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**He Reads, He Scores:
The Effect of Soccer Texts
on Students' Attitudes and Achievement in Reading**

by

Daniela Koppeser

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor**

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The recent focus on boys' underachievement in literacy has prompted interventions to improve their attitudes and achievement. One research-based strategy to engage boys in reading is to provide texts that are relevant to them. This study examined the impact of reading about a typical boy interest area, sports, on students' attitudes and achievement. The results did not show that students who read soccer texts had improved reading attitudes or achieved higher literacy scores than students who read texts from the traditional school curriculum. However, this research suggests that the relationship between reading soccer texts and an increase in reading attitudes may be stronger for girls than boys. This study raises questions about current strategies that frame boys as a homogeneous group and argues for the inclusion of non-traditional forms and genres to meet the literacy needs of all students.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my boys

Michael and Dashiell Koppeser

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This research project would not have been possible without the guidance and support of many people.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Boys' underachievement in literacy has been the recent focus of efforts to support student success in literacy. While the gender gap in different subjects is not a new phenomenon, the recent focus on boys' literacy may be due, in part, to cross-curricular implementation of literacy, as poor literacy skills impact students' performance in other subject areas. This focus may be also due to the need for graduates to have strong literacy skills to be competitive in an increasingly global and information-based society. Numerous studies (Coles & Hall, 2002; Sadker, 2002; Schwartz, 2002; Wilhelm & Smith, 2001; Viadero, 2006) have shown gender differences in literacy with respect to attitude and achievement. It is apparent that boys as a group have more negative attitudes towards reading and do not score as well as girls on measures of literacy performance. The evidence of weaker reading and writing skills among boys has prompted interventions to improve their literacy attainment. In 2004, for example, the Ontario Ministry of Education responded with a guide to improving boys' literacy skills. The preface to this guide underscores the need for educators to respond to this issue, with a particular focus on classroom strategies:

Based on an international review of effective practices, the guide is intended to stimulate discussion of this important issue [boys' literacy] among educators in Ontario and to provide practical and effective strategies that teachers across the province can put to use in the classroom, both immediately and over the longer term. (2004, p. 2)

One of the strategies proposed by the guide is to create a more engaging reading environment for boys by choosing appropriate classroom resources for them. This strategy is based on the premise that the traditional content of the reading curriculum is disconnected from boys'

interests and encourages educators to expand texts in the classroom that better respond to the reading interests of boys.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that interest in reading material was the most important reason that made students want to read. In an earlier study, Millard (1997) argued that the reading communities in schools are more relevant to the interests of girls than boys. Wilhelm and Smith (2001) found that boys rejected school-based reading because it was not consistent with the activities they engaged in outside of school. Such findings suggest that educators can interest boys in reading when they provide texts that better appeal to their interests. Numerous studies (e.g., Coles & Hall, 2002; Smith, 2004) have shown that boys enjoy reading about their traditionally masculine interest areas, particularly sports. Drawing from this literature, this study examined the impact, if any, of soccer texts on boys' attitudes and achievement in reading.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between the use of soccer texts in Grade 10 applied English classes and students' attitudes towards reading, as well as students' achievement on the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)*. The central questions addressed in this research were:

- a) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' attitudes towards reading?
- b) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' achievement on the *OSSLT*?
- c) Do students who read soccer texts in English classes have higher scores on the *OSSLT* than students who study the traditional school reading curriculum?

This study used primarily quantitative and then some qualitative research methods. Student attitudes towards reading were measured pre- and post-study through a reading attitude scale, the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment*. Students' interest in sports and soccer were measured through an interest scale administered after the intervention. Students' attitudes towards reading were also measured qualitatively through analyzing themes in student responses to a series of prompts in reading journals. Students' achievement in reading was measured based on their performance on the *OSSLT*. Although the study was primarily quantitative, the qualitative data provided a means to triangulate the results.

This report is outlined as follows. A review of the literature on reading attitudes and achievement will be provided to form a theoretical context for the present research. This will be followed by a background to the study, including a discussion of the methodology and its limitations. An analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data will follow. In the final chapter, a discussion of the major findings of the study will be provided with implications for theory and practice. Finally, the researcher will provide possible directions for future research in this area.

This study was intended as a useful resource for educators at the secondary level, in particular those who deliver literacy programs to adolescent boys.

Definitions

Literacy—The definition of *literacy* is evolving to reflect changes in an increasingly technological and information-based society. The meaning of *literacy* for this study is based broadly on the definition described in the introduction to *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: English (revised 2007)*:

Literacy development is a communal project, and the teaching of literacy skills is embedded across the Ontario curriculum. However, it is the English curriculum that is

dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills on which literacy is based – that is, knowledge and skills in the areas of listening and speaking, reading, writing, and viewing and representing. (p. 3)

In this study, however, the definition of *literacy* was narrowed to focus more exclusively on reading skills. In particular, the study focused on students' reading attitudes and achievement in reading.

Reading attitudes—refers to how students feel about reading as measured on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment*. In particular, it refers to students' feelings toward five aspects of their reading environment as measured on the scale: (a) school related reading, (b) reading in the library, (c) reading in the home, (d) other recreational reading and (e) general reading. Students' feelings towards reading the particular texts in the study are also measured through their personal responses to the texts in reading journals.

Reading achievement—refers to student performance on the *OSSLT* as measured by the *Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)*.

EQAO—the definition of *EQAO* is self-described in its *Framework for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (2007)* document:

The *EQAO* is an arms-length agency of the provincial government that measures the achievement of students across Ontario in reading, writing and mathematics, and reports the results to parents, educators and government. (p. 5)

The *EQAO* conducts four provincial assessments every year, including the *OSSLT* which “assesses whether students have the literacy (reading and writing) skills needed to meet the literacy requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)” (p. 7). The framework by *EQAO* further defines *literacy* as measured on the *OSSLT*:

For the purpose of the *OSSLT*, literacy comprises the reading and writing skills required to understand reading selections and to communicate through a variety of written forms as expected in The Ontario Curriculum across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.

(p. 12)

Gender—an important sub-theme that emerged in the preparation of this research was the role of gender, in particular masculinities, in reading attitudes and achievement. For the purpose of this study, gender refers to more than biological differences between males and females; it refers to the social dimension of being male and female. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, uses "gender" to refer to "the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women". This study is based upon the socially constructed roles and behaviours of the gendered reader in society.

Masculinities—in this study, the term "masculinities" refers to the particular qualities of behaving in ways that are considered typical for males.

Hegemonic masculinities—the role of masculinities in creating hegemonic relations between males and females is also an important sub-theme in this study. In the words of Connell (1990), "To say a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole" (1990, p. 94). The intersection of hegemonic masculinity and gender stereotypes in students' attitudes towards reading will be discussed in later chapters.

Non-traditional—finally, the term "non-traditional" is used to refer to the experimental novel *Home of the Braves* throughout this study. While the novel may be traditional in terms of featuring a story of a white, middle-class, heterosexual male, it is "non-traditional" in terms of the genre of texts typically being used in the English curriculum. The Ministry of Education, for

example, has encouraged the use of “non-traditional” genres in the classroom as a strategy to engage boys in reading. It is this strategy upon which the study is based.

Delimitations of scope and key assumptions

Key assumptions in this study were that it will be possible in the otherwise “messy” classroom setting to delineate variables of interest (e.g., attitude towards reading) on the basis of what reading material is used in an English class. The researcher also decided to use the 25-item instrument that may not be comprehensive enough to distinguish nuances in the development of students’ reading attitudes.

The study is also based on the assumption that it will be possible to determine changes in student achievement in reading based on a single standardized measure of literacy achievement. The researcher used the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)* that reports literacy achievement as a single literacy score and thus, does not delineate between student achievement in reading and writing. Furthermore, the *OSSLT* also does not delineate between students’ relative success on this measure since a numerical score is only reported for students who are not successful.

Another assumption is that it will be possible to determine whether a single theme variable in the experimental novel (e.g., soccer) impacted students’ attitudes and achievement in reading. While primarily a sports-text, the experimental novel had sub-themes, such as friendship and relationships, that may have impacted students’ overall responses to the text more than the theme of soccer itself. The physical “newness” of the text and the prospect of being part of a study may have also impacted students’ initial reactions to the text.

Since the researcher did not record significant change between experimental and control groups as well as between boys and girls in these groups, it is recommended that future research

takes more factors into account. Future research in boys' literacy, for example, should take into account factors beyond gender, such as ethnicity and social status, to disaggregate the data among and between boys and girls as a group. Social class, for example, may have been a confounding factor in this research. The participants in the study were recruited exclusively from Grade 10 applied level English classes. The students in this stream may share particular social circumstances, such as fewer literacy resources in the home, that may impact their attitudes and achievement in reading. Application of such enhanced data collection techniques, which would delineate between factors like social status, ethnicity and others, will better determine for which girls and boys do particular reading interventions improve literacy.

Conclusion

As the end of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) approaches, this statement made by *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* reminds us of the important work we have of developing literacy skills for the benefit of all people:

Those who use literacy take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of "literacy as freedom." (p. 2)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of the theoretical and methodological dimensions of the literature on students' reading attitudes and achievement. The focus of this overview is on the results that point to gender differences in attitudes towards reading and recommendations on how to bridge this gap. Results from the previous research form a base for establishing questions that inform the focus for the research described in later chapters.

Definitions of Literacy

A review of the literature on reading attitudes and achievement points to an evolving definition of literacy, which is in time becoming increasingly complex. The traditional definition of literacy considers the ability to use language to read and write. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) (2003) expands basic literacy to include, "learning to read and write (text and numbers), reading and writing to learn, and developing these skills and using them effectively for meeting basic needs" (p. 29), in particular the skills necessary to perform essential daily tasks. This definition, however, is too exclusive as it does not take into account variations between particular social and cultural contexts.

More recent definitions of literacy have evolved from such an exclusive focus on reading and writing to the social and cultural aspects embedded in the act of reading and writing. The definition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, reflects the importance of socio-cultural context in defining literacy:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves

a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. (p. 13)

Similarly, a functional view of literacy incorporates “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work, and in the community—to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (Statistics Canada and OECD, p. 14). Thus, literacy is not a simple construct with one single, widely accepted definition. Definitions of literacy have evolved and become more complex to reflect the current realities in our increasingly knowledge-based society and growing demands for specific skills in the workforce, which also affect education. In this context, illiteracy is viewed as a social problem to be solved through education.

Despite changes in the meaning of literacy, all of these views espouse the underlying belief that literacy skills are the foundation of learning and that they have implications for the individual, society and world. Furthermore, literacy is a fundamental human right that is necessary to foster full participation in society.

Such beliefs have prompted the inauguration of 2003-2012 as the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) to address this global need. This political and social climate forms the context for the research conducted in this study.

Boys’ Reading Achievement

Studies show a declining trend of boys’ achievement in literacy skills, especially in reading and writing. The Canadian Council on Learning’s (CCL) report, *State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency* (2007), argues that Canada is facing a major literacy challenge whereby, “an astounding number of Canadian adults cannot read, write [...] at the level required to participate fully in today’s globally competitive economy (p. 5).” The report

also documented that while 15 year-old Canadians scored above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average in 2003, girls outperformed boys significantly in reading, with girls scoring an average of 32 points higher than boys¹ (p. 28). Furthermore, the report, *Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA Study—The Performance of Canada’s Youth in Mathematics, Reading, Science and Problem Solving* states that this gender gap in reading achievement is much larger than the gap between boys and girls in mathematics (2007, p. 38).

This trend in boys’ underachievement is also echoed in provincial measures of literacy achievement. In Ontario, The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) measures student achievement in reading and writing for students in Grades 3, 6 and 9. In 2007-2008, EQAO reported that boys did not perform as well as girls in reading at any of the three grade levels. In Grade 3, 68% of females performed at or above the provincial standard in reading compared to 59% of males (9 points difference). This gap was wider for Grade 6 with 73% of females and 58% of males meeting or exceeding the reading standard (15 points difference). Similarly, a larger percentage of female (88%) than male (80%) students successfully completed the March 2008 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). EQAO further reports that over the past five years, the gender gap has remained consistent in all three provincial assessments of reading and writing.

The achievement level of boys in reading is also lagging considerably behind girls in the United States. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for example, measures

¹ For PISA, the scores for reading, science, and problem solving are expressed on a scale with an average or mean of 500 points and a standard deviation of 100. Approximately two-thirds of the students scored between 400 and 600 (i.e. within one standard deviation of the average) for the OECD countries (Bussiere, Cartwright, & Knighton, 2004, p. 34).

the achievement of students from the United States in various subject areas, including reading and writing, in Grades 4, 8 and 12. The 2008 NAEP data showed that males consistently performed significantly below females in reading achievement at all three grade levels. The most pronounced differences in scores in 2004 were in the 8th and 12th grade where females lead males by 8 and 11 points respectively. The long-term trend scores from the NAEP show that this pattern is consistent over time. For over three and a half decades, female students have scored higher on average than male students in reading. Furthermore, this gap widens as students move into adolescence. In 2008, for instance, at age nine, boys scored an average of seven points lower than girls in reading; while age seventeen boys lagged behind girls by eleven points.

Moreover, these achievement patterns appear to be universal. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 (US Department of Education, 2007), reported that girls had higher average achievement than boys in reading in every country (n=41) and province. Overall, the average score for girls was 509 compared to 492 for boys. Similarly, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 showed that girls outperformed boys on the reading component in all countries (n = 57) and in all Canadian provinces. PISA also reported that reading is the area with the largest gender gaps, with the gap of at least 50 score points in twelve countries.

Boys' underachievement on such national and international assessments have contributed to what Barrs (2000) refers to as a "cult of measurement" (p. 287). In this context, the gap in boys' and girls' achievement has created a perceived "crisis" in boys' literacy. Sokal (2005), however, cautions that the trend of boys' underachievement is not altogether an unfamiliar topic. In fact, gender differences in literacy have remained consistent since at least 1965. Zyngier (2009) argues that it is the media that have created a perception of a crisis in boys' education

through a superficial analysis of test results and through framing the issue as a rivalry of girls versus boys. Such treatment, Zyngier argues, ignores the wide range of achievement among boys and girls and ignores factors, beyond gender, that affect the achievement of all children.

The underachievement in reading by boys has been problematised to such an extent so as to prompt the need for urgent intervention. In Ontario, a recent Ministry of Education teacher guide *Me Read? No Way!: A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills* argues that closing the gap is a gender equity issue:

All educators share the common goal of providing equitable learning opportunities for every student in the classroom. Providing equitable opportunities for girls is a familiar topic; providing them for boys is a relatively recent issue, but one that is appearing with increasing urgency on education agendas around the world. (2004, p. 4)

Zyngier (2009), however, argues that a focus on one group based on one homogeneous trait (like gender) does not promote a socially just education. Instead, Zyngier argues that schools should transform the existing structures in schools that promote a “narrow, opposing notion of masculinity and femininity” (p. 116). The boys’ debate has prompted research into gender differences in the acquisition and maintenance of literacy skills.

It is now widely accepted that boys are more likely than girls to have problems with acquiring literacy (Coles & Hall, 2002; Sadker, 2002; Schwartz, 2002; Wilhelm & Smith, 2001; Viadero, 2006). Wilhelm and Smith (2001) found that boys learned to read at an older age, took longer to learn to read, and comprehended narrative and expository texts less well than girls did. These findings are consistent with Millard’s results that a larger proportion of boys described learning to read as “hard” and significantly more girls than boys found learning to read as “easy” (Millard, 1997).

Boys are thus “differently literate” (Millard, 1997), which Millard argues may predispose them to problems with literacy in school. Boys’ rejection of school-based reading, for example, positions them outside of the “dominant literacy of schooling” (p. 45), thus disadvantaging them in acquiring the reading and writing skills necessary for success in the school setting. This is particularly problematic in those aspects of the school curriculum that are language-based. This idea that, as pupils, boys are different from girls is echoed in the work of Taylor and Lorimer (2002) who reported that boys are more likely than girls to be enrolled in special education programs, to be disciplined more often and to have higher dropout rates than girls.

