Community College Readers in Their 21st Century “Transactional Zones”

by

Cynthia Kiefer

Arizona State University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 17, 2014 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee

Jessica Early, Chair
James Blasingame
Josephine Marsh

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014
ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study examines 126 community college students enrolled in developmental reading courses at a mid-sized Southwestern community college. These students participated in a survey-based study regarding their reading experiences and practices, social influence upon those practices, reading sponsorship, and reading self-efficacy. The survey featured 33 structured response prompts and six free response prompts, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study’s results reflected the diverse reading interests and practices of developmental college students, revealing four main themes:

- the diversity and complexity of their reading practices;
- the diversity in reading genre preferences;
- the strong influence of family members and teachers as reading sponsors in the past with that influence shifting to friends and college professors in the present; and,
- the possible connection between self-efficacy and social engagement with reading.

Findings from this study suggest these college students, often depicted as “underprepared” or “developmental” readers, are engaging in diverse and sophisticated reading practices and perceive reading as a means to achieve their success-oriented goals and to learn about the “real world.” This study adds to the limited field of community college literacy research, provides a more nuanced view of what it means to be an underprepared college reader, and points to ways community college educators can better support their students by acknowledging and building upon their socio-culturally
influenced literacy practices. At the same time, educators can advantage students academically in terms of building their cultural capital with overt inculcation into disciplinary literacies and related repertoires of practice.

*Keywords:* college students, reading, sponsorship, multimodal reading practices, developmental education, social networking
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Richard and Carrie Lou
Kiefer, my sister Kathy Mellody, and my cousin, Linda Wickham who supported me
through this five-year endeavor. Even though my father did not live to see my
dissertation and Ph.D. degree completed, he has been with me through the final stages of
this process. I can hear him now telling me to “keep pressing.”
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the expert guidance and support of my dissertation chair, Dr. Jessica Early. Dr. Early served as both an inspiration and a mentor to me as she lit the path to my scholarly thinking, research, and writing. Because of her expertise and coaching, this research study and dissertation reached a quality of which we both are proud. Through her own past mentors and scholarly research in our field, Dr. Early has generously passed an incredible legacy of scholarship and productivity on to me, and this legacy will push me forward in my professional career.

I also acknowledge Dr. James Blasingame who served on my dissertation committee, advised me through my Master’s program, and encouraged me to pursue this next level in my scholarly development. I doubt I would have reached this pinnacle without his confidence that pursuing a Ph.D. was the right next step for me.

In addition, I acknowledge Dr. Josephine Marsh who served on my dissertation committee and gave me the opportunity to participate in my first Institutional Review Board-approved research endeavor as a doctoral student. It was Dr. Marsh who showed me that the most important action one can take with research is to make a plan and do it. I also appreciated her kindness in guiding me through my first national literacy research conference.

Among my professors, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Django Paris who coached me through two courses early in my Ph.D. program during which I learned how to conduct qualitative research and developed a robust knowledge of the relevant literature that led to this study. Also, Dr. James Paul Gee both broadened and deepened my thinking about multimodal literacies, the nature of discourse, schooling, and identity
in ways that directly affect my practice as a scholar, literacy researcher and teacher.

Finally, among my professors, Dr. Laura Turchi served as an encouraging friend, colleague, and mentor through my doctoral program, and her support kept me afloat when I needed it.

Along with my family and committee members, I was fortunate enough to have the support of many outstanding friends and educators during the past five years, but one stands out the most: Francine Prather. Fran’s encouragement, questioning, and professional knowledge have inspired me for over ten years, as an action research colleague, as a scholar and, especially, as a teacher. In addition, I deeply appreciate a core group of long-time friends who decided I “had” to take on the Ph.D. challenge: Kelley Harris, Faith Harris, Katherine Stelmach, and Lisa White. Without the vote of confidence these fabulous women bestowed on me, I might have lacked the courage to embark on this journey. Because I taught full time through my doctoral program, I must express gratitude for the excellent educators who supported me at work daily in countless ways: Renee Davis, Michelle Hamilton, Bob Liebman, Brian Corte, Susan Moore, and Ramona Goth.

Finally, I could not have conducted this study without the support of the reading instructors who helped me administer the study survey: Sara Cameron, Ann McCage, and Suzette Schlapkohl. To these women, I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to conduct this study and to learn more about our students’ literacy practices.
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Community College Readers in Their 21st Century “Transactional Zones”

**Introduction**

I began this research study to learn more about the reading practices and the influences upon those practices among community college students placed in developmental reading courses. In the past year, I began teaching developmental reading and writing courses in a two-year institution and became immediately immersed in the complex world of teaching developmental education. I talked to colleagues, attended seminars, read policy documents, and applied reading research and theory in my reading courses. As I read brief after brief, trolled research study after research study, and attended meeting after meeting, I wondered: where are the voices of the students? My background in adolescent literacy research led me to assume the college population was as well represented as adolescents are in qualitative literacy research. This was a faulty assumption.

What I did encounter in the college-oriented literacy research is extensive quantitative data about placement, retention, and success of developmental education students as well the programmatic and instructional interventions underway that might have the potential to influence those numbers. This data serves a useful purpose in the institution, but I began to wonder where the voices of the students were in all those numbers. The developmental education college students, like all college students, live multi-literate lives, engaging in reading for personal interest, connecting socially online, and making the sometimes difficult transition to college literacy demands. Yet, they find themselves labeled as underprepared and placed in developmental education classes in which they can spend over a year ostensibly remediating their math, composition, and
reading skills while their peers accomplish the first-year college course-work one would expect. I heard my students ask, “What am I doing in this class? I can read.” These students are right; they can read, and they are reading.

Because I heard so few student voices in the developmental reading literature and wanted to learn more about the population I was now teaching, I began to wonder: What are students reading in out-of-school contexts? Do their family members encourage them to read? What were the media and online influences in their reading? What are their practices as they relate to academic reading? Who was influencing them in their current lives to read? Do they believe that they are competent readers? From these questions, the research questions for this study emerged.

This introduction provides the educational contexts that background the community college readers who participated in this study. Most college student participants had been placed through a single assessment into the college’s developmental reading course sequence. Through a critical socio-cultural lens, an exploration of the relevant literacy literature, and the study survey, I aspired to learn more about how the personal and social interactions in community college readers’ daily "life-worlds" influence their reading practices (Schutz qtd. in Harris, 2006, p. 81). As Thomas Newkirk (2011) explains, “Reading and writing are cultural practices, not just technical proficiencies” (p. 13), and this study aimed to learn more about these socio-cultural influences.

A review of the current literature regarding college readers reveals little work regarding the cultural and motivational influences on community college students’ reading practices, both in their everyday lives and in academia, and how or why they
contribute to students’ success (Perin, 2013; Holschuh and Paulson, 2013). However, much research is available regarding their test scores on local and national measures and effective reading strategy instruction (NCES, 2003; ACT, 2013; Nist & Holschuh, 2000; Willingham, 2006/2007; Willingham & Price, 2009), but few studies investigate the actual reading practices and the socio-cultural contexts in which these students utilize their reading practices beyond classroom walls. While college reading research spans nearly 100 years, and at one point was supported with a rich research base of college reading and college readers, the field suffers from the question of whether reading is an academic discipline or not. This limits the quantity and quality of research in the field and the number of scholars with a college reading knowledge base in academia (Stahl & King, 2000).

The topic of college level reading is a complex one, affecting all college disciplines and both professors and students. National assessment data on college reading preparedness suggests that students are less prepared to meet the demands of college-level academic reading every year (NCES, 2003; ACT; 2013). For example, the 2013 ACT, *Condition of College and Career Readiness*, reports that in 2009, 53 percent of students tested met the benchmark for college readiness in reading; in 2013, the percentage decreased to 44 percent. In a 2006 survey of 1,098 college professors, 44 percent of college professors surveyed felt that their incoming students were not adequately prepared for reading and understanding difficult materials (Sanoff, 2006). In addition, college professors note that students often actively resist academic reading (Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010).
Another issue framing reading instruction and research at the college level is the practice of remediation for students who do not meet mandated benchmarks on reading, writing, and math placement assessments. The majority of these students placed in these courses are ethnically and linguistically diverse, low-income, and first generation college students (NCES, 2003). NCES data (2003) shows that across all degree-granting institutions in 2000, 11 percent of entering students placed in remedial reading, and at two-year institutions, 20 percent enrolled in remedial reading. In the southwestern community college system where this study takes place, 66 percent of students place into at least one developmental course. In 2012, 31 percent of students placed in a developmental reading course with 65 percent of those students successfully completed their developmental reading course (Factbook 2012-2013). Once students enroll in developmental courses, faculty typically refer to them as “developmental” or “dev ed” students.

Because first generation college students with diverse backgrounds are often disproportionately placed in remediation courses, the socio-cultural contexts of students’ lives are an important factor for researchers to consider in studying students placed in developmental courses. For example, SAT data showed that while only one percent of White test takers’ and five per cent of African American test takers’ parents had not graduated from high school, 27 percent of Hispanic test takers’ parents had not graduated from high school (Gándara, 2006). Latino students are less likely to graduate high school and go to college than White or African American students (Gándara, 2006). Once enrolled in two year colleges, Latino students face challenges to completion because they are more likely to have attended low-performing high schools, work part-time while
attending college, to attend larger public colleges, and be the first person in their family
to attend college (Alfonso, 2006). Because their families often lack the social capital to
help their children navigate the complexities and demands of college attendance, Gándara
(2006) reports that even when Latinos enroll in community college, few transfer to four
year institutions.

Bourdieu (2012, 1977) explains that, “academic qualifications are to cultural
capital what money is to economic capital” (p. 187). Students may limit their own
academic and economic potential (self history or “habitus”) because they are inherently
aware of this analogy. Rumberger (2010) found that educational attainment along with
cognitive (IQ) and non-cognitive factors (i.e. locus of control) are key to college
completion and economic well-being. Rumberger’s research showed that even when data
was controlled for cognitive and non-cognitive factors, upper economic class students
graduated from college six times more frequently than lower economic class students.
Sociologist S. Michael Gaddis questions whether schooling itself reproduces these
inequities or provides an opportunity for upward mobility (2013, p. 10). Gaddis (2013)
studied reading practice as a measure of cultural capital (through academic habitus
inculcation) and found a positive effect. Based on his findings, Gaddis makes a case for
further study of both the cultural and cognitive effects of reading practice on educational
attainment that ultimately produces the cultural capital that leads to upward mobility.

In this dissertation study, I set out to learn more about the actual practices utilized
among those readers assessed as “underprepared” for college reading. Whether
positioned as remedial, developmental, underprepared, or inexperienced, most college
students placed in developmental English can read and do read outside of the school
setting (Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009). While context, culture, personal interests, social influence, and networked interaction are inherent in everyday literacies, little research exists about community college readers’ contexts (Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009; Perin, 2013). Learning more about the influences on their reading helps fill a research gap in the literature and inform pedagogy. By examining the strengths embedded in their everyday reading practices as well as the personal and social influences upon those practices, this dissertation study aspires to re-vision community college reading students as aspirational readers who enact a wide range of complex literacy practices.

In addition to re-visioning college readers, I hoped to examine reading as the social, inter-textual, multimodal act it is. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) *Position Statement Multimodal Literacies and Technology* suggests that what we call reading is, more broadly, a complex multimodal “communication event:”

There are increased cognitive demands on the audience to interpret the intertextuality of communication events that include combinations of print, speech, images, sounds, movement, music, and animation. Products may blur traditional lines of genre, author/audience, and linear sequence.

To capture this non-linear essence of reading, Gunther Kress (2003) coined the term “reading path” (p. 156-167). This view of reading assumes that readers have individual and social purposes for what they read, the way they read, and the routes they take during these inherently social and multimodal “communication events.” Even before the internet and social networking were integral to our everyday literacies, reader-response theorist Louise Rosenblatt recognized that “(l)iterature itself cannot be viewed
in isolation from other aspects of activity in society” (Rosenblatt, 1995, 1965, p. 153). As Peter Smagorinsky states, “reading is fundamentally relational and dialogic” (p. 141). In addition, reading is a highly contextualized act and individuals have their own purposes for the reading they do. James Gee (2004) gives the example of the online gamer who will read a highly technical and difficult game manual, but performs poorly on de-contextualized reading tests.

Yet, college students continue to be placed in developmental reading classes based on one out-of-context reading placement assessment and labeled as reading deficient or “underprepared.” These reading assessments do not assess the students’ reading skill and strategies in contexts in which they actually read. As Newkirk (2011) states, “If we believe that reading is part of an activity system, usually multimodal, where it is used in some way (as I do), it needs to be assessed within these complex systems” (pp. 12-13). Furthermore, students assessed by proficiency assessments as developmental or remedial then enroll in developmental and college preparatory reading courses in which reading skills are often taught through out of context drill and skill computer programs and less than rigorous and completely de-contextualized workbook exercises and readings. There is little evidence that these remedial courses lead to students’ academic success, and they actually may contribute to student attrition (Burdman, 2012). This coursework often is not academically rigorous and does not align with the academic, credit-bearing courses that follow, negatively impacting student retention and progress toward college degrees (Barragan, Cormier, and the Scaling Innovation Team, 2013).
With the growth of digital literacies and new understandings of identity as socially constructed and “shape-shifting” (Gee, 2006, p. 166), research indicates the need for deeper inquiry into the reading practices of college students and the influences upon them. The roles of identity and agency, peer and family influences, shifting digital environments, and one’s socio-cultural milieus as they relate to reading practices, both inside and outside academic settings, offer educators the potential to inform pedagogy—and to learn more about the literate lives of their students.

If reading is a contact sport as Rainie (2011) posits, college literacy researchers should extend the metaphor through research that continues to explore the players and their goals, both on and off the field, as well the team members’ interrelationships and socio-cultural and literal playing environment.
Review of the Literature

Through my review of the literature, it is clear researchers have not studied the reading skills and habits of academically underprepared college students extensively; quantitative and qualitative studies that would give voice to these college readers are rare. Because of the dearth of post-secondary reading studies, I blend salient studies from the more abundant adolescent literacy literature with relevant college-centered studies.

Redefining the “Underprepared” College Student

In her recent meta-analysis of the literature regarding the reading and writing of underprepared college students, Dolores Perin (2013) found that the “research tended to lack rigor” (p.118) and “(t)here was a tendency in the studies toward applied focusing on performance levels rather than measure reflecting theoretical constructs of reading and writing” (p. 126). Because of this, Perin calls for rigorous research in eight areas, including comparing the actual reading and writing skills of lower and higher achieving college students. The Community College Research Center’s Bailey and Cho (2010) also critique the inconsistent placement testing stating that there is

. . . no obvious point of discontinuity in the distribution of cutoff scores that might provide a meaningful point to distinguish between “remedial” and ”college-ready” students. Thus, there is little to differentiate students within the wide range of students above and below the cutoff scores. (p. 47)

College reading placement assessment statistics may simply reflect that many of our college students do not test well on out-of-context reading samples or the prior knowledge necessitated by the assessments do not align with some students’ experiences. Based on one assessment, students are placed into varying levels of reading courses,
many of which are taught as skill-based “remediation,” completely negating the students’ reading experience, individual motivation, and the importance of context in reading. Yet, the point is, students just a few points below the cutoff score are labeled “developmental” or “remedial” readers while those just above are not. The actual reading skills between these groups of students may be minimal and a matter of experience, rather than ability. Joliffe and Harl (2008) conducted a qualitative case study in which they found the underprepared college students primarily needed more practice and guidance with “text to world” and “text to text” connections, both of which speak to the need for greater prior knowledge and experience with academic texts (p. 612). This study was one of a very few highlighting specific students’ and reading practices and voices as well as the issues many students face as they transition to college reading demands.

**Redefining the Nature of Reading**

If, as Smagorinsky (2001, p. 141) suggests, reading is “relational and dialogic,” we cannot study or assess reading skills in individual, out-of-context, assessments. No longer can educators and assessment makers view reading as a fixed level skill enacted by a solitary individual. As Jewitt (2008) states, we must “move away from a monocultural and monomodal view of literacy” and find ways to “identify possible reading paths” (p. 262).

While this socio-cultural and “monomodal” mindset is evolving among educators, the division between home and school literacies largely still remains. As Knobel and Lankshear (2006) state:

> What seems to be happening is that the day to day business of school is still dominated by conventional literacies, and engagement with “new
“literacies” is largely confined to learners’ lives in spaces outside of school and other formal educational settings. (p. 30)

Literacy researchers and theorists have long understood literacy is not merely a technical skill set one may possess (Brandt, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) stated learning is not a matter of moving through developmental stages, but rather social engagement with knowledge, environment, and experiences which create a “zone of proximal development” in which people are driven through complex processes to increasingly learn more (pp. 90-91). Volsinov (1973) posits that humans develop language in “a stream that flows on” and people “enter upon the stream of verbal communication” in their own contexts – that language (hence, literacy) is not a static entity, but is influenced by a wide range of elements and experiences within that stream (p. 81). Sociocultural theory, the “intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and, more recently, political aspects of people’s sense making, interaction, and learning around texts” suggests that social interactions are inherent in literacy practices (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007).

