

## ABSTRACT

FLETCHER, MICHAEL SHANE. Finding Their Voices: A Narrative Inquiry of Sixth-Grade Lumbee Males Who Struggle with Reading. (Under the direction of Dr. Hiller A. Spires).

This narrative inquiry collective case study investigated the experiences of six sixth grade American Indian males of the Lumbee tribe who struggle with reading. Bounded within an asynchronous closed wiki site, students from three sixth grade classes participated in online threaded discussions and created, posted, and viewed multimedia projects related to topics from a shared reading of *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010) during a social studies unit about ancient Egypt. Collected over a two-month period, data sources included: (a) researcher field notes, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) student journal entries, (d) student work products submitted online in the wiki site, and (e) online threaded discussion (OTD) posts housed within the site. A combination of open coding and *a priori* coding was used as part of the analysis process. *A priori* coding was informed by Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). Narrative forms of data were also analyzed using a significance analysis process that addressed evaluative devices in narrating to explore meaning making processes used by the six cases. Four major themes emerged from the cross-case data analysis: (a) connecting, (b) conversing, (c) collaborating, and (d) comparing. Findings indicated Lumbee males in this study used offline and online conversation and collaboration with peers to accomplish academic goals when working within the wiki site. They also utilized agency regarding use of technology and took leadership in partnerships to assist others in completing online assignments, recreating selves into a successful academic identities. Future research should address effects on comprehension with studies conducted over longer periods of time that utilize online literature discussion and study mediated through social media technologies. Additionally, these students demonstrated a desire for

authentic and meaningful texts with Lumbee culture represented. After identification or creation of these texts for non-reservation American Indian males, future research should study effects these texts have on reading comprehension, engagement, identity, and agency for this population.

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Finding Their Voices: A Narrative Inquiry of Sixth-Grade Lumbee Males who Struggle with Reading

by  
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**DEDICATION**

*"A wish that she hardly dare to own,  
For something better she had known."  
John Greenleaf Whittier*

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Juanita Benton. Born during the Great Depression in rural Jackson County, Georgia, she was the oldest of twelve children. Never having much during her childhood, she dreamed of better for herself and her family. Returning to employment during retirement, she worked as a secretary for the English Department at what was then North Georgia College. It was during that time I was introduced to the collegiate world, where a college campus became my occasional playground during summer sessions. She was proud of my decision to become a teacher, believing it was what I was meant to do. She also believed in my dream of becoming a college professor and even paid several semesters during my program at North Carolina State University. She passed away during my time here, so it is now in her memory and in fulfilling her dreams for me I dedicate this work to her.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Michael Shane Fletcher was born in Marietta, Georgia in 1970. His family moved to Dawsonville, Georgia in 1979, where he attended Dawson County Schools through his high school graduation in 1988. He began his collegiate experience at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, TN in 1988 where he met his wife of 27 years, Tonnye Williams Fletcher. He transferred to Pembroke State University in the fall of 1992 and graduated with a BA in Sociology in 1994. He returned to UNC-Pembroke in the spring semester of 2000 and received his certification in Elementary Education in 2002, and then went on to earn a MAEd-Reading Degree in December of 2007. He is in his sixteenth year of teaching and has also served as an adjunct instructor for UNC-Pembroke for five years. He also currently serves on a team of pastors for Impact Outreach Church in Whiteville, NC.

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My parents, Charles and Sheryl Fletcher, have given encouragement and support, as well as financial assistance along the way when times were difficult. They have also lead in example by both having earned graduate degrees from The University of Georgia, and retiring after years of service in Georgia public schools.

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MSF

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*"I can't read that good, but I can read, some, like some big words I can read and some big words I can't read. Some of the people has to help me on words that I can't read."  
(Jonathan)*

#### Background

The number of eighth grade students performing at proficient or above in reading in the 2015 National Assessment of Education Progress test is 34 percent, which is a decrease of two percentage points from 2013 data (NAEP, 2015). In the context of academic reading within the schooling process, many of these students are considered to be struggling readers (Alvermann, 2009). Specifically, the proficiency of American Indian/Alaska Native students is below the national average, at 22 percent. Though this is an increase of four percent over the 2013 data, it is only a return to the previous level of proficiency reflected in the 2011 data (NAEP, 2015). American Indian/Alaska Native females continued to produce consistently higher National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores from 2005-2011 (NIES, 2011), performing nine points higher than their male counterparts in 2011. These data suggest that instructional approaches currently used to teach reading to American Indian males need further research and consideration.

Literature discussion groups (LDGs) of varying kinds have been shown to provide important benefits to students with various backgrounds and academic needs: (a) opportunities to engage in dialogue with other readers about texts (Daniels, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Gambrell, 1996), (b) motivation for participation in reading (Daniels, 2002), and (c) support for students to be successful with reading (Daniels, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell,

2001; Gambrell, 1996; Hodges, 2010). Several studies with online applications of LDGs have revealed positive implications specifically for struggling readers (Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Larson, 2009). These studies, however, did not specify American Indian learners as participants. There is an absence of the American Indian voice for students that struggle with reading and who have participated in online literature studies. The present study was conducted to narrate these voices and begin the dialogue about the experience these students have with LDGs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Literature discussion groups (LDGs), including literature circles (Daniels, 2002), are designed to provide students with opportunities to select texts to read in common with other readers within the classroom and to facilitate scheduled meetings among these students to discuss the text, over the course of the reading. This approach to literacy instruction encourages motivation and engagement among pre-adolescent and adolescent readers (Daniels, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Gambrell, 1996; Hodges, 2010). Research has shown this strategy is especially effective when students are given a choice of texts and are provided with literature that is both relevant and meaningful to the lives of the students reading those texts (Alvermann, 2009; Connors, 2013; Ivey, 1999). Studies have shown LDGs provide struggling readers with opportunities for success (Evans, 2002; Larson, 2009; Wolsey, 2004) and they are more engaged in reading because they feel part of a community when they can share a text with other peers (English, 2007; Hopper, 2005).

Studies have also shown there are issues in the management and functioning of LDGs, particularly with shifting the control of group discussions from male-controlled to

female-controlled as students grow (Bowers-Campbell, 2011; Clarke, 2006). In a study conducted over two school years, Clarke (2006) found gender control in LDGs switched from boys to girls from fourth to fifth grade. Also, with this switch in control comes a marginalization of boys as readers in the discussion group. Complicating this issue, Wolsey (2004) found that struggling readers are limited in participation in traditional LDGs when having to follow rigorous structures, such as those found in literature circles (Daniels, 2002), where students are generally assigned certain roles to fulfill during group discussions. Thus, by conducting traditional LDGs or literature circles in classroom practice, there is the potential to recreate micro examples of the larger society's marginalization practices, particularly for male struggling readers, an issue which represents an important focus in this study. However, using the Internet for online threaded discussions (OTDs) has been shown to provide struggling readers with opportunities to consider others' comments and to take time to think and respond to others, particularly in asynchronous environments (Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Larson, 2009; Wolsey, 2004), removing barriers to marginalized participants in traditional LDGs.

Though previous research has found that struggling readers may participate in OTDs and multimedia projects related to a text with access and thinking time because of the asynchronous format (Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Larson, 2004), there is no clear picture of the reader and the individual student experience within the overall group. In particular, research concerning non-reservation American Indian males in this context is needed since there are no published data on this topic. Compounding the problem is the lack of significant growth among American Indian students on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP) assessments from scores in 2005-2011 (NAEP, 2013). American Indian males still score lower than females, as well (NAEP, 2013). Schools that serve American Indian males would benefit from research findings for OTDs to help serve these students more effectively. Even with opportunities provided by social media technology and OTDs, there is a gap in the research concerning American Indian males who struggle with reading and specifically the nature of their experiences while participating in online literature discussions. This study addressed this gap in the research by looking at transactions sixth grade American Indian male students who struggle with reading have with texts and with other participants within a social media site. It also analyzed the process of making meaning these students engaged in, as revealed through a significance analysis of narrative data (Daiute, 2014) and then created an individual and collective narrative to bring the voices of these students to the surface.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text and with other readers when participating in an online literature discussion involving a collaborative Web 2.0 site. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) expressed transactions as a social learning process where the reader brings personal experience and understanding to the reading event and then fuses those concepts with what the author of the story expresses through the text. The Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) is also extended to literature discussion as readers share transactions with the text with each other. Building on this concept with using the Web 2.0 wiki technology, this study explored experiences of six struggling readers and

the transactions each had with the text and others. This is important because other studies have found online environments, especially those with asynchronous features, allow struggling students time to review comments made by others and to consider personal answers before posting (Grisham & Wolsey, 2009; Larson, 2009). These studies have not, however, targeted American Indian populations. Online environments can also help minimize control issues found in other studies with face-to-face literature discussion groups, such as gender control and social marginalization of struggling readers (Bowers-Campbell, 2011; Clarke, 2006; Wolsey, 2004). With asynchronous technology, which provides time to process information and develop answers, students are able to construct themselves in newer ways by more fully participating in a community of learners previously constrained by social norms and marginalizing practices. In a review of narrative inquiry as a research practice, Chase (2005) suggests online technologies allow narrative researchers the possibility to explore how students develop identity and community. Reflecting this perspective, this study sought to gather narratives about online reading experiences for sixth grade American Indian male struggling readers.

This study adds to the body of knowledge about how American Indian males, specifically Lumbee, who struggle with reading transact with a text and others. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text in an online collaborative literature study unit?
2. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with other students when participating in an online collaborative literature study unit?

3. What concepts concerning identity are revealed in the narratives of study participants?
4. To what extent do narratives of struggling American Indian male readers reveal concepts of agency when participating in a collaborative online literature study?

### **Preview of Methods**

Our lives tell stories. The unique experiences that each of us have help us to create our own narrative. In communicating our experiences with others, they become readers of the narrative that we share (Bruner, 1986). The hearer-reader interprets the narrative of one's life through clues and connections made from prior experience (Bruner, 1986). Applying this concept to research involves using the narratives of individuals to develop understanding of experience. These narratives can come from the stories writers tell of their experience (Bruner, 1986), from the various discourses with others (Chase, 2005), in conversations through media environments, such as emails, chatting, or instant messaging, or in multimedia projects students create (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daiute, 2014). In regards to this study, I was interested in exploring the experiences that sixth grade American Indian males identified as struggling readers have when transacting with a text through participation in an online literature study. These narratives were elicited from writings in class, semi-structured interviews, online threaded discussions, and online multimedia projects. A significance analysis process (Daiute, 2014) was applied to the collected narratives to identify meaning making processes students used throughout the study.

Identity formation and navigation is an important consideration for narrative research. Identity development progresses from early childhood through adolescent development, and

into adulthood. An individual defines self through positioning within a variety of contexts. These contexts develop in growing concentric circles from the self outward (Au, 1997; Brofenbrenner, 1979), to include family, gender, ethnicity, the local community, and the larger global community. Within each of these areas are resources for an individual to draw upon, representing a continuum of positive and negative influences on personal identity development.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that people are “both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others” (p. 4). Students in this study revealed their stories through multimedia projects, work samples, and products they created. Multimodal learning contexts provide opportunities for students to express themselves in more than written text, thus the stories they construct may also be conveyed through images, video, and music (Spires, Hervey, Morris & Stepflug, 2012). A multimodal approach is supported by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) who suggest that narratives might be read through other mediums such as “film, tape and canvas” (p. 8); each of these mediums is supported by, enhanced, and shared through the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies today.

Narrative inquiry uses a variety of sources for data collection (Bruner, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daiute, 2014). For this study I used five data sources: (a) field notes, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) student journal entries written within class, (d) student work products created and posted on the wiki site, and (e) online threaded discussions embedded with each page of the same wiki site.

Since this study specifically looked at sixth grade Lumbee males who struggle with reading, purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used to select participants. Sixty-one students participated in the online environment; of those, forty-nine submitted products, and contributed posts to online threaded discussions housed within the wiki site. Six American Indian males were selected from the sixty-one participants to build a rich thick description for individual cases and for a cross-case analysis in this collective case study (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted before, during, and after the online literature study unit. Member checks were conducted with the six participants during the final two interviews and in a final review of findings concluding the analysis process.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations for this study include, population, instructional practice, and focus on struggling readers. The population for this study was sixth grade students in a social studies classroom who are Lumbee males. Instructional practice was limited to a wiki site used to house a literature study with multimedia posts by students and online threaded discussions. Narratives for analysis were mainly gathered from spoken answers during interviews rather than written, though story telling through digital media was confirmed in interviews through member checks. Finally, this study focused on six selected struggling readers, while there were 55 other participants with varying reading levels participating in the same activities.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study addressed a need in the literature to build understanding about American Indian males who struggle with reading. It specifically focused on the Lumbee tribe, a non-reservation based tribe in the Southeastern United States. In addition to the fact that there are

several other non-reservation tribes within the region, which could benefit from this work, there is a need for research to understand and address issues of literacy. Given the state of education for American Indian students across the nation, this study helps bring the voice of one group of students to the conversation, which is needed in order to meet challenges placed before the United States' education system concerning tribal groups throughout the nation. The Obama Administration released a statement from the Executive Office of the President (2014) concerning native youth, which illuminates the state of education in America for American Indians, and which references the continued stagnation in reading scores on National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments. Situated in historical decisions and practices by governmental agents that sought to acculturate and assimilate tribes across the nation into the dominant culture, education for American Indian tribes is challenged by decades of poor decisions and mistreatment (The Executive Office of the President, 2014). The results of these decisions have caused the situation where so many American Indian students are assessed with low reading scores, particularly when assessments focus on academic reading skills. Further, with the low percentage of American Indian populations in comparison to other ethnic groups throughout the nation, research has often overlooked them to focus on other more prominent ethnic groups. This study sought to fill this gap in the literature and to narrate voices that have, thus far, been unheard.

Additionally, this study extends understanding about struggling readers and the use of Web 2.0 technologies, such as the wiki used to house the online literature study that included multimedia projects and online threaded discussions. Particularly, the focus for this project

was sixth-grade American Indian males, which have not been identified in the literature for this specific population in similar studies.

Finally, this study adds to our understanding of the Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995), and even more using it as a framework to look at transactions created with conversation and response to text mediated through technology. This study adds to, or perhaps more appropriately reinforces, our understanding about social learning theories and concentric levels of influence a learner encounters through interactions with peers in an online environment.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following discussion defines terms relating to this study, in order to provide readers with clarity in subsequent chapters.

**Agency:** Belief one has in one's ability to perform a task or accomplish goals and the awareness that belief generates in the capacity one has to influence the contexts for learning and action or participation in learning activities or life tasks (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Agents (or actors) have differing ways for "experiencing the world" for which "actors enter relationships with surrounding persons, places, meanings, and events" (p. 273).

**American Indian (AI):** For clarification purposes, I mainly use American Indian in reference to native people of the Americas throughout this document. There are some instances where the term *Native American* may have been used or referenced in a study. Use of either term varies in the literature and within native groups, but for purposes of this document they are used interchangeably.

**Literature Discussion Groups (LDGs):** Any gathering of readers to discuss a shared text. These may include, but are not limited to book clubs, literature circles, literature workshops, and book talks (Daniels, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Grisham & Wolsey, 2006).

**Online Threaded Discussions (OTDs):** Discussions housed within a website between participants on that site. Generally these center on a shared text. These discussions may be conducted synchronously, or asynchronously.

**Reader Transactions:** The creation of a new text when a reader encounters a text. When a reader brings personal experiences and connections to the understanding of a text and considers the intentions of the author, a new and individual text is created that is different than when another reader encounters the same text (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

**Struggling Readers:** Highly contested term that is debated among researchers (Allington, 2011; Alvermann, 2009; Hall, 2009). Broadly, this term refers to readers generally performing below 40% on a criterion-referenced test, who are at least two years below grade level and who make low grades in reading and language arts classes (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Hall, 2009).

**Transactions:** Interactions between two or more individuals through some social medium that causes changes to occur in each individual (Dewey & Bentley, 1949).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This qualitative narrative case study was designed to explore the experiences of six male struggling readers who self-identified as sixth grade American Indians in order to describe how these students create transactions with a text and with others. Working from an epistemological stance that views learning as a process of knowledge construction, this literature review will begin with the theoretical foundation underpinning the study and then examine the layers of research and theory that determined the research topic and helped to develop the research questions this study was designed to answer. The discussion is grouped around the following topics: (a) foundation for building knowledge, (b) reading as construction, (c) blueprints for building knowledge of struggling readers, (d) building knowledge through new literacies, (e) American Indian males who struggle with reading, and (f) narrative case study approach builds understanding.

#### **Foundation for Building Knowledge**

Many educators have accepted the concept of learning as a process that is constructive. There are numerous researchers and theorists who have contributed to the body of knowledge on this subject. This discussion will begin with the topic of Constructivism and add Social Learning theories, and then close with a discussion of the transactional nature of social interaction.

#### **Constructivism**

Cited as the “first American constructivist” (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 48), John Dewey provided a philosophy of education and practice known as Inquiry Learning (Dewey,

1916). This philosophy is structured on the concept that learning is a social process that builds knowledge from experience. This experience, when guided by a teacher who acts as a facilitator and co-learner in the process, provides students with learning opportunities that support and engage inquiry practices. A knowledgeable teacher can help provide resources and engaging activities that excite the mind and build interests for students (Dewey, 1916). When the teacher and the student are engaged together in the learning process, construction of new knowledge occurs. This new knowledge can then provide the student a foundation to interact with other learners and potentially increase and improve the overall outcomes of the construction.

### **Social Learning Theories**

Building on concepts of social learning, Vygotsky (1978) developed an understanding about the use of sign systems such as cultural language, writing systems, and counting systems, and their influence on a child's development. He used the concept of a zone of proximal development (ZPD) to explain the process a learner uses in building on current knowledge through the support of a more competent peer to gain access to new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1969), which has come to be known as Social Cognitive Theory, expands our understanding about the social processes that build knowledge for a learner. Within each of the phases of observational learning, which include attentional, retention, production, and motivation, learners build knowledge. Working through these phases, a learner will attend to modeled behavior within a social interaction, then by employing repeated practice, or rehearsal, will retain memory of the new learning, will transform the learned concept into actions, and finally work from motivation to gain the

new understanding (Bandura, 1986, pp. 51-64). Within this theory, Bandura (1986) also explores the concepts of *self-efficacy*, which is the perception one has concerning his ability to accomplish goals, and which supplies the drive for learning to occur (p. 391).

### **Transactional Nature of Social Interaction**

John Dewey and Arthur Bentley (1949) redefined the concept of social interaction between individuals as transactional. In any situation where two or more people come together, there is a change that occurs within each person as a result of that interaction. They called this an “unfractured observation” where the experience is unique to the participants and the context of that event (p. 108). The term transaction demonstrates the semiotic relationship between contact with others and the change within oneself that occurs because of that event. These transactions are unique to each individual experience and to each individual participant, for in another meeting of the same people, the context will have changed. Each person will have experienced different events leading up to the encounter and will come away with a differing response from the previous experience.

These concepts lay the foundation for understanding about learning processes in general. The next section reviews how these ideas are applied to understanding the process of reading and literacy.

### **Reading as Construction**

Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1995) introduced the Transactional Reader Response Theory. This theory provides the foundation for understanding how a reader brings an individual set of experiences and understanding to the reading act. During the act of reading, the reader experiences a social interaction with the author, which Rosenblatt (1938/1995)

comes to call transaction, adopting the term from Dewey and Bentley (1949) and thus altering her text to include this term in subsequent publications, citing them in the process. For reading, a transaction is a social event that takes place between the author and the reader, as the reader builds a new text or “poem” as Rosenblatt (1978/1994) calls it, adding personal experiences and responses to the story, thus a building process takes place (p.14). She goes on to say, "The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader" (p. 20). This suggests any reading of a text is situated within those circumstances, thus each and every reading has the potential for developing its own set of transactions. The responses a reader has when reading are a result of the transactions he or she has when reading the text. These responses can be identified on a continuum from an “efferent” stance to an aesthetic stance, depending on the intention of the reading. A reader who selects to read information may find personal transactions are more efferent, or instructive, whereas a reader who reads for enjoyment may find the reading defined more as an aesthetic, or enjoyable experience. Depending on the level of interest evoked in the student by any given topic, an informational reading can take on a more aesthetic stance.

Further, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) suggested that when students engage in literature discussion where sharing of responses occur, a concentric effect of meaning construction takes place. As students listen to transactions revealed by other readers with the same text, they are then compelled to review personal responses and return to the text for further transactions. This concept leads to the instructional potential that literature discussion groups (LDGs) provide.

These concepts related to reading as a constructive process were extended in other studies. For example, when using Schema Theory for a theoretical lens, Anderson, Reynolds, Schalelrt, and Goetz (1977) found readers combine “personal history, knowledge, and belief” to develop a personal “interpretation” of a text (p. 376). Readers build meaning through using previously acquired knowledge connected to the text (Spiro, 1980). Spivey (1990) also refers to reading and writing as a constructive process that uses textual cues and connections to prior experience (p. 257). Meaning takes on organization as constructs develop in the reading process (Spivey, 1990). A construct may take on multiple representations as readers can make multiple connections to the textual cues (Flower, 1987).