One explanation offered for boys’ underachievement is the feminization of primary schooling. In a study of male (n = 118) and female (n = 92) primary school student teachers from 20 institutions in England, Skelton (2002) found that the teachers viewed primary schools and teaching as feminized. The need for more male role models in primary schools has been offered as a strategy to counteract the alleged feminization of schools. When asked for their views on conditions to increase male teachers recruitment in primary schools, for example, the female student teachers responded in ways that, the researcher suggested, supported traditional stereotypical notions of masculinity. These females suggested use of “three conditions associated with traditional masculinity and male power” (p. 81), in particular advanced status and higher pay, men as knowledge/skills experts (e.g., particular subject teaching; disassociation of the notion of primary teaching as similar to child care), and men as leaders (i.e., in control of discipline). Thus, the views of the female student teachers reinforced the idea that primary schools are feminized environments.

Skelton (2002), however, critiques the belief held by the student teachers that primary schools are feminized. Primary schools are believed to be feminized places because primary

teaching is primarily a female profession; that is, female primary teachers outnumber males by 5:1. Such a view, however, assumes that males and females act in stereotypical ways and that the predominance of female teachers has effects on the pedagogy and culture that privilege females. Instead, Skelton argues that the current educational policy that goes contrary to what feminized education would be, i.e., having flexible school agendas, putting less emphasis on individualism, and promoting non-hierarchical management structures in the primary school, results in schools that are “masculinised – or re-masculinised” (p. 91). The problem is that current educational policy does not challenge conventional gender stereotypes. This limiting notion of gender has the unintended effect of reinforcing stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Martino (2008) also criticizes educational policies that call for more male role models in elementary schools. Such policies, Martino argues, do not take into account the complexities of masculinity in male elementary school teachers’ lives. In a case study of two male elementary school teachers, the narratives of both males revealed competing versions of masculinity based on their specific biographies, in particular their sexual orientation and social class. Ben, a 40 year old homosexual elementary teacher at an inner-city school in Toronto and Steve, a 33 year old heterosexual teacher in an economically disadvantaged community in a major Australian city, both embody contradictory practices of masculinity. Ben, for example, desires “to fashion a masculinity against such unpalatable forms of blokkiness, which he associates with a crude form of sexism, racism, overt homophobia and a tendency to moral degeneracy, which he experiences at the hands of his students and their families”; while Steve refuses, “by wearing a floral shirt and crossing his legs, to embody normative heterosexual masculinity in the eyes of his students that immediately incites their homophobic surveillance and policing of his masculinity” (p. 599). Through their narratives, Martino suggests that educational policy should address the impact of

hegemonic masculinities on male teachers' lives rather than advocating for more male role models as a solution to addressing the boys' underachievement.

These results, although intriguing, do not reveal why boys as a group have more trouble with acquiring literacy? Is the issue perhaps in the different attitudes that girls and boys may have towards reading?

Boys' Attitudes towards Reading

Numerous studies have demonstrated gender differences in attitudes towards reading. In a study of male and female students from nine schools in South Yorkshire, UK, Millard (1997) found that boys as a group do not value reading as an activity and are more likely than girls to describe themselves as non readers. Almost half of the participant boys (46%, n = 134) were termed "occasional readers" because they did very little reading, compared to less than a quarter of the girls (22%, n = 121) in this category. Millard also found that boys were more likely than girls to report school as the place where they did most of their reading.

Millard (1997) argues that boys' perceptions of themselves as readers, and the ways in which their early reading experiences have been differentiated in relation to their gender, necessarily shape their reading attitudes. Hall and Coles (2001) reiterate this idea stating that "boys who read voraciously in texts and forms unrecognized by official school curricula see themselves as non-readers" (p. 220). Is this disconnect between boys' school and outside of school literacy experiences the consequence of school non-responsiveness to boys' literacy needs? Or, are these attitudes embedded in the broader societal issues of gender construction?

According to Millard (1997), it seems that boys' reading habits may be due to a societal issue whereby the image of the reader in society is linked to "a construct of passive feminine identity" (p. 42). For example, Millard found that boys and girls associate reading in the home

with female members of the family, particularly mothers, to the extent that mothers played an equally important role as schools in the process of learning to read. In addition, children associate different kinds of reading as appropriate to different members of the family; fathers read for a set purpose (e.g., to get informed), rather than for leisure or to enjoy the narrative. Similarly, Scieszka (2003) argued that social reasons might account for why more girls than boys are readers because many boys do not see reading as a “particularly masculine activity” (p. 17). These findings suggest that constructions of gender and literacy are inextricably linked in societal attitudes towards reading and related literacy practices. Are the literacy practices in schools feminized or are girls socialized differently in their attitudes towards reading?

Literacy Practices and Gender Identity

Similar to Millard (1997), Alloway and Gilbert (1997) argued that the then literacy practices in schools were incompatible with boys’ understanding of masculine identity. It is because “the practices that are naturalised in the literacy classroom are often practices that boys may experience as incompatible with their understandings of appropriate masculine identity” (p. 55). In particular, this masculine identity runs counter to the “truly literate subject” in the literacy classroom that encourages boys to “express their inner selves, to appreciate the canons of literature, and to observe community standards of morality” (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997, p. 55).

Young (2001) argued that these masculine identities are not stable and that they are constructed within social institutions, namely schools. Young designed a study to examine the impact that social contexts have on how boys display masculinity as they participate in literacy activities. In an eighteen week homeschooling project with four adolescent boys, Young found that the boys displayed hegemonic practices of masculinity in their discussions about texts. Here Young drew on Connell’s (1990) definition of hegemonic masculinity:

To say a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole. (1990, p. 94)

In a critical literacy activity intended to explore how teen magazines represent boys and girls, Young (2001) found that the boys talked about gender in stereotyped ways. For example, when asked to write a description of a “perfect girl,” the boys ogled the pictures and made remarks about female bodies to one another. However, when asked to describe a “perfect male,” the boys refused to respond and voiced negative reactions to the pictures of boys in the magazine. Using *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)* as a method, Young found that the gender representations in the magazines limited the ways the boys thought about themselves. Young argued that the boys’ reactions to the photos were an outward display of heterosexual masculinity important to their growing masculine identities. In addition, the boys were more interested in displaying this masculinity than participating in a critical discussion about how boys and girls were represented in teen magazines.

These distinct characteristics of boys’ literacy practices and behaviours are what Blair and Sanford (2004) termed “morphing.” In a two-year ethnographic case study of early adolescent boys in six Canadian urban and rural school settings, Blair and Sanford found that the boys morphed school literacy practices based on their interests and needs. The researchers found five themes in the boys’ comments about their literacy practices, including boys’ need to find personal interests, action, success, fun and purpose in their school work. In particular, Blair and Sanford identified three themes about boys’ morphing practices in the study:

1. Boys choose to transform time to work on aspects of school literacies that appeal to them (e.g., dedicate more time to prepare themselves for classroom activities; use larger chunks of time for activities).
 2. Boys transform the purpose of the assignment to suit their interests (e.g., representing their knowledge in alternative formats – visually, orally and with gestures; creative writing about characters that exhibit strength or power; selecting visual, humourous and active texts).
 3. Boys transform literacy events into social-cultural capital (e.g., clustering around an engaging activity; reading materials that can be shared in conversations with friends).
- (2004, p. 454)

Blair and Sanford also found that the reading selected by the boys outside of school which supported their personal interests contrasted with their selections in school because they were not seen as appropriate for school reading. The researchers further argued that since boys' literacy resists the traditional definition of school literacy, the boys in the study were "using what they had learned in school and were morphing it for their own purposes, fulfilling their need to position themselves in the world and support relationships with their peers" (2004, p. 454). In other words, morphing was a practice used by boys to turn themselves into what they perceived to be "acceptable masculine beings" (p. 457). Boys are thus set up to reinforce gendered behaviour through changing literacy practices based on their interests and needs.

Several studies offer other possible explanations for the opposition of boys' literacy practices and behaviours to traditional school literacy practices. In an action research project on dual-language storytelling, Cummins, Chow and Schecter (2006) used students' home languages and cultures as resources for learning at school. The researchers found a reciprocal relationship

within their interactions with students between cognitive engagement and identity investment. Cummins, Chow and Schecter argued that, “teacher-student interactions must affirm students’ cultural, linguistic, and personal identities in order to create classroom conditions for the maximum *identity investment* in the learning process” (p. 305). While this study focused on enhancing bilingual children’s literacy development, the framework that emerged from the study could also be applied to the distinctive characteristics of boys’ literacy. This framework is also reminiscent of the “second class” or “alternative pedagogical space” that Campano (2005) described as such that, “unsettles distinctions that are often taken for granted, such as those between official/unofficial and school/familial ways of knowing” (p. 187). Since Campano (2005) acknowledges that, “the second class runs parallel to, sometimes in the shadow of, the official first class” (p. 187), traditional or official literacy practices may fail to legitimize certain ways of knowing or being. These ways of knowing are necessarily embedded not only in school literacy practices, but in the school sanctioned texts themselves.

It is well known that books and other texts affect children’s view of themselves, including their views of gender identity (Coles & Hall, 2002; DeBlase, 1993; Millard, 1997; Orellana, 1995; Temple, 1993). According to Barrs (2000), “reading is one of the main psychological tools available to us in the process of becoming a person because of the access it gives us to other and wider ways of being” (p. 289), including ideas of what it entails in being female or male. This process, Barrs argues, is revealed in the history of texts people read from childhood and adolescence into adulthood. In examining the reading history of her goddaughter, for example, Barrs argued that the progression of female reading choices revealed a more complex and varied view of gender than many boys’ reading histories (e.g., girls are more likely to read books about boys than boys are to read books about girls; girls are freer to act out male

roles than boys are to act out female roles). She writes, however, that, “I can parallel this history [her goddaughter’s] with other reading histories of girls, but I don’t know whether many boys’ reading histories would show the same kind of pattern, of a view of gender becoming more complex and varied.” (p. 290). So, what are the implications of the content of reading on boys’ and girls’ identity construction?

Gilbert (1992) stated that, “it is also through the text that we learn how to take up positions in our culture as women and men, wives and husbands, lovers and friends: that we learn to function socially in our world” (p. 188). However, Wall (1992) cautioned that, “Since we [the readers] readily acknowledge that literature mirrors life and describes the world around us, the subconscious effect of conditioning is thus perpetuated through literature” (p. 26).

Alloway et al. (2002) also underscored the importance of taking a critical look at school texts:

Over and above the general issue of whether or not these materials are found to be more engaging by boys, real engagement in these imported materials calls for more intensive analysis of the texts’ cultural contents, and highlights the powerfully gendered nature of commercial representations of the culture in which the school operates. (2002, p.169)

If literature mirrors and describes the world around us, then an important aspect in the development of boys’ attitudes toward reading is the extent to which the texts in schools overlap with boys’ personal interests, which are also socially determined. Are there noted differences in reading interests between genders and are these interests reflected in the school curriculum?

Students’ Reading Interests

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that interest in reading material was the most important reason that made middle school students want to read. In a survey of 1765 Grade 6 students from 23 diverse schools in the United States, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that many students

(42%, n = 750) were motivated to read at school by finding good materials to read and having choice in the selection. In a follow-up interview of 31 students on the survey responses, 12 students (39%) confirmed that a good book or topic motivates them to read in school. In addition, the students who were not engaged by the assigned school texts reported these materials as “boring.”

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) also found a vast difference in the diversity of materials students reported reading at home compared to at school. For example, after being asked what are their favourite books they read at home/in school, more than three quarters of classrooms surveyed reported at least 0.7 unique titles per student for home reading as compared to less than one quarter that reported 0.7 unique titles per student for reading at school. In one particular classroom, all 23 students mentioned separate titles or topics of their home reading. Thus, there were noticeable differences between the variety and types of books read at school and home—at home students read nonfiction, fiction, popular and informational magazines, picture books, and poetry, while in school they mentioned reading award-winning novels (contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, and some fantasy) and rarely nonfiction, informational magazines, or recently published titles. The researchers concluded that students were reading at home to learn about topics related to their personal interests. Furthermore, the books students read at school did not match what they said they preferred to read and what they read outside of school. In fact, classrooms were ranked as one of the least likely places to find materials they wanted to read. So, what can teachers do to motivate students, particularly boys, in reading at school?

Taylor and Lorimer (2002) suggested that teachers can interest boys in literacy when they demonstrate knowledge of boys’ needs and provide texts that appeal to their interests. Taylor and Lorimer cite other researchers like, Grubb (2001), Muir (2001) and Worthy (2002), who argued

that giving students reading materials related to their interests leads to greater motivation in developing literacy skills. While Taylor and Lorimer cautioned that no one solution emerged from their research, the content of texts, especially if it affirms boys' masculine identities, may help motivate boys to engage in reading.

A consistent theme in the literature on reading interests is that boys like to read what reflects their experiences (Coles & Hall, 2002; Jones, 2005; Smith, 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Wilhelm, 2001). In a study of 49 boys from four diverse backgrounds and research sites, Wilhelm and Smith (2001) qualitatively examined the boys' literacy activities in and out of school. One of the themes that emerged from their research was that while boys valued reading and pursued literate activities outside of school, there was a complete disconnection between literacies at home and at school. Furthermore, they found that almost all the participants, even successful students, rejected school literacy tasks. However, many of these same boys participated in literacy tasks at home. So, why did the boys in the study reject school-based reading?

Wilhelm and Smith (2001) found no evidence that boys rejected literacy because they saw it as feminized. For example, in response to a reading profile of a boy that included details that might mark him as feminine, the boys expressed admiration for him, in particular for his love for reading and competence as a reader. Instead, Wilhelm and Smith found that boys often rejected school-based reading because it was not consistent with the activities boys engaged in outside of school. Similarly, Millard (1997) found that the reading communities in schools were more relevant to the interests of girls than boys. In an earlier study of 16 boys and girls, Millard found that the main reasons for the gender differences in attitudes towards school reading were among others in the labeling of certain kinds of literature as unsuitable for classroom reading

(e.g., computer and hobby magazines; comic strips), not having free choice in reading, and an existing mismatch between students' expectations of the importance of reading and its perceived use in school as a time filler and/or leisure activity. It seems that any intervention intended to increase reading engagement of school children, particularly boys, needs to be based on their interests. This is particularly necessary when school reading does not match boys' expressed interests outside their school lives.

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of sports in boys' school lives. Lightbody, Siann, Stocks and Walsh (1996) designed a study to measure the role of gender in motivation towards school. In the study, 1068 secondary school students in London, UK, completed a questionnaire about their enjoyment of school, particularly school subjects. Overall, girls (58%, n = 543) were more likely than boys (47%, n = 525) to report that they enjoyed school. The researchers found gender differences in the enjoyment of specific subjects, with boys far more likely to report enjoyment in Science, Technology, Physical Education, Information Technology and Mathematics. The researchers found marked gender differences on six of the following eight aspects of school life: friends, break, lunch break, teachers, clubs, sports, outings and lessons. A significant number of boys (73%) rated sports as "like a lot," which was the highest score on an interest inventory scale, compared to 48% of girls on the same item. Similarly, boys rated school clubs more favourably than girls did (41%, compared to 20%).

Other studies also looked into the children's favourite out of school activities. For example, Nippold's et al. (2005) studied the leisure time preference of young adolescents. In a study of 100 sixth graders and 100 ninth graders in Oregon, Nippold et al. found that one of the most popular leisure activities among adolescent boys was playing sports (80%, n = 200), compared to only 55% of girls. Overall, 51% of combined sixth and ninth graders responded

positively to the item on reading on the questionnaire. While reading was a moderately popular activity for all students (51%), in higher grades interest in reading declined over time as only 37% of ninth graders reported enjoying reading. Boys' interest in playing sports, however, remained fairly stable from Grades 6-9 (82%, compared to 78%). Furthermore, boys were more likely than girls (17%, compared to 4%) to report that they spend no time reading for leisure. The researchers concluded that as children become adolescents, their interest in reading decreases as other activities compete for their time. Thus, sports are clearly an important part of the lived experience of many school-age boys.

If interest in reading materials is the most important element in motivating boys to read, then literature that relates to their unique male interests, namely sports, could be an entry point to engage them in reading. Smith (2004) conducted a largely qualitative study designed to examine the reading experiences of six high achieving boy readers over a two-year period. These five-year old boys were identified by their teachers as boys whose reading was "significantly above their peers' reading and above where they would expect a child of that age to be" (p. 10). Although data was collected on fiction and non-fiction reading, the data analysis focused on the boys' non-fiction reading habits since this genre had a dominant place in their reading for pleasure.