Accordingly, college students and their literacies are not defined by their socio-cultural contexts, yet it is these socio-cultural contexts that provide the flowing stream of their literacy experiences and practices.

**Reading Practices in and out of School Contexts**

Donna Alvermann asked, "What if adolescence and the adolescent struggling reader are fictions?" (2009, p. 20). One could pose the same question about struggling college students. Noting the limitation of information about college students’ reading habits, Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009) conducted a time-diary survey study with
mostly full time students at a selective Midwestern university to learn more about college students’ voluntary and academic reading practices and the relationship of internet and television use to those practices. Their results showed participants (n=539) read recreationally an average of 1.17 hours a day, read for academics 2.17 hours each day, used the internet 2.47 hours a day, and watched television 2.47 hours a day. Sixteen percent reported not enjoying academic reading “a lot” or “very much” while 70% reported enjoying recreational reading “a lot” or “very much.” Sixty percent selected that recreational reading was “very important.” Fifty-eight percent reported “just reading” during recreational reading, but the rest the students reported listening to music, watching television, and other activities including exercising.

Even though they enjoyed recreational reading, 85% of students still preferred using the internet to recreational reading, academic reading, and watching television. Almost 48% reported conducting research during the time they recorded using the internet; this may have included academic reading. Generalizations about community college students and their reading habits cannot be drawn from these study results, yet this study is one of few studies that centers on college students’ specific reading practices. Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner highly recommend the time diary survey method for collection of more finely grained data than a typical survey would reveal. A similar time diary study conducted with a community college reader population would be incredibly valuable to literacy researchers and educators because real time data may elicit greater specificity and accuracy in the data than self-reported activities reported at later time.
Adolescent literacy research is much more abundant than the college literacy research, and several studies with adolescent populations offer evidence that young people are reading. For example, Moje's (2007) meta-analysis of several major adolescent literacy studies revealed that 98% of adolescents do read outside of school three to four times a week. In a large scale study, Richardson and Eccles’ (2007) study of the voluntary reading habits of adolescents extracted the relative data and interview transcripts from the longitudinal Maryland Adolescent in Development Study to learn more about adolescents' voluntary reading habits. Their case studies suggest adolescents read for escape or distraction, to receive support from family, friends, and teachers, and to consider possible identities and future selves through reading. However, the researchers did not explicitly present examples of influence of peers on voluntary reading or differentiate reading support. Also, the original data was collected before the pervasiveness of the web and social networking. Richardson and Eccles recommend more research centered upon voluntary literacy practices of adolescents, recognizing that these voluntary literacy practices can reveal new understandings about adolescent reading. Similarly, the dearth of research regarding college students’ voluntary reading practices calls for further inquiry.

Franzak (2008) discusses the aliteracy of some adolescents and the false dichotomy of in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, suggesting that some adolescents are "capable, but not engaged" (p. 232). Because reading in secondary English language arts (ELA) often privileges canonical texts and specific interpretations of those texts, Franzak asks us to consider that some adolescents chose not to read because, to them, the classroom texts lack meaning, the expected value of the texts in the
long term is questioned, or the instruction and school disregard the "digital and popular texts valued by youth" (2008, p. 232). For example, in Joliffe and Harl’s (2008) study, one college student chose to quickly read his academic reading assignment so he could move on to reading a novel he could not put down (p. 610). These studies address the popular fiction that young adults don’t read, but also reflect the agency readers have to read – or not.

Because students often enact a resistance to academic reading assignments (Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010), some researchers look to the culturally alien nature of academic discourse. In her literature review for her study "'Rise Up!': Literacies, Lived Experiences and Identities," Wissman (2011) reviewed the research depicting the experiences of students of color in their English classes, revealing how alienating the Euro-centric literature and invisibility of their own socio-cultural literacy practices in the classroom silenced these students. Wissman (2011) maintains knowing more about students’ cross cultural, lived experiences can inspire educators to “teach for openings” that embrace and build upon students’ own knowledge and agentive acts (p. 433). This approach to reading in the classroom can provide what Gutiérrez (2008) describes as a "third space" for learning (p. 148) in which the learners' life worlds intersect with, inform, and redefine traditional classroom discourse and teaching methods.

The literature reveals little about the reading sponsors of underprepared college students, indicating a need to explore in-school and out-of-school literacy sponsorship (Brandt; 2001; 2009; Heath, 1983) in college settings, especially among students placed in developmental reading (and writing) courses.
Sandra Hughes-Hassell and Pradnya Rodge (2007) surveyed 584 northeastern urban middle school students to learn more about their leisure reading habits. Seventy-two percent reported engaging in leisure reading (p. 23). In addition, their survey results showed that 70% of the students said their parents encouraged them to read, followed by 63% who stated that their teachers encourage them to read. Only 15% of these students said their friends encouraged them to read (p. 28). These results did not indicate peers were a source of reading material or that peers advised them or interacted with them in regards to their reading practices in any way, but did suggest parents and teachers played key roles as sponsors of their leisure reading. Again, the findings suggest young people are reading, and they are reading outside of school for their own purposes.

**Identity, Agency, and Reading Practices: a Transformational Space**

From a socio-cultural literacy perspective (Prior, 2007; Lewis, Enciso, and Moje, 2007), identity is a fluid sense of self in production, one in which readers appropriate or try on different identities in different contexts or in response to shifting social dynamics (Gee, 2000; 2006). In fact, Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) wonder if an "essentialist self" even exists and expand on this concept, stating that "discourses and practices" are "the tools that build the self in contexts of power, rather than as expressions of stable interpretations of world and values that have been imparted to the person through enculturation" (p. 27). Holland et al. suggest a "practice theory of self" in which: "culturally and socially constructed discourses and practices of the self" are actually "the tools of the self;" the "self is always imbedded in social practice;" and identity or "self-production" are plural "sites of the self" (p. 28).
Like Holland et al., James Gee (2000; 2006) presents identity as a construct that shifts depending on text and context, one that allows an individual to be known as a "certain kind of person" or several "kinds of person" (p. 99). Alvermann (2001) explains these concepts can become fixed personal or assigned reading identities such as the "struggling reader" or the cultural construction of a student as “deprived” or “different” (pp. 678-672), as often is the case with community college developmental reading students.

Unlike Holland et al. (1998), Gee suggests, as many others have, a "core identity" exists that is consistent across contexts. However, the nature of his work and of adolescent literacy researchers, is to examine identity as situated, a "performance in society" (p. 99). Gee (2006) shows how adolescents form (or don't form) "shape shifting" identities as a result of social interaction and institutional limitations or requirements, claiming these identities guide student literacy practices and their sense of identity in specific social contexts (pp. 166-168). Gee argues adolescents enact agency through these various identities, identifying with the literacies that facilitate those identities and developing those identities through discourse. Through critical Discourse Analysis (Gee 2010, 2011), researchers can gain insight into how college readers explore their identities and enact agency relative to their sociocultural contexts and social interactions.

De Certeau (1988) offers a vivid metaphor to convey his notion of how readers adopt new selves, stating that the reader "insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body" (p. xxi). For young adults, those "rumblings" provide active opportunities for internal transformation and self-knowledge. These
concepts of multiple selves and selves in production offer researchers a lens to view adolescent identity as explored through their reading practices and the social influences on those practices.

Gender-oriented research provides another lens into social influences on reading practices, although this review of the literature did not uncover studies of gender and college readers’ reading practices. In Kapurch’s (2013) research with adolescent girls who are members of informal, school, and online *Twilight* “literacy clubs” (a term she borrows from Frank Smith), she argues that adolescent females enact agency as both *producers* and *consumers* of text in online contexts. Yet, these girls continue to exist in “coming of age” socio-cultural boundaries in which they receive contradictory messages from media and the texts they read and create (p. 109). Kapurch argues “mass mediated texts function as agential opportunities for girls to create meaning, particularly through artistic works distributed online” (p.109). These activities enrich these girls’ sense of identity and agency through the consuming, producing, and communicating of texts. As Brandt (2011) explains, these integrated reading and writing skills are essential for expanding one’s cultural capital and meeting workplace demands. In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century knowledge-based economy, writing is the means of production and communication, yet students placed in separated developmental reading and writing classes in which they are identifying transition works and writing compare/contrast paragraphs. This does not create a “feel for the game” of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century workplace or create cultural capital among developmental education students (Bourdieu, qtd. in Gaddis, 2013, p. 2).

Identity and agency are also enacted through gendered social roles in one’s environment, and these roles can promote or inhibit literacy practices. For example,
Marsh and Lammers (2011) discuss the “figured world” (Gee, 2011, pp. 41-43) of an adolescent male athlete in a humanities classroom who chooses not to enact a persona of a good student. To maintain his social identity as male athlete, the student avoids participating in class and actually reading the texts, even though, in reality, he receives good grades in school. Since there are so few males in the class and the teacher is female, he feels “overpowered by the women,” suggesting gender is an issue for this student in this literacy class (Marsh & Lammers, 2011, p. 108). His teacher says he is “definitely not a humanities kid,” essentially eliminating him from her figured world (p. 104).

Again, my review of the literature did not uncover research about the reading-related practices and experiences of college-aged males, but adolescent literacy researchers offer useful findings with regard to males and reading. In Newkirk’s (2002) Misreading Masculinity, he presents literacy issues that interfere with boys and their identities as readers. In Newkirk’s observations, boys often desire social engagement with others, active role-playing, and appropriation of or relevance to popular culture in their reading activities. These preferences do not always align well with solitary activities such as silent reading and the “self-discipline and attention control” necessary to be viewed as a “good reader” (p. 62). Brozo (2009) recommends engaging adolescent boys by elevating their self-efficacy through situational interest, increasing their awareness of and experience with high-interest texts (both off and online), and connecting their out-of-school literacies with their in-school literacies.

In their study of adolescent boys’ reading, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found the boys preferred active learning strategies and needed greater schema building to acquire necessary background knowledge and to connect their learning to real world contexts.
These researchers found when they focused instruction on the experience of reading for the students, the boys engaged with the reading activity more. To allow sociocultural and identity statuses that might relate to their literacies to emerge in group discussion, Smith and Wilhelm created diverse male reader profiles for the boys to discuss foregrounding reading and masculinity, reading and race, and reading and socioeconomic class. Also, the psychological affect was important to the boys. They wanted their teachers to recognize and respect them on a personal level. Smith and Wilhelm heard repeatedly from the boys that they wanted their teachers to “know me personally,” and to “care about me as an individual,” and to “help me learn and work to make sure that I have learned” (p. 99). As Smith and Wilhelm note, much of what they learned from the boys in their study applies to girls and that generalizations about reading practices should not be applied to individual learners based on gender. Still, little information is known to college literacy researchers and educators about the ways reading practices among this population are gendered, or even if they are gendered.

Karpuch’s (2013) study is a good example of specialized literacies among a largely female population. The field of adolescent literacy benefits from a better understanding of the consumption and production of texts as well as the related social connectedness among these female readers and writers. Examining gendered literacy practices is another way to understand ways college students enact literacy and ways their literacy practices limit their agency.

**Reading Practices and Peer Interaction**

Bandura’s socio-cognitive theory (2006) emphasizes the importance of peers in broadening one's knowledge and self-efficacy as one develops over the lifespan. When
students do not experience positive social efficacy, this can both impede their social development and impoverish their potential to increase knowledge. Bandura conversely states that having a strong peer group can limit one's potential for development or knowledge if that group discourages or negates interests or learning (2006). As Bandura (1993) writes, "(b) y the choices they make, people cultivate different competencies, interests, and social networks " (p. 135). Exploring these choices and the social networks that influence them can allow us to better understand self-efficacy, agency, and social influences in adolescent reading practices.

In addition to building social self-efficacy, peer interaction can positively affect academic achievement. For example, Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Percencevich (2004) examine how reading motivation can be enhanced through the opportunity to collaborate with peers during academic classroom instruction. The researchers tested Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), a set of reading methodologies in science and found the students who received CORI benefitted from methodologies, including social discussion of the hands-on science and related reading. These results highlight the importance of social interaction during academic reading tasks. Additional research studying the relationship between collaborative social engagement with reading and academic gains at the college level, in developmental as well as credit-bearing courses, is needed to identify benefits as well as practical methods to engender collaborative learning around course texts.

As peer learning expands to larger digital networks, peer influence is exercising enormous potential to increase knowledge and the production of knowledge. The Digital Youth Project, a three-year ethnographic study, conducted by researchers at University of
Southern California and University of California, Berkeley, was designed to explore youth-centered practices and learning in the new media. The researchers conducted the study with a variety of qualitative methods such as questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and observations among others. The researchers conducted 659 semi-structured interviews, 28 diary studies, and formally interviewed another 78 participants (Ito, Horst, Bittanti, boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, Robinson, et al., 2008, p. 6). In addition, researchers spent over 5,000 observation hours and review over 10,000 online profiles (p. 6). The Digital Youth Project data suggest that social interactions mediate adolescent literacy practices, and the "(p)eer based learning is characterized by a context of reciprocity, where participants feel they can both produce and evaluate knowledge and culture" (p. 39). In addition, the project describes peer based learning as "friendship-driven networks" and "interest-driven networks" with a social reciprocity element (p. 11).

One conclusion the study reaches is that "(p)eer-based learning has unique properties that suggest alternatives to formal instruction" (p. 38). Peer-based learning in college contexts has exciting potential to change the lecture mode which prevails in colleges, especially in larger course sections situated in large lecture halls. The developmental reading literature is dense with strategy instruction studies and practical articles (Perin, 2013; Holschuh and Paulson, 2013), but how these strategies, especially social collaboration, work in academic settings to advance students’ comprehension of texts is yet unknown.

**Reading Practice and Family Sponsorship**

In Heath’s (1983) groundbreaking ethnography *Ways with Words*, she presented the day-to-day language and literacy practices of families in two South Carolina working class towns: Roadville, predominately White, and Trackton, predominately Black.
Through her study, Heath found the White literacy practices aligned with the expectations and experiences the children of both communities would encounter at school. However, the Black children’s literacy practices were often in conflict with school literacy practices such as story telling structures or behavior expectations and openly discouraged in the classrooms. White children’s parents often read to them from books during story time at night, a literacy practice valorized in school, while Black children learned the art of storytelling for which they often received negative feedback in school. As Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez (1992) explain in their anthropological studies of Mexican American families and their experiences with schooling in Tucson, all students bring with them culturally and socio-economically constructed “funds of knowledge.” Because these rich, culturally-oriented literacies are intertwined in complex social networks often ignored in classroom settings, Moll et al. recommend classroom teachers integrate them into classroom instruction because they have enormous “potential utility” (p. 134).

In addition to family and school literacy practices, the presence and context of “literacy sponsors” impact students’ reading practices and achievement. These sponsors are typically older, more knowledgeable, or wealthier than those they sponsor, so the balance of power in these reciprocal relationships leans to the sponsor, rather than the sponsored (Brandt, 2001, p. 19). Family socio-economic status also makes a difference in terms of one’s literacies; Brandt (2001) explains that “middle-class students enjoy a higher congruity between the literary practices of their home and the literacy practices of the school” just as Heath’s findings indicated (p. 185). Literacy practices are powerfully enmeshed in one’s socio-economic, cultural, and social “life-world,” and depending on
these life-world factors, college literacy expectations may seem like another universe to new college students. This is particularly relevant for developmental readers at the community college who are often low-income and second language learners from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and educational histories.

In a contrast to Heath and Brandt’s research, Love and Hamston’s (2003; 2005) research explored the leisure reading practices of privileged, private school teenaged males. The researchers wished to explore how teenage boys "are constructed and represented as readers, both in school and at home" (2003, p. 161) within the context of social and educational privilege. The purpose of the study as stated by the researchers, was "to examine how one group of teenage boys in one specifically situated context in Australia differentially 'take up' aspects of their family's leisure reading practices" (2003, p. 162). Love and Hamston (2003; 2005) studied two cohorts of participants, aged 11-17, over a three year period. Ninety-one boys, identified as "good and committed leisure time readers," provided the data for the first stage of the study. The second stage studied 75 teenage boys who were capable readers who, according to teachers and parents, typically chose not to read. Participants and their parents, interviewed separately and confidentially, responded to semi-structured interview prompts (2005, p. 187). The study indicates a continued need for more research about males' resistance to and personal agency regarding leisure reading, the socio-cultural factors beyond one's family or socio-economic status at play in creating and acting upon reading identities and the often reported "disengagement" with fiction. Updated research regarding gender, identity, and reading self-efficacy, and their relationships to family influences on college students’ reading, is warranted as much of the extant research is limited in scope or dated.
Susan Klauda's (2009) meta-analysis of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies that centered on the influence of parents on adolescent readers. She knew that previous literacy research had long correlated parental influence and younger students' reading achievement, but she wondered if that same relationship existed between adolescents and their parents. In the review, Klauda presents key theories in reading: McKenna's reading attitude acquisition theory and Guthrie and Wigfield's engagement model of reading. While neither model ascertains a role for a "socialization agent," Klauda states that "both models suggest that it is not only what children think others believe about reading or the regularity or quality of the interactions they have with others in reading activities that influences their reading but the literacy environment that others create," suggesting that parents can influence their adolescents' literacy practices through the home environment (p. 331). In one set of studies that examined social influence in reading, Klauda noted that the studies indicated a variety of people influence adolescents' reading. These studies suggest parents can be an important "socialization agent" for adolescent readers. In addition, she recommends considering support theories from a variety of fields as grounding for the analysis of research data, researching socialization agents in a variety of contexts (not in isolation from each other), and more varied and robust research methods that allow for comparison of individual's data (pp. 358-359). The literature reveal little about the degree parents and other family members act as reading sponsors for their college-aged children; more research is needed to understand the role of sponsorship among college students.

