

Exploring the Literacy Practices, Motivations, and Daily Activities of Adolescents
Through Conversational Interviews

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Interview Overview

The first research goal of our NICHD grant *Identification, Prediction, and Intervention in Adolescent Reading* was to learn about seventh grade students' reading engagement and motivations from the students' own perspectives. We were especially interested in learning about students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and resistance toward school reading, but were also interested in forming a portrait of their reading activities both inside and outside of school. In order to develop equally deep and broad understanding, we designed an interview protocol which, as detailed below, included a variety of selected-response and open-ended series of questions, and recruited nearly equal numbers of boys and girls, African-American and European-American students, and high-, middle-, and low-achieving readers for the study. In total, 260 students participated, with 18-26 students representing each of the 12 possible gender/ethnicity/reading achievement combinations. All students participated in two interviews (except three students who moved between Interviews 1 and 2). The sample was drawn from four middle schools in a rural county of a mid-Atlantic state. The vast majority of students (90%) reported living with their mother or stepmother, and 62% reported living with their father or stepfather. The portion of the sample eligible for free or reduced-price meals was 35%.

Interview 1 included a brief demographic questionnaire, an opening activity designed to put students at ease as well as generate a picture of their lives, and six series of questions concerning recreational and school reading (see Table 1 for an overview of the structure of both interviews). Specifically, the opening activity included prompts for students to list activities that are important to them and then rank the activities in order of importance to them (Hoa, Guthrie, Tonks, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2007). For students who listed reading (44% of the sample), the interview proceeded with Series A, consisting of six open-ended questions about recreational reading. For the 45% of the sample that did not list reading but responded positively when asked if they did any reading related to their listed activities, the interview continued with Series B, four open-ended questions concerning activity-related recreational reading. For the remaining 11% of the sample, the interview proceeded directly to Series C-F; these series were presented to all other interviewees after they completed Series A or B. Series C included a recreational reading checklist, which involved students indicating how often they read 11 kinds of reading materials, on a 4-point scale ranging from *everyday* (4) to *less than once a month or never* (0). The checklist was followed by a prompt for students to discuss one of the items they reported reading most frequently in more detail. Series D included open-ended questions about students' opinions about their reading/language arts and science classes, as well as 14 selected-response items each for these two classes concerning students' motivations and strategy use. Series E consisted of the same components as Series C, except it applied to school reading and additionally included a selected-response item concerning students' total time spent reading for school. Lastly, Series F consisted of a vignette about a 7th grader with a mostly negative view of reading and five open-ended questions about how the interviewee was or was not like the vignette character. The inclusion of vignettes in the interview protocol was based on their usage by Smith and Wilhelm (2002) and Love and Hamston (2004). In order to ensure that the interview ended on a positive note, Interview 1 concluded with a prompt for students to discuss the activity that they had identified as most important to them at the beginning of the interview.

Table 1

Overview of Interview 1 Structure

Interview Component	Content	Response Format
Demographic survey	a) 3 questions about family b) 1 question about number of books at home	a) Checklist and open-ended b) 7 answer choices
Important activities list*	a) Prompt to list activities that are “most important to you” b) Prompt to rank activities according to importance on concentric circle map	a) Open-ended b) 5 answer choices
Series A: General Recreational Reading	- 6 questions about recent recreational reading activity	- Open-ended
Series B: Recreational Reading about Listed Activities	- 4 questions about recent recreational reading related to important activities	- Open-ended
Series C: Recreational Reading Checklist	a) Prompt to indicate frequency of reading 11 types of materials b) Prompt to discuss one frequently read material in more detail	a) 5 answer choices b) Open-ended
Series D: School Reading	a) 2 questions about reading/language arts and science class in general b) 14 items concerning motivations and strategy use in reading/language arts class c) 14 items concerning motivations and strategy use in science class	a) Open-ended b) 4 answer choices c) 4 answer choices
Series E: School Reading Checklist	a) Prompt to indicate frequency of reading 11 types of materials b) Prompt to discuss one frequently read material in more detail c) 1 item about total school reading time	a) 5 answer choices b) Open-ended c) 9 answer choices
Series F: Reader Vignette A	- Vignette about 7 th grader with a mostly negative view of reading and five questions about how the interviewee was or was not like the vignette character	- Open-ended
Final Question	Prompt for student to discuss central activity on map in more detail	- Open-ended

* If student listed reading, interview proceeded with Series A, followed by Series C-F. If student did not list reading, interviewer probed to find out if student does any activity-related reading. If so, interview proceeded with Series B-F. If not, interview included only Series C-F.

