability or others'-support attributions. The mean academic achievement of students with others'-support attributions (e.g., teacher instruction, parental discipline, or help from friends) was lower than that of students with effort or ability attributions. That is, students who believed their own effort could most contribute to their academic success were more academically successful than students who believed support from others could most contribute to their academic success. Overall, Liu et al. encouraged teachers to suggest that adolescents hold high educational expectations and that they attribute their academic successes to their own efforts.

Liu et al.'s (2009) study had complicated factors impacting the strength of their results. First, Liu et al. (2009) used data from a released survey as their data base. This nationwide survey was a multistage stratified sample of Taiwanese secondary students and college juniors and originally contained a very large sample. The large sample size added to the generalizability of the study and strengthened its external validity. Simultaneously, the researchers did not analyze data based on social identifiers, which limited the generalizability of their study and weakened its external validity. The internal validity of Liu et al.'s study was also complicated. Though the original sample of the TEPS data was large, they experienced a subject attrition rate of 79%. This subject attrition rate was extremely large and very likely skewed the results, diminishing internal validity. Also increasing the study's internal validity, the researchers used data collected from self-report questionnaires and a general academic skills test, the

General Analyzing Ability Test. Using a self-report questionnaire naturally controlled for instrument performance, and strengthened the internal validity of the study. Simultaneously, the researchers did not explain measures used to control for the ability test, namely, that students potentially performed better due to their familiarity with the test rather than their actual academic growth or their maturation. These factors once again diminished the internal validity of the study.

Liu et al. (2009) included a p-value for every variance in their final data set. In their final estimation of the effects of multiple factors on student achievement, all six estimations had p-values less than .0005, which made these values highly significant. These p-values increased the reliability of the study. Another strength in their study, Liu et al. thoroughly described their specific coding and graphically laid out the means and standard deviations of their data. The researchers also used data from a released survey as their data base. The nationwide survey was conducted by researchers outside of this study and was available to outside observers. This transparency increased the accessibility of their data and increased the objectivity of their study.

This subsection showed the complex nuances of students' cultural encapsulations and how they impacted their academic experiences. Evans and Anderson's (1973) research, based on a deficit-model theoretical framework, found that students who were Latino/a had lower self-concepts of their academic abilities and lower academic aspirations than their European American peers. Alternately, Bankston and Zhou (2002) found that students' family structures impacted their self-esteems and their academic achievements, but that race and

ethnicity could not be solely attributed to variations in students' self-worth. Jackson, Erikson, Goldthrope, and Yaish (2007) found, similarly, that students with low-income status took less educationally ambitious options than students with higher-income status, even when their academic backgrounds made these options feasible. Finally, Ogbu (2003) and Horgan (2009) notably showed that students who had internalized racial or socioeconomic inferiority became reluctant to pursue academic activities, sometimes due to their awareness of how their social identifier negatively impacted their education. Hustinx, Kuyper, van der Werf, and Dijkstra (2009) and Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu (2009) contributed important findings to this subsection, as they showed ultimately hopeful outcomes. Hustinx et al. found that students who had low-income status, but high academic motivation ultimately attained higher-status positions in the workforce than their low-income peers who had low academic motivation. Similarly, Liu et al. found that students who attributed their academic success to their effort predictably attained higher academic success than their peers who attributed academic success to their ability or to support from others. This subsection showed that students' educational experiences were impacted by their social identifiers, and also that students with high academic motivation enjoyed more academic success than their peers with low academic motivation.

### **Effects of Enculturation on Students' Motivation to Pursue Literacy**

#### **Practices**

Students' self-concepts affect their willingness to engage in academic activities. The previous section analyzed the effects of student's self-perceptions



and motivation on their educational self-expectations and their overall academic success, particularly for students who were African American, Chicano/a, or from low socioeconomic status. These three groups have historically experienced boundaries to educational success, and have among the highest school dropout rates. The five studies in this section analyze students' desires to explore literacy practices in which they felt competent, valued, and able to grow. Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert's (1991) study begins this section with an exploration of how classroom literature practices are inevitably framed within a selective and mainstream sociocultural procedure. Read (2006) studied how youth's motivation to relate to or communicate with others affected their pursuit of literacy practices. Hamston and Love's (2005) study follows Read (2006) in this review with an investigation of boys and their enculturation into reading and the value of reading; Hamston and Love studied the effects of those values on the boys' reluctance to read. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) studied the impacts of boys' self-perceptions of competence on their willingness to pursue literacy activities. Similarly, Bozack (2011) analyzed differences in boys' perceptions of their motivation to pursue literacy practices compared with their teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities in literacy practices.

Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert's (1991) qualitative study measured how the specific reading practices selected and enacted in literary instruction authorized normative reading practices for students in those classrooms. This study showed that, for the students of one classroom in Australia, the criteria pertaining to what counted as reading were inevitably normative in that they entailed value-laden

and ideologically interested decisions about which texts, positions, and practices to select, and that the very framing of textual knowledge and competence in classroom contexts was a selective sociocultural procedure.

Freebody et al. (1991) used an existent classroom as the site for their study. This English classroom consisted of students in Year 9 in an urban school in Australia. Students were generally between the ages of thirteen and fourteen. Freebody et al. conducted a discourse analysis. The researchers focused on the classroom teacher's responses to students in their classroom analysis of the novel *Z for Zachariah*, by Robert O'Brien. The researchers also recognized other patterns of what were considered appropriate responses to literacy within the classroom. Freebody et al. analyzed students' written assignments as well as important elements in school literacy and literature study.

The researchers found that there were problems and shortcomings of conventional schema-theoretic accounts of literacy. Freebody et al. (1991) argued that literacy needed to be reframed by a serious consideration of the ideological features of the reader-text relationship. They also found that the curriculum displayed, built, and valued particular ideological configurations in large part through textual work. Particular reading positions and practices, from among the many available or imaginable, were required and privileged within the classroom. Freebody et al. found that the teacher's questions, statements, and responses to students' offerings displayed to her students what would be taken to count as demonstrating appropriate reading of the text, that is, that students connected their interpretations and inferences about characters back to the

narrative of the text. Overall, Freebody et al. found that the criteria pertaining to what counted as reading were inevitably norming. This norming process acknowledged specific types of literary practices (predominantly hailing from European and English-speaking countries) and excluded others. This practice prepared students to contribute to academic literary discussions, and simultaneously corroborated historical societal notions of power and influence. The framing of textual knowledge and competence in the classroom was a selective, value-laden, and sociocultural procedure that influenced students' contributions to classroom discussions and informed them of the types of literary analysis and critique accepted by the dominant culture.

Freebody et al. (1991) was strongly grounded in theory. Throughout their study, they pointed to various researchers and theorists who came before them and led them to their analyses of their study. This theoretical groundedness pointed toward strong credibility in the researchers' methods and analysis. However, the researchers only gave preliminary information about the students, teacher, and setting involved in their study, resulting in very weak transferability and confirmability. Freebody et al. also gave no indication of the cultural heritage or school readiness of their students or of the teacher. Without the full context of the study, other researchers may not be able to replicate the study or confirm these findings. Also, several times throughout their study, Freebody et al. pointed to a large body of research but did not evidence their remarks with data or citations. For instance, they stated that "there is ample evidence to suggest" without citing the evidence (p. 448). Even with these shortcomings in their study,

Freebody et al. confirmed findings from other studies, adding to the overall dependability of their research. Freebody et al. and the following three studies reviewed here all confirmed the important relationship between students' perceptions of literature, their perceptions of their own literary competence, and their willingness to engage in literary practices.

Read's (2006) qualitative study, measuring how the enculturation of youth affects their practices and motivations for reading, showed that six student-bloggers from the United States had their relatedness needs met by communicating through blogs, which created a motivating and validating experience, and that students dialogued with themselves when they accessed archived histories of their writings.

Read (2006) focused her study on six students who were already authors of their own blogs. Subjects were all from the United States, and their ages ranged from thirteen to eighteen. Half of students were male and the other half were female. Beyond these few descriptors, Read provided no other demographic data.

Read (2006) conducted informal studies of students' blogs and used search features of the Xanga website to find students who expressed interest in writing. Read surveyed students' blogs on a regular basis. As another major aspect of her data collection, Read posted questions on students' blogs and e-mailed them about why they blogged. In her analysis, Read compared students' beliefs about blogging with the actual content of their blog and accounted for content, format, commenting frequency, and motivation for each student.

Read (2006) found that students' communicating through their blogs and following up on comments from readers allowed them to have their relatedness needs met; students were able to connect with others through their blogs. Read suggested, from students' responses to her queries, that blogging created a motivating and validating writing experience for students. By reading students' blogs, Read found that students noticeably grew as writers over time when they wrote their blogs, and their technology skills grew as they manipulated their blogs. That is, students' blogs included more and more technologically advanced features. Ultimately, Read theorized that when students accessed their archived blog history, they could see their past selves and could dialogue with themselves about their personal growth.

Unfortunately, Read (2006) provided little support to establish confidence in her findings. First, the researcher did not provide a theoretical context for her research, diminishing its credibility. Read made claims about youth culture and modern uses of technology as forms of literacy, but regularly failed to include sources for these claims. While she cited a few studies which inspired her research, she did not point to a theoretical framework for her study. Read also provided little context to represent the transferability of her study. The researcher's criteria for finding subjects were that they were adolescent and that they were bloggers. While these two criteria can be easily found again to replicate the study, the researcher included no demographic information about the bloggers. All of the subjects had regular access to the Internet, which suggests the likelihood that the subjects were economically advantaged and

white. The researcher did not explain her reasons for selecting these particular bloggers, nor did she include demographic data on herself. Again, these factors decreased the study's level of transferability. Read's study included some aspects of confirmability. She included transcriptions of posts made by the subjects on their personal blogs and in response to the researcher's questions. Her analyses mainly consisted of her perceptions of the subjects' written responses and their agreement with her queries via e-mail and blog post.

Even with the shortcomings of Read's (2006) study, her findings complemented those from other studies in this literature review, which adds to the dependability of her study. Gordon et al.'s (2007) study (reviewed in a later section) found that creating real-world contexts for literacy activities, such as publishing, helped subjects connect more passionately with their literacy activity. Hamston and Love's (2005) study, to be reviewed next, found that their subjects' enculturation in literacy activities, as well as their personal value of those activities, impacted their reluctance or interest in pursuing those literacy activities. These findings confirm Read's findings that youth who engaged in personally motivating literacy activities, and who were able to have their personal needs, desires, or interests met, were more likely to engage in those activities.

Hamston and Love's (2005) qualitative case study, measuring how adolescent boys make choices about whether to read, what to read, and why, showed that the relationship between the individual boy, his enculturation into reading, and his value of reading had important impacts on his reluctance or interest in reading.

Hamston and Love (2005) tracked two cohorts of boys (from ages eleven to seventeen) from a private boys' school in Melbourne, Australia, over a three-year period. The first stage focused on 91 identified boys who were committed leisure-time readers. The second stage of their study focused on 75 identified boys who were considered able readers who chose not to read.

Hamston and Love (2005) used questionnaires as a source of most of their research. Questionnaires included substantial space for discursive comments, which provided glimpses of family literacy habits from previous generations and extended family members. The questionnaires for reluctant readers were accompanied by data collection methods based on Rogoff's three planes of analysis (apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation, and personal processes), using semi-structured interviews with the subjects and separate interviews with the subjects' parents.

Hamston and Love's (2005) study found that the relationship between the individual boy, his enculturation into reading, and his value of reading had important impacts on his reluctance or interest in reading. Predominantly, boys who were not interested in reading had learned there was a right way of doing things. In spite of similar enculturations into reading as the committed readers in the study, and the continued efforts of their parents to guide and facilitate their leisure-time reading, the reluctant readers' various acts of resistance highlighted how they continued cultural practices—namely, that this perpetuation is dynamic and not predetermined. By choosing whether or not to read, what to read about, and when to read, the subjects who are able to read, but chose not to read,

challenged assumptions that the relationship between enculturation and life trajectory is linear.

Hamston and Love (2005) created high levels of credibility within their study. They discussed the limitations of the study outright, and discussed the limitations of using written questionnaires with boys who were admittedly reluctant to engage in literacy practices. They also described their intentions to further Rogoff's work with influences of resistance and selective acts of appropriation. Hamston and Love also created high levels of transferability within their study. The researchers described the participant population in depth, described their own relationship with the subjects, and were able to build relationships with subjects that allayed fears of judgement. Hamston and Love also created high levels of confirmability for their study. The researchers included transcriptions from interviews with their subjects and narrative depictions of the subjects in relation to their families, and their analyses are directly tied to the data presented in the study.

Overall, Hamston and Love's (2005) study presents a very strong portrayal of the connections between boys' enculturation in literacy and their willingness to pursue literacy. Their findings are complemented by the next study reviewed, a study by Smith and Wilhelm (2004) which found that boys pursued activities in which they felt competent and often rejected literacy activities because they did not feel competent in them. These studies mutually strengthen dependability.



Smith and Wilhelm's (2004) qualitative study, measuring the importance of competence in boy's literate lives, showed that, for a sample of boys from very different backgrounds, boys pursued activities outside school, including literacy activities, in which they felt competent. Literacy activities were often rejected in school because boys did not feel competent in them, and boys embraced activities in which they received clear and immediate feedback on their competence.

