

(Example of Section II –Annotated Bibliography from a Student Proposal)

Annotated Bibliography

Previous research and analyses related to the proposed study can be grouped into five categories. First, research spanning three decades supports the malleability and learnable nature of academic motivation. Second, research on student attitudes towards writing demonstrates that writing self-efficacy beliefs are learnable when certain interventions are utilized and when student-teacher relationships are strong. Third, teachers and researchers have found noteworthy differences between boy and girl writers, which supports the fourth category of literature, the visual and popular cultural draws of graphica. Finally, research supports the use of a writing workshop model with LD students to increase interest, achievement, and confidence.

Academic Motivation

Skinner, E.A., & Belmont, M.J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(4), 671-581.

In a year-long correlational study of 144 students in grades 3, 4, and 5, researchers sought to demonstrate a reciprocal relationship between student engagement and motivation, teacher perceptions of student motivation, and student's perceptions of teacher behavior toward the child. Teachers completed a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire aimed at determining the teacher's feelings (affection, understanding, knowledge about the child, dedication, and dependability) toward individual children, and the teacher's general teaching style and class structure. Students also completed a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, aimed at assessing the student's behavior, engagement, and emotion in the classroom, perceptions of their teacher, and perceptions of their teacher's perceptions towards the child. The researchers found that "teacher behavior influences students' perceptions of their interactions with teachers" (p. 577), "teacher behavior influences student engagement" (p. 578), and "student engagement influences teacher behavior" (p. 578); thus they concluded that a reciprocal relationship does exist between teachers' behavior and students' engagement in the classroom. The researchers succinctly summarized that "teachers tend to magnify children's initial levels of engagement....For students whose initial motivation is low, their typical classroom experiences may result in the further deterioration of their motivation" (p. 580). This study emphasizes the importance of teacher behavior on student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

Although the proposed study does not intend to analyze the impact of teacher behavior on student motivation, teacher behavior is expected to affect student feelings of engagement, motivation, and achievement.

Motivation Towards Writing

Schunk, D.H. (2003). Self-efficacy for reading and writing: Influence of modeling, goal setting, and self-evaluation. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 19(2), 159-172.

This review of research on improving reading and writing efficacy demonstrates that self-efficacy beliefs are learnable and should be addressed using three types of interventions: modeling, goal-setting, and self-evaluation. *Modeling* refers to students observing new information or a pattern, and are then able to retain and reproduce the new skill. Students look to both teachers and other students as models to “provide information about what sequence of actions will lead to success and which actions have undesirable consequences” (p. 163). *Goal-setting* must take into account specificity, as specific goals are more likely to enhance learning than are general goals, proximity, how far into the future the goal extends, and difficulty. Positive *self-evaluations* “raise self-efficacy and motivation because students believe they are learning and capable of further progress (Schunk, 1990)” (p. 164).

This article is relevant to the proposed study in that the three recommended interventions, modeling, goal-setting, and self-evaluation, are each incorporated into the writing workshop model. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the students involved in the proposed study will learn from modeled behavior (through mini-lessons and peer and teacher conferences), how to set reasonable goals (by setting next-steps during conferences), and to self-evaluate their work (by comparing their work to mentor texts and the work of peers); learning these three skills should increase student motivation and self-efficacy in writing.

Voss, M.M. (2003). Building self-belief: A child overcomes writer’s block. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 19(4), 347-361.

In a semester-long observational case-study, Voss studied one fifth grade boy, Jed, and his teacher, Mrs. Margolis, in Marblehead, MA. Voss observed Jed writing, both from afar and up close, and interviewed Jed, his teacher Mrs. Margolis, and his parents in person and by phone. Voss took field notes and analyzed them for patterns. Jed began the year as a very reluctant writer, but Voss observed his confidence and abilities improve throughout her observations during the second half of the school year. Voss attributed Jed’s improvement to the environment and writing methods Mrs. Margolis employed in her classroom. Mrs. Margolis worked hard to create an environment based on building comfort, respect, and self-belief. Mrs. Margolis employed a writing workshop model that incorporated mini-lessons (modeling mentor texts, her own work, or student drafts), extended independent work time, frequent feedback, and peer and teacher conferences. In addition to the positive effects of the classroom environment, Voss points to Jed’s relationship with his teacher as central to his increased writing self-efficacy. Mrs. Margolis encouraged and motivated Jed and gave him specific, positive feedback, which helped Jed feel “accepted and appreciated by his teacher” (p. 354).

