EXPLORING ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS
OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION
THROUGH PARTICIPATION
IN A HIGH SCHOOL WIDE SUMMER READING INITIATIVE

A doctoral thesis presented
by
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ABSTRACT

1. Background/introduction/situation
   Poor adolescent achievement motivation is a problem of practice in education. Academic motivation decreases as adolescents reach high school. Adolescents struggle with maintaining motivation for their studies for a variety of possible reasons including: boredom, lack of relevance of material, lack of autonomy in curriculum, negative attitude toward reading, low beliefs of self-efficacy, and social environment. After decades of research and attempts at various educational strategies, educators continue to struggle with effectively motivating adolescents in the classroom. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore academic motivation through the implementation of a high school wide summer reading initiative. In our ever changing global economy, education needs to transform itself to better motivate students in their secondary studies.

2. Present research/purpose
   The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore adolescent achievement motivation, engagement and socialization at Sovereign High School through the informal learning experiences gained through the implementation of a high school wide summer reading initiative.

3. Methods/materials/subjects/procedure
   This research study employed a qualitative approach in exploring adolescent achievement motivation to better understand the adolescent perspectives of their unique educational experience as it relates to the shared summer reading program. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was appropriate for this study in its intent to understand adolescent perspectives on the specific problem of decreased adolescent achievement motivation at Sovereign High School through the implementation of a school wide collaborative summer reading initiative. Observation of a book discussion group was conducted along with two semi-structured adolescent focus groups, and three follow-up semi-structured individual interviews. In addition, document analysis included transcript, report card and academic record review. A total of 9 adolescent participants participated in this study.

4. Results/findings
   The findings revealed four distinct universal themes related to achievement motivation including: autonomy, efficacy, value of grades on other aspects of life and social supports. Although, all these themes intertwined, autonomy was found to be the most salient theme across participant responses. Greater student autonomy led to greater self-efficacy which enhanced academic motivation. Participants highly valued grades as they related to their future goals of college and careers. Participants actively gauged teacher motivation for the academic task which influenced their personal motivation for the task. Motivation did not always translate into engagement or completion of task. In addition to perceived poor teacher motivation, other obstacles included lack of time or poor timing of assigned task, competing academic demands, lack of meaning for task, access to short
cuts such as SparkNotes, low reading efficacy and negative feelings such as frustration and stress which lowered perceived efficacy and motivation for the academic task.

5. Discussion/conclusion/implications/recommendations
Adolescents want choice and control in their academic tasks. They are goal oriented and are conscientious of the value of grades on their future aspirations. They are motivated by grades and assessment and want to feel capable of achieving. They want educators to be sensitive to their holistic academic demands and to refrain from overburdening them. They are perceptive when it comes to the amount of autonomy their teachers have in developing and implementing academic tasks and are quite in tune to the level of motivation and enthusiasm their teachers have toward academic tasks. Their academic motivation is directly affected by the social support of others such as teachers, peer membership and parental involvement. Educators need to identify creative ways to incorporate student autonomy into the curriculum. A collective agency approach is beneficial to achievement motivation where administrator, teacher and student input is sought. Researchers need to continue to explore the motivational responses of the poorly motivated adolescent population to better identify their unique motivators and deterrents.

Keywords: achievement motivation, academic motivation, efficacy, autonomy, engagement
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“Public education must lead the way and teachers must serve as primary agents for change and enlightenment. It is in school classrooms that a new world must be born, if it is to be born at all” (Cassell & Nelson, 2010, p.196).

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem:

After decades of research and attempts at various educational strategies, educators continue to struggle with ways to effectively motivate adolescents to strive for academic success and sustain a desire to achieve in traditional secondary classroom settings. The following statement reflects how this need for adolescent achievement motivation is echoed in research: “it is widely acknowledged that an issue of great concern to educators is developing and maintaining students' optimum motivation” (Mansfield, 2010, p.44). It is true that many students find school to be a forward-looking endeavor, with positive implications on future educational opportunities, job prospects, and financial success (Kover & Worrell, 2010). Such students find their academic studies to be instrumental in pursuing future endeavors beyond high school.

Meanwhile, there are capable adolescents who lack motivation for traditional pedagogy failing to connect personal meaning or purpose of their high school studies to their post-secondary options. In fact, research has shown a steady decrease in academic motivation across all demographic groups through the high school years termed “negative slope” of motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005). Such researchers have found such a decline to be attributed to a variety of social and cognitive factors (as cited by Alfeld, Stone, Aragon, Hansen, Zirkle, Connors, Spindler, Swinburne-Romine, & Woo, 2007). Identified factors that have acted as potential causes to this phenomenon include gender, fear of failure, incuriosity, low ambition, spontaneity, lack of responsibility and rebellion (Reiss, 2009).
Despite this phenomenon and widespread studies on motivation, more research is needed to better address adolescents’ academic motivational needs in order to improve motivation and identify strategies to prevent the negative slope of motivation from occurring. Continued lack of motivation or academic reluctance leads to disengagement and places these students at risk for dropping out which in turn impacts employment and career opportunities and further impacts the global economy.

**Significance of the Problem:**

Globally, the U.S. is sliding down the scale in producing individuals with skills necessary for the 21st century workforce. In these difficult economic times, “student motivation during adolescence has become an increasingly important issue for educators and researchers” (Mansfield, 2010, p.44). A failure to address this lack of academic motivation among adolescents will perpetuate a cycle of academic failure, high school drop-outs and limited access to employment prospects in this difficult economy. This combination will have deleterious effects on this population of students and on the nation as a whole. Profound and accelerating changes in our global economy make it imperative for the nation to be more strategic, aggressive and effective in preparing students to succeed and prosper (Vockley, 2007). Educators cannot afford to be complacent regarding adolescent academic motivation or cling to traditional pedagogy. All students need to connect the importance of secondary learning to post-secondary goals in order to obtain 21st Century skills to be able to compete in a global economy.

If academic achievement for all students is the goal of education (Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011), then a deeper understanding of adolescent academic motivation is critical. It is vital that researchers continue to examine the full range of reasons for student achievement and adopt a holistic view of educational goals if we are to improve student motivation and
achievement in educational settings (Mansfield, 2010). It is imperative that institutions make student motivation and engagement efforts a central component to their mission (Kazmi, 2010). No one recognized this problem better than John Dewey, who said “somehow and somewhere motive must be appealed to, connections must be established between the mind and the material” (Dewey, 1902/1990, p.120). Yet, didactic pedagogy where the teacher and course content is central reigns as it finds “comfortable places in our contemporary society” (Kalantzis, 2005, p.5).

Thus, there is a need to further explore available alternative educational approaches concerning student motivation and their potential impact on students’ abilities to connect the value of their high school experience to their post-secondary options. Innovative educational strategies are particularly essential at the secondary level. Of particular interest to this researcher is the impact of informal learning experiences on academic motivation gained through the implementation of a summer reading initiative. “Informal learning experiences are voluntary, semi-structured, and interest-driven” (Weinberg, Basile, & Albright, 2011, p.1).

**Positionality Statement:**

It is my experience through ten years as a guidance counselor at Sovereign High School, the site of this study, that many high school students report a lack of academic motivation in some respect whether it is decreased motivation and engagement from previous years, general apathy, boredom, lack of meaningfulness of courses, or failing to see the value of educational activities. Finding ways to facilitate students’ academic motivation is a daunting task.

A major task as a high school guidance counselor is to support students’ academic, personal, social/emotional and vocational success. It can be quite frustrating to tackle this problem of poor academic motivation, a phenomenon that is shared among discussions with colleagues. It is personally troubling to counsel students on this issue only to be thwarted over
and over again in attempts to facilitate students in identifying their academic motivation. As a counselor, I strive to assist students in finding relevance in the curriculum, make meaningful connections to students’ lives, identify future aspirations and convince students of the internal and/or external value of good grades such as the impact on college admissions, or recognize the internal feelings associated with good grades or doing well in academic subjects. In addition, some students are dealing with obstacles that take precedence over academic importance whether there are familial struggles, presenting emotional or medical concerns, drug and alcohol use, etc.

The proactive nature of the role of guidance counselor and being an integral school team member was appealing to me and brought me to this aspect of education. I approach my role as guidance counselor as a first generation college graduate, and a married, white female of middle class background. My childhood and personal experiences with adolescent academic motivation included “blue collar” parents who valued the importance of education in terms of the vocational and economic opportunities it offered and instilled in me the value of education.

My dual position as researcher and counselor at the site of my study was an important factor for consideration. I am aware that I bring my personal biases into my daily practice as a guidance counselor and am careful to reflect on these biases and consciously set them aside as I counsel students. I was equally aware that my position as guidance counselor might impact my study in terms of my personal and professional biases and former relationships with participants from the data collection and analysis phases. I took great care to ensure that my professional and personal experiences did not cloud the truth of my participants’ experiences.

In this study, I had former interactions with some of the participants. It was important to note this role and discuss my experience but I made a conscious effort to bracket those
experiences to ensure the voices and meanings of the participants was clearly conveyed and not my own personal biases so that a holistic picture of the participants’ experiences were described and analyzed. While prior relationships with participants are not uncommon, it was essential that I fully disclose such relationships and how it may have impacted the study, its validity and its findings. Since qualitative research takes place in specific settings with specific participants it may limit the findings in terms of generalizability.

In relation to this study specifically, it had been my experience that many students have failed to participate in annual required summer reading assignments. Students have cited various reasons including lack of interest in or relevance of the assigned book, boredom, etc. Yet this is the introduction to the start of the school year and sets the tone for English class. This concern had also been shared by Sovereign High School’s English Department resulting in taking new strategies including the new summer reading initiative which acted as the basis for this current study. The student perspective on the new summer reading initiative was critical to understanding its impact. Thus, it was of utmost interest to me to bring the adolescents’ voice to the forefront of this issue through this scholarly and systematic approach of a qualitative study.

**Research Purpose and Question(s):**

There is a great need for research that explores alternative ways to motivate and engage students in 21st classrooms and help students make meaningful connections to their academic experiences. Students need meaningful choices, materials and strategies as well as an understanding of why the content is useful and how it connects to their personal and career interest (Jones, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation, engagement and socialization at Sovereign High School through the informal
learning experiences gained through the implementation of a high school wide summer reading initiative. The summer reading program consisted of the entire high school faculty identifying a summer reading book of their choice for the student population to voluntarily sign up for. Generally, each faculty was provided fifteen student slots for a follow up book discussion in the fall of the 2013-2014 school year. While faculty wide participation was expected, it was not mandatory. Faculty were given free rein to identify any book of their choosing that they felt was compelling and might be of student interest. Faculty names were removed in an attempt to ensure student selection was based on book preference and not faculty preference. Alternately, students were given the autonomy to self-select a summer reading book from the faculty devised list of approximately seventy eight books. Students then signed up for their book choice on-line via the high school’s website. It was expected that there will be a handful of faculty and students who would not participate in this summer reading program and alternate arrangements were made for those students and faculty to discuss an article or book to be determined during the planned book discussion groups. The rationale for this initiative was to enhance summer reading participation, increase student autonomy in relation to reading choices, foster student to student and student to faculty relationships, and enhance academic motivation and engagement as it relates to literacy and learning.

Sovereign High School is a medium sized public institution comprised of approximately 1,200 students situated in a suburban middle to upper class community. The newly implemented summer reading initiative invited a shared reading experience between secondary students and faculty with the thought that students would respond to the autonomy inherent in the self-selection from the faculty created summer reading list. It was further suggested that students would identify commonalities of interests with peers and faculty facilitator through a
one-time book discussion group. The small informal group format had the potential to promote greater socialization, foster personal relationships between students and faculty and conversely promote academic motivation to read and greater academic engagement.

In the fall of the school year, students engaged in a single small group book discussion matched with the faculty advisor who placed the chosen book on the list along with student peers who also self-selected the same book. Specifically, this researcher is interested in examining the following overarching research question:

What are the adolescents’ experiences regarding academic motivation based on their participation in a summer reading initiative?

The following research sub-questions are of interest in this case study:

a. How do adolescents perceive the secondary summer reading initiative in terms of academic motivation?

b. How do adolescents perceive the academic autonomy afforded through the summer reading initiative?

c. How do adolescents perceive the opportunity for socialization through the summer reading initiative?

**Theoretical Framework:**

This study was viewed from the lens of Bandura’s social cognitive theory which is a comprehensive theory that explains how people gain competence, values and behavior choices and how people develop motivation (Davidson, 2003). Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated goals. Individuals’ beliefs about self-efficacy impact their motivation, how they set goals and how they act on such goals (Davidson, 2003). The human ability to exercise control over choices, goals and behavior also becomes critical. Bandura’s social cognitive theory and
concept of self-efficacy, or one’s beliefs about one’s ability for a task and it impact on one’s motivation for the task, is often used in addressing achievement motivation throughout the literature. In this theory, the interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences are key to efficacy (Davidson, 2003). According to Bandura, individuals seek to control their daily activities and yet ultimately produce and act as products of their social systems (Bandura, 2001).

Social Cognitive Theory

In Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory individuals are personal agents of their behavior acting collectively or interdependently within the context of their social structures (Bandura, 2001). Agency includes one’s natural ability, belief systems or self-efficacy and one’s self-regulating abilities. A major tenet of social cognitive theory is self-efficacy which is defined as a person’s belief in their ability to produce desired results by their own actions and acts as the foundation of human motivation (Davidson, 2003). “Two decades of research have clearly established the validity of self-efficacy as a predictor of students’ motivation and learning” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 89)

At agency’s core is intention which is a “representation of a future course of action to be performed” (Bandura, 2001, p.6). Intention is a critical key to motivation. Bandura further distinguished three modes of agency: personal, proxy (or relying on others to achieve an outcome) and collective where the individual and the social structure work in tandem. Collective agency or efficacy relies on the belief of the collective power to instill action. This mode of agency is of particular interest as it places the focus on the essence of the educational social environment including educators, administrators and curriculum in understanding adolescent academic motivation. Responsibility for academic motivation is shifted from the individual
student to the educational system. The following statement by Zimmerman (2000) confirms the fluidity of self-efficacy and the impact the educational system can have on student self-efficacy and ultimately academic motivation, “clearly, students’ self-efficacy beliefs are responsive to changes in instructional experience and play a causal role in students’ development and use of academic competencies” (p.89).

Bandura’s work laid the foundation for other theorists exploring motivation such as Ryan and Deci’s (2000) principles of self-determination theory (SDT) related to concepts of competence, autonomy and relatedness. According to Ryan & Deci, (2000), motivation involves energy, direction, persistence and all aspects of activation and intention. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), in re-visiting the classic definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, “to be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated” (p. 54). They acknowledge that motivation is not a singular concept and individuals have different levels (how much) and types of motivation known as orientations.

Robert Vallerand is another theorist known for his work in motivation orientations which he viewed in a hierarchal model. Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and a-motivation are dimensions of motivation used to explain individuals’ motivation orientations and whether people are motivated towards or away from an activity. Motivation can range from a-motivation where there is no interest or an unwillingness to engage in an activity, to passive compliance to active personal commitment.
SDT considers motivation orientations on a continuum and is concerned with the social environments that facilitate or hinder motivation. Ryan and Deci place intrinsic motivation at the far right and a motivation at the far left with extrinsic motivation in the middle (Brooks and Young, 2011). These different motivation orientations or levels on the continuum reflect varying degrees of internalization or valuing of the activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation infers that the activity itself derives pleasure stemming from internal forces within the individual and thus motivation towards it (playing the cello for the pure enjoyment it brings to an individual). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsically motivated people have more interest, enthusiasm, and confidence which are found in the outcome of the product whether through enhanced performance, persistence and/or creativity.

Intrinsic motivation has a positive impact on academic performance and according to self-determination theory (SDT); people are intrinsically motivated when they are self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the root of self-determination is a personal sense of control; when people are self-determined, they see themselves as initiators of their own activities and as having opportunity to make their own choices (as cited by Brooks & Young, 2011, p.49). Student autonomy and intrinsic motivation are linked (Brooks & Young, 2011). Autonomy is essential to maximizing self-determination to motivate an individual to engage in a task (Hanich, 2009. P.1). Thus, intrinsically motivated students would select a summer reading book that they would expect to be personally enjoyable and ultimately more motivated to engage in the task of reading.
Central to the explanation of intrinsic motivation within SDT is that individuals desire to feel both competent and autonomous or empowered (Ryan & Deci, 2000; as cited by Kover & Worrell, 2010). Studies on both motivation and empowerment have examined a variety of related factors such as self-efficacy, values, goals, interests, and opportunities for self-determination in educational contexts (as cited by Brooks & Young, 2011). Motivation and empowerment are overlapping constructs (Brooks & Young, 2011) with empowerment equaling the amount of perceived control over one’s environment (Jones, 2009). These dimensions repeatedly arise across theorists in the discussion of motivation and engagement. They become central to working with adolescents especially considering that as students become older they seek greater autonomy in the curriculum and attempt to make meaningful connections to their own interests and lives.

*Extrinsic Motivation*

Extrinsic motivation infers that there are other external forces outside the person or activity that pushes the individual towards an activity’s completion where the activity has an external usefulness or value such as monetary gains (go to work to earn the paycheck), employment (complete training for certification required for a job), academic gains (obtaining an A versus an F or failing). Deci and Ryan (2000) further note that external motivation can be coercive or ultimately incur a sense of self-acceptance and thus be self-adopted. Thus, they note that understanding both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is important to educators in identifying strategies that motivate students toward their academics. In this study, extrinsically motivated students may seek a book to engage in simply to fulfill the curriculum requirement. These extrinsic motivation examples encompass instrumentality beliefs referring to the belief that an
activity is instrumental or considered valuable to the individual in obtaining something other than personal enjoyment or fulfillment.

Amotivation

In reviewing motivation, it is encouraging that research has found that overall “most people show considerable effort, agency, and commitment in their lives”, making motivation more the norm than the exception, suggesting some very positive and persistent features of human nature (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68). However, it is undeniable that poor academic motivation exists for many students. With such a-motivation there is no value to be found in the activity itself and it is not expected to provide a desired outcome, thus no interest to act. Thus, it is the a-motivation that concerns educators as to why adolescents reject the value of their academics. This population of students encompasses those students labeled “underachievers” and proves to be a frustrating group to work with where educators can see their academic capability but struggle to motivate or facilitate their engagement in academic tasks. Mandel and Marcus (1995) concluded that, “Underachievers are, in fact, highly motivated—in directions other than getting good grades. And finding out precisely where their motivation lies is the key to helping them turn around and become achievers at school” (as cited by Reiss, 2009, p. 3).

Additionally, it is the decline in motivation among many students as they advance in their school years that is also concerning. Specifically, some researchers (Harter (1981); Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried (2001); Lepper, Corpus & Lyengar (2005) have found declines in intrinsic motivation between grades 3-9 (as cited by Unrau & Schackman, 2010, p. 82). With the introduction of autonomy and opportunity for socialization via an informal group experience, this study provides a platform for insight into the motivational responses of otherwise a-motivated students.
If educators fail to foster competence, autonomy and relatedness or belongingness for all students in their educational endeavors then education as an institution contributes to poor motivation, academic failure, and placing students at risk for dropping out and failing to persist in post-secondary training or education which is considered a vital necessity in 21st Century global economy. Ultimately, academic motivation is not considered important in and of itself, but rather because motivated students tend to engage in activities that help them to learn and experience greater achievement in academic settings (Jones, 2009). Thus, motivation is highly valued in society and in education specifically because motivation produces action (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.69).

Competence, relatedness (belonging) and autonomy are three psychological needs that are thought to be essential for functioning, growth and personal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-motivation is undermined when any of these psychological needs is prevented. This theory factors in competence or efficacy for academic tasks, the level of autonomy afforded by academic tasks and the level of relatedness or belonging experienced through academic tasks. These theories are critical in understanding the academic motivation orientations and responses of secondary students for academic tasks specifically through the summer reading initiative.

Similar to Bandura’s focus on an individual’s agency within the context of the greater social system, Ryan and Deci’s SDT is further concerned with the social environments involved in facilitating or inhibiting motivation. This focus on social environment is reminiscent of some other prominent theorists briefly discussed below including Alexander Astin, Vincent Tinto, and Ernest Pascarella and their respective theories on the role of the environment on student engagement or involvement, departure and general causal model.

*Social Environment*
Although, much research has examined the issue of academic motivation in traditional classroom settings, various researchers have challenged such traditional approaches in addressing academic motivation. Alexander Astin is one such theorist who developed his theory of student involvement in part due to his frustration “with traditional pedagogical approaches to student development and learning” (as cited by Kazmi, 2010, p.3). He argued students learn by becoming involved with their learning and defined student involvement as, “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (as cited by Kazmi, 2010, p.3). Astin’s (I-E-O) Model of student engagement (Astin, 1999) also emphasizes the social context where (I) Internal characteristics of the individual and the (E) environment are important to (O) motivation and engagement outcomes. The environment refers to the programs, policies, resources and people within the educational setting.