Smith and Wilhelm (2004) studied 49 middle and high school boys from very diverse backgrounds, varying in ethnicity, social class, and level of academic achievement. All subjects came from four different schools: an elite all-boy's school, a large suburban high school, a large urban school, and a small rural school. Subjects' schools were located in three states along the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Smith and Wilhelm's study (2004) proceeded from Bandura's criticism of psychology. That is, the researchers explored the ways that psychology has "ignored" how motivation and affect impact peoples' perceptions of their own capabilities (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004, p. 454). Smith and Wilhelm also built on Czikszentmihalyi's work on understanding the connections between peoples' experiences of happiness and their motivations to pursue activities that make them feel happy. Smith and Wilhelm used a four-part collapsed form of Czikszentmihalyi's eight characteristics of flow: (1) the feeling of competence; (2) experiencing a challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill; (3) having clear goals and receiving feedback; and (4) focusing on the immediate

experience. Smith and Wilhelm drew on three types of data for the duration of their study: interviews on boys' favorite activities, interviews on their responses to short profiles emphasizing different ways of embracing or rejecting various kinds of literacy, and an interview every four to six weeks about literacy logs in which boys recorded all of the reading, writing, listening, and viewing they did in and out of school over a three-month period. Smith and Wilhelm analyzed data through conversational turn using the Qualitative Solutions and Research Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing software. Though Smith and Wilhelm used a diverse sample, they did not correlate findings with social identifiers, but instead looked for commonalities among the varying groups.

Smith and Wilhelm's data suggested that boys pursued activities outside school, including literacy activities, in which they felt competent. Literacy activities were often rejected in school because boys did not feel competent in them. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) also found that boys embraced activities in which they were competent or through which they felt they could demonstrate improvement toward competence, and in which they could receive clear and immediate feedback on their competence. The boys who participated in the study had different relationships with literacy, and particularly academic literacy activities. Boys who felt competent in academic literacy activities pursued them in school. However, even boys who generally felt competent with literacy practices, rejected school literacies that highlighted weaknesses. For instance, fourteen boys specifically mentioned the difficulties they encountered when reading texts

with descriptive language. Twelve of the boys experienced difficulty reading unfamiliar genres (e.g. plays and philosophy texts) which they encountered in school. Overall, boys rejected activities in which they believed they would be or would appear to be incompetent.

Grounded in educational theory, Smith and Wilhelm's (2004) study showed high levels of credibility. Their study design also complemented the researchers' purpose, and the researchers collected data from a variety of sources. The subjects were a large group of boys diverse in socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, and academic achievement. The researchers chose to work with a diverse group so that they could make stronger generalizations from their findings. This aspect of their study design added to the transferability of the study. Smith and Wilhelm used conversational turn as their unit of data analysis. They were explicit about their reasons for choosing this analysis unit, and they explained the ways they handled unforeseen variables within the data they collected. The researchers made available transcriptions of their interviews with the subjects, and they included written narratives of their observations within their study. Their data analysis frequently pointed back to the original data. These factors all add to the confirmability of the study.

Smith and Wilhelm's (2004) study had findings that were confirmed by several other studies within this literature review. Hamston and Love's (2005) study showed that boys' reluctance or interest in reading was partly impacted by their encultured value of reading. Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert's (1991) study showed that the framing of literacy competence was based on selected

sociocultural procedures. These studies reinforce the important role that enculturation plays in students' willingness to engage in literacy activities. When students' needs were met in the classroom—socioculturally or merely by receiving authentic praise for their competence—students were more willing to engage in literacy activities.

Bozack's (2011) quantitative study measured how literacy motives, beliefs, and practices of boys in a single-sex high school setting related to academic achievement; how students believed their teachers perceived their reading ability and practices; and the relationship that existed between reading motivation and student achievement. Bozack found that, for a large sample of boys from an all-boys Catholic high school, students varied widely in how they reported the level to which their English teachers understood their academic difficulties: students perceived their own low scores as a result of their own lack of effort and teachers perceived low scores as a result of students' lack of ability.

Bozack (2011) surveyed 330 boys from ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades at a Catholic all-boys high school. Twenty percent of students were considered part of an ethnic minority and 30% of subjects received some form of scholarship assistance. Bozack also surveyed eight teachers from the same school.

Bozack (2011) used the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) as a foundation for this study and created separate questionnaires for teachers and students using questions from the MRQ; these new surveys were called the High School Literacy Project Questionnaires (HSLPQ). Students and teachers responded to statements using a Likert-type scale. The student questionnaire

explored students' self-perceptions of their own academic and literary abilities and motivations as well as students' perceptions of their teachers' awareness of the students' academic and literary abilities and motivations. The teacher questionnaire explored teachers' perceptions of their students' academic and literary abilities and motivations. These questionnaires mirrored each other. For example, where the student HSLPQ stated, "My English teacher thinks I am a good reader," the teacher HSLPQ stated, "I think \_\_\_\_\_ is a good reader" (Bozack, 2011, p. 61). The researcher tracked survey and achievement data from all participants. In addition to student and teacher questionnaire responses, Bozack correlated data with student achievement tests.

Bozack (2011) found that students varied widely in how they reported the levels their English teachers understood their difficulties in the classroom; likewise teachers' own reports on their ability to understand students' difficulties varied widely. Furthermore, students' reports of their perceptions of their teachers' perceptions of their literary abilities was higher than the teachers' reported perceptions of the students' literary abilities. Simultaneously, Bozack found that teachers' reports of knowing what each of their students individually struggled with in class varied widely. Students reported low literary achievement as a result of their own lack of effort and teachers reported low student literary achievement as a result of perceived student lack of ability. Bozack's findings suggested a mismatch in students' and teachers' perceptions of student literary ability and motivation. Bozack thus suggested that the strategies used by teachers to engage students in literary practices might be ineffective.

A major weakness from Bozack's (2011) study, the only component that achieved a reliability score with Cronbach's alpha, was the Positive Reader Identity factor ( $\alpha = .72$ ). The remainder of the Cronbach's alpha scores for the tests were too low to warrant further exploration of the data. Also, Bozack's research was correlational. Correlational studies have natural weaknesses with internal validity, as their findings are in danger of representing spurious causations. Bozack's sample size was too small for reasonable confidence levels; in a population of 678, Bozack surveyed 330. This small sample size meant that the findings were not necessarily descriptive of the entire population and diminished external validity. Simultaneously, the sample was relatively homogenous. Thus, Bozack's findings generally described one specific type of population, which again diminished external validity. Alternatively, Bozack's (2011) study process showed strength. Bozack included specific reasoning for and descriptions of the types of questions used on the student questionnaires. This transparency with the instrumentation strengthened the objectivity of the study.

The studies in this subsection showed that the relationship between students' cultural encapsulations and the literacy expectations in their classrooms impacted students' willingness to pursue literacy activities. Beginning this subsection, Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert (1991) showed that literacy activities in the classroom were inherently value-laden and normative, often rejecting students' contributions and redirecting their thinking when it was not synonymous with dominant European American and English-speaking cultural

values. Similarly, Bozack (2011) found a mismatch between teachers' and their students' perceptions of students' literacy abilities. Bozack found that students perceived their low academic scores as resulting from their lack of effort, while their teachers perceived students' low scores as resulting from lack of ability, once again creating a cultural expectation inside the language arts classroom. A final demonstration of the mismatch between student and curricular expectations, Hamston and Love (2005) showed that boys' family cultures about reading and their personal value of reading impacted their willingness to engage with reading. The remaining two studies in this subsection showed that students who were interested in and felt competent in literacy practices were more willing to engage with these practices. Read (2006) showed that adolescent bloggers were interested in blogging because it created a validating writing experience. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) showed that boys pursued literacy activities in which they felt competent and when they received clear and immediate feedback on their competence. Overall, this subsection revealed a mismatch between students' enculturations and literacy curricula, and shared hopeful findings that youth who were engaged in literacy activities that personally interested them were more willing to continue to pursue those activities.

### **Contributions of Students' Self-Perceptions to Their Literary Success**

The prior section of this literature review explored how students' enculturation into reading affected their willingness to pursue literacy practices. Importantly, the section looked at the effects of boys' self-perceptions of competence and ability on their willingness to engage in reading or other literacy

activities, a topic of particular importance because boys typically experience higher dropout rates than peers who are girls. The four studies in this section look particularly to students' motivations for and expectations of literary success and their effects on students' actual successes in literacy practices. Paige (2011) explored extrinsic motivations for reading and their correlations to reading proficiency. Henk and Melnick (1995) studied student's self-perceptions of their reading ability. Ivey (1999) studied the multidimensionality of students and the impacts of situational context on students' dispositions toward and performance on reading. McConaughy (1985) investigated students' prior knowledge with reading and the effects of students' reading schema on their ability to comprehend stories.

Paige's (2011) quantitative study, measuring the correlations between extrinsic motivation for reading, oral reading proficiency, comprehension, and academic achievement in middle school students, the majority of whom struggled with reading, provided the first empirical test with its findings using structural equation modeling.

Paige's (2011) subjects were all from the same middle school in the southeast region of United States. In this school, 91% of students were African American, 5% were Latino/a, 2% were Asian American, and 2% were European American. Most students lived in a suburban neighborhood; 41% of the entire student population was eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. For this study, Paige had two different samples: 112 sixth-grade students who were randomly selected from the 231 students who returned parent/guardian



permission to participate forms, and 115 seventh-grade students who were randomly selected from the 166 students who returned parent/guardian permission forms. The sixth-grade sample population was surveyed within the first month of the school year, and the seventh-grade sample population assessment measures were gathered during January of the same school year.

Paige's (2011) assessment methods included administering two tests and correlating the data from standardized tests. Paige's measurement for students' self-perceptions and motivations was the 54-item self-report, four-option Likert-scale Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ). Statements within the questionnaire particularly focused on students' reading motivation based on competition, recognition, grades, social aspects, and compliance. Paige also administered the Test of Reading Comprehension-3 (TORC-3). Paige correlated MRQ and TORC-3 responses with results from two standardized reading assessments which measured oral reading proficiency, the Test of Word Reading Efficiency, Form A (TOWRE) and The Gray Oral Reading Test-4, Form A (GORT-4). Teachers at the participant middle school received training and subsequently administered the MRQ and TORC-3 assessments in group settings over the course of one week under the supervision of the researcher. Teachers provided instruction by reviewing two practice items with each group prior to administration. Test administrators also reviewed procedures for responding to the statements and questions and completed practice items for all subtests. Paige and research assistants administered the The TOWRE and GORT-4

assessments over a three-week period in individual settings. Test administrators used the examination manuals when proctoring these tests.

The standard scores for Paige's measure of fluency (using the GORT-4) were 8.6 for sixth-grade students and 7.1 for seventh-grade students, placing students at the 32nd and 17th percentiles respectively. These scores fell well below the established level for identifying students who struggle with reading. For both sample populations, Paige found correlations ( $p < .01$ ) between oral proficiency, comprehension, and achievement. With an analysis which showed low to moderate significance, the researchers found that sixth graders indicated recognition ( $p < .01$ ), grades ( $p$ -value not indicated), and compliance ( $p < .01$ ) as their major motivational forces to read. At moderate significance levels, seventh-graders' indicated recognition ( $p < .01$ ), compliance ( $p < .01$ ), and competition ( $p < .01$ ) as their major motivational forces to read. For both sample populations, Paige also found moderate significance ( $p < .01$ ) between oral reading proficiency and academic achievement in all core subject areas (math, reading, science, and social studies). Paige suggested that these findings showed a positive and reciprocal relationship between oral reading proficiency and extrinsic motivations for reading. Paige's study showed unique findings, as the relationships between oral reading proficiency and extrinsic motivations for reading have not been previously measured in the field. Overall, Paige's study correlated the constructs of extrinsic motivation for reading, oral reading proficiency, reading comprehension, and academic achievement at moderate

significance for middle school students who were identified as struggling with reading.

Paige's (2011) study showed strong internal validity. Chi-square analysis ( $X^2_{112} = 163.38, p < .01$ ) was significant for the sixth-grade sample; this fit measure indicated a solid fit of the measurement model with the data. Chi-square analysis for the seventh-grade sample was also significant, but at a lower level ( $X^2_{114} = 131.91, p < .05$ ); this measure suggested a close fit of the model with the data. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha (value not indicated) showed that all four constructs exhibited strong reliability for both sample groups. Paige found a significant, medium-sized relationship between extrinsic motivation for reading and oral reading proficiency that explained from 12 to 25 percent of the variance between the two constructs. Another strength, Paige specifically described the survey used as well as the measures for analyzing data. This transparency of data and instrumentation led to a strong objectivity for this study. One weakness in Paige's (2011) study was that the sample size was low and nondescript. In a population with 750 students, Paige had 227 participants. And, though Paige very clearly described the demographics of the population, Paige did not demonstrate whether the sample was demonstrative of that population. These two factors limited the generalizability of the study and demonstrated a weak external validity.

Henk and Melnick's (1995) qualitative study, asking how students felt about themselves as readers, showed how a teacher, using the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) to measure intermediate-level students' affect toward

reading, can focus her plans for instruction and strategies, for monitoring individual students, and for gaining insight into the classroom climate.

Henk and Melnick (1995) measured students from intermediate grades (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades). This study discussed a sample classroom of fourth graders within a school that housed elementary students. Henk and Melnick built on a foundational belief that children who have made positive associations with reading tend to read more often, for longer periods of time, and with greater intensity. The RSPS asked students to read 33 test items and rate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a five-point Likert scale. The RSPS took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Researchers asked teachers to explain the purpose of the assessment to students and work through an example before testing. Students were encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of the instrument they did not understand. Students whose RSPS scores were slightly below, equal to, or slightly greater than the mean indicated that the child's self-perceptions were in a normal range.

Henk and Melnick (1995) found that the RSPS was useful in examining whole classrooms or individual students or to assist teachers in detecting and instructing students whose self-perceptions were lower than the expected norm. Depending on their individual profiles, students received instructional adjustments. Classroom instructional adjustments included more frequent and concrete illustrations of student progress, opportunities to read in situations where a student's performance compared favorably with peers' performances,

increased positive reinforcement from the teacher, and modeling the enjoyment, appreciation, relaxation, and gratification gained from reading.

