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"Boys learn the teacher, and then they learn the subject": The Importance of the Teacher-Student Relationship in Engaging High School Boys in the Writing Classroom

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"Boys learn the teacher, and then they learn the subject": The Importance of the Teacher-Student Relationship in Engaging High School Boys in the Writing Classroom

(TITLE)

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Leslie Ellis

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Abstract

This thesis explores methods for engaging high school boys in the writing classroom. Chapter one describes the differing beliefs scholars have about boys' educational situation, specifically in English language arts. Several researchers and scholars describe boys' situation as dire because boys have failed to improve as girls have over the last sixty years. These researchers cite various reasons for boys' academic stagnation, such as learning styles, hormones, brain structure and development, the feminization of the classroom, motivation, engagement, and teaching styles. These factors may contribute to the gender gap in writing. Other scholars deny the urgency of boys' lack of improvement in writing altogether, arguing that girls have always outperformed boys academically and that girls have only reached academic parity with boys. Ultimately, one significant difference between boys and girls remains: boys dislike writing more than girls do. The conclusion of chapter one outlines research-supported methods teachers can employ to engage boys in writing to improve their enjoyment. Chapter two describes a small-scale study in two sophomore English classes in a small, Midwestern high school. One of the classes acts as a constant, and the other class receives six different interventions aimed at improving male students' enjoyment of writing in the classroom. Chapter three discusses the study findings. Male and female students in this school felt similarly about school, writing, and themselves. In general, the students expressed a negative opinion of their class and of writing. While the interventions did not appear to affect the male students' enjoyment of writing, two unexpected findings emerged from the research: although male and female students expressed similar opinions about their teacher and their class, the male students acted out

in class because of their frustrations and confusion, while the female students seemed to put their work ahead of their opinions; also, the interventions seemed to improve the students' perceptions of their teacher, which emerged as the single most important factors in these students' enjoyment of writing. The conclusion to chapter three discusses these two findings at length. Chapter four assesses the effectiveness of the study and then discusses strategies teachers can use to foster positive relationships with their students.

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Chapter 1: The Situation of Boys in Education

Evidence of the Gender Gap

Crisis. Riddle. Trouble. Problem. Literature in education discourse reflects a growing concern about the status of boys in the American education system. In the last fifty years, a phenomenon has occurred in American schools: girls have begun to perform nearly as well as boys in math and science and outperform boys in the language arts. Thomas DiPrete and Claudia Buchmann claim the reversal in the gender gap should have been expected given women's increasing equality in America (80); still, research and scholarship on the "problem with boys" abounds. The language populating these publications illustrates the country's preoccupation with boys' underperformance, and the worry may be justifiable, but perhaps not for the reasons some of the literature suggests.

DiPrete and Buchmann detail the gender gap reversal in *The Rise of Women: The Growing Gender Gap in Education and What It Means for American Schools*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Americans completed high school, but fewer than seven percent earned a college degree, and the majority of that seven percent was male (DiPrete and Buchmann 36). Sometime around the middle of the century, women began changing their courses of study and entering professional careers that required higher education. Therefore, they were preparing themselves just as well as men were for post-secondary education (DiPrete and Buchmann 80). They began taking the same types of courses of the same rigor that men were taking; however, men continued to outnumber women in post-secondary education, and men continued to earn bachelor's degrees at a higher rate than women earned degrees (DiPrete and Buchmann 37-38). Finally, in the 1960s and 70s, men's rates of college degree completion stagnated, but women's rates

continued to grow. Eventually, in 1982, women and men completed college degrees at the same rate. Since then, women's rates of completion have increased and men's rates have decreased. This phenomenon is what DiPrete and Buchmann describe as the "reverse in the gender gap" in education (27).

Since the 1960s and 70s, female students have made strides in academics, performing better than male students in the language arts and closing the gap in math and science (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson). In the last forty years, females have nearly closed the achievement gap in math to the point that it is of "little practical importance" (Ellison and Swanson 109). Although a minimal achievement gap remains, as female students age, their negative attitudes toward math seem to improve (Meece, Gleinke, and Burg 376). On the contrary, the gender gap in reading and writing persists (Gurian and Stevens), and boys' negative attitudes about language arts generally remain (Meece, Gleinke, and Burg 376). Not only do girls now outperform boys on average in language arts, but the achievement gap between the two sexes continues to grow (Froschl and Sprung 2). This contrast in attitude between boys and girls is significant and may suggest a reason why girls close the achievement gap in math as they age but boys do not close the achievement gap in language arts.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identifies the gender gap reversal in the United States as "an issue" because it reflects a change in cultural values about expectations of and attitudes toward education (77). The literature surrounding the gender gap reversal indicates concern and even worry about the state of our male students, using words like "problem" and "crisis" to describe boys' academic situation. Skeptics such as DiPrete and Buchmann, however, note that

girls have earned better grades than boys for a long time. It is only since girls have advanced academically that boys' performance has been a concern (DiPrete and Buchmann 79). The problem with boys is not that they are regressing but that girls are progressing while boys have stagnated.

The measurable evidence of boys' troubles is alarming. Boys earn the majority of Ds and Fs in school. They receive 80% of all discipline. They comprise 80% of all high school dropouts (Gurian and Stevens 22). They are expelled from school more often than girls are (DiPrete and Buchmann 102). They are more likely to have "higher rates of aggression, antisocial behavior, attention disorders, learning disabilities, mental retardation, stuttering, delayed speech, and other related disabilities" (DiPrete and Buchmann 101). Generally, boys feel that teachers don't listen to them (Gurian and Stevens 24). Boys have lower confidence, have a lower desire to succeed in school (Gurian and Stevens 24), and are "less positively oriented toward learning" as early as kindergarten (DiPrete and Buchmann 102, 114). In fact, boys have such low self-efficacy and such negative attitudes toward school and learning that they do not *expect* to do well in school (DiPrete and Buchmann 110), and they do not *desire* to do well in school (Sax 7). Boys who do not experience success in the early years of school are at risk of developing low self-esteem, which fosters undermotivation as well (Gurian and Stevens 248). This becomes particularly concerning as boys age because "adolescent [boys'] feelings about [themselves] in high school will become the basis for [their] sense of worth as [men] in adult society" (Gurian and Stevens 248). In other words, the image boys create of themselves, which begins to take form as early as age three, will dictate a young man's perception of his role and ability in society when he is outside of the school

system. Perhaps as a result, boys do not put forth as much effort into their schoolwork as girls do (DiPrete and Buchmann 101, 114). The difference between boys' effort and girls' effort is noticeable in middle school, high school, and college. Furthermore, Leonard Sax argues that "...we will see the problem of boys disengaging from school and from the American Dream is widespread" (5).

To ignore that our boys are struggling in school or to justify their underperformance by citing strides in gender equality is naive. Boys have always earned lower grades than girls. Boys have always received more discipline. Boys have always been more likely to have a disability. Perhaps all of these elements are true, and perhaps all of them are symptoms or causes of their educational shortfalls. To cite these facts as reasons to disregard boys' progress and not attempt to find ways to help them succeed is a disservice to nearly half of our students in the American school system. Boys' academic stagnation is an educational emergency.

Most of the research on the gender gap in language arts centers on reading. The disparity between boys' and girls' performance in reading is evident. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Education, boys lag behind girls in reading and writing skills by a year-and-a-half on average, which means a girl in the fall of the ninth grade reads at the same level as a boy in the spring of the tenth grade (Gurian and Stevens 129). Additionally, according to *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2011*, on average, boys in the fourth grade scored seven points lower than girls in the fourth grade on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment (National Center for Education Statistics 16). Educators and administrators have noticed the difference between boys' and girls' performances in reading, and they have acted to close the gap.

Far less attention has been paid to the gender gap in writing. Although research highlights the disparity between boys' and girls' writing performance, the results sometimes conflict. Some research suggests that boys actually outperform girls on persuasive writing assignments and that boys use skills of successful writers: they write more, they write appropriately for various audiences, they fulfill the purpose of the writing assignment, they provide support for their claims, they write coherently, and they effectively revise (Beard and Burrell; Jones; Jones and Myhill). Boys and girls continue to be successful in writing in different ways into high school, but boys seem to struggle more than and perform worse than girls on standardized writing assessments (Meece, Glienke, and Burg 367; Fones; Garlid). Elaine Millard identifies boys not as struggling writers or worse writers in comparison with girls; instead, she calls boys "differently literate," indicating strengths boys commonly have in reading and writing. Despite these apparent successes, boys typically begin their academic career at a similar writing level as girls, but by the end of the first grade, their self-confidence in writing is lower than that of the girls, and by the fourth grade, their overall performance lags behind girls' performance (Andrade, et al. 295; Garlid; Gyagenda and Engelhard; Pirie 3). Boys struggle with writing in a variety of ways. Research claims that girls tend to be able to write what fulfills the teacher's expectations, whereas, boys require help, especially in the planning and revising stages (Hansen 3). Synthesizing a number of studies, Beard and Burrell claim that boys struggle more than girls to focus in their writing and to use proper mechanics (498). Another key difference is boys' tendency to value performance on individual tasks, which contrasts with girls' value of skill mastery (Andrade, et al. 295;

Hansen 3). This difference in values affects the ways in which students approach tasks and enjoy writing.

