

THE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF INTEREST, READING ENGAGEMENT,  
AND MOTIVATION IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS'  
LITERATURE INSTRUCTION

by

ASHLEY LANE DAVIS

JULIANNE COLEMAN, COMMITTEE CHAIR

AARON KUNTZ  
BECKY ATKINSON  
ELIZABETH WILSON  
JANIE HUBBARD

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2013

Copyright Ashley Lane Davis 2013  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate the literature instruction practices of two high school English teachers. Furthermore, this study sought to explore how the participants' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation were reflected in their literature instructional practices. Using various qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews and observations, the researcher utilized emerged open and focused codes to interpret findings revealed through the data. Five focused codes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading, 2) Planning for Instruction, 3) Strategic Teaching, 4) Role of Literary Criticism, and 5) Engaging Students in Reading. In the cross case analysis, five themes emerged across the two cases: 1) The Constraints and Freedoms of the Educational Climate, 2) The Influence of Each Teacher's Education Preparation on Their Teaching Methodologies, 3) How Teaching to One's Strengths Affects Instructional Planning and Implementation, 4) The Role of Situational and Individual Interest During in Class Activities, and 5) The Role That Student Autonomy and Teacher Support Play in Students' Engagement with Texts and Motivation to Read. The findings of this case study suggest that the two participants could clearly discuss their conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation as well as the ways in which they planned and carried out literature instruction. However, the results indicated that these teachers were unable to demonstrate a cognizance of how their conceptualizations of these concepts affected the methodologies they utilized as they selected literature and carried out instruction.

## DEDICATION

For my mother, Sharon McInnish, for encouraging me to forge my own path.

For my late father, Timothy Davis, for always reminding me how proud I made him.

For my grandparents, Bobbie Herrington and the late Buddy Herrington,

for showing me what it means to have a servant's heart.

For all of my students who have always inspired me to do better.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey at The University of Alabama has been a wonderful experience, and I owe much of my success to many individuals who have offered me support along the way. I have to first thank my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Julianne Coleman, for her unending help and guidance throughout this process. I truly would not have succeeded in this endeavor without you! I also offer thanks to Dr. Lisa Scherff for her willingness to support me from afar and give me the chance to lend my talents to her. I also must thank Dr. Aaron Kuntz for opening up the world of qualitative inquiry to me. The knowledge I have gained through your courses truly has prepared me for the world of academic research. Dr. Becky Atkinson, Dr. Janie Hubbard, and Dr. Liza Wilson, thank you for all your encouragement and your willingness to help guide me in my future endeavors.

Others in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction have also been instrumental to my journey as a student. Dr. Shannon Henderson, thank you so very much for all you have taught me about what it means to be a reflective practitioner. I will forever be indebted to your generosity. Dr. Karen Spector, thank you for taking the time to meet with me during your spring break and encouraging me to apply and start me on this journey! Other thanks go to Dr. Vivian Wright, Dr. Miguel Mantero, and Mrs. Margie Carroll for all their help and support through my four years at UA.

To my fellow colleagues, I honestly would not have made it through this program without your encouragement. To Dr. Tracy Windle, Sharon Ross, and Alexander Parks, you

three have been my rock and foundation throughout this process. Thank you for listening and offering sound advice. I am truly in your debt.

Finally, I offer a most humble and special thanks to my family. Many thanks go to Sharon and Carl McInnish, Bobbie Herrington, and my aunts and uncles for all your prayers and thoughts. I am convinced that you have ensured my future success. To my best friend Jana Shelton for providing me with much needed laughs when I needed them most. To my brothers, Michael, Chris, and Bracken, in no way would I ever be able to thank you for all you have done for me. Lastly, I cannot imagine making it through this process without the support of the two most important men in my life. Even though my grandfather, Buddy Herrington, and my father, Timothy Davis, are not with me anymore, I know they are celebrating this accomplishment together in Heaven. I love you all more than you will ever know.

## CONTENTS

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| ABSTRACT.....                         | ii  |
| DEDICATION.....                       | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....                 | iv  |
| LIST OF TABLES.....                   | xi  |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....          | 1   |
| Background.....                       | 1   |
| Statement of the Problem.....         | 3   |
| Purpose of the Study.....             | 8   |
| Research Questions.....               | 8   |
| Significance of the Study.....        | 9   |
| Limitations.....                      | 10  |
| Definition of Terms.....              | 10  |
| Summary.....                          | 12  |
| CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....    | 14  |
| Overview.....                         | 14  |
| Interest Concept.....                 | 15  |
| Interest.....                         | 15  |
| Individual Interest.....              | 16  |
| Situational Interest.....             | 17  |
| Taxonomy of Situational Interest..... | 19  |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Development of Situational Interest .....                   | 19        |
| Reading Engagement and Motivation.....                      | 21        |
| Reading Engagement .....                                    | 21        |
| Connections between Reading Engagement and Motivation ..... | 22        |
| Student Choice .....  | 23        |
| Literature Instruction .....                                | 25        |
| Historical Background of Literature Instruction.....        | 25        |
| New Criticism .....   | 26        |
| Reader-Response Theory .....                                | 28        |
| Cultural Studies Approach.....                              | 30        |
| Similar Practical Studies on Literature Instruction.....    | 31        |
| Summary .....   | 33        |
| <b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....</b>                       | <b>35</b> |
| Overview.....   | 35        |
| Qualitative Research .....                                  | 35        |
| Case Study Research.....                                    | 36        |
| Boundaries .....  | 38        |
| Participants.....   | 38        |
| Tennyson.....   | 39        |
| O’Connor .....  | 40        |
| Settings.....   | 41        |
| Methods of Data Collection .....                            | 42        |
| Interviews.....   | 42        |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Pre-Unit Interview .....  | 43 |
| Informal Interviews.....  | 44 |
| Observations .....  | 44 |
| Fieldnotes and Analytic Memos .....                             | 44 |
| Complementary Nature of Data Collection Methods .....           | 45 |
| Data Analysis .....   | 45 |
| Trustworthiness.....  | 47 |
| Summary.....  | 48 |
| CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....  | 49 |
| Overview.....   | 49 |
| Tennyson.....   | 50 |
| Classroom Setting.....  | 50 |
| Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading..... | 51 |
| Planning for Instruction .....                                  | 52 |
| Strategic Teaching .....  | 53 |
| Student Generated Questions.....                                | 55 |
| Small and Whole Group Discussion.....                           | 56 |
| Extension Activities.....                                       | 56 |
| Role of Literary Criticism.....                                 | 56 |
| Engaging Students in Reading.....                               | 58 |
| O'Connor .....  | 59 |
| Classroom Setting.....  | 59 |
| Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading..... | 60 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Planning for Instruction .....   | 62  |
| Strategic Teaching .....   | 63  |
| Student Generated Questions .....                                      | 63  |
| Small and Whole Group Discussion .....                                 | 64  |
| Extension Activities .....   | 64  |
| Role of Literary Criticism .....                                       | 66  |
| Engaging Students in Reading .....                                     | 67  |
| Cross Case Analysis .....  | 68  |
| Education Climate Constraints and Freedoms .....                       | 71  |
| Influence of Teacher Education Training on Instructional Methods ..... | 75  |
| Teaching to One’s Strengths .....                                      | 77  |
| Situational and Individual Interest .....                              | 78  |
| Role of Student Autonomy and Teacher Support .....                     | 82  |
| Summary .....  | 83  |
| CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....         | 85  |
| Overview .....   | 85  |
| Interest Concept .....   | 85  |
| Reading Engagement and Motivation .....                                | 91  |
| Literature Instruction .....   | 97  |
| Implications .....   | 101 |
| Implications for Teacher Practice .....                                | 101 |
| Implications for Teacher Education Programs .....                      | 103 |
| Implications for Student Learning .....                                | 104 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Recommendations for Future Research ..... | 104 |
| Concluding Remarks.....                   | 105 |
| REFERENCES .....                          | 106 |
| APPENDICES .....                          | 113 |
| Institutional Review Board Approval ..... | 114 |
| Pre-Unit Interview Protocol.....          | 125 |
| Observation Protocol .....                | 126 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Data Collection Timeline.....   | 42 |
| 2. Formal and Informal Interview Topics .....                                | 43 |
| 3. Focused Codes and Subcodes Organization .....                             | 47 |
| 4. Demographics of Students Observed in Tennyson’s Classroom.....            | 50 |
| 5. Demographics of Students Observed in O’Connor’s Classroom .....           | 60 |
| 6. Emerged Themes across the Two Cases.....                                  | 70 |
| 7. Situational and Individual Interest Representations in the Two Cases..... | 86 |

CHAPTER I:  
INTRODUCTION

**Background**

Like many entering the teaching profession, I became a teacher because I wanted to help students become who they would be by teaching them how to question, how to think critically, and how to engage with the world around them. I had high hopes that one day in class a student would say, “Ms. Davis, I’m so glad I took your class! I feel like I’ve learned things that will prepare me for the real world.” As impractical and grandiose as that may seem, I think every teacher hopes that her students will see the importance of getting an education. However, my novice teacher naiveté soon became exploited when those idealistic dreams did not come into fruition during my first year teaching at a small school in Alabama.

As I began my teacher education program, I thought about all the fun and creative projects I would have my students do, and I was especially excited about introducing my students to the literature I had fallen in love with both as a high school and college student. Furthermore, I began learning about incorporating various instructional strategies so I could meet the diverse needs of learners, utilizing informal and formal assessments, and creating a classroom environment that encouraged an open exchange of ideas, which were all goals of my teacher education program. On the other hand, my teacher education training also attempted to prepare me for students who were unmotivated, uninterested, and unable not only to see the value of a free, public education but also to take advantage of it. I was not prepared, however, for the extent to which those descriptors, (i.e. unmotivated, uninterested, and unable to see the value of an education), would have an impact on my daily practices as a teacher. During my first year of

teaching, I struggled to get my students interested in reading, and I knew that I had to make my lessons more pertinent for my students. I needed to pique their interest so that they would become more engaged in the reading process, and I also wanted them to become intrinsically motivated to read and learn. To accomplish those goals, I strove to make content applicable to their lives.

I began learning how to connect what we read to students' lives through incorporating art, music, movies, comics, etc. into literature units. Even though not all students were always interested and engaged with class activities, I felt like I was seeing an increase in motivation. This became apparent in a reflective questionnaire students completed at the end of the school year. In the questionnaire, I asked them about which texts they enjoyed or did not enjoy reading that year, and I found that the Southern literature unit was most often what students liked best.

I decided that I would spend more time the following year developing that unit even further to include both modern and contemporary Southern texts as well as to explore what it means to be Southern, how issues of diversity (such as culture, socio-economics, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexuality, etc.) affect what it means to be Southern, and why an exploration of those issues is important. Students developed their own ideas about Southern issues of diversity through reading modern and postmodern Southern texts such as Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, Rick Bragg's *All Over but the Shoutin'*, as well as short stories by Eudora Welty, Charles W. Chesnutt, Flannery O'Connor, and others. Even though I could not teach Southern literature throughout the entire school year, I began revising the other literature units to ensure I could not only help students become interested and engaged in the texts we read, but I also wanted to see their motivation for reading increase so they would be more likely to become life-long readers and learners.

My experience teaching literature in a high school has influenced this study in two ways: (1) teachers define and conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation in multiple ways and (2) those definitions and constructs influence the ways teachers go about planning and implementing literature instruction. My own definitions and conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation played a pivotal role in how I planned for and carried out literature instruction. This realization gave me the freedom to move from traditional ways of teaching literature, i.e. a New Critical approach, to more reader-response methods of literary analysis. Students needed the opportunity to explore the meanings they found in the text and, furthermore, the new understandings they had of the world around them. I recognized that in making literature instruction more applicable to my students' lives not only piqued their interest, but they also became more engaged in the reading process and motivated to read. Since these concepts—interest, reading engagement, and motivation—became the framework for my own lesson planning, I began to wonder how they influence literature instruction for other English teachers. How do other English teachers conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation? How do they get students interested and engaged in the reading process? Are their students motivated to read? These questions have informed this study on how English teachers' conceptualizations on interest, reading engagement, and motivation and how those constructs influence their literature instruction.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research has demonstrated that success in schools requires active engagement and, furthermore, that academic motivation decreases as students progress through elementary to high school (NRC, 2004). As students get older and become more independent, they often find it challenging to follow the demands set by teachers and schools, or they may be unfamiliar with the value of succeeding in school. Dropout rates are where this disengagement with learning is

most evident. In 2010, 7.4% of 16-through 24-year-old students dropped out of high school (NCES, 2012). Specifically in the state of Alabama, a total of 3,109 students dropped out of high school during the 2010-2011 school year (ALSDE, 2011), and within the next four years, 5.6% of students will drop out of high school. These numbers are startling, and there is too much at risk for our students who fail to succeed in school: “Failure to earn even the most basic educational credential or acquire the basic skills needed to function in adult society increases dramatically their risk of unemployment, poverty, poor health, and involvement in the criminal justice system” (NRC, 2004, p. 1). What can high school teachers and administrators do to combat these problems and increase students’ engagement and motivation to learn?

In an effort to answer this question, the National Research Council (NRC) reviewed and synthesized research on engagement and motivation that applied to urban high schools (2004), although the panel points out that all findings can apply to all school environments. The NRC found that engaging teachers and schools help students become more confident in their own learning abilities, provide choices for students, have high expectations, incorporate challenging and rigorous instruction, and increase social interactions. In other words, “The nature and context of instruction are what matters most in engaging students in learning” (NRC, 2004, p. 60). Looking specifically at the “nature and context” of literacy instruction, the NRC found limited amounts of empirical research investigating the connection between literacy instruction and engagement at the high school level; most of the research found took place at the elementary level. However, the panel suggests that the following characteristics, identified mostly in elementary studies on literacy instruction and engagement, comprise successful literacy pedagogy: personalized relationships between teachers and students, authentic reading and writing tasks, capitalization on cultural knowledge, use of multiple resources, rigorous and challenging instruction, explicit instruction, frequent feedback from assessments, and integrated

curricula (NRC, 2004, p. 65).

While these characteristics are derived from students within an elementary context, there is evidence that can be utilized to guide literacy instruction at the high school level. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report on reading, incoming ninth graders read no better than they did ten years ago (NCES, 2011). In Alabama, for example, the average reading score in 2011 was 258, which is below the national score of 264; the average reading score in 2009 was 255; and the average reading score in 1998 was 255. Furthermore, significant score gaps exist among ethnic and socioeconomic groups within Alabama. Black students scored 25 points lower than White students, and Hispanic students scored 21 lower than White students. Those students receiving free or reduced lunch average a score 22 points lower than students who are not eligible for free or reduced lunches. Unfortunately, these gaps show little to no difference than the average scores from 1998. In total, only 69% of students in Alabama performed at or above the NAEP basic level of reading in 2011, which is not much better than the 66% in 2009 or 67% in 1998. Conversely, reading scores for fourth graders in Alabama were at the national average, 220, and had improved from 216 in 2009 and 207 in 1998.

With this in mind, teachers in Alabama are preparing to teach students who, compared to the national average, are consistently underperforming on reading standardized tests (NCES, 2011). Students who are unable to read and comprehend informational and narrative texts are less likely to be able to develop the skills necessary to meet the demands of new state and national mandates (Wendt, 2013). Therefore, the need for English teachers to incorporate innovative reading instructional methods that attend to students' interests, reading engagement, and motivation to read has become more pressing as the needs and abilities of students are becoming more diverse and as the advent of new initiatives begin to affect curricula and instructional practice.

The addition of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative in 2010 has added additional pressure for teachers to adapt to a new set of standards that require teachers to incorporate strands of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language into their instruction. At the basis of the CCSS is the assertion that in order for students to become college and career ready, students must display the following characteristics:

...readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experiences, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010)

In order to help students meet these dispositions, the CCSS for English Language Arts suggests that teachers be mindful when selecting texts for instruction through evaluating a text's complexity, quality, and range. These three constructs are defined in the following way within the CCSS (2010): complexity refers to the challenges a text may present for students on their present reading level; quality refers to texts that are representative of literature that is of literary merit; and range refers to the inclusion of diverse texts, such as those representing a variety of cultures, genders, races, etc. It is important to note here that while the CCSS (2010) has informed many state courses of study, this study will use Alabama's *Course of Study for English Language Arts* (2010) when considering the educational context surrounding this study as both participants teach within Alabama, whose course of study includes the CCSS (2010) as well as some additional state objectives. Therefore, the *Alabama Course of Study for English Language Arts: English Language Literacy for College and Career Readiness* (2010) will be referred to as CCRS within this document.

When considering students who are struggling readers or students who are disengaged in

learning, researchers purport that the text selections deemed appropriate by the CCSS lack the range students of diverse backgrounds need to support their engagement with a variety of texts (Burns, Kimmel, & Garrison, 2013; Hiebert & Grisham, 2012; Wendt, 2013). Teachers should select texts for instruction based on students' interests as well as on the complexity, quality, and range the texts may offer to help students become more engaged in reading. Choosing not to attend to students' interests as it relates to reading engagement can have negative effects on students' abilities to comprehend and analyze complex texts (Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, Bandre, & George, 2011).

Text selection is only the first step in helping students engage with the complex readings the CCRS (2010) mandates; teachers must also consider the methods in which they present texts to students. While teachers are to help students develop their abilities to participate in "close readings," they must be mindful in the amount and levels of support they offer students before and during the reading process (Peery, 2013). The goal of the CCRS, at least in part, is to develop independent thinkers who are able to analyze a wide variety of texts. Providing too much support will inhibit students' abilities to practice the skills needed to develop critical readers. With this in mind, teachers must consider the ways in which they group literature units as well as the length of time each unit should be implemented. Simply stated, teachers need to investigate how text selection affects literature instruction (Halladay & Moses, 2013; Hiebert & Grisham, 2012). Through this process, literature teachers have the ability to be mindful about planning and carrying out reading and literature instruction that meets the needs of their students and develops literate citizens. These goals have become more imperative, as noted by the NRC (2004):

More than ever, students need to be taught to critically evaluate information, consider its source and possible biases, and compare and contrast claims from various sources. A literate citizen must now have a higher level of critical and

analytical skills than was true even a decade ago. (p. 63)

Further research is needed to address these concerns in high school English classrooms, and this study sought to add to the current research on literacy, specifically literature, instruction and engagement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objectives of this multiple case study were to investigate how high school English teachers conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation and how those constructs were enacted within their literature instruction. This study adds to the current research on interest, reading engagement, motivation, and literature instruction through the use of a multiple case study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Given a sociocultural framework, case study is an appropriate mode of inquiry for this study. Case study's concern with exploring a unit of analysis, or phenomenon, within a bounded system speaks to sociocultural theorists who "seek to understand the social and cultural practices of people from many different backgrounds" by investigating the connections between the person and culture (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 3). This frame is used to describe the knowledge and beliefs about interest, reading engagement, and motivation two teachers bring with them into the classroom and how that knowledge and beliefs influence their literature instruction practices. Formal and informal interviews and observations were utilized to craft a picture of how two teachers' constructs of interest, reading engagement, and motivation were enacted in their literature instructional practices. These objectives were examined through two research questions.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do two high school English teachers conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation?
2. How are those conceptualizations enacted in their literature instruction?

## **Significance of the Study**

As noted by the NRC (2004), little to no empirical research has been conducted linking literacy to literature instruction and engagement at the high school level. Furthermore, within the new CCRS framework (2010), high school English teachers are in the process of adapting to new standards which place a greater emphasis on students' abilities to be college and career ready (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Developing students' close reading and critical thinking skills requires deliberate planning and implementation (Hiebert & Grisham, 2012; Peery, 2013). Investigating the methodologies high school English teachers utilize while developing these skills, among the other possibilities literature offers, provides teachers, administrators, and teacher educators the opportunity to take a closer look at how English teachers go about cultivating a literate citizenry.

In order to accomplish this goal, English teachers should select texts and plan for instruction in ways that attend to students' interests, provide appropriate levels of reading engagement, and increase students' motivation to read. While there have been studies on interest, reading engagement, and motivation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 1991; Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Wigfield et al., 2008) and literature instruction (Agee, 2000a, 2000b; Applebee, 1993; Langer, 1995b; Moley, et al., 2011), few empirical studies describe the connections that interest, reading engagement, and motivation have to literature instruction in high school English classrooms. This study differs from these previous studies in that it investigates that connection through a multiple case study. Through the use of interviews and classroom observations, this study describes the ways in which two teachers attempted to pique student interest, promote reading engagement, and increase motivation through their literature instructional practices. Furthermore, this broadens educational research on the "nature and

context” of literature instruction at the secondary level.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this multiple case study are those that are inherent in all classroom research. This study was bound within two classrooms in two different schools, and the findings of this study have not sought to generalize the experiences and practices of all high school English teachers. The settings of these schools are also similar in nature; they do not represent differing geographical, ethnic, or socioeconomic contexts. Conversely, conducting two case studies in different settings, while similar in nature, will provide the reader the opportunity to look across the various cases for similarities and differences.