Adding to the credibility of their study, Henk and Melnick (1995) described the climate in the field at the time of the study, described their entrance into the field with this study and its uniqueness to the field, and described the developmental theories around why their study successfully demonstrated what they intended to.

Simultaneously, Henk and Melnick failed to provide information which would confirm the transferability of their study. The researchers did not describe the situational context of the study, such as the students' race, socioeconomic status, gender, where they are from geographically, or their previous interactions with reading. Nor did the researchers describe the teacher. The researchers also pointed toward the data products of their study, but did not include auditable data, weakening the confirmability of their study. For instance, in describing their research, Henk and Melnick stated, "Any score for a scale that is slightly below, equal to, or slightly greater than the mean indicates the that child's self-perceptions are in the normal range" (Henk & Melnick, p. 474). However, Henk and Melnick do not provide data as to why these scores fit in the "normal range."

Even with these shortcomings, Henk Melnick's (1995) findings were complemented by findings from another study in this literature review. Ivey's (1999) study, discussed next, measured how students' reading performance and dispositions toward reading were complex and varied, and suggested that reading programs respond to students' needs and interests.

Ivey's (1999) qualitative case study measuring the nature of student's reading performance and their dispositions toward reading showed that selected middle school students were complex and multidimensional; showed that their reading performance and dispositions toward reading varied according to the context of their reading, the materials they read, and the purpose of their reading; and suggested that middle school reading programs become responsive to students' needs and interests.

From Ivey's (1999) initial and purposive sampling, she identified three sixth-grade students who matched established criteria. Identified students differed at levels of reading success, but were willing and able to offer rich information about themselves as readers. One subject was considered a successful reader, another subject was considered moderately successful as a reader, and one subject was considered a struggling reader. The students were enrolled in a rural and economically diverse community. The middle school housed approximately 580 students. Ninety percent were White, 9% of students were Black, and 1% were from another racial or ethnic group. Fifty-one percent of students qualified for free or reduced-priced school lunch.

Ivey (1999) observed and became acquainted with subjects for two weeks before beginning data collection. Ivey collected written accounts of day-to-day classroom reading for over five months. She visited the three subjects in their school three or four times, and each observation lasted approximately four hours. After these visits, Ivey no longer observed subjects in the classroom, as she determined more observations would only report redundant data. Data included

classroom observations (and her notes about these observations), interviews with students, one-on-one reading periods with individual students (these sessions were audiotaped and then transcribed), and the researcher's reflection journal.

Ivey's (1999) study found that each reader was complex and multidimensional. All three students' reading performances and dispositions toward reading varied according to the context of their reading, the materials they read, and the purpose of their reading. Students performed well as readers in specific situations and with specific materials, but other conditions inhibited their reading performance. Students lost interest in reading when it was reductionistic or overly simplistic, but most students were willing to read when it satisfied their personal needs. Ivey also found that, while terminology or categories provided a sense of how much students had developed as readers, such labels offered limited information about the complexities of individual experiences. Overall, Ivey suggested that middle school reading programs need to be responsive to students' needs and interests, and that students' purposes for reading played a strong role in all students' inclinations to read.

Providing strong credibility, Ivey's (1999) study was grounded in educational theory. She specifically chose to use the case study in order to gather a more detailed perspective around a variety of adolescent readers. Ivey got to know her subjects before she began to collect data, strengthening her subjects' capacity for trusting her and potentially granting her access to more personal reflections of their experiences with literacy, contextualized within

education reform issues. Ivey's study also had strong transferability. She used subjects who matched pre-determined qualifications, she thoroughly described the demographic contexts for her subjects as well as the educational atmosphere within the school, and, importantly, she thoroughly described her relationships with the subjects. Ivey's data collection and data analysis processes were explicit in her study. Ivey included transcriptions from interviews as well as narratives of her observations. The questions she posed were situational to her interactions with her subjects, but she illustrated her queries by providing several examples of her interactions with students, including the questions she posed. These aspects provided strong levels of confirmability in Ivey's study.

Ivey's (1999) findings were confirmed by other studies reviewed in this section. Paige's (2011) study showed a positive correlation between students' motivation for reading and their actual literacy proficiency; Henk and Melnick (1995) showed that students' affects towards reading should impact a teacher's plans for literacy instruction and strategies. Both of these studies confirm findings from Ivey's study, adding to the overall dependability of all three studies. Students' interests need to be at the forefront of literacy instruction. Classroom attention to what interested students helped them become motivated to pursue literacy activities.

McConaughy's (1985) quantitative study, measuring how good and poor readers' differently organized reading schema affected readers' comprehension of story structure, showed that, for the sample of sixth-grade students from two public middle schools in Chittenden County, Vermont, there were different types



of cognitive story schemata which readers used to organize information according to its importance in the story structure.

McConaughy's 42 subjects included 21 sixth graders labeled as *poor readers* and 21 labeled as *good readers*, selected from two public middle schools in Chittenden County, Vermont. Good readers included students with reading comprehension scores at the 64th percentile or above based on standardized achievement tests given by their schools. Poor readers included students with reading comprehension scores between the 26th and 40th percentile on the same standardized achievement tests. The group of readers who scored above the 64th percentile, the more skilled readers, was made up of nine males and 12 females; and the group of readers who scored between the 26th and 40th percentiles, the less skilled readers, was made up of eight males and 13 females.

McConaughy (1985) tested all subjects with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Revisited, as a pretest of their overall verbal abilities. Students were then tested individually in one 45-minute session. McConaughy presented students with four stories, one for each test condition. Immediately after listening to or reading each story, students were instructed to summarize the story, telling only what they considered to be the most important parts for the meaning of the story. The four test conditions included: listening-oral recall, reading-oral recall, listening-written recall, and reading-written recall. After gathering all data, McConaughy performed variance analyses on students' responses.

McConaughy (1985) found that the general recall was high for both groups; there were few distortions of information. There was no significant difference in performance between the different gender-assigned groups; therefore, the researchers collapsed the data and included both genders within each of the groups. Readers who were more skilled produced, on the average, longer summaries than readers who were less skilled ( $p < .01$ ). In output variables, students' oral responses resulted in longer summaries than their written responses across reader groups ( $p < .05$ ), but there was no significant difference between listening and reading as input variables. A significant finding, the two groups of readers emphasized different types of information ( $p < .001$ ). When stories included explicit syntactic information, readers more easily recalled the information than when syntactic clues were implicit and students had to figure out the information. Students who were more skilled emphasized seven out of the eight syntactic categories (setting, inciting incident, goal, internal response, attempt, outcome, and reaction) in implicit clues more times than students who were less skilled. These findings suggested that students' internal schematic organizations of text depended on the complexity of the text (specifically its explicit and implicit clues) rather than the readers' skills. Overall, McConaughy's hypothesis was supported: there were different types of cognitive story schemata which readers used to organize information according to its importance in the story structure.

McConaughy's (1985) study showed strong reliability and strong objectivity. The inter-rater reliability was within 96% agreement. When subjects

made errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, these were corrected by the experimenter to prevent possible bias against less skilled readers.

Repetitions, incomplete statements, and commentaries were deleted to prevent bias in modality effects. The parsed and corrected protocols were scored by two raters who were blind to the subjects' sex, group assignment, and modality condition. The transparency of data, instrumentation, and rater precautions indicated high levels of objectivity.

McConaughy's (1985) study had a weak external validity. The researcher's sample size was nondescript and did not necessarily represent the population. McConaughy did not describe population demographics, nor did the researcher describe the population size. McConaughy's study also showed weak internal validity. This study was based on correlational data and did not include implementation of interventions. Correlational studies have natural weaknesses, as spurious causation is always a danger.

This subsection showed that students' reading performances and dispositions toward reading were complex and varied, and impacted their success with literacy activities. McConaughy (1985) showed that students who scored higher on reading tests identified implicit text structures due to more developed cognitive schemata, and suggested that this was due to more experiences with reading. Thus, when Paige (2011) found correlations between students' extrinsic motivations to read and their academic success, the research suggested that curricula which honored students extrinsic motivations would engage students more and offer higher academic success. Similarly, Ivey (1999)

showed that students' dispositions toward reading varied according to their reading context and whether or not they were interested in it. Importantly, Henk and Melnick (1995) showed that the Reader Self-Perceptions Scale measured students' reading affect, an important tool for creating literacy curricula honoring students' needs. Overall, when students' reading affect was at the forefront of literacy instruction, students were more motivated to pursue literacy activities and attained higher literacy success.

### **School and Classroom Environments**

The prior sections of this literature review discussed studies which have captured current understandings about how students' motivation affects their academic success. First, this literature review explored how students' academic motivations were affected by their self-perceived abilities to succeed. This review then investigated how students' enculturations affected their desires to pursue literacy practices. Finally, this review presented studies that explored how students' motivation in pursuing literacy practices affected their academic successes in literacy practices. The second half of this critical review of current literature, the following three sections, will explore how school and classroom environments and teachers' instruction affect students' academic motivation.

#### **The Effects on Student Engagement When Schools Meet Students' Needs**

The four studies presented in this section analyzed how the school and classroom environments affect students' ability to succeed academically. Riley and Docking (2004) explored what students feel most positive and most concerned about with school decision-making. Yair (2000) analyzed students'

engagement with classroom instruction, based on both instructional and social factors. McQuillan (2005) analyzed how schools' intentions to empower students to prepare for life after school variously affected students' academic motivation levels. And, similarly, Duncan (1996) investigated how typical tokenizations of Black students as academically successful or rebellious impacted their lives as students and their understanding of the institutions, such as schools, that have influenced their lives.

Riley and Docking's (2004) quantitative study, which asked what students and school staff feel most positive and most concerned about with school decision-making and what views and experiences academically reluctant students have, showed that, from questionnaire and panel responses from samples of staff and students from Lancashire and southern England, staff generally over- or under-estimated their students' academic values, and that academically-reluctant students generally felt disengaged due to disrespect from school staff and unreasonable school rules. Importantly, the researchers found no evidence to support deficit-model assumptions that families from low socioeconomic status placed a low value on educational achievement or were uninterested in their student's progress at school.

During the first portion of their study, Riley and Docking (2004) used questionnaires to ask about the experiences of 45 students from Lancashire. The second portion of their study followed 18 primary schools and 13 secondary schools in southern England. Altogether, they collected data from 3291 students and 361 staff through both panel discussions and questionnaires. Riley and

Docking wrote and administered questionnaires asking students to express their esteem of various aspects of their school experiences using a four-point or five-point Likert scale. Questions focused on student perceptions of their academics and their comfort in school, whether caregivers supported them, their behavior, discipline, and their school attendance. To teachers, Riley and Docking administered mirror questionnaires. These mirror questionnaires asked teachers to respond about various aspects of their work experiences as well as their perceptions of their students' perceptions of their school experiences.

From their study, Riley and Docking (2004) found that staff generally misperceived their students' academic values. Staff overestimated students' interest in school, the curricula, and the extent to which students approved of the disciplinary systems and felt supported by their teachers. However, staff underestimated students' value of school work, their feelings of safety in the school environment, and students' unexcused absences. Complementary to these results, Riley and Docking found that students who felt academically reluctant felt disrespected by staff and frustrated about the school environment. As students progressed through school, more students reported feeling school-reluctant and feeling dissatisfied with the ways staff treated them. In the year ten (equivalent to United States ninth grade) sample, 60% of students reported that their school had too many rules, compared with 23% of year six (equivalent to United States fifth grade) students reporting too many school rules. The group of students who felt most disengaged (self-reported as more bored than interested) reported significantly more negatively about their interest in lessons and their

interactions with school staff ( $p < .0005$ ). Simultaneously, this group of students also generally reported positive values associated with educational motivations for academic success, feeling responsible for completing their school work, and feeling academically supported by their families. Overall, students who reported feeling disengaged from school felt that way because of particular interactions they had with school staff and the school's disciplinary system.

An important aspect of their research, Riley and Docking (2004) found no evidence to support the conventional deficit-model assumptions about students and their familial support of school. On the contrary, their study found that children and their parents with low-income status tended to place a high value on educational achievement, and students perceived that their parents were interested in their children's progress at school. Riley and Docking suggested that teachers and students would both benefit from dialoguing about their various needs in the classroom, and that their study recognized a need to shift toward teaching and learning in ways that recognize the diverse ways in which children learn.

In Riley and Docking's (2004) study, their questionnaire analysis underwent chi-square procedures, showing strong reliability and strengthening confidence in their results. Riley and Docking's (2004) study was descriptive, reporting student and teacher concerns about schooling based on two of their previous studies. Internal validity measures were not relevant to this type of study. Descriptive studies have natural weaknesses, as researcher bias is extremely common, leading to weaknesses in objectivity. Also, their teacher

sample sizes were relatively low. Their responses from teachers was 49 percent for primary schools and 40 percent for secondary schools, with a total of 361 staff. This sample was too low for generalizability weakened the study's external validity.

Yair's (2000) quantitative study, measuring how students' engagement with or alienation from instruction due to instructional practices and social forces and how those forces determine the extent to which students take advantage of classroom opportunities to learn, showed that students from a large, randomly selected sample of elementary and secondary schools were engaged with classroom instruction only 54% of the time, and that as grade level rose, students became less engaged with instruction.