Possible Reasons for the Gender Gap

Multiple theories exist that rationalize the difference in boys' and girls' performances in school, specifically in reading and writing. Some biological differences between boys and girls may contribute to their preference in learning styles. The cochlea is longer in boys than it is in girls, causing boys to have an extended response time and worse comprehension to auditory stimuli (James 19). Furthermore, most boys learn better from visuals and typically score high on visual-spatial intelligence tests (Gurian and Stevens 46, 140). In transition, girls' hormones keep their brains more active than boys' hormones keep their brains active. According to Michael Gurian and Kathy Stevens, estrogen contributes to increased brain activity in girls, "and indeed, there is up to 15 percent more blood flow in the female brain than in the male at any given moment" (247). When boys physically rest or become bored, their brains literally enter a "rest state," and they become disengaged in the world around them. The "rest state" may cause boys to drift and even fall asleep in class (Gurian and Stevens 151), whereas when a girl physically rests or becomes bored, the estrogen in her body keeps her brain active enough that she can "keep her eyes open, continue taking notes, and process the information before her" (Gurian and Stevens 247). Another reason boys perform worse than girls in reading and writing is visible to teachers in the classroom: on average, boys are more physically active than their female classmates. Oftentimes, boys need physical movement and hands-on activities to keep them engaged and help them learn (Gurian and Stevens 152). Discouraging or simply not planning for movement and hands-on learning activities

can cause neurological and biological processes to occur that would prohibit boys from learning. Traditional classrooms are teacher-led. Students listen to a lesson and perhaps take notes as they sit in desks. If time permits, students practice the lesson or skill as a teacher circulates and offers help. This traditional model of the classroom puts boys in particular at a disadvantage. The lessons are passive and are designed for auditory learners.

Boys' brains play a significant role in the way they confront school and reading and writing. Male brains are larger in size than female brains (James 14), but women and men use their brains differently, which compensates for the difference in brain size (James 15–18). While men use only one area of their brain to make decisions, women use multiple areas of the brain, which suggests a reason for women's tendency to multitask better than men multitask. Furthermore, researchers believe that the connectivity between different areas of the female brain "promotes their ruminative cognitive style, leading them to think over every possibility for each answer, have a hard time making choices, and change their answers often. Men, with their more direct connections, look for the answer and move on" (James 23). The difference in the way men's and women's brains work begins to explain their preferences for certain types of learning and their success and struggle in certain subject areas. Boys tend to perform better on math assessments than they do on English language arts assessments. Their tendency to think logically might account for this preference since math entails logical thinking, whereas writing oftentimes requires creativity and allows for different approaches that would reach the same end. Therefore, the open-ended nature of writing may hamper boys' ability to succeed given their inclination for logic. On the other hand, some scholars believe that

the brain does not cause boys' tendencies. For example, Lise Eliot agrees that the writing gap between boys and girl exists; however, she claims that the differences between male and female brains is much less significant than what other writers, such as Abigail Norfleet James, Sax, and Gurian, suggest (185-89). Instead, Eliot argues that socialization, not the brain, is the cause of boys' tendencies toward logic. She claims that socialization causes the brain to make connections and build parts of the brain. It is possible that girls' socialization teaches them be verbal, and, therefore, the parts of the female brain that control language develop more than in male brains (187).

The size and function of the brain and socialization are not the only determining factors in how boys and girls approach learning; boys' cognitive abilities develop more slowly than girls' abilities develop. Boys with developmental delays are most commonly delayed "in the Broca's and Wernicke's areas, which control language, fine motor skills, and the limbic system" (Gurian and Stevens 246). These delays would affect a boy's ability to speak, read, and write. Even without a developmental delay though, five-year-old boys are probably not developmentally ready to learn to read and write. Typically, they are developmentally one-and-a-half years behind their female peers. Sax argues, "It's not enough to teach well. You have to teach well to kids who are ready to learn, kids who are developmentally 'ripe' for learning" (18). When we begin educating our children before they are developmentally ready, they are likely to experience more failure than if they had started their education at a later age. Repeated failures at an early age will cause students to form a negative attitude toward school and learning (Sax 21). Additionally, the "high stress" and "high failure" boys experience early on in their educational careers may result in undermotivation (Gurian and Stevens 246). Again, Eliot disagrees with Sax

and claims that "school makes kids smarter. Children who attend more preschool, or longer kindergarten days, or more years of formal school for their age score higher on IQ tests than those with less schooling. According to one large study, an extra year of school raises a child's IQ about twice as much as an extra year of age alone" (145). Eliot argues against sending boys to school at a later age, which she calls "redshirting," and instead posits that schools must be realistic in their expectations, especially those for young boys (145).

Other reasons for boys' failure in school, particularly in language arts classes, derive from the classroom. Some researchers attribute the gender gap to many boys' interest in the logical and physical, while others impute it to the feminization of the school curriculum, teacher bias, and girls' strides in education (Garlid; Jones and Myhill; DiPrete and Buchmann; Hoff Sommers). According to a 2012 report by UNESCO, 85–95% of primary school teachers in the United States are female (98–99); this percentage decreases to 50-70% at the secondary level (100–101). The high percentage of women in education in the United States suggests that women may have more influence than men have in education. Although some scholars reject the concept of the "feminization" of education altogether[1], some suggest that women not only dominate the teaching profession, but they also supposedly "soften" the curriculum. M.C. Timmerman synthesizes several sources to define this "softening" and quotes Paul Jungbluth, who says that a "soft" curriculum "values...modesty, cooperation, caring for others, and

[1] Conflicting discussion about the role that women have in education fills the field. Scholars, such as Richard Whitmire and DiPrete and Buchmann, disagree with Timmerman about the effect of the "feminization" of education, and some even deny its existence altogether. To complicate matters, English language arts curricula have not changed to reflect the supposed trend. Most of "feminization". For example, most curricula still require students to study literature by Caucasian, male authors.

conflict-avoiding behavior" (458). Coincidentally, English was the first content area that female teachers dominated, allegedly resulting in the "feminization" of the English curriculum (Timmerman 464). These socio-emotional characteristics are seen as feminine. Furthermore, Sally Hansen cites multiple studies that claim that boys believe English classrooms value girls' writing over boys' writing, and boys claim the writing activities teachers ask them to do are geared toward girls (8), which may be caused in part by the sheer number of women who are in the classroom. Bruce Pirie also indicates boys' attitudes regarding English, writing, "It's not the way guys think" (4). In addition to a feminized curriculum, researchers have identified a gender bias in grading, which suggests that boys do not perform as poorly on writing assessments as the research claims but that teachers grade boys based on their behaviors and attitudes, at least in part (Jones and Myhill 475). DiPrete and Buchmann acknowledge that teachers are biased graders, but they defend this practice by comparing teachers to employers. In the workplace, an employer would evaluate an employee based on behavior; therefore, teachers who base their grades on behavior are only preparing students for the workforce (DiPrete and Buchmann 161).

Ultimately, the difference in boys' and girls' performances in language arts comes down to motivation and engagement. We know that biological, neurological, behavioral, and environmental factors affect students' learning, and this knowledge should shape how educators approach teaching. However, in the end, the problem is still the same: boys are not engaged in school, particularly in reading and writing classes; they are not performing as well as their female classmates; and sometimes they are failing entirely. In fact, some scholars cite a lack of interest in writing among male students as *the* deciding

factor between boys' and girls' writing achievement (Garlid 47; Hansen 7; Jones 106; Pirie 4). Steve Garlid offers another reason: boys dislike writing in the school setting because of its inherent constraints, which "[pressure] students and teachers to meet deadlines, reach achievement goals, and address standards;" these constraints "encouraged more compliance than creativity" (48). Garlid's statement illuminates boys' desire for writing to be free, to allow choice and expression. Susan Jones agrees, adding that boys and girls differ most in attitudes about writing, not their processes (106). In other words, boys do not take a different route to produce writing, but they do dislike the process more than girls do. To put it plainly, Garlid says there is "a deteriorating interest in writing among male students" (47). We must acknowledge that "The consistent negative writing responses from boys… [suggest] that there is a problem inherent in the way we 'package,' 'deliver' and 'measure' writing" (Hansen 13). Therefore, we must make a decision: Should we change our boys or change our system for teaching boys? (Gurian and Stevens 54).