In a recent study, Klauda and Wigfield (2012) examined 130 fourth graders and 172 fifth graders to understand the students’ perceived reading support of mothers,
fathers, and friends and the relationship of that support to motivation, gender, grade level, and genre of reading. The students identified mothers as key reading supporters and a combined effect for the support of both parents emerged from the data as well. The support of parents and friends was a key factor in student reading motivation and habits, but the students did differentiate their level of influence among reading materials. For example, the support of friends, but not parents predicted web site and information book reading. In their concluding remarks, Klauda and Wigfield recommend similar work with older students because of the “paucity” of research in the field (p. 37).

Rich ethnographic and elementary school level family literacy research is available, but the secondary and college level literacy research literature would benefit from extended research in this area (Heath, 1983; Brandt, 2001; 2011; Allen, J., 2010). Learning more about family influences on reading practices can illuminate the family’s role in developing reading self-efficacy, attitude, and practices among underprepared college readers.

**Reading in Socio-Cultural Transactional Zones**

In a presentation at the *School Library Journal* Leadership Summit, PEW Internet Research Director Lee Rainie (2011), presented reading as a "social contact sport." The statistics he presented regarding teen activity online included: 94% go online for school research, about 48% of them in an average day. Eighty-one percent go online to read about movies, TV shows, music, and sports. In 2009, 73% of teens participated in social networking. Teens who are online reading, networking, creating, and re-mixing content, are more self-directed, but also more reliant on feedback and response. Rainie makes the
point that teens use of digital tools and resources and their collaborative youth culture call for a less top-down approach for learning.

Margaret Berg (2011) in her study of over one thousand hours of student talk (literacy events) around computers in a school library noted that students’ in-school literacies and out-of-school literacies share some similarities. She delineated five categories of text that students' online work reflected: text as reference, text as authority, text as experience (information), text as expression (social), and text as instrument (about the technology). These are useful categories for studying the types of texts over which teens engage socially and academically and merit greater study of the college students’ purposes, identities, and social interactions. Berg advises teachers to "emulate the highly interactive events that pull on the knowledge of several adolescents to read and compose texts" and "to create classes that are more participatory" (p. 492). This concept of distributed learning, indicating meaning is shared across a network of people, has the power to transform learning from a transmission, individual-centric model to an engaged, multimodal, distributed model of reading in socio-cultural environments.

The Transactional Zone and The Myth of the Struggling Reader.

In a critique of schooling, Gee (2004) explains how school functions to perpetuate white middle-class values and literacies which often block poor and minority students from understanding the values and structure of academic language and texts. Yet, in digital environments, adolescents show competence in out-of-school literacies when they are motivated to read complex gaming manuals above their supposed reading levels. Affinity spaces are another motivating force in adolescent literacies; the learning community moderates them through distributed leadership and knowledge.
Gee (2010) suggests researchers perform Discourse data analysis through the significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, sign systems/knowledge evident in the given discourse. (Big “D” Discourse examines the sociocultural contexts in which “little d” discourse occurs.) Examining students’ discourse practices, conversations, underlying social language and intertextual connections can help researchers learn more about the students' socio-cultural positioning of themselves and their peers within the context of adolescent reading practices. How and in what contexts students position themselves as a "certain kinds of person" or in this case, a certain kind of reader is the result of "historical, institutional, and socio cultural forces" (Gee, 2000, pp. 99-100). Through critical Discourse analysis, we can learn more about forces that shape identity and more specifically, reading practices within various identity statuses (Gee, 2000, pp.100-105). Gee underscores these identities rarely stand separately or as any kind of progression, and, typically, several identities are in play at once. Their key purpose is to "formulate questions about how identity is functioning for a specific person (child or adult) in a given context or across different contexts (p. 101). For example, applying this analytic tool to college students placed in developmental reading courses, I might want to find out how students perceive their own performance identities by asking interview questions such as "How do you describe yourself as a student?" (Institutional-identity; Discourse-identity) and "What do your friends like to read?" (Affiliation-identity). These identity statuses provide a structure for more finely examining aspects of identity and socio-cultural contexts that might reinforce or undermine college students.
In college academic settings, where one is already positioned as deficient by the institution, it is reasonable to question if this fixed identity perpetuates that identity, limiting the likelihood that one will move out of the developmental sequence into credit-bearing college courses. How can aspirational college students who receive a reading assessment just below the cut score be labeled “developmental” and require remediation while others score just above it and escape institutional labeling?

Educators can also learn more teaching underprepared college readers through studies addressing these forces contributing to their status as “developmental” or “remedial.” For example, Mellinee Lesley (2001) designed a college developmental reading course steeped in critical theory where students examined the socio-cultural and economic influences on their literacies and conducted a small study of their progress. The students in the purely critical theory-based section moved from a 9th grade to a 12th grade literacy equivalent. This study was too small to be significant, yet Lesley’s work demonstrates how students can increase their academic reading experience through demanding texts, critical theory, and overt critical Discourse analysis that surfaces their socio-cultural positioning in society and as learners.

Like Gee, Moje (2008) notes the ways students can navigate complex texts as proven by their out-of-school-literacies. Moje explains how students must learn to be metadiscursive or learn "to engage in many different discourse communities, to know how and why one is engaging, and to recognize what those engagements mean for oneself and others in terms of social positions and large power relations" (p. 112). According to Paris (2012), educators should “maintain the practices of their students in the process of extending their students’ repertoires of practice to include dominant
language, literacies and other practices” through culturally sustaining pedagogy. Both Gee and Moje suggest learners should explicitly and critically uncover and address the academic environment and their place in it through a socio-cultural perspective.

As Lesley (2001) found, critical theory applied to relevant texts such as Mike Rose’s Lives on the Boundary (1988) transformed her developmental reading students’ literacy practices. She approached the text through metacognitive exploration of the ideas in the texts using a critical literacy lens. Students with lower socio-economic history not only struggle with academic labeling, but may be unaware of the economic issues related to poverty. They often do not see possible future lives for themselves that would help them achieve upward mobility (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Oyserman, 2013). A critical perspective applied to classroom instruction can help students jettison the identity of “struggling readers,” but students must experience cognitive modeling by teachers, read research-based texts to generate knowledge about the way literacy works in the world, and develop the literacy skills to establish their place in the institution – and the larger society.

**The Transactional Zone and the Quest for “Mirrored Experience.”**

The interview data in Moje's study of adolescent literacies (2008) indicate peers were a source of reading material, females often reported being in book groups and discussing books informally, and males talked less about sharing books, but often talked about video games and cars (in magazines and online). Adolescents often reported wanting to read books after watching a movie. Throughout Moje's study, students reported intermingling print and digital texts as they pursued interests ranging from lowriders (cars) to popular musicians. The study also revealed students were interested in
exploring identities through online and print sources about their cultural heritage.

Adolescents want to see a "mirrored experience" to which they can bond or relate (p. 139). For college students in transition from adolescent to more adult identities, this may also be the case as well. In her implications section, Moje suggests the power of texts situated in social networks. Still, she makes the point that everyday literacies have "social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual" value in adolescent lives and those literacies "foster communication, relationships, and self-expression among peers and family members" as well as "support their economic and psychological health" (p. 149).

Increasingly, reading and communication are everyday social events occurring and evolving in a variety of sociocultural networks, suggesting a need for increased research regarding those “everyday literacies” and the social contexts in which they occur.

**Transactional Zones and Reading Paths.**

The social networks and digital environments where young people read and interact have changed the nature of reading as the shift from text-based to rich multimodal reading formats evolve. These enriched digital texts involve a semiotic reading of content that is a blend of text, images, music, design, and culturally recognized symbols. Van Leeuwen (2005) refers to these elements as “semiotic resources” defined as “the actions and artefacts we use to communicate” (p. 3). These semiotic resources carry “semiotic potential” (p. 4-5), articulating social and cultural meanings. Smagorinsky (2011) recognizes this concept of “semiotic potential” as he advocates for a cultural theory of reading, grounded in “principles of activity theory and cultural semiotics” (p. 133). Smagorinsky presents the notion that “during a transaction, the reader and the text conjoin in an experiential space,” but that this space is “a dynamic, permeable zone
whose instrumentality is a function of culture” (p. 141). Readers come to texts with prior experiences and cultural understandings; reading is “situated in dialogue with and in extension of other readings;” and “reading is fundamentally relational and dialogic” (p. 141). When readers engage with reading, they are reading from a cultural, social, historical perspective, and “they encode texts through activity in (this) transactional zone” (p. 142).

Readers’ general experiences with text and their awareness of the intertextual foundations of a given text determine the literate space in those transactional zones. As Bazerman (2004) explains, “a highly developed view of the intertextual landscape helps a reader interpret, evaluate, and use a text more effectively” thus increasing the reader’s agency by “planting literate activity in a richer context, increasing one’s ability to move around within that context” (p. 61). This speaks to the need to support college readers make that connection from text to world and from text to text in academic reading. Because of this, Smagorinsky calls for an examination of reading as “cultural and contextual” and posits that readers construct their own versions of the text in the transactional zone.

Extending Smagorinsky’s theory, if text occurs in a digital space, the readers’ transactional zone continually changes as new reading paths are chosen by the reader (Kress, 2003). Jewitt (2005) explains, “(t)he multimodal character of the screen does not indicate a single entry point, a beginning, and end, rather it indicates that texts are layered and offer multiple entry points” (p. 329). When readers’ transaction zones occur in digital environments and intersect with one another, a rich, but ephemeral space for meaning making and further study has occurred.
Review of the Literature Conclusion

The review of the literature presented here reveals the wide opening for additional literacy-oriented research among the college student population in general as well as the developmental education population, in particular, who are focus of the present study.

Finally, a snapshot of the data regarding college students placed into developmental sequences presents the magnitude of the developmental populations at two-year institutions and the present study’s research site specifically. National (NCES, 2000) data show 42 percent of two-year public colleges place students into developmental coursework, with 20 percent placing into developmental reading and 23 percent placing into developmental writing. According to the study’s southwestern community college 2012 statistics, 31% of its students are placed into developmental reading and 26% into developmental writing courses (Factbook, 2012).

Locally and nationally similar data abounds. We know who these students are. We know their demographics, their course success rates, their completion rates, their transfer rates, their part and full time status, and other data that can easily be collected to quantify and essentialize underprepared or developmental students. However, we know little about their in- and out-of-school literacy practices, individual literacy motivations and the social and digital literacy influences upon them. These students exist in literacy streams that include, but are not limited to their everyday socio-cultural milieus and repertoires of practice inside and outside of those milieus (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). The field of college literacy studies would benefit from more research exploring college students’ reading practices and influences upon those practices, but more importantly, re-visioning underprepared readers and the act of reading itself.
Research Questions

The theory and literacy research presented in this literature review provides a foundation for re-visioning the college readers placed in a developmental reading course sequence. These aspirational college students read for their individual purposes, yet their socio-cultural milieus cannot be separated from those practices. Through this study and a socio-cultural perspective, I set out to learn more about students’ reading in their day-to-day life-worlds and the many personal and social influences that help shape community college developmental readers works to fill a research gap in the field of literacy studies and works to redefine and reposition what it means to be an underprepared or developmental reader at the college level. This study set out to examine and surface the lived reading practices, perspectives, and related social influences of community college students’ who had been previously classified as underprepared and developmental readers. Applying socio-critical theory and the findings from previous research, this dissertation will address the following questions:

- What individual reading practices do participant community college students engage in in their daily lives?
- How do social influences play a role in community college study participants’ reading practices?
- Who are the past and present reading sponsors of study participants, and in what ways do they influence individuals’ reading practices?
- In what ways do study participants’ sense of competence relate to individual and social reading practices?
Methods

This Methods section provides information on how data were collected and analyzed in this study. First, the setting, participant information, and informed consent procedures are described. Second, the data collection sections provide descriptions of the survey instrument, and third, the data analysis sections include descriptions of how code categories were developed and the use of a computer application in analyzing the data.

Setting

The present study was conducted during the fall and spring semesters of 2013-2014 at a southwestern community college in a major urban center in the southwest United States. This public community college is located uniquely on Native American tribal lands. The school is a mid-sized community college comprised of 10,384 students. While the average age of the student population is 27, 11% of the students are 17 and under and represent high school student dual enrollment and on campus and online attendance. Forty-three percent of the students are traditional students who are 18-22 years old. The next largest constituency is students 23-29 years of age. Twenty-five percent are 30 years old or older, representing students returning for personal, academic, and career-related goals (Facts at a Glance, 2013).

The student population, for the most part, attends this community college to pursue the first two years of undergraduate college course work, including developmental course work, Associate Degrees, and occupational certifications. The student body is comprised of 72% part-time 28% full-time students.

In 2012, 66% of the students tested into at least one developmental class. According to the study’s southwestern community college 2012 statistics, 51% placed
into developmental mathematics, 31% into developmental reading, and 26% into developmental writing. On a list of courses with the greatest enrollment on the campus, developmental courses in the math sequence, Reading 091, and English 091 (writing) are among those enrolling the greatest number of students (reported in full-time student equivalent or FTSE).

In this community college setting, students placed into developmental sequences are meeting with increasing course completion and transfer success (Factbook, 2012). Since students with lower academic level literacy levels do enroll and need assistance with the transition to college level work, experienced developmental education faculty, tutoring interventions, and innovative acceleration models are in place that have contributed to greater student success. Another factor that contributes to developmental education in the study setting is the relatively low high school graduation rates in the state: 67.2% of high school students graduated in 2010. This paced the state 43rd in the nation for high school graduation (Diplomas Count, 2010). The campus is open access, so these students are welcomed whether they graduated from high school or earned an equivalency degree or not.

The demographics of the school are as follows: 12% of students identified as Hispanic, 67% as Caucasian, 5% as Native American, 5% as African American, and 4% as Asian Pacific Islander. Forty percent of students identify as first generation college students (“Facts at a Glance,” 2013).

The site’s Native American population is significant in comparison to the number of Native students nationally that comprise .9% of all students receiving degrees at two year institutions; 1.0% of all students in undergraduate higher education are Native American

35
Arizona contains five of the ten largest populations of Native Americans in the country, including the Navajo Nation, Fort Apache Reservation, the Gila River Reservation, the Tohono O’odham Nation, and the San Carlos Reservation (“Statistics on Native Students,” 2014). The community college is a state public institution serving large metropolitan area even though it is physically situated on Native lands belonging to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, contributing to the higher enrollment and involvement of Native Americans on this campus. Nationally and in Arizona, Native American K-12 students comprise 5.5% of the total number of students attending public school K-12 (“National Indian Education Study,” 2011) as compared to the one percent attending undergraduate programs nationally.

Participants

The participants in this study were 126 community college students, 69 (45%) male and 57 (55%) female, from thirteen reading classes. One hundred and four (82.5%) participants reported being in the 18-22 age group; thirteen (10.3%) were in the 23-29 age group; six (4.8%) in the 30-39 age group, two in the 17 (1.6%) or younger age group, and one in the 50-59 (.8%) age group. Prior to beginning the study, I obtained the necessary institutional board approvals from the university and the community college. Next, participating reading instructors obtained assent to participate from students enrolled in their reading classes. These reading courses are primarily populated by students who are not reading at the college level as determined by lower scores on the Accuplacer reading placement test (The College Board, 2014). Upon admission to the college, students take placement tests for reading, English (composition), and math to
determine their placement.

Twenty-five students self-identified as Hispanic/Latino (20.7%). Sixteen students (13.2%) identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native; 59 participants identified as Caucasian (48.8 %), 13 (10.7%) as African American 8 (6.6%) as Asian Pacific Islanders, and five (4%) as multiethnic. Five students did not report (4 %).

**Informed Consent**

All appropriate university research approvals for conducting research with human subjects were secured before conducting this research. Participants signed informed consent forms prior to participating in this study. Standard voluntary consent and withdrawal guarantees were strictly enforced. An example of the consent form is available in Appendix A.