The participants in Yair's (2000) study were 865 students at elementary and secondary levels. Yair used demographic data collected during the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development (a United States longitudinal study of adolescents). Data came from twelve research sites, sampling across 33 schools (13 high schools, five K-6 schools, three K-8 schools, and twelve middle schools). Students were randomly selected from class lists in grade six (19.9% of total sample), grade eight (28.3% of sample), grade ten (29.5% of sample), and grade twelve (22.3% of sample). The researcher categorized participants by gender, race, and ability level (based on grades). Out of the total sample population 41% were boys and 59% were girls; 67.5% were European American, 15.9% percent were African American, 10% were Chicano/a, and 6.6% were Asian American. After data collection, 80% of students were identified with an *at-*



*risk* status based on their questionnaire responses during the study. Students identified with at-risk status reported a general mood that was one standard deviation lower than the average mood, reported spending more than three hours a day with peers, and reported spending less than half an hour a day completing homework.

For this study, Yair (2000) employed the experience sampling method (ESM) to collect data from his sample population. Yair provided students with wristwatches that emitted eight signals per day for one week. When beeped, students answered a short questionnaire. The questionnaire inquired about students' whereabouts, thoughts, activities, concentration levels, mood, and feelings about the main activity, and it included room for students' written comments. This procedure produced a sample, after extracting missing cases, of 4,058 questionnaire responses that occurred during instruction time. The Sloan study's research staff coded the data received from the ESM. Yair conducted logistic regressions to calculate results and correlated these results against independent variables (including demographic information).

Yair (2000) found that students were engaged with classroom instruction only 54% of the time. Yair found that race was a strong predictor of engagement with instruction. Asian American and European American students were engaged 56.5% and 55.5%, respectively. Alternately, Chicano and African American students reported the highest levels of alienation (50% and 50.6%, respectively). As grade levels rose, Yair also found a clear linear reduction in classroom engagement. Sixth-grade students reported attention on classroom instruction

62% of the time, while twelfth-graders reported attention only 49% of the time. When students reported alienation from instruction, students with mostly A and B grades tended to still become preoccupied with school, whereas students with mostly C and below grades tended to become preoccupied with extra-curricular factors. Finally, Yair found that instructional strategies significantly impacted students' academic engagement. When students perceived instruction as relevant to themselves, students felt more challenged, and as students felt more challenged, they became more engaged with the instruction. Overall, as students progressed through the school system, teachers had greater difficulty gaining and maintaining students' attention. However, when teachers used relevant and challenging subject matter in their instruction, students became more engaged.

Yair (2000) used a correlational study to answer the research question. Correlational studies have natural weaknesses in internal validity as their causations can be spurious.

Yair's (2000) sample of 865 students was randomly selected from 12 school sites across the United States and was stratified by gender, race, and ability level. These considerations heightened the generalizability of the study and strengthened the external validity. Yair also included the instrumentation for self-reporting, the student questionnaire, at the end of the study. And, Yair used data that he was not solely tied to. His demographic data was from the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development, and his data was coded by the Sloan study staff at the National Opinion Research Center with 95% interrater agreement. This transparency strengthened the objectivity of the study. Another

strength, eight out of eleven variables in Yair's study were significant at the  $p < .001$  level. This p-value indicated that these findings were not due to chance and strengthened the reliability.

McQuillan's (2005) qualitative comparative analysis of case studies, measuring how schools empower students in academic, political, and social spheres to prepare for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, showed that programs from two very different school settings varied in their abilities to empower adolescents.

McQuillan (2005) compared data from two case studies that he previously conducted. The participants in these studies were from two high schools: Russell High's newly established "Essential School," a member of the Coalition for Essential Schools (CES) and Frontier High School, a newly established alternative school. He chose these schools because they both had primary foci on empowering students. From Essential School, McQuillan gathered data from a representative sample of 76 out of the 200 students, and all 13 faculty including student teachers. Essential School's host, Russell High School, enrolled 1,000 students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, including African American, Latino/a, Southeast Asian American, and European American students (with, specifically, a very large Portuguese population), with around 70% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches. From Frontier High School, McQuillan gathered data on eight of the fourteen faculty, the principal, and nearly one quarter of the school's 160 students. The student population at Frontier reflected the breakdown within the district: 89% were European American students, 7% were

Latino/a students, and 4% were African American students. Overall, Frontier's school district was affluent, although not all students fit that profile. The two schools in McQuillan's studies were notably different in student race and ethnicity, as well as in student socioeconomic status. Essential School was an urban school with many students of color and with a high number of students with low-income status. Frontier High School was a more financially affluent and mainly European American suburban school. McQuillan (2005) began data collection nearly fifteen years before publishing this study, but found that schools generally remained institutions that taught students to be passively obedient, rather than empowered, and that his research was still relevant. McQuillan collected data for his case studies in two different waves. First, McQuillan studied the Essential School, surveying and observing the central staff and his student sample between fall 1986 and June 1988. McQuillan collected data on three days each week, using formal and informal interviews, ethnographic observations, and archival documents. Ethnographic observations occurred mainly in classes, during school meetings, and at school events. Archival data included enrollment statistics, program policy descriptions, parent newsletters, class assignments, and the student newspaper. The second wave of McQuillan's data collection was at Frontier High School between August 1993 and June 1995. McQuillan collected data on two days each week, again through ethnographic observations and archival data. The researcher conducted informal and formal interviews, attended classes and school activities, and gathered a range of school documents including the school's vision statement, enrollment

figures, policy proposals, and course assignments. Student empowerment became a research focus because it was an explicit institutional priority in both schools.

McQuillan (2005) found major differences in the ways these schools implemented their student empowerment programs, and he found varying degrees of success. The Essential School was unsuccessful in its efforts to promote student empowerment. First, Essential School started its program with incomplete policies. Program leaders hoped to revise these as the school became more acquainted with the program, but students and faculty consistently felt confused about their roles. Although Essential School demanded high standards that might have enhanced academic empowerment, students consistently resisted this innovation, and faculty grew so frustrated that they eventually abandoned the incomplete policies. Students at Essential were also both skeptical of the power accorded them and uncertain why the forums created by adults should be empowering, although many initially welcomed the opportunities.

Similarly, Frontier High struggled in its initial implementation of their student empowerment program. Students received a lot of bargaining power, so much that they were uncomfortable and wary at exercising it. However, as students and faculty reassessed their implementations, they did so together. By the end of his observations at Frontier High, McQuillan found that the faculty had approached empowerment through academic, political, and social lenses to their success. First, students played important roles in determining curriculum,

implementing instruction, and bargaining for structural academic policies, such as the grading system. Second, faculty and administrators sought student input when establishing school and classroom policies. Finally, the school implemented opportunities for faculty to act as mentors and for students to support their peers. After Frontier High's initial problems with their student empowerment program, the faculty reacted by continuing to share responsibility for the program with students which ultimately ensured its success.

Overall, McQuillan found that both schools' efforts to generate student empowerment created disequilibrium, and these attempts at empowerment contradicted what many students, teachers, administrators, and parents believed students and school should do. First, the schools needed to clarify who defined empowerment. Second, the schools needed to examine what levels of trust already existed. Based on Frontier High's successes, McQuillan proposed that student empowerment could play a major role in addressing the academic achievement gap between demographically different groups of students.

McQuillan (2005) collected data from a variety of sources, and included both subjects' perceptions of themselves and the researcher's observations of the subjects. McQuillan's research was grounded in educational theory and included an analysis of the climate within education on a national level, especially given the context of school reform. McQuillan also explained his bias as a researcher as well as his assumptions about the types of data he would collect. These factors all added to the credibility of McQuillan's study. The researcher also explained his process for choosing the participant sites, and

thoroughly described the situational contexts of his study, adding to the transferability of the study. McQuillan had strong levels of confirmability in his study. He described the types of data he collected and thoroughly explained his interactions with the schools as he was collecting data. His study included written transcriptions from meetings with teachers at the school, narratives from observations of teachers with parents of students, as well as verbatim transcripts from observations of students within advisory meetings and in the classroom setting. McQuillan's study had a variety of strengths, including the dependability of his study with other studies in this literature review. For example, Duncan's (1996) study (reviewed below) showed that historically oppressed students need access to theoretical and material tools to overcome the narrative of oppression that continues, especially in schools. Overall, these studies show that when students are authentically empowered, they can be academically successful.

Duncan's (1996) qualitative study, grounded in critical approaches to the academic literature which portrays successful Black students as downplaying the significance of race, explored the options Black students have to assume a role other than one that is ascribed to them, and showed that, for six Black high school students, their academic success was attributed to their adeptness in navigating the process that enabled a deeper understanding of the contradictions that shaped their lives in the United States and the transformation of the institutions that sustained them.

In the fall of 1993, Duncan interviewed 22 young Black women and men to explore the nature and role of Black consciousness in their lives, with particular

regard to how this concept influenced their academic achievement. All students were either attending or had recently graduated from the same high school, located 35 miles southeast of Los Angeles, California. From these interviews, Duncan focused on six students, all of whom were college students during the study. These six focus-students were chosen based on their reputations in the school and community for being African-centered in their general language and conduct.

Duncan (1996) interviewed the participants of the study as his method of gathering data. The researcher's interviews took the form of dialogues with groups of two to five teenagers structured primarily around open-ended questions. On four occasions, the researcher had one-on-one dialogues with single participants. All participants were asked a number of questions related to their perception of themselves, others, schools, and the larger society. Duncan's analysis of his data was grounded in Mediated Action Theory (MAT). This process of mediation was demonstrated by subjects using the ideas of dialogicality, or the multi-voiced quality of speech, and heteroglossia to place adolescent voices within both an historical and a contemporary praxis of Black resistance to White supremacy. Duncan's analysis shifted to examine how the arrangement of place (where the subjects lived) worked as a mediational device. In addition to situational context of Black adolescent voices, Duncan's analysis illustrated the process of problem-posing and dialogue that fostered Black youths' awareness of the social and political contradictions of race in the United States.



Duncan (1996) found that the Black adolescents he studied mediated their thoughts and conduct with tools that had been shaped within the fundamentally White supremacist cultural context of the United States. The theme of dialogicality was consistent with the notion of a communal ethos described by the researcher as a significant factor in creating educational environments that were conducive to Black adolescent achievement. Duncan echoed Freire in criticizing the banking model of education; Duncan affirmed practices that were based on critically reflective dialogue and participation. Overall, Duncan found that Black students needed access to rigorous curricula which would allow them to selectively appropriate the tools that would assist them in gaining access to resources in changing the concrete and material conditions of their lives. Duncan suggested that schools need to become places where Black students have access to the conceptual and material tools that promote the constructive channeling of various forms of ethical resistance to the oppression that partly fuels the consistent bitterness that has come out of Black students not having access to outlets for the institutionalized oppression they have encountered. And, importantly, Duncan suggested that schools need to foster an historical understanding of the institutional dynamics that have historically shaped and continue to shape present-day realities.

Throughout his publication, Duncan (1996) openly discussed the limitations of the study, and consistently showed the connections between his research methods and his extrapolations, both significant demonstrations of the credibility of his study. A potential weakness within the study was that the

participants comprised a small sample confined in a social context, which limits transferability of the study. Simultaneously, Duncan thoroughly explained the situational context of his study and provided insight to his decisions for remedies to his methods, increasing the transferability and confirmability of the study. Duncan thoroughly explained his research process and provided detailed depictions as well as transcriptions of his interviews with students. Duncan also provided an in-depth analysis of and specific data for generating grounded theory and future research.

Overall, Duncan's findings were consistent with the findings of other studies represented in this literature review. Riley and Docking's (2004) study found that teachers, students, and their parents were disenchanted with schools and desired higher academic expectations; Yair's (2000) study showed that social and developmental forces determined students' engagement with classroom instruction; and McQuillan's (2005) study emphasized the school's position in defining student empowerment. These studies each strengthened the dependability of the others. Consistent with Duncan's exploration of academic institutional boundaries for Black students, these studies all emphasized the impact that schools have on students and their willingness to engage with academia.

This subsection showed that when schools promoted student involvement, choice, and positive student-teacher relationships, students were more academically motivated. Riley and Docking (2004) found that school staff generally over- or under-estimated students academic values, and that most

academically reluctant students felt alienated due to disrespect from staff and unreasonable school rules. Riley and Docking also found that more students expressed academic reluctance as grade levels rose. Yair's (2000) findings complemented Riley and Docking's research, namely, that students became more academically reluctant as grade levels rose. Yair also found that students reported engagement with classroom instruction only 54% of the time. Similarly, Duncan (1996) showed that African American students attributed their academic success to their abilities to navigate institutions that privileged European American values and practices. Finally, a hopeful contribution to this subsection, McQuillan (2005) found that schools varied in their abilities to empower students. Importantly, when schools emphasized student-voice in school policy decisions and positive student-teacher relationships, students felt more empowered and demonstrated higher academic success. Overall, this subsection showed that students expressed varying academic motivation and reluctance, and that empowering school environments improved students' motivation to pursue academic activities.

### **Contributions of Positive School Social Culture to Student Motivation**

When schools promote student involvement, choice, and positive student-teacher relationships on an institutional level, students can become empowered and more academically motivated. The prior section explored the effects that school and classroom policies and subsequent environments can have on students' academic motivations. This section will review four studies that focus closely on the social environment of classrooms and schools. Jacob (1995)

studied how multicultural education altered the learning environment of a school and the subsequent influences on student relations, attitudes, and behaviors. Polleck (2010) investigated book clubs to determine their effect on positively enhancing students' social-emotional and academic learning. Slavin (1987) analyzed classroom incentives, using competitive and cooperative classroom social environments. Finally, Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (1998) examined the relationship between adolescents' academic motivations and achievements and their perceptions of their schools.

Jacob's (1995) qualitative study measured how multicultural education changed the learning environment of a school in ways that subsequently influenced students' attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Jacob showed that, for samples of faculty and students at a large public high school, multicultural education created an engaging and close-knit learning environment, increased motivation, effort, and school identification in students of color, but also provided terrain for intergroup conflict among groups of students of color. Jacob found that the ways in which culture was discussed and understood had a significant impact on student relations, attitudes, and behaviors.