Strategies for Engaging Boys in Writing

Some research on engaging boys in the writing classroom has been published. While many of the findings reinforce good teaching practice for all students, some seem to identify strategies that work particularly well with male students. Unfortunately, most of the research on the gender gap in writing and engaging boys in the writing classroom samples elementary and middle school levels. Nevertheless, the research establishes the foundation and illuminates the need for new research at the high school level. The literature highlights six strategies for engaging boys in the writing classroom: visual and

tactile learning, brain breaks and physical activities, student choice and control, various writing genres, scaffolding, and single-sex groups and single-sex classrooms.

Visual and Tactile Learning

One of the struggles boys face in the writing classroom is their preference for visual learning over auditory learning (Gurian and Stevens; James). Adjusting lessons for visual and tactile learners will benefit a variety of students, especially boys since their dominant learning style more commonly falls into one of those two categories. Many teachers rely heavily on auditory instruction, so reinforcing directions and lessons helps boys understand and remember information. To help boys engage in auditory lessons, teachers should allow boys to type notes on a laptop during class (Gurian and Stevens 141). As a homework assignment before class, teachers can ask students to preview material. For example, the teacher could ask students to outline the argument in an article, so that they are more familiar with the content when class activities and discussion begin (James 44). Additionally, providing boys with graphics and encouraging them to organize their thoughts in graphics like mind maps will engage visual learners (James 44, 200). Asking students to complete a graphic organizer as the teacher lectures will help students focus and engage in the lesson.

Brain Breaks and Physical Activity

To prevent boys from falling into a "rest state," teachers should plan for frequent breaks during auditory activities. During these breaks, students should discuss and collaborate on writing assignments and lessons to keep their brains active and engaged (Loeper 38; Garlid 50). Also, because boys tend to be physically active, teachers should

limit use of whole class discussion or lecture. Instead, they should allow boys to move while they work (Gurian and Stevens 141). Using discussion techniques such as gallery walks or carousels, concentric circles, and stations allows boys to move in the classroom. Utilizing activities such as these will target physically active students, particularly boys who are more likely to doze or fall into a "rest state" during auditory activities.

Scaffolding and Various Writing Genres

Because of the way boys' brains function, overstimulation or multitasking can be frustrating for male students (Gurian and Stevens 50). Providing a specific outline of assignments and tasks, one at a time, with clear and direct instructions will lessen the stress boys feel, but may also help girls who feel overwhelmed academically. Assigning multiple short writing assignments prevents boys from becoming overwhelmed and engages the reluctant writer (James 203). Another important strategy teachers must use to prevent boys from disengaging under stress is scaffolding. Because boys usually understand and prefer analogies and logic more than girls do, providing boys with skeletons to base their writing off of will make writing feel mechanical to them (James 200, 203; Garlid 50). For example, teachers can provide students with writing structures or "frames" to help them be successful when responding to literature (Fones 28). Offering these structures may make male students feel more comfortable, which may allow them to enjoy writing more (Fones). Although structuring assignments and providing clear expectations and directions are particularly helpful to male students, too many restraints may also be overwhelming for boys. Offering students options and giving them control over their learning and the course of their study will increase student engagement and enjoyment (King and Gurian; Garlid 49). In order to appeal to a variety of interests,

teachers should expose students to a range of writing genres (Fleming; Ivinson and Murphy; Hansen). Along with exposing students to several different genres and modes, teachers should expand their idea of acceptable writing topics, namely violence (Garlid; Anderson). In general, to engage male students, teacher should allow boys as much autonomy and student choice as possible.

Single-sex Education

Another solution to the gender gap in education is single-sex classrooms and single-sex schools. Some scholars have noted improved performance among boys learning in single-sex situations (Sax 187; Mercer 54-57; Gurian and Stevens 155; Benenson and Heath; Hoff Sommers 161). DiPrete and Buchmann note multiple advantages of single-sex education, primarily certain classes and departments in single-sex schools are not deemed gender-specific. Boys can play the violin, sing, play football, and enjoy science without threat of social repercussions in school (DiPrete and Buchmann 164-65). Ideally in a single-sex setting, English language arts would become a respected content area, free from gendered labels. Additionally, single-sex classrooms, or even single-sex groups, may encourage friendly competition and, therefore, pique boys' interest in learning (James 203). However, single-sex education *does* have at least one significant social repercussion for society: students educated in single-sex school do not interact with, collaborate with, and learn from peers of the opposite sex. Boys need to interact with girls in school to prepare them for interacting with girls in the real world (DiPrete and Buchmann 164-65). Still, teachers can make changes to their teaching methods that are less drastic than single-sex classrooms: Allowing boys to work in small, single-sex groups, rather than in one-on-one situations with a peer, will promote learning

and engagement (Benenson and Heath). At the end of a writing unit, teachers should expand the collaborative network of the classroom and share student work with the writing community and the outside community to encourage students to be proud of their work and invest time and care into it (Loeper 38).

Conclusion

Students face a variety of obstacles in American classrooms. In particular, school-aged males are at a critical point in American history. If girls continue to grow and progress and boys continue to stagnate in English language arts, male students will eventually become what female students were in the past. In a society that is consistently concerned with the pursuit of equality, boys deserve help from the school system to perform as equally as possible to girls. However, several aspects of the school system and of boys in general make it difficult for boys to achieve and perform at the same rate that girls do. The small-scale studies that were successful at the elementary and middle school levels offer a basis for determining methods to reach our teen males and help them continue to grow as just as girls have. In the next chapter, I will describe a small-scale study that aims to engage high school boys in writing using the methods outlined above.

Chapter 2: Methods

The small-scale studies that researchers conducted in elementary and middle level classrooms served as a foundation for this study. The study revolved around two essential questions: How do high school boys feel about writing? How can teachers increase boys' engagement in writing? Two tenth-grade English classes at Stratton School[2] participated in the study.

Stratton is a rural school district located approximately ten miles outside of a Midwestern college town of approximately 83,000 people. According to the district's 2015 data, the school serves 462 students. Students who come from low-income families comprise 9% of the student body, 95% of all students are Caucasian, and 8% of the students have an IEP. Students at Stratton School typically perform above the state average on standardized tests. Of the freshmen who participated in PARCC testing in the spring of 2014, 47% met or exceeded standards, compared to 33% statewide. Also, 70% of juniors at Stratton School who participated in PSAE testing in the spring of 2014 met or exceeded standards, compared to 54% statewide. Of the students who took the PSAE, 75% of female students met or exceeded standards, while 62% of male students met or exceeded standards. This statistic is part of a trend at Stratton School: girls frequently perform better than boys on standardized tests in all subjects. Nearly all of the teachers at Stratton are Caucasian, and 50% are female. The school culture is overall positive and cooperative. Fights, truancy, and failure are uncommon; Stratton School has a 92% graduation rate and a 0% dropout rate. Students, teachers, and administrators generally

[2] The names of the school, teacher, and students have been changed to protect the anonymity of the study subjects.

support and encourage one another. The school has a reputation for and culture of high expectations, which is evident through student behavior and performance.

Two types of participants from this school community participated in this study: thirty-five students—nineteen males and sixteen females—and one English language arts teacher. The majority of the students represent the average student at this school. Thirty-three of the students are white, one is Asian, and one is multiracial. Four of the students have a 504 plan, but both classes are in an inclusive classroom without a special education co-teacher. Six of the students are from low-income families. All of the students are 15–16 years old. Although males were the intended focus of the study, all students in the classes were invited to complete the questionnaires and submit writing samples.

The teacher, Mrs. Chandler, is a 24-year-old Caucasian. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and has taught English for one year.

The Writing Units

The research project analyzed male high school students' perceptions of and attitudes about writing and the writing classroom over the course of two writing units in a sophomore English class in the fall of 2015. I began the study in October during a five-week literature circle study of *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. To complement the reading, the teacher, Mrs. Chandler assigned a fractured plotline narrative. In the third week of the unit, Mrs. Chandler assigned a creative writing piece: the fractured fairy tale. Students selected a well-known fairy tale or fable, fractured the plot line, and narrated the story from another character's point of view. Mrs. Chandler created a schedule for the unit, but she did not share it with the students. Students read approximately sixty pages in

the book each week. During class, they discussed with their groups, learned about discussion techniques, studied different types of plot structures and narration styles, and practiced writing. Students had time in class to plan, draft, peer review, and revise essays. There were six total class periods dedicated to the various steps of the writing process.

I observed the class once during the writing process, and I administered questionnaires to the students at the end of the unit. The questionnaires addressed their engagement in the lesson and their learning progress. I also informally discussed the unit with the teacher throughout the unit and formally interviewed her at the end.

When I formally interviewed Mrs. Chandler after the first writing unit, she explained that many of the skills she was evaluating in the student writing were review from English I. For example, she wanted students to use dialogue and descriptive language to create characters, and she wanted them to spell and punctuate properly. The new skill she was evaluating was the students' ability to "understand the non-linear narrative." She said she wanted the students to understand how the fragmentation enhanced the plot. The assignment sheet for the first writing unit (Appendix A) lists several requirements, including "clear use of nonlinear plot structure as the main fractured element," development of at least two plot lines, and use of flashback four or more times.