Vincent Tinto built upon Astin’s theory and focused on the motivational impact of student integration into a new environment. This theory goes hand in hand with Ernest Pascarella’s theory that the environment plays a huge role in student motivation and achievement (Kazmi, 2010). Pascarella extended Astin’s I-E-O Model to 5 variables: 1) student characteristics 2) institution’s organization and structure 3) institutional environment 4) interactions with agents of socialization and 5) the quality of student effort (Kazmi, 2010).

The psychological needs of efficacy, autonomy, belonging, relatedness and environment are intertwined throughout each of the above theorists’ and their respective theories on academic motivation and engagement. These theories are further linked in addressing the impact of informal learning experiences gained through small book group discussions. These theories go hand in hand with the focus on efficacy in self-determination theory and the interplay of humans as both agents of behavior and products of social systems in social cognitive theory. This study
sought to identify the role the social environment of Sovereign High School in terms of the
summer reading program and the impact on the students’ academic motivational responses to the
self-selected small book groups and discussions.

The comprehensive nature of social cognitive theory provided an adequate framework for
this qualitative study as it addressed the academic motivational needs of adolescents as agents of
their behavior within a specific educational social structure. This study focused on the interplay
of individual student characteristics and the social environment of the educational institution in
addressing academic motivation for a specific educational task of summer reading. It was of
interest to determine the students’ perceptions of their: 1. ability to act as agents through
autonomous book selection, 2. opportunity for belongingness through of the use of small groups,
3. opportunity for socialization gained through the book dialogues, and 4. their perceptions of
academic motivation and engagement in relation to participation in the summer reading
program.

Using social cognitive theory as the basis for the theoretical framework provided a direct
link in considering agency, autonomy and the social system in relation to adolescent motivational
and engagement responses to this summer reading initiative. This focus on student autonomy is
reminiscent of Dewey (1902/1990), an influential education scholar of the 20th century, for
whom learning is authentic. It allows the learner to synthesize the knowledge and facts within
their own experience of the world – shifting the balance of ownership from the teacher to the
student. He believed in the fluidity of learning and reciprocity between teacher, student and
curriculum, which he felt was lacking in traditional education. The importance of the social
system and Bandura’s mode of collective agency is echoed here wherein the responsibility lies
with the education agents including educators, administrators and curriculum in affording
academic autonomy to the student. Thus the concept of the individual as producer of and product of the social system is a delicate balance that requires a shift in educational paradigm.

To synthesize, one’s academic sense of self-efficacy, perceived autonomy and sense of empowerment is interwoven in the social context of the educational environment especially in consideration of the concept of adolescent academic motivation. How these factors present in relation to the shared reading program and specifically through small group book discussions answered the research questions regarding these adolescent academic motivational, socialization and engagement responses. Reflecting upon these various theorists and their commonalities, the high school wide summer reading initiative provided student autonomy in summer reading assignment, provided student control or agency over the small group book discussion as they guided the small group book dialogue, and addressed belonging and socialization needs through informal socialization through a small informal student/faculty group learning experience. The expectation was that this reading experience invited ownership of the summer reading through autonomous self-selection. It would further provide autonomy within the curriculum and promote learning in an informal learning environment. Belongingness and socialization through small group identification could enhance student/faculty relationships as well as student/student relationships. The informal learning experiences gained from the small book group discussions will assist in shedding light on subsequent academic motivation and engagement responses in the classroom.

**Conclusion/Forward:**

This chapter has provided an overview of the problem of poor adolescent achievement motivation, the significance and its complexity. It has further echoed the need for alternative
educational strategies at the secondary level to enhance achievement motivation. In addition, an overview of key seminal experts in the area of motivation has been provided and further reflects the complex nature of motivation and specifically academic motivation. Chapter 2 briefly explores the literature on the general concept of motivation and delves into achievement motivation as understood on a continuum from a-motivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. It further addresses underlying factors attributed to achievement motivation including individual characteristics including self-efficacy, personal agency, autonomy and social environment including the organizational agents, small book formations and informal learning experiences. Literature that has focused on reading and literacy motivation is highlighted in relation to this study. This chapter further sheds light on the populations that have been traditionally researched in relation to achievement motivation and the need for adolescent voices to be heard on this topic. Chapter 3 provides the methodology for this study providing an explanation of the rationale for use of a qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review:

In addition to the plethora of motivational theories that make motivation such an elusive concept, motivation itself is a complex concept defined many different ways throughout literature. In fact, the literature on motivation is well established throughout the fields of psychology and education and there are areas and authors on this topic that extend well past the scope of this literature review. Mobilizing others to act, perform and achieve has always been a primary concern for educators. In addition, various motivational theories have emerged through
the decades to attempt to identify and understand what motivates students to immerse themselves in their academics. Academic motivation is addressed here as it relates to individual student characteristics, autonomy, self-efficacy, task value or instrumentality, and the impact of social environment on achievement motivation.

**Academic Motivation**

Academic or achievement motivation has been defined in various ways throughout the literature. McClelland, Koestner & Weinberger’s (1989) definition resonated in conjunction with this study, they defined it as a drive that energizes, is directed and selects behavior toward achievement in a competitive situation or task. Others have defined it as a process that is inferred from actions and verbalizations, whereby goal-directed physical or mental activity is instigated and sustained (Jones, 2009). The complexity of and multidimensional aspects of academic motivation discussed in this study are evident in the various theories presented as well as in current research. For example, Jones (2009) presented a MUSIC Model of academic motivation to be used by instructors to design courses that will engage students in learning. His MUSIC Model was based on five components: 1) eMpowerment, 2) Usefulness, 3) Success 4) Interest and 5) Caring (noting the acronym from each component). Jones’ study indicated that when instructors fostered one or more of these MUSIC components, students were more motivated to engage in their learning (Jones, 2009). The multidimensional aspects are easily discovered in the interplay between the components of the MUSIC Model. This study further highlighted the need to address academic motivation from a more cohesive model of interwoven elements and lends to the rationale of this case study in addressing academic motivation in relation to efficacy, agency, autonomy, socialization and belongingness afforded through informal learning experiences gained by the summer reading initiative.
**Autonomy**

As previously stated, research has shown that students begin to demonstrate a steady decline in academic motivation (negative slope of motivation) during the high school years. Wallace (2009) found this to be true in identifying factors related to decreased motivation and learner identity, “as participants moved to secondary education, the content was perceived to be irrelevant and the individual’s realities at home, imagined futures and in their peer groups were not recognized or reflected in the curriculum” (p.41). The need for autonomy or choice in curriculum to enhance personal relevance and meaningfulness of academic content is again echoed here. Autonomy in curriculum invites students to incorporate personal interests, individual creativity and allows students to identify personal relevance in their learning. Thus, autonomy invites students to become personal agents or producers within the context of the educational social system. The responsibility of the educational system to nurture autonomy reflects the power of Bandura’s collective agency to empower students to take ownership of their education. Autonomy is interrelated to one’s self-efficacy or expectation of being likely to achieve a goal and motivates individuals to focus on those goals rather than those they perceive to be less achievable (Wesson & Derrer-Rendall, 2011). Russell & Slater (2011) completed a case study among undergraduate students at a large university in New Zealand. They found engaged students tended to be intrinsically motivated and needed to feel competent to work autonomously and to achieve success. They also echoed the importance of the social context and reported the significant influence teachers as agents can have on student motivation. In addition, they found self-chosen groups positively impacted engagement as opposed to institutional or teacher generated ones echoing the research that encourages more choice and autonomy in education as well as opportunities for activities that invite socialization through group activities.
Individual Factors

Reiss (2009) studied the various potential factors related to low achievement motivation among middle school students in Turkey and identified six possible factors including fear of failure, incuriosity or low need for cognition, lack of ambition, low need for order, low need for responsibility and high need for vengeance. Reiss also found a possible link to gender in the finding that females were more motivated for the sciences than males. Sevinç, Özmen, & Yiğit (2011) echoed this finding on the impact of gender as they researched middle school students’ motivational responses to science learning. Females had higher motivational responses to science learning than males. Hodis, Meyer, McClure, Weir, & Walkey (2011) completed a three year longitudinal study on academic motivation and achievement with secondary students and also found that in general boys reported high negative motivation scores and had the highest probability of being at academic risk. In addition, Brouse, Basch, LeBlanc, McKnight, & Lei (2010) researched college students’ academic motivation in terms of gender, class, and funding and found “females scored higher than males on all measures of intrinsic motivation” while males were noted to possibly need targeted interventions to facilitate motivation (p. 5). Van Etten, Pressley, McInerney and Darmanegara Liem (2008) interviewed college students regarding their academic motivation and reported internal and external factors that impacted academic motivation. Internal student factors included social class, expectations, beliefs about control and beliefs about learning and mastery. External factors included course related characteristics, reward and feedback, social factors including teachers, peers, family and general college environment such as the physical environment, available academic associations, volunteer/internship opportunities and extra-curricular opportunities. This study reflects the continued complexity of the internal and external factors present in understanding academic
motivation. The importance of the cognitive aspects such as self-beliefs or efficacy and autonomy are again interwoven with the social factors including other agents (educators and peers) and the perceived essence of social environment.

**Task Motivation**

Just as Wallace (2009) noted learners’ “imagined futures”, Mansfield found that future goals were the most notable response among high school participants in comparison to responses for achievement goals and social goals. Mansfield’s finding aligns with Edwin Locke’s Goal Theory which is a major theory of academic motivation that pinpoints a direct link between goal setting and motivation and engagement. Wood, Mento & Locke (1987) further delved into goal theory through a meta-analysis on task complexity and found that simpler attainable goals had a greater impact on task motivation and engagement than more complex goals. This is echoed by Wesson & Derrer-Rendell (2011) who also found that unrealistic self-beliefs and goals may actually be de-motivating. Such findings reflect how critical it is to ensure that students are not only empowered to make meaningful choices in their academics but they that they have the opportunity to connect current studies to their future goals and be further motivated to engage in achievable tasks. Thus, research supports the role future aspirations play in impacting current academic motivation. These findings are especially important when considering Mora’s (2011) study that focused on Latino middle school students. Observations and conversational interviews revealed recurring emergent patterns such as boredom with class activities. A move away from rote activities and a move toward more interactive approaches to educational activities are called for. Mora further noted that explicit boredom resulted in participants questioning their desire to go on to college. These studies suggest that students are actively seeking to find value in their daily educational activities whether it is related to a desire for
stimulation through interactive approaches, connecting activities to future aspirations or perceiving tasks as achievable versus unachievable. Whether or not students find value in their daily educational tasks is impacting their academic motivation towards or away from those specific tasks.

**Social Environment**

Heaney & Fisher (2011) used Astin’s I-E-O Model to better understand persistence among conditionally admitted undergraduate students after their first semester at a public university. Their findings reflected the importance of the social environment including outside influences of other agents such as educators and peer mentors as well as individual characteristics and students’ ability for self-initiating behaviors in developing habits and a mindset toward coursework.

Heaney and Fisher noted that many of the formerly cited factors around motivation responses such as gender, ethnicity, grades and standardized test scores, financial need and first generation status did not emerge as themes in terms of academic motivation. Heaney & Fisher further placed responsibility with the educational social agents and urged educators to help students gain self-awareness of “big picture goals” and their attitudes towards traditional classroom approaches in order to facilitate adopting new strategies for enhanced academic motivation. Such work could be critical in preventing the “negative slope” of motivation from occurring through high school.

Gillen-O’Neel & Fuligni (2013), completed a longitudinal study at the secondary level on school belonging and academic motivation. They sought to find out how school belongingness changes over high school years and how it is associated with academic achievement and values. Their study included male and female students of various ethnic backgrounds. They found that
when students had a strong connection to school there were positive motivational benefits. For example, when students had a strong connection to school they also found it more enjoyable and useful. They further postulated that “school belonging may help students maintain high levels of motivation regardless of their actual achievement” (p. 690). Here again the complexity of academic motivation is evident in the interwoven various elements including student characteristics, social needs for belongingness and task value, making it futile to pinpoint a single overarching factor when addressing this complex construct.

In reviewing these motivational theories and motivational factors it becomes evident that the educational environment is a central concept to the discussion of motivation. Heaney & Fisher’s (2011) study of at-risk first year college students used Astin’s Input-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) Model. Astin’s I-E-O Model of student engagement postulated that students’ bring pre-existing conditions with them to the classroom such as personality characteristics, past academic experiences. These factors represent their student input (I). The environment I that they come into is comprised of the educational institution’s programs and policies etc. The outcomes (O) are equivalent to the student outcomes related to their exposure to environmental factors. In relating this to academic motivation, adolescents come to high school with varying backgrounds, personal characteristics and past educational experiences and these factors influence their current academic motivation for high school.

Abd-El-Fattah & Patrick (2011) studied secondary students and the relationship between achievement motivations orientations, goals, and interests. They found that Australian students work hard in academics and strive to achieve not only to satisfy their own personal goals and aspirations, but also to meet the expectations and goals set by significant others such as family, teachers, and friends to gain social approval. These findings further support the Bandura’s
emphasis on and the importance of the social system’s role in enhancing or hindering academic motivation through the educational environment’s course offerings, programs, resources and policies. The outcome is the level of academic motivation experienced as exerted through energy and efforts into their studies which manifest themselves through grades, self-reported outcomes of academic experiences and decisions to continue with post-secondary training and education.

These findings suggest that motivation orientations are a foundational step in exploring a gaining a deeper understanding of achievement motivation. However, there are a complex set of layered elements that need to be understood in terms of self-efficacy, autonomy, ownership, belonging, socialization and personal relevance that impact achievement motivation.

**Reading Motivation**

Many researchers have specifically explored reading in relation to motivation. Unrau & Schlackman (2006) addressed motivation and its relationship to reading achievement for urban middle schoolers. They highlighted the importance of topic interest, physical environment and availability of support. The importance of social context and environment on shaping middle school readers’ beliefs and intentions to read was based on McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth’s model of changes in reading attitude which linked affect and expectations. According to this model, Unrau & Schlackman surmised that as beliefs and attitudes toward reading become more negative, reading time would be replaced by other types of entertainment such as video games and “contribute to the gradual deterioration of not only reading time but also reading skills and the growth of knowledge” (p.82). Unrau & Schlackman’s study on urban middle school students echoed former studies that found a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and school achievement including reading achievement. Their study further highlighted the
important factors of the educational environment and educators on reading motivation including “teacher engagement, achievement related instruction, classroom community, assessment and reward systems, and autonomy support” (p.98). Retelsdorf, Koller & Moller (2011), extended past research by examining the effects of motivation orientations on reading performance growth among secondary students. As they predicted, they found intrinsically motivated students demonstrated greater reading performance and growth.

Daniels and Steres (2011) case study examined the effects of implementing a school wide reading culture in an urban middle school. They found that when the culture was injected from the top down it had a positive impact on student reading engagement. Students perceived that faculty and administrators not only expected all students to read, they also engaged in reading themselves. Thus, the expectation and reading engagement behaviors of the educational personnel positively impacted the value, beliefs, motivation and engagement of the students to read. Collectively, these researchers propose student engagement can be increased if “administrators actively created and fostered a school-wide reading culture” (Daniels & Steres, 2011, p.10). This assertion strongly aligns with Bandura’s idealistic vision of the power of the collective agency in promoting academic motivation. Once again the responsibility of the educational social system is highlighted as being essential in enhancing student ownership of educational tasks such as reading.

Starcher and Proffitt (2011) studied traditional undergraduate business students in exploring the issue of motivating students to read. They found that students needed additional preparation prior to classroom and that professors can assist in motivation to read for classes. They reported that punitive measures are ineffective addressing this issue and further suggested
creating Special Interest Groups (SIGs) or roundtables and presentations devoted exclusively to
the topic of approaches to engage students in required reading.

**Meaningfulness**

Indeed, there are a variety of social and personal factors that contribute to a student’s
motivation and students of all ability levels lack motivation and disengage. Many individuals
actively reject formal education despite the overall positive impact on personal, social,
emotional, financial and employment opportunities (Wallace, 2009). Alienation and
disconnection from formal education have been cause for academic disengagement and poor
motivation. Rigid school systems and traditional pedagogy compounded by students’ inability to
make personal connections to the curriculum and significant others in the educational setting,
perpetuate poor academic motivation. Kazmi (2010) stated that student’s disengagement can be
“likened to a state of unconsciousness, of auto pilot, of sleepwalking” (p.1). He further urged
educational institutions to identify what can be done to wake students up and dare to break the
traditional mold of education so that we are not trying to fit students into an outdated mold but
adapt the educational system to fit the students of the 21st Century.

Today’s society is technologically driven and students lead digital lives where there is
constant stimulation. Student motivation is a struggle when the didactic approach remains the
mainstream pedagogy. Unfortunately, educators continue to struggle to develop a new dynamic
of pedagogy (that is meaningful and engaging to students), and builds on the progressivism of
John Dewey and other progressive reformers. Without the presence of widespread
transformational change to traditional pedagogy, a review of smaller educational strategies for
change is warranted. Given these technological advancements and digitally infused lives that
adolescents live, it is not surprising that Mora (2011) found that boredom is associated with
abstract book-driven curricula and tedious activities students find meaningless. Students are motivated when they perceive purpose for engaging in an academic activity (Mansfield, 2011).

Today’s students are evolving in an advanced technological and global society and yet the face of education has yet to be motivated toward transformational change from the past traditions. Harper (2009) used SDT to study the engagement responses of college sophomores enrolled in psychology courses at Cleveland State University through the use of enhanced technology feedback compared to a control group using traditional instructor feedback. Harper noted the difficulty that many students have in finding meaningfulness in their daily academic experiences. He found that those who received digital feedback maintaining greater focus and reported greater enjoyment than those in the control group.

Motivation is an emotional state that leads to a response of engagement or disengagement created by a certain set of personal, social and contextual factors. In addition to boredom, students often fail to find course content meaningful viewing it as “book knowledge”, questioning its value in applying it to their own life or future goals lending to poor academic motivation. Offering adolescents more choice in education may enhance their sense of autonomy in the classroom, feelings of self-determination and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to participate in their academics. The current study sought adolescent perspectives and experiences of the summer reading initiative as it relates to their motivational responses to self-selection, opportunities for socialization and belonging through informal small group discussion and faculty pairings.

Educators need to ensure that students know why content is useful, how it connects to their personal interests, career interests, in other words “the real world” (Jones, 2009). Students
need to know educators care about them. This, in part, can be achieved by educators listening and valuing students’ opinions and ideas (Jones 2009). It is noted that whether children feel welcome and whether they find the learning activities to be meaningful and engaging may have a greater effect on children’s long-term development than other factors such as ratio of adults to children in classrooms and program rankings based on standardized test scores (DeMarie, 2010). Caring is further evident in the individual interactions with critical educational figures and collectively through the institutional policies, procedures and programs.

This researcher concurred with Abd-El-Fattah & Patrick (2011), who found “most previous studies on achievement motivation orientations have centered primarily on university students” (p.92). University students are more accessible to researchers than younger students in seeking to further understand the phenomenon of achievement motivation. This researcher also found a lack of literature on academic motivation from the adolescent perspective. Adolescent voices are often muted while adult participant voices are abundant. While it is common practice and beneficial to seek out expert opinions in the field, it is also essential that students of all ages be heard regarding their perspectives on their academic needs in the classroom to promote academic motivation. Jones (2009) highlighted this need to seek student opinions regarding their education. Mora (2011) echoed the need to heed student voices in his statement, “students’ boredom within the classroom can be addressed in part by simply listening to students” (p.5). Daniels (2010) also highlighted this need, “when we talk to students about what motivates them to achieve in school, they are articulate and thoughtful about their responses. They know what makes them motivated. It is up to us to listen to them” (p.29).

Implementing student-centered programs in the 21st century represents a gateway to greater student motivation in the contemporary classroom. Education in the 21st century needs
to go beyond core content and needs to provide more rigorous, relevant and engaging opportunities to motivate student for learning in an ever changing global economy. Educators can create more motivating learning environments (Daniels, 2010). This study is supported by these and other researchers who have explored ways to enhance student motivation through reading (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Hilton, Wilcox, Morrison & Wiley, 2010; Starcher & Proffitt, 2011).

Synthesis of literature:

When it comes to the topic of academic motivation some past researchers have focused on the internal individual characteristics that have impacted academic motivation while others have focused on the external factors such as the social environment. However, such categorization of theories and factors has potentially minimized the complexity of academic motivation and limited our understanding of poor academic motivation. The literature on academic motivation and specifically reading motivation has evolved to confirm a variety of internal and external factors are present and interwoven urging a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon of poor adolescent academic motivation. In addition, most motivation studies have included elementary, middle school and post-secondary students. Limited research focusing directly on secondary students was found on the topic of academic motivation. Yet, there was an abundance of studies on academic motivation from the educator perspective. In the discussion of academic motivation, many researchers readily agree that more research is needed at the secondary level and specifically from the adolescent perspective to identify the unique underlying factors that enhance or inhibit academic motivation.