Smith found that these boys all enjoyed reading non-fiction texts, particularly to find out information. In particular, the boys enjoyed reading about four subject areas: space, football, dinosaurs and animals/minibeasts. The researchers also noted the dominant place of football in the boys' non-fiction reading. In a research conversation with one of the boys about things they like about reading, one of the participants responded, "I like to find out about information ... I like finding out about football" (2004, p. 11). In fact, five of the six boys reported an interest in

soccer (though denoted in the study as football) texts. For some boys, this interest developed over the two years and dominated their reading at the end of the study. In the reading logs of two of the boys, for example, all of the non-fiction reading noted was football-related. Furthermore, the researchers found that the reading interests of the boys were not feminized as they closely resembled the interests of other boys. So, how do these successful boy readers make connections with their masculine interest areas and reading?

Smith (2004) found that one of the ways the boys made positive connections between reading and masculinity is that they used non-fiction reading to find out information about their masculine interest areas. For example, the boys read non-fiction texts to find out statistical and biographical information related to football. The outcome of boys' reading is that they have excellent knowledge on the subject areas of their interest. The boys used this knowledge gained from their non-fiction reading in the classroom with their peers. This "expert" identity gave the boys "high status, hegemonic masculine identity" (p. 14) amongst their peers. Smith concluded that the boys used the non-fiction reading in traditional boy interest areas to develop an acceptable and desirable "version of masculinity" (p. 11) which includes being a reader. Thus, Smith concluded that masculinity and reading became compatible for the young boys in the study through their non-fiction reading interests.

Sokal (2005) also argued that boys perceive reading of high-interest texts as an appropriate activity. Such texts, however, must be engaging to the individual boys, not to boys as a homogeneous group. Similar to Smith's findings in the previously described study, Sokal argued that boys rationalize their participation in reading by using themselves as the models for masculinity. In other words, when boys find interest in a feminine activity, they will justify taking part in it by thinking that since they are boys and they enjoy the activity, the activity must

be appropriate to boys. Sokal cautions, however, that while de-feminizing reading will affect some boys' performance, it will not impact other obstacles to boys' reading achievement. Instead, Sokal argues that researchers move towards asking the question "Which boys?" instead and take into account individual preferences as vital in engaging non-reading boys.

Similarly, Martino et al. (2004) problematize educators viewing boys as a homogeneous group. In a study of boys at a junior secondary high school in Australia implementing a "boy friendly" curriculum, Martino et al. found that the "boy friendly" curriculum was highly gendered and based on teachers' normative assumptions about how boys learn. The school implemented an "activities-based curriculum" based on the assumption that boys prefer structured programs with more hands-on activities to address their educational needs. The ways in which such a curriculum is framed, however, homogenizes boys and normalizes certain gendered approaches to learning. Such approaches, they argue, can have a negative impact on the social and educational outcomes for boys and girls since they cater to a particular kind of masculinity for a particular type of middle class boy. Despite such limiting definitions of masculinity, are there differences between the reading preferences of particular boys and girls?

Boys and Sports Literature

In a study of reading choices by Coles and Hall (2002), there were significant differences in the types of books chosen by boys and girls. Coles and Hall's study replicated an earlier large-scale national reading survey sponsored by the W H Smith bookshop chain in England in 1971. The current study used a national survey with children of 10, 12 and 14 years of age in 110 primary and 59 secondary schools in England to compare children's reading choices over time. Overall, the researchers found that book reading had increased, except amongst 14-year old boys. The average number of books read in the month prior to the study decreased over time from 1.78

to 1.45 in this age group. There was also a tendency for fewer books being read by children as they grew older. For example, 91% of 10 year olds had responded positively to having read any book in the month prior to the survey compared to only 64% of 14-year olds.

Coles and Hall (2002) also examined differences in the types of books chosen by boys and girls. A much greater percentage (82.1%, n = 7867) of boys' reading consisted of sports-related books, compared to only 17.9% of girls'. Amongst the boys, a comic book, tabloid newspaper and soccer magazines were the most popular at the time of the survey. When asked to complete the sentence "I think that reading is ...," more girls (59.2%) than boys (47.1%) expressed positive attitudes towards reading. Coles and Hall concluded that reading practices are highly gendered, and become more gendered as children move into adolescence. They further argued that the mismatch between boys' reading tastes and habits and school literacy requirements affect boys' motivation in school-based reading. Boys' "vernacular literacies" (p. 105), for example, are more inclined to analyzing information (i.e., memorizing facts and figures, rehearsing arguments, comparing and ranking performances and identifying procedures) than analyzing motivation or characterization. Thus, Coles and Hall argued that children's distinct reading cultures outside school should be recognized and respected in school.

Crowe (2001) also reported that the sports novels widely read by boys often featured male protagonists. While sports literature for teenagers has been around for a long time, the nature of these novels has changed over time. Crowe (2001) coined the term "sportlerroman" (p. 130) to describe a genre of bildungsroman that deals with the personal development of a young athlete. In these novels, "the main character is an athlete, but the central issues of the stories are only tangentially connected to sports" (p. 130). Such books, Crowe described, combine character development with game action. Crowe also noted that sports novels are often used to motivate

reluctant readers and this has limited the acceptance of the genre as “legitimate literature” (p. 131). Similarly, Hill (2005) touted the popularity of the “male sporting hero” as one who is “admired by men of all ages as a paragon, the happy warrior who all would wish to be” (p. 411).

Minchew (2002) pointed out the potential value of teaching character through sports literature in schools since it “provides an avenue for values discussions; moreover, the intensity and passion of the court or field or arena may more completely engage some students than traditional literature does” (p. 138). Minchew illustrated that sports literature can be used to teach, among other values, a strong work ethic, physical and psychological courage, honesty and fair play, and the ability to learn from adversity. Thus, studies on the reading preferences of boys support the notion that boys’ enjoyment in reading about their masculine interest areas, particularly sports, should not be taken lightly, but should be reflected in the school literacy activities as well.

In encouraging boys to read about masculine interest areas, however, Greig and Hughes (2009) warn that using “boy baits” such as adventure, sports and violence, to “lure” boys into reading reinforces traditional definitions of masculinity (p. 92). Such strategies, they argue, interfere with boys’ best interests “as it is not only aggressive and violent but maintains male power at the expense of women and other subordinate and marginalized masculinities, and imposes limits on boys and their reading preferences” (p. 94). This narrow view, they argue, also assumes that boys’ reading preferences “are determined as a result of simply being boys” which leads to the homogenizing of boys as a group (p. 93).

However, Brozo’s (2002) research on boys’ reading preferences suggests that there may be more to boys’ reading engagement than simply the genre of text. Brozo argued that boys became more engaged readers when they were motivated by literature that embodied traditional

male archetypes. Perhaps not surprisingly, these archetypes appealed to and affirmed boys' unique masculine identities. While Brozo emphasized that boys exhibit "multiple expressions of masculine identity" (2002, p. 15), the archetypal "warrior" Brozo described in his research seems to be the most closely aligned with the culture of sports. Here Brozo drew on Arnold's (1992) definition of the archetypal warrior as the one that traditionally represents the "noblest qualities of masculinity: bravery, self-sacrifice, stamina and skill" (Arnold, 1992, p. 101). The ten positive male archetypes alluded to in Brozo's research included the pilgrim, patriarch, warrior, magician, king, wildman, healer, prophet, trickster and lover. In defense of criticism that such archetypes reinforce gender stereotypes, Brozo argued instead that "books that are steeped in positive male archetypes may actually dispel stereotypical notions of what it means to be masculine" (Brozo, 2002, p. 19).

Several studies have explored the place of sport in the construction of particular types of masculinities. The connection between sports and war imagery has long been established. Gilbert and Gilbert's research (1998) found that "men's sport is the archetype of institutionalized masculinity, and the image of men which dominate its ideology are the quintessential manifestation of the masculinist ethos" (p. 33). Similarly, Renold (1997) warned of the gendered consequences that sports can have on boys and girls. In a study of playground relations in two primary schools, Renold examined how playground games and activities, particularly soccer, defined boys' masculinity and signified this masculinity to others. In both primary schools, the researcher found that soccer (though denoted in the study as football) was the dominant activity for boys and girls. However, Renold suggested that hegemonic masculinity was constructed through the exclusion of females in the game. The following excerpt from the transcripts show this exclusionary practice:

ER: Why do you think they are stopping you from playing sometimes?

Hannah: Well sometimes if you go up to them and say 'can I play football' they say 'No you're a girl, you're not good enough' or something like that.

ER: But the fact that you do score goals and that you can play/

Hannah: Yeah but they won't let you try. (Renold, 1997, p. 9)

Through such transcripts, Renold showed the place of soccer as a "powerful collective practice dominated by boys who actively excluded girls" (1997, p. 9). In fact, the physical separation of the school playground between soccer and all other activities further segregated the girls from the boys.

Renold (1997) also explored the relationship between athletic achievement in soccer and masculinity. The boys that showed mastery of skills in the game, for example, were often considered to be more masculine by their peers. Renold further argued that these masculinising practices privileged boys over girls:

The masculinising practices that took place with and without the game of football seemed to stem specifically from the need to portray and display to others a particular type of male hegemony, achieved by positioning themselves within a wider 'sporting narrative.' Moreover, such practices, because they were constructed in relation to femininities, subordinated, stigmatized and marginalized other masculinities and femininities. (1997, p. 20)

However, Renold noted that it was the boys who were not fully skilled in the game that actively excluded girls from the game. Renold suggested that since these boys were unable to construct their masculinity through sporting competence, they excluded girls to disassociate themselves from the "feminine" (1997, p. 14). This study cautioned that there may be greater social

consequences in using sports, particularly soccer, as a sole means to encourage better involvement of boys in school activities.

Smith (2007) also noted the dominant place of sport, particularly football, in shaping hegemonic masculinities in schools. In an ethnographic study of adolescent working class boys in a large co-educational secondary school in the UK, Smith (2009) found that “footballing prowess represented the prestige resource in signifying ‘successful’ masculinity” (p. 186). Furthermore, Smith (2007) found that boys used football in the classroom to exert hegemonic masculinity against girls and any competing masculinities. For instance, the boys used verbal and physical intimidation to subordinate masculine identities in the classroom that did not include their physically aggressive masculine interest areas, particularly their ability to play football. Football, Smith argues, “is the ‘norm’ and status and popularity are only achievable through the ‘cool’ masculinity exhibited in its skilful displays of corporeal social action” (2007, p. 187). Such practices of heteronormative behaviour, however, are likely to adversely affect school outcomes since they reinforce masculine/feminine polarities, resulting in enthusiasm for things like sports and disinterest in academic study.

Avoiding Bias in Soccer Literacy Programs

An increasing number of schools are using soccer as a means of engaging boys in literacy programs. The *Playing for Success Program* in the United Kingdom, for example, has been shown to have beneficial effects on boys’ progress in literacy (Sharp, Kendall, & Schagen, 2003). The developers of the program believed that soccer (though denoted in the study as football) would appeal to young males and help address their underachievement. In a study of 12 of the largest out-of-school-hours Study Support Centres in professional football clubs, the researchers administered a pre-course questionnaire to gauge students’ interest in soccer. A

control group was also established, comprising 244 students from five centres. Sharp, Kendall, and Schagen reported that 86% (n = 620) of the students in the soccer literacy program who completed the questionnaire reported that they were interested in soccer. While there was some concern that the use of soccer might marginalize girls, the girls in the program were as likely as boys to report that they were interested in the sport. A similar level of support for soccer was demonstrated by students known to be from ethnic minority backgrounds (77%) and by students in the control group (n = 114). Therefore, the issue of marginalization of girls and students from ethnic minority backgrounds did not appear to be an issue in this study.

Sharp, Kendall, and Schagen (2003) also designed the study to measure the program's impact on the literacy achievement of boys. Four instruments, including a reading test, were administered to 1600 students involved in the program. The results from the pre-test showed that the students were achieving at a low level compared to age-related norms. Overall, the KS2 students (key stage 2; ages 7-11) who attended the program made greater progress than the control group in the numeracy test, computer skills and in one of the attitude scales. This trend is reflected in the results of the KS3 students (key stage 3; ages 11-14), with these students making greater progress in numeracy, reading comprehension, computer skills and mathematics enjoyment. In reading comprehension, the progress of KS2 pupils attending the program was non-significant in comparison with the control group, but students in KS3 achieved average gains of four points, which is the equivalent to six months of progress. This result is encouraging in view of the previous studies (Millard, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2001; Taylor & Lorimer, 2002) that noted difficulties in engaging adolescent boys in the in-school reading activities.

Sharp, Kendall, and Schagen (2003) further found several gender-related differences in actual literacy achievement levels. For instance, girls scored significantly higher than boys in

relation to reading enjoyment, writing enjoyment and independent study skills. However, boys scored higher than girls in numeracy and the attitude scales relating to confidence in mathematics. The control group scores did not increase during the evaluation period. Since the researchers found few differences in the progress between boys and girls in the study, they concluded that the *Playing for Success Program* appeared to have been equally successful with boys as it was with girls. Thus, there was no evidence in the study to suggest that the emphasis on football in the program marginalized or disadvantaged females.

Limitations of a Gendered Curriculum

The strategy of modifying instructional practices to better meet the needs of boys has not gone without criticism. Alloway et al. (2002), for example, developed a theoretical framework for improving literacy outcomes for boys that takes into account the positions boys take up as literate subjects:

Boys' repertoires for (re)presenting themselves in the world, their repertoires for relating to others, and their repertoires for engaging with cultural knowledges, practices and meanings, all need to become aspects of the attention needed to effect shifts in engagement and achievement levels in the literacy classroom. (2002, p. 202)

Martino and Kehler (2007) also warned about the dangers of "casting boys as particular sorts of literate subjects" (p. 408). Similarly, Rowan et al. (2002) cautioned educators about the limits of treating boys as a homogeneous group in addressing boys' underachievement in literacy since:

Being a boy relates not only to experiences of a male body, but also to factors associated with race, ethnicity, economic status, physical ability, sexuality, religion, first language, physical appearance and so on. In other words, many factors combine to determine the

ways in which an individual boy will be ranked within a particular gender hierarchy.

(Rowan et al., 2002, p. 43)

Another criticism of the gender reform agenda is that texts that appeal to masculine interests may have negative influences on some boys and girls. Many studies have demonstrated that the traditional canon of literature privileges male authors and characters (e.g., Benjamin & Irwin-Devitis, 1998; Kouritzin, 2004; Lake, 1998; Slack, 1999; St. Pierre, 1999; Wall, 1992). In a study designed to determine whether there was gender bias in the 21 novels commonly used in the Hudson, Quebec School Board, Wall (1992) found that the majority (85.7%) of novels were written by men and had male protagonists (82%). In a qualitative analysis of the novels, Wall found that men were portrayed consistently in the novels as empowered figures. Similarly, Pace (1992) found a gender imbalance in the literature anthologies in the United States. Pace found that the canon of literature contained only five fictional works by women. Furthermore, the women in these stories are physically weak, passive and “the voiceless victims of negative experiences with men” (Pace, 1992, p. 35). Pace argued that these characters match culturally embedded stereotypes of women and, as such, are unfair to both sexes.

Similarly, Sadker and Sadker (1994) argued that allowing male dominated texts and ideas to permeate our classrooms does male students a disservice because they no longer teach boys the skills they need to be successful:

Boys cannot develop these repressed parts of themselves [tenderness, nurturance, the skills of cooperation, the desire for connection] without abandoning attitudes that degrade girls. Until gender equity becomes a value promoted in every aspect of school, boys, as victims of their own miseducation, will grow up to be troubled men; they will be

saddened by unmet expectations, unable to communicate with women as equals and unprepared for modern life. (1994, p. 225)

Similarly, Kouritzin (2004) found that “the classifications of the required reading [in schools] are incomplete; they draw a line around whatever ‘fits’ and leave out or marginalize any dissenting voices” (p. 193). These voices, Kouritzin argued, have traditionally been the silenced voices of female authors and protagonists. Ignoring or minimizing the role of women in literature is problematic because “the silences born of these omissions become consent; they become the voice of complicity” (Pace, 1992, p. 37). Pace further argued that “the absence of women’s voices suggest that acquiescence to the status quo is part of the ‘natural order of things’” (p. 37).

A review of the literature in reading therefore shows that gender differences affect students’ motivation towards school-based reading and their achievement. Boys do not see in-school reading as a masculine activity and the literacy practices in classrooms are often incompatible with their masculine identities. Boys prefer to read texts about sports and texts that speak to traditional male archetypes. Understanding boys’ reading interests can perhaps help to close the gap between some boys’ and girls’ reading achievement and therefore warrant further study.