### **Literature Discussion Groups as Context for Knowledge Construction**

Literature discussion groups (LDGs) have been applied to reading classes in various ways (Daniels, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Gambrell, 1996). The Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002) approach uses a process of sharing transactions with a text by having students respond to a text and share those responses with a group, often by assuming various roles to support discussion with the group. Students form groups by selecting a text from choices provided by the classroom teacher, and gather with their groups to discuss various responses to the text following an assigned reading. LDGs have been found to develop metacognitive awareness, increase mutual respect through dialogue, and encourage collaboration in a learning community (Commeyras & Sumner, 1998). Students also learn about social behavior and how to conduct discussions with others on a given topic (Evans, 2002). LDGs have positive implications for struggling readers through scaffolding with stronger readers in heterogeneous groups (Moller, 2005). Discussion groups can also

scaffold bilingual learners (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2000) and students in special education (Blum, Lipsett, & Yocum, 2002). Malock (2002) also determined that the scaffolding of learners within discussion groups is an important component and can be accomplished through direct and explicit instruction by the teachers in order for students to engage in the discussion group. Larson (2009) found that students who are shown how to develop questions for discussion groups become more involved in the process, a finding that was further validated when applied in an online learning community framework. When used in an online environment, particularly one that provides asynchronous access, struggling readers have more time to consider what they will post, and have opportunities to be heard by the group, in contrast to face-to-face LDGs where struggling readers are often silenced (Grisham & Wolsey, 2006).

### **Blueprints for Building Knowledge of Struggling Readers**

Defining struggling readers is difficult at best. Researchers have suggested perhaps it is educators and the education system itself that have created the phenomenon and provided the term (Alvermann, 2009; Hall, 2012); by doing so, they have created a sense of identity dictated by the educational system rather than one that is generated by how students see themselves as readers (Hall, 2012). The system further compounds this problem for adolescent readers by not providing interesting materials or appropriately leveled texts for class instruction (Allington, 2011). For adolescent readers, this seems to be significant when the data for eighth grade shows 64 percent of students are reading at a basic reading level or below (NAEP, 2013). By only using this measure as a defining point for identifying struggling readers, the majority of students would be labeled as such, and this is a pressing

concern in middle school, where textbooks are often written above grade level (Allington, 2011). This high percentage of students reading below standard levels complicates the task of defining struggling readers. It does, however, imply there is a continued need for further research and development of instructional strategies to move students forward in their acquisition of reading skills. Complicating this is the traditional focus on specific skills in segmented tasks and selections, whereas current research (e.g., Allington, 2011) suggests students need to read more in order to improve reading comprehension and that reading should be in appropriately leveled books that are self-selected based on interest. For struggling readers this segmentation can compound the problem when instruction in classes is more structured around skill building activities using teacher-provided texts, instead of sustained reading using student-selected materials (Allington, 2001, p. 37).

Middle school struggling readers need opportunities to share with classmates and to interact with other more competent readers, which can be addressed through instruction that involves self-selection of texts and opportunities to discuss texts with others (Daniels, 2002; Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Wilhelm & Novak, 2011). Adolescent students also need reading materials that are culturally responsive and they benefit from instructional strategies that are sensitive to various cultural backgrounds, in addition to engaging the multi-literacies they already utilize (Alvermann, 2001; Langer, 2009). It has also been shown that struggling readers respond well to reading tasks when they are presented in authentic ways that address needs of individual learners (Fisher & Ivey, 2006). Concerning struggling readers, Allington (2011) posits that teachers need to provide vocabulary instruction and multi-genre, multileveled texts, supply reading materials that interest students, and offer opportunities for

students to write about topics that interest them. Creating these opportunities for students produces more academic work, and with self-selection of texts, engagement is “high and sustained” (Allington, 2007a, p. 278).

### **Literature Discussion Groups and Struggling Readers**

Literature discussion groups (LDGs) have been shown to provide struggling readers support in comprehension of texts (Finke, 1997; Gambrell, 1996) as well as motivation to read (Gambrell, 1996). When these discussions are formed by students’ choice of reading texts, motivation becomes a key factor (Daniels, 2002; Gambrell, 1996). This concept is particularly important for middle school students, who like to “read when they have access to materials” that are “interesting” and available in “multiple levels” (Ivey, 1999, p. 188). Middle school students also want “opportunities to share” with “teachers and classmates” (Ivey, 1999, p. 188). Allington (2011) stresses the importance of motivation as well, specifying the importance of guiding students to find books that are appropriately leveled during the selection process.

Using online technologies to support LDGs has the potential to increase student engagement. By using online sites, such as wikis, students become engaged and encouraged to work collaboratively with peers on projects related to a text (Davies, 2009; Imperatore, 2009; Knobel & Lankshear, 2010; Richardson, 2009). This phenomenon has the potential to provide struggling readers further access to participation and potential increases in understanding, a topic that will be explored more fully in the subsequent sections of this review of literature. It has been demonstrated that struggling middle grades students need authentic reading and writing activities to engage in learning (Fisher & Ivey, 2006), thus

online technologies have the potential to provide the authenticity students need as technology is part of their lives.

### **Building Knowledge through New Literacies**

Technology evolves over time and place as we seek new ways to address challenges in society. Technological innovation follows a similar process as the concept of construction, since new ideas and innovations are built on what has been successful, or even what has not, in the past. From the very earliest inventions of tools created to hunt, farm, and build, humans have been constructing new knowledge. This is true in the area of literacy, as well.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, computers, the Internet, social media, and multimedia tools have transformed communication. Literacy, which in the past was easily conceptualized in terms of reading and writing print media, has also changed. This change has compelled educators and researchers to redefine the term literacy and has sparked many debates about what these new literacies are (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2009). Defining these new literacies and determining how they are placed within the larger research body, has revealed several major divisions. There are three main groups of researchers who have contributed to the definitions of new literacies, all of which have undergirded this present study.

#### **Multi-literacies and The New London Group**

In the 1990s there was an emerging reality that defining literacy and providing literacy instruction to students was rapidly evolving (The New London Group, 1996). As the Internet connected people from around the globe, educators were urged to develop a “meta-language” that would provide grammar instruction in “language, images, texts, and meaning-

making interactions” that would allow for effective communication across these cultures (The New London Group, 1996, p. 76-77). The group suggested five defined modes of learning: (a) visual, (b) audio, (c) gestural, (d) spatial, and (e) multimodal (The New London Group, 1996, p. 77). The final mode, multimodal, refers to situations where there are two or more of the other modes of learning working together to make meaning. These ideas are supported by Social Semiotics Theory (Kress, 2003), which conveys the idea that learning is transformative for the reader/consumer as well as the author/creator when there is a dynamic sharing back-and-forth, which the Internet and telecommunication devices allow. The relationship between a reader/consumer and an author/creator Kress (2003) is similar to the transactional nature of author and reader relationship described by Rosenblatt (1978/1994). Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) exploration of the new poem (or text) that is created as a result of the transactional relationship between the author and reader, which is further developed in literature discussion, provides a foundation for this present study, which extends this understanding to the transactional nature of social networking technologies used in literature studies.

### **New Literacy Studies**

James Paul Gee is credited with helping to form the New Literacy Studies (NLS), which was an outgrowth of the work conducted by The New London Group (1996). One of the main charges of the NLS was to shift perspectives from the concept of reading as a model of literacy to include social and cultural contexts of various social groups accessing texts and other types of content through digital media. NLS challenged traditional notions about literacy by extending understanding of this concept to include varying degrees of access

people of differing social classes have to communicate with new digital literacies (Mills, 2010). Gee challenges researchers and educators to view development from within the social and cultural contexts of access and use of technology and to consider marginalized groups (Gee, 1998). Gee (1990) sought a new definition of literacy in terms of globalization and changing cultural norms, where others were looking at the changing technologies as defining new literacies, which leads to the third group of perspectives contributing to the definition.

### **New Literacies Continually Evolving with Technology**

A final contributing group of educators and researchers have added to the understanding and definition of new literacies from a psycholinguistic background that looks at reading comprehension with online texts. This group claims defining new literacies is deictic, that there is no fixed stationary definition of literacy (Leu, 2000; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). Since technologies are rapidly changing and altering the context mediated through the Internet, there is the “potential” for a “continuous redefinition of literacy” (Coiro et al., 2009, p. 5). The deictic nature of changing Web 2.0 technologies and components the students in the current study used to share and collaborate on topics support this position.

### **Meaning Making Processes Build on New Literacies Foundation**

Research in the area of new literacies is sometimes difficult due to the rapidly changing nature of technology. Quantitative studies can be challenging due to the difficulty of isolating a skill or a technology out of the context of learning for the participants, as many technologies are interconnected and create a sense of interdependence with one another (Kulikowich, 2009). However, there have been studies that help lay a foundation for

continued efforts to quantify data (Mayer, 2009; Kulikowich, 2009). For example, Mayer (2009) has looked at using images with text used to convey meaning and had found long-term memory is aided by presenting information in multiple modes. One approach in providing for multiple modes, also referred to as modes of learning (The New London Group, 1996), is mediated online with multimedia components working together. Meaning making occurs through Social Semiotics described by Kress & van Leeuwen (2001), as well as in video gaming formats (Gee, 2009), which spur learners to further exploration (Facer et al., 2009). Learning in these modes is always in motion; as students navigate through web pages or video game scenes, they build knowledge throughout each of these events, and literacies are needed to accomplish this navigation (Kress, 2011).

### **Building tools of Web 2.0 and Social Media for Struggling Readers**

Using Web 2.0 and social media components, educators have potential opportunities to provide struggling readers access to more meaningful transactions with texts as they participate online (Larson, 2009; Wolsey, 2004). The asynchronous nature of Web 2.0 technologies allows participants to work collaboratively and to communicate with one another without having to be in real time. Struggling readers have time to read and re-read posts by other participants before constructing personal responses (Wolsey, 2004). This process time gives students an opportunity to reflect that they are not given in traditional face-to-face discussions, where comments are more instantaneous and spoken by those who are comfortable in sharing (Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Wolsey, 2004). Students feel more able to join in discussion when they are not pressured by time constraints (Bowers-Campbell, 2011) or marginalized by other participants in the group (Clarke, 2006). These studies reveal

potential implications for instruction with struggling readers, yet no studies, to date, have explored these implications for American Indian populations.

### **American Indian Males who Struggle with Reading**

The Obama Administration released a statement from the White House concerning Native Youth (2014) that outlined the historical contexts and illuminated current situations those historical events have impacted. This statement focused on the educational performance of American Indian and Alaska Natives in math and reading, using data pulled from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). This metric has been used to assess student reading performance in grades four and eight for several decades. Using data generated from this study, the National Indian Education Study (NIES) explored data concerning American Indian/Alaska Native students. These students continue to perform lower than Caucasian students on reading. Further, scores for this group have been stagnant for a decade. No significant change was noted from 2005-2011 scores (NIES, 2011). In looking at the NAEP scores for 2013, there is no significant change in scores by American Indian and Alaska Native students, though there has been growth for other races and for students overall (NAEP, 2013). In reading, American Indian girls continue to score higher than boys (NAEP, 2013). This information supports the necessity for more research concerning how to address the needs of this specific population.

Issues surrounding American Indian education are complicated by historical implications of policies toward indigenous people in the United States (Executive Office of the President, 2014). Strong assimilationist efforts through Indian boarding schools around the country worked to drive the Indian out of a person and replace him with a Euro-American

identity. *The White House Report on Native Youth* (2014) describes the "Carlisle model" and its effects on educating American Indians (p. 8). Practices, such as forcing students to speak only English, wearing uniforms instead of native clothing, and boarding students away from parents worked to remove much of the language, practices, and culture from the students (Executive Office of the President, 2014). One of the more difficult consequences for students was a sense of "alienation" and an inability to "connect with their families," as a result of the changes enforced upon them (Executive Office of the President, 2014). Policies drastically changed with the Indian Education Act of 1972; however, "lasting scars" remain in effect (Executive Office of the President, 2014, p.12).

The Lumbee tribe located mainly in the southeastern United States represents "the largest Native American group east of the Mississippi and the seventh largest in the United States" (Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick, & Oxendine, 2002, p.2). There is little research published on this group and of other non-reservation tribes. Though all tribes may share some commonalities concerning historical marginalization as native people, each has unique characteristics. In the case of the Lumbee, there are differences that need to be explored and better understood if education is to address the slow and sometimes stagnant growth in reading scores (NAEP, 2015). Addressing this issue, Collins (2015) shares the following need for further research in his dissertation:

In particular, additional information is needed from other southeast tribes who have experienced years of colonization yet view themselves as not assimilated. They may have adopted majority ways in order to survive, but they still rely on traditional means as a way of survival. Their Indianness is celebrated in their communities and

they have a strong sense of identity, but their stories do not pervade the existing literature. (p. 167)

His study specifically focused on experiences of higher education student, and he goes on to say in his discussion, "future research should include a diverse array of Native voices to tell a somewhat collective yet varied story of American Indians in higher education" (Collins, 2015, p. 168). Though he was speaking about higher education, the same thing can be said for lower schools. More research needs to be conducted with non-reservation tribes, so that policies and practices can be adjusted to meet the educational needs of this population.

Many Lumbee people speak a "dialect of English" referred to as Lumbee English (Wolfram, et. al., 2002, p. 2). Even though "not all Lumbee speak this dialect" most "community members are familiar with Lumbee English and readily understand it" (Wolfram, et. al., 2002, p. 2) and can "switch into and out of" it (Blu, 1980/2001, p. 160). While Tuscaroran and Cherokee languages are still spoken within their respective Indian communities, many of the tribes in the Southeast have lost their ancestral language (Wolfram, et. al., 2002). This is important to recognize as studies have been conducted with other tribes, mainly reservation groups, that reveal findings suggesting texts should be developed for students of those tribal groups in their native tongue and have characters, places, and events that they can identify with. This presents a more difficult scenario for Lumbee students, since Lumbee English is not Standard English. Scott & Brown (2008) found Lumbee students in higher education are challenged to modify and adapt their native dialect to conform to the academic Standard English norms within the institution. This dismissal, in fact, may be part of the problem for reluctant Lumbee readers, and for this

study, boys, who are unable to read stories with characters who are like them, and especially who speak like them. Since Lumbee English dialect is an important part of Lumbee cultural identity (Wolfram, et. al., 2002, pp. 19-21), this may be part of the struggle.

Building on strengths of Lumbee culture and experiences of males within the community, this study sought to provide a new narrative that recognizes cultural influences on schooling and practice that would promote positive literacy development.

### **Narrative Case Study Approach Builds Understanding**

As stated in Chapter One, our lives tell stories. Each of us has personal experiences that help us to create our own narrative. In communicating our experiences to others, they become readers of the narratives we share (Bruner, 1986). Bruner (1986) defines how the hear-reader interprets the narrative of one's life through clues and connections made from prior experience. In using this concept in research the narratives of individuals are gathered through various collection methods to develop understanding of experience. Traditionally, these narratives come from the stories one tells about his or her experience, and from the various discourses with others (Bruner, 1986; Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daiute, 2014). In regard to the present study, I was interested in exploring the experiences of sixth grade American Indian males identified as struggling readers when participating in an online literature study, in which students could share projects, view other projects, and use the discussion thread features to reflect on any number of topics related to the shared reading text and the posted projects.

Daiute (2014) details procedures for conducting a significance analysis process with narrative data. This process explores meaning making processes a narrator reveals through

use of evaluative devices to narrate personal experiences. There are several types of evaluative devices guiding this analytic process. Narrators use words that reveal psychological states that are identified as affective, cognitive, or reported speech. They also employ (a) intensifiers, (b) causal connectors, (c) negations and hedges, and (d) qualifiers to build meaning in their stories. Intensifiers are words that add expression and emphasis to the narrative, which could also include non-word characters used in a written narrative to include punctuation and expressions of emotion (Daiute, 2014, p. 156). Causal connectors are words that reveal cause and effect situations (Daiute, 2014, p. 157). Negations are used to negate statements with negative contractions or provide non-committal words (Daiute 2014, p. 157), Hedges are “barely noticeable evaluation that something is out of the ordinary” (Daiute, 2014, p. 157). Finally, qualifiers are words used to describe or verify a statement further, such as “evaluative adjectives” (Daiute, 2014, p. 156). A significance analysis process utilizes word counts through identifying each of the evaluative devices and calculating percentages of their use against the total word count for a narrative. The use and placement of each of these devices reveal meaning making processes created by narrators to construct the story of their experiences (Daiute, 2014). This particular analytic process, like Transactional Reader Response Theory, looks at meaning making and can help show how readers experience text and literature study activities related surrounding a text.

### **Identity Formation Important in Narrative Research and for Readers**

Identity formation and navigation is an important consideration for narrative research. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us that people are “both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain

themselves to others” (p. 4). These stories develop over time as individuals continue to refine the narratives they tell. Identity development progresses from early childhood through adolescent development, and into adulthood. An individual defines self through positioning within a variety of contexts. Researchers have applied the concept of identity formation to readers (Hall, 2012). Students have learned to identify themselves as a certain type of reader based on social norms and practices within the classroom (Moje & Luke, 2009). These contexts develop in growing concentric circles from the self (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Au, 1997) outward to include family, gender, ethnicity, the local community, the larger community that local community is situated in, and the larger global setting. Within each of these areas are resources for an individual to draw upon in a continuum of positive and negative influences on personal identity development.

### **Agency in Narrative Research and the Reader**

As a dimension of identity navigation, the notion of agency in narrative research takes into consideration the individual actor “agentively engaging in narrative practices” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 106). The term agency is applied to the belief an individual has about personal ability to accomplish a task. For Emirbayer and Mische (1998) agency includes three elements, the iterational, the projective, and the practical-evaluative. The iterational involves an agent using prior experience and “past patterns of thought and action” working to “sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time” (p. 371). An agent can utilize the “cultural toolbox” to guide actions based on cultural norms and practices (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 982). The projective element brings the ability of the agent to consider “future trajectories” of certain actions that are “creatively reconfigured based on the hopes,

fears, and desires for the future” (p. 371). Considerations of the future can influence how an actor will direct a course of action based on projected futures for current actions (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 988). This element factors into narrative research by presenting an opportunity to examine narratives that reveal changes in courses agents have made in life based on how they have addressed “emerging problems” (p. 989). Finally, the practical-evaluative element refers to the ability of the agent to evaluate the possible outcomes of “alternate possible trajectories” as situations evolve (p. 371). Essentially, the proverbial “fork in the road” metaphor reveals the decision making process whereby an agent navigates decisions by evaluating possible outcomes for actions before acting out those decisions (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 996). Applying concepts of agency in multi-literacies, Kalantzis and Cope (2009) suggested that “meaning making is an active, transformative process” for which the student becomes an active participant in the meaning making process (p. 28). In using multimedia approaches to literacy instruction, Gallagher and Ntelioglou (2011) suggest collective writing provides learners with opportunities to develop transformative meaning from individual understandings to collective ones (p. 329).

### **Summary**

The present study utilized multimodal approaches through an online wiki environment to communicate and narrate the experiences of six individual American Indian male struggling readers, and then transform their individual stories into a collaborative narrative that tells the collective experiences of the entire group. The discussion in this chapter outlined the foundational components of this study. This study began with constructivist theories and built on those with social learning theories, establishing a

foundation for using Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) Transactional Reader Response Theory as a lens for interpreting student narratives and online participation. Further, this study explored the interest in literature discussion, and more specifically, with struggling readers, and the use of new literacies to develop newer formats for discussion. Additionally, this study addressed the need for more research with American Indian males, specifically Lumbees and finally, examined selection of narrative inquiry, including the topics of identity formation and agency, for this qualitative study. The following chapter focuses on the methodology used to collect and analyze the data.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This qualitative collective case study used a narrative inquiry approach to give voice to sixth grade American Indian males who struggle with reading. This chapter details the methodology for this study (Creswell, 2013). The following topics will be addressed: (a) design and research paradigm, (b) researcher context and sample selection process, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) my roles and assumptions in this context, and (f) issues of validity and reliability.

The purpose of this study was to describe how sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text and with other readers when participating in an online literature discussion involving a collaborative Web 2.0 site. The research questions were:

1. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text in an online collaborative study unit?
2. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with other participants when participating in an online collaborative literature study unit?
3. What concepts concerning identity are revealed in the narratives of the study participants?
4. To what extent do narratives of sixth grade struggling American Indian male readers reveal concepts of agency when participating in a collaborative online literature study?

### **Design and Research Paradigm**

This study was designed with theoretical perspectives that support learning as an inquiry process (Dewey, 1916) and as situated in a social world of activity (Vygotsky, 1978). The study also approached the investigation of struggling readers using a lens of Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994), which contends that students have transactions with texts they read and that when placed in opportunities to share those transactions with others the result deepens a reader's understanding of that text. The framework for these transactions in this study was an online environment created for students to share multimedia projects related to themes within a shared text and to participate in online threaded discussions (OTDs) about the projects and the book. The online literature discussion groups (LDGs) in this project were situated during a larger social studies unit related to the shared text.