The time frame for this study also served as a limitation. The data collection process took place during one literature unit, whose length was dependent upon the participants. The time frame for data collection was two months. A longer period of observation over more than one unit of study would have provided a more in-depth description of the participants’ literature instructional practices over the course of a school year. Furthermore, no post-unit interviews were conducted due to scheduling conflicts between the researcher and the participants. While informal interviews occurred before and/or after observations, the researcher was unable to further ask the participants about the instructional practice observed. The post-unit interviews would have provided the participants another opportunity to communicate their beliefs about interest, reading engagement, and motivation in relation to their literature instruction practice.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following key terms and definitions are important for understanding this study:

*Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)* is an accountability measure by which school systems are evaluated on a yearly basis. Schools are evaluated based on students’ abilities to meet performance standards, which gradually increase from year to year (No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) Act of 2001, West 2002).

*College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS)* represents the state of Alabama's course of study for English language arts (2010). The CCRS includes the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as some additional objectives from previous courses of study as a way to bridge the gap between the CCSS and the needs of Alabama's students.

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* is a federal initiative that seeks to provide consistent educational standards across the United States. The CCSS aims to prepare students to be college and career ready through standards that reflect the skills students will need to effectively participate in a democratic society (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

*Cultural Studies Approach* refers to a type of literary criticism that is interested in ethical, moral, and social questions and situates literature within a social and cultural context (Carey-Webb, 2001; Langer, 1995b; Latrobe & Drury, 2009).

*Historical Criticism* is a method of literary analysis that places an emphasis on understanding an author's biography and the historical context in which a text was composed (Latrobe & Drury, 2009).

*Individual Interest* includes topics, specific content-areas, or activities that often intrinsically motivate students (Schiefele, 1991).

*Interest* is a psychological state that influences attention, goals, and levels of learning (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

*Literature*, for the purposes of this study, refers to literary texts including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. However, because of the nature of this study, informational texts are not included within this definition.

*Motivation* refers to the beliefs, values, needs, and goals that an individual possesses that

influences her decision making process (Guthrie & Cox, 2001).

*Multiple Case Study* is a research design employed when a qualitative researcher wishes to investigate the same unit of analysis across multiple bounded systems which concludes with a comparing and contrasting of results (Barone, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

*New Criticism* is a literary theory that places emphasis on students doing a close reading of a text through an evaluation of “the narrator, the point of view, and the ‘correct interpretation,’” and meaning is found within the text itself (Agee, 2000b; Langer, 1995b; Latrobe & Drury, 2009).

*Reading Engagement* refers to “...students who are intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides. But engaged readers are also strategic. They use strategies such as self-monitoring and inferencing to understand text. Engaged readers are also wide and frequent readers. They read often and explore new territory through text” (Guthrie & Cox, 2001, p. 284).

*Reader-Response Theory*, originated in the work of Rosenblatt (1995), emphasizes the transaction that takes place between the reader and the text as it acknowledges the life experiences that readers bring to the reading process. It is within this interaction that meaning is constructed.

*Situational Interest* is a contextual stimulus used to arouse interest in students and is, therefore, of temporary value (Schiefele, 1991).

### **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the background, the statement of the problems related to this study, the purpose of the study and research questions, the rationale for this study, and the limitations and terms relative to this study. Chapter II will present a theoretical framework for the study and explore other related literature that further helps define this study’s purpose and

direction. Chapter III will explain the methods and procedures that was used to answer the research questions; this chapter will also present how trustworthiness was addressed through researcher positionality, triangulation of the data, and internal and external validity. Chapter IV will present the findings of the study, and Chapter V will discuss the findings of both cases in relation to the related literature pertinent to this study. Chapter V will conclude with implications for teacher practice, teacher education programs, and student learning as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II:  
LITERATURE REVIEW

**Overview**

There has been an abundant amount of research illustrating the impact of interest, engagement, and motivation in the classroom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci, et al., 1991; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Schiefele, 1991; Wigfield, et al., 2008). Within this breadth of research literature, this qualitative study concentrated on how high school English teachers incorporate all three of these concepts into their literature instruction within literature units. The questions that guided this research study were (a) How do two high school English teachers conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation? and (b) How are those conceptualizations enacted in their literature instruction?

This review of the related literature means to serve as a theoretical context for this proposed study within the boundaries of the researcher's own interest in the connection between how teachers conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation and the ways in which those constructs are enacted in their literature instruction. This chapter begins by reviewing the development of the general concept of interest during the past 30 years as well as its connection to research on reading engagement and motivation.

Next, the Literature Instruction section of this literature review will present the following literary theories that currently influence literature instruction: New Criticism, Reader-Response Theory, and a cultural studies approach. This chapter concludes with a critique of similar studies on literature instruction and the methodologies used by researchers that point to a need for this study.

## **Interest Concept**

In the context of the current educational climate, administrators and teachers are striving to increase students' intrinsic motivation for learning. They want to get students actively involved in the learning process through igniting students' interests, engagement, and motivation. Acknowledging the role that interest, engagement, and motivation play in the classroom is the first step in helping students become more intrinsically motivated to learn and, in turn, achieve greater academic success (Guthrie, 2004; Krapp, 1991).

### **Interest**

Dewey (1913) recognized that external motivators do not make learning interesting to students, and he recommended that teachers design curriculum to reflect students' individual interests. Interest mediates the connection between effort and learning, and, furthermore, effort without interest will amount to nothing. Dewey made two assumptions about interest: (1) interest has the capacity to lead to active learning that could satisfy basic intellectual and intrapersonal needs, and (2) interest could not be externally imposed as a means of increasing learning. Most importantly, he believed that interest could be fostered within a classroom setting by providing students with various opportunities to capitalize on students' existing interests and motivations. In other words, when teachers acknowledge students' interests and construct authentic tasks, students' motivation for learning increases (Dewey, 1913).

Interestingly enough, research on the conceptualization of interest subsided for nearly 40 years due the onset of research on American Behaviorism in educational psychology (Schiefele, 1991; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). During the 1970s, interest research became integrated back into educational research with the inception of a renewed focus on prose learning theory and deeper processing theory. In Germany, Kintsch was one of the first to distinguish between

emotional and cognitive interest (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). For Kintsch, emotional interest occurs when a reader has an affective response to a text, and these responses typically reflect the human experience, such as life, sex, conflict, etc. Cognitive interest, on the other hand, occurs when a reader becomes engaged in the reading process. For example, a student may become cognitively interested in Libba Bray's (2009) young adult novel *Going Bovine* because the main character, Cameron, mysteriously contracts mad cow disease and is frequently visited by a punk rock angel. The reader finds novelty and many unexpected plot twists, which leads to reading engagement and, according to Kintsch, cognitive interest. Even though Kintsch was the first to distinguish between cognitive and emotional interest, his work was not tested empirically, and he, furthermore, did not make a distinction between what future researchers would identify as individual and situational interest (Schraw & Lehman, 2001).

**Individual interest.** Building off the work of Dewey and other cognitive and behavior psychologists, Schiefele (1991), began making distinctions between two concepts of interest: individual and situational. Individual interest includes topics, specific content-areas, or activities, and it is composed of latent and actualized characteristics. The latent characteristic of individual interest has both feeling-related valences and value-related valences. Feeling-related valences, or feeling-related criteria, encompass the feelings a student associates with a given topic. Those feelings, also later identified by Schiefele as intrinsic feeling-related valences, show a student's capacity to learn and be involved in learning for the sake of learning about the topic without external motivators. On the other hand, value-related valences refer to the placement of one's individual significance to a topic, content-area, or activity. Conversely, a student in a state of actualized individual interest is already interested in a content-specific topic and is motivated intrinsically to learn about it for the sake of learning. Based on a student's content-specific motivation, interest has the possibility to be a predictor of learning outcomes. Furthermore, if

teachers can activate and integrate students' feeling-related and value-related valences into instructional practices, the possibility of increasing students' intrinsic motivation will rise and extend beyond a particular learning context or classroom environment.

In his research on individual interest, Schiefele (1991) designed four studies to investigate the connection among interest, the text, and comprehension achievement, which he describes in his article, "Interest, Learning, and Motivation." The undergraduate students who participated in all four studies either read high-interest texts or low-interest texts, and they were asked to complete comprehension tests after reading. It was within these studies that feeling-related valences and value-related valences emerged. The results indicated that students who read high-interest texts experienced higher levels of engagement and deeper levels of comprehension while students who read lower-interest texts experienced lesser levels of reading engagement and lower levels of comprehension. Furthermore, these results suggest that higher levels of interest allow readers to go beyond mere comprehension and motivate readers to explore a text's theme and possible meanings. Although Schiefele's studies provide evidence for a context of individual interest, situational interest had no clear representation in the four studies.

**Situational interest.** Unlike individual interest, situational interest, is brought on by situational, contextual stimuli to arouse interest in students and is, therefore, of temporary value (Schiefele, 1991; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). For example, teachers might introduce racy novels or controversial topics to get students' attention. A teacher can incorporate group work, puzzles, or technology as means of initiating situational interest (Mitchell, 1993). However, for interest to become long-term, or individual interest, students have to become involved with the topic and see the meaning and value of learning (Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001; Schraw & Lehman, 2001).

Mitchell's (1993) study on interest took place in the secondary mathematics classroom. The purpose of the study was to assess the tenability of a hypothetical construct of interest, with a focus on situational interest. This study was conducted in three stages with a sample size of 350 high school students at three different sites. The first stage was comprised of developing a theoretical model of interest according to current research literature on interest. The second stage involved collecting qualitative data on student perceptions of interest in the secondary mathematics classroom. The third and final stage included quantitative measures in the form a survey. The qualitative and quantitative measures were combined to test the validity of the theoretical model of interest the researcher developed during the first stage of this study. The results indicate that there is initial quantitative evidence to support distinguishing between the catch and hold facets of situational interest; however, Mitchell (1993) points out that it is unclear as to whether this distinction would be evident in other content areas, which points to a need for further research in various content areas to explore the ways in which teachers utilize the catch and hold facets of situational interest or the ways in which teachers transfer students' initial interest into long-term, life-long interest.

While Mitchell's study looked at students' perceptions of interest in the secondary mathematics classroom, Zahorik (1996) examined what teachers do in their classrooms to create situational interest in learning. The participants (n=65) were enrolled in a graduate level course, and the group was comprised of 30 elementary and 35 secondary teachers, whose teaching experience ranged from 1 to 19 years. Throughout the course, the participants wrote four reflective papers, which focused on the following topics: (1) qualities of a good learning experience, (2) a very interesting activity I have used, (3) how I create interest and what I do to avoid disinterest, and (4) subject matter facts and concepts. The researcher used these essays as data and analyzed them through cross-comparative analysis. The results of the study indicate

that hands-on activities were used the most in classrooms to foster situational interest in learning, although the quality of hands-on activities was not consistent through the data.

***Taxonomy of situational interest.*** Others have conceptualized situational interest in different ways. Schraw and Lehman (2001) created a taxonomy of situational interest that includes text-based, task-based, and knowledge-based distinctions. Text-based interest is related to seductive details, suspense, the inclusion of emotionally charged or provocative information, or text coherence. Task-based interest refers to interest that is activated by encoding tasks and instructions and changing readers' goals. Finally, knowledge-based interest is initiated through prior knowledge about a topic. Krapp (1991) further acknowledges not only the connection between the person and the text, but also the person's individual interest to the learning context itself. Both the person's individual interest and the learning context affect the psychological state, which is how Krapp defines interest, within actualized individual interest. In his review of empirical research, he points out the connections among interest, motivation, and achievement, and it is among these relationships that teachers can facilitate students' interests and impact their reading engagement with various texts.

### **Development of Student Interest**

While previous studies (Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Zahorik, 1996) indicate that a distinction can be made between individual and situational interest, they do not discuss what teachers can do within classrooms to develop interest within students. Defining interest as a psychological state, Hidi and Reninger (2006) posit that interest can and should be developed within classrooms. Their research proposes a four-phase model for developing interest:

- Phase one reflects a triggered situational interest, which results from short-term changes in both affect and cognitive processing. For example, students may have sparked interest

when meeting new, surprising information or when participating in classroom activities that aim to get students' attention.

- Phase two reflects maintained situational interest where students' interest is held and sustained for a period of time. Teachers can achieve this through developing cooperative learning activities, project-based learning, or peer tutoring.
- Phase three recognizes the beginnings of emerging individual interest when students begin to seek out new information to reengage with content-specific topics. Students in this phase typically begin to have "...positive feelings, stored knowledge, and stored value" (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 114).
- Phase four reflects students who have gained fully developed individual interest. Students in phase four continually reengage with content-specific topics over longer periods of time.

Hidi and Renninger's (2006) four-phase model of interest development offers a valuable model for helping students become independent, life-long learners. It is important to note that emerging individual interest is, although not exclusively, intrinsically motivated, and it may not lead to a fully developed individual interest.

Similarly, Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman (2001) reviewed historical and empirical literature on ways to increase situational interest in the classroom, and they developed the following six strategies: (1) offer meaningful choices to students, (2) use well-organized texts, (3) select texts that are vivid, (4) use texts that students know about, (5) encourage students to be active learners, and (6) provide relevance cues for students. These strategies highlight the importance of student autonomy, choice, teacher support, and activities to activate both individual and situational interest. When teachers utilize strategies such as those developed by

Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman (2001), students have the opportunity to increase intrinsic motivation and to actively engage with texts.

### **Reading Engagement and Motivation**

Interest's role in the classroom is key to getting students involved in the learning process (Dewey, 1913; Krapp, 1991; Schiefele, 1991), and its connection to reading engagement and motivation has also been explored in theoretical and empirical research (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011; Schiefele, 1991; Zahorik, 1996). Research has demonstrated that when teachers do not utilize students' interests while planning for instruction, students are less likely to become engaged in reading and motivated to read in and outside of school.

**Reading engagement.** For students to be engaged in the reading process, teachers must activate students' individual and situational interest through a variety of texts and activities. Furthermore, just as interest is a cognitive and an affective, emotional, process (Gambrell, 1996; Krapp, 1991; Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991), Guthrie (2004) makes similar observations about reading engagement. According to Guthrie, reading engagement involves motivation dispositions, such as intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, cognitive strategies, conceptual understandings, and social discourses, and, furthermore, he posits that readers who are engaged self-select books, read daily, think about the text while reading, accept varying viewpoints, and read books on a variety of topics. As students become more engaged in the reading process, they become more knowledgeable about a particular content area (Gambrell, 1996), and the context for developing individual interest and motivation increases.

With this in mind, Guthrie and Cox (2001) conducted a comparative study of two elementary classrooms over a 10 week unit. One classroom served as the dependent variable, and the students received traditional reading instruction. The independent variable classroom

consisted of 28 students from diverse backgrounds and low-socioeconomic statuses, and the students received Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), which came out of an initial study conducted by Anderson and Guthrie (1996). The purpose of CORI is to develop long-term reading engagement through constructing instructional goals that utilize conceptual understandings of specific topics within a knowledge domain, and this occurs through four phases:

- Phase one involves students observing a phenomenon and then selecting a specific topic to investigate.
- Phase two consists of students' self-selection of texts by conducting research.
- Phase three occurs when students comprehend and synthesize the gathered materials.
- Phase four involves students sharing what they have learned.

During all four phases, the teacher may need to step in and assist students with strategies that will assist them throughout the process. The findings from this study show that most students within the CORI group showed an increased motivation as well as an increase in using strategies for comprehension. Furthermore, the findings suggest that when students experience autonomy while simultaneously having teacher-support, teachers can create a learning context where students' motivation for reading and learning can be increased.

**Connections between reading engagement and motivation.** Other studies have also expanded on the effects of using CORI in the classroom and the connection between reading engagement and motivation (Guthrie, et al., 2000; Wigfield, et al., 2008). Guthrie, Wigfield, and VonSecker's (2000) study compared classrooms that utilized CORI to ones who utilized traditional reading instruction, and Wigfield et al.'s (2008) study compared CORI, traditional instruction, and strategy instruction. Even though these studies have examined CORI in different

ways, they find similar conclusions. Both studies indicate that reading instruction that is conceptually grounded and provides opportunities for students to self-select texts, participate in hands-on activities, and collaborate with peers does have positive effects on students' reading engagement, comprehension, and motivation.

Pitcher et. al (2007) also investigated the connection between students' reading engagement and motivation through the development of the Adolescents' Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). The AMRP is comprised of a survey and interview protocol that assesses students' motivation to read. In their study, 384 students were surveyed and 100 students were interviewed across five regions in the United States and the Caribbean. The results indicate that students' motivation to read is based on the following characteristics: students' perceptions of themselves as readers, multiliteracies, family and friends, teachers and instructional models, and book choice (p. 381-383). The research indicates that when students' motivation for reading increases, their abilities to make connections and share their knowledge with others also increases.

Likewise, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) surveyed sixth graders (n=1765) at 23 different sites about students' motivation to read outside of school. The survey asked students about their outside of school reading habits and their general reading preferences. The results show that 63% of students valued having time during class to read, and 62% of students enjoyed teachers reading aloud to them. In relation to motivation, 42% of students were attributed their motivation to read to book choice, and, further, 74% of students read books from home or books they purchased. These results signify a strong connection between book choice and students' motivation to read.

***Student choice.*** Similar to studies investigating the effects of implementing CORI and the connections between reading engagement and motivation (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996;

Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Guthrie, et al., 2000; Wigfield, et al., 2008), others have explored the connections among student choice, reading engagement, and motivation. Seeking to investigate how locus of control, or student choice, influences students' reading engagement with texts, Vieira and Grantham (2011) asked elementary and middle school students (n=170) who were aged 9 to 12 to complete a pre-reading survey that measured autonomy and students' general levels of reading interest. Next, students read one of three randomly selected texts, and then they completed a post-reading survey that focused on reading engagement. The findings show that reading involvement occurs in two ways: observer (cognitive) and participant (emotional). Observer reading involvement reflects reading that takes note of the plot, character motivations and potential consequences, and themes, among other factors. Conversely, participant reading involvement reflects a reader's identification with a character's situation, feelings, and/or thoughts. When readers process stories as both an observer and a participant, according to the researchers, they experience a complex emotional experience, which is a required process for fostering long-term reading involvement and engagement with texts.

In a similar study about book choice, engagement, and motivation, Lapp and Fisher (2009) designed a year-long literature course organized through conceptual questions in an effort to increase students' reading engagement with texts. The researchers worked with low achieving 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who were from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds. Students participated in book clubs composed of a wide variety of multi-genres, and the teaching framework the researchers implemented included read-alouds/think-alouds, independent reading, and book club reading. Through interviews and observations, the researchers found that students began making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. The findings suggest that students became more engaged in the reading process because it was their interests driving text selections and conversations. The intrinsic motivation students gained was a direct result of the

students having the choice to self-select reading materials, having a context for reading through the conceptual questions guiding the units, having the experience to interact with various forms of texts, and having the experience of discussing readings with their peers.

These results are also reflected in a similar study conducted by Guthrie and Humenick (2004). The researchers examined 22 studies and computed 46 effect sizes, classified as moderate to high, focusing on student choice in reading. Out of the four categories the researchers identified, 95% of students identified student choice as the most important motivating factor in reading. If teachers begin to implement student choice into reading and/or literature instruction, students' motivation for reading will increase (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Guthrie, et al., 2000; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Pitcher, et al., 2007) as research has demonstrated a direct connection between student choice and motivation as well as a direct connection between motivation and reading engagement (Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Moley, et al., 2011; Wigfield, et al., 2008).

### **Literature Instruction**

While the previous section presented a theoretical and empirical foundation on the concepts of interest, reading engagement, and motivation, the following section will outline how English teachers have been approaching the teaching of literature. The first section will provide a historical background of literature instruction in the English classroom. Next, New Criticism, Reader Response Theory, and a cultural studies approach to literature analysis and instruction will be presented. This chapter concludes with a review of similar studies on literature instruction and the methodologies used by researchers that point to a need for this study.

### **Historical Background of Literature Instruction**

Historically, English in the classroom has not always had a place in the curriculum. English as a subject emerged in the 1880s and 1890s as a reaction against the traditional

curriculum in place at the time, and the inclusion of English education became part of the progressive movement in its earliest stages (Applebee, 1974, 1993). During the 1920s and 1930s, English continued to progress as its own subject area, but it suffered a short divergence during the 1940s and 1950s due to a separation between theory and practice. Fortunately, the profession came back together in the 1960s as elementary and secondary professionals recognized a “unity of purpose” (Applebee, 1974, p. ix), and in the following decade, this unity created a space for the beginnings of educational reform.

During the 1970s, literature instruction changed dramatically. In college English classrooms, professors and students began using New Criticism as a theoretical lens for analyzing literature (Applebee, 1993), and it eventually trickled down into secondary English classrooms. At the same time, educational reform began placing an emphasis on student-centered theories, and in literature classrooms, this meant selecting and teaching literature that sought to connect students to texts. This new approach was headlined by Rosenblatt (1995) and Probst (1988). Within this shift, cultural studies approaches to curriculum also developed in the 1970s (Banks, 1993, 1996) and affected which literature teachers selected for instruction. The following sections present a background of New Criticism, Reader-Response Theory, and a cultural studies approach as an account of how literature instruction has been approached historically. The final section concludes with an analysis of empirical research on literature instruction and the methodologies used by researchers that point to a need for this study.