Jacob's (1995) observations took place at Heritage High, a large public high school located in a prominent Northeastern city. Traditionally an all-male institution, the early seventies brought to the school court-mandated desegregation, and transformed the school from almost entirely European American students to one of predominantly students of color. The teachers and administrators who were interviewed were chosen based on their interest,

willingness, and availability, as well as for their wide range of perspectives from participating in the Multicultural Education program. The students were chosen as a random sample of 200 students, based on race, ethnicity, language ability, and academic success, as well as on their availability and willingness.

Jacob (1995) spent five months observing classes and interviewing students and staff in a new multicultural program, focusing particularly on three aspects: the curriculum (the arranged learning materials the teacher brought into the classroom); pedagogy (the methods by which the curriculum was taught to and/or learned by students); and the learning environment (the activities separate from regular course material and outside of the classroom). Jacob logged 240 hours of participant observations, including 14 individual interviews with teachers and administrators and 10 focus-group interviews with students (separated by academic success and self-identified race), informal surveys of student attitudes, and a variety of written material including grant evaluations and policy statements. Jacob analyzed data using the grounded-theory methodology. Jacob first conducted open coding, which created categories and themes present in the collected data. Then Jacob identified consistent themes and relationships between the different data sources. In the third stage, the researcher identified themes that ranged across all data sources, generalizing themes explaining overall findings. Finally, Jacob correlated these themes with each demographic group within the sample, looking for differences among groups with varying races, genders, and academic achievement.

Jacob (1995) found that the multicultural program created an engaging and close-knit learning environment and implemented activities that recognized and celebrated cultural diversity, and in turn stimulated an increase in student motivation, effort, and school identification for students of color. One classroom started a bilingual newspaper that covered issues relevant to students. Teachers and students decorated hallways and classrooms with bright, culturally relevant posters, including role models important to students. The multicultural program also institutionalized a foundation for discussing challenging socio-political issues, and gave students and teachers opportunities to practice analyzing relevant issues. The decorations and activities built an atmosphere wherein students felt represented, welcome, and academically in-tune, particularly students who identified as Latino/a and African American. However, despite good intentions to lessen divisions among groups, the multicultural program also provided terrain for intergroup conflict, particularly among different groups of students of color. Due to the high number of Spanish-speaking Latino/a students, the program developed a reputation as being a program only for those students. African American students discussed teacher favoritism toward Latino/a students and their own subsequent apathy toward the program. Overall, Jacob found that the ways in which culture itself was discussed and understood by students and within the school had a significant impact on student interpersonal and intergroup relations, attitudes, and behaviors.

A major strength of Jacob's (1995) integrative ethnography and case study was his thorough introduction of the context for his study, including the

history of the school, as well as the context of the school within the paradigms of constant school reform measures. These aspects contributed to Jacob's level of credibility. Jacob could have strengthened credibility by including an in-depth analysis of his own biases as a researcher and his choice to work with Heritage High in particular. The researcher was thorough in his creation of focus-group demographics to ensure fair representation of the different ethnic and racial groups participating in the study; students self-reported their ethnic identity. These factors strengthened transferability. The researcher included in-depth descriptions of the data he gathered, including topics for questions and the researcher's explanation that the interviews followed the interests, insights, and responsiveness of the subjects. These traits of the complementary process and product strengthen the confirmability of the study. Jacob used a grounded-theory approach to analyze his collected data. This approach allowed Jacob to identify critical ideas, themes and relationships as they presented themselves in the data, rather than using established theory to search through his data.

Jacob's (1995) findings were complemented by the findings of other studies in this literature review. Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert (1991) found that the way literacy practices were legitimized in the classroom greatly impacted students' perceptions of academic success with literacy practices. Likewise, Duncan's (1996) study measured how students' perceptions of themselves and the institutional environment of support within schools shaped their ability to be academically successful. And, Polleck's (2010) study (discussed below) showed that students involved in book clubs encountered social-emotional learning,

which heightened their academic experience. Overall, creating tight-knit learning communities that authentically supported students and their sociocultural backgrounds contributed to academic success.

Polleck's (2010) qualitative study, measuring how book clubs enhance students' social-emotional and academic learning, showed that, for two different small groups of African American and Latina high school girls, book clubs promoted academic literacy learning and competencies associated with social-emotional learning.

Polleck (2010) conducted her study in a small urban high school with two different book clubs. The younger group consisted of two African American ninth graders, two Latina ninth graders, and one African American tenth grader. The second group consisted of all eleventh graders: two African American girls and 15 Latinas.

Polleck used observations, interviews, book club discussions, and surveys to gather data for her study. Polleck used the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) outline for social-emotional learning. She collected data which demonstrated students' growth in self-awareness of emotions, strengths, self-efficacy, and self-confidence; social awareness, including empathy, respect, and understanding perspective; responsible decision-making, including evaluation and reflection; self-management, including control, persistence, goal-setting, and motivation; and relationship management and skills, including cooperation, communication, and seeking help. She conducted pre-study interviews with 12 participants to document their literacy



background, family background, and school information. Polleck used post-study interviews and surveys to analyze the participants' attitudes toward their experiences both in the book clubs and in school.

Polleck's (2010) study found that the book clubs promoted academic literacy learning and promoted the competencies of social-emotional learning. The informal and safe environment of the book club allowed the student participants to share about their own lives while analyzing the text and connecting to each other's responses. Students demonstrated analysis of textual literary features, including symbolism and cause and effect. Students also successfully demonstrated reading strategies, including summarizing, clarifying, inferring, and evaluating. And, in their exit interviews and surveys the majority of students indicated that their personal interests in reading, their reading rates, and their abilities to comprehend text increased since the beginning of the book club. During a conversation analyzing the actions of a protagonist, students shared their own experiences coping with personal struggles and death and even built their responses off of each other's contributions. Within these conversations, students displayed their growing abilities to control and understand their own emotions as well as develop empathy toward each other. The participants also demonstrated growth in cooperating and understanding perspective. Polleck's study showed that incorporating book clubs into curriculum can increase students' social-emotional skills as well as their academic literacy skills.

One strength of her study was Polleck's (2010) collection of from a variety of sources. Also strengthening the credibility of her study, Polleck's analysis was

grounded in theory. The researcher described the framework for her study and then showed how each element of her study complemented that framework. In addition, the researcher described the national climate of schools at the time of her study, particularly in terms of the common experience of many students of color in schools on a national level. Polleck described her relationship with the students, the school, and the community, and especially her investment in this study. Strengthening the transferability of her study, Polleck described the context of the school, as well as the specific participants she had for the study. She created tables to make her subjects' demographic information more clear. Polleck included transcriptions from interviews with students, as well as narratives based on her observations of students during the book clubs. She also wrote her analyses directly after presenting the data, facilitating deeper understanding of her thought processes and subsequent analyses. These factors strengthened the confirmability of her study. Jacob's (1995) study complemented Polleck's (2010) findings, which showed that creating a close-knit learning environment increased academic motivation and effort. These complementary findings strengthened the dependability of both studies.

Slavin's (1987) meta-analysis is included in this literature review because of its synthesis of and contributions to the literature. Slavin compared the best approaches for classroom incentives. Slavin used 46 studies to research two related approaches to classroom motivation that used cooperative, rather than competitive, standards for success. From these 46 studies, the samples indicated both large numbers and international representation. Samples from

these studies included students from elementary to secondary grades in urban, rural, and suburban locations. Slavin found that cooperative reward structures, based on the individual learning of group members, were necessary for the success of cooperative methods in improving student achievement. Slavin's synthesis continues to add a significant contribution to the literature.

The participants in the studies Slavin (1987) analyzed ranged in grade levels from second grade to high school seniors. Subjects were from urban, rural, and suburban locations in four countries. Students were in diverse subject areas including mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, and foreign language. Sample sizes from Slavin's chosen studies ranged from 27 participants to 1,742 participants. The median sample was 118 subjects.

Slavin's (1987) meta-analysis was a comprehensive review of two teaching methods: group contingencies and cooperative learning. In the group contingencies method, groups of students were rewarded on the basis of the behavior of all the group members. In this method, the members of the group applied social sanctions to one another to encourage other group members to do what was necessary to ensure group success. Peer interaction did or did not exist in this method, but group rewards, often based on individual behavior, were essential. In the cooperative learning method, by contrast, teachers not only rewarded groups of students based on the behavior of their members, but they also engaged students in face-to-face interactions around learning activities. Students were required or encouraged to work together. Group rewards were an optional element, but peer interaction was essential.

Slavin's (1987) meta-analysis showed that in the realm of cooperative learning structures, cooperative-learning methods yielded significantly greater gains than group-contingency methods. Twenty-five out of 28 (89%) studies of cooperative-learning methods found significantly greater achievements compared to group-contingency classes, and only three studies found no differences. Slavin found that providing recognition to student teams based on the sum of their individual learning, rather than on significant contributions by individual students, increased student achievement. Overall, Slavin found that consistent positive reinforcement of cooperative learning aided student learning and mitigated a variety of non-academic problems associated with interactions between students, including race relations between students, non-mainstreamed students' attitudes toward their mainstreamed peers, and student self-esteem.

Slavin's (1987) used several criteria for establishing measures for his analysis. The cooperative learning method was compared with a control group (group contingencies) that was considered initially equivalent. Also, the studies took place in regular elementary or secondary classrooms for at least two weeks. And, achievement measures assessed individual learning of objectives taught equally in experimental and control classes. These specific criteria established strong external and internal validity.

Slavin (1987) generalized the findings of the 46 studies using percentages to discuss commonalities. However, he did not include p-values or Crohnbach's Alpha values to establish reliability for his overall findings. Even if the studies used had these indicators, Slavin did not include them in his analysis,

diminishing the reliability of this analysis. Slavin's analysis also had weak measures for objectivity. Meta-analyses naturally have severe weaknesses with bias, as they entertain numerous opportunities for the analyst to introduce subjectivity into the analysis. This phenomenon indicated major weaknesses in the objectivity of the analysis.

Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff's (1998) longitudinal quantitative study, examining the relationship between adolescents' academic motivations, academic achievements, emotional selves, and perceptions of their schools, showed that, for a diverse sample of European American and African American middle school students from Maryland, students' perceptions of their school environments impacted their academic achievements, predicted their successes during their final years in middle school, and predicted their academic and emotional stabilities.

Roeser et al. (1998) used a sample of 1,041 European American and African American middle school students from 23 middle schools in a county-wide school district in Maryland. Data was collected in two waves, first in the fall and winter of 1991-1992 and then again in the spring and summer of 1993. Sixty-six percent of the students were African American and 51% were male. The families of participants reported a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Annual incomes ranged from less than \$5,000 to more than \$75,000, 86% reported having employment, and 65% reported being married or living with a partner.

Roeser et al. (1998) gathered data through interviews with students and their families, students' and their families' responses to questionnaires, students' academic grade point averages (GPAs; including grades from all core subjects: English, math, science, and health/social sciences), and school attendance records. The families of participants reported their marital statuses, education levels, employment statuses, annual incomes, and formal education levels. On the questionnaires, participants evaluated statements regarding their own academic competence, academic values, and academic motivations using 5- and 7-point Likert scales. Roeser also used the Systems Checklist 90-Revised and Kovac's Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) to determine participants' levels of emotional well-being and distress. Using this data, Roeser et al. conducted two in-depth analyses using the same data. First, Roeser and his colleagues examined the relationships between and predictive power associated with students' academic motivations and their emotions. Second, Roeser et al. identified students' coping patterns associated with these same variables.

From their first wave of analysis, Roeser et al. (1998) found significant results indicating an association between students' emotional functioning and their beliefs about their academic competence ( $p < .001$ ), academic values ( $p < .001$ ), and academic achievement ( $p < .001$ ). Essentially, students who reported less frequent emotional upset during the initial assessments, at the beginning of seventh grade, showed more frequent feelings of academic competence in the final assessment, at the end of eighth grade. Students' perceptions of their schools, namely students' regard for their teachers ( $p < .01$ ), the schools' ability

and task goal structures ( $p < .01$ ), and curricular meaningfulness ( $p < .01$ ), predicted students' academic values over time. The second wave of their study also showed significant findings. Students who reported school motivation higher than median figures perceived their school environments as focused on task mastery, effort, and improvement ( $p < .01$ ), found their curricula meaningful ( $p < .01$ ), perceived multiple opportunities for extra-curricular involvement in school ( $p < .01$ ), and found teachers available for providing emotional support ( $p < .01$ ). Overall, Roeser et al. found that students who perceived their middle school environments as focused on task-mastery, emphasizing meaningful curricula, and employing supportive teachers were predictably more academically motivated and successful than their peers who perceived of their school environments as competitive.

Roeser et al.'s (1998) study included both strong and weak internal validity measures. Roeser et al. controlled for testing and instrumentation measures. Because of the long time span between when students were initially and finally tested, the results were not due to students' familiarity with the assessments. Likewise, Roeser et al. used self-administered questionnaires which controlled for changes in the instruments used to measure performance. Alternately, this study had a very high subject attrition rate at 29%, potentially skewing the data and indicating a weakness in internal validity. Of those students who did not continue through the end of the study, demographic indicators suggested these students were slightly older, had lower income statuses, and experienced lower academic achievement than the median sample figures.

Roeser found no significant differences between the continuing and non-continuing groups in relation to subjects' genders, races, emotional factors, or families' employment statuses. Another complex feature of the study was that not all of Roeser et al.'s instrumentation received an acceptable reliability score. Most of the subtests within the participant questionnaire achieved adequate Cronbach's alpha scores (ranging from  $\alpha = .75$  to  $\alpha = .83$ ). However, the subtest measuring students' perceptions of the usefulness of school as a gateway to lifelong opportunities received Cronbach's alpha scores at  $\alpha = .69$  for both administrations of the assessments. This score falls lower than acceptable reliability for the assessment tool and limited its reliability.