An important consideration in the selection of narrative inquiry as a methodology for this study was the concept of identity. Identity has been the subject of numerous narrative studies. Identity development moves in a continuum from early childhood to adulthood. Contexts influence positioning an individual makes concerning identity. These influences work in concentric circles growing from the self to the larger social contexts surrounding that individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Au, 1997). These circles of influence provide resources for an individual to develop understanding and positioning in society.

This study collected and analyzed narrative data from six sixth-grade American Indian males who struggle with reading in order to develop an understanding of their experiences as struggling readers in a collaborative online environment. The use of

narratives was important in this study, which focused on American Indian males, as each of us creates a narrative about our own lives and experiences (Bruner, 1986). Knowing this, it provided the basis for better understanding the experiences each had individually and collectively. As the researcher, I assumed the role of hearer-reader (Bruner, 1986) in order to interpret the narratives of these students' experiences within the context of this bounded online environment. The use of the term "struggling reader" is contested in various contexts (Allington, 2011; Alvermann, 2009; Hall, 2010); however, for the purpose of this study, I identified students who were at least two years below grade level on standardized tests and who struggle to make passing grades in reading class. Examining state End-Of-Grade test scores and conferring with the English Language Arts teacher about student's performance in class verified these criteria. Individual scores were only used to help me identify those students who scored within the two-year range and are not specifically reported out be individual students in this study. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this study in order to protect student identities. Also, since students who are identified as Exceptional Children (EC) have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and thus receive support services from other professionals within the school, I chose to use students who were not identified as EC for the purposes of this study.

Multiple data sources were used during this narrative inquiry. These included: (a) field notes, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) student journal entries written within class, (d) student work products created and posted on the wiki site, and (e) online threaded discussions embedded within each page of the same wiki site. Within the context of the online site, students posted multimedia projects, which were also viewed as narratives. The

meaning making process students used to understand the text and the transactions others had with the text is consistent with the study of new forms of literacy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) and with narrative inquiry, in particular the significance analysis approach used for this study (Daiute, 2014). This study employed the participants' non-print methods of communication to contribute to the narrative of students within the context of this online literature study unit. Other narratives were collected from student reading response journals and participant interviews, all of which are types of sources used in other narrative studies (Bruner, 1986; Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daiute, 2014). Member checks were conducted during the middle and final interviews, as well as when the analysis process was complete. This engaged students in collaboratively narrating their stories with me (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

As I assumed the role of narrator of these narratives, as Mishler (1995) indicated, I did not just "find stories" (p. 117) in this process, but rather I created the stories using an analytical lens. In order to remain as close as possible to the narratives the data sources provided, I used the constant-comparison method for the analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I analyzed each data source, I reviewed previously identified themes and identified newly emerging themes. This created a layering effect for the narratives that revealed the experiences these students had with the text and others throughout this process. This was done within the context of each case and then through a cross-case analysis process, thus a collective narrative was created.

### **Researcher Context and Sample Selection Process**

The students selected for this study were non-reservation based American Indians living in the rural Southeastern United States. The participants attend an elementary school that was formerly a segregated school for the local Indian population, thus situated in what was traditionally an American Indian community; however, there are other ethnic groups who attend this school and who live within the community today. American Indians make up sixty percent of the population in this school. Hispanics make up the second largest population within the school at about thirty percent, while African American, Caucasian, and Asian students collectively make up less than ten percent of the total population. Informed consent was obtained from students and parents (see Appendices A & B), and district approval was obtained. An explanation of the process of using avatars and pseudonyms within the online site and pseudonyms in this document was provided in the informed consent. Additionally, the wiki site used to house the online literature study unit was an approved site for use by teachers and students within the district.

In order to gain a rich description of the experiences six American Indian males revealed through narratives, I selected to use purposive sampling (Stake, 2005) to be intentional about collecting data from students identified as Lumbee and also struggling readers. Purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002) was used to provide an opportunity to gather data to create a rich, thick description (Merriam, 2002) of the students who participated in the online collaborative literature discussion group. Students provided signed informed consent forms (see Appendix A) in order to participate in this study. It was

also necessary for selected participants to have participated in the online activities within the wiki site and to have completed the reading of the text.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us that people are “both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others” (p. 4). For students in this study, this narrative was revealed through conversations they had during interviews, posts they made on the online threaded discussions (OTDs) housed within the wiki site, or through the multimedia projects they created, viewed, and shared online. It was through the combination of activities online and discussions each student had in the wiki that they told their stories. Thus, participation was important for students to be selected as cases in this study.

### **Snapshots of Participants**

**Junior.** Junior is an outspoken student often blurting out his opinions and shifting class attention away from lessons. He is a jovial student who likes to make jokes and generate laughter throughout the class period. He enjoys playing football, baseball, and hunting. He showed himself, as the proverbial saying goes, 'honest to a fault' in sharing his opinion on many topics whether solicited, or not. He is the only one of the six participants that used his Lumbee identity in the initial description of himself in the first interview. He is a local tribal dancer and has demonstrated his style of native dancing to the school body during annual American Indian Heritage month celebrations. He lost his mother when he was in second grade and lives with his father and older brother.

**Jacob.** Jacob is one of the most respectful children I have worked with. He always responds to adults with “Yes sir” and “Yes ma’am.” He likes sports, particularly baseball.

He enjoys hunting with his dad and his grandfather. Like Junior, he enjoys playful banter in class and often joins in the jokes and commentary of other disrupters. However, he is not usually one to start the disruptive activities. He will work when prompted, though he is often easily distracted, especially by his peers. He enjoys working on collaborative projects more than independent work.

**John.** John is an energetic young man who loves football, baseball, and dirt bikes. He loves to be outdoors and enjoys hunting and fishing. Out of the six boys, John probably reads the most at home. His older sisters and mother are avid readers. He chooses to spend time reading in the living room some evenings during a week as a break from playing his video games (interview, September 16, 2015). Though he spends discernably more time reading at home than his peers, he does not do well with school-wide incentive reading programs, and he struggles to make passing grades in reading classes. He has a quick wit and also enjoys a jovial atmosphere in the class, sometimes blurting out remarks and gaining the attention of his classmates.

**Jonathan.** Jonathan is the least sports-oriented out of the six boys. His dad passed away when he was young, and he lives with his paternal grandmother and uncle so he can attend school in the district. His grandmother is a teacher, so he is exposed to reading at home, as he sees her grade papers and prepare assignments as part of her work. He also enjoys spending time outside and playing games with his cousins. He recognizes his younger cousin as a better reader and places him above most girls he has observed (interview, September 18, 2015). He does not participate in classroom banter as much as the previously mentioned participants; however he does not shy away from class participation

when called upon. He has a positive attitude toward his peers and works to keep peace among them. When selecting collaborative partners, he tends to select girls in the class, rather than boys to work with. This contrasts with the other participants who tend to choose boys for collaborative partners.

**Earl.** Earl lives with an aunt along with his two brothers and a cousin. He loves football and hunting. He is a favored player in football games at recess, and though small, he plays as hard and as well as the other children, often making the most touchdowns during a game. He does not play for the local team, due to not having transportation to practices and scheduled games, though he wishes he could. At home, he plays with his cousins in nearby woods and during the final interview shared a narrative about hunting a coyote with his cousins that had attacked a neighbor (interview, September 20, 2015). According to my observations and classroom assessment data, Earl struggles with reading more than the other five cases. He is very quiet and timid when he is called upon to read aloud in class, and he does not volunteer to do so on his own. When he does read aloud, he reads softly, seeming unsure. I struggled to hear his answers to my interview questions when transcribing the audiotapes, often replaying several times to verify what I typed. He consistently has difficulty demonstrating growth on annual standardized tests in reading.

**Luke.** Luke is the liveliest storyteller of the six boys. He enjoys embellishing stories in the classroom and generating laughter among his peers, often using sound effects and gargantuan arm movements. He loves football and baseball. Though his birth certificate declares his race as Lumbee and he self-identifies as Lumbee, he shared in the initial interview that he is biracial (interview, September 19, 2015). His father is African American

and his mom is Lumbee (interview, September 19, 2015). He lived out-of-state after birth for about four years before returning to the local community. This has caused some issues in acceptance and identity among his peers, since his accent is slightly different. This is also true for his behavioral responses with peers in social settings. He appears confident about his reading skills, though his scores suggest otherwise. He believes he reads better than most students in the class, finding them to be slower in reading aloud than him. In my observations in class, he does attempt to read fast and decodes fairly quickly, but he is not always attentive to what has been read, thus not always able to answer comprehension questions. As with the other participants, he has not performed at grade level on annual standardized tests. However, within the read-aloud setting used for this study, he was highly engaged and was eager to continue reading, often expressing anger at having to stop the reading each day. Of the six boys during the interviews, he recalled more details from the book, including names of places and people, and he could describe events in great detail.

### **Data Collection**

With narrative inquiry, the researcher uses a variety of sources for data collection (Bruner, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daiute, 2014). This is consistent with qualitative practices that support analysis (Merriam, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). For this study I used five data sources: (a) researcher field notes, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) student journal entries, and (d) student work products submitted online in a wiki site, and (e) online threaded discussion (OTD) posts housed within the same wiki site. Six students who are American Indian males who struggle with reading were identified and participated in semi-structured interviews conducted before, during, and after all in-class and online

activities related to the shared text of *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010). In order to protect the identity of participants, aliases (Creswell, 2013) were applied to data collection storage with a coding system that allowed only the researcher access to data for each participant. Each case is reported in the next chapter along with a report of the cross-case analysis applied to the full study, which explored shared experiences (Creswell, 2013) and transactions students had with the text and other participants.

Table 3.1

*Summary of Data Sources Collected on Six Cases and Included in Analysis*

Data Source	Quantity	Percent of Total Participation
Researcher Field Notes	n/a	n/a
Semi-structured Interviews	18	100%
Journal Entries	6	10%
Student Work Products (on wiki)	7	14%
OTD Posts	73	16%

There was a homework policy change in the district that caused me to have to alter the plans for reading assignments during this project. I originally planned to give students copies of the books with nightly reading assignments to be completed at home. The new policy required teachers to only assign twenty minutes of homework collectively for the grade level per night. Many of the reading assignments would have required students to read at least thirty minutes or more each night, which would not have allowed time for math and language arts class homework. I decided to use an audiobook format of the book and have

the students follow along with the reading in class, which meant they did not take the books home to read, but rather read them in class.

All sixty-one students that participated in this study signed the informed consent form (see Appendix A). Since this study explored students who were not adults, parent signatures were also obtained. Even though only six students were selected as cases and participated in interviews, permission was obtained from all participants since work was submitted online and could be included in any analysis of transactions the selected six students participated in, which could be quoted in the findings section of this document. Students used an assigned username for the wiki site and most created an avatar to use in their personal settings section of the site. Students were encouraged to maintain anonymity by using assigned names in communication within the site.

The site was designed for anonymous participation. Students created personal avatars and used given pseudonyms for communication within the wiki. However, I noted in my field observations that there were multiple groups of peers who worked collaboratively on laptops and computers throughout the room on the project in each of the three classes. Collaborative groups did so without maintaining anonymity between each other and often other groups within the room. This phenomenon included all six cases identified in this study. By doing this, they often knew which entries belong to their peers, thus anonymity was not always preserved, especially within the specific classes. Anonymity was mostly maintained between the different classes, but students likely knew most people within their peer groups in individual classrooms.

### **Researcher Field Notes**

In this study, I took the role of participant observer (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) as I have been a part of the environment within the school for more than a decade; this role gave me the opportunity to more fully "experience the lives of the people" I studied (p. 41). As the teacher in the classroom, I made the decision to use a professional audio recording of the text to read to students daily, since district homework policies prevented sending the books home for assigned readings. This allowed me the opportunity to maintain focus on the readings and insert comments or pose questions in class to encourage students in maintaining engagement with the text. As a participant on the site, I posed the initial threads for the online threaded discussions. I commented in the online threaded discussions at various times, when needed, to assist students in providing evidences for answers and to clarify unclear comments. I posted voki.com videos to give students instructions for each page in the site, sample images, and one sample cartoon. I kept field notes concerning ideas and observations I made during the in-class readings and subsequent related discussions within class (see Appendix D sample field notes). I also noted work and comments made in the wiki site throughout the unit, as well as observed behaviors in class relating to student engagement in completing the multimedia projects using the class laptop lab. I also created field notes following each interview session, making note of ideas and follow-up questions I added to the end of the final interview session.

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted before, during, and after the literature study unit and any activities that occurred on the wiki site. This was intentional due to the lack of experience sixth grade students have in answering interview questions, and particularly with narrating experiences. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix C) to guide my questions and to provide consistency across the interviews for later cross-case analysis. However, I was intentional about the semi-structured approach to allow me the flexibility to keep the conversation going and to adjust questions for clarification as was needed. The semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed me to probe further during interviews to elicit narratives and to expand on comments given with less detail within the wiki site, thus accessing more of the thinking processes each participant used while participating in the unit. This also helped me to focus the interviews (see Appendix C) as more “conversational,” which can be more appropriate for members of an American Indian community (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). This approach is appropriate in the local community this study was conducted in because of the cultural practices of storytelling, which are important within the local American Indian community. Storytelling as a way to express experience is a part of the school community, where visiting American Indians frequent the campus and use the approach to explain practices, ideas, and experiences.

### **Student Journal Entries**

Students maintain reading response journals throughout the school year for all independent reading within my classes. Thus, when this study was conducted they continued to record hand-written entries relating to *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010), as this was read

aloud by an audio program in place of the independent reading portion of my classes. The journal entries of the six participants were collected and incorporated in the analysis process.

### **Student Work Products**

Recognizing that students communicate ideas through multimedia formats (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010) in addition to verbal methods, I examined various products students created and posted online. Students created short videos using Animoto.com to explore concepts relating to the shared text and then posted those to the wiki. Additionally, some students created comic strip posts using toondoo.com and uploaded those to the wiki. These multimedia creations were viewed as communication and thus used for the analysis process, as well. The creation of videos is a form of communication using pictures, words, music, and graphics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010). The producer must consider the message to be communicated and the consumer who will receive the message.

### **Online Threaded Discussion Posts**

Finally, I collected data from student posts in the online threaded discussions, which are archived within the wiki. Students answered threads I created, engaged in creating personal threads, and answered threads created by peers. Discussions included threads concerning the shared text, comments about multimedia products posted on multiple pages, and questions raised by various students in different threads throughout the wiki site.

### **Data Analysis**

One of the important factors to acknowledge in the setting for this study is the impact my role as the students' teacher has on the narrative. As their teacher, I am part of the students' narratives and have to acknowledge this on several levels. First, I am a teacher in the school, and have been since before this group of students was born. I have taught many family members and friends of these students in this school and have inherited relationships with some because of past students who are related to current ones. Second, I am a researcher in this classroom, making me a participant observer. Although this allowed me greater access to the lived experiences of the participants, I was also part of the narrative as an outsider looking in while also being a participant in the experiences within the classroom and on the wiki site.

As a narrative inquiry, I treated the narratives of these students as "situated interactive performances" (Chase, 2005, p. 657) as each student participated in the social networking wiki site. This is consistent with the concepts of transaction that Rosenblatt (1978/1994) came to reference when discussing the change that occurs between a reader and the text, as well as a reader who shares transactions with others about the same text. Since this study used the Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) to look at newer forms of literacy practices within an OTD and was housed within an online literature study that utilized multimedia projects, it was important to use the constant-comparison method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the data. This allowed me to explore emergent themes and to compare and contrast these across the multiple sources of data collected.

I chose to personally transcribe all interviews in order to help me begin the process of identifying possible emergent themes and to sense these early in the coding process. I listened through the interviews multiple times following these to get a broader sense of codes I would select. I coded for these initial thoughts through the interviews creating “nodes” within the NVIVO software. I then applied codes from a significance analysis approach in narrative inquiry. After reviewing the significance analysis process for the narrative inquiry portion of this study, I realized I would need to review the transcripts again and make some adjustments to the transcriptions that clearly and consistently denoted uses of colloquial slang and word pronunciations, as these assist the researcher in recognizing instances where the participant reveals identification with a culture group (Daiute, 2014).

I selected an approach to narrative inquiry that looks at significance (Daiute, 2014), which explores meaning making processes. This analysis process looks for two phases of meaning: referential and evaluative (Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997). This approach to the analysis process values and evaluates the small statements within utterances of spoken or written language for meaning (Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997) and examines how intersections of data points from several views can inform analysis (Bamberg, 2004). It looks for voices within the “content” and “structure” of the narratives (Josselson, 2011, p. 227). I took this analysis further in the context of this study to view multimedia projects as expressions of personal narratives, and verified personal intent through the semi-structured interviews by viewing these projects with the student during the interview to explore the processes each used to develop the products.

Additionally, significance plays an important role in expressing meaning (Daiute, 2014). As it was applied to this study, significance analysis provided an insight into processes these students utilized to make meaning through transactions with a text and with others. Significance analysis identifies word usage in a narrative looking at evaluative devices employed by the author/speaker to determine how he structures the narrative to communicate his story. These evaluative devices work together to convey meaning. The first device explored was psychological state, which include affective, cognitive, and reported speech. Also, narrators may use varying evaluative devices in multiple ways to add to the meaning of the narrative. These include intensifiers, causal connectors, negations and hedges, and qualifiers. A word count was conducted for the total narrative and a percentage was calculated for each type of evaluative device employed in the narrative. Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted to look for patterns of similarities and differences across the cases (Josselson, 2011).

### **Coding**

I began the analysis process using open coding to identify initial themes. I personally transcribed the semi-structured interviews to help me start this process. I wanted to allow for emergent themes that might not have been represented in the a priori coding I conducted later based on the Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) and in the coding related to the significance analysis process used for narrative inquiry (Daiute, 2014). I did this with each data source, going through multiple readings and coding sessions. I then applied the significance analysis coding to the narratives solicited in the semi-structured interviews, the reading response journals, multimedia products the participants created and

posted in the wiki, and the online threaded discussions posted on various pages throughout the wiki site. In order to get a thick, rich description of the six cases, it was important to include non-narrative data in the analysis process because I knew students at this age, and especially those who struggle with reading, would have difficulty creating full narratives for all of the questions I asked in the interview protocol. Additionally, many of the entries online were short answers in discussion threads or were electronic projects created with images in addition to words. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to probe further with my attempts to solicit narratives, but it also allowed me to explore experiences students had while creating multimedia projects, posting those projects online, and participating in online threaded discussions. I pieced together small narratives and removed nonessential words or phrases I uttered during interviews to assist in the flow of reading the selected narratives and also in applying the significance analysis process to those narratives, I removed places where I used words, such as, "go on," "uh huh," and "what else."

### **My Role and Assumptions in this Context**

In the context of this research study, I assumed the role of a participant observer. All participants were my students and participated in the activities in the collaborative online environment as part of my class instruction. I was also a participant on the wiki as a facilitator for the online threaded discussions (OTDs) by providing question prompts and further probing comments. As stated in the informed consent (see Appendix A) students did not receive grades for specific products or conversations held online related to this study. *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010) and all activities online related to this text were designed to help engage students in further study of Ancient Egypt as part of their regular social

studies classes. This helped to remove any desire to perform or participate as part of some reward system. Students were free to engage as they had opportunities provided within class, as well as access from home via the Internet, though only a few students worked outside of class time on the site.

My assumptions related to this study and to the learning process are rooted in a belief in learning as a social construction of knowledge (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1978). I believe readers bring to the text personal experiences that create a unique encounter as they transact (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994) with a text. I believe meaning for the reader is constructed through the process of transactions with the author when reading a text, as well as with others when sharing those transactions in a social setting. I also believe all learners, no matter what level readers they are, benefit from social interaction surrounding a text. I believe those social interactions deepen understanding and the meaning making process involved in the transactional response to reading (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Thus, I believe in the power of using literature discussion groups to provide students opportunities to explore transactions surrounding a text, and that these can be furthered by the use of online social-networking technologies like the wiki site used in this study. I believe that struggling readers can also benefit from participation in the asynchronous environment of a Web 2.0 site, and that it may be further beneficial to provide anonymity with the use of pseudonyms and avatars to represent themselves, thus removing barriers found in traditional face-to-face literature discussion settings.

### **Issues of Validity and Reliability**

In addressing issues of validity, Creswell (2013) suggests that in qualitative research it represents “an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings,” which leaves the burden of validation where the “report of research is a representation by the author” (pp. 249-250). In addition, the researcher should seek to strengthen the validation “through extensive time spend in the field,” in seeking to create a “detailed thick description” of the case, and finally to increase the value of the “accuracy” of the study through the “closeness of the researcher to participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). With these ideas in mind, I endeavored to be transparent in my research process in this document. My extensive time with the students was established by my daily role as their teacher. I have also been part of the school environment for these students since they entered our school in Pre-K or Kindergarten. Many of my students were siblings of former students, students who were in my wife’s second-grade class, have participated in an after-school writing program with me in the past, or students who have helped me in various school events and community events over the last several years. Even though I am not originally from this community, I have spent enough extensive time in it to provide an *emic* and *etic* view of these students’ lived experiences. In this document, I provided a thick description of each case and the cross-case relationships the students have verified through the triangulation (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) of multiple data sources collected in this study.