### **New Criticism**

During the 1930s, New Criticism emerged as the central method of literary analysis, and it continues to dominate literature instruction in secondary English classrooms (Applebee, 1993; Carey-Webb, 2001; Latrobe & Drury, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1995; Showalter, 2003). The New Critics read against historical and political approaches to literary analysis (Carey-Webb, 2001;

Showalter, 2003), and they place the work itself at the center of analysis as they believe that literature has its own language and knowledge and, thus, deserves its own reading approach (Latrobe & Drury, 2009). This aesthetic response to literature asserts an objective literary analysis through methodically identifying literary elements within a text and considering how they work together to create meaning. The New Critics recognize this method of analysis as masculine as it utilizes reason over emotional, or ideological, analyses (Showalter, 2003).

Within the secondary English classroom, New Criticism still has an established presence as textbook companies embed it within literary anthologies (Carey-Webb, 2001; Langer, 1995b) as it proves to be a safe method for literary analysis. Many researchers also recognize its uses and benefits in the classroom. Showalter (2003) acknowledges that New Criticism gives students a place to start when approaching a text because it helps them understand the structure of a text through specialized language. Through a close reading, or a reading of a short passage from within a larger text, students learn to read carefully and consider smaller parts of a text as opposed to reading an entire novel, for example, and only taking away an overall impression (Latrobe & Drury, 2009; Showalter, 2003). During a close reading, students begin to recognize patterns of language and structure across various texts through identifying literary elements such as plot, character, setting, tone, point-of-view, theme, and mode (Latrobe & Drury, 2009). All of these elements are to be evaluated on their own merit outside any historical or social context, which became the central focus for opponents of New Criticism.

Research indicates that New Criticism remains to be a central focus in secondary English classrooms (Anyachebelu, Anyamene, Obumneke-Okeke, & Abedola, 2011; Applebee, 1993; Langer, 1995b). In a recent study on teachers' perceptions of effective literature teaching strategies, Anyachebelu et. al (2011) surveyed 1,006 randomly selected English teachers on a 15 item, likert scale survey. After a t-test analysis, the results indicate that teachers are still tied to

traditional forms of teaching, and they view other non-traditional forms of literature instruction, such as literature circles, think alouds, etc., as ineffective. The researchers posit these results reflect the pressure teachers face as a result of standardized testing.

In a similar study, Zancanella's (1991) case study evaluated five teachers' approaches to literature through the use of interviews, observations, fieldnotes, transcripts of interviews and observations, and artifacts as methods of data collection. The results of this study show that the teachers approached reading literature as an imaginative experience, that is they connected texts to their own life experiences. As classroom teachers, they managed teaching literature in two ways: (1) through comprehension and (2) through learning literary terminology. The teachers approached reading literature as a personal, emotional experience, but they felt pressure through their schools to teach literary terminology and comprehension strategies for standardized test preparation. Even though the teachers were experiencing conflict between what they believed to be good literature instruction and what the school system required of them, participating in this study helped them realize how "...their practical experience as readers might contribute to their teaching of literature" (p. 30). Regardless of the pressures teachers face in the classroom, literature instruction must move beyond traditional forms of teaching as they limit opportunities for students to engage critically with texts and to participate in divergent ways of thinking (Langer, 1995b) or looking outside of the text for meaning.

### **Reader-Response Theory**

As a response to New Criticism, Rosenblatt (1995) rejected the notion that the text should be at the center of literary analysis and that "there are common images, evocations and responses to a literary piece that all good readers experience" (Langer, 1995b, p. 212). Instead, she proposed that the reader's construction of meaning takes place during the "to-and-fro" (p. 26) that occurs between the reader and the text. Furthermore, it is within this transaction that the

poem, play, or novel exists. Through this process, readers explore multiple meanings as meaning is created outside the text through the transaction occurring between the reader and the text, which is unlike New Criticism (Langer, 1995b). For Rosenblatt (1995), the context in which reading occurs is vital because the life experiences a reader brings to the text affect the meaning created through the reading process. As discussed by Tracy and Morrow (2006), Reader-Response Theory recognizes two different responses a reader may experience: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent responses are fact-oriented and take place after the reading has occurred. On the other hand, aesthetic responses are personal, emotionally based responses that will vary from person to person. These responses must occur on their own time through self-reflection, and they are also flexible as the meaning a reader has created with a text may change over time (Latrobe & Drury, 2009).

For teachers incorporating Reader-Response Theory into their classroom practice, it is important to remember that even though there are multiple responses and meanings students may create with a text, not all responses are equally valid (Rosenblatt, 1995). Students need to provide evidence and rationales from texts to support the inferences they draw out during the reading process, and teachers can facilitate these interactions by designing activities that encourage students' engagement with texts (Langer, 1995b; Rosenblatt, 1995). Small and large group discussions, literature circles, creative writing, and artistic activities are all good examples of tools teachers can use to get students actively engaged in the reading process.

Even though Reader-Response Theory accounts for the role the reader plays in the reading process, it also has some limitations. First, it does not suggest how teachers should choose texts, whether they are inside or outside the literary canon (Carey-Webb, 2001; Langer, 1995b). Second, it makes independent reading within the classroom difficult because students may not have opportunities to participate in literature discussions in small or large groups.

Finally, it does not acknowledge cultural literacy or a cultural studies approach to literature, and, ultimately, students are left with a narrow point-of-view that does not acknowledge viewpoints that differ from their own.

Matthews and Chandler (1998) as well as Ricker-Wilson (1998) discuss how they incorporated Reader-Response Theory into their literature instruction when exploring issues of race while students created meaning in their transactions with course readings. While both studies indicated that students were able to make personal connections with the text and, furthermore, were able to create meaning through interacting with texts, they also acknowledge the limitations and possible harm a Reader-Response Theory approach can have for students. For example, African American students in Ricker-Wilson's (1998) study felt as if they were the subjects of a lesson on race while reading Harper Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and they ultimately felt ostracized from the White students in the class.

### **Cultural Studies Approach**

As Reader-Response Theory situates meaning in the transaction between the reader and text within the context of the reader's lived experience, a cultural studies approach goes further and places literature within a social context that is cultural, economic, and political (Carey-Webb, 2001; Latrobe & Drury, 2009). According to Carey-Webb (2001), "Cultural studies emphasize the integration of literary works, even the most canonical, with the whole range of cultural expression," (p. 8). When doing a cultural analysis, students may evaluate the social context of both the social text, the reader's role, the author, and text itself (Latrobe & Drury, 2009). Teachers incorporating a cultural studies approach to teaching literature generally organize the curriculum thematically, taking into consideration culture, social structures, and historical circumstances surrounding texts (Carey-Webb, 2001). Through mixing genres and including interdisciplinary texts, a cultural studies approach fosters critical thinking and activism

because it requires readers to evaluate how they see themselves as well as others in society. Furthermore, it calls us to evaluate hegemonic groups and those who are placed in the outer boundaries of society.

Since cultural studies are interested in ethical, moral, and social questions, it acts as an umbrella term that goes beyond multiculturalism (Carey-Webb, 2001). Advocates of a cultural studies approach also incorporate feminism, gender studies, social class, popular culture, and social change. This helps students to realize that they live within broader social, economic, and political contexts, and it is important for them to address literature in the same manner.

Working with data from a study investigating middle school students' interpretations of children's books, Books and Browne (2012) developed a grounded theoretical model for incorporating cultural studies into reader-response forms of instruction. The development of this model acknowledges the limitations that Reader-Response Theory often poses as students are grappling with typical cultural influences, such as gender, values, and personal experiences, instead of delving deeper into what the researchers call "homeplace cultural positions" (p. 78). Descriptors include ethnic group, community, supporting cultural positions, family, and peers. The researchers posit that attending to these descriptors and their cultural situated theory affords students the opportunity to explore "a range of cultural positions factors into students' meaning making compels us, we argue, to mint texts more carefully for cultural milieu as well as find acceptance with a broader range of literary interpretations" (p. 83).

### **Similar Practical Studies on Literature Instruction**

Agee (2000b) explored five teachers' effective literature instruction. Throughout the course of the study, the research conducted interviews, observations, and videotaped classroom sessions. The results showed a disparity between what the teachers knew to be good literature instruction as it was indicated in the strategies or activities they used in their classes.

Furthermore, the teachers who were most effective in literature instruction were found to be more likely to ask for student feedback as well as reflect on it critically. Teachers who were least effective were found to be inflexible in their literature instruction and did not seek out student feedback or chose to ignore it.

Expanding on his previous study, Agee (2000a) evaluated two in-service secondary English teachers and the aspects that molded their instructional practices, including graduate work that emphasized new literacy theory. The researcher focused on the tensions the participants felt after completing a progressive graduate program and what they were experiencing in the classroom. The results indicate that the teachers' main source of tension resulted from conflict between the theory they learned as part of their graduate programs and what they were able to implement into practice. The teachers faced much pressure from administrators as well as community expectations in regards to the communities' values, the socio-cultural contexts of the school, and their students' needs. Agee implies that when teacher educators do not consider the contexts and situations in which their graduate students are teaching, progressive programs can be more limiting than giving their graduate students avenues for growth.

McCutcheon and Milner (2002) also constructed a case around an exceptional secondary English teacher. Because of the participant's past success in the classroom, the researchers analyzed how he planned his literature course on British literature and compared his planning practices to empirical research on teacher planning. Means of data collection included interviews and classroom observations. The researchers found that the participant utilized long-term, proactive planning in which he made year-long pacing guides as opposed to creating weekly or daily lesson plans. He selected literature based on three criteria: (1) his general attitude toward the text, (2) its thematic connections to other selected literature, and (3) its availability on the Web.

The results indicate that this teacher's planning practices deviate from what the research indicates the method most teachers use to plan for instruction. The researchers posit that there is more research needed on how contemporary teachers design and carry out literature instruction.

### **Summary**

Research reveals that interest is both cognitive and emotional (Schraw & Lehman, 2001) and can be represented in both individual and situational valences (Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Zahorik, 1996). Situational interest is often short-lived and is used while initiating student learning through hands-on activities, group work, and multi-genre texts (Mitchell, 1993). Teachers might utilize situational interest to pique student interest by creating a specific context for learning. However, for interest to develop and become individual interest, students have to recognize the value and meaning of learning about a specific topic (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 1991; Schraw, et al., 2001; Zahorik, 1996). They have to delve deeper into texts and interact with their peers so learning can become an intrinsically motivated process.

Students also need the freedom to act on individual interest and self-select texts or topics that they wish to engage with on a deeper level (Guthrie, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011). Using a model like CORI (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996) in the classroom is one way to give students the opportunity to engage with a conceptual topic, self-select materials, have teacher support, synthesize information, and communicate with peers. As other research has indicated, autonomy in reading is central to increasing students' motivation for reading, but teachers also have to create class activities that support the learning process in interesting, strategic ways (Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011). Attending to literature instruction in this way is one way for high school English teachers to increase students' intrinsic motivation.

Literature itself holds many possibilities. It can offer readers a temporal escape from reality. It can take readers to places they have never been, and it can put readers into contact

with people and situations unlike that of their everyday lives. In her book *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt (1995) says that, "...literature makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers. And always we seek some close contact with a mind uttering its sense of life" (p. 6). Examining, or what Rosenblatt calls experiencing transactions with texts, the human condition and the interconnectedness of the human experience becomes possible through reading literature, and, furthermore, it is impossible to read a novel, a poem, or a dramatic work without encountering ethics within a social context. Reading literature can push students to begin to answer moral questions of right or wrong while helping the students develop their own moral codes. Most importantly, if we want students to be prepared for the real world, teachers need to restructure literature instruction so that it attends to activating students' interests, actively engaging students with various texts, and increasing students' intrinsic motivation, and further research is needed to investigate how high school English teachers are currently attending to those constructs through their literature instruction.

This chapter has presented a theoretical context for this proposed study by reviewing the development of the general concept of interest during the past 30 years as well as reading engagement and motivation. Then, a section on Literature Instruction presented theoretical and empirical research on New Criticism, Reader-Response Theory, and a cultural studies approach to literary analysis. The chapter then concluded with a review of studies that are similar to what this study investigated.

CHAPTER III:  
METHODOLOGY

**Overview**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology for this multiple case study on high school English teachers' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation as well as how those constructs were utilized during literature instruction. The beginning section of this chapter consists of an overview of the utility of qualitative research and why it is the best methodology for this study. Next, the chapter presents an overview of case study research design, and more specifically multiple case study methodology. Then, the boundaries of the multiple case study, participants, and settings will be described. Finally, qualitative methods of data collection—interviews and observations—will be examined as well as methods of data analysis. The final sections will address how trustworthiness was adopted throughout this multiple case study, and then the chapter will conclude with a summary of the methodology.

**Qualitative Research**

The purpose of qualitative research, on a basic level, is to investigate a phenomenon and to try and make sense of it (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers are intrigued by lived experience and social interactions, and they are, "...interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative researchers go beyond a mere understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and seek deeper interpretations of the meaning people attribute to their lived experiences. In seeking to understand the nature of lived experience or phenomenon and acknowledging it cannot be separated from its context (Creswell,

2007), qualitative research takes place in natural settings, triangulates multiple sources of data, acknowledges context, and is interpreted through thick description (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research methods were best utilized here because this study sought to interpret the complex ways in which two high school English teachers' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation impacted their literature instruction practices, and it is within this intersection—between the constructs and enactments of teachers within their classrooms—that was the focus of this study. Through purposeful, detailed data collection and analysis, the reader will find an in-depth analysis of this bounded system. Before the particulars of this study are detailed, however, an exploration of the affordances of a case study design within qualitative research is needed.

### **Case Study Research**

Merriam (2009) cites four characteristics of case study research. First, it is particularistic in that the research takes place within a bounded system, whether that is a phenomenon, context, person, event, etc. Second, it is descriptive, where researchers offer a thick description of the case being studied. Third, case study means to be heuristic to enhance the reader's understanding of the unit of analysis. Finally, it is inductive in its very nature, with findings emerging from data collection. While qualitative researchers agree, like Merriam (2009), that a case study is an investigation of a phenomenon within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009), there is some disagreement in the ways in which case studies should be utilized as qualitative research (Barone, 2004; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). For example, Yin (2009) views case study design as a method of qualitative research, where the researcher enters a naturalistic setting with a predetermined plan and research design before entering the field. While Yin (2009) acknowledges the reciprocal process among data collection, analysis, and sharing findings

with participants, the researcher still enters the context with formed research questions, unit of analysis, and data collection protocol. However, Merriam (2009) defines case study as an orientation into qualitative research. Unlike Yin (2009), Merriam (2009) suggests researchers develop units of analysis and research questions *after* entering the field of study. This approach to case study research might be helpful for researchers who have an area of research interest but no research question(s). For the purposes of this case study, the researcher utilized Yin's (2009) approach to case study as the research questions and methods of data collection had been predetermined before entering the research setting.

Even though case study research employs triangulation of data and thick description of emerged findings, some have questioned the legitimacy of case study research (Andrade, 2009; Gerring, 2004). At its very core, case studies are bounded within a given context, which causes critics to beg the question of case study's generalizability to other settings (Gerring, 2004). This might be troubling for researchers seeking empirical, scientific-based research, or for researchers seeking to generate theory or test hypotheses (Andrade, 2009). However, if researchers acknowledge that the goal of case study research is practical knowledge, or what Thomas (2010) calls *phronesis*, and not theory, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation as opposed to knowledge that can be generalized across contexts, generate theory, or test hypotheses.

This study honored this type of practical knowledge through the use of multiple case studies. The phenomenon investigated during this study was how two high school English teachers planned and carried out literature instruction while attending to students' interests, to issues of reading engagement, and to the development of motivation. The settings in which these teachers carried out literature instruction cannot be separated from their instructional practices. The decisions they made regarding literature instruction were not only a result of their own

teacher education preparation and their beliefs about teaching, but also the educational climate, individual school settings, and course goals that encompassed their individual classrooms. Therefore, because this investigated phenomenon was bounded within separate school contexts, or units of analysis, multiple case study research best fit the methodology necessary to accurately investigate and describe the findings of this study.

A multiple case study is often employed when qualitative researchers wish to investigate numerous cases to study a phenomenon in multiple contexts (Barone, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). By looking across multiple cases, the researcher can offer readers a more in-depth perspective into the phenomenon being investigated as well as create a compelling argument that points to the significance of the study (Barone, 2004). Merriam (2009) further notes that multiple case studies often include more compelling interpretations as similarities and differences across cases become more explicit to the researcher and the reader alike. Most importantly, utilizing multiple cases is a strategy researchers may employ to strengthen the external validity of the findings (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

### **Boundaries**

This multiple case study sought to investigate a central issue through multiple cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009), and the boundaries pertaining to this study were as follows: participants, setting, and time. The multiple case study included two participants who are high school English teachers. The locations of data collection took place at public high schools in the state of Alabama. Finally, this multiple case study was bounded within two months, April and May.

### **Participants**

The participants were selected through purposeful sampling, when, "...the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of

the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). For this study, the two participants were selected because of their abilities to add a great deal to the purpose of this study, investigating how their conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation affected their literature instruction. Further, these participants represent what Merriam (2009) calls a convenient sample because they were selected based on their willingness to participate within the given parameters of this study. Furthermore, only two participants were included in this study as access to local schools was limited. The participants selected were teachers who had a previous working relationship with the researcher from a summer writing workshop at a local university. Because of these previous relationships, the researcher was able to determine to what extent the participants would be able to articulate their own beliefs about teaching. With this in mind, these participants represent a sample of convenience. Given that samples of convenience are often criticized (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009), basing participant selection on participants’ willingness to participate in this study was paramount because the methods of data collection asked teachers to be reflective on their own thinking about interest, reading engagement, and motivation as well as their own teaching practices. Participants were also selected based on having completed at least three years of teaching in order to give them the capability to thoughtfully reflect on their own instructional practices, and participants must teach literature on a consistent basis. After each participant agreed to participate, an approved Institutional Review Board letter of consent was signed (Appendix A). The following is a description of each participant:

### **Tennyson**

Tennyson, a Caucasian female, has been teaching English for 24 years in rural middle and high schools in a Southeastern state. She had been in her current position at Darcy High School for 12 years. Her teacher education training consisted of a bachelor’s and master’s degree at a

university in the Southeastern United States, and she has also completed some post-graduate work in English as well. In 2000, Tennyson became a National Board Certified teacher, and she achieved recertification in 2010. Her teaching schedule consisted of one Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition class, one Advance Placement U.S. History class, and one senior level inclusion class. As part of her qualifications to become an AP instructor, she participated in an Advanced Placement Summer Institute at a local university, which is conducted by College Board approved facilitators. The AP Summer Institute consists of weekly workshops that help teachers conceptualize the purpose of AP courses, methods of organizing syllabi, and methods of carrying out instruction that help students perform well on the AP Exam. This training widely influenced the ways in which she taught her AP English literature class, which was the class observed during this study.

### **O'Connor**

O'Connor, an African American female, had been teaching at her current position at Finch High School for 14 years. Prior to becoming a teacher, she completed a bachelor's degree in English at a small public Historically Black College or University in a Southeastern state. Then, she completed a certification program at a university in the same community. O'Connor taught both regular and advanced English 11 courses as well as Advanced Placement English Literature and Language courses. Much like Tennyson, O'Connor had also participated in the AP Summer Institutes for both the AP English Literature and AP English Language courses, and this training had also influenced the ways in which she planned for and implemented instruction. Apart from her classroom duties, she also sponsored the cheerleaders, sponsored the prom, served as the junior class sponsor, and serves on the media advisory committee.

## Settings

The two settings for this study were located within the same community in Alabama. They are part of different school systems, yet they are each located a few miles apart from one another. Darcy High School is a part of a county school system that serves 33 different schools. Approximately 1,847 students attend Darcy (51% male, 49% female). Four groups represent the racial makeup of the school: 63% White, 34% Black, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. Furthermore, approximately 42% of students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. During the 2011-2012 school year, Darcy High School did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) because only 18 of 20 goals were met, moving Darcy into its fourth year of school improvement. Currently, the graduate rate is 85%, which is 5% below the state's goal.

While in the same community, Finch High School is somewhat different from Darcy High School. The school population is approximately 921 (51% female, 49% male), with the racial makeup of the school being 75% Black, 20% White, 4% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Almost 50% of the school population participates in the free or reduced school lunch program. Also in its fourth year of school improvement, Finch did not make AYP for the 2011-2012 school year, only meeting 10 of its 16 goals. The graduate rate of Finch is approximately 84%, which is still below the state's graduation rate goal.

Within a larger educational setting and sociocultural framework, both schools operate within an Advanced Placement (AP) culture. Students had the opportunity to take various AP courses, which both participants teach one or both AP English Language and/or Literature courses, in hopes of gaining credit for college classes while they are still in high school. The pressure for these two participants to produce students within their schools that are capable of performing well on the AP Exams offered at the end of each academic year is a key element for

understanding the culture of the two schools in relation to the choices both participants made regarding text selection and implementation of instruction.

### Methods of Data Collection

For each participant, a unit of literature instruction was chosen for data collection purposes. The decision on which unit to select was determined collaboratively, working within the time constraints of the participants as well as the participants' level of comfortability of the literature unit selected. The timeline for data collection is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Collection Timeline

| Week      | Method of Data Collection            | Participant             | Literature Unit   |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Week 1    | Pre-Unit Interview                   | Tennyson                |   |
| Weeks 2-4 | Informal Interviews and Observations | Tennyson; 5 days a week | <i>Brave New World</i> by Aldous Huxley                       |
| Week 5    | Pre-Unit Interview                   | O'Connor                |   |
| Week 6-8  | Informal Interviews and Observations | O'Connor; 5 days a week | Thematic unit on protest songs from the Civil Rights Movement |

During the course of the literature units, the researcher utilized a variety of qualitative methods of data collection because they provided, "...a wide array of procedures as the researcher builds an in-depth picture of the case" (Creswell, 2007, p. 132). The methods of data collection the researcher incorporated in this study were interviews and observations.