The second unit was three-and-a-half weeks long. Students read *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and wrote an expository essay that required them to research a social issue in which "silence perpetuates violence" is a theme. Students read approximately forty pages in the book each week. During class, students discussed the book as a whole class, researched their paper topics, drafted annotated bibliographies, and wrote their essays. At

the end of the unit, they conferenced with Mrs. Chandler about their essays, and they revised. Again, I observed the class during the writing process and administered questionnaires to the students at the end.

I formally interviewed the teacher, Mrs. Chandler, upon completion of the second unit. Her personal goal for the unit was to teach students "to structure an essay in a way that they feel less overwhelmed with the task." In other words, she wanted to reduce the stress students' feel about writing. She also expressed that she wanted students to practice and master learning standards associated with the Common Core State Standards. She wanted students to be able to write an expository essay, identify credible sources when researching, and follow the structure of an outline she provided. She emphasized the importance of students being able to "present information about a topic without being persuasive, because expository is just informational."

Interventions

During the second unit, the teacher introduced interventions that I developed, which were intended to improve male students' perceptions of and attitudes toward writing while targeting and mastering writing standards. One English II class (first hour) received interventions, while the other English II class (seventh hour) acted as a control. The purpose of the interventions was to determine how high school English teachers can engage male students in writing in order to increase student enjoyment while targeting and mastering writing standards. Understanding why boys dislike writing in general and how to engage them in the writing classroom may lead teachers to create classrooms where male students have higher rates of success in mastering writing standards and higher achievement on writing assessments. Additionally, if boys find writing enjoyable,

they may continue to take English classes and engage in voluntary writing activities outside the classroom. These interventions tested methods that previously have been successful mainly at the elementary and middle school levels in improving male students' enjoyment of writing in the classroom.

I outlined six different interventions to test on the trial group. Several studies show that boys feel more comfortable and are more successful when they work in single-sex groups (Sax 187; Mercer 54-57; Gurian and Stevens 155; James; DiPrete and Buchmann 164-65). Joyce F. Benenson and Anna Heath also contend that boys feel less pressure and communicate better in small groups as opposed to in one-on-one situations[3]. For that reason, I asked the cooperating teacher to make students form single-sex groups, and I built five opportunities for collaboration into the unit schedule. When students collaborated in their single-sex groups, the teacher would attempt to keep them focused and engaged by providing them with questions and topics for discussion. One activity I directed her to incorporate was author's chair. She allotted time for this activity each time the groups met. According to Steven Garlid's experience with fifth-graders, students appreciate the opportunity to hear their peers' writing and to recognize each other's successes. This may help boys maintain or reestablish a positive view of writing if they are undermotivated or have experienced repeated failures in writing before (Gurian and Stevens 246; Loeper 38). Additionally, Judy Abbott's study of fifth-grade male writers shows that they feel more comfortable in the writing classroom if the teacher establishes

[3] Studies have also attested to the potential advantages of single-sex schooling for females. For example, Alice Sullivan, Heather Joshi, and Diana Leonard conducted a large-scale longitudinal study of students in single-sex schools and coeducational schools. They found that girls were more likely to achieve on exams at the age of 16, and "women who had attended single-sex schools were more likely than coeducated women to gain their highest qualification by age 33 in a male-dominated field" (25).

an environment where they can share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs openly and comfortably (67). Therefore, each time the groups in Mrs. Chandler's class met, each member could determine the type of feedback they wanted or needed (using the bless, press, or address strategy used by the National Writing Project and other educators), and the group would respond. The students shared with their small groups only so that boys would feel comfortable sharing their writing.

The second strategy aims to reduce students' stress and confusion about performing a challenging task. Deborah Fones found that her eleven- and twelve-year-old students enjoyed using structures the teacher provided when they wrote literary analysis essays. Therefore, I created a step-by-step guide for outlining an analysis, from thesis statement to conclusion paragraph. The students used this outline to help them write the first draft of their essay. Although Mrs. Chandler encouraged students to complete this outline to help them prepare to write, its completion was optional. Mrs. Chandler also required students to write an annotated bibliography. She has taught this genre to this class before, so I encouraged her to use the same model again in this unit to review the genre with the students. Using the step-by-step guides and the models helped students visualize what their final products should look like.

The third method we used was another attempt to reduce students' feeling of being overwhelmed. Gurian and Stevens cite multitasking and overstimulation as a reason boys feel overwhelmed during writing units (50). Steven Garlid suggests one way to quell students' frustrations and feelings of stress is using a syllabus (51). Mrs. Chandler provided her students with a unit calendar that outlined the different activities the students would participate in and hard deadlines Mrs. Chandler had set. Mrs.

Chandler expected students to meet the deadlines she set; otherwise, students were free to set checkpoints for themselves throughout the unit.

Fourth, I asked Mrs. Chandler to allow students as much freedom as possible regarding topic selection and language during the unit. Michael Anderson noticed that his fifth-grade male students frequently wrote about violence. Anderson surmised that this was because his students were inundated with violence in their lives and by the media. Allowing students to write about topics they choose and in language they choose helps them write more freely. Therefore, Mrs. Chandler allowed students to write about their topic of choice as long as it was within the realm of the assignment. She also granted freedom in the type of language they used in their writing, as long as it was appropriate for the assignment.

The fifth intervention encouraged Mrs. Chandler to closely monitor her students' progress and engage with them one-on-one to establish a positive rapport with them and help them improve their writing. Gurian and Stevens report that male students feel that their teachers do not listen to them (24). Steven Garlid emphasizes the importance of establishing an environment where boys feel recognized and listened to (51). In addition to setting up author's chair sessions in the single-sex groups, one-on-one conferences between Mrs. Chandler and the students aimed to show students that their teacher cared about them and their learning and to create a comfortable space for them to ask questions and receive direct feedback. Mrs. Chandler participated in the author's chair sessions, but she gave only praise as a way to establish a positive learning environment and relationship with the students. She also conferenced with the students after they had written a complete draft of their essay to give them feedback.

The sixth strategy we used to improve male students' engagement and enjoyment of writing is valuing the writing process. Heidi L. Andrade, Xiaolei Wang, Ying Du, and Robin L. Akawi note that male students value grades over skill mastery (295). Also, Garlid encourages teachers to focus on process and support more than product (51). Judy Abbott recommends encouraging the writing process through freewriting to brainstorm and draft (75). To get the students writing, Mrs. Chandler used journal prompts to help the students brainstorm and organize through freewriting. She used these freewrites to stimulate author's chair, small group discussions, and conferences. To incentivize the writing process and focus more on process, Mrs. Chandler made the writing process nearly 12% of the overall grade, which is approximately one-and-a-half letter grades on the grading scale at Stratton School. She also supported the students as they learned to write and revise through author's chair and one-on-one conferences.

Research Instruments and Analysis Practices

At the beginning of this study, I developed six questions to guide my research and analysis. Generally, I was interested in differences in the ways boys and girls learn to write, differences in boys' and girls' writing performances, boys' opinions of writing, and methods teachers can use to increase boys' enjoyment of writing. These issues drove my initial research, and as I read the literature, I narrowed the scope of these questions to develop the questionnaires that I administered to the students. The first questionnaire asked ten questions that gauged the students' opinions of writing in general and writing in their classroom, specifically during the unit they were studying; their definitions of writing; their perception of their learning; and their attitude toward their teacher. Eight of the questions were open-ended, and two questions required students to circle an answer.

After observing the class twice and reading through their questionnaires, I realized I needed more information about the students' opinions of school and their class. I observed several students who openly challenged the teacher and who seemed discouraged and disinterested in the class and school in general. Therefore, I revised the phase two questionnaire. On this document, I asked twelve questions, eleven of them open-ended. Again, I asked questions that gauged the students' perception of their learning and their opinion of the unit and of their teacher. Additionally, I asked the students how they feel about school and how they view themselves as students. Also, as a way to determine the effectiveness of some of the interventions, I asked them to describe any activities, lessons, or documents they found particularly helpful during the unit.

After I collected the questionnaires from both phases from the classes, I began sorting through the data. To ensure I remained unbiased and accurate in my analysis, I removed information that identified the student's gender, class period, and name from the front of the questionnaire. On the back of each document, I wrote the student's initials, the class they were in (first or seventh hour), and their gender. Then, I began to look for trends. I used small sticky tabs to mark each time each of the following words or ideas were mentioned:

- dislike or enjoyment of or boredom with writing
- easiness, difficulty, or confusion associated with the writing units
- Mrs. Chandler, classroom management, or teaching effectiveness
- student choice or interest
- social life or friends
- transferability

- workload, time constraints, or stress

After I had tabbed any mention of these topics, I sorted the questionnaires by class hour and student gender.