### **Member Checking**

I used member checks in the second and third interview sessions, as well as a final time after the analysis process was complete, to verify ideas and themes I had identified with

the six cases. This allowed the participants to help direct me “to a more accurate vision of their lived experiences and their meanings” (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000, p. 166), which is appropriate for American Indian populations.

### **Bracketing**

Finally, I have attempted to bracket my personal biases to help the analysis process; however, I affirm that as a human instrument in this process, there are transactions that exist between me as a researcher and participant observer that impact the narratives of these students. Since I was the teacher in the classroom, and since I have been a part of the school environment longer than these students have been alive, I was part of their narratives and the narratives of many in the local community. I was a character in their stories and the stories of their families, especially those surrounding school experiences and community events I have participated in over the years.

Thus, in addressing validity for this study, I have attempted to provide transparency for the research process used. I have outlined the extensive time I have spent with these students, utilized triangulation of multiple data sources, verified themes to create the narratives with member checks, and bracketed personal biases. These methods of transparency were important to validate my commitment to telling the narratives of the students in this study, individually and collectively.

### **Research Reliability**

To enhance the reliability of this study, I have detailed the process used to collect and analyze data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources to establish what might be better called dependability with the

attempt to build trustworthiness in a study. The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize to the larger population (Creswell, 2013), but rather to increase understanding about a particular phenomenon or population. In this case, the phenomenon is reader transactions with a text and the meaning created for the reader by those transactions. The population for this study is American Indian males who struggle with reading. The context for these transactions is housed within an online literature study unit. To establish reliability, Creswell (2013) suggests using detailed field notes with tape recording that is transcribed (p. 253). He also suggests using computer programs to help in “recording and analyzing the data” (p. 253). For this study, I used researcher field notes and as Nvivo software to help identify and establish connections between codes for each of the data sources, as well as the cross-case analysis, in order to establish address issues of reliability and dependability. Finally, the characteristics of participants selected for this study are presented in this document with transparency to allow readers to understand the population and to make judgments about how to use the data to increase personal understanding of struggling readers who are American Indian males, as they may be looking to address instructional needs of similar populations.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have reviewed the methodology utilized in this study. I have outlined how I collected and analyzed data from multiple sources that reveal narratives elicited from six American Indian males who are identified as struggling readers. The next chapter details each case, the narratives constructed by each participant, and the findings from the cross-case analysis

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

*At the beginning, I was excited, and when we was stopped, I'd want to go to the next page, like I would want to read more to know what was coming next because I was excited. (Jonathan)*

This chapter presents findings from a narrative inquiry collective case study of six sixth grade American Indian Males who struggle with reading. It tells the story of each participant as he participated in an online literature study with other students in the same three sixth grade classes. As part of the class activities to support an online literature study, students listened to the audiobook of the shared text, *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010) and recorded hand-written entries in reading response journals with prompts I provided after each day's reading. This analysis process sought themes identified through a constant comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) of qualitative data. I began with open coding, then used *a priori* analysis informed from Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Finally, I used a significance analysis approach for narrative inquiry (Daiute, 2014) with narratives collected from interviews, reading response journals, and online posts. I collected data over a two-month period in my three classes and through an online site that hosted online threaded discussions and multimedia projects created, shared, and viewed by all participants.

The purpose of this study was to describe how sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text and with other readers when participating in an online literature study housed within a collaborative Web 2.0 site. The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text in an online collaborative study unit?
2. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with other participants when participating in an online collaborative literature study unit?
3. What concepts concerning identity are revealed in the narratives of the study participants?
4. To what extent do narratives of sixth grade struggling American Indian male readers reveal concepts of agency when participating in a collaborative online literature study?

This chapter is arranged to reveal findings through the retelling of stories that reveal the experiences of six cases as they participated in the project and shared narratives with me in multiple interviews. Narratives were also informed by reader response journal entries written by the six participants and collectives of their online threaded discussion posts. Interwoven in the participant stories is a secondary analysis where I analyzed the narratives for significance, looking at the use of evaluative devices by each participant. The significance analysis process yielded a description of how each participant created meaning and used that meaning in narrating personal stories. I calculated frequencies of evaluative devices found within the narratives through numerical analysis. Following the participant stories I include a section that explores the collective narrative by revealing cross-case findings. The cross-case analysis also involved an examination of sample narratives collected from all six participants and compares and contrasts findings from the significance

analysis process applied to those narratives. Finally, the chapter closes with a summary discussion of the findings.

Each participant story is arranged with an introduction and description. The stories I wrote are interwoven with the significance analysis process applied to the selected narratives; I applied the constant comparative approach to all texts with coding related to identity and agency, as well as for reader transactions. Quotations from findings may include narratives collected from the interviews with the removal of my words (e.g., "go on" or "what else"), in order to provide a more fluid reading of the students' narratives. In other instances, I chose to include the transcription of the interview in order to demonstrate a particular finding, or to clarify a statement. I also included examples of calculations for evaluative devices used by students to narrate experiences.

For the purpose of preserving the language used by these students, I provide dialectic indicators in the quotations throughout this chapter. Lumbee English dialect is an important ethnic indicator among tribal members and is a rich part of the culture within the community (Wolfram, Danneberg, Knick, & Oxendine, 2002). As the title of this paper indicates and as part of the purpose of this study, it was the missing voice of Lumbee culture in the literature I sought to highlight, thus the dialect infuses the narrative I tell.

### **Findings Within Cases**

#### **Junior: A Reader to Get By**

Junior generally appeared to be a positive child with multiple friendships, having several close peers within the room. He was a talker who loved to make jokes and to have a good laugh. It was not surprising to find he engaged with peers online and off during the

online literature study project. He spent most of his time during classes alongside his peers "working together to set up an Animoto and a Toondoo" (interview, November 5, 2015) and posting those on the wiki. He collaborated with peers to support his answers in the threaded discussion sections, saying "We just, I think we only talked about the book to get questions, I mean the answers to the questions" (interview, October 15, 2015).

He was not a confident reader and struggled to do well in reading class. He relayed the following when asked how he felt about himself as a reader:

I don't think of myself as a good reader, I think of myself as a reader to get by. . .I'm not good. Well, I can read, but I just don't like reading. I don't like it, and it don't help me, and other people they read all the time, and I don't. (interview, September 16, 2015)

Negations such as, "not that much," "just don't," and "kind of," indicate an uncertainty about standing firm on his answers. However, he did not fully accept his issues with reading as equivalent with being labeled "struggling." During a member check portion of the final interview, I asked him about this struggle with reading I had identified from earlier interviews and he said, "It's not hard for me to read, um...[long pause]. I don't know. I got good grades in reading. I just don't, I don't want to, I think I just want to do something else" (interview, November 3, 2015). I coded his use of phrases like "it's not hard for me" and "just don't" under negations and hedges during the significance analysis. In this particular narrative he put up defenses and did not want to be labeled as one who struggles with reading. This narrative gives clues to the concept of Junior as a reluctant reader, rather than a struggling reader. When one considers the concept of a hedge as a barrier to protect property

and to keep others out, it helps direct attention to the phenomenon he employed in his story. When he said he "just don't want to," he may have been using a hedge to protect himself from the label of struggling reader by implying he could read if he wanted to. He struggled during the timeframe of the study with academic reading because he admittedly was reluctant to read, and when this reluctance was combined with assignments that have increasing text complexity, it is clear to see why he was classified as a struggling reader.

Junior admittedly was not fully engaged during the audio book readings of the text. He said there were times he "fell asleep" and "didn't follow along the whole time" (interview, October, 15, 2015). However, at other times he was engaged in the story. He admitted he liked "figuring out what happened" (interview, November 3, 2015). He also enjoyed "the battle stuff they was doing in the book" (interview, November 3, 2015). It was the action sequences that captured his attention and helped him have further transactions with the text. Visualizing events during the story was one method Junior employed for transacting with the text. In the final interview he described a connection he made with seeing the action scenes of the book like the action scenes of a movie. He made mental connections to various activities he enjoys through this process of visualizing. In the transcription below, he revealed the connections he made with the text:

Me: No? You just saw it, like I said, like a movie?

Junior: Yeah, probably the big battle scenes.

Me: You think you could be in the big battle scenes?

Junior: Yeah.

Me: Why would you like to be in the big battle scenes?

Junior: Cause I like tough housing and stuff.

Me: Rough housing?

Junior: Yeah, tough housing is rough housing. (interview, November 3, 2015)

Junior further transacted with the text by engaging in the story ad in activities about the story that connected to his personal life. In online discussions he shared about how his brother treats him in a similar way to how Sadie treated Carter in *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010). He said, "I have a brother that don't like me but he do like me a little" (online threaded discussion post, October 28, 2015). Junior also found an identity with the main character, Carter. He said, "He's the only person on there is like, is actually like me, cause everybody else in the story is all weird and mess" (interview, November 3, 2015).

Junior used the text along with a friend to address objectives in a related social studies project. When discussing project connections with a peer about ancient Egypt, the following narrative shows his engagement:

Um, me and my friend we, we researched about papyrus and the tombs at the museum. . . cause Sadie had mentioned something about the papyrus. Talking about the paper. And, looked up the tomb, from the mummy, too, because they had saw one in the book. (interview, November 3, 2015)

Junior worked alongside a group of his peers in class to create the multimedia projects and to post those online. Using class time and the mobility of laptops within the room, his group often worked online while talking with each other face-to-face, or perhaps even more accurately, side-by-side. Of course, there were students from other classes they did not know on the site with whom they interacted. However, it is possible there were many they become

aware of as the project continued over the two-month period as students discussed the project outside of class. This collaborative environment created within the classroom resulted in engagement that allowed transactions with the text and with others to occur beyond the online literature study.

Junior used collaboration with his peers to help him complete the assignments related to the book and on the wiki. He used this process to allow him to be successful and to complete the assignments I had given them. He said he worked together with his friends "during class when we had time to, um, get on computers." In addressing answers to the posted discussion threads he said, "We just, I think we only talked about the book to get questions, I mean the answers to the questions." Many of the students worked openly and collaboratively offline within the class to create the multimedia components of the online literature study and then online to post projects to the wiki site. They seemingly dismissed the concept of maintaining anonymity while in the site, utilizing each other's varying skills to work within the Animoto, Toondoo, and Doppelme sites to create and post their projects to the wiki. Junior, like his peers, grouped up with buddies and looked at each other's screens, shared components of the various sites, and demonstrated to each other how to post those on the wiki pages.

By looking at the multimedia projects online during the interviews, Junior was able to recall more of his experiences during the project. As we looked through the videos posted on one of the wiki pages, he was able to recall characters and events he had earlier struggled with in the interview:

Me: Ok, so let's just watch some to help you remember. What did you think when you were watching these videos as far as the book goes.

Junior: Um, I was, how that there is, how that looks good on the outside.

Me: Uh huh.

Junior: But bad on the inside, I...

Me: Was it...no go ahead.

Junior: And um, and someone try to be Amos,

Me: Uh huh.

Junior: And, that cat...?

Me: Bast?

Junior: Yeah. They was showing the good people on the outside, but they was really bad people um...

Me: On the inside?

Junior: Yeah. (interview, November 3, 2015)

Junior had a straightforward way of presenting himself in his relationships with peers and in the way he carried himself in class. He freely spoke his mind during class, especially with peers with whom he disagreed. This was confirmed in the significance analyses of his various narratives throughout the project. His use of evaluative devices was limited in most of his narratives. However, there were some instances where word counts indicated he used more than 50% evaluative devices to narrate his experience. He used qualifiers, negations, and hedges to narrate his stories about working on the project. He employed qualifiers to

specify events and people in his narratives. This included words such as "every," "sometimes," "my friends," and "most of."

Of the six boys, Junior was the only one who participated in tribal songs, drumming, and dancing at local powwows. The other boys did attend the local powwows sponsored by the Lumbee tribe, which include opportunities for spectators to watch dances, visit demonstrations, and shop with native vendors. His straightforward nature was evident in the choices he made in how he participated in local tribal activities. He danced in the Men's Northern Traditional style of dance, honoring long-standing traditions and respecting regalia that indicate that history. He also participated in playing the ceremonial drums and chants. He took the lead in the school in demonstrating his style of dance and songs, as well as playing a hand drum for other dancers during our annual school powwow hosted by members of the local tribe (field notes, November 16, 2015). He engaged Jacob, one of the participants in this study, to sing in class while he demonstrated his style of dance as part of our social studies lesson related to ancient America. This transpired following the activities related to the online study during the time between the ending of the online activities and my final interviews (field notes, November 18, 2015).

### **Jacob: A Reluctant Reader**

Jacob liked to fish and hunt. Football was his favorite sport and he was an avid Carolina Panthers fan. He expressed that he doesn't "like reading books about sports," but "huntin' and fishin' I like" (interview, October 15, 2015). He loved to be outside, and indicated that even when he plays video games, he prefers the ones on an iPod so he can be

"outside, just to enjoy the nature" (interview, September 10, 2015). He stated about his parents, "Daddy and Mama, most of the time, they're outside" (interview, October 15, 2015).

Jacob considered his reading ability to be somewhat average in comparison to peers. In describing himself as a reader he said he is, "In the middle...Not too good, but not bad (interview, September 10, 2015). He reads some at home when prompted by his mother, which amounts to not much more than a couple hours each week (interview, September, 10, 2015). He may be described as a reluctant reader, but this reluctance over time has placed him in a challenging position when it comes to comprehension. This is especially true, as text complexity has increased as he has moved through the grade levels. He struggles to make passing grades in reading and to demonstrate growth on annual standardized tests.

Jacob had a matter-of-fact way of presenting himself and viewing the world around him. The significance analysis process demonstrated this to be true in the way he narrated his experiences in this project. His use of evaluative devices was less than 50 percent of the total word counts for the majority of his narratives. Of those, he employed qualifiers and causal connectors equally at 34% and only 5% of word counts were applied to intensifiers. This means he confirmed facts and took on the role of reporter within his narratives more than embellishing his stories with expressive words. For example, he would qualify his context with names or pronouns for people in his stories, such as "daddy's," "mama's," or "she's," along with naming places or qualifying frequencies, such as "most of the time" or "a little."

The concept of a factual reporter was contrasted in Jacob's narratives by his frequent use of negations and hedges. Even though he qualified his stories with facts and used short

narratives to tell his experiences, he used negations frequently. For example, he said, "stuff," "stuff like dhat," and "just" throughout his interviews. He also often closed his statements with a laugh, which indicated uncertainty about the rightness of what he had just stated, suggesting that he wanted to safeguard his statement by negating its importance with a laugh. He did this when he shared his original Toondoo project during an interview:

I remember I had like a girl, before, and she took drugs and it jacked her up, and then I had like that bear that was smiling that said 'don't do drugs' again...[laughs]. . . . Probably get jacked up like he. It's not a good thing, it messed her up. (interview, November 3, 2015)

In narrative analysis, punctuation and inflection can be as meaningful as word choice (Daiute, 2014). In his case, the use of laughs at the end of many of his statements demonstrated a sense of uncertainty with what he knows and thus by laughing he could negate the previously made comment.

Jacob mentioned in his first interview that he loved sports. Specifically, he enjoyed playing football at recess most days with many of his peers who also enjoyed football. He used images from the National Football League to help him create a video that explored the concept of how things are not always as they seem. He related how a player, Josh Norman, can be a really "cool guy," but that on the field he was a "tough guy." He related this to the character, Set in *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010). He said, "Set can be bad, but also he can be not as bad as you think he is." I confirmed his concept of Set by discussing the images in his video, which showed a football player with a broken anklebone completely exposed outside of the foot from an injury during a game. He indicated Josh Norman could also be a

good football player and a cool guy, but that sometimes people could get seriously hurt in the game.

An interesting self-concept for Jacob emerged when I asked him if he saw himself in any of the characters in the book. Jacob said he connected with two major characters. He qualified his connection by sharing how he believed he was similar to them:

Me: Ok. All right, so, I want you to think about the characters in the book. Any character, not just Carter and Sadie. I know they're the main characters. Tell me which one you're most like.

Jacob: Either Iskandar or Zia.

Me: Ok. Why do you think that?

Jacob: Because they was wise.

Me: Ok. So you think of yourself as a wise person.

Jacob: Sometimes [laughs].

Me: Sometimes. Ok, so that's what...um...so what's the difference between Zia's and Iskandar's wiseness?

Jacob: I don't think there is.

Me: You don't. So do you think they were similar?

Jacob: Yes sir.

Me: Why do you think they were similar?

Jacob: Because both of them made wise choices (interview, October 15, 2015).

As discussed earlier, when analyzing the hedges and negations in the narratives collected during this project, there was a sense of self-doubt that was protected by those barriers. His

use of negations in his narratives contrasted with this notion that he identified with the characters of Zia and Iskandar. Perhaps the matter-of-fact way he approached narrating his story pointed to his concept of making “wise choices,” indicated in the significance analysis process through his use of more qualifiers as evaluative devices than any others.

Jacob interacted more offline than online with peers. I observed him sitting in collaborative groups with laptops and huddled over screens sharing project ideas and answers to the discussion thread posts I had assigned (field notes, October 10, 2015). (Anonymity was dismissed for the purpose of working together on the site to accomplish assigned tasks and to assist peers in creating the multimedia projects posted in the wiki.)

Jacob struggled with recalling events and answering questions during the middle and final interviews. It was helpful to have the wiki site opened during the final interview so we could look together at what he posted and the contexts for those posts. As with the NFL themed video he created for his Animoto project, he demonstrated an understanding about how the major protagonist in the story, Set, was not a stereotypical enemy. He recalled this concept while we were reviewing various multimedia projects, including his video on the wiki page about Set. He said, "Well yeah it does about Set, that he really wasn't the bad one it, it was Apophis instead" (interview, November 3, 2015). So as he read and viewed the items contained on that wiki page, his memory was activated and he was able to recall meanings and connections he had made earlier in the online literature study.

### **John: An Occasional Home Reader**

Out of the six boys, John probably read the most at home. He had older sisters who were avid readers, as was his mom. He spent time reading in the living room in some

evenings during a week as a break from playing his video games, as shared by a family member (field notes, September 22, 2015).

In listening and reading along with the audiobook, it was the action scenes in the story that appealed the most to John. Exciting elements engaged him in the story and were recalled during the interviews and on the wiki. In the transcription below, he shared what he liked about the story. He said, "Fighting, magic, [and] burning people up. How um, the Elvis Presley suits defeated the men with the shotguns" (interview, October 16, 2015). In another narrative about the book, he added more to his story about what he liked most about the book. "...The fighting and the action...wishing I could be in there." In the final interview he again mentioned the magic in the book:

Me: So, can you tell me about, um, how you felt about yourself as a reader as we were reading it?

John: Uh, I felt good.

Me: Good, what do you mean by that?

John: Uh, I like magic, I felt like I was a magician myself. (interview, November 3, 2015)

He was also engaged away from the class with thoughts about what was to come in the story.

When asked about this he said,

About what's going to be next. Or, Set, is he going to destroy the world or the continent. Or is Bast or Zia or Amos dead when they go missing, or are they going to die in the future of the book. (interview, September 19, 2015)

John used the various formats for activities during the project to make connections to the text. He wrote responses in his journal, participated in the online threaded discussions and posted projects to the wiki. He developed a sense of character and communicated this sense across these formats. In the following narrative, he shared how his ideas about Set had changed and after we had finished the book, he knew there was more to what was going on in the story:

He probably, now I know because he was gone for a while and he had been hosting Set. Cause he was gone for awhile, he hadn't been talkin' to 'em, calling 'em and things like dhat, and he was hosting dhere enemy. (November 2, 2015)

I had given a similar prompt for the reading response journals when the audiobook had reached this same point in the story. In *The Red Pyramid* (Riordan, 2010), Riordan crafted a sense of continual uncertainty about which character could be trusted by the two protagonists. John's entry from that day supported his comments in the transcription where he said Zia was the one to trust. He said, "Zia means that she told them that Uncle Amos was hosting Set. And that she was not lying" (journal entry, October 8, 2015). His development of trust for Zia occurred early on in the reading as he wrote, "Dear Mr. Fletcher they should trust Zia because they don't have a choice because Desjardins wants them killed" (journal entry, September 18 2015).

John utilized the online threaded discussion to engage in conversation about the story with others. The Wikispaces site provides discussion threads directly on each page, so participants were able to easily scroll through projects and read discussion posts on the page.

Me: What thoughts did you have about the book while reading the posts of the other students online?

John: Um...yeah a little bit, a little.

Me: Can you tell me about it?