### Interviews

The interviews that were conducted during this study were a combination of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994) and informal, unstructured conversations. Each interview took place at the participants' individual school sites and lasted 30 minutes to an

hour during a time that was convenient for each participant (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). The researcher audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews verbatim. The semi-structured format of these interviews allowed the researcher to adapt and expand interview questions appropriately for each participant while the interview was taking place (Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994). Furthermore, this also encouraged participants to elaborate their responses through narratives about their own learning, teaching experiences, and reflections, paying special attention to the ways in which their literature instruction is influenced by interest, reading engagement, and motivation. A representation of topics included in informal and formal interviews is located in Table 2.

Table 2

Informal and Formal Interview Topics

| Interview Type  | Topics   |
|---|--|
| Pre-Unit Formal Interview                                 | Teaching Background<br>Interest<br>Reading Engagement<br>Motivation<br>Literature Instructional Practices  |
| Informal Interviews<br>(before and/or after observations) | Lesson Plan Outline<br>Expectations of Student Performance<br>Levels of Students' Interest, Engagement,<br>and/or Motivation during Lesson<br>Preview of Next Day's Lesson |

**Pre-unit interviews.** The pre-unit interviews (n=2) occurred before any observations began. The purpose of these interviews was to acquire background information on each participant, including descriptions of teacher education preparation and descriptions of each participant's teaching philosophy. Other questions addressed their own conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation, and their beliefs about literature instruction. These

initial, semi-structured interviews served as a basis of comparison for observations. A complete interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

**Informal interviews.** Informal, unstructured conversations occurred before and after all observations and took place in each participant's classroom. These conversations addressed what took place during class, what changes were made during instruction, or what thoughts they had about what happened during class. While these conversations did not have an official time and were not always be recorded due to the inevitable flexibility involved, audio-recordings were included whenever possible. However, if an informal interview occurred while the researcher was not recording, jottings and fieldnotes were included in the researcher's analytic memos.

### **Observations**

The purpose of the observations were to observe each participant's teaching during the literature units within the same class, including teaching strategies, activities, resources, etc. Furthermore, the researcher used observations to seek instances of participants' conceptualizations interest, reader engagement, and motivation, as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) note, "The object of participation is ultimately to get close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experiences and activities *mean to them*" (p. 12). More specifically, the researcher observed whether participants' conceptualizations are accurately re-presented in their instructional practices. The observation protocol the researcher used is included in Appendix F.

Observations were video recorded, and the schedules were decided collaboratively between the researcher and participants, depending on the participants' teaching schedules and the schools' schedules. Observations took place several days (n=5) a week during the literature unit, which included a three-week observation period for each participant.

**Fieldnotes and analytic memos.** Extensive fieldnotes were taken during observations, emerging first from jottings, based on the observation protocol (see Appendix C), and described

in greater detail through analytic memos (Emerson, et al., 1995). While jottings took place during observations, analytic memos took place off-site. The analytic memos served three purposes. First, analytic memos were a way to document in greater detail what was observed, turning jottings into detailed fieldnotes. Second, memos offered a way to record meaning that emerged from observations and informal conversations. Finally, analytic memos were a way for the researcher to record questions that arose from observations that would be included in informal interviews.

### **Complementary Nature of Data Collection Methods**

The aim of this multiple case study was to investigate the phenomenon of two high school English teachers' literature instructional practices while attending to interest, reading engagement, and motivation. To accomplish this, multiple forms of data collection (interviews and observations) were needed to adequately represent the unit of analysis. With this in mind, interviews and observations were conducted to achieve two goals: 1) to form initial understandings of the participants' beliefs and conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation, and 2) to observe how those constructs were represented in their literature instructional practices. Furthermore, informal interviews were used to member check developing understandings of codes emerging from analytic memos. In this way, the findings of this study (presented in Chapter IV) represent naturalistic representations of findings and interpretations that emerged from the data collection implemented. The following section discusses in greater detail how the data were analyzed.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative analysis occurs as researchers collect, organize, and interpret emerged findings during data collection, as Creswell (2007) notes, "The process of data collection, analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often

go on simultaneously in the research project” (p. 150). This simultaneous analysis was reflected in what is referred to as constant-comparative analysis (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) through ethnographic methods of coding, including open and focused coding (Emerson, et al., 1995). The coding process took place within the separate cases in an effort to retain the individuality of the participants and cases.

Initially, coding took place after the pre-unit interviews had been transcribed and as observations began. The codes that emerged from these interviews provided a background and basis for future observation protocols and informal interviews. While observing participants, the researcher was consciously aware of her own biases and beliefs about literature instruction in an effort to be aware of how these biases could potentially influence what was being observed as well as the interpretation of the data. As observations continued, coding continuously occurred and these emergent codes and initial interpretations were noted. The researcher’s analytic memos documented these emerging codes as well as further documented concerns regarding researcher biases. Furthermore, the analytic memos also served as a place to record questions the researcher wished to address during subsequent conversations.

Audio and video recordings of informal interviews and observations were transcribed and coded as data was continuously collected; however, the analysis of the data was reciprocal in nature. The researcher revisited pre-unit interviews, informal interviews, observations, and analytic memos to constantly compare emerging codes. In this manner, the researcher became aware of how emergent codes began to overlap and ways that meanings, or focused codes (Emerson, et al., 1995), appeared.

After all data had been collected, transcribed, and member checked, a second round of coding occurred. This second round of coding allowed the researcher to revisit the research questions, related literature, and participants’ pre-unit interviews, and determine focused codes

that emerged from open codes. Throughout open coding, 36 codes emerged from the data; then, open codes were organized according to themes and five focused codes were identified as being most significant to this research study; three subcodes are also included under one focused code. The focused codes are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Focused Codes and Subcodes Organization

---

|  |
|--|
| Selecting Literature and Setting a Purpose for Reading |
| Planning for Instruction                               |
| Strategic Teaching                                     |
| Small and Whole Group Discussions                      |
| Student Generated Questions                            |
| Extension Activities                                   |
| Role of Literary Criticism                             |
| Engaging Students in Reading                           |

---

This multiple case study offers readers in-depth interpretations and “naturalistic generalizations” (Creswell, 2007) of the participants’ conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation and how those constructs impacted their literature instruction practices. The following section describes how trustworthiness was addressed to validate the findings.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was addressed through the researcher’s positionality (discussed in Chapter I), triangulation of data, member checking, and thick description. The researcher has included a statement of positionality to make biases and assumptions transparent to the reader in an effort to communicate the ways in which these biases and assumptions influenced data analysis. Data was triangulated to establish internal validity (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) between interviews and observations. External validity

(Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) was addressed through member checking transcripts and emergent findings throughout the course of the study. Participants had the opportunity to modify statements to ensure transcripts accurately reflected participants' beliefs. Finally, thick description provides (within Chapter IV) in-depth presentation of individual cases and allows the reader to make generalizations across cases.

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology utilized within this multiple case study. An overview of qualitative research was provided as well as an overview of case study research. Next, a description of the boundaries surrounding this study, participants, and settings provided the context for this study. The chapter also presented a description of data collection (interviews and observations) as well as its methods of data analysis. Finally, the chapter concluded with the researcher's construction of trustworthiness through internal and external validity.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

#### **Overview**

In this chapter, case studies have been constructed for each of the two participants. Cases were constructed through two methods of data collection: interviews and observations. Extensive coding was utilized to understand the connection between these two high school English teachers' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation to their literature instructional practices. Five major focused codes emerged from the data: 1) Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading, 2) Planning for Instruction, 3) Strategic Teaching, 4) Role of Literary Criticism, and 5) Engaging Students in Reading. The results in each case study are organized to address the two research questions in this study through the five major themes. First, two focused codes, Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading as well as Planning for Instruction, are used to answer the first research question. Next, the three remaining focused codes, Strategic Teaching, Role of Literary Criticism, and Engaging Students in Reading, are utilized to answer the second research question. Furthermore, within each case, brief descriptions of the participants' classrooms as well as the literature units observed are described first to give the reader a sense of what the teachers' classrooms and teaching styles are like. This chapter concludes with a cross case analysis through a discussion of the following themes that emerged across the two cases: 1) The Constraints and Freedoms of the Educational Climate, 2) The Influence of Teacher Education Training on Teaching Methodologies, 3) How Teaching to One's Strengths Affects Instructional Planning and Implementation, 4) The Representation of Situational and Individual Interest during in and out of

Class Activities, and 5) The Role That Student Autonomy and Teacher Support Plays in Students' Engagement with Texts and Motivation to Read.

### Tennyson

#### Classroom Setting

Tennyson's classroom showed the signs of a teacher who wants to make the learning environment comfortable for students. In her 24<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, she had collected many artifacts displayed in her room. She had several bookcases filled with her own personal books as well as multiple class sets of texts she used in her literature classes. To an informed observer, one can tell that the British Romantics were her favorite. She arranged the desks so that students can easily see the white board, where she posted the class schedule for the unit. Her desk was placed in the back of the classroom, but she has a projector that faces the white board where she could show a video or presentation. Her classroom was inviting, which also became apparent during the literature unit observed during this study.

During the three-week observation period, Tennyson's two Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition (AP) classes discussed Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The demographic information for both classes is represented in Table 4.

Table 4

Demographics of Students Observed in Tennyson's Classroom

| Class         | Males | Racial Makeup | Females | Racial Makeup                  |
|---------------|-------|---------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| First Period  | 5     | All White     | 7       | 5 White<br>2 African American  |
| Second Period | 3     | All White     | 12      | 11 White<br>1 African American |

Tennyson's expectations for her AP students were high, and she structured her class as a college classroom might be structured. Before coming to class, her students were to have completed reading the entire novel. She organized her discussions through Huxley's motivation to write the novel as well as the following themes that she identified within the text: technology, cloning, sexual promiscuity in marriage, and religion. While *Brave New World* was the focus of this literature unit, her students also watched a film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* during the last 15 to 20 minutes of class during the period of observation. During the initial interview and other conversations before or after observations, she also discussed a literature unit on Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and other pieces of poetry.

**Question One: How do two high school English teachers  
conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation?**

**Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading**

In Tennyson's AP course, students read a wide variety of college level texts, including Shakespeare, Milton, Morrison, Faulkner, and many other canonized authors. Her choices, though largely based on preparing students for the AP exam students take every year in May, were to help students understand difficult texts. This was evident in the initial interview when she discussed her own college experience, and she identified one of her most influential professors. In one of the course assignments, the professor had students construct a world literature syllabus, providing rationales for their literary selections. This professor's influence carried over into Tennyson's own literature instructional practice.

“...I'm teaching AP, and he really had me thinking in terms of, you're teaching this course to college students. It wasn't just about reading literature, which we do in most English courses. It's just about understanding literature.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

For Tennyson, literature selections should help students understand literature on a deeper level and gain an appreciation for them, regardless of whether students were interested in a text or motivated to read it.

Tennyson's students read texts together as a group, but she also had students self-select pieces of literature from an AP reading list she provides to students. The selections students made were largely based on preparing students for the AP exam, but she also provided students opportunities to change books should they begin reading and find they were not interested or engaged with the text.

“When I give the list, I try and tell them a little bit about all of the ones on it that I've read that I know anything about. And like, if I come up with something, I see if anybody else has. If all else fails, I say take the book. Read a couple chapters as quickly as possible three or four chapters, and if you hate it, go find another one on the list.”  
(Tennyson, initial interview)

However, students did not find as much freedom while reading texts as a whole group. Like many English teachers, Tennyson decided what the class will read as a group, and if students were uninterested in a particular text, they still had to read it in hopes they may, at the very least for Tennyson, gain an appreciation for it. Another example of this was the students' viewing of *Pride and Prejudice* at the end of class daily. Students did not read Austen's novel as a group, but Tennyson thought it was important for them to become familiar with the text and appreciate its significance to the literary canon, which might motivate students to read the book on their own.

### **Planning for Instruction**

Tennyson's method of planning for instruction was linear in that she organized her literature units chronologically, including literature that might appear on the AP exam or on the college level. Another one of her college professors had also influenced her methodical planning practices. In her English pedagogy training, Tennyson's English methods professor had students

plan an entire academic year's worth of instruction, which Tennyson found extremely useful.

This is an activity she felt pre-service teachers need to practice as well.

“And one of the things that can happen with them too is they [pre-service teachers] get caught up, if they haven't planned it all out, they get caught up in, oh, this unit is taking longer than I thought, and that's good because they're doing well. That's fantastic, but that means something else has got to go. So, what I normally tell my interns is, you have to make that decision. Do I move them along? Do we take more time? If you really think their understanding is going to be improved by taking more time, realize that later on, something else has to go.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

She placed more emphasis on the content to be covered as opposed to responding to students' interest or motivation in reading a text. For Tennyson, if teachers continually respond to students' interests, engagement in reading, or motivation, another piece of literature has to be sacrificed.

This was also evident during the *Brave New World* unit. Tennyson's students were to have completed reading the entire novel before they began talking about it in class as a whole group, and they had approximately two weeks to complete the reading. She then designated a two-week period for students to discuss themes in Huxley's novel. At the end of the two-week period, students took a test on the book. During the observation period, several students were absent for one day due to a school activity. Instead of prolonging the discussion period, Tennyson stuck to her instruction schedule, even though most of the class had missed a discussion they would be tested on later.

### **Question Two: How Are Those Conceptualizations Enacted in Their Literature Instruction?**

While Tennyson's selection of literature and planning for instruction was focused on what the text had to offer, she balanced teacher-centered and student-centered instruction within her literature instruction. She utilized a variety of teaching strategies during the three-week observation period, and they are each presented in the following section.

## Strategic Teaching

**Student Generated Questions.** At the beginning of the *Brave New World Unit*, Tennyson asked students to write down any questions they had about the reading on a slip of paper, and she kept the students' identities private as she navigated through each question. Knowing that some students might not have finished the reading, or even began reading, she told students that if they did not have a text related question that was fine. One student, for example, asked the following: what is the meaning of life? She adopted this strategy after attending an AP Summer Institute, and she used it to validate students' thinking about a text.

“Everybody has to write something, and everybody has to ask a question even if you feel like you understood it all and all you want to do is ask me how I’m doing... I will answer every single question, and we will use those as discussion. Because somebody might ask why Lady Macbeth looks like she’s washing her hands at this point, and I’ll be like okay, does anybody feel like you understand that. They’ve been able to ask this question and nobody knows who asked it. But the question gets asked.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

She also believed that this strategy helped students who might not be comfortable participating openly in class discussions might be more apt to participate if he or she was aware the class did not know who asked the question. This let her know whether or not a student is engaged in reading.

“But I can tell they’re engaged, partly, because they have a question. Obviously you can be engaged and have no questions whatsoever, but if they weren’t somewhat engaged with it, they wouldn’t even care to ask a question.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

Tennyson used these questions for two purposes: 1) to assess what students knew about the text and 2) to open up discussion. If students were able to ask her thoughtful, text-centered questions, she knew they had at least a basic comprehension of the reading. Conversely, should students ask a question that represented a misinterpretation of the text, she might use this opportunity to let other students address the issue or address it herself. For example, during the first discussion on *Brave New World*, one student asked a question that might easily be answered

had he read the book. She then posed the question to the rest of the class, who answered his question.

**Small and Whole Group Discussion.** Tennyson utilized both small and whole group discussions in different ways, which were both apparent during the *Brave New World* unit. She used small group discussions to help students validate their initial thoughts about a text as well as provide students with topics to discuss within their groups.

“I like to put them in groups sometimes and let them assess things. The hope is that they can get their idea validated, and when we go back to full group, that they’ll share. Sometimes they won’t do it.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

Tennyson’s students participated in a JIGSAW activity during the *Brave New World Unit*. At the beginning of the class, she wrote down the following four themes on the board: technology, cloning, sexual promiscuity in marriage, and religion. After she divided the class into four small groups, she assigned each group one of the themes and asked them to find examples of how Huxley addresses their assigned theme in the text. She allowed students 15 to 20 minutes to discuss, and then she broke up each of the groups into new groups. The second round of groupings contained one student from each of the original groups. Then, they shared what their original groups had discussed. In this way, Tennyson allowed students to explore the meaning they discovered in the text and to share their knowledge with each other.

On other days, Tennyson facilitated large group discussions by posing open-ended questions to the class. For example, she read an article to the class regarding baby cloning on the first discussion day. Then, she posed the following question: at what point do we draw the line between science and morality? Students then participated in a 20 minute discussion of the article’s topic in relation to *Brave New World*. Other than the JIGSAW small group activity, Tennyson mainly used whole group discussion to guide her literature instruction.

**Extension Activities.** During the initial interview, Tennyson explicitly stated that she did not use projects or presentations in her classroom. For her, they provided little depth, and most students spend time completing tasks that are menial. Furthermore, it reminded her of her own experience participating in creative extension activities.

“My own horror at projects comes out [when contemplating using projects or presentations in her own classroom]. I was the kid who if they gave me a choice between a project and a paper, I did the paper. And I probably should.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

Another rationalization for not utilizing projects or presentations is an issue of scheduling. Her classes were organized on block scheduling, which she felt left little time to do extra things. The major concern was leaving a text out of her syllabus in order to make room for extension activities. Further, she also pointed out that many of her AP students were enrolled in multiple AP classes, and she wanted to make sure their workload was not too heavy.

### **Role of Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism was represented in three different ways in Tennyson’s classroom: New Criticism, Historical Criticism, and Reader Response Theory. At the beginning of the year, she wanted students to understand the importance of words and the ways in which word meanings could alter a reader’s understanding of a text.

“I usually start off the school year by talking to them about words and the importance of words. One of my favorite lines from any literature is from *Hamlet* when he’s asked, what are you reading. And he says, ‘words, words, words’... And we talk about times that they’ve seen the power of words. What words can get them and how words can hurt. Just the greatness of certain kinds of words and hope that that’s going to work.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

In the discussions on *Brave New World*, Tennyson used the power of words to address the differences among the different social classes in the text. She also asked students to analyze the structure of the text, paying attention to how Huxley develops the plot. She also spent a great deal of time discussed characters and character motivation within the text.

Historical Criticism, for Tennyson, was an essential component of literature instruction. She felt that students needed to understand the context of both the author and history surrounding a text. For example, when a student intern was covering Shelley's "West Wind," one of the students misinterpreted the text, asserting a religious theme within the poem. Another student commented that Shelley was an atheist, making a Biblical perspective an inappropriate analysis of the text. While discussing *Brave New World*, Tennyson also utilized Historical Criticism to have a whole group discussion with students about Huxley's motivation to write the book. Students were able to recognize how Huxley's own political views, the modernization of industry, as well as the influence of other dystopian works influenced his book. This type of analysis also helped students discuss why *Brave New World* continues to be a meaningful text for contemporary readers.

While Tennyson utilized New Criticism and Historical Criticism frequently during the *Brave New World* unit, she used both as a bridge to Reader Response Theory. For example, when she led a discussion on sexual promiscuity in marriage, she used this as an opportunity to have an open-ended discussion with students about the societal expectations placed on marriage in the United States. During the interview, Tennyson discussed how she used issues, such as gender roles or marriage in her *A Doll's House* unit, to get an emotional response and to challenge students' opinions.

"Most of them enjoyed *A Doll's House*. I think one of the things they liked about *A Doll's House* is it aggravated them so badly, which is fine. They became so horrified by some of the characters, but they were engaged." (Tennyson, initial interview)

For her, giving students opportunities to read texts they can respond to, either by way of personal experience or by relating the reading to another text, was always one of her goals.

Moreover, when her students responded to poetry, she tried to include poems that would

challenge their thinking in some way. For example, she assigned “Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou, and one her of male students had an eye-opening experience.

“And he said, they’ve [African Americans] always been part of my world, and I never thought once how difficult it would be for them to be Black girls in a majority White atmosphere, and if they ever felt like they had been put upon. If they ever felt like they had been discriminated against, and he was just like, overwhelmed by this concept. It had never occurred to him.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

This male student, according to Tennyson, began looking at himself and others in a new way.

Most importantly, she believed students became more engaged with the poem because it challenged their previously held beliefs about the African American experience.

### **Engaging Students in Reading**

In Tennyson’s AP class, engaging students in the reading process did not always happen during class time because her students completed most of the readings at home. Therefore, it was difficult for her to observe them during the reading process. However, when asked which actions students exhibit during class time that would demonstrate they had engaged in reading, she discussed a variety of actions they might display. For example, students might have a nonverbal response to what is being discussed, which was the case when students read Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* aloud together during class.

“Well for me, I see facial expressions that are intriguing. I love watching their facial expressions. See we read *A Doll’s House* out loud instead of having them read it on their own because I thought it would be more fun. I don’t want to read every play off on your own. I wanted to have the engagement of it.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

She went on to discuss how the students’ facial expressions connected to the personal responses they were having as they read aloud. For instance, one student had a strong, negative response to one of the main characters, Torvald, whenever he patronizes his wife.