These motivational issues and theories warrant a closer examination of the rigidity of school systems and curricula, students’ expressed motivational needs, and how opportunities for
autonomy and socialization relate to academic motivation and engagement in academic tasks. The literature supports further investigation into the impact of alternative educational strategies on adolescent achievement motivation. The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method allowed an intensive look into the social system of Sovereign High School using a specific summer reading initiative to better understand adolescent perspectives on academic motivation and specifically reading motivation. Such a comprehensive view of overlapping elements evident in poor academic motivation provided a foundation for the research questions surrounding this study. The research questions were intended to provide clarity to adolescents’ overall academic motivational responses to the reading program and specifically identify any potential impact of autonomy, socialization and belongingness through the informal learning experiences of the small book discussion groups. This study potentially adds to the existing body of literature on academic motivation by exploring the impact of a newly implemented high school summer reading experience that engages faculty across disciplines and students across grade levels to better understand adolescent academic motivational and engagement responses.

Chapter 3- Qualitative

Methodology

This research study employed a qualitative approach in exploring adolescent achievement motivation to better understand the adolescent perspectives of their unique educational experience as it relates to the shared reading program. Qualitative inquiry is an inductive approach to research. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011) qualitative research takes place in its natural setting and involves making sense of or interpretations of a phenomenon that exists in that setting (as cited by Creswell, 2013). The role of the researcher is critical in the collection of data, examining of records, interviews of participants and observations. Multiple data sources
are typically used in qualitative research. The unique experiences and perspectives of the participants are the central focus so that the researcher can understand the meaning of the phenomenon as they view it. Data from multiple sources is organized and then patterns, categories and themes emerge from the data. “The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p.238).

In considering this study, the qualitative approach invited the exploration the phenomenon of academic motivation through the unique perspectives of the adolescent participants. Thus, the qualitative approach was considered the best method for this study in obtaining the authenticity of the student voices and making sure the adolescents are truly heard which is critical to this researcher.

**Research Design**

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized in this study for qualitative inquiry into adolescent achievement motivation. IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith within the field of psychology but is more widely used across various disciplines. IPA is a “meaning focused, qualitative method, which is committed to understanding the first person perspective from the third person position, so far as is possible, through inter-subjective inquiry and analysis” (Larkin, 2012). IPA appears to start and remain narrow in scope viewing the individual experiences and uniqueness. Thus, it focuses on the inner perspectives of the individual experience of an event, process or phenomenon. The goal of IPA is idiographic and idiosyncratic, respecting the unique physical, emotional, cognitive qualities of each individual and thus their unique experiences to the same event or process.
IPA is useful in understanding the experiences of various groups of individuals. In this study IPA gave voice to adolescents when considering their daily educational activities. This is critical in education where many educators are charged with and/or apt to apply their own assumptions about what students need or label youth, rationalizing their experience from their own subjective perspective rather than engage in inquiry to delve deeper into the why or the how. Larkin (2012) stated educators need to “engage with, and attend very carefully to, the personal accounts of others” namely our students. IPA provided an ideal tool in exploring why adolescents struggle to find meaning and motivation in their daily academic routine. We need to “seek and understand their perspective” pertaining to their educational activities. This phenomenological method allowed the researcher to delve into the phenomenon while shedding light on the individual nuances of the adolescent participants’ experiences.

Not only is perspective and context important in IPA but so is interpretation. IPA makes use of hermeneutics or the study, theory and practice of interpretation (Larkin, 2012). IPA embraces the interpretation and viewpoint of the researcher in the process of sense-making each individual’s unique experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows researchers to take an approach to their studies so that the experiences are “texts” (Creswell, 2007. p. 59). Researcher bias is acknowledged and embraced as the researcher attempts to be a conduit to the participants’ experiences while bracketing their own opinions and assumptions.

**Research Tradition**

The theoretical foundation for IPA is phenomenology (Larkin, 2012). According to Creswell (2013), the phenomenology approach is one of five qualitative approaches to inquiry in research in addition to grounded theory, ethnography, case study and narrative research. IPA is
similar to phenomenology yet unique in its focus on the individual’s personal meaning of the experience with the phenomenon whereas phenomenology is geared towards describing the commonalities or essence of the experience (McNabb, 2012).

IPA and phenomenology are inductive and exploratory in nature. An interpretative phenomenological analysis is used to design a study in which the intent is to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the lived experiences as described by an individual or small group (Creswell, 2012). IPA differs from phenomenology in its focus, goals and role of the researcher. IPA diverges from Moustakas’ (1994) portrayal of phenomenology where the goal is to transform the experiences of individuals and identify a composite description of the phenomenon which is the essence of the shared experience and is the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). Thus, phenomenology studies individuals’ experience of a certain phenomenon and seeks to widen the lens toward a broader conception of the experience.

IPA is in sharp contrast to phenomenology as it seeks to describe and capture the unique experiences of the individual participant in response to the lived experience of the phenomenon. “IPA is the researcher trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of a particular phenomenon” (McNabb, video, 2012). IPA provided a forum for an in-depth exploration of each participant’s lived experiences and their sense-making of those experiences. In this study, IPA sought individual sense-making of achievement motivation as related to the informal learning experiences of the summer reading initiative, through in-depth exploration of each participant as opposed to the goal for generating generalizations.
This methodology allowed the researcher to delve into the phenomenon of achievement motivation through each participant’s experience with the phenomenon. It provided a systematic approach to interpreting the data and making sense of adolescents’ experiences of academic motivation. This exploration and analysis provided an opportunity for students to gain a voice and informed decision-making that could enhance academic motivation among adolescents in its particular academic setting.

Participants:

As recommended in IPA, a purposeful sampling of adolescents was sought who could offer a meaningful perspective on the phenomenon of achievement motivation (Larkin, 2013). The interpretivist perspective aligns with IPA and invites a closer glimpse into a homogenous group of students through a qualitative study to “better understand the subtle mechanisms” at play that lead to maintaining academic motivation (Butin, 2010, p.62).

A maximum of eight to ten adolescent participants were sought for an in-depth picture of the issue and unique participant experiences. Ideally participants would reflect varying backgrounds, achievement levels and genders. Informed parent and student consent were gained for student participation with the assistance of English teachers, counselors and faculty overseeing the student book discussion group. Faculty facilitators and counselor of the single book discussion group verbally introduced the study and distributed the letters regarding the study to their student book group members inviting student participation in a focus group and follow-up individual interviews. Students were verbally informed of the purpose of the study and its voluntary nature. It was clearly noted that participation in focus group and/or individual interview would have no impact on students’ grades and bares little to no harm to the participants. The informed consent letter further outlined the details in their entirety including
the “opt out” option if they chose not to participate in the follow-up individual interview upon conclusion of the focus group. Students and parents were encouraged to contact this researcher with any further questions and concerns. Each on site counselor received a copy of the letter and were fully informed of the study in the event that students and parents sought their counselor out to discuss participation.

Returned student consent letters were cross-referenced with grade levels (9th through 12th), English levels (concepts, college prep, honors/AP) and demographics to identify potential participants of varying grades, English levels, demographics, gender, race, etc. Ideally, participants would have varied across gender, race, grade and English levels. Demographic and historical data on file was also gleaned including gender, race, grade point average, standardized testing and achievement history.

Creswell (2013) warned, the larger the number of cases the greater potential there is to “diluting the overall analysis”. The small sample size will inherently cause limitations to external validity making the ability to generalize findings difficult. However, the goal of this study is to consider the motivational experiences of the participants in relation to the summer reading initiative.

**Recruitment and access:**

After approval from the Northeastern University’s IRB (Appendix C), the researcher sought approval through the district including superintendent, building principal and consulted the English Department Leader to conduct the study at the researcher’s site and recruit adolescent participants. To maintain the highest regard for ethical considerations and protection of human subjects, parent written consent were sought via parent letters to participate in the
study (Appendix A). Confidentiality was assured through pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants, site, and others named by participants.

**Data collection:**

A total of nine participants volunteered to participate in the study. Data collection began after approval from the school board, superintendent, principal, teachers, and parent and student written consents were obtained. An observation of the book group comprised of 30 students and two faculty advisors was conducted for approximately fifty minutes. The first adolescent focus group was conducted with the five participants who arrived and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. In order to ensure rich think data, the researcher completed a second round of recruitment in order to conduct a second focus group. Recruitment included follow-up face to face contact with students who missed the initial focus group meeting as well as inviting students from the spring book discussion group. A second focus group comprised of four participants was conducted. Follow-up semi-structured, in-depth face to face individual interviews occurred with 3 adolescent participants who were chosen based on their unique perspectives from the focus group discussion.

Creswell (2010) recommends data triangulation where multiple sources of data are utilized for an in depth study depiction. To provide rich contextual data, “Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study” (Merriam, 2009, p.119). The researcher’s role during the book discussion group (lasting approximately 50 minutes) was to primarily observe this class activity. Additional observations of participants’ discussion groups would have been optimal. However, all discussions took place simultaneously. This observation varies from a traditional classroom
observation as it provided a more informal social learning setting comprised of 30 students engaging in the book discussion and two faculty members who facilitated the book discussion group.

Focus groups and individual interviews allow one to gather data that cannot be directly observed, such as thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Merriam, 2009). Expected length of time for each individual interview was approximately forty-five minutes. An interview protocol of 13 open-ended questions was created as recommended by Creswell (2013). Merriam (2009) recommended the best interviews generally involve a fewer number of open-ended questions that yield descriptive data. As recommended by Creswell (2013), the interview questions were based on the theoretical framework and research questions, phrased to be easily understood by the participants, defining and clarifying or avoiding jargon (Merriam, 2009).

Questions were open-ended, general and focused in order to understand the central phenomenon of achievement motivation within the context of the summer reading initiative (Appendix B). The individual interviews were face to face and audio-recorded to capture the non-verbal body language as well as the verbal content of the interview. Field notes were made during and after the interviews. The researcher was conscientious and respectful of the participants’ willingness to share their thoughts and feelings in the interview setting.

Establishing rapport and finding a comfortable setting within the school for the focus group and individual interviews was critical to this process (Merriam, 2009). Establishing rapport involves ensuring reciprocal interactions with participants prior to conducting the interviews. It is essential to relationship building and ensuring that participants feel that can express their opinions and experiences in an open and honest manner. The researcher took care
to provide a welcoming environment for all to feel comfortable participating in the focus group and snacks and drinks were provided. The researcher verbalized that all responses were welcome and that varying viewpoints added to the discussion. The researcher utilized rapport building strategies gained through counseling techniques including the SOLER positioning during the group including: sitting squarely, having an open posture, leaning in, eye contact and relaxing to invite participants to feel relaxed in the setting. The school provided the most convenient location for students and was the most feasible considering transportation needs that other locations would require. The counseling suite was considered an ideal location that allowed for students to sit comfortably around a table in a circular formation to facilitate discussion. Follow-up participant check-ins were completed on an as needed basis for accuracy checks and clarification of any responses.

Additionally, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the student files (transcripts, report cards, standardized tests) to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ motivational and engagement responses throughout their academic career. Documents “are a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator” (Merriam, 2009, p.139). In addition, the focus groups and individual interviews were professionally audio recorded and transcribed via Rev.com and hand coded. Member checking with a fellow counseling colleague was completed to ensure accuracy and consistency across multiple individuals. Member checking provided further reliability and validity to the emergence of codes, categories, themes, and patterns which are integral to the ultimate analysis and findings.

The data collection timeline took place during the 2013-2014 academic school year to allow for the extensive time spent in the setting to gather rich data regarding participant
experience with the shared reading program and achievement motivation. The extensive nature of data collection in this study provided a forum for rich textual raw data for a deeper understanding of the issue of achievement motivation, further interpretation and emergence of themes and concepts central to the study regarding the shared reading program and achievement motivation.

Data storage:

Data was stored at home and office with both password protected computer and backed up with multiple copies via USB ad hard-drive. Paper copies were maintained under locked storage at home and in the office. All data was cleaned and coded so that written records have anonymity and included focus group transcripts, interview transcripts, field notes, personal journals, observations, and information gleaned from document analysis. A master list of all files will be maintained by the researcher with pseudonyms in order respect the anonymity of the participants, faculty and study site. The researcher had sole access to files. All files will be retained for at least five years following the study as recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010).

Data Analysis:

This researcher utilized general inductive analysis (GIA) which is a basic qualitative approach including interviews, coding and “thematic workup of major categories of information” (Thomas, 2006, p.69). GIA uses a detailed and systematic review of raw qualitative data to facilitate the emergence of themes or concepts. According to Thomas (2006), there can be numerous disadvantages to GIA for a new researcher. The researcher must undertake multiple analyses of the data with detailed rigor, pouring over it extensively during open and axial coding.
The researcher must be ready for the fluidity in the study and be willing to allow for the natural changes that might occur out of the data that could impact a change in direction of questioning, questions themselves or the interpretation of data. The in-depth analysis of the data warranted checks and balances where the researcher sought further reliability and validity through a second coder for verification of themes and categories identified. The rich thick descriptions gained from interviewing participants provided this researcher an in-depth look into their academic motivational experiences.

Data analysis is continual throughout the data collection process. Interview transcriptions, field notes, observation notes, focus group transcriptions and field notes and existing documents were reviewed multiple times to track the data and see what emerged in terms of concepts and themes. From there, a formal process of coding and thematic analysis followed. Open coding is considered a first round of coding that occurs that the initial stages of analysis that allows the researcher to develop individual code segments while axial coding is a second round of coding that further facilitates the identification of categories and themes for analysis (Saldana, 2009). Open and axial coding identified codes, concepts, categories and themes emerging from the textual data. Thematic analysis occurs through conceptual mapping or illustrating concepts by providing quotes throughout the study. This involved a focus on repeated words or phrases within and across the participants’ responses and provided evidence of answers to the research questions (Gribich, 2007). This process ensured that participant voices were heard and individual experiences and collective experienced were accurately understood. “This approach to qualitative research insists that the data should speak for themselves initially before any predesigned themes are imposed” (Gribich, 2007, p.32).
Based on Huberman and Miles, the researcher engaged in a systematic approach to analysis with notes in the margins, reflective passages in the notes, metaphors, codes, memos, patterns and themes, and use of contrasts and comparisons (Creswell, 2013). Using Wolcott’s recommendations, highlighting, identifying patterned regularities, and consideration of tables will be given to display the data (Creswell, 2013). The analysis culminated in the presentation of assertions in terms of the overriding themes examined within and across individual participant responses and experiences within this particular summer reading initiative.

**Trustworthiness:**

Trustworthiness is interchangeable with the term validation in qualitative studies. It was essential to build rapport and trust with participants and ensure that there was minimal to no risk or harm to participants. Thus, it involved making sure participants know they may withdraw at any time from the study and honoring their decision to participate or not. This researcher standardized the procedures to reduce ambiguity (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012) and engaged member and cross-member checks of data to ensure accuracy. As a lone researcher, a counseling colleague was consulted and trained as a coder. Inter-coder agreement further lent itself to trustworthiness reflecting “stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets” (Creswell, 2013, p.252). Participant checks ensured accuracy of information.

The use of data triangulation was a primary resource for trustworthiness through the use of semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. “Using multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories to provide collaborating evidence” (as cited by Creswell, 2013, p.251). Qualitative studies use *epoche* to achieve trustworthiness in their studies. Epoche refers to the “bracketing” or setting aside of the researcher’s personal opinions and biases so that the participant voices and perspectives are truly portrayed (Creswell,
2013). It was important to be aware of and reflective of researcher bias and personal opinions on the topic of study and conscientious efforts were made to bracket opinions and biases to ensure the participant opinions and voices were evident in the data and the findings. This was central to this study given the prior relationships this researcher may have with participants given the dual role as guidance counselor at the researcher’s site.

**Protection of Human Subjects:**

Adolescents are generally considered a vulnerable population of interest in research studies. Declining academic motivation and a-motivation has been found among middle school and high school aged adolescents making them more vulnerable to being identified as students who are underperforming or poorly motivated for their academics. Adolescents may already feel marginalized and may be suspicious or even unmotivated to engage in this study. It was this researcher’s goal to shed further light on their academic motivational experience by hearing their voices and opinions. As required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), written parental consent and student consent was obtained. Upon IRB approval, which ensures minimal to no harm to participants, additional approval was sought from the district including superintendent, school board, and building principal.

This researcher has the dual role of guidance counselor. It was of utmost importance for participants to know their participation in no way impacted counselor responsibilities with them and that confidentiality and anonymity would be upheld. It was essential to ensure that justice, beneficence and respect were at the forefront of this study. “The researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas, and needs to determine a setting in which this is possible” (Creswell, 2007, p.133). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they may withdraw their consent to participate at any time during the study.
without any penalty. This researcher remained aware of student feelings and possible misgivings about participation in this study and respected students’ decision to participate or decline.

Reciprocity

A major tenet of ethical considerations in research is reciprocity. Creswell (2013) defined reciprocity as the “giving back to participants for their time and efforts in our projects” (p.55). Reciprocity is a very important consideration in research as participants through their participation can inform our current future daily educational practice. This is especially meaningful when working with vulnerable populations such as adolescents as is in this study. This researcher made it clear that participants may receive no direct benefit from their participation in the study. However, in exchange for sharing their lived experiences, I wanted participants to be aware that their voices would be heard and that their participation could inform daily educational practice at their site. Participants elected to give their time and energy to this study and it was important to identify how they might benefit from their participation. Informed consent without undue pressure was of utmost importance.

Limitations

Due to the use of the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method and small sample size within the single high school setting, there were limits including: context, access, bias, and generalizability (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of academic motivational experiences related to the summer reading initiative under investigation and not for generalization beyond this context (Creswell, 2013). Potential biases might also limit the findings and be noted as they relate to the
researcher’s dual role as guidance counselor. It was of utmost importance for this researcher to remain aware of and cite potential biases.

CHAPTER 4
Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the academic experiences of adolescent students at Sovereign High School and their academic motivation within the context of a newly implemented summer reading initiative. The adolescent participants in this study provided rich, thick descriptions of their general academic motivation levels; their motivation for school related reading; and specifically their motivation within their experience with the summer reading initiative at Sovereign High School. Two focus groups were conducted in February and March of 2014 with a total of nine participants. The first focus group was comprised of five Caucasian adolescent participants, four females and one male. Three additional participants were unable to attend due to absence from school or conflict with an after-school activity. To ensure rich data, a second focus group was conducted a few weeks after the first. It was comprised of four Caucasian adolescent participants, two females and two males. Three additional participants were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts or personal reasons. Each focus groups lasted approximately forty-five minutes.

Follow-up, semi-structured, in-depth face to face individual interviews occurred with three adolescent participants for further exploration of individual experiences, two from the first focus group (Mark and Lauren) and one participant (Michael) from the second focus group. Each individual interview lasted approximately forty minutes including initial introductions with my colleague, Karen Brodsky, who acted as witness in the individual interviews for the safety
for the minor participants as required by Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Participants

Ashley is a 16-year old Caucasian female junior whose historical review of her academic portrait reflected she consistently achieved honor roll status, is in approximately the top 40% of her graduating class and has maintained a college preparatory course load throughout her high school career with the exception of English and history where she has primarily moved toward honors level placement for these courses. She is also a multi-sport athlete. She shared academic motivators including maintaining her academic honor status, a desire to please her mother and a future goal of college.

Jennifer is a 17-year old Caucasian female junior who is in approximately the top 20% of her graduating class and who maintains a college preparatory course load throughout her high school career. However, she has maintained enrollment in honors level English classes. She maintains academic honor status and is very involved in various activities including student council, debate team, and a varsity sport.

Mark is a 16-year old Caucasian male sophomore who is in approximately the top 40% of his graduating class and whose academic file reflects has previously maintained primarily a college preparatory course load. However, this year he has enrolled in mostly honors courses across various disciplines including English and except math. Mark is involved in extracurricular activities of both an academic and athletic nature. Mark reported his primary academic motivation stems from a desire to learn more and “get into a good college and a get a good job in the future”.
Jackie is an 18-year old Caucasian female who is a senior who has taken a mix of college preparatory, Honors and Advance Placement level courses in various disciplines and in the top 30% of her graduating class. She has primarily enrolled in honors level English classes. She described her general academic motivation as primarily being related to initial college acceptance and maintaining her college acceptance, “I keep my grades up so I can get into the college I want to get into and so I can stay accepted to the place”.

Lauren is an 18-year old Caucasian female senior in the top 50% of her class who has maintained a college preparatory course load throughout high school years with enrollment in honors level English classes. Lauren described her general academic motivation as “to get into college and hopefully be successful with a good job in the future”.