**Procedures**

This study utilized an anonymous Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey, 2014) questionnaire, designed to learn more about the students’ everyday reading practices, their reading self-efficacy, as well as individual, social and digital influences upon their reading. I initially contacted all reading faculty at the community college via email and in person to provide information regarding the study and offer the opportunity to have their students participate in the study during class time. Three teachers and I recruited students from thirteen sections of reading courses over a period of six weeks. The reading course instructors distributed the survey link and administered the survey in computer labs at the college in October and November of 2013.
Survey Instrument

The Survey Monkey survey instrument provided a means to discover more about community college participants and their reading practices. The 39-item survey offered a statement or prompt followed by a five-point Likert scale, an open-ended response relative to the prompt, and questions with multiple possible responses. Six open-ended questions provided qualitative data. The survey prompts appear in Appendix B.

I selected Survey Monkey as my data collection tool because the question stems and prompts can collect both quantitative data and qualitative data and that data can be analyzed and disaggregated through Survey Monkey’s data analysis tools. In addition, Survey Monkey contains pre-verified questions (consistent with other education-oriented surveys) for collecting demographic data from survey participants. Survey Monkey’s data analysis tools allow for filtering and comparing the data and creating word frequency reports as well.

My assumption was the anonymity of the survey might allow students to respond more honestly and, therefore, uncover qualitative data I might not elicit otherwise. Also, students are accustomed to taking multiple choice tests and surveys, so the data collection structure would be familiar to them.

I designed the survey using reading survey questionnaires for this study based on modifications of several well-known instruments. Sources for the survey include: Bandura's (2006) detailed guidelines for creating self-efficacy scales; Pitcher et al.’s (2007) Motivation to Read Profile; Wigfield, Guthrie, and McGough’s (1996) A Questionnaire Measure of Children's Motivations for Reading; Klauda and Wigfield’s

The survey attempted to discern reading practices and preferences, reading sponsors, reading self-efficacy, and social influences on participant reading selections, including online sources. I designed the reading survey questions into five sets of question categories with each category, except the first, reflecting one of the four central research questions. The first category focused on demographic information; the second category focused on individual reading practices and preferences; the third on reading sponsors past and present, the fourth on social reading practices, and the fifth on self-efficacy for reading.

**Memos**

I wrote brief memos throughout the two-month data analysis process to track my process and thinking (Merriam, 2009). The memos were written and recorded in NVIVO 10 (QSR International, 2014) as shown in Figure 1. Writing the memos provided a structure for creating and recording useful in-the-moment questions, analyses, and reflections that helped me generate theories, hypotheses, and questions for further research.

Figure 1.
Curious about how the students who marked “none” when asked about people in their lives who currently make recommendations to them about books reading, I wondered if these students also had no past reading spouses.

What I found is that all ten of them did state that they had been encouraged to read by parents, teachers, siblings, and teachers. One also mentioned a trainer and another a mentor.

A question arises for me is why no one currently is functioning like that in their lives now.

I had wondered how these students respond to the questions about their interests as well as others, so I explored their data in NVivo to see how their responses stack up against the overall group. I found they read no fiction or non-fiction books in any format and that they did not read music web sites - something about 40% of the respondents said they did (they music). This is an interesting aspect to the analysis because it brings up against the commonly held view that the students can be reached through music.

When it comes to sharing, they shared magazines, sports and celebrity web sites. They were less likely to share web sites and send links to friends.

Sixty percent also reported that instructors at the college did not encourage them to read - almost a minority of the whole group.

They were much less likely to use social networking to connect about school reading compared to the overall group.

Sixty percent of the group said that they read 0-1 hour a week for their coursework, even though 60% of the group (0-10) and they were full-time students with 12 or more credits.

Even though students say that no one makes recommendations to them about their reading currently, they do report encouragement by family members, especially mothers (60%) and fathers (50%). Still, the number figure for the overall group was about 35%. Two of the ten say no family members encourage them to read.
Data Analysis and Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

First, I used Survey Monkey (2014) data analysis tools to analyze the data. Survey Monkey is available in several different levels, and the “Gold” level tools allowed for numerical analysis and filtering of the data set. The tools allowed me to analyze the results in numbers of participant responses and percentages to get an overview of the participant responses to the quantitative survey questions and view them in bar chart, stacked bar chart, pie charts, donut chart, or line graph format. The Survey Monkey provides for direct export to Excel (and statistical applications) which facilitated further manipulation and graphic representation of the data.

In addition, I used Survey Monkey tools to filter and compare data to observe whether certain subsets of participants differed in their responses. For example, to learn more about the students who report no current reading sponsor or person who recommends reading sources to them, I filtered the data by the answers for those ten participants to learn how their reading interests, their social sharing, and other reading practices compared to the survey group as a whole.

Because the participants are all students enrolled in reading classes, I wanted to learn more about the students enrolled in the developmental courses as compared to those who persisted to the final course in the reading sequence that is required by most of the degree programs at this college. When I filtered the data by course enrollment, I noted some important differences in the reading habits and practices of students who persist in their college education as compared to the students in the developmental sequence. The filtering tools in Survey Monkey also allowed me to filter results by demographic data
such as gender and ethnicity as well. Although I used NVIVO 10 (QSR International, 2014) for my qualitative analysis, Survey Monkey does include a word frequency tool allowing for a quick snapshot of key ideas and terms.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The survey featured five free response questions designed to elicit open-ended responses. I used NVIVO 10 to code the open-ended questions for patterns related to the research questions as well as other emerging patterns. I acknowledge coming to the coding of the data with potential theories, hypotheses, and predictions in mind, based on my experience as a white, middle class, female English teacher, as well as deep reviews of the literature. Charmaz (2002) makes a distinction between the constructivist theorists who "define what is happening in data" and objectivist theorists who discover what is happening (p. 684). I acknowledge both perspectives in my own analysis. Still, I set my preconceptions aside so I could take on a discovery mindset during the analysis and coding of the data.

Charmaz (2002, p. 684) states that the first question to ask before coding data is, "What is happening in the data?" I kept this in mind through my first several readings of the free response data. To organize codes and analyze the free response qualitative data, I uploaded the free response data into NVIVO 10. Through NVIVO’s “nodes,” I established categories that aligned with my research questions and coded the free response data within and across these nodes which I labeled as “reading practices and preferences,” “social reading,” “reading sponsors – past,” “reading sponsors – present,” and “self-efficacy.” As I coded for these categories, I also used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to create nodes and code for themes that emerged in the
data including “inspirational reading,” “spiritual reading,” “identity,” “reading to learn,” and “connection to real life,” “teachers encourage reading,” and “media influences.”

NVIVO allows for selected material to be cross-coded as well. For example, participants might describe a book as inspirational because it helped him or her reflect on his or her own identity. NVIVO allows for subnodes, so for coding media influences, I coded specifically for influences of books, film and television, music and video games. NVIVO’s word frequency tool allowed me to review the most frequently recurring words across the entire dataset which I uploaded from a spreadsheet file created and downloaded from Survey Monkey. For example, I wanted to pull the data for the word “inspire” (and derivations of the word), and I extracted nine students responses from across the qualitative dataset in which that word appeared. The word frequency tool does capture the stems from the survey questions, so it is not perfect, but it helped me double check and capture nuances I might have missed or mistaken such as the word “game” which was less about video games and more about the novel *Hunger Games* or consider making a node specifically for the word “friend.”

During the free response coding, I wrote brief memos noting questions, thoughts, insights that occurred as I worked. I created these memos in NVIVO allowing me to store and search them easily as well as link to them to relevant data nodes. The memos also helped with the creating of new codes and sent me back to the Survey Monkey tools to try another filter on the quantitative data. The filter feature allows sorting, comparing, and disaggregation of the data by question, demographics, and by specific response to a question.
After the comparative coding using the “nodes feature in NVIVO,” I examined the codes to see how the new extended set of codes could be re-combined and distilled into key concepts or theories including, but not limited by, my original research questions. As I read and coded the interviews, I noted common themes that emerged, especially regarding participants’ reading motivations: (a) the desire to learn about life and solving life’s problems through reading non-fiction and inspirational texts; (b) the desire to develop an identity as a “stronger reader;” (c) the importance of reading sponsors; (d) the interest in finding and linking to interesting content through social networking sites or other media; and (e) the pervasiveness of young adult fiction titles mentioned. Also, NVIVO’s word clustering feature creates a graphic view of how words cluster most frequently together in individual and combined free response data sets, revealing over-arching themes such as those above and the domination of young adult literature in reporting reading that is important to them.

Throughout analysis of the free response data, I applied a sociocultural perspective (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) to learn more about the college students’ socio-cultural positioning of themselves and their peers within the context of their reading practices and their “figured worlds” (Gee, 2011, p. 42). I worked to consider how and in what contexts students position themselves as a "certain kinds of person," or in this case, a certain kind of reader as the result of “historical, institutional, and socio cultural forces” (Gee, 2000, p.100) and reading sponsorship (Brandt, 2000). As I read and coded the interviews, I noted themes that emergent themes regarding participants’ motivations for reading and influences upon reading practices. I then went back and completed another run-through of the data to collapse and clarify themes, make critical observations,
and note any consistencies and resistances the community college students reported about themselves as readers, their reading practices, reading sponsorship, and the social influence on their reading practices.

**Results**

Through my data analysis, the survey results revealed these students, often classified “underprepared” readers, *are, in fact*, reading. Findings from this study revolve around main themes: (a) reading motivation (expressed as preferences), (b) reading sponsorship, (c) digital and media-related reading practices, and (d) a disconnect between reported self-efficacy and perception of selves as college readers. In the following section, I will provide quantitative and qualitative findings aligning with these four main themes.

**Demographic information.**

The survey collected demographic information from the participants. The data show twenty-five students self-identified as Hispanic/Latino (20.7%). Sixteen students (13.2%) identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native; 59 participants identified as Caucasian (48.8%), 13 (10.7%) as African American, 8 (6.6%) as Asian Pacific Islanders, and five (4%) as multiethnic. Five students did not report (4%). The data in Table 1 provides another view of the demographic data, including full or part-time status, and family income. In this view, the data is divided into two groups, the developmental reading course sequence group (071/081/091) and the capstone course (CRE 101) group.
Table 1.

Demographics of participants, by current class group (counts and percentages), separated by developmental sequence courses and capstone reading course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>071/081/091</th>
<th>CRE101</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulltime students</td>
<td>69 (72.6%)</td>
<td>22 (71.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>14 (14.7%)</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5 (5.3%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10 (10.5%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>22 (23.2%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>41 (43.2%)</td>
<td>18 (58.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (3.2%)</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0-$24,999</td>
<td>31 (32.6%)</td>
<td>8 (25.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$49,999</td>
<td>21 (22.1%)</td>
<td>8 (25.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$74,999</td>
<td>15 (15.8%)</td>
<td>7 (22.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>11 (11.6%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$149,999</td>
<td>8 (8.4%)</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$150,000</td>
<td>9 (9.5%)</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individual reading practices and preferences.**

Through the eight survey questions designed to elicit information about students’ individual preferences and practices, I learned more about what these community college readers are reading and gained insight to their personal, social, and academic motivations for reading.

**Voluntary reading.**

When asked what they prefer to read in their free time and given a list of 26 possible sources and genres to select, participants tended to read for social and interest-based purposes in a variety of genres, both online and print as Figure 2 depicts. Their most frequently selected social networking sites included Facebook (94/74.6%), Twitter (50/39.9%), Pinterest (29/23%), Tumblr (21/27%) and “other social networking sites”
Two respondents wrote in “Instagram” in the comments box which is an example of “other social networking sites.” Students also read personal communications through email (50/39.7%) and text messages (83/65.9%).

In addition to this socially-driven reading, participants reported that they preferred to read print magazines (67/53.2%), sports web sites (48/38.1%), music web sites (46 36.5%), online blogs (33/26.2%), online magazines (28/22.2%), print fiction books (28/22.2%), celebrity web sites (26/20.6%), and non-fiction books 24/19%.

Fewer students responded that they read for information online (beyond sports and music) in their free time. For example, twenty participants (15.1%) selected “science web sites,” 19 (15%) selected “informational web sites,” 18 (14.3%) read “gaming web sites,” 17 (13.5%) selected “education-related web sites,” and 14 (11.1%) selected Wikipedia.

Figure 2.

Participants’ Voluntary Reading Choices
Book reading and genre preferences.

When asked to respond to the prompt, “If you like to read books in your spare time, what kind of books do you like to read?,” 119 of 126 participants selected from multiple genres listed. Among the non-fiction selections, 46 (38.7%) of 119 respondents selected “autobiographies, biographies, or memoir;” 44 (37%) of 119 selected “comedy or humor books;” and 41 (34.5%) selected “adventure, true life, non-fiction,” 36 (32%) selected true crime non-fiction, and 30 (25.2%) selected “inspirational non-fiction.” A general preference for “true story” reading prevailed among the non-fiction selections.

Among fiction genres, 41 participants (34.4%) selected “mystery novels;” 40 (33.6%) selected adventure novels; 38 (32%) selected “horror novels;” 32 (26.9%) selected fantasy novels; 28 (23.5%) selected “classic novels;” and 26 (21.9%) selected science fiction novels and inspirational novels. Six participants selected all 23 of the possible responses.

On the related free response prompt, “Please explain how you would respond to this situation: Your reading teacher has told you that you must read a book for the course, but you can select any book you want to read. What kind of book would you read and why?” a wide variety of preferences emerged. Many participants indicated that they would consider several genres. For example, one participant wrote that he or she would choose “adventure, comedy, horror, war, science” book while others indicated only “true crime” or “romance.” Some were very specific and would choose “a Sarah Dessen book” or a book from The Bluford Series, but only 14 of 126 (11.1%) named a specific text, author, or series. A NVIVO word frequency analysis showed the most frequent genre-related words to be adventure, life (as in “true life” or “real life”), romance, mystery,
sports, biography, history, horror, inspirational, crime, and fantasy, again reflecting the wide range of genre preferences among these college readers.

A word frequency analysis in NVIVO showed the word “interesting” was used by 37 participants to explain why they would choose a particular book, but the genre or titles of books labeled as “interesting” varied widely, reflecting readers’ diverse interests. Mystery readers enjoy reading for the thrill, because mysteries “keep(s) me interested in what im reading n makes me want to know what happens next in the chapter” while horror readers enjoy the suspense and, as one participant asked, “(W)ho doesn’t enjoy a good scare?” Adventure readers love the action that holds their attention, but there could be more to this interest. One reader explained more fully: “The main character always has a purpose or goal to what they are doing. It's also exciting to read and keeps me drawn in the entire time.” This student enjoys reading about aspirational characters who have “a purpose” or “a goal” while participating in engaging adventures. Others read inspirational or self-help books to learn more about others and themselves. As one participant explained, “These kind of books can relate to me or the people around me. Reading these books help me become a successful person in the society.” This desire for inspirational reading tied to aspirational goals emerged from at least ten percent of the free response data.

While the survey prompt about free choice reading, did not reveal the motivations behind the participants selections specifically, the survey prompt that asked respondents to identify and explain “the most important book, magazine, online content, or other text you have ever read” offered richer responses. The themes of reading for inspiration and reading to relate to or reflect upon real life situations emerged from the qualitative
analysis. Students explicitly referred to several classic inspirational texts in the free responses as these examples show:

One of the books I have read was "the power of positive thinking" by Norman Vincent Peale. This was not only fascinating to read but really helped me out. Believe me when I say I had no money, no motivation, and seemed to facing struggles everyday. After I read this book, it gave me a whole new perspective, and I'm far from no money, I'm continuing my education, and becoming someone.

Also referring to another older classic inspirational text, a student states that:

Dale carniege's "how to make friends and influence people" is the most influential book I have ever read. Although it is an older piece of literature it still holds true and has put such a positive spin on life.

One student discussed the more recent and widely read inspirational book, *The Secret*, and tied it to a continued interest in reading related articles:

The secret and many online articles about success in life and the law of attraction, the power of positive thinking. If you're willing to read and learn about these things, they are really uplifting and provide great insight about life and how to make the best of it starting with your thoughts.

While it is not surprising surveyed students, most of whom are transitioning to adulthood and/or who are in school to better their opportunities would want to read inspirational works, I also noticed none of the inspirational non-fiction books reported were based on actual (and current) psychological and scientific research in positive psychology, mindset studies, change studies, and motivational psychology.

The biographical and fiction books students found inspirational may be similar in
that students found them “uplifting,” and these readings provide opportunity for identity-related engagement with characters as I point out below, but more research is needed to learn about the long term motivational effect of this inspirational and aspirational reading is needed to clarify these possible connections.

Similarly, students explained the value of spiritual texts to guide them in life, especially the Bible, which was mentioned in 12 of 126 responses (9.5%). One student explained, “The most importand (sic) book for me is the bible. I can feel relief (sic) when I read the bible and it always helps me to cheer up or find answers to what I'm looking for.” Several students commented that the Bible guides their values and actions as this student articulated, “The most important book in my eyes is the bible. It's important to me because it's a part of my life and I live by it every day.”