“Every once and a while, one of them would stick her finger in her mouth as if she was going to upchuck, so I could definitely tell they were engaged in that and they were not liking him.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

Helping students have a personal response to texts, for Tennyson, was one way to ensure that students became engaged with a text, whether it was a negative or positive response.

Unlike the reader's theatre approach she used in *A Doll's House*, students had already completed reading *Brave New World* before coming to class. This made assessing students' engagement with reading more complex. During the interview process, Tennyson pointed out that engaged students are more motivated to ask questions. Those questions might be to discuss an interesting or shocking or to seek help comprehending a text.

“I love the ones, and God bless them, that are willing to stand up and say I don't get this and please help me. But there aren't that many of them. But I can tell they're engaged, partly, because they have a question. Obviously you can be engaged and have no questions whatsoever, but if they weren't somewhat engaged with it, they wouldn't even care to ask a question.” (Tennyson, initial interview)

During the *Brave New World* unit, implementing a student generated questions technique helped Tennyson to assess how engaged students were with the text. It was also a way to assess whether or not students had completed the reading. If students had no questions about *Brave New World*, she felt like she knew that particular student had not read the book.

## **O'Connor**

### **Classroom Setting**

O'Connor's classroom was an inviting space for her 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. When entering her classroom, her students could see many motivational posters on her walls. A lot of student work was displayed on the walls and in bookcases as well. Her classroom was colorful and warm; it was a place where students could sense that she hopes to inspire and to motivate her students to participate in the learning process.

She arranged her desks in groups of three to four to allow for small group collaboration. Students often worked in groups during her class, and she placed students in groups based on their individual learning needs in that she purposefully placed struggling students with more

advanced students. The groups were also arranged so that students could clearly see the front board, where the projector displayed a poem, video, or assignment. A second white board was also located in the back of the classroom, and students often used that space, according to O'Connor, to record collaborative discussions. The demographic information for the class observed can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Demographics of Students Observed in O'Connor's Classroom

| Class        | Males | Racial Makeup                  | Females | Racial Makeup                  |
|--------------|-------|--------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| First Period | 17    | 2 White<br>15 African American | 14      | 4 White<br>10 African American |

During the three-week observation period of one American literature class, O'Connor implemented a thematic unit on protest songs from the Civil Rights Movement. She and the American history teacher collaborated on the unit so that as their students read about the Civil Rights Movement during their history class, they were also reading poetry, articles, and song lyrics in O'Connor's English class. Both teachers decided on a final product, which was an original protest song written collaboratively within their small groups, that students were to record and present in the library.

**Question One: How do two high school English teachers  
conceptualize interest, reading engagement, and motivation?**

**Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading**

When selecting literature to include in her instruction, O'Connor's choices were determined by which class the texts were to be used. For example, she selected literature for her Advanced Placement courses based on what she felt the students would be interested in reading.

This was important to her because her students would be engaged in close readings of difficult texts.

“I choose things in my AP class that I want them to dive into the text and be able to read it closely. Not only are you just reading it for the words and getting a synopsis of it, but I need you to analyze the language. So I have to give them things that they like.”  
(O’Connor, initial interview)

Should she select something students might not be interested in reading, she felt the analysis process would be more difficult for them. Furthermore, she knew that her AP students would have to take the AP Exam at the end of the year, and she felt pressure to make sure students had engaged enough with texts that they could participate in close readings as well as analytic writings.

Conversely, her literature selection process was different for the American literature class, which was the class observed. She selected literature that she enjoyed without attention to what she felt students might be interested in reading.

“Now my Lit class, my American Lit class, I choose what I want, and I have it grouped already just because you’re the one that has to present it in some form or fashion.”  
(O’Connor, initial interview)

During the observation period, O’Connor had pre-selected Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit,” a news article from the North Carolina Museum of History on the Greensboro Four, as well as a YouTube video on Emmitt Till. While she utilized multi-genre texts in her cross-curricular unit on protest songs in the Civil Rights Movement, the objective was the same. Students’ purpose for reading or viewing each text was for the analysis of literary elements. Students analyzed each text for the following literary elements: setting, speaker, mood, symbols, theme, conflict, and point-of-view. It was important for O’Connor to develop students’ own analytic strategies largely because she knew some of these students would enroll in the senior level AP course, which was initiated during the initial interview.

## **Planning for Instruction**

After O'Connor selected the literature she wanted to present to her American literature class or AP class, she placed the selections into units, which were based on literary movements or genres in American literature. For example, before the unit on protest songs in the Civil Rights Movement, O'Connor had just finished covering a unit on Southern American literature through short stories. She had also covered a unit on American modernism as well as a unit on the Jazz Age, when she assigned students to read F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

For O'Connor, planning for instruction afforded her some freedoms within specific boundaries. Her school system had a curriculum specialist who helped train teachers on strategies they might use to access and to support students' learning in a variety of ways. In O'Connor's instruction, she tried to implement these strategies by having students do much of the thinking as she tried to have a student-centered classroom.

“That's what we're moving towards. That's where the core is. It's all about critical thinking on the kids' part. Now again I do front load but I try to make them, I try to engage them in their reading and let them tell me [what they're thinking].” (O'Connor, initial interview)

While planning for instruction, O'Connor assessed which strategies would best fit the piece of literature she was presenting so that she could engage students in reading. As chair of the English department at her school, she felt like she should put these strategies into practice so she could model them for other teachers. Specific strategies O'Connor utilized in her instruction will be addressed through the themes in the next section.

### **Question Two: How Are Those Conceptualizations Enacted in Their Literature Instruction?**

O'Connor's methods of selecting literature, setting a purpose for reading, and planning for instruction were synthesized into an instructional style that are largely student-centered. She

often did what she calls front-loading material, which is when she provided background information about an author, the historical context, or the text itself; she utilized strategies that she felt would increase students' abilities to engage with a text and, hopefully, motivate them to read independently.

### **Strategic Teaching**

**Student Generated Questions.** O'Connor used student generated questions to assess whether or not students had engaged in reading, and she also felt students who ask questions were also motivated to read.

“Well, when I give a reading assignment outside of class. When my ninth grade class reads, if they did not understand the text, they would definitely ask. And when my they come in, they will have their text annotated. They will have margin notes, question marks if there's something they don't understand.” (O'Connor, initial interview)

During class time, she gave students the time to ask questions at the beginning of class. When students would not or could not ask questions, she encouraged them to dig deeper. The types of questions students asked were also important to her. She expected students to ask questions that reflected deep thinking, or if they did not understand the reading, they could at the very least communicate what it was they did not understand. However, if students had not read, it became easily apparent to her.

“I didn't understand. I don't let it fly. And I say, ‘Well I don't understand either. Because what I don't understand is why are you telling me you don't understand.’ And then I say, ‘Now do you have questions?’ And that's when the questions will start coming out. That's when I'll know that they have at least attempted to read. But usually when you get, I didn't understand, they haven't attempted to read.” (O'Connor, initial interview)

During the observation period, O'Connor encouraged her students to ask questions as they engaged in reading “Strange Fruit” and the Greensboro Four article and viewing the Emmett Till video during class. This was one way for her to check students' understanding of the texts;

additionally, she could monitor how students were engaging with each text so she could manage her instruction to help support struggling students.

**Small and Whole Group Discussions.** The professional development training O'Connor received from the school system's curriculum specialist included several strategies that employ both small and whole group discussions. During the unit on protest songs from the Civil Rights Movement, students participated in small group discussions almost on a daily basis. Students responded to writing prompts at the beginning of each class, and then students shared their thoughts with the small group. On another day, students analyzed the song lyrics to "Strange Fruit" by paying attention to setting, speaker, mood, symbols, theme, conflict, and point-of-view. After each group held a discussion of the literary elements found in the song's lyrics, the discussion turned to a large group discussion. For O'Connor, this was an opportunity for students to develop their own ideas and opinions about a text.

Another whole group discussion strategy O'Connor used in her literature instruction was called chalk talk. During the interview, she described how students participated in a collaborative discussion without talking. Students then collaboratively created a mind map on the white board, demonstrating their understanding of a topic or to explore controversial topics in a safe environment.

"We did chalk talk, and I found out what she was really referring to. You let the board do the talking. You write your comments and we discuss the board. I was explaining to them that, you know, chalk talk was supposed to be a discussion without talking. Just based upon what another student said, you draw your arrow and you write whatever it is you want to say about that person's comment." (O'Connor, initial interview)

With strategies like chalk talk, students were able to share ideas and engage with classmates to reach a common understanding.

**Extension Activities.** In O'Connor's classroom, students and visitors could see a variety of student work displayed on the walls and in bookcases. One might see poster projects students

completed after reading *The Great Gatsby* or a three-dimensional replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. During her interview, O'Connor talked about how important it was for her to create activities or projects for students to complete because it was one way she might be able to use students' interests, to motivate them to read, and, further, to engage with texts. At the beginning of the school year, her students filled out an interest inventory sheet that lets her know what her students' interests were. She then used that information to develop extension activities that would give students an opportunity to utilize their talents. For example, she discussed one student in her class that loves to sing, so she created an activity where that student could sing and show what she had learned about the reading.

“A lot of students are shy to and some students they don't mind getting up rapping a song or singing in the choir. So you are conscientious of that. Like I know [student], she loves to sing. So if there is something dealing with music she's there. So if plays a big role especially on assigning those type of assignments.” (O'Connor, initial interview)

By allowing her students to use their interests and talents in her classroom, O'Connor felt her students knew that she cared about their learning, and she wanted them to do well.

During the protest song unit, O'Connor attended to students' interests in the extension activity she planned for students to complete. In their small groups, students decided to address one civil rights issue either at school or in the real world they wanted to protest. She then asked students to write a new protest song, mimicking the style of “Strange Fruit” and using the types of figurative language they had analyzed. After students wrote their song, she gave them time in class to record it. Students were also asked to design an album cover that might symbolically represent their protest song. Each student in the group had a different role, or several students worked together on the song lyrics while others worked on the album cover. When each group had finished, they presented their songs and album covers to the class.

## **Role of Literary Criticism**

O'Connor used a variety of literary criticism in her instruction and each for different purposes. She used Reader Response Theory to get students interested in the text they would be reading or are already engaged in reading. At the beginning of the protest song unit, she asked students to brainstorm reasons songwriters had used songs to protest societal issues in the past. She then had them listen to a Chris Brown and Rihanna song, which she knew students could relate to easily. After students had a chance to talk in their small groups, she led a whole group discussion on how students felt about the song. This was one way she used students' own thoughts and feelings as an introduction to the unit on protest songs. Further, as students listened to "Strange Fruit" and read the news article on the Greensboro Four, she would ask students to relate the topic to their own lives. How might they feel had they been sitting at that lunch counter? Have they ever witnessed someone else standing up for something he or she felt strongly about? Would they be brave enough to do the same? Asking students these questions also helped her transition into topics the small groups might want to write about in their own protest songs.

O'Connor also used New Criticism in her literature instruction. For her, students had to go beyond merely demonstrating they had comprehended a text. They had to be able to analyze a text to find a deeper meaning. During her interview, she discussed how students comprehended several of the texts they read, but they were unable to dig deeper and find more complex meanings.

"They understand everything that took place in it ["A Good Man is Hard To Find"]. I had to pull teeth about, you know, the symbols like the tool box and the car and the bird. I pulled that out of them, but other than seeing how she, you know, gave all her characters some kind of disability or something of that fashion, they got it. I was like quite pleased with them. So we had a good discussion today about the title, and we associated the title with every one of the characters." (O'Connor, initial interview)

She also used New Criticism in the protest song unit. Students were asked to analyze setting, speaker, mood, symbols, theme, conflict, and point-of-view in “Strange Fruit.” They then used their understanding of those elements when they composed their own protest songs in the small groups. In this way, O’Connor asked students to transfer their knowledge so she might assess how well students could not only identify the different literary elements in a text but also use them in their own writing.

One reason O’Connor used New Criticism so predominately in her classroom was she knew that students would be taking the ACT and might be taking her AP course during their senior year.

“I choose things in my AP class that I want them to dive into the text and be able to read it closely. Not only are you just reading it for the words and getting a synopsis of it, but I need you to analyze the language.” (O’Connor, initial interview)

As her AP students would need to do close readings independently, her 11<sup>th</sup> grade American literature students needed more support, and she gave students opportunities to build these skills, such as in the protest song unit, by working collaboratively and independently.

### **Engaging Students in Reading**

When asked about how she knew students were engaged or had engaged in reading, O’Connor discussed nonverbal cues students might display. She stated students might be smiling as they were reading or nodding their heads. When asking teacher lead questions, engaged students might enthusiastically raise their hands to answer questions or to pose their own questions or ideas.

However, facilitating situations where students could authentically display their engagement was more difficult for O’Connor because she selected most of what students read in her class. During her interview, O’Connor talked about various methods she used to try and engage students in reading.

“We do all kinds of reading strategies to kind of make sure that they are engaged in the text and make sure that they understand the text. So I do graphic organizers. I do guided questions. I do one pagers. I had them to read something, choose a quote, choose an image to reflect that quote. We do three to one just in the event that you may have questions I want to give you the opportunity to at least ask a question. Oh my God, we did so many because we have to model learning strategies. So we do so many and they are actually on our lesson plans. We do jigsaw. We’ve done popcorn reading. We’ve done read alouds. We’ve done a brace map for writing. Once they’ve done reading. We’ve done Cornell notes. We’ve done it all.” (O’Connor, initial interview)

While she used these strategies to support students’ engagement with texts during class, O’Connor also required her students to self-select texts.

Students’ self-selection of texts occurred every grading period. She took her students to the school library, and she asked her students to choose a text outside the genre they normally would read. For example, if a student really enjoyed fantasy books, she might ask them to choose historical fiction. She thought it was important for students to have the opportunity to read whatever they wanted. After students had finished reading their self-selected books, she asked students to share their books with the class. She also required them to have an end product to share, such as a poster or, at the very least, a formal book report. In doing so, she also stated that students might be more motivated to read texts she assigned during class if they engaged in reading more frequently on their own.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

While describing each of the two cases in the previous section has provided the reader with a thick description of the participants’ classrooms; their beliefs about interesting, reading engagement, and motivation; and literature instructional practices, implementing a cross cases analysis will further add to the complexity of the findings (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). By looking across the two cases, the influences and processes that affected the literature selection and implementation of instruction utilized by these participants can be further understood within the contextual boundaries of each setting. Furthermore, this cross case

analysis seeks to interrogate emerging thematic patterns between the two cases in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of each individual case as an interpretation of the meaning of each case is examined (Creswell, 2007).

It is important to acknowledge that the teaching styles of both participants are reflections of and bound within the contexts in which they teach as well as the teacher education preparations they each received. It is dangerous, therefore, to assume that each would employ the same instructional methodologies were they to teach within different school settings. What becomes most important to this cross case analysis is how each teacher has been influenced by their teacher education preparation as well as the school settings in which they teach.

Through conducting multiple rounds of ethnographic methods of coding and analysis (Emerson, et al., 1995) found within this chapter, thematic patterns emerged that represent the similarities and differences between the two cases that can provide insight into how the conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation influenced literature instruction within these two high school classrooms. The emerged themes and how they are represented within these two cases are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

EmergEd Themes across the Two Cases

| EmergEd Theme   | Tennyson   | O'Connor  |
|---|--|---|
| The constraints and freedoms of the educational climate.  | *Advanced placement culture of the school setting.   | *AYP pressure for students to perform well.   |
| The influence of teacher education training on instructional methodologies.   | *Alternative master's certification.<br>*Advanced Placement Summer Institute training.<br>*Importance of exposing students' to canonical literature.                         | *Alternative master's certification.<br>*Advanced Placement Summer Institute Training.<br>*Professional development from the school system's curriculum specialist. |
| How teaching to one's strengths influences instructional planning and implementation.                               | *Role of history in literature instruction.<br>*Role of new criticism as method of literary analysis.  | *Role of history in collaborative planning with American history teacher.<br>*Teacher's personal interest and engagement with texts.                                |
| The representation of situational and individual interest during in class activities.                               | *Situational interested cultivated by real world analysis and personal responses to texts.<br>*Individual interests not considered during planning or implementation stages. | *Situational interest represented through collaborative extension activities.<br>*Individual interests utilized during planning process.                            |
| The role that student autonomy and teacher support plays in students' engagement with texts and motivation to read. | *No self-selection of texts for whole group literature units.  | *No self-selection of texts for whole group literature units.   |

The following sections of this chapter discuss each of the emerged themes as they related to Tennyson and O'Connor.

### **Educational Climate Constraints and Freedoms**

The educational climate created by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) has cultivated a context for teachers where they are expected to produce students who can not only perform well on standardized tests but who are also college and career ready. These two school settings are no different than the multitude of schools across the nation adjusting to new state and national mandates. In an effort to help students meet these high demands, many schools have also increased the number of Advanced Placement courses offered to students in hopes that they will be better prepared to be college and career ready. According to the CCRS (2010), students need the analytic skills necessary to be thoughtful and critical writers, readers, speakers, listeners, and, most importantly, thinkers. Tennyson and O'Connor both taught Advanced Placement English Literature and/or Language courses, and the expectations the schools place on them directly influenced their instructional practice in both positive and negative ways.

It is important to note here the nature of AP courses so that the reader might understand the rationales behind the participants' planning and implementation strategies. AP courses are to be constructed as having a level of difficulty students would encounter in a college course, as students who perform well on the AP Exam might be able to earn college credit for their work. The AP English Literature Exam is composed of two different sections. The first section is a multiple-choice section, where students read passages and answer questions that often require them to be skillful literary analysts. The second section is comprised of three essay questions: poetry analysis, prose analysis, and open-ended question. The goal of the essay section is for students to be able to analyze prose and poetry selections through the use of New Criticism as

well as to be able to relate their analysis to the meaning of the work as a whole. For example, students may be asked to analyze the how the author uses characterization techniques to reflect the meaning of the work as a whole. The open-ended question typically asks students to evaluate a particular thematic idea within a literary selection of their choice. The text they select to answer the question, however, must be of literary merit, which is a text that is a part of the literary canon. In sum, the nature of an AP course can influence high school English teachers' perceptions of the expectations students, parents, and administrators place on them, and these expectations offer both constraints and freedoms to their literature instruction.

For Tennyson, these expectations constrained her literature instruction in several ways. First, she designed her Advanced Placement English Literature course by reflecting on how she envisioned a college literature course being constructed. This caused her to group literature units chronologically as opposed to thematically grouping texts. She also felt it was important to cover a breadth of literature that was part of the literary canon, which was evidenced during her initial interview. She included literature that represented a variety of literary time periods as well as across various cultures. Perhaps this is why her students viewed a film version of *Pride and Prejudice* during the last 15 minutes of class without having read the text. She wanted to ensure that her students had, at the very least, been exposed to Austen's text, as it is commonly included on the AP English Literature Exam.

Next, the literature she selected for instruction must be complex enough so that students would be challenged in close readings. She wanted to be able to ensure that students could practice the analytic skills necessary, mainly through the literary analysis process typical of New Criticism, so that they would be able to do well on the multiple choice, poetry analysis essay, and prose analysis essay sections of the AP Exam. Outside of the expectations placed on teachers who facilitate AP courses, the CCRS (2010) also asks that teachers select texts for instruction

that represent a range of literature, that is complex, and that is a quality piece of literature (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). In this way, Tennyson's disregard of students' interests while selecting literature can be best understood within this educational climate. It was more important for her to include literature that was complex and of literary merit rather than considering whether students might be interested and enjoy the assigned reading within their individual interests.

Even though the educational climate influenced by AP courses and the CCRS (2010) has constrained the ways Tennyson develops her courses and selects literature for instruction, she does have the freedom to employ the instructional methodology of her choosing. While her AP English literature class is to reflect the quality of a college classroom, Tennyson also chose to give her students a classroom environment that was comparable to a college classroom. Her students openly discussed literature through the themes or ideas Tennyson had selected for class or through the questions students generated themselves. She felt it was important for students to take ownership of their own questions and analyses of literature, which was evidenced in her initial interview and was observed in her own teaching. This might be a reflection of the CCRS's (2010) focus on developing independent, critical thinkers as well as a reflection of the skills students would need to gain college credit on the AP Exam. The freedom she utilized during her instruction also might be a result of the students enrolled in her AP course. Typically, students taking AP courses are those who exhibit college level capabilities, excluding classroom management issues from constraining the instructional decisions she could make.

Much like Tennyson, O'Connor's school also offered multiple AP courses, two of which she taught herself (AP English Literature and Composition and AP English Language and Composition). The constraints placed on O'Connor by the AP culture were very the same constraints placed on Tennyson. The literature she selected for instruction represented complex,

canonical texts that afforded students the opportunity to participate in deeper levels of literary analysis. Unlike Tennyson, however, O'Connor's 11<sup>th</sup> grade students may or may not be taking the AP English literature course during their senior year, and some of them had not passed the graduation exam, which was used as one quantitative unit of analysis for the school's AYP score. The school where O'Connor taught had not met the baseline score for AYP, so there was additional pressure for her students to perform well on the state graduation exam.