Erica is a 17-year old Caucasian female senior who is in the top 50% of her graduating class and has maintained a mix of college prep, honors and advance placement level courses throughout her high school career. She has moved from college prep to honors level English classes for junior and senior years. Her primary academic motivation is “for your future and having to get into college and everything”.

Kristen is a 15-year old Caucasian female sophomore who just transferred to High School X this year from out of state. Since participation in this study, she transferred back to her former school to finish out the school year. She was primarily enrolled in college prep courses this year. Due to her short time in the district, her academic standing was not available. A historical review of her academic file reflected grades ranging from A to C and some former placement in honors level classes achieving low C’s in her former high school. The file also reflected multiple school transfers due to various family moves over her academic years. Kristen
described little to no motivation for her academics. She reports, “if it wasn’t for my parents I probably wouldn’t even be in school”.

Michael is a 16-year old Caucasian male junior who has maintained a college prep course load throughout high school and is ranked in the lower 50% percentile in comparison to his graduating class. This year he has enrolled in honors level English and History classes. A historical review of his academic profile revealed a distinguished award from a former district out of state in 5th grade for performance in math. Teacher reports in elementary schools described him as, “enthusiastic for learning” and “willing to accept new challenges”. Standardized test scores reflected advanced performance across major subjects. As reported by participant, his grades took a slip dip in middle school from mostly B’s and C’s to mostly C’s and D’s by 8th grade. Michael described a moral sense or obligation to do well academically and for his future aspirations of college and career.

Thomas is an 18-year old Caucasian senior male. A historical review of his academic file revealed he ranked within the top 15% of his graduating class. He has maintained primarily honors level courses throughout high school including English classes. Thomas described his academic motivation primarily related to “wanting to do well and then like get into college and be prepared for college”.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Class Rank</th>
<th>Academic Rigor</th>
<th>English Level</th>
<th>Individual Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>College Prep</td>
<td>Honors</td>
<td>athlete, honors society, class representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Class rank</td>
<td>Academic Rigor</td>
<td>English Level</td>
<td>Individual Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>College Prep</td>
<td>Honors</td>
<td>athlete, honor society, student council, debate team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>College Prep</td>
<td>Honors</td>
<td>athlete, science club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Honors/ AP</td>
<td>Honors</td>
<td>tv studio, renaissance leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>College Prep</td>
<td>Honors</td>
<td>athlete, student council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Focus Group 2 Participants*

The findings are summarized and presented in sections organized according to four themes that emerged throughout analysis of the focus groups and interviews. These themes reflect the participants’ academic motivation in relation to the summer reading initiative:

1. Value of grades on other aspects of life
2. A desire to feel confident and capable

3. Choice and personal interests are important

4. Reliance on others for support

Sub-headings are provided under each theme for greater clarity that encapsulates the essence of the participants’ collective experiences. The findings are prefaced with an account of my observation of one of the initial book discussion groups. This provides a basis for understanding the general context of participants’ responses for the focus groups and individual interviews that follow.

**Observation** I observed a larger book discussion group that took place during the first round of the school’s summer reading initiative in November 2013. The average group size was 15 students and one faculty member. The group I observed was comprised of 31 students and two faculty members, Mr. Smith and Ms. Jackson who had selected the same young adult novel about a local celebrity. The book discussion groups were held during a morning period where all book discussions were occurring simultaneously across the high school.

Book discussion announcements via the morning announcements served as a reminder of the pending book discussions and signs displayed around the school served as a visual of room assignments for each book discussion. In addition, email reminders were sent out to the faculty by administration in the weeks prior to the book discussions. Book club assignments and teacher guidelines for potential discussion points were also made available via email attachments.

The observed book discussion group was held in Mr. Smith’s classroom who had selected the book. He had set up the class in a large circle of student desks to accommodate the large group size of 31 and facilitate verbal interaction. The book discussion group was comprised of
26 females and five males. The distribution across grade levels was 18 seniors; 5 juniors; 4 sophomores and 4 freshmen and all students were of Caucasian descent. Twelve of the eighteen seniors had taken an English class with Mr. Smith the prior school year. When asked why students had chosen this particular book, some shared they chose the book based on the teacher, others had chosen the book based on the book itself and some chose the book because their friends had chosen this book. Mr. Smith stood for the duration of the group while Ms. Jackson sat at a desk within the circle of students. All students appeared to have brought a copy of the book for reference. Ms. Jackson, had sticky notes in various parts of her copy of the book to facilitate discussing topics of interest. Mr. Smith took charge of initiating discussion points for the groups to respond and made reference to a list of questions that he generated for the group’s discussion. Ms. Jackson brought up discussion points from her seat referring to various chapters in the book using her sticky notes as book markers to guide her statements.

Table 3

*Observed Book Discussion Group: Round One of Summer Reading Initiative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Mr. Smith &amp; Ms. Jackson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The book discussion group was teacher driven with discussion points such as “what aspect of the book did you relate to the most?” and “what was your favorite part of the book”. Each question brought about active interactions among any of the group members. Many students were actively engaged in verbal participation and some students were quiet throughout the discussion. At times, Mr. Smith would ask for a show of hands about something related to the book and students who had not verbally participated would raise their hand as a form of non-verbal participation. For example, he asked if anyone had a similar experience or could relate to that of the character in the book, “has anyone had this happen to them?” He would follow-up with, “does anyone want to share that experience?” or “what was that like?”. There were many points that were of a universal nature that would not require knowledge of the book to jump in and participate. For example, the character in the book talked about self-consciousness regarding a facial imperfection. Anyone could relate to some personal imperfection and participate in the discussion. The character also revealed her feelings about being whistled at by male construction workers while walking down the street. Many females in the group shared they had a similar occurrence in their own lives and how it made them feel.

The discussion lasted to the end of the period with active engagement of the book content. Both teachers appeared to have great enthusiasm and interest for the book of discussion. Group members engaged in active discussion and debate about the points in the book throughout the entire period reflecting a lively discussion from this researcher’s perspective. As an observer to the group, I became curious if all the students in the group had read the book. Students were not graded on the discussion group and there was no tracking of any students who may not have read the book, as the initial goal of the discussion piece was to bring students and faculty
together regarding a mutually interesting book. For this reason, and the “universal nature” of participation, it was my overall impression that this book discussion group was well received.

Administration conducted a student survey following the initial book discussion group. Based on survey feedback, it is noteworthy that administration decided to employ a second round of the book selection and discussion groups midway through the year. The participants all varied in their second round of book selections and discussion groups.

Focus Groups

The first adolescent focus group was originally comprised of eight adolescent participants. However, three participants were unable to attend due to absence from school and/or after-school scheduling conflicts. The first focus group was conducted with four participants from the larger observed discussion group with Mr. Smith and Ms. Jackson in comparison to the fifth participant, Mark, who was in a discussion group comprised of five students and one male faculty member, Mr. Brand.

The second focus group was conducted a few weeks later, the group was comprised of four Caucasian students, two females and two males, who ranged from grades 10 through 12 and varied in terms of academic levels from core level, college preparatory, honors and Advanced Placement levels.

Themes

Value of grades on other aspects of life

When asked about general motivation for academic studies, overall participants across focus groups verbally shared their primary motivation for school stemmed from the value that academics held for various reasons for each of them such as grades, college acceptance, status
and pleasing parents. In general “grades” were very important and meaningful to participants. Academics were valued as a necessity in achieving other aspects of their lives. The theme of value of grades brings clarity to the individual perspectives as well as the general scope of meaningfulness of academics across participants.

Michael discussed his general desire for a good future and yet reflected that he was operating on “should” or a “need” in that doing well in school is “the right thing to do”. The following quote described this aspect of his thoughts and feelings on his general motivation for his studies:

“I feel that if I had to say what my motivation was I’d be, I’d faster say that I didn’t have a motivation and that I just went along with what I felt was the right thing to do and more operated off of I feel that I should get this in and I feel that I should move onto the next thing, rather than really thinking oh well I want to go and I want to do whatever it is I’m working on...I don’t always feel that I’m working toward something …just that I’m doing what I need to do”

**Goals and future**

Looking more closely at the specific value academics held for the participants, it was clear that goals and the future were a top priority. Grades were equated with goals and future aspirations such as national honor society placement, college, playing sports in college, obtaining a desired career or job. This is evident in Jennifer’s response, “I do good in school so I can get into college and play a sport”. Jennifer elaborated that in order to achieve this goal, “Gotta keep the grades up”! Jackie echoed this sentiment with, “I keep my grades up so I can get into the college I want to get into and so I can stay accepted to the place”. Lauren touched on the importance of academics and grades in obtaining a career, “my academic motivation is to get into
college and hopefully be successful with a good job in the future”. These feelings were shared by members of the second focus group as Erica shared, “your future and having to get into college and everything”. Thomas further stated, “wanting to do well and then like get into college and be prepared for college”.

For the participants, summer reading further aligned with obtaining future aspirations. When it came to motivation for summer reading, participants shared their perceptions of the purpose for summer reading. Participants perceived there to be value in summer reading and understood why the school would want students to read throughout the summer and assign summer reading. They noted that reading through the summer is a good cognitive activity and could be used to build vocabulary. Participants had used their perspectives on summer reading to apply meaningfulness to this task. According to Erica, summer reading is important because it goes with the curriculum and offers different views on the subject. Thomas elaborated, “I guess like just to keep our mind on topic, keep it active over the summer and then like maybe help you learn a little bit about what you’re going to be learning for next year”. Michael’s perspective brought in a more global lens of viewing the purpose of summer reading beyond the scope of alignment with curriculum and the cognitive benefits,

“I definitely feel there is a purpose to it, it’s just that people don’t read enough and what’s apparent all over America is that you need more people who are reading uh because reading definitely helps you boost your intelligence and boost your vocabulary and it helps when you read more often you have a better understanding about vocabulary you can grasp it easier and generally when it comes to reading and writing, if you read you’ll be a better writer, you’ll be better at reading, you’ll pick up more concepts and
things along those lines, everybody should read I feel and they just want everybody to read…”

Anticipation of assessment

The grade or expectation of credit arose as a driving force for engaging in required summer reading. Ashley’s statement brought back the importance of grades when it comes to summer reading, “um like my motivation is like we always get like tested on it when we come back when the school year starts”. Jennifer agreed, “I have the same reason, I need good grades to begin with”. Erica used the strategy of waiting to see if something was assigned, “cause you don’t always have a project on every single book you read over the summer so you just wait til like you know what you’re doing on it”. Michael highlighted the anticipation of being tested as well,

“I think mainly when I have a book that I have to read for summer reading the only reason that I go through it is because I always assume there will be some sort of project that will be associated with it and I’m not willing to have to go back and read it or Spark Note it or whatever I’d rather just have it on my mind so that I can do the project or whatever it is more easily”.

However, participants across groups were mixed in their desire for a grade or credit of some type to make this summer reading experience “count”. In fact, participants in the first focus group shared their disappointment that there was no assessment following the initial summer reading initiative. Jackie stated, “it was hard to just think oh ok I’ll read this book and then we can talk about it but not really going to get any school credit for it”. Jennifer anticipated some type of assessment, “I thought I was going to get a grade on this (summer reading initiative book) and then I didn’t so then I was upset that I spent time on that and not
more time on my required book”. Whereas, participants in the second focus group either liked that there was no assessment or thought a participation grade would be appropriate. Although, no one thought the journal component added in the second round was the way to go for credit.

**Status and pleasing parents**

Various participants addressed the importance of maintaining grades to either enhance status and/or please their parents. Ashley noted, “*my motivation is probably to stay in National Honor Society and my mom is all about me doing good…*”. Kristen was the lone participant to share no academic motivation and yet credited her parents for staying in school, “*I don’t really have motivation for I guess academics*” and later shared, “*If it wasn’t for my parents I probably wouldn’t even be in school*”. She echoed similar lack of motivation for required summer reading, “*I don’t have any motivation for summer reading, especially since it’s like in the summer and I’m out doing whatever I do*”.

**Summary:** Eight out of nine participants across focus groups and individual interviews cited the connection between high school and the impact on their future success. Kristen was the lone participant who reported a-motivation or no personal motivation for her studies and a total dislike of reading in general. Kristen’s academic records reflect several school transfers throughout her academic years due to family moves. Since this study was focused on academic motivation related to the reading initiative, it is not known if these transfers or other factors contributed to her lack of academic motivation. Overall, participants identified extrinsic academic motivators being derived from the value of good grades and the role they played on future goals and aspirations such as college and career, maintaining academic status and pleasing parents. Mark shared a unique perspective within the context of this study bringing light to
intrinsic motivation. Woven throughout his responses was the concept of learning for the sake of knowledge itself and enjoyment of school related reading that aligned with his personal interests.

In general, eight of the nine participants described a personal enjoyment of reading and engage in personal reading. Furthermore, participants saw academic reading serving a purpose and being valuable. Participants perceived there to be value in summer reading and understood why the school would want students to read throughout the summer and assign summer reading. They noted that reading through the summer is a worthwhile cognitive activity. Participants applied meaning to the initial round of the summer reading initiative and felt that they had time to engage in reading during the summer which facilitated their buy-in for this academic task.

The exception to this was Kristen who further shared her lack of motivation to read which in part was related to poor reading efficacy and resulted in a lack of buy-in and an avoidance of such an activity.

Despite overall participant buy-in for their academics, personal enjoyment of reading and identifying value of academic reading, participants lacked internal motivation for required academic reading. Several participants agreed that the expectation of being graded on the summer reading was a strong motivating factor for engaging in required summer reading. The reading initiative book was of secondary concern to their other required summer reading books where there would be an assessment such as project, test or grade. Overall, five participants read their initially chosen books. Those who didn’t start or didn’t finish their book felt no consequence since no assessment or credit was given for the initial summer reading initiative book. Thus, the grade or expectation of credit arose as a driving force for engaging in required summer reading.

Desire to feel confident and capable
The overlap of task value and self-efficacy were intertwined across groups and participant responses in that the value of the reading assignment was directly tied to participants’ perceptions of their ability to understand the reading material and perform well on related assessment. For these participants, independent reading brought issues of time constraints and lack of comprehension for difficult reading material. Participants relied on in-class reading, teachers and short cuts such as internet resources for comprehension and confidence.

Motivation and confidence regarding required reading was highlighted by Jennifer, “I have little to no motivation to read in school mainly because I am not interested in the books, there are a lot of them that are old English and I don’t really understand them so I don’t really read them”. Jackie brought up the important role that teachers play in motivation, comprehension and efficacy, “I think it’s easier to be motivated when you’re in class because the teacher can explain it more and it gives you more confidence I guess”. Participants shared a desire for in-classroom reading where the teacher could provide a platform for greater explanation, understanding and confidence in school related reading enabling the teacher to act as a conduit for knowledge about the required reading. Kristen again discussed her own lack of confidence when it came to reading unless reading short books that had “small words”.

**Time**

Some shared a dislike for independent required reading citing lack of personal time outside the classroom. Ashley stated, “I think I'm never interested in the book they ask us to read and when I get home I feel like I don’t have enough time to read it”. Lauren shared, “if I uh have nothing going on or if I’m just laying on the beach doing nothing I’ll end up reading it”. Kristen’s lack of motivation for summer reading and factor of time were apparent in her
response, “I don’t have any motivation for summer reading, especially since it’s like in the summer and I’m out doing whatever I do”.

Participants discussed the point that the summer initiative book selection was in addition to their other required summer readings for English and/or History classes. This was the case for eight out of the nine participants as Kristen was the only participant who did not have any other assigned summer reading for her classes. They felt burdened by having the extra book to read and most focused their summer reading progression with the focus on their other summer readings which they felt were the priority due to getting graded on it upon return to school. Lack of time and other academic responsibilities arose in discussing the second round of the initiative. Lauren shared her feelings, “I was angry…I already have school work that I have to get done and I have to be college ready…I have to write like a seven page research paper and it’s really overwhelming and to be honest I didn’t even buy my book”. The journaling component incorporated in the second round was an added responsibility and further identified the issue of time constraints. According to Erica, “I liked my book but then when we like had the journals due I would always like be behind where I needed to be in the journals and so like then I just stopped reading halfway through the book cause I couldn’t keep up with it”. She further shared the problem of lack of time, “we were obligated to record like summaries…and like over the summer I feel like more people read that time it was over the summer and it was a book you chose and if we did that over the school year its hard…you also have the stuff you’re getting from your classes to do”. Lack of time and lack of comprehension for difficult material were seen as obstacles to their confidence in the material. These factors led to frustration, stress and ultimately poor motivation and poor engagement in the second round of the initiative.

Short cuts
The availability of online resources and shortcuts entered the discussion as a means to obtain knowledge about the book without expending the independent time reading the book in its entirety and to be prepared for any assessment related to the required reading. Thomas openly shared that he hasn’t “read a book since like freshman year”. Thomas stated, “when they make you read a book that you don’t like but you can read like a paragraph summary on the chapter it’s a lot easier to do than read the book”. Erica shared, “I don’t really read for summer or for like summer reading, I’ll just like look it up or ask somebody else or read like a couple of chapters”. Lauren stated, “um I do read my English books if we are reading them in class but if we have to read them at home I’ll probably Spark Note¹ them…”. Access to internet resources and use of Spark Notes to gain information about required readings were brought up in both groups.

**Summary:** A general lack of motivation to independently read what school was providing was found in part due to lack of understanding of the material and/or lack of confidence in their ability to understand the material, a perceived lack of time and the availability of internet resources to inform the participants. Therefore, when it comes to adolescents’ academic motivation for school related reading and specifically the summer reading initiative, participant responses reflected that efficacy played a role in their intentions and engagement in reading. Difficulty in comprehension and lack of confidence led to avoidance or use of shortcuts as shared by various participants.

A desire for in-class reading reflected that teachers play a role in students’ the personal agency or the extent to which they comprehend difficult material and confidence to achieve a positive outcome on associated assessment. The teacher role also reflected the agency by proxy

¹ Spark Notes is a web based literary resource providing help for book comprehension, writing papers and test study guides for various academic subjects. [http://www.sparknotes.com/about/](http://www.sparknotes.com/about/)
that Bandura highlighted in that there is interdependency between teachers and students to achieve a desired positive academic outcome.

The participants’ primary goal in obtaining information from other sources about the required reading was the desire to feel confident to perform well on an ensuing assessment. Chapter summaries, peers, and the internet or use of SparkNotes enabled quicker understanding of the material and confidence in the participants’ ability to perform well on an expected test related to required reading without actually reading the books in their entirety. Internet resources played a role in fulfilling the personal agency replacing the teacher’s role of proxy agency when that was not made available.

**Importance of choice and personal interests**

**Control**

In addition, participants across focus groups echoed the importance of choice or autonomy offered in the reading initiative and the concept of choice and autonomy arose quickly in each discussion. All participants exercised autonomy and control in signing up for their selected book within the 78 book offerings. Although, all admitted to signing up for their book simply because that was the expectation or obligation and potential consequence of getting a book they were not interested in or being stuck with a book “that no one wanted”.

Most participants across focus groups admitted that they enjoy reading other books of personal interest including Thomas who shared, “*I read like other books that haven’t been assigned…*” and Erica agreed, “*like if it was my choice to pick a book and read it on my own time then I would read it*”. Michael echoed, “*personally I read constantly*”.

Participants enjoyed the autonomy, choice and variety offered through this year’s summer reading initiative. The notion of personal preferences being accounted for through
choice was echoed across participants and is captured in Michael’s statement, “…I feel having the choice of book is it definitely inspires you to read more because you want to read whatever you picked”. When asked how thoughts and feelings changed with this year’s summer reading initiative, participants such as Jennifer shared, “I liked it a lot better…because I didn’t get bored with my book it was a book I enjoyed to read so it almost wasn’t like torture to read my book it was kind of fun”. Erica stated, “I liked that we could pick the book cause I actually liked the book I picked and so I didn’t mind reading it and since we had such a lot of different options to choose from that was nice…”. Only Jackie shared a differing view of the number of choices offered, “I personally felt like overwhelmed with all the different types of books…”. There was an overall positive response with participants enjoying the choices that were offered and that it brought personal preferences into account.

Participants were split in their responses regarding the on-line sign book sign-up aspect of this year’s initiative, with five finding it easy and four finding it difficult. Ashley completed this on her phone and found it “easy”, Jackie agreed it was “convenient”, Michael echoed it “definitely wasn’t difficult”. However, some felt it was more confusing such as Jennifer who shared, “I didn’t know how to log on or what we had to do to sign-up for the book so I just got someone else to do it for me”. Mark agreed that it was “confusing…I actually signed up for three books by accident”. Thomas signed up immediately on-line for his book and was the sole participant across groups to order his summer reading book electronically through his Kindle. However, he admitted to not reading it because he “just never got around to it…like I pretty much forgot about it all summer”. These sentiments highlighted the overlap of efficacy and autonomy and further indicated that choice and autonomy did not necessarily translate into motivation to engage in the task.
However, when it came to the second round of the read initiative that was introduced mid-way through the school year, emotions and responses were quite strong in opposition sparked controversy in terms of choice and control. The second round had students sign-up online again for their book selection based on teachers’ chosen books with an additional component of journaling. According to focus group participants, students were expected to maintain a journal for each chapter of this book. They were also expected to answer questions regarding their reading strategy. The journals then would be graded and go into their English grades.