While the literature provides competing explanations for boys’ underachievement in literacy, theories that attribute differences in reading attitudes and achievement to biological differences are insufficient. The argument that “boys will be boys” reinforces stereotypical notions of gender based on physical differences and ignores the important role that socialization has on creating and reinforcing gender identities. Existing structures in schools that set up a rivalry between males and females by viewing them as polarities further reinforce these gender stereotypes. Current “boy-friendly” approaches are also problematic because they privilege and

validate certain ways of being male. These stereotypes of masculinity are further perpetuated through literature designed to engage boys in reading that present only certain versions of masculinity as acceptable. Such approaches do not benefit boys or girls as they do not take into account the wide differences between and among boys (and girls) as a group. More research is therefore required into the ways in which particular versions of masculinity are constructed in recent approaches to engage boys in reading.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Background of This Study

As documented in the previous chapter, the achievement gap between boys' and girls' literacy is drawing increasing attention among educators. A growing body of research suggests that gender is a factor in both choice of reading materials and student attitudes towards school-based reading. Student engagement with reading has also been shown to impact students' achievement on standardized measures of reading. As the achievement gap widens, there is a need to examine the current school reading curriculum and its impact on students' attitudes towards reading and their reading achievement.

In January 2005, the Ministry of Education provided funding to the researcher's high school to conduct a three-year action research project into teaching strategies for improving boys' literacy. One of the strategies selected by the Teacher Inquiry Team was making reading relevant to boys through careful choosing of appropriate classroom resources for them. In selecting such relevant reading materials, the Teacher Inquiry Team used the research on boys' reading interests which shows that boys are interested in reading about sports. As a result, the school purchased soccer texts, including novels, magazines and technical manuals, to help engage boys in Grade 9 and 10 applied and locally developed English classes. As team leader of the project, the researcher saw this initiative as an opportunity to conduct research at another school to measure the impact of the soccer texts purchased through the project on students', particularly boys', attitudes towards reading and their reading achievement.

Description of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the uses of soccer texts in Grade 10 applied English classes and students' attitudes towards reading; as well as the student achievement on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Important sub-themes that emerged from the research were gender differences in attitudes towards reading and achievement in reading in relation to choice of in-school reading materials.

The central questions addressed in this research are:

- a) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' attitudes towards reading?
- b) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' achievement on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)?
- c) Do students who read soccer texts in English classes have higher scores on the OSSLT than students who study the traditional school reading curriculum?

The hypotheses underlying the study were that,

- H₁) Students who read soccer texts will be more motivated to read than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum;
- H₂) Students who read soccer texts will achieve higher scores on the OSSLT than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum.

Description of Research Procedures

The researcher conducted a primarily quantitative study with an experimental design approach. The researcher provided one Grade 10 applied level English class with a soccer-themed literature, while another Grade 10 applied level English class used the current school

reading curriculum. The intent was to assess the effect, if any, of the independent variable, type of literature, on the attitudes towards reading and student achievement on the *OSSLT*.

Selection of Literature

Soccer Novel

The soccer-themed novel taught in the experimental group was *Home of the Braves* by David Klass. *Home of the Braves* is a 354 page young adult novel copyrighted by David Klass in 2004. The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data summary for this book reads:

Eighteen-year-old Joe, captain of the soccer team, is dismayed when a hotshot player shows up from Brazil and threatens to take over both the team and the girl whom Joe hopes to date.

Some of the issues in this book include soccer, competition, family problems, divorce, identity development, growing up, relationships, friendship and bullying. This novel was purchased through Ministry of Education funding at the researcher's high school to improve boys' literacy. The use of the novel, therefore, represents a gender intervention to engage adolescent boys in reading.

The researcher chose the novel *Home of the Braves* for the experimental group because David Klass writes about realistic characters and settings that many teenagers could relate to. In the opening chapter of the novel, Joe Brickman, the protagonist of the novel, describes the primary setting of the novel, Lawndale high school:

I see a normal, slightly shabby school, populated by eight hundred students, a hundred and fifty of whom are bused in. We study algebra and Dickens, flirt and fight, hang out and try to act tough, or slink along and try to hide, and generally muddle our way through the years between fourteen and eighteen. (p. 4)

Such description of the school could probably fit in any suburban school setting; the participants in the study would be able to easily relate to this type of environment.

As the title suggests, an important theme of the novel is sports. The protagonist of the novel is captain of the *Braves*, the school soccer team. In selecting a soccer-themed novel, the researcher ensured that the novel promoted positive lessons about the sport, such as dedication and sportsmanship. At several instances in the novel, soccer is used in such a way to relate lessons from the game to greater life lessons. After a particularly difficult soccer game, for example, Joe Brickman comes to a realization about life based on an experience in the game:

And that was when I learned something about life. It's not a very nice lesson to have to swallow, but it's a true one. Life can be just plain unfair. Desire can count for nothing. Training and conditioning can count for even less. And if you don't think what I'm saying is true, you've never gone up against a player the soccer gods have smiled on. (p. 123)

In this way, the novel fits the genre of a bildungsroman as the protagonist learns difficult life lessons through the medium of sport.

While soccer is an important theme in the novel, the novel also has important sub-themes about relationships, particularly friendships. At the end of the novel, Joe is faced with a difficult decision about whether or not to fight a student who had been bullying his best friend throughout the novel. As Joe thinks about his decision, he comes to the following realization:

If we fought, it could not be hidden [...] there would be no graduation day, no chance of moving forward to something new and different and maybe better. [...] I could stop it. That was the truth I came to in that long and frozen moment. This was my life. (p. 341-2)

In the end, Joe decides not to fight and feels that, in this decision, he has grown from a child to an adult.

The novel tells the story of a white, middle class heterosexual male who uses his sporting prowess to assert his masculinity, in particular to win recognition from his peers and to impress a girl. While the novel can be read as a traditional male discourse, this genre of text is not traditionally used in the English curriculum. In this respect, the novel can be considered a “non-traditional” text designed to engage reluctant readers, particularly boys.

Curriculum Novel

Students in the control group studied the novel that was currently being taught in the Grade 10 English curriculum at the school, entitled *My Darling, My Hamburger* by Paul Zindel. *My Darling, My Hamburger* is a 160 page young adult fiction novel copyrighted in 1969 by Paul Zindel. The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Summary for this book reads: “Four highschool seniors struggle with the responsibilities of growing up, particularly the problems of an intimate relationship.” Some of the themes in the book include family and peer relationships, dating, teen pregnancy, sex, abortion, stepparents, identity, peer pressure, growing up, graduation, and prom.

My Darling, My Hamburger also focuses on the responsibilities of growing up, particularly in connection to friendships. However, instead of the lessons being taught through soccer, the lessons are learned through relationships. Maggie, for example, breaks a prom date with Dennis to support her friend Elizabeth:

Liz had enough problems without knowing about the broken prom date with Dennis. It didn't matter that much. I can use the dress for graduation, Maggie thought. The important thing was she had done everything she could for her

friend when she needed her. (p.123)

At the end of the novel, Maggie, like the protagonist in *Home of the Braves*, comes to a realization about her future:

She wondered if in a short time she'd remember how miserable she was on this graduation night and whether it would all seem as naïve and idiotic. Was that what life was going to be? Just going from one year to the next feeling slightly less ridiculous? Was that what all the talk about maturing was? (p. 159)

In the end, the protagonists from both novels face the future with a renewed sense of confidence based on their very different life experiences.

Set-up of the Study

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from the Grade 10 applied level English classes at a large suburban high school in the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. It is a Catholic Secondary school with students ($N = 1474$) enrolled in Grades 9-12. In March 2008, 88% of first-time eligible students ($N = 337$) successfully completed the *OSSLT* (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test). The *OSSLT* classifies students as successful or unsuccessful:

Successful students will have met the level of literacy competency expected at the end of Grade 9 and will thereby have satisfied the literacy requirement for graduation. Feedback is provided to unsuccessful students to assist them in working to meet the standard.

(EQAO, 2008, p. 9)

The student questionnaire administered after the *OSSLT* provides some important contextual information for the school. The majority of students (90%, $N = 337$) reported speaking only or mostly English at home; however, only 33% reported reading materials, other

than homework, written in English outside school, for more than three hours a week. Overall, 94% of students reported having English language books at home. While 62% of students indicated that they read novels, fiction and short stories in English outside of school most weeks, females (81%, $N = 159$) reported reading significantly more fiction than males (45%, $N = 178$).

The classes were purposely selected through non probability convenience sampling. By so doing, the researcher followed Creswell's (2002) instruction about "A convenience sample, a form of non-probability sampling, in which the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to be studied" (p. 167). The researcher selected Grade 10 applied level English classes for two reasons: (1) there are traditionally more reluctant readers in this stream and (2) the researcher would be able to use results of the *OSSLT*, a Grade 10 test of reading and writing, as a measure for this group. The population sample was limited to two classes due to the small number of sections of applied level English classes in a semestered school system and the limited amount of soccer texts purchased through the grant. The goal was to measure the impact of non-traditional reading materials, soccer texts, on students' reading skills. In order to do so, it was necessary to have a control group. However, the researcher soon realized that it would be difficult to separate the same class into two groups which would read different materials, without disrupting the instruction processes. Another problem in such scenario would be "data bleeding," which would be the consequence of students communicating with each other and even sharing the reading materials. For these reasons, the researcher used two different classes taking steps to ensure that other conditions of the experiment stayed as similar as possible.

There were several limitations to the conditions of the experiment. It was the researcher's intention that these courses be taught by the same English teacher, however, the current teacher scheduling did not allow for this. Although both teachers have teaching qualifications in the

intermediate and senior division for English and eight years of teaching experience, the teacher of the experimental group was male and the teacher of the control group female.

While the composition of the classes was similar in terms of size and ability level, the gender representation in the control group, except for two female students, was almost exclusively male. Data were collected from 27 participants, 8 females and 19 males. The experimental group had 12 students (n = 6 males, n = 6 females), while the control group had 15 students (n = 13 males, n = 2 females). One student withdrew from the school during the course of the study; the other two students, one from each class, did not assent to participate for personal reasons.

The classes were similar in terms of ability level and probably in terms of social class of the students. Since students were recruited from the Grade 10 applied level English classes, the participants may share certain social factors that may have impacted their reading attitudes and achievement. The students in this stream, for example, may have poor initial attitudes towards reading due to a history of difficulty with reading and have less access to literacy resources, namely books, in their homes. Data on the participants' social status was not available to the researcher during the study for reasons of confidentiality.

All participants in the study were given an informational packet containing an introductory letter that outlined the goals and procedures of the study, and an informed consent letter. The consent letter outlined participants' rights to know the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw. The researcher also obtained permissions from the school board, secondary school principal, teachers of the classes, parents of the participants and assent from the participants themselves.

Procedure

The researcher collected and analyzed three different kinds of student data in the study: student responses on a 25-item reading attitude assessment, responses to literature prompts in a reading journal and scores on the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)*.

There was one independent variable used in this study: type of literature. This variable is categorical in nature. The treatment was therefore based on the type of literature used by the teacher in the English classes, particularly soccer-themed novel vs. regular curriculum novel. While the researcher's motivation was to evaluate the appropriateness of the treatment in improving boys' attitudes towards reading and literacy achievement, data were collected on both boys and girls since the soccer text intervention was used in a regular school program with mixed-gender classes. Dependent variables were cumulative attitude towards reading scores and pass/fail literacy assessment scores.

The survey. At the beginning of the study, the classroom teachers administered the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* instrument (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980) to two Grade 10 applied English classes to measure students' initial reading attitudes. The teachers read the statements from the instrument aloud to the class, while the students recorded their responses individually on the scale. This assessment was also administered to the participants at the end of the study to gauge changes in students' attitudes towards reading.

Tullock-Rhody and Alexander developed the Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment instrument based on the criteria set out by Heathington (1975) of a paper and pencil measurement tool suitable for classroom use that should:

- a) Require no reading on the part of the student,
- b) Be designed to be used early in the school year,

- c) Require minimal time for administration and scoring,
- d) Be reliable and valid,
- e) Take into account the fact that attitudes should be measured throughout the school experience, and
- f) Contain items truly representative of students' feelings toward reading. (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980, p. 610)

Since Tullock-Rhody and Alexander found that no secondary school instrument completely met the criteria mentioned above, they developed their own instrument.

The "Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment" (the Rhody scale) is a twenty-five item survey with a five point Likert response scale (see Appendix F). Tullock-Rhody and Alexander (1980) found that the scale has good construct validity. First, the statements on the scale were constructed from comments made by secondary students themselves. The scale also discriminated between students that teachers identified as having the most positive or the most negative attitudes towards reading. Finally, the researchers found that the individual items on the scale correlated with the total scale. According to Tullock-Rhody and Alexander, the Rhody scale also has a test-retest reliability coefficient of .84 in an interval of one week. The researchers grouped the statements on the scale into clusters to help teachers disaggregate students' attitudes toward different aspects of their reading environment, namely:

School-related reading: items 11, 18

Reading in the library: items 9, 20

Reading in the home: items 4, 10

Other recreational reading: items 5, 17, 22, 24, 25

General reading: items 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 23.

In scoring the “Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment,” a very positive response receives a score of 5, and a very negative response a score of 1. Therefore, the possible range of cumulative score is 125 (25 x 5) to 25 (25 x 1). The scores of responses to each survey statement were calculated through descriptive analysis and a codebook developed in the initial phase of the study. The researcher also compared students’ attitudes on the items about school-related reading with the students’ attitudes towards other recreational reading.

Reading journals. The students were also instructed to write responses to the texts they were reading based on a series of 28 open-ended prompts in a reading journal (see Appendix G). The “Personal ways to Respond to Reading” (Lundy, 2007) prompts given to students included a variety of positive, neutral and negative statements to guide student responses to the texts. The students were encouraged to select prompts and write in their reading journals regularly throughout the novel study. These journals were collected and assessed by the classroom teachers as part of the regular school curriculum for a novel study. The teachers provided numeric/level scores and comments on student writing. The researcher collected these journals at the end of the study and analyzed student responses for themes as qualitative data.

Literacy assessment. The researcher also collected and analyzed students’ scores on the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)*. The *OSSLT* is a test of reading and writing administered to all Grade 10 students annually by EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office). The purpose of the *OSSLT* is defined by EQAO: “to ensure that students have acquired the essential reading and writing skills that apply to all subject areas in the Ontario Curriculum up to the end of Grade 9” (EQAO, 2008). The reading selections included an information paragraph, news report, dialogue, real-life narrative and graphic text. The writing tasks included

short-writing (six lines), a news report, a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion, and multiple choice questions that test writing skills.

The *OSSLT* is comprised of two booklets and a Student Answer Sheet for all multiple choice responses. In March 2008, there were 47 test questions; eight were open-response scored with the rubrics, the rest were machine-scored multiple choice questions. Students complete each booklet in 75 minutes, plus a student questionnaire. Student's results are reported as a single literacy result on an Individual Student Report (ISR) and are classified as successful (S) or unsuccessful (U). If students are not successful, feedback is provided to help them meet the standard. On the March 2008 administration of the test, students must have achieved a minimum score of 300 on a scale of 450 to be categorized as successful. Furthermore, the EQAO reports the accuracy, reliability and validity of its assessments, including the *OSSLT* in reports released to the public.

Students' scores in the treatment group were compared to the performance of students in the control group to determine whether the use of soccer texts in the classroom influenced student achievement on the *OSSLT*. Since EQAO reports results as a single literacy score, students' results were reported as successful or unsuccessful for both reading and writing. Overall, 24 of the participants wrote the *OSSLT*; all of the students in the experimental group and 12 students in the control group. Three students in the control group did not write the *OSSLT* because they were Grade 11 students in a Grade 10 English class and had already written the *OSSLT* last year.

After the tests were assessed by the EQAO, the school received a report where each student who passed the test received only the descriptive "pass" score, while the students who failed, also received the numerical score on the test. In order to be able to use these scores in the

statistical tests, the researcher decided to assign to each passing student the “average” passing score of 375. By doing so, all the participant students were assigned numerical and descriptive scores on the OSSLT, which were further used in data analysis for this study.

The researcher also considered the relationship between two or more variables in the study. For example, the researcher considered several questions:

- a) Does the use of soccer texts improve students’ attitudes towards reading?
- b) Does the use of soccer texts relate to students’ increased achievement on the *OSSLT*?