With this in mind, O'Connor's constraints were reflected in the main type of literary analysis she used for instruction. While she used a mixture of Historical Criticism and Reader Response Theory, the main focus of her literature instruction was having students participate in New Criticism as well as having students transfer that type of literary analysis to their own writing. This type of instruction methodology aimed to familiarize her students with literary terms they would need for close readings so that they would be able to pass the state graduation exam. Furthermore, those were the types of skills students would need to be successful in an AP course, which they would take the following year, and in a college or career setting.

The freedoms the educational climate offered O'Connor was represented through the types of instructional methods she utilized on a daily basis. While she provided more structure in small and whole group discussions than Tennyson, O'Connor implemented various types of collaborative activities. As observed during the literature unit on protest songs during the Civil Rights Movement, O'Connor's students participated in a collaborative song lyric writing activity that required them to transfer the New Criticism analysis they had previously done into their writing. During the initial interview, O'Connor also described other types of collaborative activities she utilized in her instruction, such as chalk talk, popcorn reading, one page responses to literature, and several others.

In sum, the freedom Tennyson and O'Connor felt to incorporate these various activities might be due to the CCRS (2010). While the CCRS makes recommendations about the types of literature teachers select for instruction, it does not outline or mandate instructional methodologies for teachers to use. The CCRS (2010) directs teachers toward the skills students will need to be college and career ready, but it does not tell teachers how to teach. Therefore, the climate created by the CCRS (2010) gave both Tennyson and O'Connor the freedom to incorporate whatever types of instructional methodologies they found appropriate for the texts being covered in their classes.

### **Influence of Teacher Education Training on Instructional Methodologies**

Both Tennyson and O'Connor had come to the high school English classroom through similar paths. They earned bachelor's degrees in English without taking English methods courses and earning teacher certification. In order to become certified to teach English at the high school level, they completed alternative master's degree programs that included teacher certification. The training they received during their bachelor's and master's degrees had significantly influenced the ways in which they approached literature instruction.

For Tennyson, the focus of her literature instruction was centered within the text. This became apparent when she discussed in the initial interview how she began each school year by discussing the power and importance of words. Her selection of canonical texts as opposed to young adult literature implies that she was more concerned with providing students with a breadth of knowledge of literature that is reflected within university English curriculums. This can be attributed to her undergraduate degree in English. Her bachelor's degree had offered Tennyson a strong foundation in content knowledge, and she voiced her opinions about the importance of appreciating literature and the importance of literary analysis during her initial interview. Because her teacher certification was earned through an alternative master's program,

her beliefs about literature instruction were formed after her experiences within various university English classrooms. This had formed her opinions about utilizing extension activities, such as creative projects or presentations, to such an extent that she did not include them as part of her instructional practice. During her initial interview, she discussed how she chose not to include “fun” projects because she did not believe they could represent deeper levels of literary analysis and, therefore, became a waste of students’ time. She would rather students’ focus on analyzing literary texts and finding meaning within them as opposed to creating a poster or diorama.

O’Connor’s undergraduate and graduate training had also influenced the instructional methods she employed in her classroom. Unlike Tennyson, however, O’Connor found useful and practical knowledge within her English methods training. While the texts O’Connor used for instruction were canonical and complex, the methodologies she used varied in nature.

O’Connor’s classroom was more student-centered in nature in that she facilitated extension activities that provided students opportunities to construct their own beliefs about literature. Furthermore, the New Criticism O’Connor employed into her instruction was assessed in a variety of methods, such as the original protest song students wrote during the observation period. She chose to incorporate a variety of instructional strategies as her focus was on the learning processes in which the students were participating, which was unlike Tennyson, whose focus was solely on the content being covered.

Another teacher education training that had influenced both Tennyson and O’Connor was the AP Summer Institute sponsored by College Board (2013). The weeklong institute provides teachers with the background knowledge about the AP Exam as well as methods and activities teachers might use to best prepare their students to perform well. The type of activities generally provided to English teachers center on various strategies to analyze literary texts quickly. For

example, the SIFTT method of literary analysis asks students to analyze a text's symbolism, imagery, figurative language, title, and theme. Using this type of analysis will benefit students when they complete the multiple-choice and essay portions of the AP Exam. Activities like these again support the methods New Critics utilize during literary analysis. This type of training highlights the connection between the instructional choices Tennyson and O'Connor made to the goals of the AP course.

One differing influence in O'Connor's educational training was her school system's curriculum specialist. The professional development training she had received included supporting students' learning through constructivist activities that encourage collaboration among students. This had influenced the ways in which O'Connor engaged students in reading as well as how she assessed their engagement with texts. Unlike Tennyson, O'Connor provided students with during reading activities that helped support students' engagement with texts. She accomplished this during the observation period by collaborative note taking and small and whole group discussions, which were just a few of the recommended strategies she learned during the professional development provided by her school system. O'Connor understood the learning process and placed importance in supporting students' learning as they were constructing meaning; conversely, Tennyson engaged students in small and whole group discussions after they had read to help students investigate their own thoughts about the meaning of the texts.

### **Teaching to One's Strengths**

Throughout the initial interviews and observation periods, it became apparent that both teachers utilized their own strengths as learners when planning for and implementing instruction. For Tennyson and O'Connor, this was represented in the presence of history in their instruction. Both teachers placed importance on helping students understand two things relative to Historical

Criticism: 1) the author's biography and motivation for writing the text, and 2) the historical context in which the text was written and/or is set. Both teachers had a strong background in history: Tennyson through an undergraduate minor in history, and O'Connor through a collaborative planning relationship with the American history teacher. Furthermore, both teachers had taught history courses. Tennyson was responsible for teaching AP American History, and O'Connor had taught a course in American Studies. With this in mind, it becomes plausible to see the justification for including Historical Criticism into their literature instructional practices.

Another strength that O'Connor used to her advantage is her own personal interest in the texts she selected for instruction. During the initial interview, she described selecting literature for instruction that she herself enjoyed reading. When she did this, she then became more engaged in planning for instruction as she conducted research and developed activities to support and extend students' engagement with texts. In this way, she was modeling the process of individual interest and its connection to motivation for her students. Showing students how excited she got over reading a text and engaging with it helped them to see what engaged readers do. They seek out information, they ask questions, they reread to gain a deeper understanding, and they make connections (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009). It is plausible to assume that through modeling this process her students would be more likely to begin practicing those same dispositions.

### **Situational and Individual Interest**

Situational and individual interest's role within the English classroom can take many forms. When considering situational interest, teachers may choose to develop contexts, whether it is represented in the classroom environment itself or through activities, which help get students initially engaged in a lesson or literature unit. Outside of the context teachers create which

attends to situational interest, students' interests in a topic might not be transferred to other lessons or assignments. Conversely, individual interest represents the individual interests students already have about a topic, content area, genre of literature, etc. However, individual interest can be developed (see Chapter II). The goal for teachers is to utilize situational interest within classroom activities in ways that develop or increase students' individual interests. While Tennyson and O'Connor attended to these constructs, neither focused on actually *developing* students' individual interests because the focus of their classes was on developing students' content knowledge so they could perform well on the state graduation exam or the AP Exam.

For Tennyson, cultivating situational interest within her small and whole group discussions was apparent during the observation of her teaching of *Brave New World*. During the initial interview, Tennyson discussed why she selected *Brave New World* for her AP class, and, outside of the New Critical analysis students would be able to do, she felt it offered students a pathway for discussing real world issues. The situational interest she created during those discussions revolved around her ability to bring in additional readings, such as a news article on cloning babies, to get her students engaged in their post reading discussion.

Her motivation for this type of instruction was threefold. First, she wanted students to be able to engage in discussions around a provocative topic, through students' personal and oftentimes emotional responses, in hopes that they would be able to transfer the ideas discussed into a literary analysis. Second, this was a way for her to historically place *Brave New World* into its original historical period as well as make it relevant to the world in which the students lived. Helping students understanding the context of a piece of literature was very important for this literature unit, as well as the way she approached other literary pieces. Lastly, it was important for her to model the types of discussions students might encounter in a college classroom. The goal of the course, at least for Tennyson, was not only to prepare students for the

AP Exam by developing their literary analysis skills, but also to prepare them socially for the college classroom. Perhaps in this way, she saw her role as their instructor more than just a teacher of content; she was also preparing them to enter an academic discourse unlike what they had experienced in high school.

For O'Connor, creating contexts for tapping into students' situational interests was something she attended to almost daily. Because of her student population, she knew she had to incorporate creative activities inside her class that would get them interested so that they could become engaged in learning and motivated to complete the reading and extension activity, which was observed during the protest song unit. Her motivation for utilizing situational interest was a reflection of her teacher education preparation, and, more specifically, the professional development training from the school system's curriculum specialist. Helping her students transfer knowledge to their own writing during the protest song unit helped her assess the level of understanding of literary terms from their lyric analysis. In this way, she helped her students not only have a base level of understanding of literary analysis, but she also made sure her students could apply their knowledge as well. With other literature units, she asked students to complete other creative extension activities that would reflect their understanding of the text's meaning. Her inclusion of these types of activities reflected her ability to recognize that her students' critical thinking and analysis skills still needed to be developed, especially if they were to take her AP English literature course the following year.

Unlike situational interest within these two classrooms, individual interest did not play as large a role. For Tennyson, she was not concerned with acknowledging students' individual interests as a means for planning for or implementing instruction. This was due to her focus on the content she selected for instruction. Her goal for the AP course, outside of preparing students for the AP exam, was to prepare them for the type of work they would do in college. It did not

matter to her if her students enjoyed or were interested in the reading she selected. For her, it was more important that they be able to read and analyze complex texts like they would be doing in a college English class. She even acknowledged during her interview that she wanted to prepare students to read and analyze texts they might not enjoy reading. This construct is also evidenced in her lack of creative extension activities. For her, those types of assignments could not display the level of deep thinking that a class discussion or writing assignment could. Her AP Summer Institute training helped develop this methodology, as the focus of those workshops are helping students analyze a text through traditional modes of instructional support within New Criticism.

Unlike Tennyson, O'Connor attended to individual interest in a different way. At a base level, she utilized students' individual interests as a way of creating a context for situational interest in the types of in class assignments she constructed. The student interest inventory she administered at the beginning of each school year helped her uncover her students' individual interests, whether their interests are in art, music, sports, etc. She could then utilize these to her advantage during the planning process. In this way, O'Connor's instructional focus was more student-centered than Tennyson's. She wanted to ensure that her students were engaged in learning in hopes that she could motivate them to read or to complete an extension activity. Her belief in developing students' critical thinking skills informed the way that she planned and carried out her literature instruction. For her, it was not enough for her students to read a text and discuss it during class. That would not yield engaged or motivated readers because they needed more of an incentive, such as an activity constructed through situational interest, which would keep them engaged so she could help them develop deeper levels of thinking. In this way, O'Connor used individual interest as a pathway for planning activities that would be bound

within situational interest in hopes that her lessons would have long-term effects on students' critical thinking skills.

### **Role of Student Autonomy and Teacher Support**

Throughout the analysis process, one area that both teachers had in common was the role of student autonomy and teacher support in developing engaged and motivated readers. As the research indicates (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011; Schraw, et al., 2001), giving students opportunities to select literature is the central way teachers can develop students' motivation to read. The self-selection of texts should move beyond reading these texts independently as an extra reading assignment; teachers should give students choices for the texts they will cover in class, whether through small reading groups or whole group discussions. While Tennyson and O'Connor both provided students opportunities to self-select texts, they had not created a reading environment that supported students' engagement with these texts and, more than likely, would not lead to an increased motivation to read.

The texts that students' self-selected in Tennyson and O'Connor's classrooms were to be completed independently, without the engaged reading support of their teachers. As evidenced in the related literature, when students do not receive before, during, or after reading support, it is difficult to assess how well students participated an engaged reading process that leads to deep comprehension and analysis of texts (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011). For these teachers, after reading assessments became more complex as they did not have the opportunity to check for understanding as students read or prepared book reports, which was the case with O'Connor's students, or writing assignments, as with Tennyson's class. The extension activity became a way for them, at least on a basic level, to see that the students had completed the reading and comprehended the texts.

The decision to have students complete reading outside of class without regard to students' engagement with texts resulted from the pressure these teachers felt to prepare their students for standardized tests. When students read books independently that are not to be used for whole or small group instruction, it becomes more difficult for teachers to provide the instructional support students will need in order to develop literary analysis skills. With this in mind, Tennyson and O'Connor both chose the texts students would be reading so that they could control how students were approaching the text by providing before reading support, such as a Historical Criticism approach or guided reading questions, as well as during and/or after reading support, through class discussions or extension activities. If they could not observe and assess their students' learning in more regimented ways, they would not be able to ensure that their students had received the instruction needed to pass the state graduation exam or the AP Exam. For these teachers, the pressure of accountability outweighed an attention to students' interests in allowing students to self-select texts that might be more engaging and, therefore, might lead to increased motivation to read.

### **Summary**

Chapter IV has presented a multiple case study of two high school English teachers' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation as well as how those conceptualizations were enacted in their literature instruction. Each research question was addressed through the five focused codes that emerged from the data analysis process: 1) Selecting Literature and Identifying a Purpose for Reading, 2) Planning for Instruction, 3) Strategic Teaching, 4) Role of Literary Criticism, and 5) Engaging Students in Reading. The chapter concluded with a cross case analysis of the individual cases through a discussion of five thematic patterns that emerged across the two cases. The five themes included the following: 1) The Constraints and Freedoms of the Educational Climate, 2) The Influence of Teacher

Education Training on Teaching Methodologies, 3) How Teaching to One's Strengths Affects Instructional Planning and Implementation, 4) The Representation of Situational and Individual Interest during in and out of Class Activities, and 5) The Role That Student Autonomy and Teacher Support Plays in Students' Engagement with Texts and Motivation to Read. Chapter V will present the findings in relation to the literature review, discuss the limitations of this research study, and outline implications and future educational research.

CHAPTER V:  
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

**Overview**

This chapter is presented in three sections. First, the findings presented in Chapter IV will be discussed in relation to the related literature. Similar to the literature review, this first section is organized through the following sections: Interest Concept, Reading Engagement and Motivation, and Literature Instruction. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for teacher practice, teacher education programs, and student learning. This is followed by recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

**Interest Concept**

Schiefele's (1991) distinction between individual and situational interest can be applied to these cases. He defines individual interest as students' interests that are related to content areas, topics, or activities; individual interest also includes feelings students may have about a topic as well as the values students place on learning a topic. Situational interest, conversely, is contextually bound and is generated by external stimuli that teachers may utilize initially to gain students' interests (Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Schraw, et al., 2001; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). In the context of this study, teachers' use of individual and situational interest was enacted through their selection of literature, setting a purpose for reading, and instructional practice. The following table (Table 7) represents how situational and individual interest were inherent within the two cases.

Table 7

Situational and Individual Interest Representations in the Two Cases

| Interest Concept     | Tennyson  | O'Connor  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Situational Interest | *Selection of complex texts for AP Exam preparation.<br>*Creation of classroom environment for literary analysis. | *Creation of classroom environment to support collaborative activities.<br>*Incorporation of multi-genre texts within thematic units. |
| Individual Interest  | *Represented in students' self-selected text assignment.  | *Considered during lesson planning stage.   |

While selecting literature, setting a purpose for reading, and implementing literature instruction, both Tennyson and O'Connor's choices were reflected by situational interest and individual interest. Tennyson's selection of literature was influenced by the need for students to read challenging texts that would provide meaningful analyses in order to prepare students to be successful on the Advanced Placement (AP) Exam. She chose to include texts that are part of the literary canon and provide the text complexity needed for students to participate in New Critical analyses. The goal of AP courses is, at least in part, to provide students with college level assignments and experiences so that students can either earn college credit while in high school or be better prepared for the academic discourses they will encounter in college (College Board, 2013). Therefore, it was more important for her to create a context, or situational interest, for college level literary analysis than to tap into students' individual interests.

Another way she utilized situational interest in her class was through the classroom environment she created. During class, she facilitated small and whole group discussions as a method of letting students' explore their own thoughts about a text, whether the discussions were grounded in literary analysis or personal connections. For Tennyson, this served two purposes. First, she was able to help students engage in New Critical analysis through initially getting

students emotionally involved with class discussions. Perhaps she identified the benefits of getting students to respond emotionally to complex literary texts as a method of getting students cognitively engaged with analysis (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Schraw, et al., 2001). Second, she sought to create a classroom environment that was comparable to the environment of a college classroom. It was important for her to create a space where students could openly exchange ideas and collaboratively explore personal connections and meanings found within the text. This belief, along with the expectations of the AP culture, led Tennyson to use instructional practices, that acknowledged the academic life students would have after leaving high school so they would be “college ready” (*Alabama course of study for English language arts, 2010*).

In this way, the classroom environment Tennyson created reflects, at least in part, the literature in which Hidi and Renninger (2006) outline their four phase model for developing situational interest. Tennyson utilized the first two phases of the model, as she triggered students’ initial interests (phase one) and sustained them for a condensed amount of time (phase two). However, because she was not concerned with developing students’ individual interests, she never made connections to phases three and four, which recognizes students’ developing individual interests and students’ fully actualized individual interests. Her inability to make a connection between the first two phases and the last two phases is due to the pressure of the educational climate as she strove to meet the expectations and responsibilities of an AP teacher.

In terms of individual interest, Tennyson did not take students’ own topical or content area interests into consideration when selecting texts for class. This was unlike the related literature on considering students’ interests for selecting texts (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011). As the literature posits, considering students’ interests and giving them opportunities to self-select texts for small and/or whole group discussion can result in higher levels of reading engagement as well as an increase in students’ motivation to read.

However, Tennyson's students did get an opportunity to self-select texts that they would be using for a culminating literary analysis essay. While students were able to select literature from a variety of genres and literary time periods, they still had to choose a text from an approved AP reading list. Tennyson hoped that students still might be able to find a text that appealed to their individual reading interests, which was also reflected in her advice for students to stop reading a text if it did not appeal to their interests. Tennyson's requirement for students to self-select texts for out of class reading assignments is not supported by what the related literature suggests for incorporating student book choice into the classroom (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Wigfield, et al., 2008). One method of placing student-selected texts at the center of literature instruction is through Concept Oriented Literature Instruction (CORI), when teachers ask students to self-select texts that support a concept being studied by the class (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Wigfield, et al., 2008). Students are then asked to self-select texts that add to their knowledge about a topic or concept, to comprehend and synthesize the knowledge, and to share their findings with their peers. Unlike what the related literature suggests, Tennyson's use of students' self-selection of texts was merely to expose them to literature; the texts students self-selected were not used to enhance the literature units they studied.

O'Connor's utilization of situational and individual interest varied from the way Tennyson attended to them in her classroom. In regard to situational interest, O'Connor created a collaborative space where students worked in groups to complete creative extension activities, which was observed during the protest song unit. This could be interpreted as her method of creating a situational context where students' initial interests in a fun, creative activity was utilized as a way to transfer their interest into engagement (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Schraw, et al., 2001). Creating a space

where students could work collaboratively with their peers represents the way O'Connor conceptualized what it meant to create a learning environment where students became truly interested in learning that lead to engagement and, ultimately, motivation to actively participate in class activities.

Beyond the creative extension activity she used to assess students' knowledge, she also incorporated different genres into the thematic unit on protest songs during the Civil Rights Movement to try and facilitate students' situational interests. Her use of music, videos, and pictures attended to students' emotional responses in hopes they might become cognitively engaged. For O'Connor, it was important that she be able to access students' emotional responses within the situational interest context she had created because she believed in the importance of accessing students' individual interests in ways that would create a positive learning environment so students could feel comfortable participating in cognitive activities (Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Schraw, et al., 2001). This belief was a product of the professional development training she received from the school system's curriculum specialist, who emphasized the importance of creating student-centered classrooms balanced with appropriate levels of teacher support.

In several ways, O'Connor's use of situational interest supports the related literature on use of thematic literature units (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Wigfield, et al., 2008). As CORI suggests, O'Connor utilized thematic units to engage students in learning about a concept, which was a unit on protest songs during the Civil Rights Movement. Instead of having students seek out new information on a concept, O'Connor had students collaboratively transfer the knowledge they had gained during class discussions of song lyrics and videos to write their own protest songs. In this way, O'Connor varied what CORI suggests for thematic

units. However, O'Connor's students still utilized high level thinking skills by applying their new knowledge to a different context, and they also shared their work with their peers.

Individual student interest was also represented in O'Connor's classroom. In the protest song unit, O'Connor attended to students' individual interests through the collaborative authentic activity she created. By having students write their own protest songs, present them, and design an album cover, she attempted to access both feeling and value-related valences (Schiefele, 1991). With the knowledge that her students enjoy writing, performing, and drawing, she was able to utilize students' individual interests as a pathway for creating a context where students' feelings about the task was generally positive; in turn, students were able to engage cognitively with the idea of protesting civil rights issues. With this in mind, O'Connor's use of individual interest is supported by the related literature (Hidi & Renninger, 2006) in that she not only utilized phases one and two, in which she created a context for situational interest and sustained students' interests, but also utilized students' developing and actualized individual interests by representing them within the collaborative extension activity she created for the post-unit assessment.