Other respondents were inspired by both fictional and biographical texts that taught them lessons about how to live their lives. One student learned to “live life to the fullest” through Mitch Albom’s Tuesdays with Morrie while another learned to “follow my bliss” through Joseph Campbell’s The Power of Myth. Illustrating the power of fiction to address real life issues, a student explained how Ellen Hopkins’ books made a difference, helping him or her lead a “good life:”

I read the "Crank" series & it was very important to me because it helped me realize that i need to accomplish good & positive things in my life & not go down the wrong paths with the wrong people. I want to live & succeed in a healthy & good life, not a dead beat loser with no education or goals in life.

Other participants’ responses indicated that reading helped them figure out who they are, such as the participant who said that Richard Bach’s Jonathan Livingston Seagull’s
central character’s “drive to move beyond his life and find who he really is hit me very close as I have strived to live my life for who I am.” Another respondent stated that the most important book to him or her was Jack Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums* “because, to me, it was all about the main character trying to find himself and inner peace through nature and traveling, trying to shape his identity. I related strongly to that feeling.” Some students expressed feeling empowered by memoir or autobiography such as this one who read Mexican-American singer Jenni Rivera’s biography and shared it with her sisters:

> I was starting to become a fan before she passed. And it's a very encouraging book. It seems that for the most part the book would be great for women to read because it's very empowering and motivational, which is why I gave it to my sisters to read.

The young adult classic, S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* received mention by two respondents; one respondent elaborated, “The Outsider is a book that really described part of my life the struggles and difficulties I had to face.”

> The free response data reveal when participants mention a specific book, it is likely to be a young adult book frequently read by middle school students. Even though the majority of the students surveyed are in the 18-22 age range, few of them mentioned books written for adults with the exception of the inspirational fiction and non-fiction, the Bible, and biographical books.

Books written for elementary and middle school aged children mentioned by title by students include: Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, Lowry’s *The Giver*, Rowling’s *Harry Potter*, Collins’ *Gregor the Overlander* and *The Hunger Games*, London’s *White Fang*, Farley’s *Black Beauty*, and Alcott’s *Little Women*. Young adult books mentioned by survey
respondents included Hopkins’ *Crank* and *Impulse*, Dessen’s *The Truth About Forever*, and Myer’s *Twilight Series*. Book titles mentioned that were not young adult novels, but frequently read by high school students include: Dave Peltzer’s *The Child Called It*, Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*, several Dan Brown novels, Fitzgerald’s *Great Gatsby*, Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, Kerouac’s *Dharma Bums*, and Wright’s *Native Son*. No books on current (or even recent years’) bestseller lists, with the exception of *The Secret*, were mentioned by students. Overall, more intermediate or young adult titles were mentioned by participants than fiction or non-fiction written for adults.

**Location and format preferences for the act of reading.**

In terms of where and how they preferred to read, 99 (80.5%) participants preferred to read in their bedrooms followed by 56 (45.5%) in their living rooms, 49 (39.8%) outdoors, and 36 (29.8%) in a library. Participants reported preferring print over electronic or audio recording reading formats, but this preference wasn’t mutually exclusive. One hundred and four participants (82.5%) selected they prefer to read print and 40 (31.2%) reported they preferred digital or ebook format. In addition, 31 respondents (24.6%) selected they preferred audiobooks. Two students commented further to the question explaining: “I always combine all three when i can” and “I like both formats but tend to approch (sic) my kindle because it faster for me to buy a book.”

The dominant preference for print could be related to lack of experience with digital texts, the technology and/or financial resources to purchase ereaders books online or to download digital books from public libraries. Only three of 39 students (7.7%) who reported household incomes under $25,000 reported owning ereaders, slightly lower than the all the remaining income group’s 16 (12.7%). However, 15 (38.5%) reported owning
tablets, actually a higher percentage than the remaining 41 (32.5%) respondents. Thirty-one of 39 (79.5%) students who selected this income group preferred reading print while 73 (58%) of all remaining respondents selected preferring print. Still, 15 of 39 (38.5%) in this lowest income group reported that they do read on e-readers or mobile devices, and 11 (28.2%) like listening to audiobooks as compared with the 20 (15.9%) students with household incomes over $25,000. More information about the contexts in which these preferences occur is needed to draw conclusions, but one key difference to explore is the 20.1% positive preference for print material among students in this lowest income group.

Students report when they are required to choose and obtain their own books to read that the library is a key source. Ninety-nine students (78.6%) of 126 selected the library as a source to obtain a book; 79 (62.7%) selected bookstore, and 54 (42.9%) selected an online bookstore. Native American students (16/93.8%) overwhelmingly reported they would use the library as a source for books. Friends and family members were other key sources of books, selected by 50 (36.9%) and 46 (36.5%) of the participants respectively.

**Online reading practices.**

To learn more about students’ online reading practices, they were asked to report the number of hours they spend online per day. The majority of student participants reported being online two to four hours a day, consistent with Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner’s college student participants (2009). When the data is disaggregated by course, students in the developmental (RDG 071/081/091) sequence are slightly more likely to be online for more hours. When the data is disaggregated for gender, males reported being online for two to three hours about 13 percent more than females; however, 22 percent of
females reported online five to more than seven hours a day while 14 percent of males reported being online five or more hours. Based on students’ reported free time reading preferences, most of this time is spent reading social networking, sports, music, online magazines, and blogging sites.

**Time spent on academic reading.**

In contrast, students spend relatively little time reading for academics or to complete schoolwork as shown in Table 2. In terms of the time spent reading for their college courses outside of class, twenty-five (20%) participants reported reading one or fewer hours per week; fifty-six (44%) reported reading two to three hours each week; twenty-three (8%) reported reading three to four hours each week, and 13% report reading four to five hours each week. Six students reporting reading over 7 hours a week, evenly split between full- and part-time students. Twenty full-time students (22%) reported reading zero to one hour each week for college while five (14.9%) of the part-time students reported reading zero to one hour. Forty-two (46%) full time students reported reading 2-3 hours each week for their college courses while 14 (40%) of part-time students reported reading two to three hours a week. More information is needed to fully analyze the low number of hours spent on academic reading each week, starting with data collection that reveals how many homework or reading assignments are assigned to students, especially students enrolled in developmental courses and one hundred level content courses. These numbers could reflect faculty’s lowered expectations for entry-level or pre-entry level students, or that most of this study’s participants have enrolled in few college credit-bearing courses, which is likely for students enrolled in the three course developmental reading sequence.
Another view of the data shows that 62 of the 91 (68%) full-time students in this study reported reading zero to three hours each week (21 minutes average per day at the most for college academics) while 19 (54%) of the 35 part time students reported reading zero to three hours each week for college academics. When the current numbers of hours each week students read for school are compared with the number of hours they are online, the data show that students are reading very little to support their school work. By contrast, a majority are online at least two hours a day, some of which activity might be school-related.

These numbers seem very low compared to the expectations set by many faculty members and college study advising courses, which generally suggest three hours each week studying per course. Because many of these students may be enrolled in two to three developmental education courses, their homework and reading loads are not that of the typical freshman, so that could account for the low number of hours as well.

Table 2.
Hours Spent Reading for School, Online, and Projected Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>%School/Week</th>
<th>#School/Week</th>
<th>%Online/Day</th>
<th>#Online/Day</th>
<th>%Future/Day</th>
<th>#Future/Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 hours</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 hours</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 hours</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7 hours</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 hours+</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Influences on Reading Practices.

From the six survey questions designed to learn more about past and present reading sponsors in the lives of these college students, it was not surprising that parents, particularly mothers, are key influences on study participants’ reading practices (Heath,
1983; Brandt; 2001). Nor was it surprisingly that current reading encouragement and social engagement with reading from friends would increase (Klauda, 2009). Rainie (2011), Smagorinsky (2001), and others re-define reading as a social act, and seven questions on the survey were created to learn more about those practices within the study’s community college population. The results reflect the prevalence of social networking engagement and other digital and media-related influences on students’ reading practices and choices.

**Social networking and media influences.**

In response to the question about whether media has influenced their reading, several participants made interesting statements about how social media has transformed their reading practices. For example, one student explained that:

Twitter has influenced me to read a lot more. there are many half stories told by the news and propaganda is built up on twitter and i find that when i read the actual story or news that i find what the real truth is.

Twitter is more than a series of mindless 140-character sound bites; Twitter is actually connecting students to content, and hence, longer readings. Again, Tumblr represents as a mad “tumble” of postings, but, in actuality, is providing its readers with a diverse network of reading connections through those postings. This student changed my own perception of Tumblr, stating: “Tumblr has actually got me to read a lot of articles and stories that I normally would not read. It has made me actually read certain things that I would never search for or even think of reading.” Even primarily visual social networking sites can connect students to a source of reading. While many Pinterest users focus on fashion, crafts, and home decor, some of its users connect to reading material
This student sees Pinterest as a “personal friend:”

I have found that the site Pinterest is like a word of mouth; when something is interesting or entertaining people will ‘re-pin’ it. It is like have a personal friend recommend a book to you. Many of the links are reliable and guide you to a plethora of new ideas.

YouTube works similarly to inspire viewers to link to the texts that inform the videos, as this student explains:

YouTube surprisingly has influenced my reading habits. I tend to look up poetry ink slams on YouTube. Seeing it preformed (sic) with a camera is great, but reading poetry and putting personal meaning to it allows me to engage in deep thought with the words.

This students’ statement that he or she puts “personal meaning” to the text suggests that the video represents one perspective of the poem, but he or she is seeking to create his or her own meanings through the text itself.

Social networks facilitate meaning-making and generate their own brands of understood social semiotics, exposing their members to diverse topics in blended modalities and genres they might not otherwise encounter, but that they can comprehend.

A student explained: “Facebook has started to post links to ‘trending’ topics, I know a lot of people who read their Facebook news feed just to find interesting articles or news.”

This is a re-visioning of Facebook as more than a place to “talk” with one’s network; for students like this one, it is replacing the news! Among the 126 survey respondents, only one of the 52 (41.27%) participants who responded “yes” to the question about whether a
variety of media influences their reading, only one stated that media detracted from his or reading experience. Because social media sites provide the means for self-expression, social connection, and even learning in a networked, multi-modal world, these student readers’ life-world readings are in a universe far away from the monomodal, linear, out-of-context readings and exercises that fill developmental reading texts.

Films, music and television also are sources of influence on student’s reading. Participants mentioned popular films based on books as influence on their reading. One student explained how movies motivated him or her to read books; she read *The Help* and “it made me want to read the book because the movie was so good. Same with the book ‘Holes’, and ‘The Hunger Games.’” Several students explained popular media helped them learn English and informed them about books. This student blends several literacies through media: “I like watching Talk shows this helps me with English and Reading. I listen to figure out the topic of the program. Also, when they talk about certain books that are up and coming lets me know what they are about.” Some students stated music is a reading inspiration to them, and they go online to read lyrics. One student linked music and reading lyrics with a way to “feel less alone.” The results reflect that students are engaging with texts, media, and each other in multimodal reading experiences.

*Social engagement: sharing reading with others.*

Beyond the connections made to people and content on social networks, students reported on the print and non-print reading that they share with others. When asked what reading they liked to share with friends, all 126 participants responded. (See Figure 3). The participants’ responses were similar to those for what they preferred to read in their free time (reported in the “Independent Reading Practices” section above). With the
exclusion of social networking sites and text messaging, the most commonly shared material was print magazines (67/53.1%) followed by sports web sites (48/38.1%), and music-related web sites (46/36.5%). Twenty-six (20.6%) participants share “celebrity web sites” – the same number that said they tend to read them in their free time.

Participants more frequently shared social networking reading as the Figure 3 shows, but 28 (22.2%) shared print fiction books and 24 (19%) selected print non-fiction books. None of the 27 selections for types of reading material participants like to share was unselected, reflecting the Rainie’s (2011) statement that for today’s youth, reading is “a social contact sport.”

Figure 3.

Individual Voluntary Reading Choices and Shared Choices
None of the 27 selections for types of reading material participants like to share was unselected, reflecting the Rainie’s (2011) statement that for today’s youth, reading is “a social contact sport.”

Participants were also asked to consider the degree to which they were likely to share their reading with friends and family members. Sixty-four of 126 participants (50.8%) are “likely” or “very likely” to recommend or send a web link to a friend to share while 60 (48%) are likely to send a web link to share to a family member. However, just over a quarter of respondents reported that they were “neither likely or unlikely” to send a web link to a friend or family member to share. Thirty participants (23.8%) selected that they were “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to share with a web link with friend, and thirty-four participants (26.1) said they were “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to share a web link with a family member. Gathering more information on family literacies among this population could help uncover reasons for this.

In contrast to what one might expect, within the group of participants who marked “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to share a web link with a friend, 14 of them (41% of that group) did mark they would be “likely” or “very likely” to share a web link with a family member. This difference may reflect an acceptance level with family members regarding their literacy practices, and possibly English language acquisition, these students do not feel with peers. Further research is needed to understand if this difference is significantly correlated with other social reading practices or whether lack of online access or less confidence with English limits their social interactions with readers outside their homes.

When asked the same question about sharing a print book or magazine with a family member, 20 (n= 34 in this group) participants (59% of the subgroup) said they would be
“unlikely” or “very unlikely” to share while eight (23.5%) would be “likely” or “very likely” to share print magazine or book with a family member, possibly reflecting less access to or engagement with print texts.

**Social reading and household income.**

Limited access and financial resources were considerations as I disaggregated the household income data for the students who are unlikely to share or communicate socially regarding their recreational or academic reading. The group of students who marked “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to use social media to connect with friends about school reading (n=39) shared less reading online, particularly blogs and education, academic, or information-related web content; they also read Facebook and other online social media sites less in their free time than the whole group reported and shared them considerably less, possibly reflecting less online access and/or less confidence with English. Although 33 of 39 (84.6%) of this group own smartphones and computers, 17 (43.6%) students in this group report a household income of under $25,000 (compared to 39/30% of the total group of 126), which could limit their resources or reflect a limitation on the amount of free time they have if they are self-supporting and working long hours at minimum wage jobs.

Of the students enrolled in the three course developmental reading sequence, 27 (21.4%), report household incomes of less than $25,000 and the financial hardships that come with that can be socially limiting. This campus serves a relatively large Native American population, and seven of the 16 Native American students in this study reported household incomes under $25,000. Even so, Native Americans reported sharing print books and magazines with friends more than the overall group, but shared online
sources less than the overall group. In future studies, exploring the cultural and socio-economic-related literacy influences on social engagement with reading and shared reading practices can give a more rounded view of ethnically and culturally diverse students placed in developmental reading courses.

**Social influences and academic reading practices.**

Social influences play a role in students’ academic reading just as they do in their personal reading practices. Two survey questions were created to discover the degree to which participants text on their phones when reading and whether any differences existed between texting activities when reading for pleasure versus reading for school work. Ninety-six participants (76%) report that they are “very likely” or “likely” to text with friends while reading for pleasure. By contrast, 69 participants (58%) report that when they are reading for school, they are “very likely” or “likely” to text with friends. This shows that some students are self-regulating, but that most are doing academic reading with the ambient presence of their social networks at hand.

To learn more about their academic reading strategies in an uncued prompt, a free response scenario question asked how students would prepare for a test over a challenging book. Forty-four (35%) of 126 respondents said they would consult another person and/or an online source. As one explained, “I would find a person that has read the book and talk over the book with the person.” Nineteen students explicitly stated that they would “go online,” to the web, or to the internet, and ten specifically stated that they would go to Spark Notes (online) to help them understand a challenging book. Some students combined independent reading strategies and social approaches to preparing as this respondent would:
I read it very carefully, slowly, & in a silent setting. So that i am not distracted what so ever. Also, i would take notes on little details or even major topics throughout each chapter. When i don't understand the begining of a book, i re-read it until i completely understand it. Also, i will even ask someone else who has read the book about questions i have about the book. & if i must, i will turn to Sparknotes for some pointers & summaries.

This student has a strong grasp of the independent and social reading strategies he or she can apply to be successful in academic situations. Students who have fewer strategies at hand or who are most likely second language learners, replied in simple phrases such as “re-read over and over again” and “i read 2 to 3 time.” One student wrote down no strategies except “making sure what i understand is what everybody else is understanding,” indicating the understanding that others can help him or her comprehend the material.

What is ironic is that all survey participants were enrolled in reading courses in which they are taught reading comprehension strategies and told repeatedly that re-reading is the least effective strategy for comprehending and retaining academic material. Only a few students mentioned elaborative note taking strategies or annotation, even though they are practicing these skills throughout the semester. While this result is not surprising to anyone who teaches college students, it is one that frustrates the teachers who supported this study.

**Reading Sponsors, Past and Present**

Mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and teachers are key past influences in encouraging study participants to read. The connection between mothers and literacy is
well known, and the results of this study are consistent with past studies that identify mothers as key reading sponsors for their children as shown in Table 3. In Table 3, the data show the increasing number of average family reading sponsors as students move through the developmental reading course sequence. Not all students in the CRE101 course were enrolled in the earlier developmental sequence (in this group, about 30% were), so the influx of students with stronger reading sponsorship may be responsible for this increase. More finely grained research is needed to explore whether past family reading sponsorship predicts success (or lack of success) in the reading sequence.