John: Oh gosh, they were talking about their favorite part, and then I started thinking about my favorite part. (interview, November 2, 2015)

His favorite part was the scene with the fighting "Elvis Presley suits" when they "defeated the men with the shotguns" (interview, October 16, 2015). He also engaged in collaborative conversations that shared his personal transactions with the text while working on his multimedia projects for the wiki and other related assignments in social studies. For example, in the narrative that follows, he refers to the Prezi he and Jacob worked on to present in social studies about the real Red Pyramid in Egypt. I pressed him further to explain about how this connected with the text and he continued with the events surrounding the destruction of Set's Red Pyramid in the story:

. . . . um, I got on and interacted with Jacob. We, our um Prezi's about the Red Pyramid. We talked about our favorite parts of the book, and we started making our Prezi about the book. . . .When um, Carter defeated Set? 'cause that was like the climax of the story. (interview, November 3, 2015)

John also created a Toondoo cartoon and posted it to the wiki site. In the final interview I discussed how he used the Toondoo posts to help his understanding of the text. I had asked him which one(s) he felt helped him the most. The following transcription occurred when he stopped me while I scrolled through the posted cartoons. I read through

the scenes aloud during the interview and then he explained how he thought the cartoon related to the text:

Me: So I'm looking at it, it's got like these characters and there with this older man and one of them says, "let's go defeat Set," and then one of them says, "we conquered Set," and then the last scene says, "oh no, not Apophis!"

John: Like they were trusting Set to help 'em and then he let out Apophis.

Me: Apophis came out? Ok, So that helped you understand. How does that help you understand the story?

John: How Set, he was lying to them and they shouldn't trust him. (interview, October 16, 2015)

John also was engaged in online and offline tasks with his peers in relationship to the text and this project. In one instance, he shared his opinion about an incongruous video. He said, "Yeah, um, I commented on, the um, I think it's one of the last videos, 'The Thing You Seek.' The theme music and their pictures didn't really go together." He also engaged with another student to help him create and post a Voki to the wiki:

John: I made vokis, um...I needed help a lot.

Me: Ok, who helped you?

John: You, and I went to Earlene [*name changed*], I've made a video about how things can look good but can be bad, or they can look bad, but look good. (interview, November 2, 2015)

In the collected narratives, John, like Jacob used more qualifiers than other evaluative devices. He was more expressive than Jacob or Junior, so he used more intensifiers in

narrating several events. In the following narrative, I had asked him to share a story of something he had done in the past that he enjoyed. This was done at the beginning of the final interview to help him focus on developing a story to tell. He told a story about a family vacation to a water park at Disney World:

Um, water park...um...something that was like, I forget what it was called, but I don't know what it was called but this....SUMMIT PLUMMET! It's like the 3rd biggest water, waterslide in the world! And when I got out, I had a wedgie! I felt like I was about to, when I went down I felt like my head was coming off and I was about to clip. And my mama and my daddy went down it, too. (interview, November 3, 2015)

In this narrative, John used exclamation with heightened voice when he remembered the name of the water slide he rode, "SUMMIT PLUMMET!" "3rd Biggest in the world!" and "wedgie!" This shows expressiveness about something interesting and memorable to him. He did this when retelling part of the story during an interview about connections he made to the story when viewing multimedia projects. He said, "Their Uncle Amos, oh yeah! And Set, he said he was going to help 'em and dhen the snake came out!" Again, his use of heightened voice exclamations showed the intensity he felt in the connections to the text and to what meaning he got from the online posts.

### **Jonathan: A Reader in the Middle**

Jonathan was the least active in sports of the six participants. He spent most of his time visiting with his friends on the playground, though he sometimes played soccer on occasion. During the first interview Jonathan acknowledged his younger cousin as a better

reader and places his cousin's level above girls he has observed during class readings, though he thinks of girls in general as better readers (interview, September 20, 2015).

Jonathan had some difficulty during the two interviews with recalling specific events or characters until we opened the wiki and looked at the posts he created and responded to. This need for scaffolding built into the interview to help him recall events reveals specifically the way Jonathan transacted with the text as a participant in the online literature study.

As I probed further to trigger his memory, improved recall of the story occurred as we discussed his animoto.com video. In that video, he had chosen a background scene of sites around a city with billboards or signs that posted the particular images he selected for the video, such as a bus stop and a subway station. He chose polar bears as the featured images for the theme of the video. He was one of the earlier participants to post his video, so it was on the site at the time of both the second and final interviews. The characters and events he attributed to the story in the two interviews changed over time. In this first interview, he said he was thinking about Bast and how "She could be mean" and " um...She would...she'd be tryin' to attack people and all of dhat and um she could raise her voice and stuff" (interview, September 20, 2015). (We had not completed the reading of the book before the second interview so this connection makes sense in context to the amount of the story we had read by that point in the project.) When I reviewed all of his posts to the wiki site during the final interview, I returned to his polar bear video and asked what connections he had made to the story. The transcription below shows the updated connection he had made, which related to the events that unfolded at the end of the story. I included a large section of the transcribed interview to demonstrate how working through the videos during his interview provided a

scaffold for his memory. With probing he was able to connect his project to the text and eventually to explain how his choice of character related to his video.

Me: So how does that relate to the polar bear video that you made?

Jonathan: Um.

Me: "Don't judge a polar bear by its looks." [*Title on video*] How does that relate to what you said about Zia and about shabti and stuff?

Jonathan: Um, polar bears look real on the screen, but it's not.

Me: [laughs] Is this, [I replay the video.] so in the beginning these are polar bears, right? They're nice, they're not growling, and they're not attacking anybody, but this one right here looks like he's ready to attack somebody, doesn't he?

Jonathan: Uh huh.

Me: Yeah, so how does that relate to what you just said about Zia being mean in the beginning, but then later she was nice?

Jonathan: Um, I don't know.

Me: You don't know? Well, is this mean or nice here?

Jonathan: Just mean.

Me: Ok, What is it here?

Jonathan: Nice.

Me: Ok, so how is this, which one, Zia in the beginning was mean, so if I go backwards on your video, if I go to where your polar bear was mean, and then I go to where you said the polar bears are nice, how does that relate to Zia? Zia is. . .

Jonathan: Zia is sometimes mean and she can be nice. (interview, November 10, 2015)

Jonathan made several personal connections to the characters in the story. In the second interview he mentioned his temperament being like Sadie's. He said he gets "angry," which is a characteristic of Sadie throughout the story. At another point during the interview he goes into further detail about this connection:

Jonathan: Because she gets mad a lot and she hollers and she always tells people to shut up.

Me: [Laughs] Is that what you do? Are you like that?

Jonathan: [Nods yes].

Me: Ok, is there anything else about what she does that's, that's similar to you?

Jonathan: She gets aggravated with people.

Me: Uh huh. What about her sense of humor? Do you have a sense of humor? Do you cut jokes or make people laugh?

Jonathan: [Nods yes].

Me: You do?

Jonathan: Yeah. (interview, October 19, 2015)

Jonathan used the online multimedia project to help him express his understanding of concepts within the story. He utilized the discussion feature embedded within the wiki pages to ask "them about their video and stuff, and comment on their videos, that's what I done" (interview, October 19, 2015).

In the transcription that follows, he connects the meaning expressed by his selection of the subject of his video to the book:

Polar bears. . .Cause I think their interesting, and. . . . Polar bears look nice, but dhe're not. Cause, because sometimes dhey can be mean, dhey can, um dhey can attack people. And dhen sometimes dhey can be nice and they go on and don't mess with nobody. . . .She [*Bast*] don't mess wid 'em. (interview, October 19, 2015)

I asked him how his view of polar bears related to the book, and then I clarified what or who in the story demonstrated something nice, but could also be mean. He chose *Bast* and said, "She would...she'd be tryin' to attack people and all of dhat and um she could raise her voice and stuff and that's all" (interview, November, 10, 2015).

Jonathan felt anonymity was important in his participation online. He liked how he could express himself more freely online without feeling susceptible to peer criticism found in a face-to-face setting. From his comments, it is clear he has faced or witnessed this situation in class before. This is detailed in the following narrative about why he would want to maintain anonymity on the wiki site:

Because, um, some people don't, don't like certain people in this class, so you have to be secret, so then um, so then when they comment on your video, some people probably, if they wouldn't share their name, they would work less. (interview, November 10, 2015)

It is possible from this he has experienced bullying about his ideas and reading ability in the past, which may have played a role in his response to this question. He maintained anonymity during online threaded discussions, but he did work on multimedia posts with

peers, who would have known what he created, and thus could have figured out what his pseudonym was on the site. This means he did not protect his anonymity with those closest to him in class.

In conducting the significance analysis of Jonathan's narratives, some important concepts emerged. Jonathan had a low sense of agency for reading, using hedges and negations within the narrative about his reading skills. In the following story he describes when he began reading and how well he reads now:

Um, about first grade I started to read, on my own about 2nd grade. I can't read that good, but I can read, some, like some big words I can read and some big words I can't read. Some of the people has to help me on words that I can't read. (interview, September 20, 2015)

In saying, "I can't read that good," he used both negation and hedging. The word "can't" negated his ability and "that good" hedged it to protect him from not being able to read well. He went on to hedge using "some big words"; valuing the ability to read bigger words suggested that he was not that limited in his ability, but that there were "some big words" he did not know.

### **Earl: An "Alright" Reader**

According to academic records and assessment data, Earl seemed to struggle with reading more than the other five cases. He was very quiet and timid when called upon to read aloud in class, and he did not volunteer to do so on his own. He had difficulty demonstrating growth on annual standardized tests in reading, though he described himself as

"Pretty good, but not good, it's like between, like I ain't good at some of it, but I am good at some of it" (interview, September 22, 2015).

Earl benefited from having the audio format of the book read to the class. He was able to identify words he didn't know and sought definitions when he needed to know more. He also listened to moments when I stopped the audio to explain words or concepts, especially those relating to the Ancient Egyptian terms and culture used in the book.

Earl utilized information provided by other students on the wiki site to help him understand the story better. Since he struggled with reading, the features of the website helped him use other skills to develop meaning for the text. For example, he used the discussion threads to help him adjust his understanding. In the transcription below, he called the discussion thread posts "textin," and upon clarification it was clear to me he meant the posts students had made to various discussion threads on the different pages in the wiki.

Me: Ok, I just want to make sure I understood you. So how do you think it helped you understand it better, as you were reading what they put on here as you say "textin."

Earl: Some of 'em are like I tried to think of what they was about.

Me: You couldn't figure out and you read their's and you understood it better?

Earl: Yes. (interview, November 2, 2015)

Earl's shyness and unimposing personality in academics was demonstrated in the data collected and analyzed for significance in the narrative pieces. He had the lowest number of total word counts, 633, in all the collected narratives. Like several of the participants in this study, he used frequent negations, 24% in the comparison narratives and 22% in the total

narratives. This indicated a lack of confidence in the trustworthiness of his statements within the narratives about his experiences during this project.

Earl lacked confidence about his reading ability. In the narrative about how he sees himself as a reader, he indicated an unwillingness to say he struggles. However, when I applied the significance analysis process to that narrative he used evaluative devices 79% of the total words with 68% of those being negations and hedges. He struggled with identity as a reader and uses both negations, such as "not good" and "ain't," and hedges, such as "pretty good," "it's like between," and "some of it" to sandwich his identity in the middle of other readers.

Even though Earl was quiet when it comes to reading aloud and answering questions in class, he was socially active with his peers. I noted in my field notes a situation when he collaborated with peers to create and post his multimedia project without concern for maintaining his anonymity: "Earl is sitting by his best friend now working together to create their Animoto videos. This means anonymity may be reduced, but he seems not to care since it is his best friend" (field notes, October 16, 2015). This is interesting for Earl, since in the interview he stated that the anonymity for this online literature study was important to him. During the final interview he shared his belief that because other students did not know who he was, he had opportunity to do his best. He said, "Because people could track you down by your name?" (interview, November 6, 2015). Of course, there were the students in other classes that he didn't work face-to-face with, so his anonymity was protected from them, but he did not value his privacy to the point of maintaining it with his closest peers within his class.

In addition to the online threaded discussions embedded within the wiki, Earl used the multimedia components to help him better understand the story. In an interview about his Animoto video, he demonstrated a connection to the theme of the book with the assignment. In the following transcription from our final interview, Earl makes connections from the story to his project. I had asked him who in the story related to his choices in his video, for which he had indicated the character, Amos:

Earl: That he was mean to him and then he wasn't.

Me: Then he wasn't...what was wrong with him?

Earl: Um, he didn't see him a lot.

Me: What happened to Amos in the story?

Earl: That he got missing, got lost, he went somewhere...?

Me: Yeah he disappeared for awhile in the story, got lost...and then when they found him later...did they trust him?

Earl: Yeah.

Me: Yeah, did it turn out to be the wrong thing to trust?

Earl: Yeah.

Me: Yes, so you remember...so you said at the beginning, the words in the video that "somethings are not always what they seem," and then you said, "sometimes things are even better," so how does that relate the story?

Earl: Amos. (interview, November 10, 2015)

**Luke: A Connected Reader**

Luke was an energetic young man who valued entertainment with his peers. He liked to get a laugh out of his peers and often used stories with sound effects and other physical embellishments to entertain the class.

Luke was confident about his reading skills, though his scores were low. I observed he carried and occasionally read the follow up book to the shared text from this study, but he didn't finish it. I believe this is a regular occurrence for him. He believed he read better than most students in the class, finding them to be slower in reading aloud than him. In my observations in class, he did attempt to read fast and decodes fairly quickly, but he was not always attentive to what has been read, thus not always able to answer comprehension questions. As with the others, he did not perform on grade level on annual standardized tests. However, within the read-aloud setting used for this study, he was highly engaged and eager to continue reading, often expressing anger at having to stop reading each day.

Luke: It was funny. It had lots of curiosity. It Um... Had bunch of brave, well lots of people start with brave, and dhen it was like the book, like it's gonna be like "what's gonna happen next, and it's gonna do it again, and dhen, you have to keep reading it and dhen like you don't want to stop readin' it. (interview, October 19, 2015)

This thought is continued with the transcription that follows. I had asked him about seeing himself in the story:

Luke: I saw uh, I saw myself in almost all of the [laughs] whole book.

Me: Did you?

Luke: Yeah, the RV, the fightin', the um, the um, the part where dhey was attacked by the little um Leprechaun things that was chasin' them while Bast was drivin' that car.

Me: [Laughs].

Luke: [Laughs].

Me: So, all of it huh? So you got into the story didn't you?

Luke: Uh huh. (interview, November 2, 2015)

His high level of engagement maintained his interest and supported his recall of the story, events and characters. For example, he correctly described the conditions that would cause Carter to act brave in the story, even when he wasn't normally the brave one.

Luke: He got very vicious, and he turned into an avatar and started fightin'.

Me: Ok, so he got brave and courageous.

Luke: Uh huh.

Me: He didn't seem like that in the beginning. Is that right?

Luke: Uh huh, he seem like he was like a nice like somebody that's, harmless.

Me: Uh huh, so he was like just not so mean guy, but then he turned into a pretty vicious fighter when it came time to take care of his sister.

Luke: Uh huh.

Me: Ok, that's cool.

Luke: That's a possibility.

Me: I bet that surprised Sadie, too, don't you think?

Luke: [Laughs and nods head].

Me: Yeah, who was the feisty one?

Luke: Bast.

Me: No, I mean between the two of them.

Luke: Sadie. (interview, October 19, 2015)

Luke related to the two protagonists in the story because he shares some common and unique characteristics the other participants do not. First, he was biracial. Second, like Sadie, he only got to see his dad twice a year. He discussed this connection he made, and posted to his peers on the wiki, during the final interview:

Me: I asked personal connections and you told people on there that you...

Luke: I am like Sadie because I only get to see my dad 2 times a year.

Me: Yeah so you made that connection to the story.

Luke: Yeah. (interview, November 2, 2015)

He had earlier discussed this personal connection in more detail during the second interview when I asked him which character in the whole book he most identified with:

Luke: [Long pause] Sadie?

Me: Why do you say Sadie?

Luke: Because, we only get, I only get to see my dad two times a year, and my mama and my dad's two different, well two different colors, biracials, my mama's Lumbee and my Daddy's black.

Me: Uh huh.

Luke: And um, my dad comes and gets, sees me in December and November, when the times he gets to get out, but if he's workin' during dem times he won't get to

come see me because he's at dis place where it'll help him, [takes deep breath] so [long pause, then whispers "yeah"].

Me: So, are there some years you don't see him?

Luke: Yeah.

Me: Where you normally would?

Luke: Yeah, and I can call him, but when I call him he's mostly doing work.

Me: You never know for sure if you're going to get him if you call?

Luke: But when, he's off on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, he just has to stay dhere until dhey say he can come and visit. (interview, October 19, 2015)

I chose to show the transcription above to demonstrate the process of questioning and responding that occurred. When I took this set of text and analyzed his narrative for significance, he used 92 percent of the total words as evaluative devices to explain this relationship to Sadie. This was a highly emotional moment during the interview, as demonstrated by his use of long pauses and sighs (each bracketed in the narrative); I coded these as hedges. Though he showed vulnerability, these were moments he allowed the narrative to continue and then close. In my field notes I noted this interview:

There was a tough moment today in the interview with Luke when he revealed a strong bond to the character of Sadie in ways I was unprepared for emotionally. It was a moment I will not forget as he opened up raw emotions and connected intimately with Sadie (field notes, October 19, 2015).

This strong connection compelled him to show in this highly emotional moment, that he knew exactly what Sadie felt each year when she saw her dad twice. He also felt confident

enough to share that fact with his online peers, as demonstrated earlier, by his posting this situation to the discussion posts.

In the narrative below Luke reveals the various ways he engaged the website. In addition to the excitement generated by the audiobook for Luke, he enjoyed getting online and interacting with his peers:

Well there is a lot of questions on there and I like it. You get to make an avatar. You work in groups. You can talk to other people. Discuss how the book is going, um....you can add on different things about how did the book, how was the book, like how did you like it and stuff like that? (interview, November 2, 2015)

Luke engaged others on the wiki site through questioning. Talking with others through the website empowered him to take leadership in this process with his peers. In fact, Luke started three discussion threads on his own to pose questions to his peers online. Figure 4.1 shows one of the discussions threads he created. It shows where he inserted his question and received responses from other students between two of the prompt questions I had originally posted on that page.

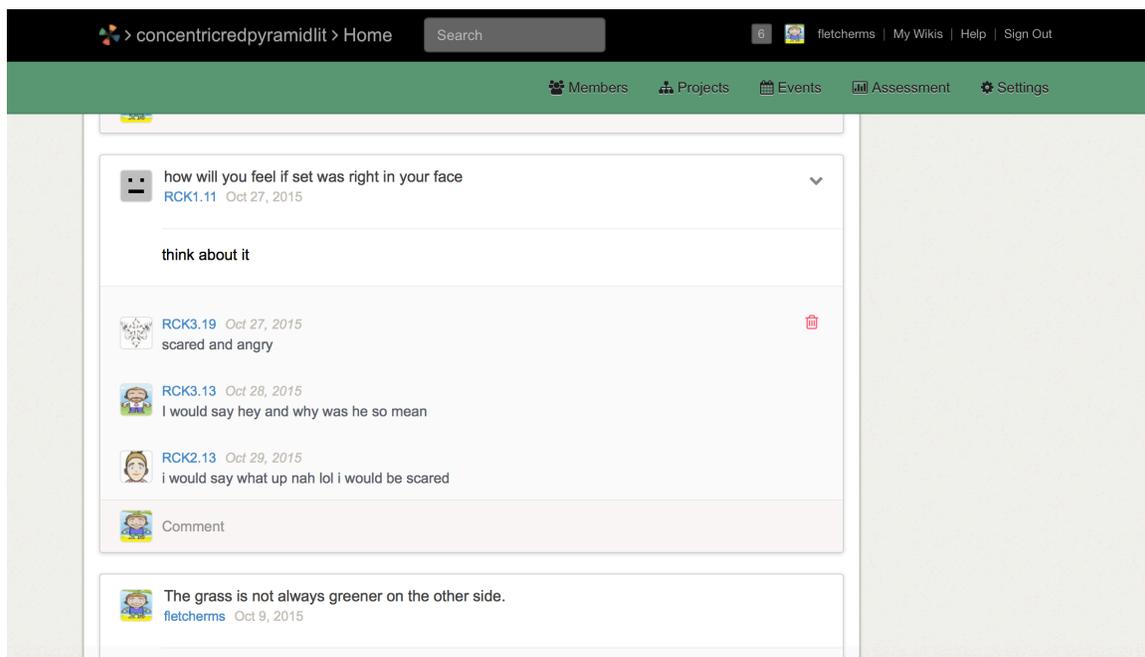


Figure 4.1. Screen capture of online threaded discussion

I asked Luke to tell me about his experiences with the online discussions and his choice to initiate his own threads. He said,

Oh, I asks some questions, and, if, if dhey tell me, I asked dem how did dhey like, if dhey had um. I asked dem how would dhey'd feel if Set was right there, in front of like your mom's face and dhey answered dhat and I said how would you feel, and dhey tell you the answer (interview, November 2, 2015).