Roeser et al. (1998) explained the origination of their sample as a subsample from another study conducted by Thomas Cook and his colleagues. Cook's sample included the entire population of middle school students from one county-wide school district in Maryland. Roeser et al.'s subsample is representative of that population. This transparency of sample information strengthened the generalizability of Roeser et al.'s study. Another strength of their study was that Roeser et al. included sample statements from the questionnaires administered to participants during their study. The researchers also included the coding numbers they associated with the variety of responses from questionnaires and demographic information. These inclusions strengthened the objectivity of the study, as it made their data collection observable and repeatable.



Overall, this subsection of this literature review showed that creating a tight-knit learning community in the school and the classroom that authentically supported students and their sociocultural backgrounds contributed to their academic successes. Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (1998) showed that students' perceptions of their school environments impacted their academic success, and could even predict their overall academic success. Complementing Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff's findings, Jacob (1995) showed that a multicultural education program created a tight-knit learning environment at the school and increased student academic motivation. This program also had unintended negative consequences due to the program not addressing students' internalized racial inferiority. On the classroom level, Slavin (1987) found that cooperative reward structures were integral to successful cooperative learning methods; successful cooperative learning was truly cooperative and not competitive. Similarly, Polleck (2010) showed that book clubs enhanced students' social-emotional development, increasing their interpersonal empathies and promoting literacy learning. Overall, these studies showed that a positive social environment in the school and the classroom increased students' academic achievement.

### **Relevant Curricula Engaging a Full Range of Literacy Practices**

The prior section explored the social effects that school and classroom cultures can have on students' academic success. Teachers who implemented critical instruction that was relevant to the lives of their students promoted both autonomy and cooperation in the classroom and encouraged student motivation.

The six studies in this section will particularly explore classroom instruction.

Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, and Vinz (2007) measured the effects of using a real-world context of publishing for motivating students to write. Ma'ayan (2010) explored the effects of using culturally relevant and age-appropriate texts for creating a more welcoming literacy environment. Ivey and Broaddus (2007) analyzed the effects of using literacy materials that reinforced students' cultural and future contexts on their motivation to engage in literacy practices. Gillen (2009) explored the effects of technological literacies in the classroom on students' willingness to engage in literacy practices. Morrell (2002) investigated how incorporating popular-culture media into classroom instruction can affect students' motivation to pursue literacy activities. Weinstein (2006) analyzed students' connection and engagement with literary practices when he used rap as a classroom medium.

Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, and Vinz's (2007) qualitative study, measuring the effects on students' writing when they are working toward publishing their texts, showed that, for several African American male students enrolled in Horizon Academy through juvenile detention in New York City, the publication process created a real-world context for students to share themselves and their stories more realistically and passionately.

Gordon et al.'s (2007) study focused on the experiences of two Black male students, Saint and Jermaine, from Horizon Academy. This academy was operated by the Department of Corrections and the Department of Education; it was a high school at Rikers Island Jail in New York City. Horizon Academy

offered optional schooling, primarily for incarcerated students over 18 years old who hoped to earn their GEDs.

Horizon Academy used oral history as an instructional tool for engaging incarcerated students in writing processes and for turning those processes into a product. Gordon et al. (2007) used interviews to ask subjects to tell their life experiences through oral histories. They electronically recorded the students' stories and then transcribed each one, which served as a first draft. Students used these first drafts to revise, edit, and eventually publish their stories. Data for this study included field notes, transcriptions of ongoing discussions, and students' working drafts. Researchers compared different subjects' revised and edited stories about the same event to examine the layers and particularities of their stories.

Gordon et al. (2007) found that meaning was manufactured through the lenses of each subject's separate understanding. Subjects conveyed emotions and thoughts through oral stories that they were not fully aware of before. The researchers also found that the publication process created a real-world context for students to share about themselves, and they shared stories more realistically and passionately than when they were oral accounts. Ultimately, Gordon et al. found that students who had been historically marginalized used the writing and publication process as emancipation, both for themselves and as new insight to the researchers regarding their expectations. Participants disrupted the dominant expectation of victory narratives. That is, participants' stories challenged the researchers' own complex expectations that their participants would share

stories which would engage the listener by evoking empathy for the writers' struggles.

Gordon et al.'s (2007) study demonstrated several important traits which added to the strength of their study. First, the researchers created strong credibility through triangulation. They explained how they knew each other and how they worked together, they were open about the complementary and conflicting desires they expected to achieve through the study. And, the researchers were open about their consistent negotiation with each other concerning what they offered to their subjects as editors, their interpretations of what occurred during their study, and the differing perspectives they each had as they wrote their study. This openness about their process created high credibility for their study, as well as high confirmability. By describing the different processes for triangulation, the researchers also frequently presented the actual product of their research, the transcribed interviews and conversations the researchers had with the subjects. Unfortunately, the bulk of their study described their collaborative process as researchers and writers of their study, which detracted from the progressive narrative of their study. The researchers thoroughly described the population context of their subjects, as well as how their relationships with the subjects changed over the course of the study. However, their very targeted and small sample population weakened the transferability of the overall study.

One aspect of Gordon et al.'s (2007) findings is confirmed by several other studies in this literature review—that creating a real-world context for their

writing helped students write more openly and passionately. Gillen's (2009) study in particular, discussed later in this section, also explored the intersections of literature with real-world context and found that students were motivated and engaged in literacy practices in a broader sense than what is regularly legitimized as literacy. These consistent findings add to the dependability of both studies. However, a majority of Gordon et al.'s study describes the researchers' collaborative process in writing the narrative of the study. While this initially added to the credibility and confirmability of the study, the researchers only presented limited information on their findings.

Ma'ayan's (2010) qualitative case study, asking what literacy methods would help one student develop literacy skills inside of the classroom when she feels there is no room for what she wants to contribute, showed that for a Latina student with low socioeconomic status in a relatively wealthy inner-city middle school in the southwestern United States, best practices came out of using culturally relevant and age-appropriate texts coupled with open discussion.

Ma'ayan (2010) studied one student, Erika, from Lincoln Middle School, a public school in a city in the southwestern United States. Lincoln enrolled 900 students, of whom 51% were European American, 34% were Latino/a, 6% were Native American, 5% were African American, and 2% were Asian American. Nearly 50 of the 55 regular classroom teachers and all of the administrators were European American, while almost all of the support staff were people of color, mostly Latino/as. At Lincoln, 35% of students were on free and reduced-rate lunch, making the school one of the wealthier inner-city public middle schools in

the area. Erika was an academically failing student labeled with “at risk” status (Ma’ayan, 2010, p. 647). She was living with low-income status, was Latina, had previously been in special education, and had repeated the fourth grade. Standardized tests placed Erika at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Ma’ayan (2010) met with Erika, observed her during the school day, collected work samples and other artifacts, and met with her and several other girls as part of a weekly literacy discussion group during their language arts class period. Ma’ayan collected data for nearly nine months, including artifacts Erika created in and outside of school, and recorded responses to open-ended questions about diverse literacy practices, such as music, technology, recreational reading, and art.

When Ma’ayan (2010) originally met with her subject, Erika had below-average standardized test scores and failing grades. Ma’ayan quickly identified Erika’s high interest in reading and her literacy skills, though these skills were not emphasized on standardized assessments and remained covert in the classroom. From the work samples and artifacts Ma’ayan collected, Erika demonstrated multiple literacies, particularly through reading e-mails, magazines, and books, and through writing notes and letters to friends, poetry, or other compositions. Erika also demonstrated literacy using computers and technology, and navigating the internet. During interviews with the researcher and observations of interactions in a small literature discussion group, Erika opened up and shared about her life. However, Ma’ayan noted that Erika quickly silenced herself during small group discussions and did not contribute orally during class

instruction or discussions. Erika's interests (gangs, violence, and sexuality) were not the norm, and were even considered taboo in the classroom and in the middle school. Erika regularly felt and experienced alienation from academic activities. Erika remained silent in the classroom because her experiences and interests were not validated by the classroom or school. Based on her study with Erika, Ma'ayan recommended that teachers working on developing literacy with urban middle school students should use culturally relevant and age-appropriate texts coupled with open discussion.

Strengthening the credibility of her study, Ma'ayan (2010) described her theoretical standpoint and her methodological approach. The researcher also collected multiple forms of data, and her study focused on the multitude of literacies her subject engaged in, many of which were not considered legitimate academic literacies. The researcher also added to the transferability of her study. She thoroughly described the community and school context for the study, and she focused on one student in particular. The subject displayed two characteristics researchers have regularly seen by students of color in urban schools: silence in the classroom, and leadership elsewhere. The researcher included written narratives of her observations of the subject, transcripts from conversations and interviews, and written reflections from another student who was associated with the subject, in order to compare them with the main subject's experiences. These aspects all added to the confirmability of Ma'ayan's study.

Consistent with the findings of other studies, Ma'ayan's (2010) study demonstrated strong levels of dependability. Ivey and Broaddus' (2007) study, discussed below, showed that students were successful in academic literacy when reading materials were relevant to their lives, and when a range of literacy activities was legitimized. Polleck's (2010) study showed that using book clubs with open discussion formats as literacy activities promoted academic literacy learning and engaged students in social-emotional learning. Overall, these studies represented literacy curricula which thoughtfully engaged a wide range of literacy practices which had relevancy to the subjects' lives.

Ivey and Broaddus' (2007) formative experiment, asking how teachers can increase engagement in reading and writing among adolescent second-language learners, showed that, in one integrated middle-level language arts classroom of English language learners, teachers were most successful when: (1) they selected reading materials with content aligned with the social practices of students' lives; (2) they capitalized on the intersections between reading, writing, oral language, and content knowledge in the native languages and dialects of students; and (3) they addressed the full range of what it means to be literate.

Ivey and Broaddus (2007) conducted their study in a seventh- and eighth-grade integrated language arts classroom consisting of native Spanish speakers who were on an English language learner team. Students also attended content-area classes specific to English language learners at other times during the day. The middle school in the study was located in a small city in a rural area in the



southeastern United States. The city had a rapidly increasing immigrant population connected to farming and industry sectors.

Ivey and Broaddus (2007) used a formative experimental design, meaning their study regularly identified the factors that inhibited or advanced the effectiveness of their intervention and modified their intervention and implementation to more effectively address their pedagogical goals. The researchers collected data which included classroom observations, student interviews, teacher-researcher debriefings, artifacts of students' reading and writing, students' reading logs, and researcher notes and reflections on time spent reading and writing with individual students. Ivey and Broaddus' implementation evaluations took place in three forms: research debriefings among the researchers, teacher, and teaching assistants; frequency counts of instances of engaged reading and writing; and reflective writing about specific instances of reading and writing among students. Throughout their study, the researchers performed three modifications: (1) they expanded the range and volume of reading materials available in the classroom library, (2) identified supports to make difficult texts more accessible to students, and (3) scaffolded writing experiences for students.

Ivey and Broaddus (2007) found that selecting appropriate reading materials mattered and that the social practices of students' present and future lives had major implications for their reading engagement. Especially for students who were English language learners, Ivey and Broaddus needed to find reading materials that were culturally relevant to their participants. Ivey and Broaddus

also found that, for students who were fluent in their native languages but uncomfortable using English, their most successful approach to writing was first instructing students to orally produce their thoughts using their native language and eventually transpose those ideas into English. Successful instruction required capitalizing on the intersections between reading, writing, oral language, and content knowledge in whatever languages and dialects the students were most comfortable using. Instruction needed to address the full range of what it meant to be literate. Also, some instructional practices that seemed to help the population of students become more engaged in reading and writing included teacher read-alouds prior to independent reading, teacher explanations of concepts about reading, student dictations, and patterned writing.

Unfortunately, Ivey and Broaddus' (2007) study had some weaknesses. A factor which limited the study's credibility was that the researchers did not have the information necessary to truly know and understand the cultural resources, background knowledge, and first-language competence in literacy of the students in the study. Simultaneously, Ivey and Broaddus presented these failings as a part of their self-critique, finally adding to the overall credibility of the study. Ivey and Broaddus also failed to focus on district- and state-level language arts standards, limiting the transferability of their findings. And, though the study and intervention took place in a conventional classroom, the researchers (not the classroom teacher) took the lead in implementing and modifying the intervention. This factor both weakened the credibility of their findings, but also enhanced the transferability and confirmability of their findings. While the interventions might

not play out similarly in a typical classroom without researchers, the researchers were able to apply interventions very specifically and measurably.

Overall, Ivey and Broaddus' (2007) study confirms many of the findings from other studies of its type: when students' interests, native languages, and extracurricular literacies are honored, literacy success is more accessible for them. These findings are consistent with Gordon et al. (2007), which honored a real-world literary context, with Ma'ayan's (2010) study, which found culturally relevant and age-appropriate texts immediately important to literary engagement, and with Weinstein's (2006) study (reviewed later in this section) which found that engaging literacy instruction grew out of students' personal interests and investment in extracurricular literacy. These studies all confirmed that students' personal connections with literature positively impacted their academic engagement with literature.

Gillen's (2009) qualitative study, measuring the range of literacy practices that students engage in using a virtual island world and the literacy opportunities that digital technologies hold for motivating and engaging students, showed that the literacy practices of students deserved attention in a much broader sense, in contrast to teachers' more customary legitimizing of the dichotomized boundaries between new virtual literacies and more established ones.

Gillen (2009) observed the practices of the Schome community, an already existing, virtual, 3-dimensional voluntary organization, comprising a wide range of people interested in what can be loosely termed alternative models of education. While collecting data in the virtual world, Gillen interacted with

academics, parents, young people, policy-makers, educators, and other interested parties.