Participants felt burdened by the second round mid-way through the year and perceived it to be thrust upon them with a new requirement of journal keeping that they would be graded on. Mark initiated this discussion, “I didn’t like that we had to do journals for that book”. He shared his distaste for various aspects of the journal, tracking vocabulary words, “stupid categories”, and having to document reading strategies, “I don’t do any of that I just read the book”. He felt the journals were “a waste or paper”. Lauren felt “stressed”, “overwhelmed” and “angry”. Jennifer “was going to boycott”...”I didn’t boycott, I just didn’t do it”. It became clear to me that the journaling component was perceived as lacking value to the participants. Lauren shared she was “angry” and thought, “this is pointless”. Jennifer thought of “boycotting” and in fact did not complete the journaling component as she thought it was “ridiculous”.

In addition, participants across groups perceived that the teachers had no choice or control in the second round of the initiative and were not vested in this activity. Erica shared, “...the teacher didn’t even seem too interested, it was kind of like she had to do it”. Jennifer echoed this in the first focus group, “I didn’t think the teachers even liked it that much, I mean
well the teachers I talked to, none of them are really happy about it, it’s one more thing they have to grade”.

Participants struggled to find value, relevance or meaning in this second assignment of the summer reading initiative which was evidenced by Lauren, “during the school year I don’t see the purpose of it at all because I thought that’s what the books that were given in English class assigned”. She emphasized this thought with, “it’s just, what’s the point”? Jennifer chimed in, “ridiculous” and “it definitely takes away the fun of it”.

In contrast to the first round, seven out of nine participants did not finish the book or never started the book for the second round. All participants struggled to find value and meaning in the second round of the reading initiative and added journaling component despite the autonomy of book selection offered. In addition, participants’ strong emotions and responses appeared to relay that the second round of the summer reading initiative really counteracted its initial goals of providing autonomy, socialization and inspiring a love of or motivation for reading.

Overall, participants wanted even greater autonomy in the book selection in the future. They sought diversity of book selection within each book discussion experience that reflected personal interests so everyone in the group could have a different book that they shared with the rest of the group. Mark offered, “like during your summer, whatever you choose to read…bring that in the next year and like say this is what I did, this is what I felt about it…”. Their sentiments seemed to overlap the idea, ‘don’t pick something you think I would like, let me pick what I would like’. Thomas’ statement reflected this point, “I guess if you could just have it some way that the kids could pick a book more toward what they would want other than just the options that the teachers picked”.
Choice further arose in the discussion of assessment. Mark and Lauren thought there should be choice in the assessment for credit such as Lauren offered “maybe like a poster board, or a PowerPoint, or something like that just kind of summarizing”. All focus group two participants liked the initial round where there was just the discussion group and nothing else. If credit was going to be given, Thomas summed up their collective thoughts, “I wouldn’t want to attach like things to do after every chapter or after you read the book but maybe if the teacher graded you on your participation in the discussion”. However, compared to past years, overall all participants shared Mark’s feelings, “I still think there’s room for improvement but it’s gotten better than just this is the one book you have to read and that’s it”.

The discussion turned to inspiring a love of reading and participants highlighted the importance of a sense of autonomy, control and personal choice. The impact of autonomy on academic inspiration or motivation within curriculum and specifically regarding the reading initiative was summed up by Michael:

“if you can be inspired to read for some reason that’s the best thing if you can be inspired to read out of school and on your own time that would be good but whenever it comes to an obligated reading system I feel that its gonna end up being less than successful”.

**Summary:** Participants echoed each other’s thoughts and feelings about the autonomy offered in the reading initiative and the concept of choice and autonomy. The presence of autonomy and personal interests led to the reading task providing greater self-efficacy, more personal meaning and having greater value. Participants liked the autonomy, variety and quantity of books offered through the summer reading initiative. Overall, participants shared that the summer reading initiative was an improvement from past years as it incorporated choice and personal interest in book selection. Participants’ thoughts on the role of assessment in the
summer reading initiative varied. Their suggestions reflected a greater desire for choice of assessment such as a participation grade, power point, poster, project, or paper.

A pervasive lack of autonomy, socialization and teacher investment was expressed by all participants across groups regarding the second round of summer reading initiative. Participants felt there was a distinct change in the second round among the teachers in that they hadn’t supported or engaged in this reading assignment. Without teacher input, investment and enthusiasm in the academic task, the task value or meaning is lost. Not only do teachers lose motivation for the task at hand but there is a trickle-down effect leading to a lack of motivation, engagement and purpose among the students. This reflects the importance of the roles teachers play in being provided control and autonomy within the curriculum development and delivery.

Overall, control for book selection provided for personal interests to be accounted for and proved to be an important aspect and motivational force for most of the participants in their experience with the summer reading initiative. Participants expressed a desire for greater choice and control in future book selections.

**Reliance on others for support**

The initiative was set up with the intention that students would choose books based on the book content that aligned with their personal interests and not based on the teacher who selected the book or what books their peers had chosen. No names were associated with the books during the sign-up phase. Students viewed the selection of 78 books online with the cover picture, title and brief description of the book. They could also see if the book was open for more students to sign-up or if it was closed and had reached its maximum capacity of either 15 or 30 slots.
Participants shared differing views on the anonymity associated with this aspect of the initiative. Mark sought greater transparency, “it was kind of secretive…I didn’t like that we didn’t know who was in our group or our teacher because it would be nice if we could kind of know oh I know this teacher you know, kind of get like a feeling for if this teacher likes this book and I like this book I know this teacher and I like this teacher maybe I’ll like this book”. He also thought, “If I know the students who are in this group I could like talk to the students about the book to see what they thought about it too but we didn’t know until that day so”. Others such as Jennifer knew the teacher and friends who had chosen her book. She further stated this impacted her decision on her book choice, “I picked the book because I liked the teacher and I liked the person the book was about”.

Participants in the first focus group desired greater transparency in knowing the teacher and students who would be in their book discussion group. Participants in the second focus group differed on this point. Erica thought the intentional anonymity “…was smart cause I think a lot of people pick their book according to the teacher and who’s going to be in that, but then kids like do that anyways, they knew who all what book all their friends were picking”. Yet, seven out of the nine participants knew the teacher who had chosen the book because they were either reading it in class or talking to students about their book selection. All participants from the observed book discussion group knew some friends that had selected the same book. Participant responses and behavior reflected a reliance on teachers and peers in guiding their book choices.

**Peers**

As previously noted, some participants relied on peers to share information on a mutually chosen book for gaining information about the book instead of reading the book. In addition,
students talked about the depth and quality of their book discussion experience which had in part depended on the level of peer interaction, size of the group, and whether they had read the book. Lauren who admitted to not finishing her book thought it was easy because, “…there were so many people in the class that we were in… you didn’t even have to speak up about anything and you weren’t required to say anything…it didn’t count as a grade, didn’t have to write anything, do a project, so it was pretty laid back”.

Jennifer who was in the same book discussion as Lauren expressed that she was counting on peers for a quality interaction in the discussion group, “I like the exact opposite of what Lauren liked, I did not like that some not everyone had to participate, that not everyone read the book, I would rather have, like I spent my time reading that book, I would rather have had everyone in the class read the book too so we could all actually discuss it. I liked when we actually did discuss the book, which wasn’t very much”. Mark pointed out that there were five students in his book discussion group and one faculty member, Mr. Brand. Mark shared that everyone in his group read the book. Participants such as Jennifer, thought they would have felt “much more pressure” to read the book in such a small discussion group.

Teachers

Participants across groups agreed the book discussion experiences were teacher driven with teachers initiating discussion points. Michael asked his focus group participants if any of them had a “serious like really good discussion” to which Thomas responded, “yeah well like for my book yeah because like everyone in my book got really into it except for the five guys who didn’t read it and the whole rest of the class was girls…the teacher would just ask a question and it would start like a whole debate and like it was easy to jump into like even if I hadn’t read the book but like they were just talking the entire period so they used up the entire hour”. Erica
who was also in Thomas’ discussion group agreed this discussion group experience was “a lot better” in comparison to her second one midway through the year.

Erica described quite different experience the second round of the summer reading initiative, “…like half the class didn’t read and there was only like ten kids and just nobody in the class was friends with each other so we were just sitting there with the teacher asking us questions.” Michael shared a similar experience, “the second time around it was pretty much carried by my teacher and he went through and just kind of talked about it but nobody was willing to say anything else.”

Table 5  ADDED!!

Table of Motivators and De-Motivators

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<th>High Achieving Motivators</th>
<th>High Achieving De-Motivators</th>
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<td>Grades</td>
<td>No assessment</td>
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<td>Lack of content interest</td>
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<td>Summer timing</td>
<td>Mid-year timing</td>
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<td>Choice</td>
<td>Forced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Poor comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive peer membership</td>
<td>Negative peer membership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived positive teacher motivation</td>
<td>Perceived negative teacher motivation</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
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Summary: The social support themes were clearly evident in participants’ development of sense of self-efficacy and academic motivation. As noted in the literature, it was evident in this study that teachers maintain a critical role in academic motivation of high school students. They acted as primary positive influences on academic motivation of these participants. Teacher investment also lent to the quality and quantity of socialization afforded through the book discussion forum. Participant responses echoed past research that teacher investment is critical to student self-efficacy, academic motivation and engagement. In this case, teachers were provided latitude and flexibility in terms of the books they selected and how they led their book group discussions and socialization appeared to be greatly impacted by teacher’s investment and style of handling each group. Regardless of group size, participants either enjoyed the quality of interaction and socialization within their discussion groups or craved more. The level of perceived socialization appeared to be more directly related to how individual teachers handled their group discussions. Participants suggested greater transparency in future book selections to enhance opportunities for socialization.

Summary of Focus Group Discussions

In summary, the two focus groups provided a foundation for the perceived academic motivational experiences of the adolescent participants within the context of their involvement with the summer reading initiative. Similar motivational forces of an extrinsic nature were shared across focus groups. Participants shared a concern for academic success, maintaining positive academic status, pleasing parents and a concern for future related to college acceptance and preparation. Participants across both focus groups cited the connection between high school academic success and their future success in terms of getting into college, securing a good job and/or attaining a desired career. Given the focus on grades and the impact on these aspects of
their lives, participants highly valued required academic assignments in terms of assessment and expectation of being graded or obtaining credit. Eight of nine participants reported to be driven by the expectation of a grade that might come from the reading initiative such a test or project.

Most participants enjoyed reading in general when they could personally select books that incorporated their own interests. However, participants shared a general dislike toward required reading especially when there were little to no choice in the readings. Participants found much of the required content difficult to comprehend citing the content of Old English books as an example. Thus, they found independent reading difficult and time consuming and an obstacle to their motivation and engagement in required reading. Reading for school was also considered time consuming in relation to their other academic expectations. Participants preferred in-classroom reading where the teacher could act as a conduit for learning by explaining difficult material and increasing their understanding of and confidence in comprehending difficult reading material.

Kristen was the lone participant that shared a general lack of motivation or a-motivation for her academic studies and more specifically for reading. Kristen’s responses reflected low personal reading efficacy that resulted in an avoidance of this task. It is not known if Kristen’s multiple transfers and relocations or her dislike and discomfort in reading have been factors in her lack of academic motivation due to the this study’s focus on the participants’ motivation related to the reading initiative. However, Kristen’s participation in this study was very beneficial as it provided a glimpse into an important segment of adolescents who are not motivated or engaged in their education. Kristen’s motivational responses differed from the high achieving participants in that she felt low efficacy and thus was moved to avoid such academic reading tasks possibly out of fear of failure as put forth by Atkinson’s (1957) study on
motivational determinants. Students such as Kristen are especially susceptible to lacking persistence through high school and are at risk of dropping out. Kristen’s voice is especially important in this aspect of research and in daily educational practice.

Overall, the participants shared a positive regard for the initial summer reading initiative in comparison to past years in terms of the increased autonomy and choice it offered. Participants liked that this year’s summer reading initiative was structured in a way that provided a forum for choice and personal interests to be taken into account. Participants overwhelmingly voiced a desire for even greater autonomy in book selection. They questioned why teachers should pick books that the students might like and instead have students pick the books that reflect their own interests. Thoughts surrounding type of assessment for the summer reading initiative varied from participants wanting a participation grade for reading initiative to those who wanted individual autonomy in assessment selection such as PowerPoints, poster boards, papers, etc.

However, greater autonomy, choice, efficacy and even motivation regarding the reading initiative did not always translate into greater engagement across participants. Four of the nine participants either never started or never finished reading their chosen book for the first round of the reading initiative. Motivation, meaning and engagement decreased further for the second round of the reading initiative where six out of nine participants never started or never finished their second round choice. Students either reported they forgot about the book, chose not to read it, or never finished the book. Others read chapter summaries, use the internet such as SparkNotes, or asked peers about mutually selected books. The primary reason for these choices reflected a focus on other required summer readings where they knew an assessment would occur.
Based on participant responses, the opportunity for socialization through the book discussion forum overall appeared to fall short of its goal. The secrecy of the book selection may have played a role in limiting the opportunity for socialization. The responses regarding the quality and quantity of socialization offered by the book discussion group experience were scattered across participants with some describing in-depth, quality discussions with good teacher and peer debates while others found the discussions sparse and lacking. Responses regarding group size varied and there was no clear delineation as to whether a smaller or larger group size was more advantageous as some thought the larger group size lent itself to greater discussion and others found comfort in the anonymity it provided.

Timing of the summer reading requirements arose as a major factor in student motivation and engagement in the summer reading initiative. Specifically, participants thought the timing of the first round of the initiative was acceptable and perceived students and teachers to be more vested, motivated and engaged in this round of the initiative. To the contrary, most participants across both focus groups thought the addition of the second round of the initiative in the middle of the school year was poor in terms of timing and necessity. Specifically, the added journal component in the second round of the initiative was perceived to be a mundane task that they did not have time for. Students felt overwhelmed, burdened and angry by the added reading requirement when they already had their other course expectations under way. This component led to a decrease in motivation and engagement in the second round of the initiative. The second round of the reading initiative lost its value and its meaning which created a snowball effect in terms of poor motivation and engagement for this task.

In addition, they felt that the second round was forced upon the teachers as well leading to a perceived lack of teacher motivation and engagement. They perceived students and
teachers to be more vested in the initial round as opposed to the second round. Their responses reflected the critical role that teachers play in their academic motivation and personal agency in terms of the extent to which students believe in their ability to understand perceived difficult material, acquire confidence for the material and support students’ perceived ability to achieve a positive outcome when tested on material. The teacher role also reflected the collective or shared responsibility that exists with inter-dependency between teachers and students to achieve a desired positive academic outcome.

**Individual Interviews**

Follow-up individual adolescent interviews were conducted with three participants who were chosen for various reasons based on their responses and participation in their respective focus group discussions. For example, Mark shared the lone voice of loving to learn for learning’s sake and was very outspoken about his thoughts and feelings comparing the first and second rounds of the book initiative. A follow-up individual interview provided an opportunity to gain greater personal insights into his academic motivation and experiences within the reading initiative. Michael provided both in-depth insights into his unique experiences within the reading initiative as well as thoughts that reflected a more global perspective on academic motivation and reading. I wanted to delve deeper into his thoughts and feelings surrounding the initiative and academic motivation. Lauren was very open about her lack of motivation to engage in the required summer reading and provided a unique perspective through the forum of the individual interview.

Each individual interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes including icebreaker conversations and initial introductions with my counseling colleague present who acted as witness for the safety of the minor participants in the individual interview setting as required by
Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Two of the three interviews are summarized below.

Mark

Mark is a 16-year old Caucasian male sophomore, in the top 40% of his graduating class whose academic file reflects primarily a college preparatory course load with an increase in rigor his sophomore year with mostly honors courses across various disciplines including the humanities and science. Mark was cordial and initially appeared somewhat nervous in the individual interview with myself and witness. He eventually seemed to calm and settle into a natural discussion returning to answer some initial questions he had originally passed over.

Mark is actively involved in extracurricular activities of both an academic and athletic nature. Mark was of interest to this researcher for his intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivators. When asked how he would describe himself as a student he shared, “I try very hard. I get good grades. I participate in after-school activities and clubs. I’m responsible as a student”. He later added, “I work very hard. I try to be, get all my work done on time, be responsible”. Mark expressed a variety of factors on his academic motivation including goals and future aspirations as well as learning for its own sake. When asked how he would describe his motivation for his studies he replied, “I’m motivated to do well because I want to get into a good college and get a good job”.

Mark was the lone participant in the study to discuss his personal goal of learning for the sake of knowledge, “I like learning new things because I don’t want to remain ignorant. I, the more I know the better, that’s just my mindset”. Mark partially credited himself for his love of reading, “I got interested in reading myself, just the more I read, the more I knew and it was interesting to me to learn about all the different things that I didn’t know before”. This behavior
tied in with both his mindset to gain more knowledge for knowledge sake and the increased confidence new knowledge about learned material would bring. Mark touched very briefly on the role his parents played in his academics when asked what or who had positively influenced his motivation for reading, “my parents were big readers. I guess they really got me interested in reading”.

When asked if anyone or anything had negatively impacted his motivation to read he cited some books he was required to read in middle school, “…books I didn’t enjoy reading but was required to read”. He shared that he handled this by not reading the book, “I read halfway through and I just couldn’t stand the book any longer so I just stopped”. When asked about reading outside of school, Mark echoed his thoughts from the focus group that he prefers factual and informative reading to fantasy or fictional reading and that he engages in non-school reading on a daily basis. “…I do a lot of informative reading outside of school for different things that curiosity-wise. I read an article on the internet that I’m interested in and I read that”.

Mark was asked about his thoughts and feelings about the summer reading initiative and how if at all this experience impacted him. “The book that I picked on-line I was interested in and it positively affected me because I liked the book so I enjoyed reading it”. When asked if the reading initiative negatively impacted his motivation at all, he shared, “The first selection over the summer didn’t negatively impact me at all but the one that we just did during the school year negatively impacted me because we had to do the reading, the journals which I did not like”.

When asked how he developed his mindset “the more I know the better”, he responded, “maybe it might be just through experience I’ve learned that the more you know the easier it is to get through some things in life like you know, I don’t know. I guess it also could be good
teachers. *Some teachers maybe.*” When asked how his teachers might have impacted his mindset, he shared, “*My teachers always told me to do good and, do well, I shouldn’t say, not to do good. I guess they always said that if you put your mind into anything that you can do whatever you want. I believe that and I have found that to be true most of the time*."

When asked if he could think of an example where he put his mind to something, he replied, “*getting the good grades I get, you have to …put a lot of time into it and get good grades*”. When asked if anyone else, in addition to teachers, has positively influenced his motivation for his high school studies he firmly stated, “*No. Teachers*”. Teachers were also very influential on Mark’s motivation to read, “*teachers in middle school, I had a teacher in middle school that really got me interested in reading. She got me books that she thought would be interesting to me and I read them*”.

At times, Mark felt that teachers had been a negative influence on his motivation. For example, when asked if anything or anyone had negatively impacted his motivation for his high school studies he focused on teachers he had in middle school, “*Basically I had a science teacher; well I had two science teachers in middle school that didn’t teach us anything which annoyed me very much, because I like science. All they did was give us packets every day and then they’d tell us to fill out the packet*”. He felt that this instructional strategy had longer term negative effects, “*…that affected me later in high school I guess because that information we were supposed to get in middle school we didn’t get so now in high school when they reference the stuff we learned in middle school I don’t know it*." However, Mark’s intrinsic academic motivation, initiative and determination to succeed was evident in his response to this concern, “*luckily I was able to learn it on my own*”.

In recalling this negative experience, Mark described a desire for teachers to take a more active role in delivering curriculum. When asked how he would have liked to have been taught, he responded, “I would like the teacher to have got up and actually taught us, teach us the material instead of sitting at their desk and watching us fill these packets out mindlessly and robotically every day”. Mark felt that he was obtaining this preferred method in high school, “Teachers in high school try to get you interested in the stuff that we’re learning and they tell you how this impacts our life or how it relates to real life…” When asked how teachers make it interesting, he shared the importance of teacher enthusiasm, “…they’re enthusiastic about what they’re teaching. It’s not just like they’ll spit out facts. They’re interested in the stuff they say and they want you to be interested too”. Mark’s comments reinforced the point that teacher enthusiasm for material and ability to relate it to real life provides an opportunity for student motivation for material.