His self-created discussion threads engaged responses from students in each of the three classes, and lead to other spontaneous threads from various students on the site. In fact, outside of my requirements for their participation by answering threads I initiated, students were just as engaged, if not more, in their own discussions. This choice by a student who has been identified by the school as a struggling reader demonstrates the agency he was provided

within the wiki to engage other learners. This may not have occurred in a face-to-face class setting. However, within the bounded system of the wiki site, he found courage to engage in the questioning process with his peers.

### Findings Across Cases

Students in all three classes participated on the wiki, posting videos, cartoons, Vokis, and adding comments to discussion threads found on each page within the site. Table 4.1 shows the number of projects submitted and/or edited and discussion posts made by each

Table 4.1

*Number of Page Edits/Submissions and Online Threaded Discussion Posts*

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Projects Submitted/Edited</b>	<b>Threaded Discussion Posts</b>
<b>Junior</b>	3	6
<b>Jacob</b>	1	10
<b>John</b>	1	13
<b>Jonathan</b>	4	24
<b>Earl</b>	1	6
<b>Luke</b>	1	14
	<b>11</b>	<b>73</b>

of the six cases for this study.

All six participants completed a video using animoto.com and successfully posted those to the site. Junior, John, and Jonathan created additional content beyond the required videos for the project and posted those to the relative pages in the wiki.

There were four major themes identified in this study. Within each of these four themes are subthemes. To describe these themes I selected gerunds that represent the action taken by the students that address the questions of "how"; these descriptors also related to concepts of identity and agency that emerged within the findings. The themes may answer one or more of the research questions individually, and collectively the group of themes addresses the four research questions. The themes and subthemes are listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Themes and Subthemes*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
<b>Connecting</b>	Making personal connections.
	Bridging ideas across multimedia formats.
<b>Conversing</b>	Participating in online discussions.
	Discussing through offline conversations.
<b>Collaborating</b>	Working through partnerships.
	Using strong agency with technology to engage with peers.
<b>Comparing</b>	Considering male readers to female.
	Contrasting personal reader agency with peers.

**Connecting**

In looking across the cases, one major theme emerged to answer the first research question about transactions these students made with the text as part of the online literature study. These students who are identified as struggling readers engaged with the shared text

in two major ways. The first way included making connections to personal experiences and their specific personalities. The second involved making connections across multimedia formats within the wiki. Some of these connections were made during the read-aloud portions of the class, while many were made through online discussions surrounding the multimedia projects and the text.

**Making personal connections.** Making personal connections to the text was an approach used by these students as part of their transactions with the story. The story was read aloud using an audiobook version of the text, while students were encouraged to follow along. Comments were made such as, "I was imagining it" (Junior, interview, October 15, 2015), referring to seeing the plot unfold in his head. Several participants said, "I saw myself in the story." Jacob saw a likeness of himself in both the characters of Zia and Iskandar, "because both of them are wise" (interview, October 15, 2015). John liked the fighting scenes in the story and said, "Yeah, when they was fightin' cause I like fightin'" (interview, November 3, 2015). Jonathan made a connection to Sadie because he, "gets angry alot" like he believed she did in the story (interview, October 16, 2015). He emotionally connected with the events in the story as they occurred. About Carter and Sadie, he said he "felt sorry for 'em because they'd lost dhere mama and daddy, and dhey couldn't find 'em" (interview, October 16, 2015). When reading along with the story, Earl said he would "pretend I was Carter, and my sister was Sadie" (interview, October 16, 2015). He also wondered during the story if "Zia and Cater [were] gonna go out" (interview, October 16, 2015). Luke recognized a similarity to Sadie, "Because, Sadie and Carter are not the same color they are biracial" (discussion post, October 27, 2015), in that he was also biracial.

**Bridging ideas across multimedia formats.** The varying multimedia components available to the students on the wiki site created opportunities for students to make connections with the text and with each other through the process of creating, sharing, viewing, and discussing the projects. John made connections across the social studies related work in class when he learned about the jars Ancient Egyptians used and connected that information with the character of "Osiris and the things that they put their body or organs in" (interview, November 6, 2015). He recognized the connection from the video he made to Zia and how "she was a shabti, not the real one" (interview, November 6, 2015), as we had discussed shabti in class and multiple students had conducted research online about the burial processes of the Ancient Egyptians. Similarly, Jonathan worked through the online threaded discussions and the project pages to post and engage with others about the book:

I created my avatar, and dhen, and dhen we answered some questions, and dhen I created my Animoto, my video and dhen I went to the other videos and looked at ‘em, and dhen I commented on some, some of ‘em (interview, October 16, 2015).

In creating his video, Earl says he thought about how in the text "stuff ain't the same" (interview, November 6, 2015) and how he chose to show good and bad models of cars and motorcycles in his video. Luke connected across formats by watching other videos created by peers in his class. He told me about a leprechaun video a friend had made and originally posted to the site. In discussing how the changes in character images in the other student's video related to the text he shared:

. . .when Carter turned into his falcon warrior, like at first Carter couldn't do nothin' because, like something happened under water and he said he couldn't do nothing,

like he was going to drown, but he said 'well I don't got no choice,' and then he turned into his falcon warrior. (interview, November 2, 2015)

This was a major change from Luke's earlier response at the beginning of the project when he talked about being uncertain about what to do and where to go to post projects:

You see brrbrr [frustration sound he made] it is kind of confusing, well frustrating, cause I don't know where I's supposed to go to do it, but I do know where I's supposed to go to talk, and I got my avatar created. . .um [long pause]. . .really to me it's fun to do it. (interview, October 16, 2016)

He eventually learned how to do the tasks he needed to accomplish, and posted his own video created in similar fashion to the leprechaun video he referenced. His own selection of a sweet and innocent looking bunny picture turning into a vicious dog-like animal related to the way the leprechaun video was produced. He said, "rabbits aren't all that nice when you get to know 'em," and later "my rabbit'll try to bite you" (interview, November 2, 2015).

### **Conversing**

Conversing with others about the text answers the second research question.

Discussion threads are embedded on every page of the wiki so participants are able to discuss topics related to what has been posted on that page. Anonymity was built into the project by giving students a pseudonym to use when posting comments and multimedia projects.

Conversing occurred within the site, but also within the classroom as students gathered around tables with laptops and at desktop computers and worked on projects together.

**Participating in online discussions.** All six of the cases posted discussions throughout the site. Junior posted mainly responses to the questions I had placed as prompts

on each page. He did respond to one of Luke's prompts he created about a face-to-face meeting with Set. Jacob similarly responded to my discussion prompts, but not to others. He said, "I might have commented on your questions, other than that I probably ain't" (interview, November 5, 2015). He did respond to the video posted by John, referring to the hunting dog images selected for the video. Jacob had mentioned in the first interview that he liked hunting. John did the same thing for Jacob with his video about Josh Norman, saying, "he is the best cornerback in the NFL" (threaded discussion post, October 27, 2015). John posted to others online besides his closest peers. Jonathan had the most discussion posts, 24, of the six cases. This matches his offline personality in class of participating in conversations with peers in the room. Earl, as with Junior, only posted discussions six times for the entire project. He mentioned in the final interview learning from the others' "textin'," as he called it, on the wiki pages. Luke had 14 discussion posts, three of which he started. He mentioned the biracial nature of the two main characters for an answer in a discussion started by another peer, and answered all of my questions for each page.

**Discussing through offline conversations.** In online discussions, Junior mainly focused on answering my questions on the various pages, but participated in offline conversations about the text and the projects with multiple peers throughout the study. He grouped himself with his closest peers in the classroom and worked on his multimedia projects and discussed answers to the questions I posed. Jacob was one of the peers Junior spent offline time discussing the text and the project with. This means Jacob was also utilizing offline conversations about the text and the projects to participate in the study. John worked alongside several peers throughout the study and engaged in conversation about

answers to the questions posed on the discussion threads. Earl used a close peer to review comments made and as he said, "to help me" with the words he didn't know (interview, November 7, 2015). Luke spent time with peers in class discussing projects and placing questions on the site. He mentioned in an interview "Billy told him to look at his video, because he had posted it" (interview, November 15, 2015). Earlier in the process he discussed a video in class with a girl who had posted hers and told him about it, and he said "she had used her own picture" and he "told her she wasn't supposed to do that" (interview, September 22, 2015).

### **Collaborating**

Wikis are designed to be collaborative in nature. Utilizing Web 2.0 technologies that allow multiple participants to work simultaneously on a site encourages participants to work together to create new meaning together. This finding addresses the second research question, but also the last one, as it provides the context for student success on the project. The collaborative nature of the site coupled with student interest in working together online, motivated this group to work on this project. In analyzing data across the cases, it was clear that collaboration online and offline was occurring. This was done in two main ways. First, participants created partnerships within the classroom to develop multimedia projects, to assist each other in posting those products to the wiki, and to discuss the projects while working. Second, a strong sense of agency concerning the use of technology encouraged students to assist each other with the various components within all the online tools and formats to complete the project.

**Working through partnerships.** Partnerships represented a recurring aspect of collaboration. Throughout the study, when Junior worked on the wiki, he engaged his peers to collaborate on the projects and discussion threads. John worked with a girl in his class to complete his Voki project and she helped him to post it to the wiki. Jonathan helped some girls in class "post their avatars" to the site (interview, October 16, 2015). Earl employed his "best friend" in class to "help him post" his video (interview, October 16, 2015). Luke worked with peers to develop and post videos on the site; his friend's "was about a leprechaun that was crazy" (interview, November 16, 2015).

**Using strong agency with technology to engage with peers.** Working with the technological components of this project provided these six struggling readers opportunities to demonstrate skills to peers and encouraged collaboration as participants completed the various multimedia projects posted to the wiki. Junior worked with "a friend to answer questions on the site" and to help another friend "set up an Animoto and Toondoo" (interview, November 4, 2015). Jacob did not mention peers in his interviews, but I observed him in class and noted his collaborative behavior in my field notes: "Jacob is working with Junior today side-by-side on laptops making their Toondos. Junior is posting something about baseball, and it looks like Jacob has something to do with drug use (field notes, October 26, 2015). John worked with three of his peers while making his Animoto video and posting it to the site. He had confidence in helping them with their videos and discussion thread posts, but also sought help with a girl in class when he attempted to make a Voki and needed help to get it done. Jonathan enjoyed "making them little avatars" and was one of

only 18 out of the 61 students who posted the avatar to their settings page. He worked with classmates to show them how to do that after being successful with his. I noted,

Jonathan has learned how to post his avatar to the wiki and is helping others. I wonder if he realizes in helping them, they can now know who he is and he can know who they are on the site (field notes, October 5, 2015).

Earl has a close peer in the class who he collaborated with to get his multimedia projects posted, who "helped him" to understand what others had written in discussion posts, as well. Luke worked with a peer in the class with his Animoto video and shared the friend's video with me during the interviews. He engaged several people throughout the project and was even proud of knowing who people were on the site when he wasn't supposed to. He said, "I got my ways" when I asked how he knew who so many were.

### **Comparing**

For middle school students, exploring identity is part of the process of development. Comparing self to others is a way many students judge and form personal identity. In this study, the six cases across multiple data sources made comparison statements about other students and themselves, which support this concept. This process of comparison to build and support personal concepts about identity addresses the third research question. In this section there are two main subthemes that emerged about how these cases demonstrated identity through comparing.

**Considering male readers versus female.** During the interviews, I asked the participants to describe the difference in boys and girls as readers. Junior shared an

understanding that had been taught to him from his grandmother concerning the differences of boys and girls with reading:

A girl reader...a little better than the boys...um...they...they just get the hang of it faster than boys...they...it's like...Grandma said most Lumbee boys are ...most Lumbees can't read, but most of the girl readers just catch onto it. . . . (interview, September 16, 2015)

He was a reluctant reader, having shared "I don't like reading," and "it don't do me good"; Junior claimed he can read, but doesn't want to read (interview, September 16, 2015).

Similarly, Jacob says he "most of the time girls can read better, cause boys like to do other stuff, like they like to go outside," and this view was especially important to Jacob as he reported his entire family likes to be outside whenever they can (interview, September 19, 2016). He read at home, but only when his mom, as he said, "tells me to read" (interview, September 19, 2015). John said girls "might have different imaginations about a picture in a book or something," which for him living in a home with three sisters and a mother was probably a home observation as much as a school one (interview, September 20, 2015).

Jonathan had a different take on boys versus girls because he has a cousin living at home with him who is a boy that is an avid reader, but later says that girls in class read better out loud than do boys. Earl says girls are "smarter than boys," and shared that his aunt, who is his guardian, said, "girls have more opened minds" (interview, September 21, 2015). Luke referenced girls reading "things boys don't like...a bunch of girl stuff" (interview, September 21, 2015). In all of the significance analysis for the narratives by the boys comparing girl and boy readers, at least 20% of the evaluative devices employed were negations and hedges.

Words such as "just," "other stuff," "they say" all represent negations to focus attention away from personal identity as low readers when compared with girls. This was true for Jonathan's narrative, as well; he was the only one to refer to boys as better readers, but was not able to make the case without negating and hedging his statements 75 percent of the time in his narrative with words like "well" and "how to put it" before stating his thought that "boys read better than girls" (interview, September 21, 2015).

**Contrasting personal reader agency with peers.** Throughout the project, I discussed concepts about personal reading identity to verify the statements included in this section. In looking across all the data, it is clear that these boys did not see themselves as top level readers, but none of them want to claim a bottom level identity, either, even though academic records and annual assessments would indicate they were. In all of the member checks during the interview process, I returned to the concepts of them as "middle level" readers within the room and consistently they saw this as the case. Each of them felt there were others who struggle with reading in class more than they did, but they also recognized there are those who read better. However, when I applied the significance analysis to their statements about reading identity, most used negations and hedges to build their narratives using more than 25 percent of evaluative devices in the statements, thus indicating their lack of confidence in their claims about personal reading ability. Thus, they may have claimed to be middle-level readers, when in reality they may have believed themselves to be lower and been unwilling to state it as a fact. The following statements demonstrate my analysis. Junior thought of himself as a "reader to get by" (interview, September 19, 2015). He had a poor concept of himself as a reader and negated his statements 32 percent of the time in his

narrative. Jacob saw himself as, "in the middle [laughs]. Not too good, but not bad" (interview, September 19, 2015). In this example, he negated his thoughts about himself with a laugh. John said, "I know I could read now, I could read stuff when people asked me to, and I can read signs and stuff now," again employing negations of the word "stuff" twice in this short statement, possibly indicating his reading is not necessarily of an academic nature, but some type of reading done at home. Jonathan described himself as, "Good, but sometimes I miss words. I'll be reading fast, too fast, and I'll miss words. Good, but not top-of-the-line;" however, even though he used the descriptor "good," he hedged with the admission, "but sometimes I miss words," as though his good must be protected from scrutiny when someone might hear him read. He goes on to say, "I haven't practiced them, the big words and stuff," again hedging with the word "practiced" (interview, September 21, 2015). However, he used negations and hedges less than 25 percent of his narrative, the lowest in the group, positioning himself more firmly with his reading identity than the others. Earl said that he saw himself as "pretty good, but not good, it's like between, like I ain't good at some of it, but I am good at some of it," using 68 percent of his evaluative devices as negations and hedges. His use of "pretty good," "not good," "but I am good," and "some of it," indicated that he did not want to narrate himself as a poor reader, but when comparing himself to others, he falls short for "some of it" (interview, September 21, 2015). Luke completely avoided the question in the first interview by telling a story about why he "likes to read," like "books about nature and stuff," but never addressed how he saw himself as a reader. In subsequent interviews, I addressed this question again. The transcription of the member check exercise in the second interview follows where I worked with him to come to

a statement. Below that portion of the interview is the transcription from the same place in the final interview:

Me: Ok, so there's a couple of things I want to talk about that, um, I got from our first interview, and I want to make sure I'm on the right track. So as far as you're concerned, the way you believe about your reading, I think you feel like you are somewhere in the middle of the class, that there are kids that can read better, and there are kids that can't read as good as you, is that true?

Luke: [Shakes head no].

Me: No, so what, how do you feel about your reading?

Luke: I feel great about myself. I know I can do good. I know I can do better. It's just sometimes I push myself too hard and then I mess up a couple of words, and then I get back right on track. I like the way I read, it just that sometimes I just get off I get a little off track.

Me: So do you feel like you're more toward the advanced kids in the class?

Luke: No, not really.

Me: Not really, so why would you say...so why do you think that then?

Luke: I don't know. I just like to read.

Me: Do you think you're the lowest reader in the class?

Luke: Uh-uh.

Me: No, so?

Luke: Like in-between (interview, October 16, 2015).

This is how he defended his identity in terms of other readers in the class. He had confirmed through the earlier interview above about his belief of being "like in-between," but just wouldn't say so again in this final interview.

Luke: Really, now I can't say, because when we had that reading interview, well when we was reading in front of class, nobody could read, they stuttered the whole time they was going through the book.

Me: So you think you could handle it better?

Luke: uh huh (interview, November 7, 2015).

I had chosen not to apply the significance analysis to the texts from the member check sections, since they were not really narrative, but rather used to verify earlier statements and themes I identified about each participant on the wiki. However, with Luke, I chose to apply that process to his follow up statement about his concepts about his reading to determine where his identity might fall in terms of how he uses evaluative devices to narrate that piece.

I feel great about myself. I know I can do good. I know I can do better. It's just sometimes I push myself too hard and dhen I mess up a couple of words, and dhen I get back right on track. I like the way I read, it's just that sometimes I just get off. I get a little off track.

In this text, Luke used hedges and negations for this narrative with 30 words out of the 62 total words, which is 48 percent of the text. He tried to safeguard his personal thoughts about his reading by using hedges, such as "can do good," "push myself too hard," "mess up a couple of words," and "right back on track," then negates negative reading events with "just get off" and "just sometimes" (interview, November 7, 2015). This process indicated to me

that he was safeguarding himself from the academic label of a struggling reader, but knew he was not the best and "can do better," thus his reading identity fell somewhere in the middle of his peers, as stated in the earlier interview transcription.

Table 4.3 shows a matrix, adapted from Dauite (2014), I used for comparing the six cases with three selected narratives on topics related to personal reading identity, comparing gender with reading, and narrative first experiences with reading independently. A sample of the matrices is included in Appendix D.

Table 4.3

*Significance Analysis Matrix: Combined Narratives Totals*

	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Jacob</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>Earl</b>	<b>Luke</b>
Psychological States						
<i>Affective</i>	2					2
<i>Cognitive</i>	2		1		1	1
<i>Speech</i>	2					7
Intensifiers	5	2	1	6	1	6
Casual Connectors	27	11	22	11	5	37
Negations and hedges	14	4	9	20	11	44
Qualifiers	11	12	13	26	28	48
Total Evaluative Devices	63	29	46	63	46	145
Total Words	165	72	87	128	112	252
Evaluative Devices/ Words Used	0.38	0.40	0.53	0.49	0.41	0.58

*Note.* Table format adapted from "Narrative Inquiry: A Dynamic Approach," by Coleen Daiute, 2014, pp. 185-186. Copyright 2014 by Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. Reprinted with permission of SAGE College.

This matrix provides a way to compare uses of evaluative devices within narratives that answered the same questions by all six participants. Jonathan employed the highest percentage of intensifiers for his narratives, 10 percent, matching his expressive and verbal

personality in class. However, he also used the highest percentage of negations and hedges in these narratives, 32 percent, indicating lack of self-confidence in his statements. The lowest percentage of negations and hedges belonged to Jacob, which may indicate his matter-of-fact personality and a higher level of confidence about his beliefs. Earl and John both used intensifiers in their narratives only two percent of the time, indicating possible lack of vocabulary to express ideas beyond facts, especially when coupled with their use of negations and hedges for more than 20 percent of their stories. In all, meaning making processes identified through the significance analysis indicate a dependency on facts and causal events to organize and report ideas. The one huge surprise was the low percentage of intensifiers employed by Luke in his narratives when he is one of the most expressive and engaging oral storytellers in the class. Perhaps, it is the high volume of words he uses, he used the most words both in the comparison narratives and in the total narratives for the study that lowers the percentage of intensifiers when comparing evaluative devices.

Table 4.4

*Total Percentages For All Collected Narratives and Total Word Counts*

	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Jacob</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>Earl</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Psychological States</b>	12%	3%	9%	7%	5%	4%	7%
<b>Intensifiers</b>	12%	5%	4%	5%	3%	7%	6%
<b>Casual Connectors</b>	20%	34%	25%	22%	23%	29%	26%
<b>Negations and Hedges</b>	26%	24%	16%	16%	22%	18%	20%
<b>Qualifiers</b>	30%	34%	49%	43%	47%	42%	41%
<b>Evaluative Devices</b>	46%	39%	39%	50%	44%	48%	44%
<b>Total Words in Narratives</b>	1524	840	1408	1583	633	2815	8803

*Note.* Table format adapted from "Narrative Inquiry: A Dynamic Approach," by Coleen Daiute, 2014, pp. 185-186. Copyright 2014 by Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. Reprinted with permission of SAGE College.