This study implies that teacher-student relationships that “offer extensive assurance and reassurance while expressing high expectations and belief in their potential for success” is at the core of building writing self-efficacy in struggling writers. However, this study lacks demographic information for all participants involved, and furthermore does not take into account Jed’s likely maturation throughout the year as causation for his improved self-beliefs.

Boy Writers

Fletcher, R. (2006). *Boy writers: Reclaiming their voices*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Drawing on teacher surveys and interviews, student writing and interviews, national and state quantitative achievement data, observation, and personal experience, Fletcher creates a picture of the boy writer in the modern classroom. Upon observing writing classrooms, Fletcher noticed that boys tended to be: “Turned off. Checked out. Disengaged. Disenfranchised” (p. 4). Through interviews, Fletcher confirmed that boys did lack enthusiasm for writing in school, even in the writing workshop classroom, which Fletcher had previously viewed as “a dynamic structure that celebrates choice and puts a premium on action,” (p. 5), a description that should resonate with the more active-directed boys. Fletcher also examined teacher perceptions of student writers through a questionnaire that he sent to 100 writing teachers (return of 71) of whom he thought very highly. The questionnaire revealed that the teachers sampled believed girls enjoyed writing more than boys by a strong margin (49 teachers stated that girls enjoyed writing more than boys, one teacher stated that boys enjoyed writing more than girls, and 21 teachers said both sexes equally enjoyed writing).

In chapter 13 of his book, Fletcher presents research on the differences between the male and female brain, as well as observational and experiential evidence that supports the importance of drawing for the boy writer. According to research by Michael Gurian and Leonard Sax (as cited by Fletcher), girls’ brains are wired for language, while boys’ brains are more wired for spatial-mechanical functioning. However, the elementary classroom is predominantly language based, while “we [educators] remain suspicious of drawing, and I’m not sure why” (p. 128). Fletcher suggests that “allowing boys to draw while writing will make it more fun and help them feel invested” (p. 129), and recommends that teachers show an interest in student drawings, recognize the underlying detail in drawings, and teach mini-lessons on drawing techniques and strategies.

Newkirk, T. (2002). *Misreading masculinity: Boys, literacy, and popular culture*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

In this frequently cited book, Newkirk draws primarily on student interviews with approximately one hundred students (boys and girls) and student writing in five New Hampshire elementary schools, as well as memories, observations, cultural analysis, action research, and the research of others, to describe and support the reading and writing choices boys typically make. Newkirk argues that schools and classrooms have “discouraged, devalued, or even prohibited the genres of reading and writing that are most popular with many boys, stories that include violence, parody, and bodily humor” (p. xvi). “Boys often feel that an open show of enthusiasm for schoolwork, particularly in the language arts, can undermine their identity as a ‘real boy’” (p. 39); it therefore follows that when schools prohibit the reading and writing to which boys relate, boys become further alienated from school.

Pajares, F., & Valiante, G. (1997). Influence of self-efficacy on elementary students’ writing. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 90(6), 353-360.

In this study, path analysis was used with a group of 218 fifth graders in three public elementary schools to test the influence of writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension, perceived usefulness of writing, and writing aptitude. In the first part of study, students completed the self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, and apprehension instruments, which consisted of eight, nine, and 10 items (respectively) and were reported with scales of 0 to 100, one to nine, and not listed

(respectively). In the second part of the study, students had 30 minutes to write an essay titled “My idea of a perfect day.” The researchers scored the essays using a holistic 5-point scale. In addition, teacher ratings of students’ writing aptitude were collected using the same 5-point scale used to score the essays.