Mark again pointed to the important role that other individuals in the school play such as teachers and peers when it comes to opportunities for facilitating greater social connections, “These types of connections I think would have to be made in a classroom maybe through more groups activities and then through that you might be able to get connections made. In addition, peer membership through extra-curricular activities and club involvement were integral factors for Mark when considering making connections within the school. “I guess when I think of connections making connections with people you’ve never met before I think of Chain (pseudonym), (Chain is a student experience where some students are chosen to spend a weekend with some faculty and administrators engaged in team building and leadership building exercises).
I asked Mark, how if at all, the summer reading initiative positively or negatively impacted his engagement or socialization in the classroom. Mark thought, “it’s a tough question.” I asked him if there was any engagement or connection made between you and the other people in his group. He responded, “I didn’t think there was much of a connection made at all with any of the students because they were all upperclassmen. I barely know any of them and they were all in their own little thing and we were, I was the only sophomore that the read the book so I was alone”.

When asked what might have made that a different experience for more potential for connections to be made through the group discussion, he answered, “I don’t really think there was any way you can make long-term connections just by having people that read the same book as you”. He further shared, “I think that connections with other students have to be made on, with the students’ decision. You can’t force connections with us students its just not going to work”. He elaborated, “if you want to make connections with students the only way to do that is to get the students to find common interests…”. When asked about his own social connections within the school setting he shared, “I think I’m making good connections. Definitely I’ve met a lot of people that I didn’t know before through classes and stuff”.

Michael

Michael is a 16-year old Caucasian male junior who has maintained a college preparatory course load throughout high school, ranked in the lower 50% percentile of his graduating class and had enrolled in honors level English and History classes for his junior year. Michael appeared very comfortable in the individual interview with the researcher and witness who was present for the safety of the minor participant. I started off the interview asking Michael to tell me a little bit about his background. Michael responded, “I enjoy reading, I’m mainly in regular
classes but I’ve taken a few AP’s this year. I have decided that I’m going to go for more AP’s next year and I’m going to finish my Spanish course so when I have the extra knowledge once I go to college”. When asked to share more about his interest in college he shared his plan is to attend a four-year university for a possible major in engineering.

When asked how he would describe his motivation for his studies, he focused his response on college and his future, “my motivation would probably be, if you don’t manage then you don’t get into college, you don’t end up having a future in anything. I think that’s the main motivation for most people, it’s you have to do it, it’s not …you don’t have a choice otherwise, otherwise, you work at McDonald’s for the rest of your life, so”. Michael responded in a way that placed education on a continuum with high school and preschool as the most important phases on this continuum, “…high school and preschool are probably the most important phases when it comes to getting where you want to get in life because you need to learn the basics and then you need to learn the basics of the more complicated things. So long as you learn the basic stuff that you learned in high school, it’s teaching you for the rest of your life like pre-school taught you from elementary into high”.

When asked how his motivation for his studies has stayed the same or changed since middle school, he shared, “In the middle school, I think, in the beginning of middle school I was really into it and the whole…you have letter grades now and you want to get as high as you can. I was very motivated at 6th grade but from that point on, I was kinda, it slowly went down and I got in 8th grade, and I had barely passing grades. I came out with D’s and C’s and I think I had like one B in 8th grade… and that was obviously not good and it’s always been, for me, the beginning of the year, I did really well and I slowly come down towards the end. His response echoed the research that identifies an academic decline typically starting around the middle
school years. His responses reflected that the grades were initially motivating but not motivating enough to maintain throughout middle school. This highlights the concept of persistence or endurance when it comes to sustaining academic motivation and engagement throughout the entire school year.

Michael further pondered his motivation transitioning from middle to high school, “From middle school going into high school, I’ve definitely seen an improvement because I’ve kinda learned from the mistakes that I’ve made in not doing my homework and things along those lines where I have done out of pure laziness. Slowly, as I go along, my grades are getting better rather than getting worst… I started in 9th grade, I think I had the worst grades and now, in 11th, I feel that I have the best that I had so far”. His responses reflected that the grades were initially motivating but not motivating enough to maintain throughout middle school. Future goals and aspirations became more tied into his academic motivation for higher grades as he moved through high school years and provided the impetus needed to maintain academic motivation and engagement consistently throughout each school year.

Michael had expressed a change in attitude since 9th grade with increasing rigor and pride in getting better grades. He explained that his shift in attitude came from a realization that “there’s not an easy way in academics. You need to work in academics, otherwise, you won’t succeed. It’s just I came to that realization and decided to change my tune”. When asked what made him realize this he pointed out, “mainly people telling me that I wasn’t going to be lazy for the rest of my life and it wasn’t going to be a matter of…you have to do this or you’re not going to get to here. If I don’t pass 11th grade, I don’t go onto 12th and pass that, I don’t get to go to college, I don’t get a job and you know…””. When asked who he saw as the main factors in helping him come to this realization, he identified his parents. Michael focused on the need for
increased parental support and pressure, “Because some parents just blow it off, they don’t care either...I think that if parents care a little bit more about their children’s academics, I think in general, that would improve the um, the situation”.

Despite his own change in attitude in high school, he admitted personal interests and other priorities divert his attention away from doing homework and that nothing specifically had negatively impacted his motivation for his high school studies but, “just generally not liking school...it’s part of that forced thing but you can’t say, “Don’t force me to go to school” because you’re in a country that requires it for good reason. We have one of the worst education systems in the world unfortunately because our government doesn’t push as hard as it should”. He is further shared that he is “more apt to go and do something that I enjoy doing then go and do homework which I absolutely don’t enjoy...usually I’m playing a game or I’m doing something that involves creativity...”.

However, Michael pointed to the importance of application and effort, “I just have to make sure that I’m applying myself, ...if you’re not applying yourself, you won’t learn in general I guess”. As he described himself as a student, he summed it up, “ah less than fully academic but willing to try if I need to... I always have another interest rather than school and it’s been like that ever since I was a kid. I wasn’t always fully interested in learning, it’s always been like kinda on the side, so it’s always been something that I’ve had to say, “Okay, I can’t do this, because I have to do this, where school is always been a have to for me”. It’s never been something that I’ve enjoyed, it’s just school”. This statement reflected that interests are very important to adolescent students. Furthermore, in Michael’s case, academics have become a necessity to his future goals and aspirations and trump interest when academic interest is lacking.
Michael elaborated on the important role the teacher plays when it came to how he felt the education system could be improved upon, “If we have higher standards for our kids and one of the things is curving tests. I’ve always seen curving tests as ...All of these kids are taking the easy way out because they don’t have to work harder...”. Michael shared that he finds the practice of curving tests “fairly typical”. When asked if Michael felt that in some ways the school was reinforcing the bare minimum as the bar, he responded, “I don’t feel the school is reinforcing the bare minimum, I feel that some teachers don’t realize that they’re enforcing the bare minimum. They don’t see it to through each kid’s eyes... you can tell what classes they (students) feel they can just pass the bare minimum on... I think that it’s just, it’s like ignorance, I think on a teacher’s part they just don’t realize that what they’re doing is actually being hurtful”.

Michael felt the school’s academic policy for athletes was motivating which states that if a student athlete has two or more failures in any given week, they are ineligible for participation in that sport until they get the grades back to passing. “When you’re in sports and you have the threat of...punishment, when you have an F or too many F’s”... “That’s entirely fair and that’s a good thing because it does encourage people not to be that low”. In asking how the school could look, feel or be different to instill greater academic motivation for students like himself, he felt that this could be achieved if test curves were eliminated, courses were made harder and if there were some kind of consequences for bad grades. Michael’s perspective reflects the important collective role that teachers and administrators play in setting standards and student academic motivation and engagement. It brings to light the need for educators and administrators to look at their academic policies and procedures and be conscious of the academic bar that is set for students and how that bar is perceived by the students.
When asked how he would have changed the associated reading initiative activities he responded that he would have liked to “have had discussion groups be a bit more active” and “involved more critical thinking which I think a lot of people lack...they’re sitting there and they’re trying to get into an argument with you and you knock them over because they don’t understand what you’re saying”. He would have also asked the teachers, “to be much more into it with the students and I would ask the teachers to have a small test that could grade you on the book because a lot of students didn’t even read. I think part of summer reading is you always have the problem where people aren’t reading”.

Rounding out the interview, I asked Michael how, if at all, the summer reading initiative impacted his engagement or socialization in the classroom. Michael admitted, “I don’t think that it’s really positively or negatively affected me”. In questioning whether the summer reading initiative could be used to impact engagement and socialization in the classroom, Michael shared the following:

“If you really want to engage people, I feel that if you had the summer reading that you chose, and this is very abstract but if for a small portion of the year, you went in and you actually had open discussion. You had more of a classroom environment with these students and it was continuous for a week, maybe...”.

In addition, Michael also identified peers as having a positive impact on his academic motivation and self-efficacy, “…you see somebody else has something nice and they’re doing really well and you say, “Hey, I can do that”. I’ve always felt that I can at least match, achieve the same thing as someone else…and then obviously just my parents saying, “Hey, you need to do this, you need to get this up” and them helping me along”. In addition, Michael is actively
involved in stage crew and will check out other club meetings that his friends participate in. When asked about being extracurricular activities and school motivation, he shared, “I think it ties you in a little tighter with the school”. “The intertwining and then finding something that you really enjoy and working at it like a job and realizing that it’s not hard to do something simple like school work”. He gave his own example of his club participation, “I work at (my club) like I would work a job”. “I’m in a zone where I just want to get things done and I come out of it feeling bruised and bloody but I feel like I’ve accomplished something. I think that’s part of it where when you’re really working on something and there’s something else that really deserves work that you just…you work on it…I’ve noticed that a lot of the kids who are interested in an activity, are more interested in school…people who don’t have any interests in clubs and they go home… they don’t seem to care as much”. His responses highlighted the importance of parental support, positive peer membership and extra-curricular involvement on academic motivation, socialization and self-efficacy.

When asked if the reading initiative experience negatively impacted his motivation for his studies, he shared, “I don’t think it negatively impacted my motivation. It really hasn’t affected me at all. It was just another thing that you needed to do. When asked the flipside, how this experience positively impacted his motivation for his studies, he felt, “It just encouraged me because I know now that most of our summer reading will probably be…you will be allowed to pick a book…For two occasions now we have been allowed to choose our own thing. I feel that that’s going to be a recurring instance and that excites me because I do definitely enjoy reading”. Overall, Michael found the reading initiative to be “a better system than we’ve had before and I definitely appreciated the ability to choose your own book, but I feel that it could’ve been better executed when it came down to the actual assignments associated with the book”.

Summary Synthesis

In summary of the two interviews, both interview participants described the necessity of effort to achieve their academic goals. There were no short cuts found to academic success. One participant was more intrinsically motivated and the other was more extrinsically motivated, but both shared similar goals of academic success for college admission, future career and job success. They both referred to academic motivation and engagement being a mindset that is instilled within oneself or instilled by others crediting teachers, peers and parents.

Across Mark and Michael’s responses and the focus groups, negative influences were teachers who did not exude a passion or show a personal investment for raising the bar for instructional material. There was a low tolerance across individual interview participants for teachers who were not invested or passionate or unconsciously act to lower the bar or reinforce the bare minimum from their students whether through mundane mindless packet completions or curving tests. Teachers who raise the bar, maintaining higher academic standards for their students exude passion and instill passion and motivation for what is being taught. Teacher investment is critical to student self-efficacy, academic motivation and engagement.

Prefaced more in the background, parents were common threads across individual interviews on academic motivation. Mark shared that his parents were role models when it came to instilling a love of reading. Michael’s discussion of his parents revolved around their academic support and pressure they placed on him to succeed academically and were the main factors in his mindset that academics played a huge role in future goals of graduating high school, going to college and obtaining a career.

One of the goals of the summer reading initiative was to enhance socialization among students and faculty using the summer reading initiative and book discussion forum. When
discussing this goal, peer membership and extracurricular involvement were also common motivators across the three individual interviews. Mark, Michael, and Lauren specifically shared the important role that their peer membership and extra-curricular involvement played in their academic motivation and connections made within the school setting. Lauren had a change in academic motivation and intention when she found a new peer group who valued academics which caused her to increase the value she placed on education and the effort she put out for academics. Michael’s healthy peer membership and desire to match or exceed their academic performance spoke to his perceived self-efficacy to be successful in academic endeavors. Mark identified positive connections being made through his classes and extracurricular involvement. Michael and Mark focused on long-term connections being made through various extra-curricular activities and in-classroom group efforts over time with the same group of students and teacher as opposed to a one time book discussion group.

In summary, the individual interviews provided a forum to delve deeper into adolescent academic motivation within the scope of the summer reading initiative. Using the unique perspectives of three participants, further light was shed on the extrinsic motivating forces that affect student motivation and engagement. The interviews further emphasized the important role that teachers play in setting high academic standards for students and supporting their academic motivation. It further brought to light the role that peers and extracurricular offerings play in academic motivation and socialization within the school setting. Bandura’s collective agency was evident throughout the individual interviews affirming that student academic motivation is layered in efficacy and interdependent within the structure of the educational institution’s policies, curriculum and program offerings.
The findings in this chapter attempted to shed light on the lived experiences of the adolescent participants in terms of their academic motivation specifically in relation to the newly implemented summer reading initiative. Despite unique nuances across individual experiences as reflected in their responses, there were themes that reflected collective experiences that provided some patterns of commonalities. Chapter 5 places the participants’ individual academic experiences and collective experiences within the context of Bandura’s social cognitive theory and the extensive literature on achievement motivation.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Research Findings

Educators struggle to identify effective strategies to motivate adolescents in their academic studies. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and motivational responses of adolescents at Sovereign High School in relation to their participation in a newly implemented summer reading initiative. The overarching research question used to conduct this study was: what are the adolescents’ experiences regarding academic motivation based on their participation in the summer reading initiative? This chapter provides a review of the identified themes, an interpretation of the findings and proposes potential implications for future research and practice.

Analysis of the focus groups, individual interviews, observation, and academic record reviews revealed four distinct themes concerning academic motivational experiences in relation to the summer reading initiative:

1. Value of grades on other aspects of life

2. Desire to feel confident and capable
3. Choice and personal interests are important

4. Reliance on others for support.

Two adolescent focus groups and three follow-up individual interviews were conducted to explore the academic motivation among adolescents at Sovereign High School in relation to a newly implemented summer reading initiative. Various academic motivational themes emerged and are interwoven across the data including the importance of grades on other aspects of life, a desire to feel confident and capable, the importance of control and personal interests and the reliance on others for academic motivation and engagement. Students’ reliance on others for academic motivation was the predominant connecting theme with teacher, parental and peer support.

The two focus groups and three individual interviews provided a wealth of knowledge on the unique experiences of each individual adolescent participant. It was a great undertaking to explore the rich responses, understand their personal perspectives and identify collective themes that emerged within those experiences, across participants. Giving voice to adolescents about their academics is central in today’s education system. Using their voices to explore new strategies to effectively motivate and engage adolescents in their education needs to be the goal. The summation of this study has found that academic motivation is tied into task value or meaningfulness, empowering student choice and confidence as well as having a solid social support system with teachers on the front line. Students desire control and their personal interests to be taken into account to enhance meaningfulness. Additionally, their sense of academic confidence or efficacy is developed and enhanced by the support of others with teachers emerging as the primary agents to support adolescent academic motivation.
Extrinsic motivators including grades and ultimately future aspirations and goals including college acceptance and career attainment were the most prominent responses in playing a major role in academic motivation and pursuant academic engagement followed by mastery goals of gaining knowledge or academic status and finally social goals in terms of pleasing others such as parents and peer membership.

Motivation for future goals and aspirations further led to participants’ focus on the importance of assessment and grades. Although participants verbalized the cognitive and academic benefits of reading, the expectation of assessment following the summer reading was a driving extrinsic motivational force for engaging in this task. Most participants were disappointed that there was no follow-up assessment and thus it “didn’t count for anything”. It is notable that the value of the task from the student perspective (grade) varied greatly from the value that the educators and administrators had assigned to the task (fostering reading).

The second theme incorporated self-efficacy or participants’ desire to feel confident and capable. High personal agency was noted in students’ responses in their ability to choose the summer initiative book and engage in reading the book. Most participants had other required summer reading for core English and history classes. For more difficult class reading material, they sought teacher support (agency by proxy) and in-class reading to enhance comprehension and self-efficacy. In addition, it is noteworthy that participants relied on other resources such as internet, SparkNotes and peers which also acted as proxy to gain information about their summer initiative self-selected book and to enhance perceived efficacy for reading content and expected assessment.

The second round of the initiative competed with multiple other academics tasks, was perceived as a more complex task and less attainable due to time constraints and other academic
priorities compared to the first round. This brought about frustration, stress and ultimately poor self-efficacy which led to de-motivation and poor engagement in this round of the task. In comparison to the first round where four of the nine participants did not read the book, eight of nine participants in the second round did not engage in reading the book.

The third and most salient theme in this study was autonomy as the importance of control, choice and personal interests emerged. Autonomy was enhanced in the summer reading initiative through personal book selection from a list of 78 book titles. Participants generally reported increased motivation for the task through book choice and the sense of autonomy or control it afforded them. The variety and quantity of book selections also allowed for personal interests to be taken into account. Participants shared a desire for even greater autonomy in future summer reading initiatives as they still felt their autonomy was limited as book offerings were generated by faculty. They questioned the necessity of faculty being charged with picking books they thought the student would like and instead to allow students to choose their own books in the future. They also sought greater autonomy in choice of assessment.

Participants’ sense of autonomy dissipated with the second round of the initiative as it was put forth mid-way through the school year in addition to their other academic demands and added a mandatory journaling component that lacked meaningfulness. Students were also very aware of teachers’ perceptions of their own autonomy in this initiative and delivery. Perceived teacher investment and motivation had a ripple effect on student investment and engagement. Thus, when teacher investment, enthusiasm and autonomy are evident and present in the curriculum delivery, there is a direct connection to greater adolescent academic motivation.

In tandem with perceived teacher autonomy, the fourth and final theme pointed to the reliance on others for support. Teacher support and motivation directly influenced student
motivation and engagement responses. The reading engagement behaviors of the faculty and administrators directly influenced the reading values, beliefs, motivation and engagement responses of the students as noted in their responses between the first and second rounds of the reading initiative. In addition to teachers, positive parental and peer influence on academic and reading motivation was threaded through participant responses. Parents play an active role in instilling academic motivation and a love of reading in their adolescent students. Parents need to continue to verbally share the importance of academic effort and the value of grades on future goals of high school graduation, college acceptance and obtaining a career. Amotivated or poorly motivated students can and do heed parental advice to stay in school and perform well even when they lack personal academic motivation.

Responses also revealed the importance of peer membership and extra-curricular involvement on socialization and academic motivation. Healthy peer membership and a desire to match or exceed peers’ academic performance can affect one’s perceived personal and collective agency in achieving academic success. Participant responses reflected a conscious internal dialogue whereby they are actively measuring and gauging their own academic progress in relation to peer progress and will adjust their performance accordingly. In addition, changing peer membership had a direct relationship on changing one’s academic motivation. These responses reflect great personal insight and use of peers as a barometer for one’s own academic success.

Interpretations and Relevance to the Literature

This study’s findings echoed previous studies (Wallace, 2009; Mansfield, 2010; Abd-El-Fattah & Patrick, 2011) where participants most notably highlighted the importance of academic
motivation in relation to the value that grades had on their goals or “imagined futures” such as college admissions and career placement. The participants in this study were actively questioning, weighing and measuring academic tasks in terms of their perceived usefulness, value or meaning in relation to their own future goals. Once they perceived the task to have personal academic value on their future goals, they acted as causal agents in their motivation and engagement in the summer reading initiative tasks. There was a general lack of intrinsic motivation to engage in the summer reading with the primary extrinsic motivational force being related to a grade for its potential effect on future goals, grades needed for college, academic status, and social approval such as parental pleasing.

Participant responses reflected Bandura’s work and Deci & Ryan’s self-determinism theory in that individuals have urges to be causal agents in their daily academic activities and confirmed Hanrich’s (2009) that autonomy is essential to motivating individuals to engage in a task. The findings support the belief that when situations provide opportunity for student autonomy, they positively impact motivation for a given task. Overall, students were empowered by the autonomy afforded in the summer reading initiative which enhanced their motivation for this academic task. Personal agency was present in the first round of the reading task when the task was seen as attainable and they could choose their own book acting interdependently of the organization.

As posited by Bandura, the adolescents in this study acted within the larger social structure of their school. Agency by proxy via teachers was resounding and prevalent across participant responses in this study and impacted the motivational responses among participants. This was evident in participant responses regarding more difficult reading material, where participants relied on teachers for explanation and in-class reading to gain efficacy. Participants
further relied on teachers to provide quality book discussions and were responsive to teachers taking the lead. Conversely, they took their cues from negative teacher responses and behavior regarding the second round of the initiative. This study further highlighted the importance of the collective agency or the greater educational system on impacting the motivation and engagement responses on adolescents in their academics.