I also calculated the total word counts for all narrative texts I collected, (see Table 4.4) to get a better sense of the full use of evaluative devices throughout all narratives by the six cases. However, due to the varying nature of the semi-structured interviews, this table may not be used as an equitable comparison. I include it to illustrate how the narrative texts are demonstrative of the individual cases and personalities observed in classes and through the themes identified through the open and a priori coding, and axial coding conducted on all data sources.

For example, Luke was the most verbose of the students in class and with the narrative recorded here. He used 2815 words in all, whereas the next highest use was 1583 by Jonathan, another student who was talkative in class and enjoyed working in groups for discussions in class. This was true for Junior, as well who used 1524 words in all. On the other end of the spectrum, Earl used 633 words to construct his narratives throughout this study, which was indicative of his reading level compared to the other participants. However, the second lowest, Jacob, with 840 was perhaps more indicative of his use of short phrases and matter-of-fact manner that addressed questions directly, though the 24 percent use of negations and hedges would indicate his lack of self-confidence in those statements, particularly his frequent employment of [laughs] throughout his narratives and responses in his interviews. The participants used causal connectors and qualifiers more frequently on average in the total narratives, which is similar to the findings with the comparison narratives used in the previous section. All six cases utilized evaluative devices in a range of 39-50 percent of their narratives.

### **Summary**

Six cases were explored using open coding, a priori coding and significance analysis of narrative data sources. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) connecting, (b) conversing, (c) collaborating, and (d) comparing. Findings indicated that the Lumbee males in this study used offline and online conversation and collaboration to accomplish academic goals when working within a wiki site assigned as part of classroom activities. Narrative analysis revealed struggles with reading identity and strong agency associated with tasks surrounding work with the technology on this project.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

*Well there is a lot of questions on there and I like it. You get to make an avatar. You work in groups. You can talk to other people. (Luke)*

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of six sixth grade Lumbee males who struggle with reading while participating in an online literature study in which participants created, posted, and viewed multimedia projects, and also posted discussions to threads created on pages throughout a wiki site. The investigation involved a two-fold approach. First, the study used open coding and an *a priori* coding with analysis informed by Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995), in order to gain a thick, rich description of the experiences the six cases had while participating in the online literature study. Second, a narrative inquiry process was used to explore significance within narratives collected from multiple data sources (Daiute, 2014) to reveal meaning making processes the six students used. The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with a text in an online collaborative study unit?
2. How do sixth grade struggling readers identified as American Indian males transact with other participants when participating in an online collaborative literature study unit?
3. What concepts concerning identity are revealed in the narratives of the study participants?

4. To what extent do narratives of sixth grade struggling American Indian male readers reveal concepts of agency when participating in a collaborative online literature study?

The discussion includes: a summary of findings, connections between the findings in this study and previous research, implications for policy, implications for practice, implications for policy, implications for future research projects, limitations, and a final section discussing three major conclusions from this study.

### **Summary of Findings**

Through fusing the findings from the two-fold approach, the present study sought to tell a new narrative of the six individuals and the collective stories of the group. The findings in this study were collapsed into four major themes: (a) connecting, (b) conversing, (c) collaborating, and (d) comparing.

### **Connections to Previous Research**

Learning is a social process that occurs when individuals build on knowledge from the experiences they have through interactions with those within their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). This study used the epistemological stance that learning is a constructive process (Au, 1997; Brofenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ideas of constructionism, this study viewed literacy through the lens of Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) and the concept that life is lived as a narrative (Bruner, 1986) that tells a story about a person and how that person experiences the world around him. For the present study, the experiences of six American Indian males who struggle with reading were narrated through a series of interviews, online threaded

discussions, literature response journals, and multimedia projects created, shared, and viewed by the participants. This was done within an online literature study as part of a larger unit of study in a social studies class where students explored the topic of Ancient Egypt. Riordan (2010) wrote *The Red Pyramid*, which explores “what if” scenarios of the present day world with the existence of the Ancient Egyptian gods and descendants of magicians belonging to the House of Life. Due to district demands on homework hours, I chose to have students read along with an audiobook recording of the text in class, rather than assigning pages to be read at home. This actually changed the experience for these struggling readers by encouraging engagement through the actors’ use of accents and by reading with prosody throughout the book. The actors employed varying changes in accents as different characters were quoted and varied their voices to convey emotions experienced in the narrative. The main female character was from London, England, and had a strong accent throughout the reading. This created interest in the story for the students because they mentioned the accent a few times in their responses during the interviews, which would not have occurred if they students had read the book privately, since nothing is written in dialect and there is only a brief reference to Sadie’s accent in the beginning of the story. Toward the end of the reading, I introduced the students to the site and they began posting discussions and multimedia projects.

### **Transactional Reader Response Theory**

All readers bring to the reading event personal experiences and knowledge that create a unique transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). This transaction is unique to the reader and to the specific time the reading takes place

(Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). This study contributes to this theory by revealing transactions six cases had with a shared text. They did this by connecting personal experience to the story and by engaging their own imaginations within the reading event. These individual transactions with the text can be challenged, confirmed, or adjusted based on knowledge gained about other readers' transactions with the same text through discussion (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). In this study students discussed the text through online discussion threads and face-to-face teams as each contributed multimedia content to the wiki site. Within the corpus of data sources, the six cases revealed multiple events when ideas were shared, explored, and adapted based on discussion threads, images created, and videos shared.

Face-to-face literature discussion groups in classrooms have been found to recreate marginalization practices found in the larger community (Clarke, 2006; Wolsey, 2004). Students who struggle with reading can be silenced within groups through marginalization practices (Gambrell, 1996; Grisham & Wolsey, 2006). This study was built with this concept as a foundation by providing anonymity for participants. However, many students, including all of the six cases, set aside anonymity within their individual classes to work collaboratively on creating, posting, and sharing the multimedia projects. The online and offline settings within this study generated opportunities for dialogue about the reading. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) explained that as a student discusses a text with others he will listen to other students' transactions with that text and then "critically reevaluate his own assumptions and preoccupations" and that these circumstances would encourage him to explore concepts of a text different from his own and to alter or confirm those transactions based on the internalization of the others' transactions (p. 74). This was the case within the

context of the online literature study, both through the online threaded component and the multimedia projects. It has also been shown that struggling readers benefit from online discussion groups that are arranged on an asynchronous schedule, which allows readers to process answers, whereas a live discussion group would require students to share ideas and transactions more quickly, which could result in less participation by these students (Wolsey, 2004). The Wikispaces site allowed students to participate asynchronously throughout the project, which allowed them ample time to participate in the study and to process responses before posting, as all six cases made contributions to the discussion threads.

Gathering narratives from sources other than print are consistent with narrative inquiry practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Use of multimedia components mediated through a Web 2.0 site allows students the opportunity to merge concepts through technology, where their stories converge through the use of videos and images (Spires, Hervey, Morris, & Stepflug, 2012). In the present study, students extended discussion of concepts found within the shared text through multimedia projects. The threaded discussions provided print methods for extending the concepts communicated through the videos and images.

### **Reading Identity**

Risko and Walker-Dalhousie (2015) suggest struggling readers need opportunities to construct reading and writing identities through engaging texts (p. 114). The read-aloud audiobook, the multimedia projects students created to express personal meaning, and the discussions students had within this project gave them opportunities to develop identities as readers having something important to contribute to the collective site. Using the read-aloud

approach of the audiobook provided students an anchor text to explore further and develop interest in the social studies content, which supported approaches to disciplinary literacy (Risko & Walker-Dalhousie, 2015). All six cases posted multimedia projects related to the text and several added additional content beyond the requirements of the online literature study.

### **Wiki Technology**

The Wikispaces.com site used for this study allowed students to post avatars created on the Doppelpme.com site, cartoons created on Toondoo.com, and videos created on Animoto.com. Each of the sites were used to create images, cartoons, and videos consisted of components that required navigation skills and technological literacy skills to successfully create the projects. This is consistent with research demonstrating the need to teach literacy skills related to each technology utilized in a class in order for students to successfully navigate and comprehend a website or technology tool (Leu, et.al. 2004). Thus, within the wiki site, students had to develop skills to navigate the various pages to, enter the editor mode for the selected page, upload their personal multimedia project to the site, to insert the project onto the editor page, to engage the projects posted by other students, and to post comments to the discussion section on each page. Participants who might not otherwise excel in classroom literature discussions had opportunities to demonstrate competencies, and as was the case for the six cases in this study, to assist other students in the class in completing their projects. This level of agency utilized to engage in these tasks as experts gave students a means to be important in the class.

## **Social Learning**

Learning is a social process students engage in through interactions with peers and adults within a community (Bandura; 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). These concepts were supported throughout this project as students engaged in online and offline discussions to complete assignments and successfully create projects to post to the site. The students engaged in hundreds of posts throughout the site, identifying concepts shared in videos, images, and discussions posted to the site. Brofenbrenner (1979) described concentric circles of influence that radiate out from a learner; these circles are exponentially expanded by those in immediate proximity to the learner, and by those further out who are within the larger culture. Within this online literature study, due to the way students chose to use the laptops within the classroom and the skills of various peers, students expanded their knowledge in concentric levels of influence by using expert peers within the class and further expanding experience by posting, sharing, and viewing projects collectively online. Rosenblatt (1978/1994) also used concentric circles to describe the process a reader goes through in expanding transactions to a text by challenging personal understanding through exposure to transactions others have had with the same text. This challenge often sends the readers back to the text to verify understanding and to resolve conflicts within themselves as they adjust meaning they have created from the text. All of the six students in this study reported this process either through responses to online threaded discussions or by viewing the various multimedia projects posted to the site.

## **Lumbee Connections**

Studies have shown Lumbee students at the high school and college level find a greater ability to succeed when given opportunities to collaborate and support learning from within their home community (Bryant & LaFromboise, 2005; Collins, 2015). This study extends our understanding of this concept by directing attention toward sixth grade Lumbee students, for whom collaboration was identified as a major theme. Students worked face-to-face in self-created teams of peers while online, helping navigate various multimedia creation sites, as well as the wiki pages created for this project. Community plays an important role in providing structure for students to succeed academically (Collins, 2015) and was a characteristic of Lumbee schools before desegregation (Dial, 2005) and has been continued as an identifier of the local community (Dial & Eliades, 1996). The online and offline community of sixth graders in this project supported learning and shared ideas, including the six cases in this study who are identified as struggling readers. The collaborative nature of the community within the classroom and the online collective group, provided structure that students needed to engage in the reading event and to share personal connections with others.

At the same time, students can struggle with acceptance within a social group, which could have potential effects on collaborative efforts; dialect differences and isolation felt by Luke is not uncommon within the local Lumbee culture. Lumbees who were reared away from their native home often do not speak with the dialect of Lumbee English as the local people do and this can lead to some social issues, such as being treated as "snobbery" because the individual does not switch into the dialect (Blu, p. 162, 1980/2001). Luke struggles with acceptance by Lumbee peers in part, as he revealed in the interviews, because

he doesn't talk like them. He spent time from before school age up to third grade in a different state within the southern United States and in a non-Lumbee community.

Blu (2001) also shared a description of Lumbee identity as developed through "ethnic symbolism," emphasizing history and culture (Blu, 2001, p. 169), rather than native languages and practices associated with other tribes. Also, because Lumbees are not bound to tribal lands on a reservation, they are not stringent with defining levels of Indianness in order to recognize membership to the tribe, as is the case with many reservation tribes. Blu (2001) says, "All Lumbees are considered equally entitled to be Lumbee with one socially recognized Lumbee parent" (p. 170). This is certainly the case for Luke, who identified himself in the narratives as Lumbee and as biracial when he shared his connection with Sadie and Carter. This struggle can be magnified for an individual as Luke, since Lumbee English dialect can be a factor in determining a person's "indianness" within the culture. Appearance alone is not arguable to determine "indianness" (Dial & Eliades, 1986, p. 20). This fact was repeatedly supported in the discussions with the six cases as I asked them about how they could know who was Lumbee in the classroom; all six boys determined it was the way a person speaks that revealed a person is Lumbee more than physical features, such as skin color.

Researchers have also shown family support structures encourage academic success of students within the Lumbee culture (Collins, 2015; Dial, 2001; Blu, 2001). Blu (2001) in the afterword of the 2001 edition of her ethnographic study, noted the "role that families have played in tribal community" after discussing the improvements in opportunities since her earlier ethnography was written, observing that many children build homes close to homes of

their parents as they expand and continue to grow professionally (p.252). This view was supported by Collins (2015) in discussing how Lumbee students succeed in higher education contexts away from home; many connect with other American Indian students on campus to find a sense of community and support. Some return home on weekends to stay grounded within the home community and to find support to continue to excel in school. In the present study there was a sense of community within the classroom that developed as students engaged in unfamiliar activities online. Within the community atmosphere adopted by the students when creating and posting multimedia projects to the wiki, collaboration with one another fostered success, even at the expense of anonymity within the wiki.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study provide insight into teaching practices that would potentially benefit students in similar ethnic populations and those who struggle with reading. Given the engaging nature of the read-aloud text used for the story with the online literature study, teachers could incorporate audio versions of texts they use for instruction. Struggling readers may find engagement from expert readers who incorporate voice and prosody into the reading.

Recognizing the collaborative way students engaged in the online literature study within the wiki, there is potential in engaging learners who struggle with reading. Since anonymity provides struggling readers opportunities to participate more fully in an online literature study than with face-to-face literature discussions (Wolsey, 2004), teachers could benefit by using Web 2.0 technologies that would encourage students to engage others socially in ways that would allow them to protect their identities. Wolsey (2004) also found

that process time was increased in the online setting, giving struggling readers better options for contributing to literature discussion. In this study, the technology engaged the agency of the struggling readers to propel them into the role of expert when they helped others in the class to create, post, and view multimedia projects. Teachers that provide these methods for learning to students could potentially build self-esteem and engage marginalized learners in the social learning structure of their classes; whereas face-to-face activities might intimidate, online activities could validate these learners.

### **Implications for Research**

This study used a qualitative approach to investigate experiences. While the findings provide a window into the experiences of struggling readers in this study, there are quantitative approaches that could be employed to explore several related aspects. This section explores some of the possible studies that could be conducted.

### **Cultural Representation in Text**

It is important for American Indian readers to see themselves in stories they read (White-Kaulaity, 2006), and for American Indian students who speak native languages to have opportunities to read in their native language (Markowitz & Haley, 1973) and have school courses that incorporate cultural traditions in instruction (Buly & Ohana, 2004). Additionally, American Indian students gain knowledge through curriculum that recognizes American Indian culture is often developed through a sense of place (Semken, 2005). It has also been suggested that stories should come from authentic authors within those in the community who can better reveal the characteristics and nuances of that community in a text. Though not a specific focus for this study, the desire for connection represented an emerging

theme from the data during open coding from the interviews with these boys. This finding suggests Lumbee boys need to be able to read books where they can see themselves in the personalities and experiences of the characters. They need to be able to identify culturally with the setting and events a particular character encounters. Language use in the newer texts would have the potential to further validate the culture. Whatever language or languages spoken in the region by local people before European contact disappeared over time as Lumbee people adapted to the dominant European culture (Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick, & Oxendine, 2002). However, studies have shown a distinct English dialect of the Lumbee tribe exists (Scott & Brown, 2008; Wolfram, et. al., 2001). It may be more engaging and empowering for Lumbee readers if stories were written with this dialect utilizing Lumbee English within the speech of the Lumbee characters in the book. Additionally, stories that incorporate events and familiar settings Lumbee students can identify with may be more engaging than what is available today. Quantitative studies for comprehension and reading engagement could be developed to explore results of students having these types of texts to read.

Four of the six cases in this study could be described as reluctant readers who now struggle with reading as a result of low reading engagement. After creating stories with Lumbee characters, engagement could be studied in a scenario in which Lumbee boys are able to select texts in which they “see” themselves represented. For example, four out of the six boys specifically discussed hunting, fishing, football, and baseball as interests. Though there are texts available that use settings within each of these areas of interest shared by these

students, none of the stories have Lumbee characters, or use speech patterns familiar to the boys.

Another perspective of Lumbee life is experienced in local churches. Blu (2001) reports that "Lumbee religion and life are intertwined in such a fashion as to give the people the opportunity for joy in this world while preparing for the next" (p. 117). She goes on to say, "The church has been the focal point of community spirit" (p. 117). With this in mind, stories written with church life incorporated into the narratives of Lumbee children would additionally authenticate the texts and perhaps engage them more in the reading process.

Another facet of Lumbee life and history is strength through adversity, and "if adversity produces 'inner strength,'" as some have suggested, then the Lumbees have acquired a great deal of that quality" (Blu, 2001, p. 174). If Lumbee students understand this about their culture, then texts with themes of survival or Lumbee characters that endure adversity would speak to them. In discussing possible interests in reading, two of the boys said a book with a modern character that is American Indian would interest them. One of the other boys said it didn't matter to him if it was a modern person or based on someone in the past, he would read it because it was an American Indian. Recognizing themselves within stories available in print would provide cultural relevance and help them to honor and celebrate their Indianness.

That the Lumbees believe in their Indianness has done a great deal to shape their history and way of viewing the world in which they live. Moreover, the Lumbees, more than most native Americans, are well aware that being Indian is not merely a

physical foundation, but that it is even more importantly a state of mind, a self-concept. (Dial & Eliades, p. 23, 1996)

Perhaps Lumbee students need more opportunities to explore culture and tribal history within context of schooling. In exploring experiences of higher education students, Collins (2015) discovered students had successfully navigated the public education system, but had rarely explored what it meant to be Lumbee:

After hearing these stories of the students' experiences at the university, I found myself going back to a statement many of them made when they were faced with the incessant questions about their Indianness. Oftentimes they indicated they had "never thought about it" when they had to consider what it meant to be Lumbee. The data illustrated they knew who they were, but they had not considered their identity in the context of the larger society (Collins, 2015, p.115).

Perhaps if Lumbee students had texts that incorporated characters within the context of the larger society wrestling with identity, they would also be challenged to develop their own answers about "Indianness," and then be more prepared to express those views in public settings. The problem is not in these students knowing they are American Indians; it is a contextual issue within society to explain what it means to be American Indian. In this study, every case wrestled with providing answers to questions about being Lumbee. Junior was the only student of the six cases who was able to express his Indianness more openly, which is not surprising since he was the only one who participated regularly in tribal activities as a dancer and drummer for local powwows. Researchers may extend this concept beyond Lumbees by looking at effects stories have with American Indian characters with similar

issues in exploring what it means to be American Indian within our contemporary society. This would require more qualitative studies within varying American Indian communities to build an understanding of experience. It would also be necessary to engage authentic authors from within each culture to write appropriate stories representing those experiences from an emic perspective. With a collection of stories for a particular American Indian tribe, quantitative studies could be developed to explore effects these stories have on a variety of topics such as identity, comprehension and engagement in reading.

### **Reading Comprehension**

By providing experiences using online literature study through a Web 2.0 site, such as Wikispaces.com used in this study, researchers could measure changes in comprehension. This study looked at one text from one unit of study in a social studies class. Other disciplines could also incorporate these programs and explore effects on comprehension within that discipline. This is also true for English Language Arts classes where literature discussion groups are already being conducted. Research can be conducted on the effects of moving literature study activities online within a Web 2.0 site. Also, since the present study took place during only two months of a school year, research needs to be conducted looking at results of a full school year of instruction. These could be qualitative or quantitative studies that investigate effects routine use of these approaches have on comprehension.

### **Implications for Policy**

The homework policy that altered the reading assignments for this project bears mentioning here. Though the audio format of the text provided my students the opportunity to have a scaffold for reading by listening to competent readers read the text aloud, it caused

a change in my instructional plans. With limitations on homework to 20 minutes per night for the entire grade level, reading assignments for this project would have added time to nightly language arts and math homework and violated the policy. I am concerned about a policy that causes teachers to have to weigh the value of homework for content-area classes against tested subject areas, such as reading and math. The context for the reading assignments in this project was the social studies class, not the language arts. While I understand taking precautions to prevent overburdening students with homework after doing academic work in a school day, I challenge a policy that forces teachers to limit needed reading practice at home.

### **Limitations**

There are four major limitations to this study discussed in this section: (a) focus on one ethnic group (b) interest in one specific tribal group within the larger ethnic group, (c) examining struggling readers, and (d) the amount of time spent gathering data.

First, the study's findings focused on six sixth grade students who are identified as Lumbee males. Though generalizing to the larger population is not the goal of qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005), studies of this kind do contribute perspectives that can be combined with findings from other studies to better understand a case or groups of cases (Stake, 2005). Given that there is little research to provide an understanding of non-reservation American Indian males who struggle with reading, this study will help to improve our knowledge of the Transactional Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994) applied to this population and in particular the application of this theory when students participate in OTDs and online literature studies. The study provides

educators with information specifically related to this population within the overall group of students identified as struggling readers.