Table 3.
Past Family Reading Sponsorship (counts and percentages).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current class</th>
<th>071 3</th>
<th>081 36</th>
<th>091 56</th>
<th>CRE101 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reading Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>29 (80.6%)</td>
<td>46 (82.1%)</td>
<td>29 (93.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>39 (69.6%)</td>
<td>23 (74.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
<td>20 (35.7%)</td>
<td>14 (45.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>14 (27.8%)</td>
<td>24 (35.5%)</td>
<td>14 (45.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>5 (13.9%)</td>
<td>15 (26.8%)</td>
<td>10 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
<td>15 (26.8%)</td>
<td>10 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>9 (25.0%)</td>
<td>12 (21.4%)</td>
<td>9 (29.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>15 (26.8%)</td>
<td>6 (19.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
<td>1 (1.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # encouraging family members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The qualitative data offered greater insight to students’ family sponsorship. One student explained that, “(m)y mother always took me to the library as a child and encouraged me to grab at least five books to read. As I grew older the books grew longer and my interest grew with them.” Another presented a mother’s aspirational sponsorship of reading:

A big influence in my life especially with education would be my mother. She's educated herself, I look up to her and she's always told me "education" is what you need. It will always be in your life; subjects like reading, math and science etc. It's used in everyday bases. Mainly reading, you will need to read where ever you go. Until this day, I've been going to school because my mother has pushed me towards it and also reading my books from college, such as studying

As expected, this study also shows grandmothers, fathers, and teachers are key past influences in encouraging study participants to read as well. This student’s warm memories of her grandmother reflects both pride and a desire to “discover” through reading:

My grandmother on my mothers side influenced me the most to engage with literature. My grandmother was the first woman in her family to graduate college with a degree in English. She had a true passion for books and often joked that books were her true friends . . . She showed me what a joy reading was by reading to me as a child and always sending me home with books to discover. I will always cherish those memories. Every time I crack open a new book I think of her . . .

Another student explained the dual impact of her father and her teachers:
the people that did encourage me to read was my teachers and my dad the
teachers said that you could learn more and have the knowledge. my dad really
did encourage me by showing how reading can be very good and he showed me
what i can learn and i loved it.

The family influence on reading is powerful, and the compounding of these influences
inside and outside of the family may be even more so.

**K-12 teachers’ reading sponsorship.**

Students named a number of K-12 teachers, especially English teachers, in
student responses similar to this one: “My high school English teacher strongly
encouraged me to read and she helped me look at reading and in books in a whole other
way.” Another student linked her high school teacher’s encouragement to her career
aspirations, explaining that the teacher “influenced me to improve my reading skills and
that it will help me further in my career in the future.” One English teacher influenced her
students to be independent in their reading choices, yet engaged with the students over
their reading:

I had freedom to read any book of my choosing outside of the classroom and
school library. When I wrote my book reports she always discussed them with me
and was always interested and asked questions regarding the books.

In addition to English teachers, several coaches proved encouraging as this student
reported:

(O)ne person who has influenced me to read is one of my old basketball coaches.
He would remind me on a daily basis on how important reading was to a person.
he always said its like push ups for the brain. coach would go on and say how it
made a person more versatile and open the human mind up wider.

Both family and teacher sponsorship set powerful, positive life-long associations with
reading for many of the survey respondents; this fact came through these longer, most
heartfelt responses students made to any free response question in the survey.

Only a few students claimed no past reading sponsorship, but when comparing the
students’ words above with these study participants who had no or little encouragement
or sponsorship growing up, the loss is palpable. These students statements included: “i
didn't really have anyone to influence me to read,” “i never liked reading and no one
encouraged me to read,” or “I only read when they tell me to read.” The results of this
free response question illustrate the long term attitudinal results of childhood and
adolescent reading sponsorship.

**Current reading sponsorship.**

To find out more about reading sponsorship in their current lives, participants also
identified people from a list who recommend books to them in their lives now as opposed
to recounting the influence of others in the past. Fifty-nine (47.2%) reported that their
friends currently recommended reading to them. Sixty-three (50.4%) students reported
that teachers (50.4%) are most likely to recommend readings to them, even greater
number than mothers 59 (47%) and fathers 38 (30%) at this point in their lives.

When the results were disaggregated by gender, 37 (53.6% of males) male
participants report the influence of teachers in book recommendations while 26 (46.4% of
females) female participants report that teachers make book recommendations to them.
This disparity between males and females calls for closer study of what kinds of text
professors are recommending to students, what disciplinary areas are represented in those texts, the professors’ purposes in making those recommendations, and how male and female students perceive those recommendations.

When the last course reading course in the sequence, CRE 101, was disaggregated (n=31), the data revealed that as students progress in their academic reading sequence and persist past English 101 in college (the prerequisite for CRE 101), the role of friends (20/64.5%) and teachers (18/58%) exceeds the whole group percentages. In fact, for this participant group, the number of family members encouraging and influencing reading is greater overall as well. Learning more about how this subgroup’s (CRE 101) reading practices and sponsorships may have led them to persist in college while students with similarly assessed skill levels did not is essential in creating interventions to increase retention into credit bearing, university transfer courses.

Still, family matters when it comes to reading sponsorship. Among female respondents (n=57), friends and mothers, equally make recommendations (28/50%). The same is true for the male respondents (n=69): 31 (44.9%) report that friends make recommendations and 31 (36.2%) also reported receiving recommendations from their mothers. Fifteen (27%) female participants report that their boyfriends recommend books to them while 13 (18.8%) of males report that their girlfriends do. Thirty-seven (53.6%) male participants report the influence of teachers in book recommendations while 26 (46.4%) female participants report that teachers make book recommendations to them.

As students move up the course sequence, they report a greater mean number of people in their lives, as depicted in Table 4, influencing their reading choices, especially
friends and college teachers, but the relationship between course level and reading sponsorship is not significant.

Table 4.

Current Reading Sponsors by Reading Course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class size</th>
<th>071 3</th>
<th>081 36</th>
<th>091 56</th>
<th>CRE101 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who Recommends Books</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>25 (44.6%)</td>
<td>20 (64.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>8 (14.3%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>8 (14.3%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>2 (3.6%)</td>
<td>1 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>20 (55.6%)</td>
<td>25 (44.6%)</td>
<td>18 (58.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>11 (19.6%)</td>
<td>6 (19.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>17 (47.2%)</td>
<td>28 (50.0%)</td>
<td>13 (41.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
<td>19 (33.9%)</td>
<td>11 (35.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>7 (19.4%)</td>
<td>14 (25.0%)</td>
<td>9 (29.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>10 (17.9%)</td>
<td>7 (22.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>12 (21.4%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
<td>7 (12.5%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>10 (17.9%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
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<td>Cousin</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>9 (25.0%)</td>
<td>12 (21.4%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>4 (7.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of person recommending books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 illustrates a moderate positive correlation (+.54) between the number of past reading sponsors and the number of current reading sponsors. No significant difference in this correlation was found based on the course enrollment. However, Table 4 above suggests that as course level increases, the mean number of reading sponsors increases. More research with larger datasets is needed to further explore reading sponsorship over time and in combinations of sponsors.
The Relationship (+.54) between past and present reading sponsors (Questions 32 and 37).

When comparing the male and female participant responses regarding who currently recommends reading to them, several other areas of difference emerge. Eighteen of 57 (32.1%) females report that they receive recommendations from sisters while only 13 (18.8%) of 69 males report that they receive recommendations from sisters. Females report that six (10.7%) of them receive recommendations from their brothers while 16 (23.1%) males report receiving recommendations from their brothers. Twenty-six (27.7%) males report that fathers make reading recommendations while 12 (21.4%) females report that their fathers make book recommendations. For females, 12 (21.4%) report their cousins recommend books to them; similarly, 14 (20.3%) males report that cousins make book recommendations. When the data was disaggregated by ethnicity,
Native Americans reported sharing with cousins more than other ethnicity groups. Sharing of reading with cousins was reported by 5 of 16 (31.3%) of Native American participants, 2 of 8 (25%) Pacific Islander students, 2 of 13 (15.4%) African American students, 4 of 25 (16%) Hispanic American students, and 11 of 59 (18.6%) White students.

The family influence is strong among the survey’s participants, males and females tended to receive recommendations with same sex siblings more frequently than opposite sex siblings. Only five males (4%) and four females (3%) reported that none of the people listed recommend reading material to them.

When I filtered the data set for these participants who marked “none” for people who currently recommend reading to them, a several differences emerged. While 48 (38%) of 126 respondents selected that they like to read music web sites, not one participant among these ten students selected music sites. Also, their reading interests are more limited and less diverse than the whole group, and they include no novels or fiction books of in any format. What was consistent with the larger group was their interest in sports web sites: four (40%) choose to read sports sites in their free time and four (40%) share sports sites with others as well. Also, only one of the ten (10%) is likely to use social networking to connect with other students about school reading versus 51 students (40.5%) in the entire survey group. A larger study would need to be conducted to ascertain the strength of the correlation between no current reading sponsorship and a lower level of social and engagement with reading in general, but these results suggest that a negative relationship may exist and bears further study.
**Academic faculty sponsorship.**

Survey participants were asked if college teachers other than their reading teachers encouraged them to read. While 65% of participants do report their instructors are encouraging them to read, 35 percent report that they are not being encouraged by their professors. A word frequency analysis of the free response data shows a variety of students’ professors are encouraging them to read, but especially their CPD 150 instructors. CPD instructors are advisors on campus and act as academic coaches for students in their college strategy and preparedness classes. Most students in the developmental sequence are required to take the course once, concurrently with the first semester developmental course/s they tested into. CPD instructors are advisors on campus and act as academic coaches for students in their courses.

Among the fourteen specific references to CPD 150 instructors, several were clear about the value of teachers recommending reading. In the free response data, one student explained “CPD 150 but that is a college strategy class that helps you prepare for college. I am also in the Film School, so I am constantly reading any blogs or info that my instructors tell us about.” Another stated that “(m)y English teacher and my CPD teacher have encouraged reading. They say that it increases vocabulary and can give someone previous knowledge when talking to someone or trying to communicate in some way.” A student clearly new to college wrote, “My CPD150 instructor encourages me to read because it's what i'll mostly be doing the next 4 years.” The compounding of faculty reading encouragement may be as important to these college students as the compounding of family encouragement was earlier in their lives; these conceptualizations are worthy of further research.
Students also responded that professors used reading encouragement as a way to expand their knowledge generally and in specific disciplines. As one student explained, “I have read more since I've attended college. It helps in my school work and gives me more of a reason to read more to better myself in my courses.” Several students made comments about how many of their content area instructors promote reading including this one:

Many of the teachers I have had in college will reference books during lecture and encourage people to read them. . . . I have gone on to read books from a variety (sof instructors from Psychology, Math, English, Communications, History and Sociology teachers.

Another explained the extended learning related to a content area reading provides: “my anthropology professor encourages us to read more than just the text that is required for the class in order to get a better understand of social cultures that exist.” One student wanted to assert independence as a reader and stated: “Now that I'm older it's up to me to decide whether I would like to take the time to read or not.” The study results strongly suggest the power professors have to positively influence these college students’ reading practices and to inculcate their students into the world of disciplinary academic reading.

**Self-efficacy.**

Like many reading surveys, this one features five questions aimed at learning about students’ self-efficacy for reading. When asked to evaluate themselves as readers, 45 participants (38%) see themselves as “very competent” or “competent” as readers. Seventy-two participants (57%) rate themselves as “average.” Few participants at any course level feel “very competent” or, conversely, “below average” or “not competent
enough to meet the reading demands in my life.” Even though 72 participants (57%) see
themselves as “average readers” and 43 participants (34%) marked that they were
“competent” or “very competent” readers, they overwhelmingly feel confident they can
meet the reading demands of their college courses. When asked to agree or disagree with
the statement, “I feel confident that I can meet the reading demands of my college
courses,” 109 (86.5%) “agreed strongly” or “agreed.” Fifteen participants (12%) neither
agreed nor disagreed with the statement and only two (1.6%) participants “disagreed.”

Self-efficacy and perception of academic reading.

In a similar prompt with a different Likert scale, participants were asked to rate
the difficulty of their college course reading. Fourteen participants selected “not at all
difficult” and 45 selected “neither easy nor difficult,” indicating that fifty-nine
respondents (46.8%) were not struggling with their college reading even though 72 (57%)
respondents see themselves as “average readers.” Fifty-six respondents (44.4%) found
their college reading “somewhat difficult” and ten participants (7.9%) found their college
reading “difficult;” however, two participants (1.6%) disagreed with the statement, “I feel
confident that I can meet the reading demands of my college courses.” These data suggest
a disconnect between their confidence and their actual performance, and if I were re-
designing the survey, I would want to include students’ placement data and academic
performance data to learn more about what appears as slight over-confidence.

Projecting self-efficacy for reading as peers see it.

When the survey asked participants to predict how their friends would evaluate
their reading competence level, this same sense of confidence in their reading skill was
reflected in the data. Fifty-four of 125 participant responders selected (43.2%)
“competent” or “very competent,” about five percent increase in perception from how they viewed themselves. Sixty-seven (53.6%) participants thought their friends would see them as “average” readers compared with the 72 (57%) who saw themselves as “average” readers. In future studies, collecting student retention and academic achievement data along with self-efficacy data could provide further means to compare students’ reading self-efficacy with actual persistence and performance data.

*Projecting self-efficacy for reading as family members see it.*

When asked how their family members see them as readers, 62 (48.4%) of 126 participants marked that their family members would see them as “very competent” or “competent,” a ten percent increase over how they see themselves. Sixty-one respondents (48.4%) reported that their families would see them as “average” readers; this is a 9% negative difference in how they see themselves. This difference accounts for the ten percent increase in the “competent” and “very competent” categories for this question.

Students’ sense of competence increases with enrollment in the course sequences as would be expected. During the data analysis, I wondered if student reported self-efficacy was correlated with reading sponsorship and found no correlation (Fig. 5).

Figure 5.

No correlation between reading self-efficacy and number of current reading sponsors.
Methods and Analysis Conclusion

The results of this study offer a multi-dimensional view of these community college readers, their reading motivations, and social influences on their reading practices. Through the results of the study, the students’ reveal themselves to engage in complex social and digital reading practices in order to address their interests, explore aspirational identities, and navigate college reading demands. To paraphrase Donna Alvermann (2009), the idea that these mostly young adult students are non-readers is a fiction, and as Lee Rainie (2011) suggests, they are fully engaged in reading as a “social contact sport.” They have their own socio-cultural literacy streams, yet their aspirations demand that they take paths in and out of those streams to meet their personal and academic goals. For many of these students, reading provides the intellectual and attitudinal capital to “become someone.”

A final overarching point that emerges from the present study: more research is needed to more fully understand the multiple purposes, influences, and possible identities these readers appropriate as they navigate the literal and literacy-bounded transitions from adolescence into adulthood and from school to career.

Limitations:

To learn more about community college students placed into a reading course sequence, the study would benefit from replication on multiple community colleges in regional and demographically diverse campuses in the United States. This study is limited by the number of participants (n=126) and the single location of the participants on one community college campus in a country-wide system of ten campuses. Another limitation is the survey itself; although I modeled the survey on other well-known, valid reading surveys, this is the first time this instrument has been used. The survey needs
further refinement and narrowing of the survey stems and more specific free response questions specific to this population.


**Discussion**

As recounted in the introduction, I began this research study to examine the reading practices and the influences upon those practices among community college students placed in developmental reading courses. This mixed methods study revealed the literacy practices and influences among these developmental reading students as a group while allowing me to “hear” their individual voices. The study’s findings extend upon the existing adolescent literacy research and suggest that, for the college readers surveyed:

- Reading texts is not an autonomous, uni-directional act (Street, 2009; Alvermann, 2008).
- Reading is a multimodal, social, and multi-literate transactional experience with texts (and “texts” refers to all semiotic conveyances of meaning in communication) (Smagorinsky, 2001; Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2007).
- Reading is activated in and influenced by social, psychological, and cultural contexts (Gee, 2000; Smagorinsky, 2001; Street, 2009; Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012).
- Reading motivation is not a static entity, but rather a fluid metacognitive and affective force activated by readers’ agency in response to texts in socio-cultural contexts (Smagorinsky; 2001; Street, 2009; Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012).