Then, I sorted questionnaires to determine the students' perceptions of themselves as students, their opinions of school in general, their feelings about writing, and their preferences between the two units. Instead of counting the words that were frequently mentioned, I counted the number of surveys that voiced similar beliefs. For example, I counted the number of questionnaires that suggested an overall negative attitude toward writing or a preference for the *Night* unit. Again, the students' identities were hidden on the back of the questionnaires, so I did not consider the class the student was in or the gender of the student when I counted similar responses to the questionnaires.

After I tabbed and counted the questionnaires for trends, I put all of the responses into spreadsheets and counted the number of female and male students who had similar responses. I grouped similar responses and converted them into percentages to determine the significance of the data.

Chapter 3: Observations, Data, and Discussion

Although this study intended to determine strategies teachers can employ to improve male students' enjoyment of and engagement in writing, the results were inconclusive and sometimes conflicted with the existing literature in the field. (Students were not aware of the particular interventions; therefore, their responses on the questionnaire items may have differed if the questions had explicitly asked about the specific interventions.) Some trends seemed to appear among the two classes, but no one intervention definitively emerged as successful. However, two unexpected patterns did emerge: despite similar attitudes, male students behave differently than female students behave, and the single most defining factor of student enjoyment of writing in this study was the teacher-student relationship. I will discuss these trends at length at the end of this chapter. Meanwhile, several less definitive patterns exist among the data from these two classes, not all of which derived from the study's interventions.

Students' Perceptions of School, Writing, and Themselves

After I observed the classes once and read through their responses on the phase one questionnaire, I began to understand that the students were dissatisfied with their experience in their English class. The students discussed their confusion and frustration, which I will detail later in this chapter. In order to contextualize their feelings and their opinions, I organized their responses based on their perspectives in four areas: the students' concerns about their grades in their English class and their perceptions of school, writing, and themselves as students.

Concerns About Grades

In general, these students value grades. Of the students from the two classes who responded to the phase one questionnaire, 31% mentioned grades, and 80% of those students were male. Students' comments about grades on the phase one survey varied. Half of the male students who commented on grades expressed a desire to earn a "good" grade, and 25% of the male students stated that they cared about grades because they wanted to avoid failing. The other 25% of male students viewed grades as an indicator of their progress, or lack thereof, and complained about their low averages. Students' focus on their grades and the belief that the grade is the ultimate indicator of success resound with one study Howard R. Pollio and Hall P. Beck conducted at the college level. In Pollio and Beck's study, students mistakenly believed that instructors valued grades more than learning (90); instructors also mistakenly believed that students valued grades more than learning (93). In reality, both groups wished that the other party were more learning oriented, but they reinforced grade-oriented behaviors in each other (Pollio and Beck 96). None of the high school students in this study indicated that they believed their teacher was concerned with their learning. Instead of indicating a desire to learn, these students revealed their preoccupation with their performance and the grade associated with it.

Not only did students express worry about their grades on the phase one questionnaire, but I also observed their concern with grades as they discussed scores on assignments and complained about their grades in their English class. One student, Matthew Martin, spent a significant amount of time during my second observation in his class looking at his grades online. Although he was viewing grades for all of his courses, his behavior signifies his concern about his grades. During my four different

observations, three separate conversations regarding grades occurred among students and between students and the teacher. In all three of the instances, the students were dissatisfied with grades they had received on assignments. One student, Brian Whitman, even raised his voice and blurted, "What the hell is this?" when he saw that he had missed a point that Mrs. Chandler had given his peer credit for. Although I did not observe the students' responses to their grades on the assignments in this study, these observations do speak to the students' attitudes and beliefs about what grades they should earn.

Students' grades on the *Night* unit may have affected how they responded to the phase two questionnaire. In first hour, 59% of students earned higher grades on the expository essay than they did on the fractured fairy tale. Half of those students were male. Also, half of the males in the class earned lower scores on the expository essay, and one male student (13% of all male students in that class) did not turn in the expository essay. In the seventh-hour class, 82% of the male students earned higher grades on the expository essay, and all students who earned higher grades on this essay were male. In this class as well, one male student did not turn in the essay. The lack of negative comments about grades on the phase two questionnaire suggests that students were not as worried about their grades after the *Night* unit.

On the phase two survey, 29% of all students commented on their grades, which may have indicated that students were satisfied with the grades they earned on the writing assignment. The nature of the students' comments about grades differed on the phase two survey: the students either stated their desire to earn a good grade or explained that the teacher graded their writing, which was why they sought her approval. While students

continued to monitor their achievement in the class through their grades, the change in their comments about grades suggests that their negativity may have dissipated after they had satisfied their definition of "good" grades.

Opinions about School and Self-Perception

Of the thirty-two students who completed the phase two survey, 50% of both boys and girls shared negative feelings about school. The students' negative responses ranged from "sometimes it can be boring" to "[it] makes me want to cry a lot," "I think it sucks," and "I hate it with a passion." The positive comments varied less. "Enjoy" was the most common verb used. The most passionate positive response was, "I enjoy it alot [sic] actually." Also, half of the positive comments blended with negative comments. For example, one female student wrote, "I find that this school educationally is very good. The social part is somewhat of a joke." A male student wrote, "School is fun but can be very tiring. That is why I believe it is good to have some breaks." Only four students of the thirty-two wrote completely positive responses to this question. The students' feelings about school are complicated. Many of them are dissatisfied with school or dislike school for various reasons, ranging from alleged teacher ineffectiveness, immature peers, stressful tests, and boring classes. Their enjoyment of school is much less fervent.

The students' questionnaires also revealed no clear patterns in how the boys and girls view themselves as students. Students used various adjectives to describe themselves, such as "hardworking," "outgoing," "average," "well behaved," "stressed," and "cool." Other students described their habits, behaviors, and reputations, writing, "'the best' is what i'm really known for'," "I don't do homework," "I slack off," "[I] get in trouble sometimes," and "I'm a good student." Because the question on the survey was

open-ended (asking "How do you view yourself as a student?"), it elicited a wide range of responses. Some students described their study habits and work ethic, while others described their reputation, personality, and behavior. None of the students described themselves in relation to their English class, writing, or their English teacher. Although the students share concerns about their achievement in school, their views of themselves as students varies drastically.

The students' responses about their opinions of school and how they view themselves as students does not resonate with the research currently in the field. According to Gurian and Stevens, boys have lower confidence than girls and a lower desire to succeed than girls have (24). Sax reinforces these claims (7). This does not appear to be true with the students who participated in the study. Boys and girls in these classes seem to dislike school at the same rate. They were equally likely to describe themselves as successful or struggling in some way.

Opinions about Writing

On the first questionnaire, I asked students how often they enjoyed writing in school, which they most commonly defined as writing essays. Again, no distinct pattern emerged. Four boys and three girls replied "Never," fourteen boys and seven girls replied "Sometimes," and one boy and three girls answered "Usually." No student selected "Always." Once again, this sample of students does not replicate the studies that others have done, suggesting that male students dislike writing at a much higher rate than girls will (Hansen 7; Garlid; Anderson). Instead, the students are generally indifferent towards writing in school, and boys and girls in these two classes have similar feelings about it.

Effect of Interventions

As stated in the two previous chapters, the interventions in this study aimed to improve male students' enjoyment of writing. Research drove the development of the interventions, which were tailored to the unit Mrs. Chandler was required to teach by the English II curriculum in her school. A clear increase in male students' enjoyment of writing was not apparent; however, students in both classes acknowledged improvement in some areas. Additionally, 29% of all students and 29% of males believed the *Night* writing unit helped them grow as writers.

In the first-hour intervention group, 69% of students, including 63% of males, preferred the unit on *Night* to the unit on *The Things They Carried*. Ultimately, the fourteen students in this class described the *Night* unit as easier than the first unit eight times. Although they did not acknowledge a specific intervention as helpful or useful, 21% of the students in first hour mentioned improvements in Mrs. Chandler's teaching, which may have led the students to perceive the *Night* unit as "easier."

Single-Sex Groups

Several researchers note the effectiveness of single-sex groups for learning and increasing engagement, particularly for boys (Sax; Mercer; Gurian and Stevens; Benenson and Heath; Hoff Sommers), which is why one of the interventions Mrs. Chandler employed was single-sex groupings and structured collaboration. Some of the group activities Mrs. Chandler facilitated were author's chair and peer review. During my observations of both classes in the computer lab, the students segregated themselves: boys sat with boys (with only one exception), and girls sat with girls. Therefore, students were already constructing single-sex groups if Mrs. Chandler gave them the opportunity

to collaborate. The intervention required single-sex groups to collaborate on dictated tasks; Mrs. Chandler facilitated the collaboration. On the phase two questionnaire, I specifically asked about students' opinions of opportunities for collaboration. Most of the students in the intervention class who acknowledged that there were opportunities for collaboration described them as ineffective: "[The opportunities for group work] ended up being innapropriate [sic] and the serious discussion turned wrong," said one student. Another student noticed that "People didn't really take advantage of group work." No pattern arose from the male students' comments about group work. It is possible that boys did not recognize a difference in the collaborative work in the class because they were already forming single-sex groups when they had the opportunity to do so. What is evident is providing students with opportunities to collaborate, even if they are structured opportunities in which the teacher dictates the task and the conversation, did not work with these students as the research suggested it would. It is apparent that not all students can be successful in small group settings without instruction and practice being a group member. To improve the outcome of this particular intervention, teachers should directly teach students how to behave and interact with one another in groups. Team-building activities and speaking and listening lessons would be helpful in creating effective groups.