This study echoed Unrua & Schlackman’s (2006) and Daniels & Steres’ (2011) studies who highlighted the importance of school support for injecting a culture of reading to promote reading motivation. The presence of the reading initiative itself acted as a catalyst to engage teachers and students in not only reading and literacy but conversations that extended past their respective academic discipline. Although, the book discussion groups were aimed at providing an opportunity for socialization among peers and faculty outside the curriculum, the findings suggest students gain connections and meaningful socializations through extra-curricular involvement, peer membership, and longer-term classroom led group activities.

These findings confirm the existing literature surrounding academic motivation in relation to the theory of social cognitive theory and self-determinism which emphasize the importance of efficacy, autonomy, meaningfulness and the structure of the larger social organization. This study contributes to Ryan and Deci’s motivational orientations and need for autonomy in terms of motivation as well as Bandura’s underpinning of efficacy across the three dimensions of personal, proxy and collective agency. As argued by Bandura, the responsibility for academic motivation and engagement in the reading initiative shifted from the individual to the educational social system of the high school including teachers, administrators and the curriculum. Strategies that reflect the collaboration of the greater organization is of utmost importance.
The four identified themes or key findings and four sub-themes confirm and add to the existing body of literature on academic motivation. It further confirms the literature on goal theory and motivation pinning future aspirations as a positive motivating force in academics. Additionally, this study adds to the database of literature on academic motivation by using IPA and bringing the adolescent voice to the forefront of discussion in terms of educational curriculum and instructional strategies, which has been lacking in the research on academic motivation.

Implications for Research

This study has been significant in its use of IPA as a methodological design with adolescents to explore their lived experiences with newly implemented summer reading and their academic motivation. In using IPA, this study responds to literature that has called for hearing adolescent voices and perspectives directly. This study extends findings that confirm the importance of academic task value, specifically future goals and aspirations, for both educators as well as adolescents.

These findings further urge that school support for reading be continued past the middle school years and prominent throughout the high school years. Thus, this study brought to light firsthand that adolescent self-efficacy is directly tied to individual teachers’ ability to provide agency by proxy and more importantly the entire educational organization’s ability to act as a collective agency.

In considering Bandura’s collective agency, I believe a move away from a top down structure would be beneficial. I envision a structure that spans a horizontal continuum which places administrators, teachers, and students on the same plane working collectively and
interdependently to enhance reading motivation and engagement. Future research needs to continue to focus on identifying the effectiveness of educational strategies that promote reading motivation and engagement such as the reading initiative reviewed in this current study.

Furthermore, individual responses reflect the most salient theme that emerged was autonomy. Greater student autonomy that is collectively injected into the curriculum has robust potential to enhance adolescent academic motivation. Perceived teacher autonomy also influenced student motivation. It is essential that this design be used in future studies to address the existence of perceived student and teacher autonomy in educational activities.

Finally, this study brought to light the role the social environment of Sovereign High School played in terms of the summer reading initiative and its effect on students’ efficacy, academic motivation and engagement responses to this initiative. When considering the one time book discussion group, participants called for more classroom-based continuous, long term discussion groups. In addition, social environments that offer a range of extracurricular offerings and opportunities for positive peer membership, strengthen student connection to the school and enhance academic motivation.

In conclusion, the organization that truly acts as a collective whole with teacher input and curricular development that incorporates student autonomy and personal interests leads to teacher buy-in, student buy-in and academic motivation. Further research using IPA as a methodological approach can continue to identify the level of collective agency present in an organization from the student, teacher and administrator perspectives as well as any potential gaps or areas for improvement.

**Implications for Educational Practice**
These findings have implications for daily educational practice when considering academic reading and motivation and engagement responses. Counselors are considered social agents for change and have expertise in the areas of social, emotional and vocational development. Counselors need to be present at the table with administrators and educators in assisting students in identifying goals, aspirations and identifying new strategies for greater student motivation. regarding enhancing efficacy, autonomy and academic motivation. It is essential that professional development focus on teachers’ role as a social agent and the importance of understanding unique intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for individual students including the traditionally unmotivated student. While students are not necessarily intrinsically motivated for required academic reading, they perceive summer reading to be a worthwhile academic cognitive activity that relates to curriculum and anticipate assessment upon completion and school return.

Curriculum and professional development activities need to focus on aligning educator and student goals and finding strategies to create a common goal for lifelong readers and learners is paramount. The goals of the educators and administrators and that of the participants in this study were widely disparaging. While the educational community’s collective goal for the participants in this study was to implement an educational strategy that would foster a love of reading among students and facilitate the development of lifelong learners among students, the participants themselves were motivated by assessment and grades. Educators should continue to develop various formative and summative assessments that are meaningful to students and relay their expectations for related assessment. Classroom time discussing the importance of reading and being a lifelong reader would be time well spent to enhance reading motivation. Educators
should incorporate student input for assessments, involving them in curriculum development, implementation and participation on various academic committees.

These findings have implications for daily educational practice when considering efficacy for academic reading and motivation and engagement responses. Educators and counselors are at the forefront of students’ perceived self-efficacy for academic tasks. In-service activities need to focus on the teacher’s role as an agent of change in terms of enhancing student self-efficacy and motivation. Counselor expertise can be tapped into when addressing efficacy and motivation. Broadening the scope from this study, educational curriculum development needs to be reflective of a collective agency bringing in teachers, students, counselors and administrators together for greater student efficacy and academic motivation.

Traditionally, administrators and educators are charged as experts within their educational organizations and student autonomy can be easily silenced or overlooked as curriculum is designed and implemented. Organizations that respect and embrace student autonomy in curriculum development and implementation create educational communities that promote student motivation. Administrators, counselors and educators must identify strategies, assignments and assessments that incorporate greater student autonomy. Administrators and educators must be careful not to overburden students or provide the illusion of autonomy such as assigning tasks that are in addition to multiple other academic demands.

Additionally, teachers’ perceptions of assignments whether verbalized or not, are clearly visible to students and directly influence students’ thoughts, motivation and engagement for academic tasks. If the value of the task and personal motivation is lost in translation between administration and teachers it is further diluted when delivered to the student body. Thus, the
level of personal choice, autonomy and empowerment provided to and present among teachers can impact student motivation toward a task and their decision to engage in the task at hand. With the findings of this study in mind, educational leaders of various disciplines can blend their areas of expertise while seeking and valuing student input on new and revised curricular initiatives.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

While the research on academic motivation is complex and a wealth of literature exist on the topic, these findings present various opportunities for further research. Adolescent voices need to continue to be at the forefront of academic motivation research. Increased use of IPA should be considered as a choice methodology design and analysis to obtain the unique, lived experiences of various adolescent populations across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and academic levels. The traditionally unmotivated adolescent population voices especially need to be heard. The findings in this study reflected that such students have insight into their learning styles, needs and recognize motivating educational strategies that meet these needs. Yet, greater participation by this population in this study proved difficult despite this researcher’s efforts. Creative strategies need to be identified by researchers to obtain volunteers from this segment of the adolescent population to better understand the unique motivators and deterrents that may present.

Participants of this study requested total autonomy in book selection for future rounds of the summer reading initiative; this would be an excellent follow-up study from the current study. It has been noted in the literature and by participant responses in this study that a decline in academic motivation occurs in the middle school years. Future research could lend itself to use
of IPA with middle school students to explore this phenomenon more closely at its starting point to identify strategies to halt this trend and promote academic motivation at this pivotal point.

These findings further reflect teacher autonomy and motivation is strongly tied to student motivation. Given the current atmosphere of a strong focus on standardized testing, it would be of further value to educational organizations to explore perceived teacher motivation and autonomy in relation to curriculum and initiative development and delivery.

Furthermore, while most of the adolescent participants in this study were honors level students with clear post-secondary educational goals and strong desires for good grades, it remains that these participants shared they were generally unmotivated for school required reading. They failed to report a general love of reading through such assignments but viewed it as more of an obligation or a means to an ends for grades and future goals. Their willingness to seek shortcuts via the internet, spark notes, and ask others to obtain the necessary information begs the question of how do we thoughtfully and successfully foster a love and motivation of reading and inspire lifelong learners.

It is also imperative to continue to identify strategies and forums that provide meaningful student socialization within the academic setting that further enhance motivation. Participant responses reflected that longer-term classroom based socialization, extra-curricular involvement and positive peer membership influence academic motivation. Follow-up studies focusing on these areas could shed greater light on the influence of socialization on academic motivation.

Postscript

As a secondary school counselor for ten years, I have encountered thousands of high school students while providing social, emotional, vocational, and academic counseling. In my
experience, the greatest obstacle for adolescent students is often related to poor academic motivation. The goal in counseling students is very much related to IPA in gaining an understanding of each individual student’s unique experience as it relates to this phenomenon. This study provided a structured, scholarly approach to understanding the individual adolescent perspectives as well as the general threads of commonalities that emerged.

Guidance counseling as a profession has expertise and insight into concepts of efficacy, autonomy and motivation. This study shed light on the compartmentalized approach to academic tasks that continues to exist today. A blending of educational expertise is needed to create a coordinated approach to academic motivation. Counselors need to be a voice at the table in stressing the critical role that these aspects play in students’ lives with educators, administrators and parents. Counselor insights and opinions need to be sought in identifying strategies to enhance academic motivation. Counselors are a great resource to educators and administrators and need to be central in leading professional development activities and faculty meetings where these concepts are addressed in relation to academic motivation.

Furthermore, counselors need to lead parent information sessions outlining these concepts and highlighting the critical role that parents continue to play in their adolescent’s social, emotional, vocational and academic life. Counselors collaborate with these various parties on a daily basis and have the ability to bring these various parties together as a collective agency in order to enact the greatest impact on adolescent academic motivation. This collective educational approach is particularly important as motivation for secondary education acts as a stepping stone to further post-secondary training and education, an absolute necessity in our growing global economy.
APPENDIX A: Participant Recruitment Materials

Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

Dear Parents and Students,

The following information is provided to you regarding information on a study being based on the newly implemented summer reading initiative with specific interest in achievement motivation (motivation for academic studies) among high school students. This study became of interest as it was learned that many teenagers begin to experience less motivation for their academics as they become older (middle school and high school). It is important to educate and motivate all students for their academics and find better ways to achieve this goal. Please be aware that participation is voluntary and should you decide to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time during the study without affecting your relationship with this researcher, your teachers or your classes at X High School.

The purpose of this study is to better understand adolescent perspectives on academic motivation (what makes adolescents maintain a desire to succeed in their academic studies) in relation to the new school wide summer reading initiative. This study is part of a doctoral level college course. One observation of the summer reading discussion group will take place as scheduled with faculty advisor. If chosen, one audio-recorded focus group will take place with a possible follow-up individual participant interview that would last approximately one hour discussing the reading initiative in relation to each student’s perspective on achievement motivation, engagement and socialization. In addition, document analysis of field notes and participants’ academic file including past and present report cards, transcripts, g.p.a and class rank information. In addition, faculty interview field notes with participants’ English teachers will be collected.

The highest regard will be given to confidentiality and anonymity. A Pseudonym or fake name will be used in the study. Your name will not be associated with this study or its research findings. Only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about this study either before participating or during your time that you are participating. We would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with participation in this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information gained about the student experiences of participating in a school wide summer reading initiative, possible impact on future summer reading assignments and its potential impact on achievement motivation and engagement and socialization in one’s studies.

Please sign your consent below with full knowledge of the nature of this study and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent will be given for you to keep.
APPENDIX A cont’d:

Signature of Parent:_______________________________ Date: __________
Parent Name Printed:_____________________________
Signature of Participant___________________________ Date: __________
Student Name Printed:_____________________________

APPENDIX B: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

DATA COLLECTION ADOLESCENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewees:

Question #1: How did your experience with this year’s summer reading compare to previous experiences?

Question #2: What did you think of the concept and process of this year’s summer reading (i.e. choosing from a variety of book selections, on-line sign ups book discussion)?

Question #3: Tell me about your experience in the book discussion group?

Question #4: What if anything did you like about the experience?

Question #5: What if anything did you not like about the experience?

Question #6: How if at all did this summer reading experience influence your academic motivation to read the book you self-selected? Motivation to engage in the book discussion group? Motivation to socialize with others who read the book?

Question #7: What if anything would you recommend for future summer reading assignments?

Question #8: What if anything would you recommend to enhance student academic motivation?
“This concludes our focus group. Does anyone have anything else they would like to add? I want to thank you all for your participation in this discussion and this study. Your thoughts and comments are so valuable. I may contact you for a follow-up interview or clarification.”

APPENDIX C: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

DATA COLLECTION ADOLESCENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Demographics (grade, gender, ethnicity, English level):

(Brief Description of Project)

Part A: Interviewer will ask interviewee to tell a little about their background/self for rapport building purposes and general background information regarding participants’ views about their self as student or learner and motivation for studies. About 25 minutes will be slotted for this and move into the interview questions surrounding achievement motivation as it relates to the reading initiative.

Question #1: “How would you describe yourself as a student?”

Question #2: “Thinking about yourself as a student, how would you describe your motivation for your studies?”

Question #3: “How has your motivation for your studies stayed the same or changed since middle school?”

Questions #3: “What if anything has made a positive impact on your motivation for your high school studies?

Question #4: “What if anything has negatively impacted your motivation for your high school studies?”

Part B: The questions for this part will focus on achievement motivation as it relates to the experience of participating in the high school reading initiative.
APPENDIX C: cont’d:

Question #1: “What has been your experience participating in the summer reading initiative where you chose a book and participated in the book group with a faculty advisor?”

Questions #2: “How, if at all, has this experience negatively impacted your motivation for your studies?”

Question #3: “How, if at all, has this reading initiative experience positively impacted your motivation for your studies?”

Question #4: “Final question, how if it all has the summer reading initiative impacted your engagement or socialization in the classroom?”

“This ends our interview. Do you have any further comments or questions for me? I want to thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study. I may contact you if I have any questions or clarifications from our interview. I will be completing a classroom observation of English class in the next week or so. Do you have any question about that?”

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE LIST OF SUMMER READING DIRECTIONS and OPTIONS

**Summer Reading**

The High School Summer Reading book selections will be listed online on the Sovereign High School webpage. The Library link can be found under the Quick Links menu. After you are directed to the Library Page, please select “Summer Reading” from Library Links. Students are expected to select with their parents/guardians a new title to read. The titles offered are listed below. Students can sign-up online June 2nd - June 6th. Students can click on the book covers displayed to be redirected to barnesandnoble.com where they can review the books. Also, students are able to take advantage of professional reviews and comments that could be found on the following websites:

- [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)
- [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Once a selection is made, each student should sign up for a book. Signups are limited to 15 students per title, exceptions being *Ender’s Game* (28 students), *The Maze Runner* and *Paper Towns* (30 Students each). Titles are filled on a first come, first served basis. Once you have signed up for a title, you will not be able to erase your signup, so please
consider your choice carefully before signing up. On a date to be determined, students and faculty will meet in the Fall and discuss the book. Enjoy Reading!

Titles

The Big Time
The Maze Runner
Crank
The Invention of Wings
Killing Kennedy
Big Mouth and Ugly Girl
For the Sins of My Father
Allegiant
The Johnstown Flood
Fourth Down and Inches
The Glass Castle: a memoir
Clockwork Angel
East of Eden
Debt-Free U
Demonic
The Big Time
The Maze Runner
Crank
The Invention of Wings
Killing Kennedy
Big Mouth and Ugly Girl
For the Sins of My Father
Allegiant
The Johnstown Flood
Fourth Down and Inches
The Glass Castle: a memoir
Clockwork Angel
East of Eden
Debt-Free U
Demonic
Insurgent
Ender's Game
Uglies
A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier
FREAKONOMICS
Friday Night Lights
Water for Elephants
The Face on the Milk Carton
All Quiet on the Western Front
It's Kind of a Funny Story
The Imperial Cruise
Inside Coca-Cola
A Long Way Down
Schindler's List
Into the Wild
The Coldest Girl in Coldtown
With the Old Breed
Half a Chance
The Happiness Project
Bury Me in My Jersey
Lone Survivor
The Fault in Our Stars
Vanishing Acts
Love is a Mix Tape
Mind Gym
Dorothy Must Die
The Art of Racing in the Rain
Cat's Cradle
Divergent
Blink
The Art of War
Eight Men Out
Sing You Home
Sister of My Heart
Slaughterhouse-Five
Perfect Chemistry
Stiff
The Raft
Take the Risk
Never Fall Down
The 10 Big Lies About America
The Bite of the Mango
Moneyball
Heaven is for Real
Out of the Easy
Paper Towns
Lucky Every Day
White Oleander
The Beginning of Everything
The Last Lecture
The Greatest Thing Since Sliced Bread
Longbourn
Pete Rose: An American Dilemma
The Sacrifice
The Short Bus
The Tipping Point
Legend
No Exit
The Truth about Forever
The Chance You Won't Return
Smarter Than You Think
Today's Special
57 Lives of Alex Wayfare
Phoenix Island
The Daughter of Time
The Reason I Jump

APPENDIX E: Suggested Book Discussion Points For Faculty Provided by English Department Leader

The structure of the time can be designed however you would like and there is no formal assessment required. The following is a list of suggestions you may want to incorporate that day:

1. To build community, you may want students to wear name tags so that they could easily address each other.
2. Tell students why you picked the book.
3. Open the discussion by asking for reactions to the text in general. This will get the conversation moving.
4. Is there a film adaptation for your book? Consider showing a clip or asking the students which scene they would like to see. (Nothing rated R of course) It could be interesting to have a scene picked out already and copy the scene from the book. Students could note where dialogue was changed, comment on mood created by the book and the novel, or discuss other choices the filmmakers made.
5. Does a particular food play a part in your book selection? Why not bring some in to share?

6. Your book has probably been a choice for some other book group out there. Often you can Google, “Book club discussion questions for ___________” and find a plethora of specific thought provoking questions for your book.


   and fiction books:


8. Share your favorite passage from the book and say why you liked it. Encourage them to take some time to find their favorite part to read aloud as well. The English teachers are asking all students to bring a copy of the book to class.

9. Create a game to play with the novel.

10. Have students act out a scene.

11. Give students directions to pantomime different scenes or create a tableau and students guess which part is depicted.

12. Write reviews of the book. How many stars would the student give it out of 5? Do you have little star stickers? Could they write it on an index card? Save these as we are thinking about creating a display of titles with reviews for outside of the library. If you do this, please turn it in with your attendance to the office.

13. Give suggestions of other books for students to read. Amazon.com could help you here. Type in your title, scroll down and see “you might also like.”

14. Mostly, have fun talking about reading. Hopefully, your students will want to do it even more!
References


23, 1, pp. 48-59.


Dewey, J. (1902/1990). *The school and society; & The child and the curriculum*. Chicago, IL:
University of Chicago Press.


Mora, R. (2011). "School is So Boring": High-Stakes Testing and Boredom at an Urban Middle


For NU IRB use:

Date Received: ____________________________ NU IRB No. ____________

Review Category: ____________________________ Approval Date ____________

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL FOR USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Before completing this application, please read the Application Instructions and Policies and Procedures for Human Research Protections to understand the responsibilities for which you are accountable as an investigator in conducting research with human participants. The document, Application Instructions, provides additional assistance in preparing this submission. Incomplete applications will be returned to the investigator. You may complete this application online and save it as a Word document.

If this research is related to a grant, contract proposal or dissertation, a copy of the full grant/contract proposal/dissertation must accompany this application.

Please carefully edit and proofread before submitting the application. Applications that are not filled out completely and/or have any missing or incorrect information will be returned to the Principal Investigator.

REQUIRED TRAINING FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Under the direction of the Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Northeastern University is now requiring completion of the NIH Office of Extramural Research training for all human subject research, regardless of whether or not investigators have received funding to support their project.

The online course titled "Protecting Human Research Participants" can be accessed at the following url: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php. This requirement will be effective as of November 15, 2008 for all new protocols.

Principal Investigators, student researchers and key personnel (participants who contribute substantively to the scientific development or execution of a project) must include a copy of their certificate of completion for this web-based tutorial with the protocol submission.