One of the ways this study’s findings move beyond the current literature in the field of developmental reading is to call for the re-visioning of community college readers placed into developmental reading courses as well as the act of reading itself. Because students’ motivations for reading and out-of-school literacy practices vary,
blanket assumptions should be avoided. Also, these motivations shift with reader in any given context, negating the practice of static labeling by institutions. These findings reveal these readers, in their own lives, are not remedial or developmental readers; it is the context of college that positions them as such. As the study results suggest, the students do read and are reading widely and in a variety of formats to suit their own interests, in response to suggestions from friends, family members, social media sites, and at the encouragement of their instructors. Re-visioning these students as aspirational rather than remedial or developmental provides a more positive, accurate reflection of who they are as hopeful, evolving human beings, many of whom are experiencing the “most volitional” period of their lives (Arnett, 2000, p. 469).

The study expands on the notion of what it means to read in the 21st Century. Because of pervasive digital and social influences, however, reading is not the monomodal, autonomous act it was once thought to be (Smagorinsky, 2001; Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2008; Street, 2009). Yet, developmental reading curriculum, teaching practices, and texts often still position reading skill, strategy, and comprehension development as if it were. This study reinforces the need for literacy researchers, educators, and students to adapt to an ever-evolving definition of what is means to be a reader in the digital age. A critical awareness of the ways literacy and socio-economic opportunity intersect must be made transparent to students so that they can recognize unseen obstacles as they explore new opportunities and literacy events.

This study offers insights for researchers and educators regarding college students’ myriad reading practices, social and digital influences on their reading
practices, and the shifts in reading sponsorship. Uncovering more questions than answers, the study suggests further paths of inquiry for college literacy and adolescent researchers.

The study results clearly reflect the power of faculty to influence the reading of college students. Developmental education faculty and disciplinary faculty can wield this influence to inculcate their students into the world of academic and disciplinary literacies while not disparaging students’ own individual and socio-cultural literacies. While students’ personal literacies can be a bridge to college reading success, it would be disingenuous to pretend that students everyday reading practices are sufficient to make the leap from reading social networking posts, sports, and music web sites to reading in academic or workplace contexts. Engaging these aspirational college students through disciplinary readings from the “real world,” some of which address aspirations or inspiration from the field could be quite powerful and provide a platform to discuss the invisible, yet powerful cultural capital at work in the workplace and society at large. This multi-disciplinary, socio-cultural approach to literacy instruction warrants further study by literacy researchers and action research by educators.

To develop knowledge about how literacy works and can work in their lives, students in developmental reading courses should study literacy as a curricular topic and examine it through a critical socio-cultural perspective. In addition, content-area instruction should communicate explicit contributions of diverse people and present content through a variety of perspectives in ways that communicate and valorize those contributions. Reading literacy creates cultural capital for readers and governs their placement in school courses and programs which ultimately predicts their lifetime earnings (Oyserman, 2013; Tramonte & Willms, 2010; Rumberger, 2010; Oyserman,
Bybee, & Terry, 2006). Students should know these facts, and they should read about them in complex texts to which they can apply their considerable “funds of knowledge” regarding how literacy works to position people in institutions (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

This makes re-visioning reading curriculum and instruction a relevant notion, especially in developmental college contexts where cultural capital remains an unknown or “hidden” variable to the students (Smith, 2009; Margolis, 2005). If over sixty percent of a total student population places into developmental education courses upon admission, then every faculty member on campus is teaching a large number of “developmental” students. In addition, community colleges such as the setting in this study serve a large number of first-generation college students, indicating the need to mentor them more actively across disciplines whether they are labeled “developmental” or not. This study suggests that students view college faculty as reading mentors. Because of this, educators can serve their diverse students at all academic performance levels by having a better understanding of recent literacy research.

**Reading Practices and Preferences: Voluntary Reading Motivation**

Just as the act of reading is a fluid and shifting practice, readers’ motivations for reading shift as well. As Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield’s (2012) metanalysis of reading motivation research shows, reading motivations vary and are influenced by “mediating values” (p. 456). However, among the studies, they did find that common “dimensions” of reading among readers in the research reviewed. Three of those dimensions, investment (the utility or usefulness of reading), emotional tuning (to alter one’s emotional state), and involvement (engagement, imagination) are relevant to this
study’s discussion. The present study’s results show that college readers’ voluntary reading choices and preferences align with these dimensions, but as the researchers state themselves, reading motivation is more complex, involving identity, self-concept, social influences, popular culture, and goal orientation to name a few psychological factors in play. This complexity suggests the benefit of cross-disciplinary literacy studies. For example, to learn more about readers’ motivations for reading inspirational texts, researchers would need to understand the intertwining psychological, social, cultural, economic, and individual aspects of that motivation.

“True Stories” for “Real Life”

The reading surveys of these community college students reveal they are reading, and they motivated to read for a variety of purposes in a variety of formats and genres. This study’s results show the strong commonality among these preferences is reading genres that reflect “real life” such as adventure, true crime, biography, and contemporary issue-based novels. This desire to learn or have experiences through others speaks to de Certeau’s (1988) representation of reading as poaching (p. xxi). If readers find solutions to real world problems they face in reality in novels and biographies, then reading has practical usefulness to readers. If readers can identify with or “try on” the world of another character or person, those readers can imagine alternate possible lives for themselves as well. The students who participated in this study demonstrate how ethnically and linguistically diverse and underperforming students may use reading to envision their possible lives by seeing diverse identities and possibilities in texts. This suggests the ways readers take part in shape-shifting their own identities enough to relate to a character or person they want to be in a text, then that reading may serve as
motivational inspiration (Gee, 2006). College reading students, like all readers, have multiple motivations for reading and like identity, motivation is a shape-shifting, non-static entity. Furthermore, the readers surveyed in this study find utility in texts centered on inspiration and guidance about how to succeed in the world, overcome obstacles, and live better lives as a consequence. Books not only provide access to knowledge, but to possible identities, experiences, dreams, and worlds students may not have imagined without engaging deeply with words on a page. Additional literacy research centering on identity theory and literacy practices among college students is needed to discover more about how college students explore and enact identities based on their reading.

**A Desire for Inspiration and Identity: “Becoming Someone”**

Another theme that emerged from the free response data is participants’ desire for and enjoyment of inspirational or spiritual reading and reading to explore identity and inspire their future success. Among all texts, the Bible was the book most frequently mentioned in this study. Although students self-reported the influence of the Bible on their literacy practices, this text was most likely something they read outside of school curriculum. Many K-12 students do not have access to this kind of reading material within the formal curriculum unless they attend parochial schools, so my assumption is that the Bible is still a literary force in many households. These findings suggest reading the Bible is pervasive in many households today and valued as a literal guide for daily living as well as a source of spiritual inspiration. I started thinking about this before the study results were analyzed when, in one class I was visiting, a student asked me if it was “okay” for her to mention the Bible in her survey responses. It seemed that in her mind, the Bible wasn’t a book that would “count” or that one should mention in a college
survey. This incident made me wonder if religion and the Bible have been de-valORIZED in academia, except for study as literature or in religion departments, and whether the Bible is more likely to be an influence among various socio-cultural and economic groups. Literacy researchers should further explore the role of spiritual texts in college students’ lives and how spiritual reading affects their literacy practices and textual understandings just as Moje et al. (2008) noted in their study of the “complex world” of adolescent literacy. Qualitative interview and case study-based research with this population could begin to create a clearer understanding of this largely unrecognized spiritual force in our students’ family literacy practices and the way these kinds of texts serve to support and enhance students’ reading practices and identities as readers.

In the free response data, surveyed students reported that their family members saw education and reading as important to success in life as do they. For some, reading is a way to achieve the “American Dream.” Other students reported reading classic inspirational texts that would make them successful. Because students in the study population are largely young adults who have not yet established fully formed adult identities, they may be seeking positive motivation through these texts to learn about and manage the trajectory of their lives. These texts may provide emotional support to help students persist in their goals and suggests a need for further research. The desire for identity development and inspiration students reported in the survey points to the need to embed more reading opportunities in the formal curriculum that serve as mentor texts for life, demonstrating inspirational stories and examples of diverse individuals living fulfilled lives. Further research regarding the power of texts to shape and shift identities
and develop agency among college students would provide valuable insights to literacy and developmental psychology researchers and educators.

**Young Adult Literature: A Quest for the Multimodal Mirrored Experience**

One finding in the study is the dominance of young adult literature reported by surveyed developmental reading students when students mentioned a book by title. It was not clear whether students mentioned these titles because they recently read them, or that they were recalling the last book they enjoyed reading, which could have been in middle school or last week in a developmental reading course. Future survey instruments like the one I created for this study should ask more direct questions about students’ reading of young adult literature to better inform the field, and this is an adjustment I plan to make to the instrument.

The reading of young adult literature in college developmental reading courses requires much further quantitative and qualitative research to fully explore and understand its role in college students’ lives as well in academic settings. Because young adult literature typically features young adult heroes and heroines who are confronting social issues, issues of power, and personal challenges in their lives, the opportunity for exploring one’s identity, universal themes, and relevant social-cultural contexts aligns well with critical inquiry and the “real lives” of young adult readers (Singer & Shagoury, 2006; Appleman, 2009; Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, & Nilsen, 2012; Hayn & Kaplan, 2012).

While young adult literature has merit in itself, in developmental reading courses, these texts can serve as a foundation for critical understanding of important societal issues and can provide the background knowledge and affective interest that will lead
students to engage with more complex texts. Gill’s (2000) research shows that university educators do assign multicultural young adult literature to their students, but of those who do, close to half do not engage students in explicit instruction regarding them, missing an opportunity to critically explore important socio-cultural themes relevant to students’ lives. The college students in this study wanted to read about other people experiencing personal obstacles such as drug addiction, romance, friendship, culture, and identity, as well as inspirational biographical texts. These are themes commonly found in young adult literature.

Engaging readers’ cultural awareness through accessible young adult literature in which ethnically diverse characters face universal issues provides a foundation for critical and socio-cultural inquiry as well as identity exploration as well. In Kaulaity-White’s (2006) discussion of using Native American young adult literature in the classroom, this connection to universal themes as well as ethnically diverse representation allows “the power of voices, not only the voices of power” (p. 16) to surface in the classroom. Themes such as “Stirring Up Justice” create opportunities for students to explore important issues relevant to their lives through young adult literature and other relevant texts (Singer; 2006; Singer & Shagoury, 2006). This study suggests the need for educators to consider adoption of complex instructional practices using layered texts and modalities that engage developmental reading students with the relevant adult themes in young adult literature. This study’s finding suggests young adult literature is a force in voluntary reading among college readers. Consequently, teacher action research examining effective curricular and instructional practices is needed to develop and study
complex instructional practices as they relate to young adult literature in developmental reading classes.

This study defines reading as a multimodal act, and today’s young adult literature is media-enriched as a matter of course, while adult popular literature is just getting started with media enrichment (Parsons & Hundley, 2012). The availability of online games, specific enriched web sites, trailer videos, and fan fiction are inherent in marketing to young adult readers. In the literature review, I built a case for re-visioning reading as a social and multimodal meaning act; young adult literature is at the forefront of this re-visioning. The study’s findings reflected this engagement with media around texts. This multimodal engagement with reading suggests active engagement with the reading and outside the reading. Learning more about how multimodal connections to young adult literature influences or engages developmental reading students requires further research.

**Reading Sponsorship Shifts: Family and Friends**

As shown with past literacy studies of adolescents, mothers are the most frequent reading sponsors of these students (Heath, 1983; Brandt, 2001; Early, 2010). Fathers, grandmothers, and teachers are other key reading sponsors. In students’ current lives, friends and teachers become the more frequent source of encouragement and reading recommendations. Furthermore, the power of the media to influence student reading extends from films to popular social networking sites. In response to these findings, educators may want to consider designing instruction to help students connect their out-of-school reading motivations and practices with academic reading purposes, if they are salient to the course or discipline. Since so little research exists regarding the role of
reading sponsorship among developmental college students, the field would benefit from literacy studies that uncover the ways these relationships support and build reading practices over time.

**Reading Sponsorship and Educators: an Underutilized Sponsorship**

The findings of this research study make it clear that the influence teachers have over reading practices grows more powerful in the college context. College instructors often recommend content-area reading, recreational, interest–based, or career-based reading from a wider variety of sources than those the students may be aware. Developmental education faculty and disciplinary faculty can extend this influence to initiate their students into the world of academic and disciplinary literacies while acknowledging the value of students’ own individual and socio-cultural literacies. College students bring “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) with them into the classroom, but rarely have opportunity to show what they do know. This study suggests the value of surfacing students’ funds of knowledge through reading instruction and curriculum as well as recognizing these funds of knowledge as strengths by students and faculty.

In addition to surfacing college students’ funds of knowledge, content-area curriculum should include explicit contributions of diverse people and myriad perspectives to which students can relate. This study revealed the strong influence college professors have on their students’ reading which suggests that students see them as academic literacy sponsors. Students placed in developmental education are often discouraged and blind-sided by the hidden curriculum in higher education (Margolis, 2001; Smith, 2013), and professors are in a position to expose the hidden curriculum,
teach students to navigate complex academic literacy practices, and expand students’ cultural capital. If professors “maintain the practices of their students in the process of extending their students’ repertoires of practice to include dominant language, literacies and other practices” as Paris (2012) suggests, they will provide the meaningful sponsorship into not only general academic practices, but disciplinary literacies and knowledge. This suggestion has both policy and pedagogical implications, both of which would benefit from further study of the informal and formal ways college faculty mentor students through curricular inquiry and explicit instruction in disciplinary repertoires of practice.

A concentrated effort among faculty to promote reading in and across disciplines has the power to influence and educate college readers such as those in this survey. Surveying college instructors about how they perceive student reading, their issues with assigning reading, and especially how they enact roles of reading sponsorship would benefit the field of literacy research. Even increasing awareness among the faculty that students are listening to them when they talk about or recommend reading could encourage faculty to act on that knowledge more consistently. This line of inquiry has the potential to affect college pedagogy, potentially resulting in students learning how disciplinary literacies and socio-cultural understandings operate in various contexts. Further research examining how students connect disciplinary content, previously hidden curricula, and explicit teaching toward expanding their repertoires of practice could generate new literacy theories or multi-disciplinary or hybrid theories of literacy.
Reading Sponsorship: Popular Media and Social Networking.

Findings from this study reinforce and extend the way media works to influence student reading and how this influence extends from films to popular social networking sites. Moje (2008) found similar results among adolescents. More qualitative research is needed to understand how students see their everyday reading practices in academic tasks, especially as they relate to myriad digital media. In response to these findings, educators may want to consider designing instruction to help students connect their out-of-school reading motivations and practices with academic reading purposes in authentic ways (Alvermann, 2008).

Literacy and developmental psychology researchers have much to learn about metacognition and online and multimodal reading among college students. The field would benefit from similar studies among developmental reading students to learn more about what happens when they read online and to create effective online reading interventions and strategy instruction, including intervention studies. More mixed method research in which students are asked to think aloud while they read online material along with related reading performance assessments will help researchers understand how students’ metacognitive and reading strategies engage while reading online.

Because reading is a complex, multimodal, multi-literate and social act, engaging students in a variety of ways, researchers must direct their attention to the role of affective and social effects of engaged reading. Further research should be conducted to learn more about the ways active engagement with online texts might lead to reading performance improvement, increased background knowledge, identity reification and exploration, individual agency, and socio-culturally influenced practices related to
reading. The complexity of reading and the study of social engagement around it requires further cross-disciplinary, mixed methods research.

**Role of Libraries at the Community College**

Surveyed students reported that the library was a major source for obtaining books to read as well as providing a place to read. Because of this, it is plausible to suggest that community college libraries and librarians may or could serve as literacy sponsors for college students just as public and school librarians do. College libraries generally build content or disciplinary-specific book collections, but to meet the needs of this study’s participants, community college librarians should reconsider revising their collection development policies to support the reading needs of students in the developmental reading sequence. Developmental education courses disproportionately enroll lower SES, first-generation, and ethnically diverse students who, like the students in this study, see the library as a source of books.

If college students are reading young adult literature, and this survey showed that they are (or that a popular young adult book was the last book they read), community college librarians may want to market young adult literature in the library as the librarians at Bowling Green State University did (Yoder, 2013). At the least, collection development policies should include young adult literature selection of novels and non-fiction with more mature, multicultural, real life, and inspirational themes to meet the needs of college readers such as those surveyed in this study. In addition, librarians and developmental reading faculty should work together to connect readers with books, teach students how to find and select books for themselves, and help students transition to reading books intended for more adult audiences as they mature.
To learn more about community college students’ online reading practices, research such as Berg’s (2011) in which she studied 1000 hours of students’ talk around computers in a library would provide invaluable information to the field. Because libraries are public spaces on college campuses and don’t carry the same power issues inherent in classroom environments, studying community college students’ literacy acts in this setting would facilitate data collection for quantitative data analysis as well as a less threatening campus environment in which to conduct qualitative research.