Scaffolding

In order to reduce the likelihood that students will feel overwhelmed due to the high demands of a class, James and Garlid suggest scaffolding assignments and lessons. Therefore, Mrs. Chandler used a step-by-step guide that scaffolded each stage of the annotated bibliography (Appendix B) and the outline (Appendix C). I asked about

assignments, lessons, and activities that the students found particularly helpful on the phase two questionnaire. Although students rarely named specific assignments, two girls did mention the outlining packet. One stated, "She gave us a packet that helped me through it. I liked it cause it helped me a lot," and another said that outline was her least favorite part, "But it helped me write the paper so it turned out to be good." None of the male students in the class identified a specific lesson or assignment that they thought was helpful. Their failure to mention the scaffolded assignments on their questionnaire may have been intentional and may have indicated that they did not find the assignments helpful. However, it may have also been their inability to identify the annotated bibliography and outline assignment as options for responding to this question. Their responses may have varied if I had asked questions that specifically addressed those assignments. Because students may not have been aware that the teacher was scaffolding the assignments, teachers may explain the scaffolded assignments and their purposes. This will help students understand the purpose of the assignments and activities and how they build on one another, and it may help students grasp the skills they are learning better and faster.

Unit Calendar

Because some writers, like Garlid and Fones, suggest that providing students with an outline of the unit can reduce stress and confusion, Mrs. Chandler and I worked to develop a calendar that fit within her timeframe for the unit. She provided the class with the calendar that listed some lessons, all work days, and all due dates (Appendix D). None of the students identified the unit calendar as useful when asked on the questionnaire. However, two students, one female and one male, commented on the

timeline for the unit. The female student explained that her least favorite part of the unit was writing the essay because Mrs. Chandler "only gave [them] a few days." The boy wrote, "Even though we didn't have a lot I appreciated work time." Although his statement does not directly cite the unit calendar, being aware of the timeline of the unit can help students work efficiently in the classroom. Again with this intervention, male students did not identify it as an influential factor in their enjoyment of writing. Results about the effectiveness of sharing the unit calendar are not clear because, just as with the scaffolded assignments, students may have commented on the unit timeline and the calendar if the questionnaires had specifically asked about them. However, having the unit calendar was not so prominent that the students commented on it voluntarily.

Student Choice

Several researchers claim that allowing student choice improves enjoyment and performance for all types of students (King and Gurian; Garlid; Fleming; Ivinson and Murphy; Hansen; Anderson). To promote student choice in the second unit, Mrs. Chandler allowed students to choose their group members (although only single-sex groups were allowed) and their paper topics. Interestingly, the majority of both male and female students stated that they preferred the intervention unit on *Night*. Three students, only one of them male, in the first-hour class cited choice as the main reason they enjoyed the *Night* unit more. Although I did not specifically ask about student choice on the phase two questionnaire, one girl stated that she enjoyed picking her group members because she picked people she would work well with. (She did not mention that her choices were limited to female students.) The other two students, one boy and one girl, expressed that they liked picking their paper topics. They felt as if they made more

decisions about what their essays could be in the second unit. However, the two units involved similar amounts of student choice. In both cases, students were given a topic to work with (i.e., a fairy tale, a modern social issue), and they decided what their papers would be after that point. Nevertheless, students perceived more choice in the second unit, but the ability to choose group members and paper topics did not seem to affect male students' enjoyment of the unit.

Author's Chair and Student-Teacher Conferences

Several authors state that students who share their work with each other and applaud each other's successes are more engaged and feel more confidently about their writing, which can help undermotivated students or students who have experienced failure before (Garlid; Gurian and Stevens; Loeper). Additionally, Garlid emphasizes the importance of a creating a positive learning environment. Therefore, Mrs. Chandler facilitated author's chair activities in the single-sex groups, and she conferenced with students about their essays. As I stated before, the students did not identify a specific activity or lesson on the phase two survey that they found more useful than the others. The students did not mention author's chair or student-teacher conferences as something they found effective; however, these two activities may have contributed to students' changing opinions about their teacher in the second unit. I will discuss this more at the end of this chapter.

Emphasis on Process

Because some research suggests that emphasizing process can encourage students to work and to learn (Andrade, et al.; Garlid; Abbott), Mrs. Chandler's rubric allotted

12% of the unit grade value to the writing process, and she dedicated a significant portion of the unit to practicing the writing process, from freewriting, outlining, and drafting to peer review and conferencing. None of the students recognized process as an integral aspect contributing to their enjoyment (or lack thereof) of the unit. However, one male student did appreciate that the paper was 50% of his final exam grade, which suggests that he values the assignment more because it has a great influence on his grade. Because the questionnaire did not explicitly ask about how students value the writing process, the students' responses may have differed from what they expressed. However, the male and female students neither confirmed nor denied that process was an influential factor in how they viewed the writing unit.

All of these interventions may have had different outcomes if the teacher had explained the interventions and their purposes. Particularly with short units, students need explicit instruction to understand how assignments build upon each other and what the teacher intends students to learn.

Gender Differences in Classroom Behavior

Although the interventions did not reveal clear results about male students' engagement in the classroom, two significant patterns became apparent in the questionnaire and my observations: the boys behaved differently than girls did in the classroom, and the teacher-student relationship is a crucial component to classroom environment and student success.

Mrs. Chandler was absent during my first observation of the seventh-hour class. Her absence allowed me to see how the students behaved and interacted without her as a factor. The students demonstrated a distinct difference in behavior based on their gender.

Generally, male students in this class were unfocused, off task, and distracting. The class period began with journaling time. The students were supposed to freewrite, and Mrs. Chandler had left the substitute teacher with potential topics for students who struggled to write on their own. Very few of the male students diligently wrote in their journals. Two of them argued about whose job it was to pass out and collect the class's journals, and three boys spent the majority of the journaling time staring at me or their notebooks. Additionally, one male student wrote for only about a minute before he closed his journal. Most of the male students in this class demonstrated similar behaviors when they moved to the computer lab to peer review each other's fractured fairy tales. Four of the male students sat together in the front row of the computer lab; they worked diligently to review each other's papers for most of the hour. The rest of the male students were not focused on the activity for most of the class period. One pair of boys played with each other's computers, three others argued about where camels live, and another pair played computer games. All of the students, both male and female, had packed their books and essays up and were ready to leave school for the day five minutes before the class period ended. Although this class was not belligerent or rowdy during this observation, most of them were uninterested in the activity and did not use their time wisely. For the most part, the girls in the class remained on task for the duration for the period. They talked quietly with each other, but the conversation almost always revolved around their essays. On the other hand, the male students were off task, wasting time, distracting each other, and joking around. The boys were much more social, and many of them did not achieve what Mrs. Chandler had intended for them to accomplish during the period. In this particular case, the social nature of the boys in this class seemed to prohibit them from achieving.

The first-hour group behaved similarly; however, Mrs. Chandler was present during this class period. She spent the entire period assisting male students. (Female students did not request her help.) The students in the first-hour class worked diligently and focused much better than the seventh-hour class did. Mrs. Chandler's presence likely influenced the difference in behavior in the two classes. After my first observation in both classes, it was clear that Mrs. Chandler had to carefully tend to the male students to keep them focused.

As mentioned before, the male and female students in these classes expressed similar feelings about the class and their teacher. However, the difference in the boys' behavior in comparison to the girls' behavior was distinct. The male students voiced their frustration with the class and their teacher (a topic I discuss in detail in the next section) and their confusion with the content, while the female students attempted to work independently and quietly. Therefore, it seems as though the female students' negative perception of their teacher and her ability and willingness to help drove them to take initiative and complete the assignment on their own, while the male students' negative feelings about the class manifested in attention-seeking behavior.

Teacher-Student Relationship

Students mentioned Mrs. Chandler a total of fifty-one times in the two questionnaires. Their perception of their teacher revealed an unexpected finding in this study: in this case, the teacher-student relationship hindered students from enjoying the class and writing and created a toxic classroom environment. Although the students did not necessarily believe that the interventions helped them learn, the students' responses suggested that the interventions may have influenced a positive change in the students'

perception of their teacher. That the interventions did not clearly reveal an improvement in male students' enjoyment of writing indicates that the teacher-student relationship is crucial to the ways students view classes and subjects.