To answer these questions, the researcher used inferential statistics to analyze data from the sample to draw conclusions about the effect of soccer texts on students’ motivation and achievement in reading.

As the researcher began to interpret the data, the researcher found that the reading journals did not allow for sufficient disaggregation of students’ interests in sports, namely soccer. The researcher applied to the Research Ethics Board (REB) for a request to revise methodology to conduct a follow-up questionnaire with the participants in the study. In January 2009, the researcher administered a two-question survey (see Appendix H) with a five point scale rating about students’ interest in sports in general and in soccer in particular. The researcher collected and analyzed the surveys from all the participants (n = 21) who were enrolled in the school at the time of the questionnaire. Since the previous semester, six students had withdrawn and/or transferred from the school and were unable to be contacted to complete the questionnaire.

The statistical analyses were performed using Microsoft Office Excel 2007 and SPSS 17. The 25 items from pretest and posttest scores for each student in the control group and each student in the experimental group were accompanied with their pre- and post-intervention

cumulative scores on the Rhody scale instrument. These items, together with their scores (pass/fail and projected numerical) on the *OSSLT*, and scores on interest in sports in general and in soccer in particular, were copied and pasted into SPSS, creating a data file containing 60 variables including the student's identification number, grade, gender, and group status.

The coding of qualitative data were finalized after the researcher has read the student journals and assigned descriptive codes to their words. By using qualitative data, the researcher applied triangulation principle known to support "evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection" (Creswell, 2002, p. 280).

Ethical Considerations

An ethical consideration characteristic for this and other similar studies is that the introduction of texts that are more relevant to the interests of boys may reinforce gender stereotyping. Sports are traditionally male interest areas and reading about sports may reinforce only traditionally masculine identities in the classroom. The inclusion of sports texts in the reading curriculum may also limit boys' exposure to texts that are less traditionally masculine. Soccer texts may also perpetuate the "laddish culture" often associated with the sport in the culture of the classroom.

There is also the danger that boys may be perceived as a homogeneous group. While many boys may enjoy reading about sports and soccer, this is not true of all boys. To address this concern, the researcher administered a follow-up questionnaire to the participants in the study to gauge their interest in sports and soccer, and to relate these results to students' attitudes and literacy achievement.

Another ethical consideration underlying the study is the potentially harmful impact of soccer texts on girls in the study. To address this concern, the researcher chose a soccer novel

with strong male and female protagonists. The novel also had themes about the coming of age experience that both males and females would be able to relate to. In closing one gap, it is important not to open another.

Conclusion

There is a critical need to reframe the reading curriculum to engage the interests of reluctant readers, particularly boys. This understanding will help to close the achievement gap and lead to many benefits for boys and girls. This study may be of particular interest to educators developing and delivering literacy programs in elementary and secondary schools.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The central questions addressed in this research were: a) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' attitudes towards reading?; b) Does the use of soccer texts in the English classroom affect students' achievement on the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)*?; and, c) Do students who read soccer texts in English classes have higher scores on the *OSSLT* than students who study the traditional school reading curriculum? In order to answer these questions, the researcher conducted a primarily experimental, quantitative study. The hypotheses underlying the study were that,

H₁) Students who read soccer texts will be more motivated to read than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum;

H₂) Students who read soccer texts will achieve higher scores on the *OSSLT* than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum

The researcher focused on these two hypotheses for the quantitative portion of this study. The researcher would fail to reject the first null hypothesis if grade 10 students in the experimental group (those who used a soccer text), did not experience a significant ($p < .05$) increase in attitude towards reading, as measured by the Rhody instrument, compared to students who used regular curriculum texts. In addition, the researcher would fail to reject the second null hypothesis if students who read the soccer text did not achieve significantly ($p < .05$) higher scores on the *OSSLT* compared to students who used regular curriculum texts.

This section presents findings in this study in the following order: first results of the quantitative analysis are given, including demographic information of the participant groups and their performance on the *OSSLT*. Second, a qualitative analysis of the reading journals with

selected quotes is provided. These results are interpreted in the following section that contains a discussion of the findings.

Quantitative Analysis

Subjects

The sample for this study included 27 students, 8 females and 19 males, enrolled in the Grade 10 applied level English course at a Catholic High School in the WECDSB (Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board). At the time of the study, 1474 students, from predominantly middle class families, were enrolled at the school. The students were purposefully selected for the study from the available sections of Grade 10 applied level English classes being taught at the school in the second semester. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics pertaining to the sample. Experimental and control groups were fairly balanced, while female students were underrepresented compared to males. Also, there was an imbalance between females and males in the control group, favouring males. These limitations of the study will be further addressed in Chapter 5.

With sample sizes of 15 and 12, this study was close to the guidelines set by Creswell (2002, p. 150) to 15 participants. The small class size in this study will be addressed in the limitations section. Across the two classes that were selected for the study, 90% of the students gave their assent to participate. Of those students who agreed to participate, all the students agreed to complete both the reading attitude survey and reading journals. The students who did not participate declined for personal reasons. Although these students read the novels and completed the journals as part of the term work for the course, data were not collected on these students.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics with Respect to Gender and Group Membership

		Experimental or Control Group		
		Experimental	Control	Total
Gender male	Count	6	13	19
	% within Experimental or Control group	50.0%	86.7%	70.4%
female	Count	6	2	8
	% within Experimental or Control group	50.0%	13.3%	29.6%
Total	Count	12	15	27
	% within Experimental or Control group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The next semester, 78% of students in the initial study completed a follow-up questionnaire about their interest in sports and soccer (see Table 2). The six students who did not complete the questionnaire were no longer enrolled at the school at the time of the survey. The participants were not remunerated for their participation in the study.

Male and female attitudes towards sports and soccer were also illustrated using bar graphs. While both males and females expressed more interest in sports in general, than in soccer, males were more divided with respect to soccer, while females were more divided with respect to sports in general (see Figure 1). Similarly, a visual difference can be observed between the control and experimental groups with respect to interest in sports (soccer). While the

experimental group showed similar attitudes towards sports and soccer, the control group was very interested in sports in general, but mostly not interested in soccer.

Table 2.

Participants' Interest in Sports and Soccer after the Study

		How interested are you in sports?				
		not available*	not interested	neutral	interested	Total
Gender						
Male	Experimental	1	1	3	1	6
	Control	4	1	2	6	13
	Total	5	2	5	7	19
Female	Experimental	1	1	1	3	6
	Control	0	1	0	1	2
	Total	1	2	1	4	8

		How interested are you in soccer?				
		not available*	not interested	neutral	interested	Total
Gender						
Male	Experimental	1	2	2	1	6
	Control	4	5	1	3	13
	Total	5	7	3	4	19
Female	Experimental	1	1	2	2	6
	Control	0	1	1	0	2
	Total	1	2	3	2	8

* These students were no longer enrolled at the school at the time of the survey. The category “not interested” was created from “not at all” and “a little” combined. A category “interested” was created from “interested” and “a lot” combined.

Because of small frequencies in the cells, the researcher was not able to use a chi-square test to find if there were significant differences between groups or genders according to interest in sports (soccer). After taking into account only students who participated in this survey ($n = 21$), collapsing “neutral” and “interested” categories together into one and splitting the data file according to group membership (experimental or control), the Fisher’s Exact Test (see Table 3) still did not show significant difference in attitude towards sports between male and female students in the control group (Fisher’s Exact Test, $p = .78$).

Table 3.

Control Group: Male and Female Interest in Sports

		How interested are you in sports?		
		neutral or		
		not interested	interested	Total
Gender	male	1	8	9
	female	1	1	2
Total		2	9	11

Similar findings were obtained with respect to the difference between male and female students in the experimental group according to interest in soccer (Fisher’s Exact Test, $p = .78$, Table 4).

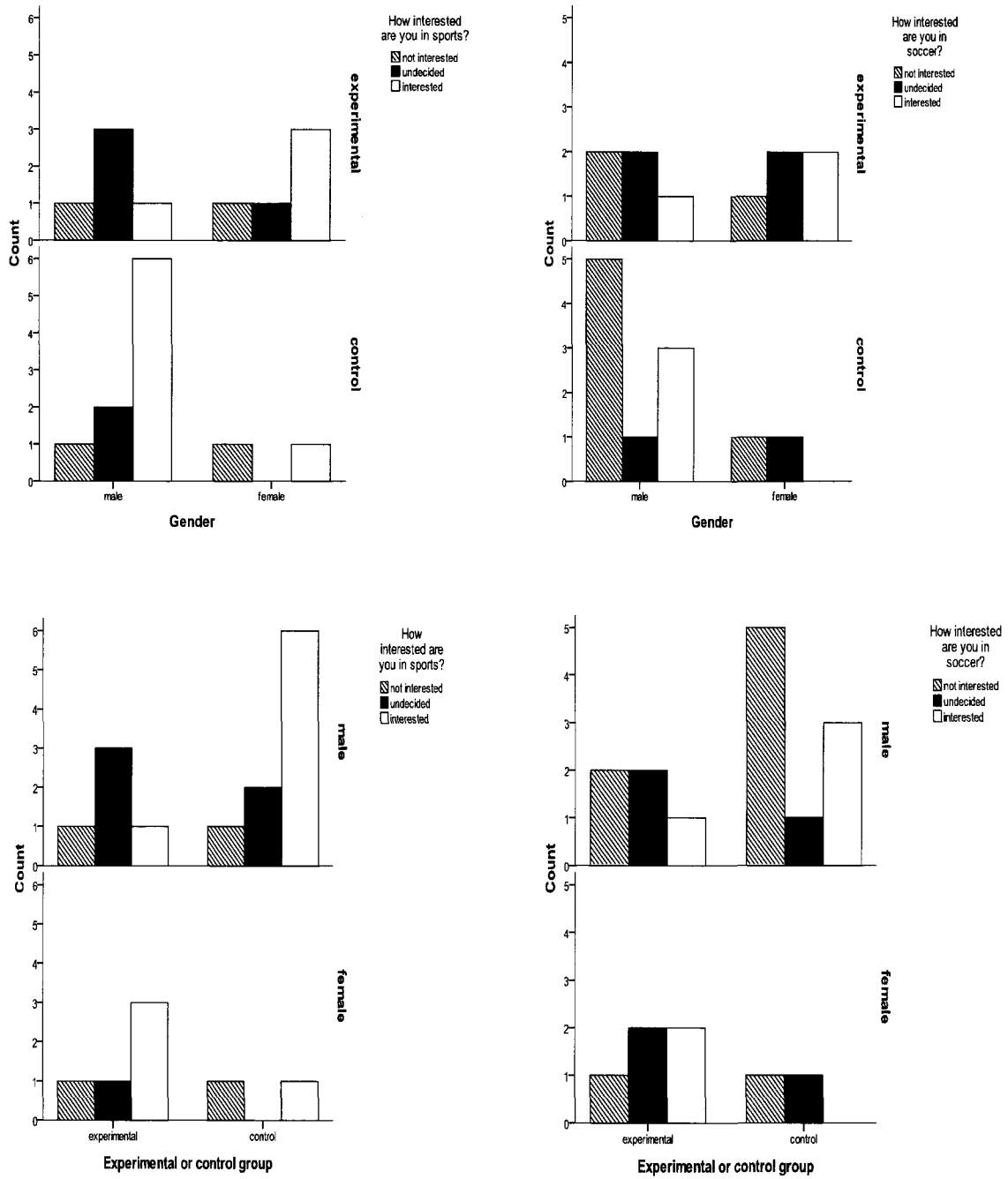


Figure 1. Interest in sports and in soccer among male and female students after the study. Interest in sports and in soccer among experimental and control groups after the study.

Table 4.

Experimental Group: Male and Female Interest in Sports

		How interested are you in sports?		
		neutral or		
		not interested	interested	Total
Gender	male	1	4	5
	female	1	4	5
Total		2	8	10

With respect to interest in soccer, there was no significant difference between genders in the control group (Fisher's Exact Test, $p = .73$, see Table 5) or in the experimental group (Fisher's Exact Test, $p = .50$, see Table 6).

Table 5.

Control Group: Male and Female Interest in Soccer

		How interested are you in soccer?		
		neutral or		
		not interested	interested	Total
Gender	male	5	4	9
	female	1	1	2
Total		6	5	11

Table 6.

Experimental Group: Male and Female Interest in Soccer

		How interested are you in soccer?		
		not interested	neutral or interested	Total
Gender	male	2	3	5
	female	1	4	5
	Total	3	7	10

More details on the between groups and in-between group differences will be elaborated on in the further text.

Summated Rating Scale

The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey. All participants completed the Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980), a 25-item summated rating scale designed to assess attitudes towards reading in secondary schools. The scale measures students' attitudes on five domains of reading, including (a) school related reading (2 items), (b) reading in the library (2 items), (c) reading in the home (2 items), (d) other recreational reading (5 items) and (e) general reading (14 items). For each item, students were asked to put an X on the line under one or more of the five possible descriptions that best represent how they feel about the statements (e.g., "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Undecided," "Agree," "Strongly Agree"). Responses to each item were scored on a 1-5 scale (from a very negative response to a very positive response). The possible range of scores was 25 (1 x 25) to 125 (5 x 25).

According to Tullock-Rhody and Alexander (1980), the survey is intended to be read aloud by the teacher, thus increasing its accessibility to students at a variety of reading levels in the secondary school. The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey has been used with seventh through twelfth graders from a variety of socioeconomic and ability levels in urban and rural schools in eastern Tennessee. The assessment was shown to have a high reliability and a test-retest value of 0.84 (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980).

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. The Grade 10 students completed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in March 2008. The *OSSLT* is a provincial test of reading and writing administered by EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) to measure the level of reading and writing students are expected to have acquired by the end of Grade 9. In March 2008, the *OSSLT* was comprised of 47 questions; eight were open-response scored with rubrics, the rest were machine-scored multiple choice questions. Students' results on the OSSLT are reported as a single literacy score. Students must have achieved a minimum score of 300 out of 450 to be categorized as successful. The EQAO ensures the accuracy, reliability and validity of its assessments. Since the EQAO reports only unsuccessful scores in numerical form and successful scores in letter form (i.e., "S"), the researcher decided to transform the letter form into a numerical maximum score of 450. After this, all the study participants who completed the test had an associated numerical score on the *OSSLT* suitable for further analysis.

Interest Survey. The students completed a follow-up questionnaire designed by the researcher to gauge their interest in sports in general and soccer in particular. The two question survey had a five-point scale rating. For each item, students were asked to circle one of the five possible descriptions that best represent how they feel about the statements (e.g., 1 being "I am not at all interested," and 5 being "I am very interested"). Responses to each item were scored on

a 1-5 scale (from a very negative response to a very positive response) to gauge student interest in sports and soccer.

Student Attitudes toward Reading

Quantitatively, students' attitudes towards reading were explored based on their answers on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* instrument. Each study participant obtained a score from 25 to 125 on the pre-test and post-test. These scores were subtracted to measure the change in attitude towards reading during the study period. The researcher's intent was to compare changes in attitude between genders in the same group or between experimental and control groups. The findings are provided in the further text.

Comparisons within and between Classes

In order to do comparisons within and between control and experimental groups/classes, the researcher applied standard visual and analytical tests for this kind of experimental research. The paired samples t-test was performed in order to make comparisons between the two scores that belong to the same group. This was suitable as the same participants were measured on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* twice, before and after the treatment. Other tests like correlations were also explored to find if the attitude scores were consistent in groups of participants. This was done by test-retest reliability analysis over the period of three months, when the researcher was correlating the two test scores to find out how much consistency was in the data (Huck, 2004). Test-retest reliability over a three-month period determined that correlation between pre and post-test scores on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* instrument was strong for both classes (Pearson correlation $r = .845$, $N = 13$, for the control group and $r = .929$, $N = 12$, for the experimental group).

The underlying Null hypothesis that was first tested here was that,

Ho: Students who read soccer texts will **not** be more motivated to read than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum;

Means Analysis. The mean differences in reading attitudes on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* and a comparison between groups are shown in Table 7. For each participant, the differences between pre- and post-intervention scores were calculated to demonstrate increase in reading attitude (i.e., Post Score - Pre Score > 0), lack of change (i.e., Post Score - Pre Score = 0), or decrease in reading attitude (i.e., Post Score - Pre Score < 0).