Gillen (2009) used virtual-literacy ethnography to engage with students over a 15-month period in an innovative out-of-school project centered on the use of the *(Teen) Second Life* three-dimensional virtual world, housed by Schome Park. Gillen used collected data from interactions to analyze evidence from three main communicative domains of the project: chat logs, the wiki (which was started by the subjects), and the forum. Gathering a multitude of evidence, Gillen hoped to demonstrate the complexity and creativity of student literacy practices.

Gillen (2009) found that student participants wrote out persistently valued literacy texts, in particular the student-created wiki (an informational page similar to a wikipedia.com entry) about *(Teen) Second Life*. From her findings, Gillen suggested that the literacy practices of students should be paid attention to in a much broader sense, as opposed to the dichotomized boundaries between the new literacies, such as technological literacy, and those more established, such as reading novels that are considered to be classic. Students impressed Gillen with their technical abilities and the imagination with which they deployed their ideas.

Adding a major strength in the study's credibility, Gillen (2009) described her stake in this research. Gillen also described her own avatar situation as she approached the virtual world, and she used data from a variety of sources. The researcher described the controversies connected with the adult arena in *Second*

*Life*. Increasing the transferability of the study, Gillen described the student population and the context and status of the online community under observation, Schome Park. However, she did not have access to the actual socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic backgrounds of her participants. Strengthening the confirmability of her study, Gillen supplied transcriptions of actual conversations with subjects within the avatar world, and a screenshot of the computer screen, in order to supply the reader with a picture of the online community.

Gillen's (2009) findings are consistent with Gordon et al.'s (2007) study, which honored a real-world context for engaging subjects in literacy practices. This consistency adds to the dependability of both studies.

Morrell's (2002) qualitative study, asking how the use of popular culture impacts the teaching of critical discourse to urban youth, showed that implementing student-centered instruction that was centered around popular culture better prepared high school students for college, illuminated the connections between literature, popular culture, and their lives, and empowered students to meaningfully draw upon personal experiences when completing assignments.

Morrell (2002) used his own students for the duration of this study. His participants were urban teens from the San Francisco Bay area. He used an already established traditional high school senior English poetry class. Morrell's study had three phases. First, Morrell chose to use hip-hop music as the vehicle for teaching critical discourse. Morrell taught an overview of poetry, emphasizing

the poet's role and the historical context of poems. Students were asked to prepare a justifiable interpretation of a poem and a hip-hop song with relation to a specific historical and literary period and to analyze the links between the two. Morrell collected student presentations and projects for his analysis. During the second phase of the study, Morrell used contemporary film as another vehicle for teaching critical discourse. Morrell used film to make meaningful connections with canonical texts, first through the *Godfather* movie trilogy (incorporated with Homer's *The Odyssey*) and then through the film *A Time to Kill* (incorporated with Wright's *Native Son*). Students watched the films while reading the texts for homework. Morrell's collected data were student-written analyses, which drew similarities and differences between characters in the films and books and people in their own lives. During Morrell's third phase, students from the original class traveled to a university in southern California for several weeks during the summer, where they apprenticed as critical researchers to study the access of urban youth to public spaces and social institutions. Students read research relating to critical media literacy and the sociology of education, designed a study, conducted interviews, analyzed countless hours of news coverage, and performed a content analysis of major U.S. daily newspapers.

Morrell (2002) found that students in his class prepared critiques similar to those required by college preparatory English classrooms. Students moved beyond critical reading of literary texts to become cultural producers themselves, creating and presenting poems that provided critical social commentary and encouraged action for social justice. Morrell also found that students understood

the connections between literature, popular culture, and their everyday lives. Further, they were able to translate their analyses into sophisticated oral debates and expository pieces. And, Morrell found that students were able to meaningfully draw upon their personal experiences during their reading of texts concerning critical media literacy, as well as during the interviews they conducted with members of the mainstream media. Overall, Morrell found that students were motivated and empowered by using a critical approach to literacy instruction through the lens of popular media.

As a major strength of credibility in his study, Morrell (2002) described his stake in this research. He also described his theoretical framework and how his process complemented each of the elements present in the theoretical framework. Morrell also described the context for the observation classroom: this classroom was situational, his own classroom to begin with. Unfortunately he did not include the demographic data of his subjects, weakening the transferability of his study. Morrell described his procedures and described the classroom projects, but he did not include actual transcripts of classroom conversations, student projects, or student reflections. Unfortunately, because these are absent, confirmability is an area of weakness in Morrell's study.

Even with these weaknesses, Morrell's (2002) findings are confirmed with other studies in this literature review. Duncan's (1996) study showed that historically oppressed students need teachers with high academic expectations and need access to theoretical and material tools to overcome the narrative of oppression that continues today, especially in schools. Weinstein's (2006) study,

reviewed next, found that engaging literary instruction grew out of students' personal interests and investment in extracurricular literacy. Overall, these studies support Morrell's findings that engaging students with a critical approach to literacy instruction and including their personal interests on a classroom level motivated and empowered students to become academically successful.

Weinstein's (2006) qualitative case study, asking what opportunities rap can offer in the English classroom, showed that, for four inner-city Chicago youths, there was a connection between the pleasure that students felt from rap music and rap's deeply social quality and grounding in a well-established discourse. The connection that young people felt to rap was particularly strong, a unique form of engagement that grew out of a nurtured pleasure.

Weinstein (2006) studied 10 inner-city Chicago youths, seven of whom had dropped out of high school, either permanently or for a period of time. One subject was a mother, one had graduated from high school and enrolled in a community college only to leave without finishing, and three were attending community college during the study. All participants wrote outside of school in ways that sometimes belied their performance in the classroom. Weinstein studied four participants in depth and used his analysis of their work as the foundation for this study. These four subjects chose to use rap as their writing vehicle.

Weinstein's (2006) study was based on theories of social literacies which argue that reading, writing, and verbal communication are all deeply contextualized activities that can only be understood by exploring the people,



places, and powers that surround and infuse them. This field also emphasized the multiple nature of literacy, which challenges the traditional assumption that one is either literate or not. For the means of this study, the researcher differentiated between rap and hip-hop. Weinstein defined *hip-hop* as the overall youth culture movement (including DJing, rapping, graffiti, and break dancing) which was particularly used as a critique for social, economic, and racial conditions. Weinstein defined *rap*, not as the mainstream, better-selling variety, but as hip-hop's vocal performances and written texts. Weinstein's main method of data collection was interviews with the subjects.

Weinstein (2006) found that imaginative writing was a venue for participants to construct and experiment with their identities. Rap was also an outlet for expressing resistance to family, school, community, and societal norms, and a way to vent sexual and emotional frustration, confusion, and desire. Weinstein also found that many of the subjects had developed productive learning strategies and demonstrated sophisticated understandings of literary features such as figurative language, voice, and rhythm. All of the participants involved in this study derived some kind of pleasure from the writing they did outside of school, either as discourse membership, as self-expression and self-representation, or as play. Overall, Weinstein concluded that there was a connection between rap's deeply social quality and grounding in a well-established discourse and the pleasure that its practitioners got out of it. The connection that young people felt to rap was particularly strong, a unique kind of engagement that grew out of a nurtured pleasure.

A critical strength of this study was that Weinstein (2006) explained her connections to the students, her first impressions of the students, and the elements she noticed about the students specifically because of her study. The level of openness the researcher presented added to the credibility of the study. She also thoroughly examined the framework for the study and thoroughly described how her methods fit within that framework. Strengthening the transferability of her study, Weinstein described how she chose her subjects and thoroughly examined what she knew about each of them and how they fit into the study as well as her relationship with each subject at the time of the study. Weinstein included narratives of subjects' writing processes, transcripts of subjects' writing, and descriptions of how their writing coincided within the framework of the study. These facets all strengthened the confirmability of Weinstein's study.

Weinstein's (2006) findings are confirmed by the findings of other studies in this literature review. Gillen's (2009) study showed that broader literacy practices should be legitimized in school. Gordon et al.'s (2007) study honored a real-world context for engaging subjects in literary practices. The findings of each of these studies supports the others, which strengthens the dependability of all three studies.

The findings in this subsection showed that using literacy curricula which represented a broad sense of literacy, honored students' interests, or created real-world contexts for literary activities engaged, motivated, or empowered students to become academically successful. Gillen (2009) found that students'

literacy activities needed to be academically recognized, regardless of the normative or established sense of the literacy activity. Gillen's findings complemented Ivey and Broaddus' (2007) work, which showed that students were most academically successful when literacy materials acknowledged a wider range of literacies than the normed and established set of literacies, and also when activities aligned with students' experiences and social interests. Weinstein's (2006) and Morrell's (2002) research also found that students were academically engaged when literacy curricula engaged students' experiences and social interests. Finally, Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, and Vinz's (2007) and Ma'ayan's (2010) work showed that students who felt empowered by literacy activities were more engaged. Overall, the research from this subsection showed that students who felt honored and empowered engaged with the literacy curricula.

### **Summary**

Chapter two reviewed the current literature on the effects of student self-perceptions and classroom and school environments on students' academic and literary success. The research was discussed to explore the connections between students and their self-perceptions, their teachers, and their school and classroom cultures. Research from the first half of this literature review showed that students' sociocultural backgrounds strongly influenced their willingness or self-capacity to pursue educationally ambitious activities. When students' sociocultural backgrounds, enculturations, and need were honored in the classroom, students became motivated to pursue literacy activities. Research

from the second half of this review showed that schools, on an institutional level, impact students' willingness to engage with academia. When schools created tight-knit learning communities that authentically supported students and their sociocultural backgrounds, students became motivated. Likewise, creating a real-world context for literacy instruction, one that coupled high expectations with a broad range of honored literacy activities, helped to engage and empower students. Chapter three will further explore these studies, with a summary and analysis of the findings from the studies from each section. Chapter three will then discuss implications for classroom instruction and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION

### **Introduction**

Chapter one discussed the foundations and history of the study of motivation in education and the potential sources for disproportionate gaps in academic achievement. No Child Left Behind and other education reform policies have produced negative unintended consequences by equating school with students' performances on standardized tests and by limiting curriculum. Likewise, the historical oppression of Latino, African American, and male students, coupled with racialized drug reforms, have led to disproportionately high academic reluctance for these groups (Alexander, 2012). Chapter one also suggested that research has shown various possibilities for improving students' academic motivation.

Chapter two included two sections and looked at current research linking both students' enculturations and their perceptions of their classrooms and schools with their academic motivation or reluctance. Within student enculturation, this literature review focused on the effects of students' self-perceptions on their academic success, the effects of students' enculturations on their motivation or reluctance to pursue literacy activities, and the overall contributions of students' self-perceptions to their literacy successes. The second section, which looked at the impact of school and classroom environments on student motivation, focused on the effects on student engagement when schools meet students' needs, the contributions of a positive school social culture to student motivation, and relevant curricula engaging a full range of literacy

practices. This review specifically focused on studies that involved groups that experienced higher than average rates of school dropout, including students who were African American, Latino/a, or male, or who had low-income status. Each of the sections within chapter two included summaries and critiques of peer-reviewed studies. The research generally showed that students' sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds played a major role in their willingness or reluctance to engage academically. Students with low-income status knew that their status impacted their school experience negatively, teachers of students who were African American had low expectations, and the family statuses of students of color (immigrant status and family education levels) predicted students' academic success. The research also showed that the extrinsic motivations associated with school and classroom environments impacted students willingness or reluctance to pursue academic success. Namely, schools and classrooms that subscribed to cooperative and student-empowering environments and relevant, socially and emotionally developmental curricula, as well as curricula which acknowledged a broad range of literacy practices enjoyed higher levels of student academic motivation and success.

Chapter three will explore the findings of these studies in greater depth, and based on these findings, will suggest implications for the adolescent literacy classroom. Chapter three will also discuss limitations in the current research and suggest opportunities for further research.

## Summary of Findings

### Student Enculturation

The first half of chapter two focused on student enculturation using studies which examined how students' cultural encapsulations, self-perceptions, and family cultures impacted their motivation or reluctance to pursue academic, specifically literacy activities. Based on the studies' findings, this section of chapter two was divided into three subsections, each looking at how students' self-perceptions impacted 1) their academic successes, 2) their motivation to pursue literacy activities, and 3) their literary successes.

**Effects of student self-perceptions on academic success.** The findings of studies in this subsection showed that students who had internalized racial inferiority, had parental immigrant status, or had low socioeconomic status were often academically reluctant. The studies showed that these students also tended to have low academic self-concepts. Importantly, these studies also showed that even when students knew that their status impacted their school experience, students who had high academic aspirations and who attributed their academic success to their effort, rather than their ability or support they received from others, actually experienced higher academic success.

Ogbu's (2003) ethnography showed that African American students experienced academic and social alienation and that these students were also reluctant to pursue academic success due to internalized racial inferiority. Evans and Anderson's (1973) work found that Latino/a students had low self-concepts of their academic ability and held lower academic aspirations than their European

American peers. Bankston and Zhou (2002) found that family structure played a major role in students' self-esteem and academic performances. That is, students with parental immigrant status showed lower self-esteem and higher academic achievement than their peers without parental immigrant status, regardless of race and socioeconomic status. Horgan's (2009) work found that students with low-income status knew that their socioeconomic status impacted their school experiences and that these students were more reluctant to pursue academic practices than peers with higher socioeconomic status. Jackson, Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Yaish (2007) showed that students with low-income statuses, even those with very strong academic backgrounds, had lower academic self-concepts and aspirations than their peers with higher socioeconomic statuses. Hustinx, Kuyper, van der Werf, and Dijkstra (2009) found that students with low socioeconomic status and who exhibited high academic motivation attained higher status employment than their low-income status peers with less motivation for academic achievement. Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu (2009) showed that students who had high academic aspirations and attributed their academic success to their effort experienced more academic success than their peers who attributed academic success to their abilities or to support from other people.