The phase one questionnaire revealed that students disliked various aspects of Mrs. Chandler and her teaching style. Nineteen of the thirty-two students commented on Mrs. Chandler a total of thirty times on the phase one questionnaire; 86% of first hour's comments and 94% of seventh hour's comments about Mrs. Chandler were negative. Both male and female students' comments were mostly negative. In fact, only three comments across both classes and both sexes were positive. Students criticized Mrs. Chandler, describing her and her teaching in similar methods. In summary, they most frequently noted:

- She is rude, insulting, and hypercritical.
- She manages the behavior of the class poorly.
- She moves too quickly from one assignment to the next.
- She does not provide adequate instruction or examples for assignments.
- She assigns too much homework.
- She makes the students dislike writing.

Students' questionnaires revealed their frustrated and discouraged attitudes toward writing and their English class. These feelings were apparent in their behavior when I observed the classes as well.

As I mentioned in the previous section, boys' behavior in class revealed that they needed and desired more attention from their teacher than the girls did. As stated in chapter one, some scholars, including Susan Jones and Debra Myhill and Christina Hoff

Sommers, cite the feminization of education as a major cause in boys' academic shortcomings over the last sixty years. An influx in female teachers has spurred the change in how teachers teach and what is expected of students in classrooms. Richard Whitmire refutes this claim and argues that the gender of the teacher does not determine student success as much as the quality of the teacher does (86). "Quality" teachers, claims Whitmire, will understand that boys and girls are different, and they will use different interventions and teaching methods with boys than they would with female students. Making these changes helps teachers establish a safe and comfortable learning environment for male students; furthermore, teachers will need to establish a healthy rapport with their students to motivate them to learn. Unfortunately, Mrs. Chandler tended to recognize the boys' negative behaviors more than she recognized their positive contributions. She responded to calls for assistance, and she chastised and corrected misbehaviors, but she did not commend progress and success, even when students asked for it. For example, during my second observation of the first-hour class, a male student named Nolan was confused about the annotated bibliography assignment and had completed it incorrectly. Mrs. Chandler reviewed his work and said, "The MLA is still wrong." She walked him through the corrections, and he wrote them down with a pencil. He explained that he used EasyBib to cite, and she snapped back, "It's wrong! That's why I told you to use [the quick reference sheet]." Mrs. Chandler was quick to sharply correct Nolan when he misunderstood and became confused. Another boy, named Charles, required a great deal of Mrs. Chandler's attention. He was vocal about his frustration and his confusion, and he demonstrated a desire to earn Mrs. Chandler's approval. Once during both of my observations of his class, Charles proudly proclaimed

that he was doing something Mrs. Chandler desired: "Mrs. Chandler! Look how much I have done!" and "Mrs. Chandler, I'm moving right along!" Mrs. Chandler did not acknowledge Charles either of these times. Nolan and Charles reacted differently to Mrs. Chandler's responses. Nolan became visibly frustrated, hardening his features, throwing his hands up, and sighing when she corrected his mistakes. When Mrs. Chandler did not recognize Charles' progress, he tended to fall off track. One time, he even laid his head down across his arms for several minutes after she ignored his call for praise. It is evident that the teacher's attention and approval is capital for the male students in Mrs. Chandler's classes. Although the boys in her classes do receive almost all of her attention, the attention is typically negative. Therefore, it is easy to understand how the students would perceive Mrs. Chandler as critical and rude.

Mrs. Chandler's relationship with students suffered because of her responses to their needs. In addition to perceiving Mrs. Chandler as negative (41 comments) and critical (11 comments), boys and girls commented four times on their questionnaires that Mrs. Chandler's classroom management was ineffective, even though the survey was not designed to elicit responses about classroom management. Students did not respond positively to Mrs. Chandler, and this was clear in both class periods during my second observation. In the seventh-hour class, the male students were prominent again. The boys were disrespectful and rude to the teacher, and their confusion and disinterest in the subject matter manifested in several behavioral issues. In fact, some of the students seemed to make comments with the sole purpose of frustrating Mrs. Chandler. Her irritation with the class's behavior was evident; she threatened detentions on the whole class twice and on an individual male student once within the first two minutes of giving

instruction. Although the students did not behave appropriately and deserved consequences for their rude, disruptive behavior, Mrs. Chandler did not carry out her threats, and the class period began with a hostile environment, created by both students and Mrs. Chandler.

An interaction between Mrs. Chandler and a male student, David, illustrates the bitter environment in the class. After Mrs. Chandler had instructed the class and began helping students, David asked, "Can I spit out my gum?" She told him, "No. Swallow it." "But it stays for seven years…" he said. Then, she ended the conversation by stating, "You're not leaving the room." David continued to challenge Mrs. Chandler's strict expectations by asking her two additional times to spit out his gum; she ignored his requests and him for an extended period of time.

David is an interesting case. He is a sixteen-year-old boy who wants to succeed but disrupts class and irritates his teacher. Interestingly, on his phase one questionnaire, he stated that "[Mrs. Chandler] doesn't affect [how he feels about writing in the class] at all." However, he expressed that he would enjoy class more if "[Mrs. Chandler] would stop being mean." Additionally, he wrote that he does what the teacher asks him to do because he does not want to fail. He expressed that he believed the lessons he learns in English class are "very important, [because] practice makes perfect," but he believes "[he is] not making much progress, [he is] not doing anything well, [but he wants] to improve on doing the assignments more in depth." David is obviously a student who wants to succeed; however, his behavior conflicts with his attitude and outlook. He believes his teacher is mean and "[does not] teach." His negative exchanges with Mrs. Chandler illustrate the toxic relationship between the two. He appears discouraged and does not

feel supported by her. However, his desire to do well and succeed drives him once he receives even the littlest guidance, support, and positive interaction with her. After Mrs. Chandler ended the conversation about spitting out his gum, David stared at his computer screen and pestered other students; he did not progress on his assignment, but Mrs. Chandler passed by his computer twice and mistakenly commented on his being "on track." It was not until much later in the class when Mrs. Chandler spent several minutes with David and walked him through a citation for a source on his annotated bibliography that David showed interest in completing the assignment. After that one positive interaction, David worked diligently on his assignment; he did not stop or become distracted for the rest of the period. In fact, he was the last student to log off of his computer at the end of the class period.

David's relationship with Mrs. Chandler emphasizes the importance of a healthy, supportive, and positive teacher-student relationship. Whitmire and Kathleen Cleveland both stress the importance of teachers showing that they care about students (Whitmire130–31; Cleveland 69). Cleveland believes the caring teacher-student relationship that emphasizes accountability and high expectations is the most effective way to engage underachieving boys: "[The classroom learning environment] needs to be an affirming space in which a boy belongs and feels both respected and valued as a member of that environment" (75).

As mentioned before, although Mrs. Chandler introduced interventions in the first hour-class, the seventh-hour control improved their grades more than the first-hour class improved. Therefore, the interventions alone do not appear to have influenced the students' writing performance. However, the interventions did seem to affect the

students' perception of their teacher. In the phase two survey, 40% of first hour's comments about Mrs. Chandler were positive, while seventh hour's comments were entirely negative. Some of the positive comments stated that Mrs. Chandler was "more helpful" and "nicer," and "she explained a little more clearly." Overall, the students' perception of Mrs. Chandler improved drastically between the first and second units. Not only did students write fewer negative comments, but they also wrote more positive comments on the phase two questionnaire.

Two of the interventions may have improved students' perception of Mrs. Chandler. When students worked in small groups and shared their writing in author's chair, Mrs. Chandler floated among the groups and listened in. Her task was to participate and respond to student writing; however, I asked her to voice only positive comments, and I encouraged her to ensure the male students heard positive feedback. She explained in her interview with me that some of her students were confused by her responses to their work. She said that it could have been that the students were expecting criticism, but she gave them praise. Another activity that may have improved the students' view of Mrs. Chandler was student-teacher conferencing. Mrs. Chandler met with each of the students during class to discuss their writing. Although some students commented on their surveys that her advice was difficult to follow, this personal attention to each student demonstrates that the teacher cares about how each student progresses. Because students did not recognize any one lesson or activity that helped them through the unit or grew them as writers, their comments suggest that the teacher's approach to the unit, perhaps through author's chair and student-teacher conferencing, is what made them enjoy the writing more.