Interestingly, O'Connor also utilized her own individual interest when selecting texts for instruction. While she selected canonical texts that represent appropriate complexity, quality, and range (CCRS, 2010), her decisions were greatly influenced by what she enjoyed reading. She felt it was important that she feel emotionally and cognitively invested in the texts she presented to the her students. This allowed her to become more engaged in the planning process so that she might be able to use instructional methods best suited to meet the diverse needs of her students as well as to model her own enthusiasm for a text. Other research studies have also suggested the implication of teachers' interests on text selection and planning processes (Hall & Smith, 2006; McCutcheon & Milner, 2002), and, therefore, reflects the same decision O'Connor

made to attend to her own content interests when planning for instruction. This attention to her own individual interest represents how she viewed her own role as a teacher of English language arts. Perhaps she accepted that it had become more difficult for her students to be interested, engaged, and motivated to read if she could not model those same dispositions herself.

### **Interest Development**

As demonstrated in both Tennyson and O'Connor's classrooms, there is a distinction between situational and individual interest, which has also been reported in the related literature (Mitchell, 1993; Schiefele, 1991; Zahorik, 1996). While representations like Hidi and Renninger's (2006) four phase model suggest that interest can be developed in classrooms, it is Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman's (2001) strategies that offer insight into the two cases. Their suggestions on developing situational interest are characterized through the following six strategies: (1) offer meaningful choices to students, (2) use well-organized texts, (3) select texts that are vivid, (4) use texts that students know about, (5) encourage students to be active learners, and (6) provide relevance cues for students.

While Schraw, Flowerday, and Lehman's (2001) model provides six strategies that are useful when determining how to develop situational interest, not all of them were enacted in these two cases. Both Tennyson and O'Connor require students to self-select texts to read outside of class, neither offer students choices on texts they might use during a literature unit (strategy one); both teachers select literature that is to be covered as a group during class. The decision by both teachers to include self-selected texts as an outside of class assignment reflects the pressure they faced to have students perform well on standardized tests. For Tennyson, the AP culture influenced her decision to select texts for whole group instruction as opposed to giving students' input into what they read and discussed together. For O'Connor, the state graduation exam also placed pressure on her to be able to supervise students' developing

understandings of literature. Had students read texts outside of class independently, she would not have the opportunity to assess their abilities to analyze texts in ways that would prepare them for the state graduation exam.

The texts Tennyson and O'Connor do select might not be representative of texts inside students' previous knowledge (strategy four). However, Tennyson and O'Connor do select texts that are well organized and vivid (strategies two and three), as they are all part of the literary canon. These three strategies all represent how the educational climate had influenced the decisions they made. Within the *Alabama Course of Study* (2010) and AP contexts, Tennyson and O'Connor selected literature that they felt best represented the texts students would need to read to be prepared for standardized tests, college settings, or career work after high school. Furthermore, the expectations of the students, parents, and school systems directly affected what texts they taught and how they taught them.

In regard to encouraging students to be active learners and providing relevancy for students (strategies five and six), both teachers encouraged students to actively participate in class activities, whether through small or whole group discussions or through authentic extension activities. They also grounded their literature instruction within a societal context. Tennyson's decision to use *Brave New World* was influenced by her belief that students should understand the historical context in which it was written. With this understanding, she could then facilitate a discussion of how the major themes found within the novel translated into today's society. For O'Connor, she also placed her protest song unit within a current societal context by asking students to write an original song representing a civil rights issue they faced either in school or outside of school. Tennyson and O'Connor's beliefs about placing literature within a societal context represent their understanding of the value of literature outside mere literary analysis (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Carey-Webb, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1995). With this in mind, Tennyson

and O'Connor related the literature to the issues students face in their everyday lives, which the literature suggests as being an effective method for helping students understand the possibilities literature has to understanding the world around them (Beach, Appleman, Hynds, & Wilhelm, 2006; Carey-Webb, 2001; Langer, 1995b; Rosenblatt, 1995).

### **Reading Engagement and Motivation**

The connections among interest, reading engagement, and motivation has been evidenced through theoretical and empirical research (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011; Schiefele, 1991). This research posits that when teachers utilize students' interests while planning for instruction, students are more likely to become engaged in the reading process and to be motivated to read outside of school.

Facilitating reading engagement and motivating students to read requires that teachers attend to students' emotional and cognitive interests (Guthrie, 2004; Krapp, 1991). When teachers create contexts where students can have positive, emotional responses to a text, whether it is before or during reading, students' ability to cognitively engage with a text increases (Guthrie, et al., 2000; Wigfield, et al., 2008). Furthermore, the transition from engaging students in reading to motivating students to read is largely dependent upon student autonomy and teacher support (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011).

The constructs of interest, reading engagement, and motivation can be explored in both cases. For Tennyson, utilizing students' interests was not an essential part of her literature selection and planning processes. Knowing that her students would be taking the AP Exam was the motivating factor for how Tennyson selected literature and carried out her instruction. It was not necessary for her students to be interested in the literature because it was the analytic skills they needed in order to perform well. If she conceptualized interest in this way, how was she then able to engage students in reading if students' interests were not actively considered during the

literature selection and planning processes? Furthermore, how was she able to engage students in reading and to assess students' developing understandings of literature when they had already completed the reading before coming to class?

She did this by utilizing students' emotional and cognitive interests during literature instruction in an attempt to assess students' engagement with a text, which is unlike what the related literature suggests (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011; Schiefele, 1991), which is that teachers provide before and during reading support. Her decision to utilize this type of reading engagement assessment was informed by her desire to imitate a college classroom environment, where students often go beyond merely analyzing a text and begin to link a text's meaning to the human condition, or the characteristics that emphasize the connectedness of humanity. This was evident during small and whole group discussions when she asked students to discuss various themes related to *Brave New World* and, further, to connect these themes to the real world. She stated in the interview that many of her students often had emotional responses to texts, which was also observed during her teaching. These emotional responses during class discussions made it easier for students in Tennyson's class to explore literary analyses, or cognitive responses. Once they became emotionally invested in the text, they could explore more cognitive understandings of the text outside a personal response. This type of reading engagement assessment is supported by literature that defines an "involved reader" as having both emotional and cognitive responses to texts (Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011). Furthermore, this process reflects her goal as an English instructor to have students who were to be able to appreciate and analyze literature. Regardless of her inclusion of real world applications and reader responses to texts, the focus of her instruction was still on developing students' cognitive understandings of texts.

Conversely, the findings demonstrate that O'Connor did attend to students' interests in an effort to increase reading engagement and motivation. Selecting literature she could enthusiastically present was one way she attempted to elicit an emotional response from students. For instance, she used protest songs, which students listened to and analyzed the lyrics. After the lyric analysis, she lead students in a discussion about current civil rights issues they might be facing in order to facilitate students' emotional engagement in the unit. Students then participated in cognitive engagement through an authentic task (writing an original protest song, presenting it to the class, and designing an album cover). Having knowledge of students' topic related interests as well as students' talents gives teachers the ability to facilitate learning experiences where students can emotionally connect with content, leading to deeper engagement in cognitive analyses (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Wigfield, et al., 2008).

O'Connor's ability to enthusiastically present texts to students as well as provide hands-on activities reflects related literature on ways in which teachers make learning interesting for students (Zahorik, 1996). Zahorik's (1996) study posits that teachers can create interest to increase students' engagement and motivation through eight ways: hands-on activities, personalized content, student trust, group work, variety of materials, teacher enthusiasm, practical tasks, and variety of activities. O'Connor's thematic unit on protest songs accomplished all of these tasks through her enthusiastic presentation, attention to students' interests in ways that created trust, collaborative work, multi-genre text selections, collaborative song writing, as well as album art design.

However, Tennyson and O'Connor attending to students' interests through various methods to engage students in reading in ways that connect reading engagement and motivation was more problematic for them. The related literature suggests incorporating autonomy and

teacher support through thematic literature units as a method of engaging and motivating students to read (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Wigfield, et al., 2008). For example, Lapp and Fisher (2009) implemented this strategy in their year-long research study when they used book clubs as a method of giving students autonomy and teacher support when self-selecting texts in thematic units; the students in the study displayed higher levels of reading engagement and motivation because of the use of student autonomy coupled with teacher support. This suggestion for utilizing students' self-selection of texts to increase motivation by the related literature was not supported by the two cases. For Tennyson and O'Connor, student autonomy was only utilized when students selected texts to read outside of class as opposed to incorporating self-selections into thematic literary units. Furthermore, those texts were not used for small or large group discussions or used for any other in class activity. Tennyson's students wrote a literary analysis, and O'Connor's students did a class presentation. Furthermore, teacher support was only offered, as evidenced in the two interviews, when helping students prepare for the after reading assignments.

One reason that implementing the student autonomy and teacher support strategy for increasing students' motivation to read, which is suggested by the related literature (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Guthrie, et al., 2000; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Wigfield, et al., 2008), was not evidenced during the interviews or observations was because of the methods the teachers employed to select literature and plan for instruction. Both teachers' selected literature, whether based on teacher preference or analytic possibilities a text offers, and then planned to present the texts through chronological order as opposed to grouping texts by themes, as the related literature suggests (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Wigfield, et al., 2008).

Also, both teachers chose to have the whole group read the same text so that the students might collaboratively explore the readings together. Having students self-select texts for

individual exploration or book clubs becomes problematic for teachers whose instructional practice is primarily driven by literary analysis (Applebee, 1993; Zancanella, 1991). This is also reflected in the literature's discussion of incorporating students' voices into text selection (Lapp & Fisher, 2009), which was not evidenced in either case.

### **Literature Instruction**

While Reader Response Theory (Matthews & Chandler, 1998; Ricker-Wilson, 1998; Rosenblatt, 1995) and a cultural studies approach (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Carey-Webb, 2001) have been represented in the related literature on literature instruction practices, researchers have conceived that much of teachers' literature instruction is fundamentally structured around New Criticism (Applebee, 1993; Carey-Webb, 2001; Latrobe & Drury, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1995; Showalter, 2003). Interestingly, both teachers used a combination of these types of literary criticisms to develop students' abilities to engage in New Criticism, as that was the ultimate goal of literature instruction, which has not been reflected in the related literature.

In Tennyson's literature class, the goal of utilizing New Criticism in her classroom was evidenced during her initial interview when she described how she began the year discussing the importance of words with students because the focus of her literature class is on the meaning found within a text. With each reading she assigned, Tennyson asked students to complete a close reading of the text. This was also observed during the *Brave New World* unit. Even though students had read the entire text before coming to class, students analyzed the text's themes through an analysis of plot structure, setting, character motivations, and point-of-view. Her focus on New Criticism supports the related literature's focus on literary analysis methods in English classrooms (Carey-Webb, 2001; Langer, 1995b). New Criticism has historically been the central focus of literary analysis (Applebee, 1974, 1993), so it stands to reason that this would also be one of the main forms of literary analysis represented in state and national mandates (*Alabama*

*course of study for English language arts*, 2010; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010) as well as the focus of Advanced Placement English courses (College Board, 2013).

However, while Tennyson asked students to grapple with these literary elements, she also facilitated students' personal, and often emotional, responses to texts. Students were encouraged to share their personal connections about each theme, which is utilized in Reader Response Theory. Further, Tennyson used these personal responses to help students participate in a cultural studies approach of analysis by asking them to negotiate those responses within the context of the real world. While the goal of reading *Brave New World* ultimately is to help students participate in New Criticism, she helped students get there by implementing Reader Response Theory and a cultural studies approach to analysis. This blending of types of literary criticism has not been reported in the related literature on methods of literary analysis utilized by English teachers.

However, research on reading engagement and motivation represents Tennyson's utilization of emotional and cognitive approaches to teaching literature (Krapp, 1991; Schiefele, 1991; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). When Tennyson used Reader Response Theory and a cultural studies approach to literary analysis as a method of getting students engaged in New Criticism, she was attending to students' emotional engagement (Krapp, 1991; Schiefele, 1991; Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011) with texts as a pathway for getting them engaged in learning. When she did this, it became easier for students to feel comfortable participating in deeper levels of literary analysis, which the related literature identifies as cognitive analysis (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995; Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011).

Similarly, the focus of O'Connor's unit on protest songs during the Civil Rights Movement was also grounded in New Criticism. She asked students to analyze song lyrics from

Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," attending to setting, speaker, mood, symbols, theme, conflict, and point-of-view. Students were then asked to implement these same literary elements in their collaboratively written protest songs. Not only did students have to understand these literary elements and identify them within the lyrics, they also had to practice using them in their own writings. Further, she asked students to implement these literary elements through their visual representations in the album covers. O'Connor's methodology for getting students to participate in a New Critical analysis and a transference of knowledge is also supported in the related literature on utilizing students' interests to lead to deeper engagement with texts (Deci, et al., 1991; Zahorik, 1996). By providing students' with opportunities to participate in hands-on, creative activities that reflect their own interests, O'Connor's students participated in complex-emotional experiences, which the related literature posits is essential for developing long-term engagement with texts (Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011).

Much like Tennyson, O'Connor also used Reader Response Theory and a cultural studies approach to analysis as a method for helping students engage with the unit. After students analyzed the song lyrics from Holliday's "Strange Fruit," a newspaper article on the Greensboro Four, and a video on Emmitt Till, she lead a discussion on current civil rights issues facing students. By placing the thematic unit on protest songs within students' own lived experiences, she asked students to personally connect with the idea of social protest, much like Reader Response Theory would ask students to do within a literary text. Furthermore, she asked her students to try and understand their own lives in relation to society, which is a characteristic of a cultural studies approach to literary analysis (Carey-Webb, 2001; Latrobe & Drury, 2009).

With this in mind, Brooks' (2012) recommendations for situating Reader Response Theory analysis into a cultural studies approach can be supported by both Tennyson and O'Connor's use of students' personal responses to texts that are grounded within an analysis of

real world contexts. When teachers, like Tennyson and O'Connor, combine both of these literary analysis techniques, students are able to evaluate their own personal responses to literature within multiple cultural settings in ways that enhance their understanding of themselves within the world (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Carey-Webb, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1995).

By integrating these three methods of literary analysis, both teachers were able to support students' abilities to participate in a close reading of a text by asking them to place it within their own lives. However, the one type of literary criticism not represented in the related literature that both Tennyson and O'Connor incorporated into their literature instruction was Historical Criticism (Latrobe & Drury, 2009). Both teachers utilized Historical Criticism as a way to help students understand the historical context in which literature was written as well as the influence of the author's life on an understanding of the text. One possibility as to why Historical Criticism has not been represented in the related literature is that it is not included within standardized tests, such as state graduation exams or AP Exams. Furthermore, Historical Criticism implies that the meaning of a piece of literature might be found outside the text itself (Latrobe & Drury, 2009). This represents the opposite of what New Criticism aims to achieve. However, Tennyson and O'Connor's literature instructional decisions, as previously suggested, incorporate multiple methods for supporting students' understanding of literary texts.

In conclusion, Tennyson and O'Connor both recognized the importance of helping students relate to a text in some way, whether it is through considering a new idea or by using the text as a portal for discussing societal issues. In the end, both teachers were still able to lead students in New Critical discussions of texts; however, by the time they were able to do that, they had already asked students to become emotionally and personally invested in the texts. This demonstrates that teachers might wish to seek ways to interweave various methods of literary criticism while planning for instruction. The following section presents implications for teacher

practice as well as implications for teacher education programs and student learning. Then, a discussion of recommendations for future research is presented.

### **Implications**

Through this exploration of how these two teachers' conceptualizations of interest, reading engagement, and motivation were enacted in their literature instruction, it is evident that the ways in which teachers conceptualize these constructs do affect the ways in which they implement literature instruction. It is also apparent that these teachers were cognizant of the presence or the absence of each of these concepts in their beliefs and instructional practices. However, they did not demonstrate consciousness of how those beliefs affected the ways in which they selected literature *and* implemented instruction. Therefore, the findings of this study have implications for teacher practice, teacher education preparation, and student learning. These implications also serve as a background for future research.

### **Implications for Teacher Practice**

The implications from this study may have an impact on the ways in which teachers conceptualize and implement literature instruction. First, it is important for teachers to investigate the methodologies they employ when selecting literature and planning for instruction (Moley, et al., 2011). For example, teachers should consider why they select certain texts while leaving others out, and they may consider the following questions: Do I select texts based on my own personal preferences? Do I select texts based on how I will ask students to analyze them? Have I considered what my students might enjoy reading? Will my students be able to place this text within their own lives and the world? Teachers should consider these questions while also contemplate how they choose to group texts into literature units. For example, choosing to approach literature chronologically implies that literature might be best understood when grounded in historical contexts, limiting a teacher's ability to thematically group a diverse group

of texts from a variety of contexts and genres. The decisions teachers make while selecting literature and planning for instruction have broader implications when teachers begin to implement those plans.

Secondly, teachers should participate in reflective practice in ways that encourage them to consider how their planning practices affect their instructional implementation (Boody, 2008; Hall & Smith, 2006; Kreber & Castleden, 2009; Schon, 1983). Within these two cases, both teachers were able to communicate their beliefs about interest, reading engagement, and motivation. However, neither teacher was able to identify how their beliefs about interest, reading engagement, or motivation impacted the ways in which their literature instruction was implemented as well as how those constructs might impact students. Teachers should reflect on their literature selection methodologies, the way they group texts, and the way in which they implement instruction. The connections among these steps should be purposeful, aiming to increase students' engagement with texts and students' motivation to read.

Thirdly, teachers should consider students' interests when planning for instruction as they directly relate to students' abilities to engage with texts (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Wigfield, et al., 2008). When teachers choose not to consider students' interests when planning for instruction, they lose an opportunity to acknowledge students' thoughts, ideas, and experiences as a method of finding meaning within a piece of literature. This simple acknowledgement will communicate to students that the meaning of a text and the purpose of reading are not merely used to analyze the plot, setting, characterization, point-of-view, or theme. Students would then have an opportunity to explore the ways in which their own lives are represented in literature and through literature (Carey-Webb, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1995). In turn, this will help students engage with texts in more complex ways (Gambrell, 1996; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Moley, et al., 2011).

Lastly, teachers should consider multiple ways for implementing students' self-selection of texts. As evidenced through these two case studies, some teachers include the self-selection of texts as an outside of class reading requirement. However, research demonstrates that the opportunities students get to self-select texts within thematic literature units does affect students' motivation to read (Anderson & Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Wigfield, et al., 2008). Therefore, teachers should allow students to self-select texts for in-class reading assignments as opposed for out-of-class reading assignments. Furthermore, if students are only reading self-selected texts outside of class, how might a teacher authentically assess students' abilities to engage in reading a text, especially if students are only required to produce a work after reading has been completed? If one goal of literature instruction is to develop life-long readers, teachers must make a conscious effort to help develop students' motivation to read outside of school.

### **Implications for Teacher Education Programs**

If teachers are to begin considering methodologies they employ when selecting texts for instruction and how those selections affect their planning practices and instruction, teacher education programs should place more emphasis on guiding preservice teachers through the thought processes that support that type of careful planning (Clark & Yinger, 1987; Hall & Smith, 2006; McCutcheon & Milner, 2002; Shavelson, 1983). Teacher preparation typically includes learning how to write lesson plans, creating authentic assessments, planning for differentiated instruction, and many other skills preservice teachers will need to be successful in the classroom. However, when teaching preservice teachers how to reflect on their teaching practices, much of it occurs after teaching has been completed and may represent a surface level analysis (Boody, 2008; Hall & Smith, 2006; Schon, 1983). As the findings of this study suggest, it is imperative for teachers to investigate how selecting texts, grouping literature units, and

implementing instruction upholds or refutes their beliefs about interest, reading engagement, and motivation; the ways teachers conceptualize these constructs affect the planning and implementation choices they make before, during, and after instruction occurs.

### **Implications for Student Learning**

While this study has largely focused on teacher practice, it is important to consider the implications that teachers' planning and implementation of literature instruction has on the ways in which students respond emotionally and cognitively to instruction (Agee, 2000b; Beach, et al., 2006; Langer, 1995a, 1995b; Probst, 1988; Showalter, 2003). As research has demonstrated, students' initial emotional responses to instruction greatly influence their abilities to cognitively engage in learning (Krapp, 1991; Schiefele, 1991; Vieira Jr. & Grantham, 2011). Understanding students' perceptions of literature instruction will give teachers the information needed to thoughtfully plan so that students' engagement with texts becomes more readily accessible. Furthermore, attending to students' perceptions of literature instruction will also create contexts where students' motivation to read increases through a greater attention to students' interests and multiple forms of literature instruction.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study merely begins to address high school English teachers' literature instructional practices as it pertains to interest, reading engagement, and motivation. One area for future research might address the ways in which teacher education programs prepare secondary English teachers to address reading engagement and motivation in literature instruction. This area of research might also include how high school English teachers assess students' engagement with texts when students have completed reading outside of class. Next, future researchers might contemplate investigating how teachers integrate multiple types of literary criticisms in their literature instructional practices as opposed to purely staying within

one area of literary criticism. Additionally, investigating teachers' reflective practices before, during, and after instruction will also add to the field of educational research by incorporating data collection methods such as simulated recall sessions (Kwon & Orrill, 2007), which would ask teachers to discuss and reflect on their teaching practices. Finally, future researchers should also consider how high school English teachers' literature instruction affects students' perceptions about reading as well as how instruction affects students' abilities to develop as motivated, life-long readers.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As the implications of this research study are considered, English teachers might reflect on the goals they are striving to accomplish. Are English teachers' roles merely to present the content of English to students? Is it enough for students to read canonical texts and analyze literary elements? What do we want students to be able to do once they leave high school? It is not enough for high school English teachers to have their students read a wide variety of texts and participate in analysis and discussion activities. English teachers must work toward developing students who are capable of engaging with texts so they will be able to engage with the world around them and to consider their own views of society.