X Certificate(s) Attached

☐ Certificate(s) submitted previously – on file with the NU’s Office of Human Subject Research Protection

A. Investigator Information
Principal Investigator (PI cannot be a student) ___ Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters ___

Investigator is: NU Faculty ___ X ___ NU Staff ___ ___ Other ___ ___

College ___ Northeastern University ___ ___

Department/Program ___ College of Professional Studies/Education ___ ___

Address ___ 50 Nightingale Hall, 360 Huntington Ave. Boston, MA. 02115-9959 ___

Office Phone ___ 877-668-7727 ___ Email ___ b.sankofawaters@neu.edu ___ ___

Is this student research? YES ___ X ___ NO ___ ___ If yes, please provide the following information:

Student Name ___ Kelly McCool ___ Anticipated graduation date ___ June 2014 ___

Undergrad ___ ___ PhD ___ ___ Other Degree Type ___ X ___ EdD ___ ___

College ___ Northeastern University ___ Department/Program ___ ___ College of Professional Studies/Education ___ ___

Full Mailing Address ___ 219 Media Line Rd. Broomall, PA 19008 ___ ___

Telephone ___ 610-356-2644 ___ Primary Email ___ mccool.k@husky.neu.edu ___ ___

Cell phone ___ 610-550-1775 ___ Secondary Email ___ kellymccool@hotmail.com ___ ___
B. Protocol Information

Title  Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

Projected # subjects  8-10

Approx. begin date of project October 17, 2013  Approx. end date December 17, 2013

It is the policy of Northeastern University that no activity involving human subjects be undertaken until those activities have been reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

• Anticipated funding source for project (or none)  None

Has/will this proposal been/been submitted through:

- NU's Office of Research Administration and Finance (RAF)  __N/A____
- Provost  __N/A____
- Corp & Foundations  __N/A___

C.

Will Participants Be:  Yes  No  Does the Project Involve:  Yes  No

Children (<18)  X  ___  Blood Removal?  ___  X
Northeastern University Students?  ___  X  Investigational drug/device?  ___  X
Institutionalized persons?  ___  X  Audiotapes/videotapes?  X  ___
Prisoners?  ___  X
Cognitively Impaired Persons?  ___  X
Non or Limited English Speaking Persons?  ___  X
Please answer each of the following questions using non-technical language. Missing or incomplete answers will delay your review while we request the information.

D. What are the goals of this research? Please state your research question(s) and related hypotheses.

The goal of this research is to explore adolescents’ experiences regarding academic motivation based on their participation in a summer reading initiative. The overarching research question is “What are the adolescents’ experiences regarding academic motivation based on their participation in a summer reading initiative?

The following research sub-questions are of interest in this case study:

a. How do adolescents perceive the secondary summer reading initiative in terms of academic motivation?

b. How do adolescents perceive the academic autonomy afforded through the summer reading initiative?

c. How do adolescents perceive the opportunity for socialization through the summer reading initiative?

E. Provide a brief summary of the purpose of the research in non-technical language.

The purpose of this case study is to explore adolescent motivation for academic tasks, engagement and socialization at High School X through the informal learning experiences gained through the implementation of a high school wide summer reading initiative.

F. Identify study personnel on this project. Include name, credentials, role, and organization affiliation.

Kelly McCool, M.Ed., M.A., Counselor and researcher at Marple Newtown High School
Dr. Merle Horowitz, EdD. Superintendent Marple Newtown School District
Greg Puckett, Principal Marple Newtown High School
G. Identify other organizations or institutions that are involved. Attach current Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals or letters of permission as necessary.

Please see attached superintendent letter of approval from Dr. Merle Horowitz, Marple Newtown School District

H. Recruitment Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe the participants you intend to recruit. Provide all inclusion and exclusion criteria. Include age range, number of subjects, gender, ethnicity/race, socio-economic level, literacy level and health (as applicable) and reasons for exempting any groups. Describe how/when/by whom inclusion/exclusion criteria will be determined.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Approximately 8-10 adolescent participants from researcher’s affiliation varying in ethnicity/race, gender, between the ages of 14-18. Students will be sought for focus group and individual interviews from a summer reading book discussion group. Inclusion criteria was based a convenience sampling based on book group size. This specific group was afforded the largest number of students (30) to its allotment.

Describe the procedures that you will use to recruit these participants. Be specific. How will potential subjects be identified? Who will ask for participation? If you intend to recruit using letters, posters, fliers, ads, website, email etc., copies must be included as attachments for stamped approval. Include scripts for intended telephone recruitment.

30 students from one summer reading discussion group will be invited to participate in a follow-up focus group discussing their experiences participating in the summer reading initiative. An opt out option will also afford adolescent participants an opportunity to be randomly selected for a follow-up individual interview. Researcher (counselor at High School X) will be an observer of the initial summer reading book discussion group. Faculty advisor and researcher will verbally invite participation and provide parent/student consent letters. Follow-up email, phone contact to parents will be used as needed to invite participation. See attached telephone/email recruitment.
What remuneration, if any, is offered?

Snacks and drinks will be offered during focus group and individual interview participation.

I. Consent Process

Describe the process of obtaining informed consent*. Be specific. How will the project and the participants’ role be presented to potential participants? By whom? When? Where? Having the participant read and sign a consent statement is done only after the researcher provides a detailed oral explanation and answers all questions. Please attach a copy of informed consent statements that you intend to use, if applicable. Click here for consent form templates.

If your study population includes non-English speaking people, translations of consent information are necessary. Describe how information will be translated and by whom. You may wait until the consent is approved in English before having it translated.

The 30 students in the book discussion group will be orally informed of researcher’s intention to engage in a research study regarding academic motivation in relation to their participation in the summer reading initiative. The researcher and two faculty advisors will present the information prior to the actual completion of the book discussion. Students will be verbally informed of researcher’s role in discussion group as observer. Students will be invited to participate in a follow-up focus group that would meet once to continue the discussion of their experience in the summer reading initiative. They would also be informed of the possibility of being asked to engage in a follow-up individual interview. In addition, students will be informed of potential benefits of the study. For example, information from this study could be used to shape following year’s summer reading initiatives which could potentially benefit the students themselves and/or other students to make this activity more motivating and/or meaningful. Students will be provided a copy of the informed consent letter for their review, parental review and student and parent signed consent.

The researcher will contact parents of the 30 students via phone contact to inform them of the intended study at the conclusion of the book discussion group. All aspects will be shared as stated above with students including potential benefits. Researcher will mail home duplicate copy of consent form to parents to ensure receipt for review and signed consent.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHMENT
If your population includes children, prisoners, people with limited mental capacity, language barriers, problems with reading or understanding, or other issues that may make them vulnerable or limit their ability to understand and provide consent, describe special procedures that you will institute to obtain consent appropriately. If participants are potentially decisionally impaired, how will you determine competency?

This study includes adolescents. The greatest respect for student and parent understanding of the study and the nature of student participation will be provided orally and in writing. The researcher will verbally ask students/parents if they understand the nature of the study, if they have any questions and/or concerns. They will be invited to contact researcher for any further clarification. Students and parents will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and assure no penalty for participating in or withdrawing from study. Researcher will further ensure that students and parents understand that participation in study in no way impacts students’ grades. Thus, the decision to participate or not will not help or hurt grades.

*If incomplete disclosure during the initial consent process is essential to carrying out the proposed research, please provide a detailed description of the debriefing process. Be specific. When will full disclosure of the research goals be presented to subjects (e.g., immediately after the subject has completed the research task(s) or held off until the completion of the study’s data collection)? By whom? Please attach a copy of the written debriefing statement that will be given to subjects.

Complete disclosure of the research goals will be completed at initial consent.

**J. Study Procedures**

Provide a detailed description of all activities the participant will be asked to do and what will be done to the participants. Include the location, number of sessions, time for each session, and total time period anticipated for each participant, including long term follow up.

Adolescent participants will be asked to engage in a one-time audio-recorded focus group either before or after school hours pending convenience to participants. Participants will be instructed
to set up transportation as needed prior to participation. The group will take place in the
guidance suite for approximately 60 minutes. Snacks and drinks will be made available.

Based on data collected from the focus group, individual participants that represent various
aspects of the case will be asked to engage in a semi-structured individual interview for further
follow-up lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Follow-up interviews will take place in
guidance suite conference room before or after school hours at the convenience of student
participants accounting for transportation needs. Participant checking for accuracy and any
clarification will be completed as needed. The total expected time for individual participant
involvement is approximately 2-2½ hours.

| Who will conduct the experimental procedures, questionnaires, etc? Where will this be
done? Attach copies of all questionnaires, interview questions, tests, survey
instruments, links to online surveys, etc. |
|---|

Kelly McCool, researcher, will conduct the focus group and individual participant interviews.
These activities will be completed in the guidance suite conference room at high school.

Please See attached interview questions.

**K. Risks**

Identify possible risks to the participant as a result of the research. Consider possible
psychological harm, loss of confidentiality, financial, social, or legal damages as well as
physical risks. What is the seriousness of these risks and what is the likelihood that they
may occur?

Possible risks to participants are considered minimal. The greatest care will be taken to ensure
confidentiality and anonymity. Participants’ grades will not be impacted. The focus group
provides a potential setting for participants to incur some minimal psychological harm. For
example, students may share opinions and views not shared by peers and run the risk of social
isolation in the group. The researcher will introduce the focus group by stating that it is
important for all group members to feel comfortable sharing their point of view and opinions and
the importance of treating each other with respect. The researcher will ensure to best of ability
that all students are comfortable to share their opinions, they are treated with respect within the
group setting and ensure students know that all views are helpful in exploring the topic of
achievement motivation and the summer reading initiative. When considering the possibility of
psychological harm, financial, social and legal damages, it is thought that these are not likely to occur.

Describe in detail the safeguards that will be implemented to minimize risks. What follow-up procedures are in place if harm occurs? What special precautions will be instituted for vulnerable populations?

Special precautions will be taken in working with this adolescent population. The researcher will ensure to best of ability that all students are comfortable to share their opinion in during focus group and that all views are helpful in exploring the topic of achievement motivation and the summer reading initiative. Researcher will remind students as needed during group session that everyone has their own views, to respect each other’s views and that all views are helpful in understanding academic motivation in relation to the summer reading initiative activities. Follow-up participant checks will be completed for clarification, accuracy and any participant concerns. Researcher is available at study site for any participant to follow-up with on a daily basis. Participants will be reminded of their rights participating in the study.

L. Confidentiality

Describe in detail the procedures that will be used to maintain anonymity or confidentiality during collection and entry of data. Who will have access to data? How will the data be used, now and in the future?

Confidentiality will be assured through pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants, site, and others named by participants. Researcher will maintain sole access to data. A master list of all files will be maintained by the researcher with pseudonyms in order respect the anonymity of the participants. The researcher will have sole access to files. Data will be used for coding to identify potential categories and themes for analysis and findings.

How and where will data be stored? When will data, including audiotapes and videotapes, be destroyed? If data is to be retained, explain why. Will identifiers or links to identification be destroyed? When? Signed consent documents must be retained for 3 years following the end of the study. Where and how will they be maintained?

Data will be stored at researcher’s home and office with both password protected computer and backed up with multiple copies via USB ad hard-drive. Paper copies will be maintained under locked storage at home and in the office. All data will be cleaned and coded so that written records have anonymity and will include focus group transcripts, interview transcripts, field notes, personal journals, observations, and information gleaned from document analysis.
Identifiers and links to identification will be destroyed. All files will be retained under locked storage for at least five years following the study as recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010).

M. **If your research is HIPAA-protected, please complete the following:**

**Individual Access to PHI**

Describe the procedure that will be used for allowing individuals to access their PHI or, alternatively, advising them that they must wait until the end of the study to review their PHI.

Not applicable

N. **Benefits**

Describe what benefits can the participant reasonably expect from his/her involvement in the research? If none, state that. What are potential benefits to others?

Potential benefits to the participants are limited but may include the information gained from the study may impact possible changes to the implementation of future summer reading activities. Other students may benefit in the future form the information gained from this study and how it relates to future summer reading activities and possible other academic initiatives at the high school level.

O. **Attachments**

Identify attachments that have been included and those that are not applicable (n/a).

- X Copy of fliers, ads, posters, emails, web pages, letters for recruitment *
- X Scripts of intended telephone conversations*
- X Copies of IRB approvals or letters of permission from other sites
- X Informed Consent Form(s)* (see our templates for examples)
- N/A Debriefing Statement*
- X Copies of all instruments, surveys, focus group or interview questions, tests, etc.
- X **Signed Assurance of Principal Investigator Form** *(required)*
- X NIH Human Subject Training Certificate(s) *(required if not already on file at HSRP)*

*(Approved forms must be stamped by the IRB before use)*
Appendix A: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative: A Qualitative Case Study

SCRIPT FOR PARENT TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT

Hello Mr. /Mrs. (Parent Name),

My name is Kelly McCool. I am a guidance counselor here at High School X. I am calling to let you know that I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral studies on academic motivation among high school students in relation to the new summer reading initiative that we implemented this year. Are you familiar with the summer reading initiative?

Great! The purpose of my study is to better understand adolescent perspectives on academic motivation (what makes adolescents maintain a desire to succeed in their academic studies) in relation to the new school wide summer reading initiative. As part of my study I would like to conduct a one-time focus group with volunteer students from (student’s name) book discussion group. The focus group would be a follow-up discussion about students’ experiences participating in the summer reading initiative. The focus group is expected to last approximately 60 minutes in the guidance suite before or after school. Following the focus group, I may invite a few of the group members to complete a one-time individual interview for further follow-up at a later date that is expected to last approximately 45-60 minutes. Student participation in the study is completely voluntary and students have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity will be maintained throughout the study through the use of pseudonyms or fake names for both participants and the high school. Confidentiality will also be maintained as I will be the only one who has access to the information shared and data in the study. Students’ grades will not be impacted in any way whether students choose to participate or not in the study. There is little to no harm that would come from participating in the study. I am really excited about this study and finding out the students’ perspectives on their motivation in relation to this summer initiative. Information from this study might prove beneficial to your student and/or other students in how future summer initiatives or other academic activities are chosen and/or implemented. Do you have any questions or concerns about this study? DO you think you would be willing to provide consent for (student’s name) to participate in this study if interested? Great! I will be mailing home a consent form for you and your student to review. Please feel free to contact me if you or your student have any questions that come up. If you and your student approve, please sign the consent form and return to me at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time, I appreciate your support! I would be happy to share the results with you and your students at the end of the study.

APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form Materials

Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative
Dear Parents and Students,

The following information is provided to you regarding information on a study being conducted based on the newly implemented summer reading initiative with specific interest in achievement motivation (motivation for academic studies) among high school students. This study became of interest as it was learned that many teenagers begin to experience less motivation for their academics as they become older (middle school and high school). It is important to educate and motivate all students for their academics and find better ways to achieve this goal. Please be aware that participation is voluntary and should you decide to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time during the study without affecting your relationship with this researcher, your teachers or your classes at X High School.

The purpose of this study is to better understand adolescent perspectives on academic motivation (what makes adolescents maintain a desire to succeed in their academic studies) in relation to the new school wide summer reading initiative. This study is part of a doctoral level college course. If chosen, one audio-recorded focus group will take place lasting approximately 60 minutes with a possible follow-up individual participant interview that would last approximately 45-60 minutes discussing the reading initiative in relation to each student’s perspective on achievement motivation, engagement and socialization. In addition, document analysis of field notes and participants’ academic file including past and present report cards, transcripts, g.p.a and class rank information. Researcher will further ensure that students and parents understand that participation in study in no way impacts students’ grades positively or negatively.

APPENDIX B cont’d:

The highest regard will be given to confidentiality and anonymity. A Pseudonym or fake name will be used in the study. Neither your name or the high school name will not be associated with this study or its research findings. Only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about this study either before participating or during your time that you are participating. We would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with participation in this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information gained about the student experiences of participating in a school wide summer reading initiative and its potential impact on achievement motivation and engagement and socialization in one’s studies. This information could be beneficial in shaping the future use of summer reading activities.
Please sign your consent below with full knowledge of the nature of this study and purpose of the procedures. My signature below reflects my consent to fully participate in this study including one time focus group participation which is expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes and a possible follow-up individual interview that is expected to last approximately 45-60 minutes. I fully understand that I may withdraw at any time from the study without any harm to myself or my grades.

A copy of this consent will be given for you to keep.

Signature of Parent: ____________________________ Date: __________

Parent Name Printed: ____________________________

Signature of Participant __________________________ Date: __________

Student Name Printed: ____________________________

APPENDIX C: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative: A Qualitative Case Study

ADOLESCENT DATA COLLECTION: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Hello everyone! I want to thank you all for volunteering to be a part of this study. Feel free to help yourself to the snacks and drinks provided. Just to remind you, the purpose of this study to explore adolescent achievement motivation (or the motivation students have regarding their academics) in relation to your experience in the summer reading initiative. Before we get started I wanted to remind you that fake names or pseudonyms will be provided in order to protect your real identity in the study. Information you share will kept confidential. I will be the only person that has access to the data. As you know your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study. Does anyone have any questions at this time? May we begin with our audiotaped focus group discussion? Great! Let’s get started!

Q1: Tell me about your general motivation for your academic studies?

Q2: Tell me about your specific motivation when it comes to reading for school?
Q3: Tell me about your specific motivation when it comes to summer reading?

Q4: How did your thoughts or feelings about summer reading change if at all this year with the new initiative?

Q5: Tell me specifically about your motivation for summer reading this year compared to years past?

Q6: Tell me what it was like to have the ability to choose your book from the list of about 80 books?

Q7: What was it like to sign up on-line? What was it like to not know who else was in your group or who the teacher was?

Q8: Did you get your first choice? Or did you have to settle for a second choice?

Q9: Did anyone sign up just to sign up because that was the expectation?

Q10: Tell me how your summer reading proceeded? (did you start right away, did you procrastinate)

Q11: Tell me about the book discussion group experience?

Q12: How did this experience change your perspective if at all on reading? Reading for school? Summer reading?

One last question before we end,

Q13: Based on your experience, what do you think could improve the summer reading initiative? Or how would you change the summer reading initiative?

That concludes our focus group, does anyone have anything else they would like to add before we end? Thank you for your participation, this was very worthwhile and I have gained a lot of information. I am going to review our session. I may touch base with you and invite you to participate in a follow-up individual interview. Thanks again for your participation!

APPENDIX D: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

DATA COLLECTION ADOLESCENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Demographics (grade, gender, ethnicity, English level):

(Brief Description of Project)

Part A: Interviewer will ask interviewee to tell a little about their background/self for rapport building purposes and general background information regarding participants’ views about their self as student or learner and motivation for studies. About 25 minutes will be slotted for this and move into the interview questions surrounding achievement motivation as it relates to the reading initiative.

Question #1: “How would you describe yourself as a student?”

Question #2: “Thinking about yourself as a student, how would you describe your motivation for your studies?”

Question #3: “How has your motivation for your studies stayed the same or changed since middle school?”

Questions #3: “What if anything has made a positive impact on your motivation for your high school studies?

Question #4: “What if anything has negatively impacted your motivation for your high school studies?”

Part B: The questions for this part will focus on achievement motivation as it relates to the experience of participating in the high school reading initiative.

Question #1: “What has been your experience participating in the summer reading initiative where you chose a book and participated in the book group with a faculty advisor?

Questions #2: “How, if at all, has this experience negatively impacted your motivation for your studies?”

APPENDIX D cont’d:

Question #3: “How, if at all, has this reading initiative experience positively impacted your motivation for your studies?”
Question #4: “Final question, how if it all has the summer reading initiative impacted your engagement or socialization in the classroom?”

“This ends our interview. Do you have any further comments or questions for me? I want to thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study. I may contact you if I have any questions or clarifications from our interview. Do you have any question about that?”

APPENDIX E: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative: A Qualitative Case Study

DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER

Marple Newtown School District

MERLE HOROWITZ, Ed.D. Superintendent

40 Media Line Road

Newtown Square, PA 19073

PHONE 610.359.4256
August 27, 2013
Northeastern University
Human Subject Research Protection
960 Renaissance Park
Boston, MA. 02115-5000

Dear Human Subjects Committee:

It is my understanding that Kelly McCool will be conducting a research study through Northeastern University’s doctoral program at Marple Newtown High School on “Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative”. Mrs. McCool has informed me of the design of the study as well as the targeted student population.

I support this effort and will provide any assistance necessary for the successful implementation of this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (610) 359-4256.

Sincerely,

Merle Horowitz, Ed.D.

Merle Horowitz, Ed.D.
Superintendent
APPENDIX F: Exploring adolescent perceptions of achievement motivation through participation in a high school wide summer reading initiative

NIH CERTIFICATE

P. Health Care Provision During Study

Please check the applicable line:

KM  I have read the description of HIPAA “health care” within Section 4 of the Policies & Procedures for Human Research Protection. I am not a HIPAA-covered health care provider and no health care will be provided in connection with this study.

_____ I am a HIPAA-covered health care provider or I will provide health care in connection with this study as described in Section 4 of the Policies & Procedures for Human Research Protection. This health care is described above under “Study Procedures,” and the Informed Consent and Health Information Use and Disclosure Authorization form will be used with all prospective study participants.
If you have any questions about whether you are a HIPAA-covered health care provider, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection at n.regina@neu.edu or (617) 373-4588.

Please return the completed application to: Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection
960 Renaissance Park
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115-5000
Tel: 617.373.4588; Fax: 617.373.4595
n.regina@neu.edu

The application and accompanying materials may be sent as email attachments or in hard copy. A signed Assurance of Principal Investigator Form may be sent via fax or in hard copy.