Table 7

Mean Differences and Standard Deviations across Genders and Classes

Gender	Experimental or	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
	control group			
Male	experimental	-.08	.37	6
	control	-.12	.67	11
	Total	-.11	.57	17
Female	experimental	.09	.21	6
	control	-.02	.08	2
	Total	.06	.18	8
Total	experimental	.00	.30	12
	control	-.11	.62	13
	Total	-.05	.48	25

Note: Difference in scores on the Rhody test is calculated as Post Score – Pre Score for each participant.

The reading attitude scores did not differ significantly between the two classes—experimental and control groups. The mean difference in reading attitude score in the

experimental group ($M = .00$) was not much different than the mean difference score in the control group ($M = -.11$). While there were no statistically significant differences between classes, male and female students in the control group had very similar average change in reading attitude scores ($M = -.12$ and $M = -.02$ respectively; about .10 difference), compared to male and female students in the experimental group, who differed more in reading attitude ($M = -.08$ and $M = .09$ respectively; about .17 difference). Students in the experimental group reported on average more consistent overall reading attitudes before and after the intervention than students in the control group. Also, variability of mean differences in reading attitude score was more apparent in the control group ($SD = .62$) than in the experimental group ($SD = .30$).

After applying the paired samples t-test no significant differences were found between pre-scores and post-scores in any of the two groups (see Table 8).

Table 8.

Results of the Paired Samples t-test in Experimental and Control Groups

Group Post Score –Pre Score	Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	Lower	Upper			
Experimental	.00	.30	.09	-.18	.19	.06	11	.95
Control	-.11	.62	.17	-.48	.26	-.63	12	.54

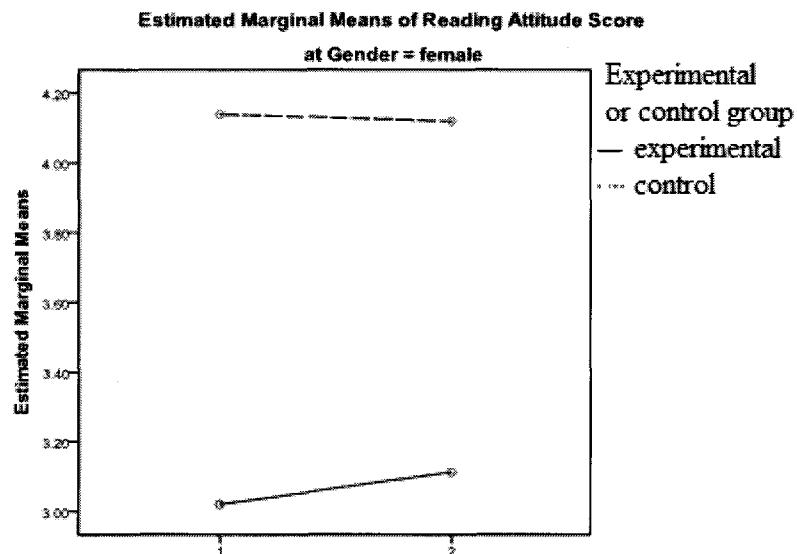
Gender Differences. For further analysis, the researcher performed a Two-way Repeated Measures Mixed ANOVA. “Mixed” design was deemed appropriate in the study that used a mixture of between-groups and repeated measures variables. “Two-way” was used since two

independent variables, *gender* and *group* were manipulated during the experiment. These two variables were used as between-measures to establish difference between the participants on the level of their gender (i.e., *boy* or *girl*) or group (i.e., *experimental* or *control*). The “repeated measures” part came from the fact that the same participants were involved in pre- and post-intervention testing. Since there were only two conditions (i.e., pre- and post-test), the sphericity was not an issue in the test. Based on the result that the main within subjects effect was not significant ($F(1, 21) = .75, p = .79$), the researcher concluded that the type of reading material did not have a significant effect on the reading attitudes of the participants.

The Levene test of homogeneity indicated that variances in values of pre- and post-test Rhody scores were homogenous (i.e., similar for these two variables), because the test did not provide a significant result. The main between-subjects effect was only significant for variable *gender* ($F(1, 21) = 14.91, p < .05$). This rating points to a conclusion that if it is ignored whether the Rhody test results came from the experimental or control groups, these test scores significantly differed between boys and girls. The researcher concluded that pre- and post-test scores significantly differed between boys and girls, but not between experimental and control groups.

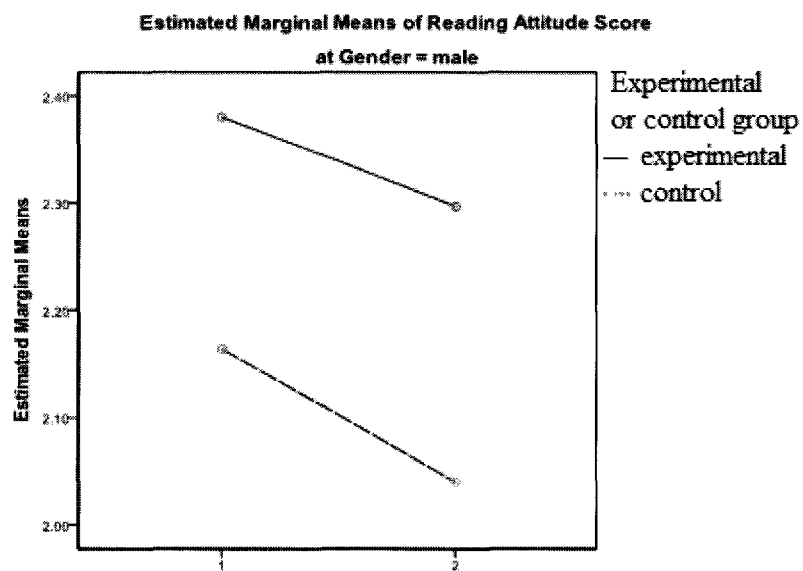
Mean differences in reading attitude scores did not differ significantly across genders. During the study, the girls’ attitudes in the experimental group on average increased slightly ($M = .09$), while the girls’ attitudes in the control group on average decreased slightly ($M = -.02$) as shown in Figure 2. Although boys’ reading attitudes on average declined in both groups, as shown in Figure 3, the drop was bigger ($M = -.12$) among the males from the control group. These comparative findings suggest that the relationship between reading the experimental novel and an increase in reading attitudes may be stronger for girls than for boys in the sample groups.

However, because of the statistically insignificant changes during the intervention time, any of these results may have been the consequence of natural variability in data.



Note: "1" stands for Pre-test condition, "2" stands for Post-test condition.

Figure 2. Mean Pre- and Post-test Scores on the Rhody test for Females in Experimental and Control Groups



Note: "1" stands for Pre-test condition, "2" stands for Post-test condition.

Figure 3. Mean Pre- and Post-test Scores for Males in Experimental and Control Groups

Comparisons within Classes

Gender Differences

Means Analysis. The difference in means for reading attitude scores for boys and girls within classes are shown in Table 7. In the experimental group, males and females did not demonstrate significantly different changes in reading attitude scores after the intervention. Yet, the females had higher mean change scores than males ($M = .09$ and $M = -.08$, respectively). The findings were similar for the control group: males and females did not have significantly different mean change attitude towards reading scores, but again, the females showed a very small change in scores, compared to males whose scores went down ($M = -.02$ and $M = -.12$, respectively) after the intervention. Thus, there were no statistically significant differences between or within classes on the mean differences between the post- and pre-intervention reading attitude scores.

Students' attitudes towards reading were further disaggregated by the researcher based on students' feelings toward several areas of their reading environment. The developers of the scale grouped the statements of the survey into clusters that demonstrate students' attitudes towards five aspects of their reading environment: (a) school-related reading; (b) reading in the library; (c) reading in the home; (d) other recreational reading; and (e) general reading. The researcher compared students' attitudes between genders and classes on three of these items: school-related reading, reading in the home and other recreational reading. Tables 9-11 present descriptive statistics pertaining to these three aspects of students' reading environment.

With respect to students' attitudes towards school-related reading (taking only items 11 and 18), there was no significant difference between genders in the control group or in the experimental group (see Table 9.)

Table 9.

Mean Differences and Standard Deviations across Genders and Classes for School-Related Reading

Gender	Experimental or control group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Male	experimental	.00	.89	6
	control	.25	2.05	12
	Total	.17	1.72	18
Female	experimental	.00	1.41	6
	control	-.50	.71	2
	Total	-.12	1.25	8
Total	experimental	.00	1.13	12
	control	.14	1.92	14
	Total	.08	1.57	26

Note: Difference in scores is calculated as Post Score – Pre Score for each participant on the items related to school related reading: items 11, 18.

Similar findings were obtained with respect to the difference between genders and classes according to students' attitudes on reading in the home (taking only items 4 and 10). The reading attitude scores did not differ significantly between the two genders and groups (see Table 10).

Table 10.

Mean Differences and Standard Deviations across Genders and Classes for Reading in the Home

Gender	Experimental or control group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Male	experimental	.17	.41	6
	control	.08	2.36	13
	Total	.10	1.94	19
Female	experimental	-.33	1.03	6
	control	.00	.00	2
	Total	-.25	.89	8
Total	experimental	-.08	.79	12
	control	.07	2.19	15
	Total	.00	1.69	27

Note: Difference in scores is calculated as Post Score – Pre Score for each participant on the items related to reading in the home: items 4, 10.

The mean differences in students' attitudes towards other recreational reading (taking only items 5, 17, 22, 24, and 25) and a comparison between groups are shown in Table 11. Once again, the reading attitude scores did not differ significantly between the two genders or groups. Thus, there were no statistically significant differences between or within genders or classes on students' attitudes towards three aspects of their reading environments: school-related reading, reading in the home and other recreational reading.

Table 11.

Mean Differences and Standard Deviations across Genders and Classes for Other Recreational Reading

Gender	Experimental or	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
	control group			
Male	experimental	.50	3.27	6
	control	-.15	4.06	13
	Total	.05	3.75	19
Female	experimental	-.33	1.21	6
	control	1.50	.71	2
	Total	.12	1.36	8
Total	experimental	.08	2.39	12
	control	.07	3.81	15
	Total	.07	3.20	27

Note: Difference in scores is calculated as Post Score – Pre Score for each participant on the items related to other recreational reading: items 5, 17, 22, 24, 25.

Achievement on the *OSSLT*

The second Null hypothesis that was tested stated that,

H₀: Students who read soccer texts will **not** achieve higher scores on the *OSSLT* than students who read the traditional school reading curriculum;

The students' achievement on the *OSSLT* (*Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test*) and a comparison of counts of successful completion of the *OSSLT* between genders and groups is shown in Figures 4 and 5. The number of students successful on the *OSSLT* did not differ significantly across classes or genders. The success rate (50%) for both males and females in the experimental group was very similar to the success rate (54.55%) of the males in the control

group. Note that two males and one female did not take the *OSSLT* assessment with the other students, which is shown on the graphs in the darkest shade.

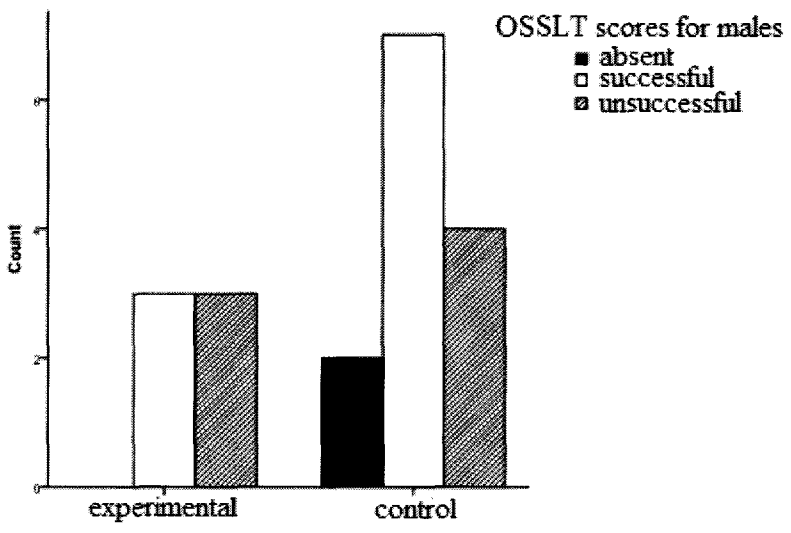


Figure 4. Success counts on *OSSLT* for males in experimental and control groups.

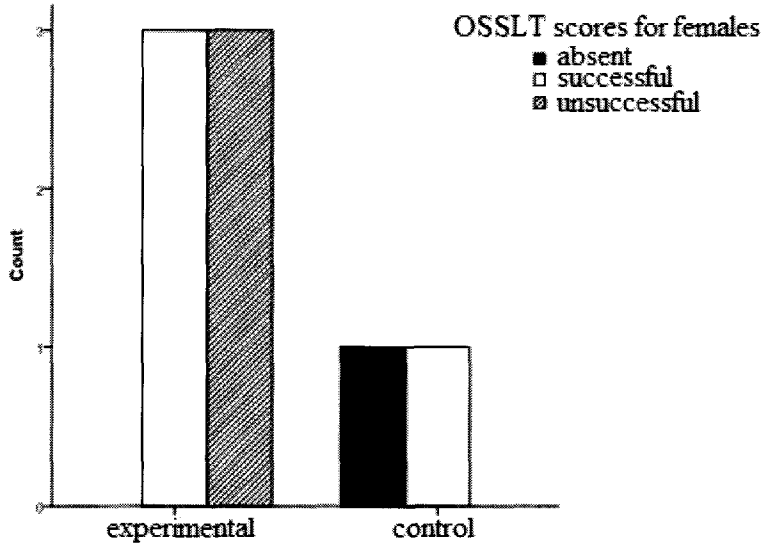


Figure 5. Success counts on *OSSLT* for females in experimental and control groups.

Results: Interest in Soccer and/or Sports

Students' interest in sports. The score count for students' interest in sports and a comparison of scores across classes and genders are shown in Table 12. Levels of reported

interest in sports did not differ significantly across classes or genders. Females in the experimental group reported slightly more interest in sports. These findings suggest that the females' interest in sports may have been influenced by reading about soccer. Similar to the findings for the experimental group, data from the males and females revealed no significant difference in interest in sports, however, males showed slightly more interest in sports.

Table 12

Scores for Students' Interest in Sports across Classes and Genders

			How interested are you in sports?				
			Not Available	Not Interested	So-so	Interested	Total
Experimental or control group	gender						
Experimental	gender	male	1	1	3	1	6
		female	1	1	1	3	6
	Total		2	2	4	4	12
Control	gender	male	4	1	2	6	13
		female	0	1	0	1	2
	Total		4	2	2	7	15

Students' interest in soccer. The score counts of students' interest in soccer can be seen in Table 13. Similar to the findings for interest in sports, the data revealed no significant difference between interest in soccer between classes and between genders. While there was no significant difference, the results showed a correlation between males' interest in sports and soccer.

Table 13.

Scores for Students' Interest in Soccer across Classes and Genders

Experimental or control group			How interested are you in soccer?				Total
			Not Available	Not Interested	So-so	Interested	
Experimental	gender	male	1	2	2	1	6
		female	1	1	2	2	6
	Total			2	3	4	3
Control	gender	male	4	5	1	3	13
		female	0	1	1	0	2
	Total			4	6	2	3

These correlational findings suggest that the relationship between interest in sports/soccer and reading attitude may be stronger for one gender than for the other. To test this possibility, the researcher compared scores on the reading attitude survey to students' interest in sports and soccer. Overall, 13 students reported scores at least as good or better on the post reading attitude survey. Among these students, there was no significant correlation between their post score and interest in sports or soccer. Therefore, their improved scores on the reading attitude survey were not significantly correlated with their interest in sports or soccer.

Qualitative Analysis

An important quantitative finding was that after the treatment students in the experimental group reported more positive reading attitudes than students in the control group. In an effort to corroborate this finding, the researcher analyzed reading journals from the students in both classes for themes in their responses to literature.

Subjects

The qualitative analysis was conducted on responses to a series of 28 reading journal prompts (see Appendix G) from the participants in the experimental and control groups. The sample included 27 students, 8 females and 19 males.

The Reading Journals

The “Personal ways to Respond to Reading” (Lundy, 2007) prompts are semi-structured and include 28 positive, neutral or negative statements intended to explore the participants’ thoughts and feelings about the literature they are reading. The goal of the prompts was to guide student writing to gain insight into their emerging responses to the novel.