Second, the six male students in this study belong to a specific non-reservation American Indian tribe. The scope of this study does not include American Indians students on reservations, those who attend Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, or other tribal groups represented in the school setting. The participants in this study live within the Southeastern United States, and are members of the Lumbee tribe. Though there are several non-reservation tribes within the same geographic region, this qualitative study only examined this one specific ethnic group. However, findings from this study should interest educators within public schools who work with similar populations and may provide insight into instructional practices that can be implemented within instruction, specifically for those with similar populations. Though this study may not allow for generalizations, it does work to fill the gap within the current body of literature. Though the overall population of American Indians is small when compared to other population groups within the United States, there are teachers who work with these groups and some with significant percentages in their classrooms, similar to my own. Thus, this study serves to inform their instructional practices.

Third, the scope of this study was limited to the struggling reader population. Generalizations to all readers may not be made from this type of study; however, it does add to the body of literature concerning what we know about struggling readers and what experiences those readers have when participating in online literature studies with multimedia components and OTDs.

Fourth, this study was limited to eight weeks, including a four-week online activity, with two weeks of reading the text and in-class activities preceding participant engagement online, and finally two weeks of follow up interviews with the specific six cases. The text selected for this study supported the social studies content and was housed within a larger unit during the first grading period of the semester. This limited this study to the use of one text and one study unit within the larger context of an entire school year. Thus, findings for this one text may not be generalized or presupposed to be identical to findings for future texts used in the remainder of the school year or in subsequent school years.

### **Conclusions**

The six students I focused on in this narrative inquiry demonstrated high engagement in their reading and in their participation on the wiki site. Each honored the relationship I have with them by placing trust in me to openly share their experiences in this project. They also entrusted me with their narratives about reading, personal identities, and their families, sharing details that often would be embarrassing in class or even within their homes. In fusing their individual stories into a collective narrative and reviewing the story as a whole, I present three major conclusions from this research related to engagement, agency, and identity. In this section I want to challenge educational approaches, even within my own instructional design in this study, which may by some be conceptually viewed from a deficit-model, to reframe thoughts around a school culture-as-deficit concept. Focusing on what is wrong with students and then what is wrong with the context surrounding students has been challenged (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). For this discussion, I want to focus on schooling as the culture that works within this deficit. I challenge the notion of deficit for these

students and build on strengths within the findings to illuminate an approach that may be more appropriate for further study. Finally, in closing this discussion I explore concepts that call for a reframing of schooling for Lumbee students, and perhaps other non-reservation American Indians in public education. This reframing of schooling should recognize local culture, literacies from within the home, and build on individual strengths within the classroom community.

### **Student Engagement as a Result of Accessing Funds of Knowledge**

One of the strengths with the students in this study was the level of engagement in reading tasks, product creation through collaboration, and literature discussion, both online and off. When students, such as the six cases in this study, view reading as unimportant and has little value in their lives, engagement becomes truly a challenge. Engagement is affected by the value placed on perceived value of reading (Durik, Vida, & Eccles, 2006). When factoring in the notion that student engagement is a powerful factor in success in academic reading (Alvermann, 2001), and that it is further suggested to be the most important factor (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), then the challenge is to convince the reader of the importance of the reading event. This may be accomplished when coupled with instruction that provides reading materials that are of interest to adolescents (Allington, 2011). During this study, the text when coupled with professional audio read-aloud was engaging to these six students. Exciting action and relatable characters provided avenues for these students to make personal connections to the text and assisted in building and sustaining their interest. During interviews, these male students indicated interests in activities, such as hunting, fishing, sports, and riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). In my years of working as a teacher within the

local community, I have observed many male youths participating in the activities listed above. Many of my students have working knowledge about guns, ammunition, size and types of dirt bikes, positions for team sports, and the best lures to use when fishing. These “funds-of-knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) may provide a cache of topics that would interest these students and perhaps develop more motivation to foster engagement in reading activities. While there are printed and digital formats on these topics, which could be incorporated into a classroom environment, there needs to be newly developed materials with Lumbee and other American Indian characters. These topics may also engage students in other school disciplines to develop literacy skills as they link inquiry processes with literacy.

Building on interests, instruction utilizing project-based inquiry is fostering disciplinary literacy and is showing promise in increasing student engagement. For example, in a recent project, students used a project-based inquiry approach to address real-world problems (Spires, Kerkoff, & Graham, 2016). Utilizing real-world problems with inquiry approaches to learning in the disciplines could potentially encourage students to bring personal strengths to the inquiry process and increase engagement in literate practices. This supports concepts in building approaches to literacy that involve participatory practices, which promote student involvement and peer interaction with a more competent facilitator (Alvermann, 2002). This can be mediated through a variety of student-generated methods including print and digital media (Wade & Moje, 2000). In another study, Guthrie and Klauda (2016) noted engagement was supported through motivation and autonomy of choice and input, establishing importance, competence support for comprehension, and

collaboration. Each of these components was facilitated in various ways in the present study project, mediated through the wiki site. Projects using apps that address real-world problems are fostering engagement and suggest action to provide opportunities for collaboration through problem-solving (Manderino & Castek, 2016). These types of approaches provide opportunities for the teacher to build on strengths of each student and perhaps turn the focus onto new knowledge that is created versus what skills are in deficit.

### **Student Agency through the Affordances of Technologies**

In this study, agency with technology engaged all six students to participate and to lead others to participate in the online wiki site. Where agency concerning reading tasks and engagement tended to be low, agency with various components that were needed to produce videos and post those to the wiki site were identified as high. This speaks to the concept of utilizing strengths students bring to the school setting. Schooling designed to explore, identify, develop, and empower student agency situated with notions about what skills students need to be successful citizens harkens back to the pragmatic ideals of Dewey (1916) and concepts related to engendering students to attain fundamental skills and concepts to participate in a democratic society. Further educators should seek to develop environments where students are viewed as part of society, rather than waiting on a time when they will enter society in some future event (Dewey, 1916). Educators who create environments that foster student interests, while recognizing necessary standards of learning, may build on student agency to give students confidence to try new ideas and create new meaning from those experiences. Self-efficacy, which undergirds the concept of agency, supports motivation and can influence learning (Bandura, 2001). Findings in this study suggested

agency in areas outside of reading utilized student self-efficacy to promote them from a student struggling with reading to a student with knowledge about the technology to share and collaborate with peers. When viewing products created by others, these students built on their understanding adding ideas from peers. Educators who take the time to assess strengths students possess and the literacies they are competent in at home may build on student agency to foster a rich empowering learning environment.

### **Student Identity through Building on Strengths**

Identity that is built on institutionalized concepts taught through the schooling process may place the strongest argument in support of a culture-as-deficit focus. In comparing male readers to females, it is likely the schooling culture within the community of this study that fostered the claims by these students and their supporting adults that Lumbee males do not do as well in school as girls in reading. This concept was revealed in several instances in the interviews with the six cases in this study. This phenomenon is suggested by Alvermann (2002) to perhaps have developed from a deficit concept about literacy among struggling readers and those who teach them causing them to construct identity based on these ideas. Students construct reading identities based on a culmination of experiences with reading in school, and these identities are selected from labels provided within the context of schooling (Hall, 2012). In a commentary that explored concepts or reimagining reading identities through accessing a student's strengths, providing collaboration, building strategies, and problem-solving, it is suggested alternatives to traditional instruction have the potential to make gains in helping struggling readers reconstruct identity based on strengths (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Educators can help students rewrite reading identities

through created partnerships that engage them in the process of developing as readers (Hall, 2012).

There was strength for students in this study when they made statements about their reading ability, such as, “I can do better,” “I know I can do good,” and “I can read.” In addition, the wiki framework provided collaborative opportunities and facilitated these struggling readers to access personal agency toward technology and to take leadership roles in class where normally perceived labels would discourage involvement in print-based literacies. By building on student strengths, educators can validate reading, partner with students to reconstruct reading identities that are progressive, and create opportunities for students to engage in learning activities in school.

### **Final Thoughts**

My goal from this study is to continue working to understand how Lumbee males can be more engaged in the process of reading. I want to identify ways to incorporate strengths within the community into classroom instruction and to collaborate with several Lumbee males to develop a series of texts that boys can read and see themselves in the characters, settings, and events. I would like to also research the effects those stories would have on comprehension and explore how the ability to express, share, and celebrate "Indianness" is affected by these texts. Building on strengths of readers brought to the schooling context, I would like to utilize existing or develop newer frameworks for building partnerships with Lumbee males to help students and teachers reconstruct reading identities and validate the culture in the process.

Additionally, as technology continues to change, I would like to continue developing ways for students, in general, to engage socially online surrounding experiences with texts. I would also like to further research this topic through quantitative methods. I believe the concentric nature of literature discussion groups enhanced through online Web 2.0 formats, and any others that develop in time, would provide richer transactions for readers on multiple levels. I cannot make any claims about whether comprehension was improved overall for the school year because of the experiences of these students. However, I can claim that six sixth grade Lumbee males who struggle with reading in this study engaged in reading a shared text with other sixth graders. Further the engagement took place within class and while participating in an online literature study where they created, posted, and viewed multimedia projects. All six expressed the fact they enjoyed the project and claimed they would like to try these same activities with other books. That alone made the project worth the effort.

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

North Carolina State University

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

**Title of Project:** Finding Their Voices: A Narrative Inquiry of Sixth-Grade American Indian Males who Struggle with Reading.

Principal Investigators: Michael Shane Fletcher

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Hiller Spires, PhD

#### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study. Their participation in this study is voluntary and not a class requirement. They have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. They are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which your child is being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your child's participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe transactions American Indian males who struggle with reading have with a text through participation in an online collaborative using wikispaces.com as part of a literature discussion activity.

#### **What will happen if you take part in the study?**

This study will be conducted using regular classroom activities planned by your child's teacher. All students will be completing assignments as part of the regular class lessons; however, you may refuse for your child's participation to be included in the study. Your child will be reading a book with their class and participating in regular discussion groups. In addition to regular routines, their class will be working on a wikispaces.com site approved by the district for student use. If you agree for your child to participate in this study, information he/she has shared on the wikispaces.com site may be used as part of an analysis process. This may include projects, discussion threads, and posts they have made to the site. Your child may also be selected to participate in an interview on campus before, during, and after the study.

**Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for study participants. Your child will be given an individual username and password to access this site. Only participants and the researcher have access to the site. They will be given a special name (a pseudonym) to use on this site for privacy. They will also create an avatar to represent their image instead of posting a picture. All participants will be expected to follow district guidelines concerning appropriate language and online behavior. Established procedures for the school will be followed if any incidents occur.

**Benefits**

This study will help educators better understand how students perceive their learning about a text through participation in a collaborative wiki as part of a literature discussion group. This will allow them to make informed decisions about which technologies may be used to meet established goals and standards.

**Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent of the law. Data will be stored securely in locked offices and secure (password protected) computer files of the researcher. We will not mention your child's name or anything that could identify them in written reports or oral presentations of this project. Only pseudonyms will be used for any quotations from the wiki site or an interview for written reports. The physical records of the discussions and interviews and data on the wiki site will be destroyed 5 years after the project ends.

**Compensation**

Your child will not receive anything for participating.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Michael Shane Fletcher, 4271 Union Chapel Road, Pembroke, NC 28372, or 910-770-3671. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Hiller Spires, at Friday Institute 223, Box 7249, Raleigh, NC 27695, or 919-513-8501.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel your child has not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or their rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

### **Consent To Participate**

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I have discussed this study with my child and they understand what they are being asked to do.”

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow you to use my child’s work and interview (if selected) to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow you to use my child’s work for this study, but I do NOT wish them to be selected for an interview.

“I understand my child may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.”

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT wish for my child to participate in this study.

Parent’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

“I understand what I am being asked to do. I understand that I may stop my participation in this study at any time without penalty. I am willing to participate in this study. I agree to follow established rules and procedures for online participation as guided by my school and district.”

Subject's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Printed  
name of student \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Parent Cover Letter

5/11/2015

Dear Parents,

My name is Shane Fletcher. I am a doctoral student at NC State University. I am also a teacher at Union Chapel Elementary School in Pembroke. I am conducting research about student reader transactions with a text through participation in a wiki. A wiki is an interactive web site that allows participants to work collaboratively with other participants to share learning experiences through online interactions and project creations. I believe students will have transactions with the text and that student comprehension of that text will be stronger and deeper because of this experience. Specifically, I am interested in describing the transactions of American Indian males who struggle with reading.

The planned unit readings and online activities are part of routine lesson plans, and the technology is approved by our school district for use in the classroom. Your child will be provided class time and assistance in accessing the wiki to interact with students from the other participating school. Grades will come from regularly planned work and rubrics for scoring online projects.

The research for this study will be investigating evidences of reader transactions with the text within the website postings and projects. Additionally, your child may be selected to participate in a one-hour-long interview before the initial day, a day during the project, and a day following the project to occur after school. You will need to provide transportation for your child to participate in the interview, but you will have the opportunity to refuse the interview, if you so desire. Your child's participation or refusal for participation in this research study will not affect his or her grades.

There are no foreseeable negative implications for your child to participate in this study. Each class would normally study the unit for which these activities are assigned. All district policies for Internet use will be followed.

I am asking for you to grant permission for me to use work samples and possible interviews to gain a better perspective about the use of wikis in reading class. There is an attached Informed Consent form for you and your child to review and sign. Thank you again for your consideration. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael Shane Fletcher

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol – Initial Interview

*Instructions* – The initial interview is to be conducted prior to the intervention unit and related activities within the class. This interview will be used to establish and define context for the participants and the narratives to be written in subsequent interviews. It is a semi-structured format to allow for probing as needed. The initial thread is given and then follows with possible questions to engage the participant in expanding on responses.

Before you start, say, “As you have read and signed the Informed Consent Form, we will be using recording devices to allow me to review and analyze the information you share in this interview. Are you in agreement with my recording this session?”

1. Tell me about you as a person.
  - a. Who are you?
  - b. Who are your people?
  - c. How did you come to live in this community?
  - d. Do you have family outside of this community? (If so, tell me about your experiences with them.)
2. What does it mean to you to be an Indian?
  - a. Lumbee?
  - b. Male?
3. Tell me the story of how you learned to read.
  - a. How do you define yourself as a reader?

- b. How is being a male reader different than a female reader?
4. Tell me the story of your first experience of reading a book on your own.
5. Tell me about reading in your home.
  - a. Who reads?
  - b. Who reads to you?
6. How does being Lumbee affect how you think about school and reading?
7. Describe for me how being Lumbee is different to you than other ethnic groups within the school?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?
8. Tell me about your experiences with using technology.
  - a. What are you good at?
  - b. How did you get good at it?
  - c. What devices do you use?
  - d. Describe your use of technology throughout the day.
    - i. When?
    - ii. Where?
    - iii. Why?
    - iv. Who is there with you?

**Interview Protocol – Mid-Intervention Interview**

*Instructions* – This interview should be conducted after the first week of the intervention when students have had opportunity to engage the text and the online site. The initial threads are provided with possible probes for further prompting during this semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me about the experiences you've had thus far with the project we are working on within the class.
  - a. Book?
  - b. Online?
  - c. Other students?
2. How might this story be different if the main characters were Lumbee?
3. Describe the experience you're having while reading the book?
4. Tell me your story about getting online and participating on the wikispaces.site.
5. Tell me about the thoughts you've had about the book when you're not actually reading it.
6. Which character are you most like?
  - a. Tell me why you say that.
7. I would like to share with you some initial ideas I have gotten as I have reviewed your answers to our initial interview, the work you have submitted online and the discussions you have had online with others. I would like for you to be honest with me about the meanings I have selected from these and ask you to correct any ideas

you may think should be seen differently. (Share initial themes and meanings you have applied thus far to the narratives.)

**Interview Protocol – Final Interview**

*Instructions* – This interview should be conducted following completion of the reading of the text and when all projects have been posted online along with student responses. Initial prompts are given along with additional probes for this semi-structured interview.

1. Describe a time you got online with this project and interacted with someone else about the book.
  - a. Ancient Egypt
  - b. Multimedia projects
  - c. What kinds of things did you say?
    - i. What thoughts did you have about the book while reading and viewing the posts of others online?
2. Tell me about your experience of creating the multimedia product.
  - a. Why did you choose to do this the way you did?
  - b. Let's look at it together (Pull the project up online to help solicit this response.)
    - i. Walk me through the process you went through to create and post this project here.
3. What thoughts or connections did you make to the story during the project?
4. How do you feel about Carter and Sadie as people?
  - a. Tell me what thoughts you had when you realized they were bi-racial (Caucasian/White and African American).
  - b. How did that affect your reading of the story?

- c. While reading the text, did you have thoughts about your own race?
      - i. If so, describe them for me.
      - ii. If not, why do you think you didn't think about your race during the reading?
5. Would you describe for me moments when you were reading that you could see yourself in the story?
6. Tell me about you as a reader during this project.
  - a. Describe for me any struggles you had with reading the text?
    - i. What did you do when you encountered those situations?
  - b. Describe any struggles you may have had with reading the online discussions?
    - i. How did you handle that situation?
7. Describe for me moments when participating in this project; reading the book, creating projects online, viewing other projects online, and discussing the text with others online, helped you understand the text better.
8. I would like to share with you other ideas and meanings I have applied to our earlier sessions as I have reviewed your answers to our last interviews, the work you have submitted online and the discussions you have had online with others. I would like for you to be honest with me about the meanings I have selected from these and ask you to correct any ideas you may think should be seen differently. (Share initial themes and meanings you have applied thus far to the narratives.)
9. Is there anything else you can share about this project?

**Final Follow-Up Member Check Interview**

1. I would like to share with you final ideas and meanings I have applied to our earlier sessions as I have reviewed your answers to our last interviews, the work you have submitted online and the discussions you have had online with others. I would like for you to be honest with me about the meanings I have selected from these and ask you to correct any ideas you may think should be seen differently. (Share themes and meanings you have applied to the narratives.)
2. Is there anything else you can share about this project?

## Appendix D

### Sample Excerpts from Field Notes

September 19, 2015 - John

I tried to explain the idea of telling a story and what the process is to help get him started with the narrative questions. I think it helped some though there were still times I had to clarify and change the questions.

It still seems that there just is no absolute identity as Indian/Lumbee for these boys to verbalize. They know they are Indian/Lumbee, but are not able to tell me what it is to be Lumbee or to know how it is unique from other ethnic groups in the room. He did say fishing and hunting were important to him in context to being Lumbee.

September 19, 2015 - Jonathan

Has no concept of "Indianness." He says he's not given much thought to it.

As a young reader his Mom, Grandma, and aunts read with him; began reading on his own about 1st grade. Defines good and bad reading as "some big words" he can read and "some big words" he can't read.

October 7, 2015 - Class observation

In class today I noticed the students grouped together with their laptops to help each other make Animoto videos. This sense of collaboration seems to be helping students accomplish the goals for the assignment; however, they're not able to maintain anonymity, since they can see the projects each one is making. In fact, Lydia [pseudonym used] posted her own picture within her video and some of the students responded to her reminding her she was supposed to remain anonymous in her projects.

November 17, 2015 - Classroom Observation

Junior employed Jacob to help him develop a presentation for our current unit on ancient America. Jacob is singing a native song while Junior is practicing the Men's Northern Traditional dance style. Even though I've not finished the final interviews, I can see collaboration is an important process and method for them.

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## Appendix F

### Sample Significance Analysis Matrix

#### *Significance Analysis Matrix for Reading Identity*

Table Continued										
Narratives	Psychological states			Intensifiers	Casual Connectors	Negations and hedges	Qualifiers	Total Evaluative Devices	Total Words	Evaluative devices/ words
	Affective	Cognitive	Specific							
A - I don't think of myself as a good reader, I think of myself as a reader to get by... I'm not good. Well, I can read. I can read, but I just don't like reading. I don't like it, and it don't help me, and other people they read all the time, and I don't	help me	think think			to get by and other	don't I'm don't well don't don't	good I can just all the	22	55	0.40
B - Yes sir In the middle [laughs] Not too good, but not bad. I read 20 minutes at home every day. Um...like books that I get from you and the library.				not too	but from	[laughs]	in the middle every	9	30	0.30
C - I know I could read now. I could read stuff when people asked me to. And, I can read signs and stuff now.		know			asked me to And, I	stuff and stuff	could now could can now	14	23	0.61
D - Good, but sometimes I miss words. I'll be reading too fast and I'll miss words. Good, but not like top-				really good all the college	but but because because	and stuff haven't and stuff not	good sometimes too fast good top-of-the-line	27	59	0.46

Table Continued										
Narratives	Psychological states			Intensifiers	Casual Connectors	Negations and hedges	Qualifiers	Total Evaluative Devices	Total Words	Evaluative devices/ words
	Affective	Cognitive	Speech							
of--the-line. A really good reader that can read all the long words, the college words and stuff. Because they've practiced them and I haven't practiced them the big words and stuff. Well because I'm not in high school							long they've big I'm			
E - Pretty good, but not good, it's like between, like I ain't good at some of it, but I am good at some of it.				Pretty	but	not ain't	good good between like good some good some	12	24	0.50
F - .....[long pause].hum... ...the reason why I like to read, because there's sort of fascinating facts in some books that we need to read....like say...books about animals, nature, there's books about dhat.	like				reason why because like say	...[long pause]... hum... sort of dhat	fascinating some need about about	15	38	0.40