The study found that “students’ self efficacy beliefs about their own writing capability directly influenced their writing apprehension, perceived usefulness of writing, and essay-writing performance” (p. 357). The researchers recommend that “teachers should pay as much attention to students’ perceptions of competence as to actual competence for the perceptions may more accurately predict students’ motivation and future academic choices” (p. 359). Also of interest, particularly for the study proposed here, the researchers found no differences in writing performance between the boys and girls in the study, but the boys reported lower self-efficacy and higher apprehension, and they also perceived writing as less useful than did the girls in the study. Therefore, this study is relevant to the proposed study in that it supports the importance of supporting boy writers at this developmental stage.

Support for Graphica in the Curriculum

Bitz, M. (2004). The Comic Book Project: Forging alternative pathways to literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 47(7), 574-586.

The Comic Book Project was founded in the fall of 2002 with the intention of creating an arts-based literacy after-school program for urban youth in New York city while consecutively meeting four New York State Learning Standards for English Language Arts: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for (1) information and understanding, (2) literary response and expression, (3) critical analysis and evaluation, and (4) social interaction. The Comic Book Project conducted staff training workshops before the program was implemented into 33 after-school sites. The implementation of the program was flexible: some sites used the training to start a comic book club that met once or twice a week during the fall, while other sites created intensive literacy programs lasting three consecutive weeks.

Bitz reports that the project served 733 students and trained 46 teachers. All students and teachers who completed the project (number not stated) received a one-page survey consisting of multiple choice items on a 1-5 Likert scale and three open-ended questions. The survey revealed that an overwhelming majority of both teachers and students felt that students were getting better at writing, liked to write their own stories, and liked to draw pictures to go with stories (p. 582) as a result of the project. In addition, Bitz and program instructors observed evidence to support learning in all four goal standards, though they did not perform assessments to provide percentages of student goal attainment. Teachers were impressed that they were able to get “kids to write without complaining about it,” (p. 582), that students were motivated to write and draw and proud of their work. However, teachers also felt that the project was incredibly time consuming and, in the words of one teacher, that “some kids just wanted to draw. I had to work very hard to get them to write, too” (p. 582).

Norton, B. (2003). The motivating power of comic books: Insights from Archie comic readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(2), 140-147.

In a Canadian study of 34 fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students (19 girls and 15 boys) who read Archie comics, Norton investigated the appeal of Archie comics and student perceptions of the educational and communicative values of the comics. Through questionnaires

and small group interviews, Norton speculated that comics provide students with a “sense of ownership that gives children the confidence to engage with comic books energetically and critically” (p. 145), and that furthermore, “it is from this sense of ownership that pleasure derives” (p. 146). This study demonstrates the motivating capacity of comics.

LD Student Writers

Fu, D., & Shelton, N.R. (2007). Including students with special needs in a writing workshop. *Language Arts*, 84(4), 325-336.

Shelton, a fourth grade teacher, and Fu, a researcher observer, discuss the benefits of writing workshop for students with LD based on a four-month qualitative study of nine LD students in a mainstream classroom, and a focused case study on one of those students, Michelle. Each of the nine students was below fourth grade level in writing, and Michelle was tested as the furthest below grade level. Michelle was diagnosed with specific learning disabilities, as well as “‘socially ill-adjusted’ with a history of fighting with other students and disrupting class” (p. 327), indicating an emotional disability. The study, which was conducted from August to December of the students’ fourth grade year, took place in a mainstream classroom; prior to the study, each of the nine students had been taught in a self-contained SPED classroom.

Based on research by Nielson (1997) on inclusive education that demonstrated small group peer work facilitated cooperative learning, praise, encouragement, and support, the authors proposed that the writing workshop model would increase social and emotional growth for both SPED and mainstream students. Based on teacher observations and assessment of Michelle’s work, the authors concluded that Michelle did progress in her writing self-beliefs and abilities. After two months they observed a more positive affect towards writing from Michelle, as well as a desire to share work with her peers. After four months Michelle began to try the techniques taught in minilessons and to notice and correct mechanical errors in her writing. The authors concluded that Michelle’s motivation for writing was most strongly affected by her desire to share with her peers and feel a part of the community.