Overall, this subsection showed that students' sociocultural, family, and economic backgrounds impacted their educational experiences. Simultaneously, highly academically motivated students enjoyed more success than their academically reluctant peers.



### **Effects of enculturation on student motivation to pursue literacy**

**practices.** The studies in this subsection found that students were impacted by the social aspects of literacy practices. Students felt alienated or motivated by literary activities based on the alienating or validating effects of the activity, their family culture and personal values of the activity, and their self-perceptions of their competence in the activity.

Freebody, Luke, and Gilbert's (1991) work showed that classroom literacy practices were socially norming and entailed value-laden judgements which alienated students. Read (2006) showed that youths' blogs were motivating and validating literacy experiences. Hamston and Love's (2005) study showed that boys' family literacy practices and personal values of reading impacted their motivation or reluctance to read academically. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) found that boys pursued activities, including literary activities, in which they felt competent and received positive feedback on their competence. Bozack (2011) found that boys perceived their low academic scores as a result of their own lack of effort, but their teachers perceived of their students' low academic scores as a result of students' lack of ability.

Overall, the studies showed that students' enculturations and the enculturation associated with literacy activities impacted students' willingness to pursue literary activities. Students were more willing to engage in literary activities when their personal needs were met or their personal interests were piqued.

### **Contributions of students' self-perceptions to their literary success.**

The research in this subsection showed that students' dispositions toward literary

practices impacted their motivations to engage with and their overall success in those activities. Students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to engage with literary practices were highly complex, based both in students' literacy experiences and brain schemata.

Paige (2011) found correlations between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for reading and academic achievement. Henk and Melnick (1995) showed that students' self-perceptions of their reading success impacted their motivation to read. Ivey's (1999) work showed that students' literary success depended on their context for engaging with literary practices. McConaughy (1985) showed that students cognitively organized stories differently according to their reading schemata.

Henk and Melnick's (1995) study contained the weakest findings in this literature review. Though the findings were dependable, they seemed more like logical intuitions than findings from a research study, with very few research details to back their results. However, Paige's (2011) study was very strong and provided the first empirical test of its findings using structural equation modeling.

Overall, the research from these studies suggested that reading curricula are most effective when they respond to students' needs and interests, ultimately resulting in higher levels of engagement.

### **School and Classroom Environments**

The second half of chapter two focused on school and classroom environments and used studies which examined school and classroom environmental impacts on students' motivation or reluctance to pursue academic

activities. Based on findings from the studies, this section of the chapter was broken into three subsections: the effect on students' motivation when 1) schools met students' needs, 2) schools implemented a positive social culture, and 3) classrooms used relevant curricula that engaged a full range of literacy practices.

### **Effects on student engagement when schools meet students' needs.**

The studies in this subsection emphasized the effects that schools had on students and their willingness to engage with academic practices. The research showed that when schools promoted student involvement, student empowerment, and positive student-teacher relationships, students were more academically motivated.

Riley and Docking (2004) showed that academically-reluctant students felt alienated by disrespectful school staff and unreasonable school rules, and that staff generally over- or under-estimated students' academic values. Yair (2000) found that students were engaged with instruction during only 54% of class time and that students became less engaged as their grade levels rose. McQuillan (2005) showed that schools varied in their ability to empower adolescents, and that empowerment depended on student buy-in and power to reasonably alter school policies. Duncan (1996) found that students' academic successes were impacted by their abilities to navigate simultaneously historically transformative and oppressive institutions.

Duncan's qualitative study was the strongest of the studies which looked at the impact of school and classroom environments on students' academic motivation and reluctance. This portion also contained both quantitative and

qualitative studies, and the researchers emphasized their careful attention to their subjects' demographics.

Overall, students were reluctant or motivated to pursue academic practices based on their interactions with teachers, the schools' social culture, and the schools' ability to meet students' needs.

### **Contributions of positive school social culture to student motivation.**

The studies in this subsection found that positive social environments in the classroom and the school promoted high academic success. The research showed that creating a tight-knit learning community that culturally and authentically supported students contributed to their academic success. Simultaneously, students who were rewarded for cooperation succeeded academically.

Jacob (1995) showed that multicultural education created an engaging and close-knit learning environment and increased academic motivation, but also provided terrain for conflict between groups of students of color. Polleck (2010) showed that book clubs promoted academic literacy learning and also increased empathy and cooperation among students. Slavin (1987) found that cooperative reward structures in group cooperative methods, instead of rewards for individual contributions to group work, increased academic success. Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (1998) showed that students' perceptions of their school's environments predicted their academic successes and their emotional stabilities.

Overall, teachers and school staff who implemented social environments that were relevant, built empathy, and praised cooperation encouraged academic motivation and had students who enjoyed academic success.

**Relevant curricula engaging a full range of literacy practices.** The findings of the studies in this subsection showed that academically engaging literacy curricula were age-appropriate, culturally relevant, grounded in social discourse, and acknowledged a broad range of literary practices that were not necessarily previously established in the classroom.

Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, and Vinz (2007) showed that the publication process created a real-world context for student-writers to share themselves and to combat cultural expectations. Ma'ayan (2010) found that culturally relevant and age-appropriate curricula coupled with open discussion engaged a previously alienated and academically reluctant student. Ivey and Broaddus (2007) showed that an engaging literacy program used culturally relevant curricula and a broad range of literary practices. Gillen (2009) showed that students experienced literacy in a broader sense than established academic literary practices allowed. Morrell (2002) found that student-centered and relevant curricula engaged students academically and empowered students to make connections between literacy and their lives. Weinstein (2006) showed that students willingly engaged in literary activities that were grounded in a strong social discourse because the medium was relevant to their lives.

Curricula which represented a broad sense of literacy, honored students' interests and extracurricular activities, and created real-world contexts for their literacy practices not only engaged students, but also empowered them to become academically successful and build college-preparation skills.

## **Classroom Implications**

The studies in this literature review looked at the effects of students' enculturations and school and classroom environments on students' academic motivation or reluctance. Many of these studies took place in established schools and classrooms, and experimented with curricular and social factors affecting students' academic motivations. All of these studies naturally have classroom implications. These implications include both obvious applications and also nuanced suggestions about literacy instruction in the middle-level classroom. The implications presented here are divided into three categories, based on scope: implications for the classroom and curricula, implications for family outreach, and implications for institutional policies.

### **Curricula and Classroom Culture**

Within the classroom, teachers have a fair amount of control. While they cannot always determine which curriculum to use, teachers can determine how they will teach it. The studies within this review suggested a great deal about how teachers should teach their students. First of all, teachers need to legitimize or use curricula which legitimize a broad range of literary activities. Blogs, rap, oral stories, and popular culture all engaged students and helped them express themselves academically. Next, school reading programs need to be responsive to students' experiences, interests, and competencies, as these factors impacted students' internal motivations for engaging with literary practices. Another important implication of the research is that teachers need to teach using multiple perspectives. Teachers need to identify their students' self-concepts of their

competencies so that teachers can incorporate texts and genres that will engage students. Teachers also need to use culturally relevant and age-appropriate texts which will relate to students' experiences, interests, and future lives. Likewise, teachers need to emphasize empathy and cooperation in their classrooms and create opportunities for students to connect their lives with literary practices and with each other. Finally, teachers need to understand students' prior literary experiences so that they can relate curricular and literary activities to students' schemata. Findings from the research in this review have collectively pointed toward the importance of using relevant, appropriate texts that engage students in a broad range of literary activities in which students already feel competent.

### **Family Outreach**

Within a larger scope, teachers need to reach out to their students' families. Findings from the research showed that students' enculturations greatly impacted students' motivation or reluctance to engage in academic practices. Visiting students' homes, contacting students' guardians, or at minimum, surveying students, will help teachers understand students' needs and can aid teachers in understanding students' internalized motivation or reluctance. In order to understand and honor students' enculturations, teachers need to spend time getting to know their students and their students' families. This practice can help teachers make more deliberate decisions about which texts to include in their classroom libraries, as well as which practices to include in their curricula. Knowing about their students will also help teachers create opportunities for ongoing events and activities which foster positive informal conversations

between students. Several studies emphasized the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. Importantly, teachers need to incorporate time into the classroom for dialogue about students' lives and students' perceptions of the school. These practices will help students feel empowered in their roles as students and can also engage students academically.

### **Institutional Policies**

These studies also included implications for working within the school as an institution. Several studies showed that when schools and classrooms employed cooperative and empowering structures, students enjoyed higher academic success. While several of these shifts can result from teachers' classroom policies, the research also showed that schools' social environment impacted students' academic achievements. In order to truly integrate these suggestions, schools and districts need to recognize their roles in supporting teachers and students by adopting positive social and student-empowering policies. When instituted well, student empowerment can be a promising strategy for addressing the achievement gap between student groups. Culture needs to be discussed and understood in ways that attend to the needs of all students. For instance, schools need to become places where African American students have access to the tools that provide them with outlets for expressing the institutionalized oppression they have encountered.

Overall, the research from this literature review suggests that educators use culturally relevant and age-appropriate curricula which builds empathy and



cooperation, while also empowering students to critically analyze social discourse and contribute to their schools' policies.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The research in this review showed what was representative in the literature, including various findings and classroom implications. Simultaneously, the research presented in this review had many gaps. This review will presently discuss those gaps in the research.

Many of the studies presented findings which challenged school institutions to consider their roles in student achievement and the achievement gap. Ogbu (2003) showed that African American students experienced internalized racial inferiority and that these feelings of inferiority, coupled with lingering historical oppression such as gatekeeping, impacted students' educational experiences. Duncan (1996) found that African American students who navigated the processes of their schools by understanding their complex historical, institutional natures were more academically successful than their peers without a critical approach to the social discourses inherent in schools. Further research needs to examine the academic success of historically alienated students of color, specifically African American and Latino/a students, when these students openly dialogue about historical racial oppression and subsequent internalized racism that they have experienced. Further research could usefully address whether school environments that encourage student empowerment and openly recognize and combat historical oppression have

more academically successful students of color and if schools with this environmental nature could close the achievement gap.

Accordingly, McQuillan (2005) theorized that student empowerment programs which emphasized student involvement and peer and teacher-student mentors could close the achievement gap. However, of the two schools in McQuillan's study, one with a majority of affluent European American students and one with a majority of Latino/a students and generally lower socioeconomic status, the school which most succeeded in empowering students had a European American and affluent majority population. Besides the policy differences which inhibited the success of Essential School, further research could ask: what differences in culture inhibited student empowerment?

Furthermore, Polleck (2010) found that using book clubs enhanced students' literary analysis skills and simultaneously developed their social-emotional skills. Simultaneously, Jacob (1995) found that a multicultural education program enhanced academic motivation and created a tight-knit learning community, but also played a role in conflict between groups of students of color, due to perceived favoritism. Further useful research should explore whether social-emotional development and empathy-building effect students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for pursuing academic success. Research should also consider the impact of group size on students' closeness with one another. Namely, could a multicultural education program with smaller class sizes and very intentionally integrated groups be more successful than the program from Jacob's study?

As researchers continue to explore the vast range of internal and external factors affecting student motivation, researchers need to examine historical oppression, intergroup dynamics, and demographic factors that have affected school culture.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter one discussed the need to study motivation in education, explored the history of motivation studies in education, and ultimately suggested that academic motivation is bound to student success and may be a factor in the vastly disproportionate achievement rates of groups with different demographics. This chapter also acknowledged that African American, Latino/a, and male students, as well as students with low-income status, experienced disproportionately high dropout rates and linked student alienation with enculturation and school and classroom environments.

Chapter two reviewed available literature exploring student enculturation and school and classroom environments and how both of these factors impacted students' reluctance or motivation to pursue academic practices. These factors were the two main sections of chapter two, and each included three subsections. Within student enculturation, this review examined the effects of: 1) students' self-perceptions on their academic success, 2) student's enculturations on their willingness to pursue literacy practices, and 3) students' self-perceptions on their literary success. Within school and classroom environmental factors on student motivation, this review examined: 1) the effects of schools meeting students' needs on students' academic engagement, 2) the contributions of positive school

social culture to student motivation, and 3) relevant curricular practices that embraced a broad range of literary activities. Chapter two presented the sample groups, methods, findings, and critical analyses of thirty peer-reviewed studies in the literature.

Research from chapter two showed that students' sociocultural backgrounds greatly impacted their motivation or reluctance to pursue educationally ambitious activities and literary practices. The research also showed that schools, on an institutional level, impacted students' motivation or reluctance to engage with academia.

Chapter three summarized the findings of the studies, discussed implications for the classroom, and suggested areas for further research. Overall, the research suggested that schools enjoyed the highest student academic success when they implemented student empowering and multi-cultural programs which honored students' interests, experiences, and competencies. Students were most empowered in schools which respected students' needs and included their voices in decision-making. Students were also most successful in cooperative classrooms which built empathy through discussions and connecting students' lives with the literature. Finally, students were most successful when they attributed their academic successes to their own efforts, and researchers suggested that teachers implement goal-setting and analysis as a way for students to understand their own contributions to their academic successes.

Overall, the research in this review has shown that students' academic motivations and reluctances were due to a variety of factors, including their

enculturations, self-perceptions, and their experiences in schools. Importantly, the research also showed that students were not fated to academic success or failure, but that students themselves, teachers, and even schools played a powerful role in student academic success. When students, teachers, and communities work together to create positive social environments in schools, they are beginning the work of rehabilitating the educational system from the consequences of historical inequities.

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