Procedure

The classroom teachers introduced the “Personal ways to Respond to Reading” (Lundy, 2007) prompts to their students at the beginning of the novel study. Then, students were either assigned prompts by the teacher or encouraged to self-select prompts for reading journals. Students completed the reading journals at several points throughout the novel study. These journals were collected and assessed by the classroom teacher as part of the term work for the course and then analyzed by the researcher for themes in their responses.

The reading journal analysis consisted of detailed readings of student responses to literature and grouping of these responses into themes. The analysis of the reading journals

focused on the following three themes: (a) personal connection to the protagonist; (b) personal connection to the theme; and (c) praise or criticism for the novel.

Results

Personal Connection to Protagonist

Student responses in the reading journals indicated that the students in both classes developed a personal connection to the protagonists in the novels.

Experimental group. The students in the experimental group related to the character and situation of Joe Brickman, the male protagonist of *Home of the Braves*. Included among students' responses is that of Jared², who writes: "I have a friend who is in the same situation as Joe. This kind of puts me in Ed's position as the friend [...] so I can understand how Joe feels." Although the protagonist was male, more females than males expressed a personal connection with the character in their journals. Deanna, for example, writes: "Overall I feel like Joe is a nice guy that has many mixed feelings, and thoughts that any human has. I can relate myself to him a lot." Lisa, another female says, "My personal life and Joe's are kind of the same." Similarly, Annika responds: "However, I can relate to Joe. I was personally almost in the same kinda situation bout 10 months ago. [...] I find mine and Joe's situation to have the same story line and if my story worked out maybe his will too."

Control group. The students in the control group also related to the character and situation of Maggie and Liz, the female protagonists of *My Darling, My Hamburger*. Although the class was almost exclusively composed of males (males $n = 13$, females $n = 2$), both males and females expressed a connection to the protagonists and/or their situations. Emma, the only female in the group to respond to the reading, writes: "I am most like the character Maggie because we both have a lot of the same characteristics." While the males in the class did not

² All students' names are fictitious.

connect personally with the protagonists, their responses indicated that they connected with their situations. Greg, for example, related to the protagonists' high school experience: "I can relate to the story in that I am also in high school and when everything seems to be changing." Similarly, Mark, responds, "I am very happy for Liz and Maggie that they are grads."

Personal Connection to Theme

Experimental group. Student responses in the journal indicated that many students were able to relate to the theme of soccer or the experience of playing on a sports team in *Home of the Braves*. Deanna, for instance, expressed an interest in soccer:

Joe plays soccer on the school team, it seems like he is very good. He is the team captain. I relate to him very well on this matter because soccer is my favourite sport and I am very dedicated to it.

While not all students indicated a connection with soccer in particular, they connected to being on a team. With regard to sports, Michael claimed a connection with the protagonist since, "Joe is on the soccer team, I was on the Cross Country team." Similarly, Abby expressed a connection with the protagonist through her involvement in sports:

Joe enjoys playing soccer, and is very good at it. It seems like he loves being involved with sports. I also like being involved with sports. Baseball is my favorite, and we both make great players [on] our teams.

When prompted about what impressed them in the book, most students wrote about some aspect of soccer in the novel, particularly that they were impressed with Joe's decision in making his rival, Antonio Silva, co-captain of the team. Sofie, for example, expresses her admiration for him: "I was impressed by Joe's attitude. I was not expecting him to make Antonio co-captain." Similarly, Nadia admires Joe's sportsmanship in the game:

I was impressed by the fact Joe had finally let Antonio be co-captian (sic). I think Joe had finally realized that Antonio was good for the team and that he isn't here to take the ball away and show off, but that he really does play soccer and helps out the team.

Control group. While the situations were very different, the students in the control group also expressed admiration for the protagonists in the novel. When prompted about what they admired in the novel, most students wrote about some aspect of the characters' relationships than their particular actions. Greg, for example, admired the protagonists' commitment to their friendship despite a difficult situation: "I admire Maggie for the commitment that she has to Liz with helping her out with her pregnancy and conflicts." Similarly, Michael expressed admiration for the way the protagonists dealt with the situation of teen pregnancy: "I admire the fact that Maggie is there for Liz, even in the most intense situations." Chris also admired the quality of their friendship: "I liked how Maggie helped out Liz right away without asking any questions. I find that that shows a good quality of friendship."

Praise or Criticism for the Novel

Experimental group. The students in the experimental group praised the novel for the action-driven plot, particularly how the author built suspense into the plot. Michael, for example, commented: "I think that the first five chapters were good because they always leave you hanging and then you want to keep on reading the next chapter." Similarly, Annika enjoyed the suspense built into the exposition of the story:

Chapters 1 through 5 are very gripping. Those 5 chapters keep you attracted and make you wanna read more. [...] Im (sic) looking forward to reading more into this story and I am hopping (sic) that Joe gets his fairytale ending just as I did.

Even when students expressed some criticism for the novel, they returned to the element of suspense built into the novel. Rachella, for instance, commented: “But over allo (sic) I (sic) would have to say that even though some parts may get long and boring its (sic) acatually (sic) kind of something you want to keep reading.”

Control group. The students in the control group also expressed favourable impressions of the novel. R.J., for example, said, “I think the book is very good so far. I also like the character Denis cause hes (sic) cool. I think the book will turn out good at the end.” Similarly, Trevor commented, “I think the book is alrite (sic) so far. [...] I imagine the book will be pretty good.”

The students’ criticism of the novel centered primarily on their dissatisfaction with the title and ending of the novel. James, for example, criticized the title: “I don’t understand why the auther (sic) named the book ‘My Darling My Hamburger’ It’s a weired (sic) tittle (sic) for a book.” Similarly, Chris said, “When I first heard the name of the book, I imagined it to be a very stupid story.” John also criticized the book based on the title: “I think the book my darling my hamburger is a boring boring. I don’t like the name of the book.” Many students also criticized the ending of the novel. Adam said, “I was pretty disappointed with the last chapter.” Similarly, Karla commented, “the ending of the book angered me.” With regard to the ending, Matt also commented:

I don’t like the end of the book. It left me with many questions [...] I think that the book was decent but the ending was stupid. I wonder why the auther (sic) ended the book the way he did.

Several students were not engaged with the entire novel. Michael criticized the characters in the book: “I don’t like Mr. Holowitz. He needs to get real and talk about important things that

matter [...] They seem like people who can't get along with any one." Mark was also dissatisfied with the book: "If I was the author I would change the whole book."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter contains a discussion of the major findings of this study and its implications for students, particularly boys, and educators. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of its design and methodology will also be provided, including recommendations for directions for future research in boys' literacy.

Major Findings

The findings of this study support the large body of research that suggests that interest in reading material impacts students' attitudes towards reading. Ivey and Broaddus (2001), for example, found that interest in reading material was the most important reason that made middle school students want to read. Similarly, Smith (2004) found that high achieving boy readers used reading to find out about their interest areas. The most significant finding of this study, as noted in Table 7, is that students in the experimental group reported more overall positive reading attitudes than students in the control group. However, because of statistical non-significance of the results this difference may be the result of chance. The reason for the more positive reading attitudes in the experimental group may have been the introduction of a recently published high-interest reading material through the intervention. Before the more rigorous results are achieved on the bigger sample, it is safe to suggest that any intervention intended to increase the reading engagement of school children needs to be based on their interests.

Numerous studies show that school-based reading does not engage the reading interests of many students. Ivey and Broaddus (2001), for example, found a vast difference in the materials students reported reading at home compared to at school. Blair and Sanford (2004) found that the reading selected by boys outside of school contrasted with their selections in

school because they were not seen as appropriate for school reading. Table 7's findings were that reading about sports, namely soccer, made a more positive change (although statistically non significant) in students' attitudes towards reading than reading the standard content of the school reading curriculum did. This finding has implications for school-based literacy practices as it supports the importance of widening the scope of texts and genres considered appropriate for classroom use. While not traditional, genres, such as sports texts, can be an entry point to literacy for some students.

In terms of gender, the findings of this study add further to debates about the "boy problem" in education by supporting research that shows that boys are more likely than girls to have problems with literacy. Wilhelm and Smith (2001) found that boys learned to read at an older age, took longer to learn to read, and comprehended texts less well than girls did. Millard (1997) found that boys do not value reading and are more likely than girls to describe themselves as non readers. Table 7's findings showed that girls are more likely than males to have positive attitudes about reading. Although the males and females in this study did not demonstrate significantly different changes in reading attitude scores after the intervention, the females had higher mean scores than males in both groups. This finding is particularly true for the girls in the experimental group whose attitudes increased slightly ($M = .933$) while those in the control group decreased slightly ($M = -.020$). Based on these findings, it appears that boys are more likely than girls to have problems with literacy and interventions are required to make reading more relevant to the interests of boys.

Although boys' reading attitudes decreased in both groups, the drop was bigger ($M = -.124$) among males in the control group. This is an interesting finding as it challenges traditionally gendered assumptions about male and female reading interest areas. Millard (1997)

argued that the reading communities in schools are more relevant to the interests of girls than boys. Coles and Hall (2002) found that a greater percentage of boys are more likely to report reading sports-related books. This research had varied results about these factors. The experimental novel, *Home of the Braves*, appeals to a more traditionally masculine interest area, sports, however, the relationship between reading the experimental novel and an increase in reading attitudes appeared to be stronger for girls than for boys. Despite being a strategy to support boys' literacy achievement, this finding suggests that reading about sports was more likely to increase females' reading attitudes than in the group for which it was initially intended. Such a finding underscores the need for educators to challenge conventional gender stereotypes in providing a range of classroom reading materials for all students.

The results of the follow-up questionnaire about students' interest in sports and soccer also challenge traditionally held assumptions about male and female interest areas. Lightbody, Siann, Stocks and Walsh (1996) found that boys rate interest in sports in school significantly higher than girls. Similarly, Nippold et al. (2005) found that playing sports was among one of the most popular leisure activities among adolescent boys. A perhaps unexpected finding was that there was no statistically significant difference in attitude towards sports between male and female students in both groups. These findings are inconsistent with the literature. While sports are considered to be a traditionally masculine interest area, this finding suggests that the females in this study expressed a similar degree of interest in sports as the males. Such a finding suggests that differences among boys and girls may be greater than differences between boys and girls and that stereotypes about traditionally feminine/masculine interest areas can be just as detrimental to girls'/boys' literacy as they limit their reading choices. Interestingly, the females in the experimental group reported slightly more interest in sports than the females in the control

group. Since the questionnaire was administered after reading the novel, this finding suggests that the girls' interest in sports in the experimental group may have been influenced by their reading about soccer. The reason for this inconsistency, however, may be due to the small sample size, particularly of females, in the control group.

Overall, males and females expressed more interest in sports than soccer; however, males were more divided with respect to soccer, than sports. This suggests that while many boys may enjoy reading about sports, the particular sport they read about may be as or more important than reading about sports in general. Greig and Hughes (2009) warned that using "boy baits," such as sports, to lure boys into reading reinforces traditional definitions of masculinity. While sports did appeal to many of the males in the study, and there was a correlation between liking sports and soccer, not all of the males were interested in sports or soccer. Once again, this finding suggests that the differences among boys and girls may be greater than differences between boys and girls. This underscores the importance of providing materials that are engaging to individual boys, not boys as a homogenous group. The limitations of treating boys as a homogeneous group will be discussed later in this section.

The reading journals provided some qualitative insight into the students' reading attitudes, in particular into their personal responses to the novels. The themes in student writing in the reading journals added to research that shows that students like to read about what reflects their experiences. Wilhelm and Smith (2001) found that boys rejected school-based reading because it was not consistent with the activities boys engaged in outside of school. One of the themes found in student writing in the reading journals for both groups was their personal connection to the protagonists in the novels. This is in spite of, or perhaps because of, their gender since the protagonist of the experimental novel, *Home of the Braves*, is male while the

protagonists of the novel in the control group, *My Darling, My Hamburger*, is female. An interesting finding is that the females in the experimental group were more likely to identify with the male protagonist in the novel than the males in this same group. This finding suggests that factors other than gender may impact students' connection with a character. In this way, gender may be but a superficial characteristic that does not encompass students' identification with a character.

The gender of the protagonist, however, appears to be more important to the males in the control group. The males in this group, for example, connected with the female protagonists, however, they were more likely to write about their connection to the protagonists' situations than to the characters themselves. This may be due, in part, to this group being composed almost exclusively of males. The males in this group may have been less likely to identify with the female protagonists because of the superficial gender difference of the protagonists. They were, however, able to connect with the situation of friendship, which is not gender specific.

Another theme in student responses in the reading journals was their personal connection to the themes of the novels. The students in the experimental group, for example, connected to the theme of sports, particularly playing on a sports team. When prompted about what they admired most, the students in this group focused on actions, such as the protagonist's athletic achievements. The students in the control group, however, were more likely to write about some aspect of the protagonists' relationships with other characters than any particular actions. The likelihood of students writing about actions over relationships, or vice versa, may have been due, in part, to the genre/content of the texts themselves. The experimental novel, a sports text, is more action-based, while the control novel focuses more on the relationships of the characters. These responses may have also been impacted by the gender of the protagonists themselves.

Regardless of gender, the findings of the reading journals therefore show the importance of providing novels that reflect students' image of themselves.

With respect to achievement, students' results on the *OSSLT* (*Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test*) support research that shows the growing trend of boys' underachievement in literacy, particularly in reading and writing. EQAO reports that over the past five years, the gender gap has remained consistent in all three provincial assessments of reading and writing. Based on Figure 4, the success rate (50%) for males, for example, in the experimental group was very similar to the success rate (54.55%) for the males in the control group. Therefore, only slightly more than half of males in this study are meeting the provincial standard in literacy. Despite research that shows that males do not perform as well as females, the number of students successful on the *OSSLT* in the study did not differ significantly across classes or genders. The reason for this inconsistency may be related to the small sample size. While the connection between students' attitude and achievement in literacy performance has long been established, it appears that it had no significant impact on the students in this study. Thus, this study did not find that the reading materials are sufficient to affect the literacy scores of the students in the experimental group compared to students in the control group in one school term.

There are several limitations, however, to using standardized assessments of reading and writing, such as the *OSSLT*, as a measure of literacy performance. First, it is difficult to disaggregate students' performance in reading and writing since literacy performance on the *OSSLT* is reported as a single literacy score. Since no numerical score is reported for students who are successful, there is also no means to gauge their relative success on this measure as compared to those students who were unsuccessful for whom a numerical score is reported. Since the test is administered only once, there is also no baseline data to show students' initial

literacy performance, therefore, it is difficult to gauge whether the intervention had any impact on literacy performance since there is no point of comparison before the intervention. Finally, students may be engaging in literacy practices outside of school that are not reflected in literacy test results. Such limitations bring into question the value of using standardized assessments in measuring students' literacy performance.

Strengths

A strength of this study is that it uses the reading curriculum as a site for addressing gender differences in achievement. The study, for example, supports the current body of research that shows that interest in reading material is important and that boys enjoy reading about what reflects their experiences. It is well established that teachers can interest boys in reading when they provide texts that appeal to their interests. The findings of this study show that non-traditional forms and genres of texts, such as sports texts, can engage some students in reading. In this way, the study corroborates the research in boys' literacy that shows the benefits of providing a wide variety of reading materials that value boys' reading interests. While no one approach can address the problems boys have in schools, such strategies may help close the achievement gap for some boys.

Another strength of this study is the use of qualitative data to corroborate the quantitative findings in the study. While the study is primarily quantitative in nature, the qualitative data in the reading journals provides another dimension/layer to the research. The student writing in the reading journals, for example, provided insight into students' personal responses to the particular novels that are not evident in the quantitative data. Furthermore, the use of classroom data and other province-wide measures are other strengths of this study. While not statistically significant in this study, students' scores on the *OSSLT* provide a standardized measure of literacy

achievement. Such a measure provides yet another layer in the analysis that helps to corroborate the findings of the study.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size. The sample size ($N = 27$) makes it difficult to find significance and to generalize the findings to a larger group of students. The researcher was limited to such a small sample size due to the low enrollment in the available sections of the course offered in the semester that the study was conducted. Variability in student responses is also more apparent in such a sample, particularly in the control group. There was a large degree of variability, for example, in the mean differences of reading attitude scores of the control group. Such variability suggests that the sample contains some outliers that may influence the reporting of the results.