A Call for Critical Literacy for Reading Students

Many students who responded to this study’s survey clearly expressed that they like to read to develop their identities, to solve problems, and to be inspired. Critical literacy and identity theory approached through a socio-cultural lens, complex texts, and social engagement can provide students a deep understanding how literacy works in real world contexts and their sense of agency can grow with their expanding literacy development (Singer, 2006). If literacy researchers can engage in classroom studies and analyze their data using discourse analysis to analyze talk as well as Gee’s “big D” Discourse (2010; 2011) to analyze the socio-cultural flotsam and jetsam swirling in the classroom environment and students’ own literacy streams, literacy researcher and educators would benefit from a deeper understanding how critical literacy-based instruction leads students to critical awareness, empowerment, and maybe, like Lesley’s (2001) students, improved reading scores. Interview and classroom field studies with faculty and students participating in a critical literacy-based course or unit of study would provide meaningful insights to the field of literacy research.
Reading (and Writing) into Futurized “Real World”

As Brandt (2009) explains, the information and knowledge economy requires reading skill, but writing is the “second mass literacy” that is center to economic opportunity. At the developmental level, more instructional work needs to occur that links reading and writing with upward mobility so students can fully grasp the impact of these literacies on the future lives that will evolve as a result of their actions now (Tramonte & Willms, 2009; Oyserman, Bybee & Terry, 2006). As Brandt (2009) has noted, in the 21st century economy, workers will not only read diverse and complex texts, but must be able to apply them to solve problems and to communicate effectively with evidence through writing.

The arbitrary separation of reading and writing in the developmental sequence of both reading and composition impedes student literacy development because both skills must be blended for academic achievement and, later, workplace success. Perin (2013), in her meta-analysis of Community College developmental reading and writing programs, calls for more research into this separation: “Overlooked entirely in the research literature are studies of the ability of underprepared postsecondary students to integrate reading comprehension and writing skills in the types of holistic literacy practice that signify college readiness.” Consistent with Perin’s point, the present study’s results reveal how few developmental reading students reported generating online content. In any case, the students in this study do not see themselves as both consumers and producers of writing like Kapurch’s (2013) Twilight Club students did. Multimodal, cross-disciplinary research can further inform theory as well as provide foundation for instructional design to help developmental reading and writing students understand more about the economic
power of these integrated literacies could lead them to develop agency in both consuming and producing texts.

**Instructional Pedagogy and Practices for Educators**

In response to these findings, educators may want to consider designing curriculum and instruction to help students connect their out-of-school reading motivations and practices with academic reading purposes. For example, since many students read to be inspired, faculty could assign content-area inspirational biographical readings about people who overcame adversity to become great mathematicians, scientists, or psychologists. Also, many educators would not consider Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Facebook, and YouTube as starting places for student research, yet some students claim this is how they track the “real truth” behind what is happening in the world or how they learn about a book online in a way that is like having “a personal friend recommend a book.” If students can make connections between a documentary segment on YouTube and a posting on Tumblr, then relate it to a disciplinary inquiry that leads to a more scholarly study, then students’ out of school literacies can support in their in-school literacies.

Because developmental reading students in the current study reported less self-efficacy for reading also report less social engagement with reading, particularly outside their families, reading interventions that help them build social networks into their daily course work and interest-based reading could made a difference, not only in their reading experience, but in course engagement and connectedness to others, which, in turn, positively affects retention of developmental education students (Hsu & Wang, 2010). In addition, since these students do still connect with their families around reading, reading
instructors can build those connections into coursework as appropriate to build social engagement with reading.

In the long term, integrating accessible life-world knowledge and experiences with disciplinary literacies could keep students engaged in learning long past their years at college, but it is also important to make the instructional move to disciplinary “repertoires of practice” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003.) This has important implications for teaching and learning. Through their professors’ deep knowledge and content-area literacies, students can acquire disciplinary, social, and workplace repertoires of practice if those professors actually address and model those practices.

While this explicit mentoring is especially important to developmental education and low SES students, it will benefit all students to know and practice more disciplinary literacies and to understand how they are enacted as repertoires of practice. If content-area faculty can make the disciplinary literacy practices explicit to their students and offer students practical experience with those disciplinary practices, students will leave college with the “understood” literacies behind the content knowledge. This is especially important to building the “relational cultural capital” (Rumberger, 2010) that economically privileged students inherently know and enact to their advantage that some of their peers do not.

Survey research among faculty would be a good way to start learning more about how or whether faculty see themselves as disciplinary mentors, how or if they promote reading to their students, if they are aware of the concept of cultural capital, and their attitudes toward teaching developmental education students. Based on study findings, researchers may work with faculty developers to follow their experiences through an
initiative based on the idea of expanding students’ cultural capital with overt instruction, surfacing the hidden curriculum, and disciplinary repertoires of practice.

**A Call for Secondary Schools and Community College Articulation**

Most community college administrators can easily name the major feeder secondary schools for their campuses. Yet, many faculty at community colleges are completely unaware of the academic standards, behavior expectations, and instructional methodologies their students experience in public school settings; nor are secondary teachers aware that many of their students will be labeled as “developmental” reading, writing, and math students who will attend college a year before they are prepared enough to earn actual college credit. Because of this academic gulf between schools just miles away from each other adversely affects students’ long term academic and workplace goals, articulation between community college and secondary teachers should be a priority. In addition, secondary teachers are currently making the shift to teaching to the new Common Core Standards, and the English Language Arts standards place great importance on skills and strategies for reading and comprehending complex texts. If students arrive on campus with increased competence with academic texts, it is possible that developmental reading course enrollment could decrease or that course curriculum and instructional strategies will need major revision and innovations to help the students take their literacy to a greater academic level.

A final benefit of articulation is secondary teachers better understanding their students’ transitional challenges as new and possibly “underprepared” college students, and college instructors better understanding the standards and instructional methods their students have experienced for twelve years, they can clearly articulate their expectations.
and how they are similar or different from the students’ past academic experiences. Also, college professors can make sure their remediation efforts do not appear to be “more of the same” out-of-context and dry literacy instruction students may have experienced in their over-tested past.

Conclusion

The act of reading is transforming and formative. Whether reading print or reading online, meaning-making from texts is a social, multi-literate, multimodal, cognitive, motivational, critical meaning-making act; no single phrase or theoretical stance can fully define it. At several points in this discussion, I mention that hybrid literacy theories and cross-disciplinary research will continue to create theoretical conceptualizations of how people are reading in the 21st century. Reading is a shape-shifting, transactional activity complicated by complex socio-cultural milieus, psychological motivations, shifting identity roles, and available repertoires of practice. This study shows that college reading students do not read in isolation; their family members, their peers, their teachers, online and media sources, as well as personal interests intersect with their reading practices and preferences in ways that bear further research.

In addition to re-framing the act of reading among college students, I have made a case for re-defining students placed in developmental reading courses as aspirational rather than “underprepared” or “remedial.” This study suggests the need to learn more about these aspirational college reading students through quantitative and qualitative research, teacher action research, and reading intervention studies to help educators and researchers understand the ways pedagogy, curriculum, and teaching strategies can better
support their students’ reading growth and development. This research provides numerous avenues for reading researchers and literacy teachers at all levels to better understand, better support, and prepare traditionally underserved, linguistically and ethnically diverse students in their academic setting.

Finally, this study also highlights the benefit of utilizing a mixed methods approach to literacy research. (For more reflections on my dissertation research process, please see Appendix C.) By viewing reading and readers from a critical socio-cultural perspective, it makes sense to document and describe what these readers actually do when reading. The survey instrument, although limited in scope and in need of further revision, provided students an opportunity to categorize, name, and describe who they are as readers. Further revision of the survey to include more about participant reading identities and practices in different contexts will make it a more effective instrument. The survey’s quantitative data provided a real-time view of students’ literacy streams – what they are reading and who or what influences that reading. Also, the study points to the value of surveys that include opportunities for respondents to share their impressions and detailed thoughts through free response questions and qualitative analysis. The variety of questions and methods support the theoretical framework of the study and the idea that readers are complex and nuanced individuals influenced by their social lives and lived experiences.

Smagorinsky’s (2001) conceptualization of readers “transactional zones” is woven throughout this study to represent the spaces in reading in which the reader and the text “conjoin” to make meaning. What occurs in that space is still largely unknown, but we do know that the text and the reader are not alone in these spaces. It is rich with
cultural, social, intertextual, psychological, sociological, and multimodal influences, some known to readers and some not. If researchers and educators can learn more about how aspirational college readers make meaning in their transactional zones and, especially, find ways to surface hidden forces constraining these zones, these college readers will have the opportunity to grow as readers and develop greater agency as multiliterate adults.
References


Hsu, H. & Wang, S. (2010). The impact of using blogs on college students' reading comprehension and learning, motivation. *Literacy Research and Instruction, (50)*1, 68-88. doi: 10.1080/19388070903509177


APPENDIX A:
INFORMED CONSENT
**Introduction**
The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

**Researchers**
Cynthia Kiefer, Arizona State University, Ph.D. Candidate  
Dr. Jessica Early, Arizona State University

**Study Purpose**
The purpose of the research is to learn more about community college students and their reading practices.

**Description of Research Study**
If you decide to participate, then you will join a local survey study involving research of community college reading practices.

**Risks to Participants**
There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

**Benefits**
Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the possible benefits of your participation in the research will inform researchers about community college students’ reading in a way that will help researchers and educators understand more about your reading practices and motivations.

**Confidentiality**
All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, investigator Cynthia Kiefer will not collect the names of survey participants and will secure all data of the subjects in a secure location in the English Education Office at Arizona State University.

**Withdrawal Privilege**
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is okay for you to say no to participating in the study. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. Nonparticipation will not affect your grade.

**Costs and Payments**
The researchers want your decision about participating in the study to be absolutely voluntary. There is no payment for your participation in the study.
Voluntary Consent

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Cynthia Kiefer or Dr. Jessica Early. Please feel free to contact Cynthia Kiefer at cynthia.kiefer@asu.edu or Dr. Early at Jessica.early@asu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be offered to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study survey.

___________________________  ___________________  ___________
Student Participant’s Signature        Printed Name        Date

Investigator’s Statement

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator or Co-investigator: ____________________________
Date: ______
APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONS
1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. What is your household income?
5. Are you a full time student with 12 or more credit hours or a part time student with less than 12 credit hours this semester?
6. What reading course are you enrolled in now?
7. Which of the reading courses below have you taken in the past?
8. Think of a specific person or people who strongly encouraged you to read in the past. Please tell us about that person and how he or she influenced your reading.
9. Please describe the most important book, magazine, online content, or other text you have ever read and explain why it was so important to you.
10. In your free time, you tend to read (Select all that apply from the list below):
11. What types of reading material do you like to share with your friends? (Select all that apply from the list below):
12. Are there movies, songs, television shows, and/or popular media sites that have influenced your reading habits in any way? If so, please explain how they have influenced your reading.
13. What electronic device(s) do you own? (Select all that apply.)
14. When you have a choice, where do you prefer to read?
15. When you have a choice of reading formats, which of the following do you prefer?
16. How would you evaluate your skill as a reader?
17. In a typical day, about how many hours are you online?
18. How likely are you to recommend or send a friend a web link to read or view?
19. How likely are you to recommend or send a family member a web link to read or view?
20. How likely are you to share a print magazine or book with a friend?
21. How likely are you to share a print magazine or book with a family member?
22. In your experience at this college, do instructors other than your reading instructor encourage you to read? If yes, please give us an example.
23. How likely are you to text with friends while reading or surfing the web for pleasure?
24. Agree or disagree with this statement: I feel confident that I can meet the reading demands of my college courses.
25. How likely are you to text with friends while reading for school?
26. How likely are you to use social networking to connect with friends and other students about school reading?
27. How do you think your friends would evaluate your skill as a reader?
28. How do you think your family members would evaluate your skill as a reader?
29. How many hours a week do you read for your college courses outside of class?
30. So far, how difficult have you found the reading for your college courses to be?
31. Do you create web content for others to read? If so, please explain or give an example.
32. These family members have encouraged me to read (check all that apply):
33. Explain or give an example of web content you create for others to read:
34. If you read books in your spare time, what kind of books do you like to read?
35. Please respond to this situation: You have been assigned a challenging book to read in one of your college classes. How do you make sure you understand the book well enough to discuss it with your peers and pass a test on the material in the reading?
36. Please explain how you would respond to this situation: Your reading teacher has told you that you must read a book for the course, but you can select any book you want to read. What kind of book would you choose and why?
37. Where would you obtain the book mentioned above?
38. Currently, who is a person in your life who recommends books for you to read?
39. After you finish college, how much time do you think you will spend reading each day between your job and your own pleasure reading?
APPENDIX C:
REFLECTIONS ON MY DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROCESS
Through this dissertation research, I learned much regarding the reading practices and motivations of the college students my colleagues and I teach each day. But, more importantly, I have learned researching and conducting a study such as this requires staying mentally open and flexible while (paradoxically) pursuing focused interests. It also requires that one has done her due diligence, reading deeply and widely in the field. Over the past five years, I read assigned scholarly readings and studies in my coursework as well as copious amounts of the literature that informed those texts. I conducted several classroom studies to see theories in practice and to learn to observe what was in front of me more dispassionately. Even though I had practiced, throughout this study, I had to monitor myself closely to make sure I carefully reported on the actual data, not my hopeful interpretation of the data.

Prior to my data analysis, I spent dozens of hours “mucking around” in the data set. I began to sift through the data, and then I filtered and disaggregated the data, looking for patterns, trying all different filters and comparisons of groups, just to see what, if anything, was buried beneath the surface data. I read and re-read the qualitative responses, conducting different word frequency and node combinations; I learned that it is essential to know one’s data in every way one can before beginning the formal analysis of the data. This intimate knowledge of my data required a spiraling process of examining the quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed method research gave me ways to know my data more fully, see dimensions and holes in the data, and plan revision of my survey instrument for a future similar study.

Based on my experience, I recommend doctoral students who are not statisticians to establish a relationship with a statistician before taking on mixed method research.
This will help new researchers create an effective data collection instrument resulting in data that can be analyzed more effectively and, through statistical analysis, may reveal more complex underlying relationships in the data. Also, working with a statistician will help a new researcher understand the ways data are visually depicted and verbally articulated in social research. However, as I stated above, while working with a statistician, knowing one’s data is essential. For example, because I knew my data so well, I immediately realized it when a statistician provided a chart for which one column of data was off by one data set, and I was able to make the adjustment myself.

I am not an expert in using tools for data analysis, and I wish I had re-acquainted myself with SPSS prior to conducting my study. I recommend becoming familiar with quantitative and qualitative software before one’s study is underway. At that point, I knew I was too busy to re-learn SPSS, so I engaged a statistician to help me with some of the data analysis in this study (although I did most of it myself with Survey Monkey tools and NVIVO 10). I had recently used NVIVO, so I felt competent to conduct my qualitative analysis on my own. That said, I would have benefitted from working with NVIVO and other qualitative software with more hands-on training with sample data sets similar to mine. Working with field-relevant practice data sets in research classes with hands-on experience would be a much appreciated learning experience for most graduate students. Fortunately, NVIVO offers great tutorial trainings and online videos and manuals, so I could easily help myself when I could not figure out how to use a feature.

Knowing the scholarly literature related to one’s research interests and learning how to collect and analyze data are both important to success with a dissertation research project such as this one. However, *nothing* is more important than one’s relationship and
regular meeting times with one’s dissertation advisor. My regular meetings with my advisor were absolutely essential to my progress. I listened to her advice, reminding myself that her impressive publication list is the result of her skill and ability to network with other researchers. In a way, I was getting the advice of all the luminaries who had mentored her, and I fully understood the value of that. I also had to keep check on my resistances and stay open to her guidance, something easier said than done. There is a balance between one’s own conceptions and the expertise of one’s advisor. I found that staying open, non-defensive, and inquisitive helped foster my relationship with my advisor, positively impacting the quality of my study. Also, I had done my part leading up to my dissertation study: the deep scholarly reading, the practice studies, the writing for my small studies and coursework, and the presentations, and I think this contributed to a positive relationship with my advisor.

Throughout my program, I continuously organized all of my coursework and related readings on my computer. Fortunately, I had kept organized computer folders and literal binders for each course through my program. This level of organization was immensely helpful when I was creating my literature review for this dissertation study and for having studies at hand that were similar. These studies became “mentor texts” for me; I learned from my advisor to regularly re-visit, model, and revise my own work with these “mentor texts” in mind. Having several mentor studies at hand can break a writing block in an instant and inspire better, more effective communication of a point. Imitating the research and wording style of another researcher I admire was helpful in “breaking the seal” when I was struggling with writing certain sections.
Through this dissertation study process, I have learned what I need to know to continue to build on this research and to become a more effective researcher in the future.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cynthia Kiefer is a twenty-year plus teaching veteran with experience teaching secondary English and college level English and reading. Her research interests include reading and identity, multimodality in writing and reading, motivation as it relates to literacy, and adolescent and young adult/emerging adult/college student literacy practices. Currently, Cynthia resides in Scottsdale, Arizona and serves on the English Faculty at Scottsdale Community College teaching composition and reading. Cynthia may be contacted via email at cynthia.kiefer@asu.edu or cindy.kiefer@scottsdalecc.edu.