## REFERENCES

- Agee, J. M. (2000a). *Theory, identity, and practice: A study of two high school English teachers' literature instruction*. Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement.
- Agee, J. M. (2000b). What is effective literature instruction? A study of experienced high school English teachers in differing grade-and-ability-level classes. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(3), 303-348.
- Alabama course of study for English language arts*. (2010). Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Education.
- ALSDE. (2011). Alabama education: Quick facts for school year 2011-2012 *Alabama Department of Education*.
- Anderson, E., & Guthrie, J. T. (1996). Teaching with CORI: Taking the big jump. *NRRC News: A Newsletter of the national Reading Research Center*, 1-4.
- Andrade, A. D. (2009). Interpretive research aiming at theory building: Adopting and adapting the case study design. *The Qualitative Report 14*(1), 42-60.
- Anyachebelu, F. E., Anyamene, A., Obumneke-Okeke, I. M., & Abedola, H. E. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of effective strategies for teaching literature to enhance students' learning. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 2*(4), 261-264.
- Applebee, J. M. (1974). *Tradition and reform in the teaching of English: A history*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, J. M. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: Studies of curriculum and instruction in the United States*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Baker, L., & Wigfield, A. (1999). Dimensions of children's motivation for reading and their relations to reading activity and reading achievement. *Reading Research Quarterly, 34*(4), 452-477.

- Banks, J. A. (1993). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(5), 4-14.
- Banks, J. A. (1996). Multicultural education: history, development, goals, and approaches. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Multicultural education, transformative knowledge, and action: Historical and contemporary perspectives* (pp. 39-66). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Barone, D. M. (2004). Case-study research. In N. K. Duke & M. H. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy research methodologies* (pp. 7-27). New York: Guilford.
- Beach, R., Appleman, D., Hynds, S., & Wilhelm, J. (2006). *Teaching literature to adolescents*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Boody, R. M. (2008). Teacher reflection as teacher change, and teacher change as moral response. *Education*, 128(3), 498-506.
- Bray, L. (2009). *Going bovine*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Brooks, W., & Browne, S. (2012). Towards a culturally situated reader response theory. *Children's Literature in Education*, 43, 74-85.
- Burns, E., Kimmel, S., & Garrison, K. L. (2013). How common is common? An analysis of the recommended text exemplars. *Teacher Librarian*, 41(1), 23-27.
- Carey-Webb, A. (2001). *Literature & lives: A response-based, cultural studies approach to teaching English*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Clark, C. M., & Yinger, R. T. (1987). Teacher planning. In J. Calderhead (Ed.), *Exploring teachers' thinking* (pp. 84-103). London: Cassell.
- College Board. (2013). AP English literature and composition Retrieved October 10, 2012, from <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse/ap-english-literature-and-composition>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Literacy and intrinsic motivation. *Daedalus*, 119(2), 115-140.

- Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3 & 4), 325-346.
- Dewey, J. (1913). *Interest and effort in education*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gambrell, L. B. (1996). Creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation. *The Reading Teacher*, 50(1), 14-25.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-354.
- Guthrie, J. T. (2004). Teaching for literacy engagement. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36(1), 1-29.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Cox, K. E. (2001). Classroom conditions for motivation and engagement in reading. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(3), 283-302.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Humenick, N. M. (2004). Motivating students to read: Evidence for classroom practices that increase reading motivation and achievement. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 329-354). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Guthrie, J. T., Schafer, W., Wang, Y. Y., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). Relationships of instruction to amount of reading: An exploration of social, cognitive, and instructional connections. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30(1), 8-25.
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & VonSecker, C. (2000). Effects of integrated instruction on motivation and strategy use in reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(2), 331-341.
- Hall, T. J., & Smith, M. A. (2006). Teacher planning, instruction, and reflection: What we know about teacher cognitive processes. *Quest*, 58, 424-442.
- Halladay, J. L., & Moses, L. (2013). Using the Common Core standards to meet the needs of diverse learners: Challenges and opportunities. *The NERA Journal*, 49(1), 33-44.

- Hidi, S., & Renninger, K. A. (2006). The four-phase model of interest development. *Educational Psychologist, 41*(2), 111-127.
- Hiebert, E. H., & Grisham, D. L. (2012). What literacy teacher educators need to know about supporting teachers in understanding text complexity within the Common Core. *Journal of Reading Education, 37*(3), 5-12.
- Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). 'Just plain reading': A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*, 350-377.
- Krapp, A. (1991). Interest, motivation and learning: An educational-psychological perspective. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 14*(1), 23-40.
- Kreber, C., & Castleden, H. (2009). Reflection on teaching and epistemological structure: Reflective and critically reflective processes in "pure/soft" and "pure/hard" fields. *Higher Education, 57*, 509-531.
- Kwon, N. A., & Orrill, C. H. (2007). Understanding a teacher's reflections: A case study of a middle school mathematics teacher. *School Science and Mathematics, 107*, 6.
- Langer, J. A. (1995a). *Envisioning literature: Literary understanding and literature instruction*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Langer, J. A. (1995b). Literature and learning to think. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 10*(3), 207-226.
- Lapp, D., & Fisher, D. (2009). It's all about the book: Motivating teens to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(7), 556-561.
- Latrobe, K. H., & Drury, J. (2009). *Critical approaches to young adult literature*. New York: Neal-Schuman.
- Lee, H. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*. New York: Warner Books.
- Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. B. (2007). Introduction: Reframing sociocultural research on literacy. In C. Lewis, P. Enciso & E. B. Moje (Eds.), *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, agency, and power* (pp. 1-11). New York: Routledge.

- Marshall, C. R., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Matthews, R., & Chandler, R. (1998). Using reader response to teach "Beloved" in a high school American studies classroom. *English Journal*, 88(2), 85-92.
- McCutcheon, G., & Milner, H. R. (2002). A contemporary study of teacher planning in a high school English class. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(1), 81-94.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mitchell, M. (1993). Situational interest: Its multifaceted structure in the secondary school mathematics classroom. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(3), 424-436.
- Moley, P. F., Bandre, P. E., & George, J. E. (2011). Moving beyond readability: Considering choice, motivation, and learner engagement. *Theory into Practice*, 50(3), 247-253.
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards English language arts*. Washington D.C.: National Governors Association for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers.
- NCES. (2011). *The nation's reading report card: Reading 2011* (Vol. NCES 2012-457). Washington, D.C.: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- NCES. (2012). The condition of education: Status dropout rates. Retrieved September 20, 2012, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_sde.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_sde.asp)
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, 6301 et seq., 20 U.S.C.A. (West 2002).
- NRC. (2004). Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn. In Y. Committee on Increasing High School Students' Engagement and Motivation to Learn. Board on Children, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (Ed.). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Peery, A. B. (2013). Reading for the future: How the Common Core will change instruction. *The NERA Journal*, 48(2), 1-9.

- Pitcher, S., Albright, L., DeLaney, C., Walker, N., & Seunarinisingh, K. (2007). Assessing adolescents' motivation to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(5), 376-396.
- Probst, R. E. (1988). *Teaching literature in junior and senior high school*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ricker-Wilson, C. (1998). When the mockingbird becomes an albatross: Reading and resistance in the language arts classroom. *English Journal*, 49(3), 67-72.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Schiefele, U. (1991). Interest, learning, and motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3 & 4), 299-323.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schraw, G., Flowerday, T., & Lehman, S. (2001). Increasing situational interest in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(3), 211-224.
- Schraw, G., & Lehman, S. (2001). Situational interest: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 23-52.
- Shavelson, R. J. (1983). Review of research on teachers' pedagogical judgments, plans, and decisions. *The Elementary School Journal*, 83(4), 392-413.
- Showalter, E. (2003). *Teaching literature*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Thomas, G. (2010). Doing case study: Abduction not induction, phronesis not theory. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(7), 575-582.
- Tracey, D. H., & Morrow, L. M. (2006). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Vieira Jr., E. T., & Grantham, S. (2011). Perceptions of control facilitate reading engagement. *Reading Psychology*, 32(4), 322-348.

- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- Wendt, J. L. (2013). Combating the crisis in adolescent literacy: Exploring literacy in the secondary classroom. *American Secondary Education, 41*(2), 38-48.
- Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J. T., Perencevich, K. C., Taboada, A., Klauda, S. L., McRae, A., & Barbosa, P. (2008). Role of reading engagement in mediating effects of reading comprehension instruction on reading outcomes. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 432-445.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Zahorik, J. A. (1996). Elementary and secondary teachers' reports of how they make learning interesting. *The Elementary School Journal, 96*(5), 551-564.
- Zancanella, D. (1991). Teachers reading/readers teaching: Five teachers' personal approaches to literature and their teaching of literature. *Research in the Teaching of English, 25*(1), 5-32.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

April 11, 2013

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
RESEARCH

Ashley Davis  
Curriculum & Instruction  
College of Education  
Box 870232

Re: IRB # 13-OR-124: "The Conceptualizations of Interest, Reading Engagement, and Motivation in High School English Teachers' Literature Instruction"

Dear Ms. Davis,

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review Categories 5 and 7 as outlined below:

*(5) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.*

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your approval will expire on April 10, 2014. If the study continues beyond that date, you must complete the IRB Renewal Application. If you modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure (Investigator) form.

**Please use reproductions of the IRB-stamped teacher consent, parental permission, and assent forms.**

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this application, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



358 Rose Administration Building  
Box 870127  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0127  
(205) 348-8461  
FAX (205) 348-7189  
TOLL FREE (877) 820-3066

Carpanito, T. Myles, MSM, CIM  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office for Research Compliance  
The University of Alabama

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION  
PROGRAM

Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

**You are being asked to be in a research study.**

**The name of this study is**

The Conceptualizations of Interest, Reading Engagement, and Motivation in Two High School English Teachers' Literature Instruction

**This study is being done by**

Ashley L. Davis

Doctoral Student

The University of Alabama

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

\*This dissertation research is being completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor, Dr. Julianne Coleman, from the University of Alabama.

**What is the purpose of this study—what is it trying to learn?**

The research I wish to conduct is a study of how high school English teachers attend to student interest, reading engagement, and motivation in their literature instruction practices.

**Why have I been asked to be in this study?**

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a current high school English teacher who teaches literature.

**How many other people will be in this study?**

Because this is a case study, there will only be two total participants.

**What will I be asked to do in this study?**

You will only be asked to: a) Participate in two face-to-face interviews twice, lasting approximately 45 minutes to an hour each; b) Be observed teaching a literature unit 3 times a week for the duration of approximately 8 weeks; c) Offer any documents you use during teaching, such as lesson plans, handouts, or other resources; and d) Participate in one simulated reflection sessions, lasting 45 minutes to an hour.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB  
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 4/11/2013  
EXPIRATION DATE: 4/10/2014

**How much time will be spent conducting this study?**

This research will be for the Spring 2013 semester. The total goal for data collection is 12 weeks. However, you will select which literature unit you would like for me to observe you teach.

**Will being in this study cost me anything?**

This study will not cost you anything except the time you spend being interviewed and observed. However, you will receive a \$50 gift card to Barnes and Noble for your participation in the study.

**What are the benefits of my being in this study?**

Throughout the course of this study, you will be asked to vocalize your own beliefs about reading engagement, student interest, and motivation and how their beliefs influence their literature instructional practices. Further, you will be asked to reflect on your own teaching through watching video recordings of your own teaching. When teachers actively participate in reflection, they become more aware of the choices they make as teachers, which may increase the likelihood that they will engage more meaningful planning practices. Your participation in this dissertation study will seek to describe the teaching and reflection practices other teachers may replicate or benefit from reading about.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

If at any time the researcher perceives the study to have any detrimental effects or to cause a conflict of interest for participants, the research will be discontinued immediately. Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks for participants in this study. Pseudonyms will be used for all schools and participants to protect their identities. The school itself will only be identified by its general location.

**How will my privacy and confidentiality be protected?**

Privacy will be maintained throughout the data collection process. This will be achieved through protecting the teacher/subjects by using pseudonyms and barring markers of location in relation to specific geographies. Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's residence.

The privacy and confidentiality of the participant(s) will be protected in several ways. Consent forms, transcriptions, fieldnotes, and any relevant research data will be safely secured in a locked file in the researcher's residence. All transcribed data will be kept on the home computer of the primary investigator, which remains locked when not in use and original audio/and or visual recordings will be destroyed after approximately two to three years.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB  
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 4/11/2013  
EXPIRATION DATE: 4/10/2014

The data will be used by the researcher/primary investigator for presentations, dissertation work, and articles for publication. However, the audio and video recordings will not be shared publicly during presentations.

**Do I have to take part in this study?**

No. You can refuse to be in the study now or at any time in the future. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate. You may also withdraw at any time during this study if you no longer wish to participate. Your decision to participate or not participate in this research study will have no effect on your relations with your school/employer or The University of Alabama.

**What if new information is learned during the study that might affect my well-being or decision to continue in the study?**

If any new information is learned during this study, the researcher will inform you. You always have the right to withdraw consent.

**What if I have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?**

If you have any questions about this study, please let me know. If you have questions later, you may call me, Ashley L. Davis, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Julianne Coleman, at The University of Alabama at (205) 348-3248. If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at The University of Alabama, at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu). After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the UA Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

**What else do I need to know?**

You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. Save it in case you want to review it later or you decide to contact the investigator or the university about the study. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and the study is being carried out as planned.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB  
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 4/11/2013  
EXPIRATION DATE: 4/10/2014

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered. I understand what is required of me by taking part in this study. I freely agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
yes                                      no

I understand that part of my participation in this research study (the formal interviews and simulated reflection session) will be audio taped, and I give my permission to record the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
yes                                      no

I understand that part of my participation in this research study will be video taped (classroom observations), and I give my permission to record the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
yes                                      no

I would like to contact you in the future to see if you would be interested in participating in another research study. Please indicate below if you are willing to be contacted about any future research studies.

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
yes                                      no

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant                      Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator                      Date \_\_\_\_\_

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB  
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 4/1  
EXPIRATION DATE: 4/10/20

Parental Permission Form for Research Study

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM**

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

My name is Ashley L. Davis, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Alabama. I am completing a research study on how English teachers plan and teach lessons on literature in your child's English class. Because I will be collecting data during your child's English class, I want to inform you about the study and ask your permission to collect data in your child's class.

Please review the information below about my study as well as the attached "Assent Form" with your child, sign it checking the corresponding box that represents your approval for this study.

**The name of this study is**

The Conceptualizations of Interest, Reading Engagement, and Motivation in Two High School English Teachers' Literature Instruction

**This study is being done by**

Ashley L. Davis

Doctoral Student

The University of Alabama

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

\*This dissertation research is being completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor, Dr. Julianne Coleman, from the University of Alabama.

**What is the purpose of this study—what is it trying to learn?**

The research I wish to conduct is a study of how high school English teachers attend to student interest, reading engagement, and motivation in their literature instruction practices.

**Why has your child been asked to be in this study?**

Your child has been asked to participate in this study because he/she is a current high school English student who is enrolled in a literature course.

**How many other people will be in this study?**

The teacher and the other students in your child's class are being asked to participate in this study.

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

**What will your child be asked to do in this study?**

During this study, I will be observing the teacher while she teaches lessons on literature. Your child will be asked to participate in class like he/she normally would. I will not ask him/her any questions or look at any work submitted to the teacher. During my observations, I will video record what happens in the classroom to observe and record the teacher's instruction.

**How much time will be spent conducting this study?**

This research will be for the Spring 2013 semester. The total goal for data collection is 12 weeks.

**Will being in this study cost you or your child anything?**

This study will not cost you or your child anything except the time your child spends being observed during class.

**What are the benefits of my child being in this study?**

I do not think there are any risks for allowing your child to participate in this study. You might feel good about helping me highlight how your child's class participates in literature classes and discussions and teaching other English teachers ways they may wish to teach their own students literature.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to my child if he/she is in this study?**

If at any time the researcher perceives the study to have any harmful effects or to cause a conflict of interest for participants, the research will be discontinued immediately. Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks for participants in this study. False names will be used for all schools and participants to protect their identities. The school itself will only be identified by its general location.

**How will my child's privacy and confidentiality be protected?**

Privacy will be maintained throughout the data collection process. I will do this by protecting the teacher/subjects by using pseudonyms and barring markers of location in relation to specific geographies. Data collected (video recordings, notes, etc.) will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's residence.

The data collected will be used for presentations, dissertation work, and articles for publication. However, the video recordings will not be shared publicly during presentations.

**Does your child have to take part in this study?**

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

No. You can refuse to allow your child to participate in the study now or at any time in the future. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty if you choose not to allow your child to participate. Your child may also withdraw at any time during this study if you he/she longer wishes to participate.

**What if new information is learned during the study that might affect my child's well-being or decision to continue in the study?**

If any new information is learned during this study, the researcher will inform you. You always have the right to withdraw consent.

**What if I have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?**

If you have any questions about this study, please let me know. If you have questions later, you may call me, Ashley L. Davis, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Julianne Coleman, at The University of Alabama at (205) 348-3248. If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at The University of Alabama, at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu). After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the UA Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

**What else do I need to know?**

You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. Save it in case you want to review it later or you decide to contact the investigator or the university about the study. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and the study is being carried out as planned.

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered. I understand what is required of my child by taking part in this study. I freely agree allow my child to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

I understand that part of my child's participation in this research study will be video taped (classroom observations).

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

**The University of Alabama  
Human Research Protection Program**

Assent Form

Dear student,

My name is Ashley L. Davis, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Alabama. I am doing a research study on how high school English teachers plan lessons and teach literature. Since you are a student in a high school English class, I am asking you to be a participant in this study.

During class when your teacher is having a literature lesson, I will be observing what happens during class. I will not ask you to do anything extra other than participate in class as you normally would. Further, I will video tape class meetings so that I can analyze them later.

Your parental guardian knows we are asking you to do this, and it is OK with them.

No one will know your name or that you have participated in this study. I will not discuss what you do during class with anyone other than your teacher. Also, the videos that I take during class will be kept on my own personal computer that is protected with a password. I will not show the video to anyone outside your class. After I have finished this study, I will destroy the videos on my computer.

You are a volunteer, and you do not have to participate in this study unless you want to. If you start this study but then change your mind, you may withdraw from this study at any time. If you wish to stop, just tell your teacher or me.

I do not think there are any risks for participating in this study. You might feel good about helping me highlight how your class participates in literature classes and discussions and teaching other English teachers ways they may wish to teach their own students literature.

If you have any questions about this study, please let me know. If you have questions later, you may call me, Ashley L. Davis, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Julianne Coleman, at The University of Alabama at (205) 348-3248. If you have concerns about your rights in this research study, you may also contact Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at The University of Alabama, at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

If you would like to participate in this study, please sign below and indicate your willingness to video taped during class sessions. You can also have a copy of this letter to keep.

**UA IRB Approved Document**  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

Thank you very much for your interest.

Sincerely,

Ashley L. Davis  
aldavis13@crimson.ua.edu

---

I am willing to participate in this study:

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be video taped during class:

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

---

Name of Participant (Student)

---

Date

---

Person Obtaining Consent (Researcher)

---

Date

**UA IRB Approved Document**  
Approval date: 4/11/2013  
Expiration date: 4/10/2014

## Appendix B

### Pre-Unit Interview Protocol

#### 1. Background

- Tell me about your teacher education program.
  - What type of literature methods courses did you take?
  - Best advice received?
  - What do you feel you have put into practice that you learned?

#### 2. Interest

- How would you define student interest?
- What role do you feel interest plays in the English classroom?
- Describe the level of interest you feel your students have in your class content?
- How do you try and activate your students' interest? During literature instruction?

#### 3. Reading Engagement

- How would you define reading engagement?
- What role do you feel reading engagement plays in your classroom?
- Describe your students' engagement with texts?
- Are they engaged in the reading process? How do you know?

#### 4. Motivation

- How would you define motivation?
- What role do you feel motivation plays in your classroom?
- Describe your students' level of motivation?
- How do you try and motivate your students to read?

#### 5. Literature Instruction

- Tell me about what your students are reading.
- What types of instructional strategies do you typically use when you teach literature?
- Who does the talking during class time?
- What sorts of activities do your students do?
- How do you get them interested in reading?
- How do you get them engaged in reading?
- How do you work to motivate your students to read?
- How do you know this (above) happens?

## Appendix C

### Observation Protocol

1. Environment-Classroom Setting
  - How are the desks arranged?
  - What is on the walls?
  - Where is the teacher's desk?
  - Is there technology? What types?
2. Class Demographics
  - How many students?
  - Racial/gender makeup?
  - Day of the week
  - Time of class
  - Attendance
3. Text Used for Instruction
  - Which text is the class covering
  - What is being taught/learned?
  - Instructional strategies used during class? Literary theories?
  - What are the students doing?
  - What is the teacher doing?
4. Methods of Literature Instruction
  - New Criticism
  - Reader-Response Theory
  - Cultural Studies Approach to Literature
  - Teacher-Centered vs Student-Centered Activities
5. Mark any other connections to interest, reading engagement, and motivation