The imbalance in the gender composition of the classes may have also impacted students' perception of the novel. Overall, more males ($N = 19$) were represented in the study than females ($N = 8$). Since the intervention was intended to support boys' literacy, this afforded the researcher an opportunity to focus part of the analysis on this subgroup. While the experimental group was balanced (with 50% split between males and females), the control group was composed almost exclusively of males (86.7%). A class/group composed almost exclusively of one gender may unwittingly reinforce certain ingrained gender biases and perpetuate stereotypes that may influence how students as a group perceive the novel.

The gender of the teacher may have also impacted students' attitudes towards the text since the experimental group was taught by a male teacher and the control group by a female teacher. While it was the researcher's intention to have the same teacher teach both groups, the scheduling of teachers in the semester that the study was conducted did not allow for this. The

impact of a male or female role model and their own gendered perceptions of the content of the novel may have influenced their attitude toward the novel, and therefore, students' perceptions of it. This may be particularly so in the control group where a female teacher taught a novel that appeals to a more traditionally female interest area, relationships, to a group of students that were almost exclusively male.

Another limitation of the study is that it is difficult to control for the impact of one theme in a text, namely sports. Sports-themed novels are by their very nature more action-oriented, and therefore, it may be this aspect of the novel that appeals to males rather than the theme of the sport itself. Another variable that may also have impacted their attitudes is the "timeliness" of the setting, characters and situation in the experimental text, given its more recent publication date. The "newness" of the physical book, with its colourful, glossy cover and clean pages, may have also impacted students' initial attitudes towards the text. Even the very introduction of new reading materials into the classroom and students' understanding that they were participating in a study may have impacted the perceptions of students in the experimental group. Such variables must be taken into account in reading student responses to the novel.

Implications for Future Research

Current school-based literacy practices, including the selection of masculine texts to improve boys' literacy, are problematic in several ways. First, using sports texts to improve *boys' literacy* assumes that boys are a homogenous group. Such a gendered view limits the reading interests of boys to those materials considered gender appropriate, and in doing so, reinforce and perpetuate gender stereotypes, potentially limiting their possible ways of being in the world. In providing such texts, therefore, it is important that they are engaging to individual boys, and not boys as a homogenous group. Similarly, this study suggests that girls are as likely

as boys to be interested in sports, a traditionally masculine interest area. Traditional feminine stereotypes can therefore be just as detrimental to girls' literacy as they limit their reading choices. Therefore, providing a wide range of reading materials and offering students a choice of texts may be an important strategy to help close the literacy gap. The findings of the study support the need to explore what texts improve reading attitudes and achievement for both boys and girls since the differences among them may be greater than the differences between them. In particular, the data could be further disaggregated taking into account other variables, such as ethnicity, social status and age.

The impact of school-based literacy practices to close the gap in boys' literacy also invites further research into the impact of such initiatives on girls' literacy. One explanation for boys' underachievement is the feminization of schooling, in particular current school-based literacy practices that favour females. The masculinization of school literacy practices, through literacy practices that reinforce stereotypical notions of masculinity, may inadvertently create a culture that privileges males. Current strategies to close the gap in boys' literacy (i.e., choosing appropriate classroom resources for boys; understanding boys' learning styles; making reading and writing relevant to boys), may therefore have the unintended effect of constructing and perpetuating hegemonic masculinity in the classroom. While the necessity of providing equitable opportunities for boys cannot be denied, an exclusive focus on one group must not be so at the expense of another.

The gender gap in literacy achievement is a complex issue and no one strategy can possibly address the problems boys have in schools. Furthermore, the intervention in this study represents only one strategy that may be more effective for some boys and girls than others. Boys' underachievement in literacy is certainly due to more variables than simply their interest

in the content of school reading material. Likewise, there are many complex social factors at work that contribute to this problem, including geography, poverty, social status and other social factors that privilege the learning of some students over others. While strategies to improve literacy can help to close the gap for some students, these underlying social issues must be examined further to make literacy learning more equitable for all students.

This section has provided a discussion of the major findings of this study. The focus of this research has been to measure the impact of one intervention, choosing appropriate reading material for boys, on boys' attitudes and achievement. The use of sports texts, in particular, has been recommended as a school-based practice to improve boys' literacy. While there were no statistically significant findings in this study, the results suggest that sports texts can provide an entry point to literacy for some boys and girls. Clearly, more research is required to measure the impact of such interventions so that educators can provide equitable learning opportunities for both boys and girls.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Boys' underachievement in reading continues to be a troubling trend in education. While the gap is beginning to close, boys as a group continue to display more overall negative attitudes towards reading and score lower on standardized measures of literacy achievement. This gap may be closing, in part, due to interventions designed to improve boys' attitudes towards reading and their reading achievement. One such approach has been to engage boys in reading through providing appropriate classroom resources for them. Many argue that there is a need to reframe the reading curriculum to engage the interests of reluctant readers, particularly boys. Numerous studies (Coles & Hall 2002; Smith 2004; Wilhelm & Smith 2001) have shown that boys enjoy reading about what reflects their experiences, namely sports. This study was designed to study the impact, if any, of reading sports texts, particularly soccer, on boys' reading attitudes and achievement.

Overall, there was no statistically significant impact of reading soccer texts on students' attitudes and achievement. The study, however, did yield some interesting findings that suggest that reading about soccer may improve the reading attitudes of *some* students. Overall, students in the experimental group reported more positive reading attitudes on the post-test than students in the control group. The girls' attitudes in the experimental group, for example, increased slightly, while those in the control group decreased slightly. Although boys' attitudes declined in both groups, the drop was bigger in the control group. Such findings, while not statistically significant, suggest that reading about sports may be a way to engage some boys and girls in reading.

Current educational policies and practices designed to improve boys' literacy appear to be misguided. A boy-friendly reading curriculum frames boys as a homogeneous group, thus stereotyping all boys as learning in particular ways. This type of curriculum also implies changing the culture of the classroom to favour the learning styles and needs of boys. In seeking to make the classroom environment more boy-friendly, however, such interventions may inadvertently masculinize the learning environment, perhaps disadvantaging females. While there are certainly shared learning styles and reading interests among boys, the differences among boys and girls may be greater than the differences between them. More research is therefore required into for *which* boys and girls do such reading interventions improve literacy. There is a further need to examine factors, beyond gender, underlying boys' problems in literacy, such as ethnicity, social status and poverty.

This study underscores the need for educators to question current approaches to improving boys' literacy and to provide classroom experiences that respond to the diverse interests of all students. In particular, educators can provide a wide variety of reading materials and allow students some choice in reading materials. Such materials should disrupt and offer multiple versions of masculinity and femininity. Educators can also broaden the scope of the school reading curriculum and close the gap between school and home reading by incorporating a variety of traditional and non-traditional forms and genres. Although no one approach can possibly address the gender gap in literacy, classroom strategies, such as providing non-traditional texts for boys, can be an entry point to literacy for some boys.

As educators implement new policies and practices designed to improve boys' literacy, there is a need for them to become more reflective practitioners to ensure that such classroom approaches are equitable for all students.

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APPENDIX A: Certificate of Completion for Research Ethics Tutorial

Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that

Daniela Koppeser

*has completed the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics'
Introductory Tutorial for the
Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)*

Issued On: June 10, 2007

APPENDIX B: Teacher Consent to Participate in Research



TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **The Effect of Soccer Texts on Students' Motivation and Achievement in Reading**

Your English class is asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Daniela Koppeser**, a student researcher (Masters Degree in Education) , from the **Faculty of Education** at the University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Daniela Koppeser** at (519) 735-3326 or **Dr. Martinovic** at (519) 253-3000 X3962.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to explore the impact of soccer novels on students' attitudes and achievement in reading in the Grade 10 applied English program.

PROCEDURES

If you consent for your class to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. **Administer a survey about student reading habits at the beginning of the novel study.**
2. **Teach the novel assigned to your English class. All students in the class will participate in reading a soccer novel as they will be part of the program approved by the school board and the principal.**
3. **Facilitate the completion of a reading journal.**
4. **Administer a survey about student reading habits at the end of the novel study.**

If you consent for your class to participate in the study, we would ask that you also give consent for the researchers to use your students' results on the OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) as a measure of achievement. The individual students' names and scores will be kept confidential.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Your students may benefit from this study because they will be exposed to new reading materials in their English class.

This study may help teachers learn what students like to read. This may help teachers choose new books to teach in their English courses.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your students will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Any information with your students' names on it will be kept locked in a file cabinet and/or on a password protected computer. The surveys and reading journals will be kept on file for two years.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your students can choose whether to be in this study or not. If they volunteer to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw your students from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The results of the study will be made available to your school.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study? Yes No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study: The Effect of Soccer Texts on Students' Motivation and Achievement in Reading as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree that my class may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Teacher

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C: Parental Consent to Participate in Research



PARENTAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **The Effect of Soccer Texts on Students' Motivation and Achievement in Reading**

Your son/daughter is asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Daniela Koppeser**, a student researcher (Masters Degree in Education), from the **Faculty of Education** at the University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Daniela Koppeser** at (519) 735-3326 or **Dr. Martinovic** at (519) 253-3000 X3962.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to explore the impact of soccer novels on students' attitudes and achievement in reading in the Grade 10 applied English program.

PROCEDURES

If you consent for your son/daughter to participate in this study, we would ask him/her to do the following things:

1. **Complete a survey about his/her reading habits at the beginning of the novel study.**
2. **Read the novel assigned to him/her in his/her English class. All students in the class will participate in reading a soccer novel as they will be part of the program approved by the school board and the principal.**
3. **Complete a reading journal.**
4. **Complete a survey about his/her reading habits at the end of the novel study.**

If you consent for your son/daughter to participate in the study, we would ask that you also give consent for the researchers to use your son/daughter's results on the OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) as a measure of achievement. The individual students' names and scores will be kept confidential.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Your son/daughter may benefit from this study because they will be exposed to new reading materials in their English class.

This study may help teachers learn what students like to read. This may help teachers choose new books to teach in their English courses.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your son/daughter will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Any information with your son/daughter's name on it will be kept locked in a file cabinet and/or on a password protected computer. The surveys and reading journals will be kept on file for two years.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your son/daughter can choose whether to be in this study or not. If they volunteer to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw your son/daughter from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The results of the study will be made available to your son/daughter's school.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study? Yes No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study: The Effect of Soccer Texts on Students' Motivation and Achievement in Reading as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree that my son/daughter may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: Assent for High School Students



Assent for High School Students

I am a student researcher (Master's Degree in Education) who would like to learn about how what students read affects their attitudes towards reading and their scores on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

This semester, you will be reading a novel in your English class. If you agree to be part of this study, I would like to ask you some questions about your reading habits on a survey. Then, I would like you to read the novel that is assigned to you in your English class and to write what you think about it in a journal. Finally, I would like you to complete another survey about your reading habits after you have finished reading the novel. Even if you do not agree to be part of the study, you will participate in the readings because they will be part of the program approved by the school board and your principal.

I am also interested in learning about how what students read affects their scores on the OSSLT. If you agree to participate in the study, I will be using your results on the Grade 10 Literacy Test.

When I am finished working with all the students who agree to be in my study, I will write a report on what I have learned.

I want you to know that I will not be telling your teachers, parents or peers what you write on the survey or in the reading journal. Nobody will know your names or specific results when the results are released.

Your parent/guardian has agreed that you may be a part of this study. If you decide to complete the survey, you can stop answering the questions at any time and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

I understand what I am being asked to do to be in this study, and I agree to be in this study.

Signed _____ Date _____

(Student Name)

APPENDIX E: Letter of Information for Consent to Participate in Research



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **The Effect of Soccer Texts on Students' Motivation and Achievement in Reading**

You are asked to participate in a follow up research questionnaire conducted by Daniela Koppeser, a student researcher (Masters Degree in Education) from the **Faculty of Education** at the University of Windsor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Daniela Koppeser at (519) 735-3326 or Dr. Martinovic at (519) 253-3000 x3962.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The initial study was designed to explore the impact of soccer novels on students' attitudes and achievement in reading in the Grade 10 applied English program. The follow up questionnaire described in this letter will better help the researcher interpret the results of the study.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

Complete a questionnaire related to your son/daughter's attitude towards sport/soccer. These two follow up questions will be distributed to your son/daughter through their homeroom teachers.

It will take your child less than five minutes to answer these questions and the answers will not affect your child's standing in school. Any identifiable information that will point to your child, including name, will not be revealed.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This questionnaire will better help the researcher interpret the results of the study.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your son/daughter will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Any information with your son/daughter's name on it will be kept locked in a file cabinet and/or on a password protected computer. The questionnaires will be kept on file for two years.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The results of the study will be made available to your son/daughter's school.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Revised February 2008

APPENDIX F: The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey

The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment Survey

(Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980)

Directions: This is a test to tell how you feel about reading. The score will not affect your grade in any way. Read the statements and then put an X on the line under the letter or letters that represent how you feel about the statement.

SD - Strongly Disagree

D- Disagree

U - Undecided

A - Agree

SA - Strongly Agree

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	You feel you have better things to do than read.	___	___	___	___	___
2.	You seldom buy a book.	___	___	___	___	___
3.	You are willing to tell people that you do not like to read.	___	___	___	___	___
4.	You have a lot of books in your room at home.	___	___	___	___	___
5.	You like to read a book whenever you have free time.	___	___	___	___	___
6.	You get really excited about books you have read.	___	___	___	___	___
7.	You love to read.	___	___	___	___	___
8.	You like to read books by well-known authors.	___	___	___	___	___
9.	You never check out a book from the library.	___	___	___	___	___
10.	You like to stay at home and read.	___	___	___	___	___
11.	You seldom read except when you have to do a book report.	___	___	___	___	___
12.	You think reading is a waste of time.	___	___	___	___	___
13.	You think reading is boring.	___	___	___	___	___

		SD	D	U	A	SA
14.	You think people are strange when they read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
15.	You like to read to escape from problems.	___	___	___	___	___
16.	You make fun of people who read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
17.	You like to share books with your friends.	___	___	___	___	___
18.	You would rather someone just tell you information so that you won't have to read to get it.	___	___	___	___	___
19.	You hate reading.	___	___	___	___	___
20.	You generally check out a book when you go to the library.	___	___	___	___	___
21.	It takes you a long time to read a book.	___	___	___	___	___
22.	You like to broaden your interests through reading.	___	___	___	___	___
23.	You read a lot.	___	___	___	___	___
24.	You like to improve your vocabulary so you can use more words.	___	___	___	___	___
25.	You like to get books for gifts.	___	___	___	___	___

APPENDIX G: Personal Ways to Respond to Reading

Personal Ways to Respond to Reading

(Lundy, 2007)

I think ... _____

I wonder ... _____

I feel ... _____

I imagine ... _____

I know ... _____

I predict ... _____

I find ... _____

I suspect ... _____

I admire ... _____

I like ... _____

I don't like ... _____

I was impressed by ... _____

I was surprised ... _____

I noticed that ... _____

I know it is hard to believe but ... _____

If I had been there, I would have ... _____

The part I don't understand is ... _____

The part about _____ reminds me of _____

My favourite part is ... _____

The most exciting part is _____ because _____

A part that I find confusing is ... _____

If I were the author, I would change ... _____

I am most like the character _____ because _____

An interesting word / sentence / idea is ... _____

I thought it was funny when ... _____

I can relate to this chapter / story / character because ... _____

The part that makes a real picture in my mind is ... _____

The part that made me angry was ... _____

APPENDIX H: Interest in Sports and Soccer Scale



Dear student,

Last semester, you participated in a study where you completed a survey about your reading attitudes and wrote journals about the novel that you were reading in your English class. The researcher would like to ask you two additional questions about your interests. Please respond to the following questions and return this sheet to your homeroom teacher in the envelope provided.

Your name

.....

On a scale of 1-5, **1** being “**I am not at all interested**” and **5** being “**I am very interested**”:

How interested are you in **sports**? 1 2 3 4 5

How interested are you in **soccer**? 1 2 3 4 5

Thank you for taking the time to respond to these questions.

Daniela Koppeser

Master’s of Education Candidate

University of Windsor

VITA AUCTORIS

Daniela Koppeser was born in 1976 in Windsor, Ontario. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts (1998) and a Bachelor of Education (1999) from the University of Windsor. She is currently a candidate for a Master's degree in Education at the University of Windsor. Daniela is an English and Literacy Success Teacher (LST) at St. Joseph High School in the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. Her research interests are in the area of boys' literacy.