As outlined in Table 2, interview 2 included two sections. It began with another vignette and related series of questions, about a 7th grader with a largely positive view of reading (Series G). The second part of the interview, Series H, consisted of 22 items concerning students' motivations for school reading; the items represented 11 pairs of motivation constructs, with part of each pair representing a positive or affirming motivation for reading, and the other part representing a related negative or undermining motivation for reading (see Guthrie & Coddington, in press, for further explanation of these kinds of motivations for reading). Table 3 lists all constructs and their representative items.. Students responded to each statement by choosing one of four response options: *very true of me*, *somewhat true of me*, *not very true of me*, or *not at all true of me*. When students chose *very* or *somewhat true*, the interviewers probed for more details; they asked for multiple examples of school reading assignments that applied to the item, how long students had been having the relevant experiences, and in general why students selected *very* or *somewhat true* as their answer.

Table 2

Overview of Interview 2 Structure

Interview Component	Content	Response Format
Series G: Reader Vignette B	- Vignette about 7 th grader with a mostly positive view of reading and six questions about how the interviewee was or was not like the vignette character	- Open-ended
Series H: Motivations for Reading	a) 11 items representing affirming and 11 items representing undermining motivations for reading b) Prompts to discuss “very true of me” and “somewhat true of me” responses in more detail	a) 4 answer choices b) Open-ended

Table 3

Interview 2 Motivation Constructs and Items

Pair	Affirming motivation	Undermining motivation
1	Autonomy <i>I like to have choices about what, when, and how to read for school.</i>	Coercion <i>I do NOT like it when I do NOT get choices in my school reading.</i>
2	Competition <i>I want to be the best reader in my class.</i>	Noncompetition <i>I don't care whether other students read better than me.</i>
3	Efficacy <i>I am good at reading for school.</i>	Difficulty <i>Many school reading assignments are too hard for me.</i>
4	Identity <i>It is important to me to be a good student.</i>	Disidentity <i>Being a good student is NOT a priority for me.</i>
5	Intrinsic motivation <i>I enjoy my school reading.</i>	Aversion <i>Reading for school is boring.</i>
6	Knowledge <i>I think I can learn something new from most of my reading assignments.</i>	Meaninglessness <i>Many things we have to read do NOT mean anything to me.</i>
7	Performance goal <i>I like to get rewards and recognition for reading.</i>	Performance avoidance <i>I avoid reading so I won't look stupid.</i>
8	Social interaction <i>I enjoy reading assignments that I can work on with others.</i>	Social isolation <i>I do NOT like reading assignments that I have to work on alone.</i>
9	Social value <i>I enjoy reading the same things as my friends for school.</i>	Social devalue <i>My friends and I avoid school reading if we can.</i>
10	Teacher relatedness <i>I have good relationships with my teachers.</i>	Teacher rejection <i>My teachers do NOT care about me.</i>
11	Value for future <i>Being a good reader will help me in the future at school.</i>	Devalue for future <i>Reading is NOT that important for success in school.</i>

All interviews took place in the spring of 2008, with a one month gap between Interview 1 and 2 for each student. With one exception, students were interviewed by a person of the same gender, and with six exceptions, students were also matched to interviewers by ethnicity. The interviewers were five retired teachers and administrators from the same school system as the students. All interviews took place in quiet locations in the students' schools and were digitally recorded. The interviews typically took 15-30 minutes each.

Once all interviews were conducted, we transcribed them verbatim and developed a scoring rubric for each component of the interviews that included open-ended questions. Each rubric was developed on the basis of a set of 12 transcripts, and refined on the basis of coding additional sets of 6-12 transcripts until the rubric developers achieved a high level of agreement in applying it. Generally, "a high level of agreement" meant that the raters applied exactly the same codes for at least 80% of cases in a set, and, when codes represented ordinal levels of measurement, that their codes were no more than one level apart 100% of the time. Typically, this level of agreement was achieved by the raters coding 10-20% of transcripts applicable to a given rubric. Then, one to three additional raters were trained on each rubric, and assumed independent coding of transcripts once they were 80% exact and 100% adjacent in their coding with the rubric developers. Any questions the additional raters had while coding independently were resolved through discussion with the rubric developers.

Analyses of the interview data have been conducted that involve the whole sample as well as subgroups of participants. In this document, we present pie charts that illustrate the frequency with which the full sample chose each response option for all selected-response items of Interviews 1 and 2. We also include the rubrics developed to code the open-ended portions of Series A-E of Interview 1 and the motivation items of Interview 2, and pie charts that illustrate the results of this coding. It should be noted that we coded, and present, the 22 motivation items of Interview 2 in two ways. That is, we determined the proportion of the sample that selected each of the four response options for each item. In addition, we developed a rubric for each item that took into account students' answers to the probes that followed their initial response selection, and present the frequencies with which each rubric code was applied.

Most items are presented as pie charts. When there were statistically significant differences for students at different reading achievement levels, or for students from different ethnic groups within a pie chart, we also presented line graphs. The captions in the line graphs describe the differences that are statistically significant.