Whitmire claims that, "Boys learn the teacher, and then they learn the subject" (157-58). First, students must learn that their teacher cares about them. Once teachers have cultivated a trusting relationship with their students, the students will perform (Whitmire 130-31). In order to establish that rapport, Whitmire suggests using the teacher-as-coach model (158). Cleveland agrees with Whitmire's suggestion, and she builds upon the idea to create a list of qualities and behaviors teachers should encourage in their students to build a positive relationship: responsibility, leadership, self-direction, collaboration, and organization (72). Mrs. Chandler's students voiced opinions that resounded with many of Whitmire's and Cleveland's claims. Students did not feel as though Mrs. Chandler cares about them or their learning. Instead, they see her overly critical comments. They believe that she enjoys punishing students and threatening consequences. In the first questionnaire, the students criticized her poor classroom management, and she demonstrated an unbending, strict demeanor with students that most likely depleted any rapport she had built with them. The students and Mrs. Chandler both acknowledge that she has high expectations, but the students feel as though she does not support them to reach those expectations. Therefore, they do not believe she cares about their success. The attitudes of the students in the first-hour class improved during the second writing unit after she employed interventions. Several factors may have led to the students' improved perception of their teacher. First, the writing genre the students were practicing was review. Students may have felt more comfortable with the content and, therefore, did not need as much support as they needed on the narrative writing assignment. Second, the teaching methods utilized in the interventions may have helped the students feel more comfortable with the sequence and pace of the assignment. Third,

and most significant, the teacher's increased positive interactions may have helped her establish a healthier relationship with the students, one where the students felt cared for and supported.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The intention of this study was to identify methods teachers could employ to increase male students' enjoyment of writing in the classroom. Although considerable research suggests that boys and girls feel differently about writing and boys will respond positively to certain interventions aimed at improving their engagement, the results in this study regarding male students' enjoyment were inconclusive. One major finding which included a gender aspect manifested: the teacher-student relationship is integral to students' enjoyment of writing, and it influences male students' behavior. Specifically, male and female students in both classes that participated in the study described a negative opinion of and relationship with their English teacher, Mrs. Chandler. Although the students shared this perspective, the way they reacted to it was different. While female students tended to set aside their disagreements and antipathy in order to focus on mastering the content and skills of the class, the male students usually acted out, requiring a great deal of attention from Mrs. Chandler and voicing their dismay. I cannot comment on how their behavior affected their grades, their learning, or their performance in the class as this study did not involve the collection and analysis of writing samples.

Considering the results of this study, we must ask two questions: What accounts for the unexpected findings? Where do we go from here? I will address three answers to these questions in this chapter:

- The design of the study may have not elicited the information I needed to replicate the research that already exists, which supported the interventions Mrs. Chandler employed in this study.

- The interpersonal relationship between the teacher and students, particularly between the teacher and boys, may have been more significant than previous research had accounted for.
- Gender differences may be more complicated than what the current research suggests, and differences between boys and girls may not exist across all contexts.

Assessment of the Study

The study did not provide me with the depth of information I needed from students. My understanding of the students' preferences and opinions were limited by their interpretations of and responses to the questions on the two questionnaires and my observations of their behaviors during two class periods. The instruments I used to measure the students' engagement and enjoyment of writing did not explicitly reference the interventions I was evaluating; therefore, the data about students' responses to questions about the lessons, activities, and interventions were dependent on the chance of students mentioning them. The study took place over the course of two-and-a-half months. Given the information the students offered on the questionnaires and the brief timeline, I had only a glimpse of these students and their opinions of writing.

In order to rectify the flaws in the study design, I would expand the student sample, the timeline, the interventions, and the methods. I would increase the student sample to three classes instead of two. The first two classes would function as controls. One class would receive no interventions; the teacher would approach this class as she normally would, without any interventions. The second class would receive interventions from the start of the study. Because we cannot account for differences in students' preferences if we do not understand how they feel at the beginning of the class, a third

class is necessary. The third class would work as the study group. This group would gradually receive interventions intended to improve male students' enjoyment of writing and build positive relationships with the teacher. Implementing methods from the beginning of the school year may help the teacher establish caring relationships with her students from the beginning. Therefore, I would expect the second class, which would receive interventions from the start, to have a better relationship with the teacher and enjoy writing and the class more than the other classes would. Also, the third class, which would gradually receive interventions, would see an improvement for the same reasons. In order to collect enough accurate information about how the interventions affect students' opinions of writing and determine the effectiveness of the interventions, the study would need to be extended. A full year course with the same cooperating teacher would be ideal.

In order to acquire more information about the students' preferences, particularly male students' opinions about writing, the class, their teacher, and the interventions, I would replace the questionnaires with interviews to ask students about specific interventions, including methods the teacher uses to develop healthy and caring relationships with her students. Interviewing students would provide me with a more detailed picture of how they view their environment, and it would allow me the freedom to ask follow-up questions to students based on their responses or my observations of the classes.

The Teacher-Student Relationship

Although the instruments I used to assess the study did not extract the depth of information I needed from students, some of the interventions seemed promising for fostering positive relationships between teachers and students and increasing male students' enjoyment of writing. The interventions that appeared to have the greatest effect on students were author's chair and conferencing, scaffolding, and group work. Author's chair, conferencing, and scaffolding encourage behaviors that male students desire in caring teachers because they provide an avenue for teachers to demonstrate interest in student learning, to work closely with students to address individual needs, and to support students to meet high expectations.

According to *Boys: Getting It Right*, a report of Australian schools by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, "The quality of the relationships between students, teachers and parents is crucial to achieving optimal educational outcomes for all students, and this is particularly true for boys" (xx). Brandelyn Tosolt's study of gender and race in the teacher-student relationship in a diverse eighth-grade class of fifty American students, specifies that boys usually desire "warm" interactions with their teachers, such as "hugging, complimenting appearance, and offering protection," but girls tend to view "academic behaviors" as caring (149). Additionally, Tosolt found that Caucasian students "were more likely to respond to calls for academic excellence if they [were] wrapped in interpersonal caring behaviors" (149). Therefore, White male students in particular, like most of the male students at Stratton School, crave a positive relationship with their teachers that is founded on personal understanding and caring. Kristy S. Cooper and Andrew Miness reinforce the Australian report in their study of

thirty-three American high school students, claiming that students who develop strong and positive relationships with teachers have a greater sense of belonging in the classroom, which results in higher levels of engagement and achievement. Cooper and Miness explain that teachers should learn about students' lives outside of school, including family dynamics, extracurricular activities, and student interests; the authors contend that these types of interactions are most effective with boys, who desire personal relationships with teachers (285). Sarah M. Kiefer, Cheryl Ellerbrock, and Kathleen Alley reiterate the aforementioned claim that teachers "must know, care for, and connect with students...to foster high-quality relationships that promote academic motivation" (6). In addition to advising teachers to listen to students and learn about their families and their activities, the authors emphasize the importance of helping students through difficult situations, maintaining high expectations, supporting students to meet those expectations, and celebrating students' successes (Kiefer, Ellerbrock, and Alley 7–8). These relationships may be the key to understanding male students' success, motivation, and enjoyment in the writing classroom. The lack of respect, warmth, and support students perceived in Mrs. Chandler's classroom may have driven her male students to seek those qualities in their relationship with their teacher; therefore, they frequently requested her attention and assistance and some students even acted out in class to earn it. Thus, interventions in a revised version of this study would encourage the teacher to build positive relationships with her students. Further inquiry into the topic of the teacher-student relationship in the writing classroom may show that the interventions like those in this study are effective methods for teaching English and improving male students' opinion of writing when the caring teacher-student relationship already exists.

The fourth intervention that promised positive results for increasing male students' enjoyment of writing was group work. The students' questionnaires did reveal that the students value choice in the classroom. This was true with boys and girls. Providing students with the opportunity to collaborate and establishing parameters and expectations for effective group work helps teachers create healthy, positive, and productive classroom environments. Students should learn to rely on each other and value each other's opinions if the teacher helps them cultivate that mentality. In turn, students, particularly males, may enjoy the writing class more. Establishing an environment for students to learn from each other, take risks, and celebrate successes could provide the supportive, respectful, "warm" environment male students seek.

Gender Differences

As mentioned in the first chapter, much of the research about boys and girls suggests that boys feel more negatively about writing than girls do, and boys' writing performance is worse than girls' (Meece, Glienke, and Burg; Fones; Garlid; Andrade, et al.; Gyagenda and Engelhard; Pirie). Despite these trends, not all of the research is consistent. Some small-scale studies claim that boys actually perform better than girls on certain writing skills and with some genres and that they enjoy different types of writing than girls do (Beard and Burrell; Jones; Jones and Myhill). My study illuminates this complex relationship between gender and writing.

Many factors affect how students feel about writing. Although some trends faintly appear along gender lines, to definitively state that boys feel one way while girls feel another way is to ignore the complexity of their opinions. Context reigned in this study. The students' perception of their teacher and their relationship with her influenced their

opinion of the class much more than the teaching methods did. Therefore, to claim that the interventions, which were teaching methods, positively or negatively affected boys' feelings about writing was impossible. We cannot discuss the students' feelings about writing and the effectiveness of the interventions without considering the other influential factors, in this case, the teacher-student relationship.

Even though this study did not reveal the results I anticipated (clear findings about boys' preferences in the writing classroom), what it did reveal is what works for boys in this class tends to work for girls, too. Some strategies appeared to affect boys more than they affected girls, but they did not affect the genders oppositely. Therefore, because the research tends to support learning for boys and girls, the study interventions can be considered best practice. In addition, the finding about the importance of the teacher-student relationship creates another facet of what is best practice. Although it is not a teaching method, striving to develop healthy, supportive, sympathetic, respectful relationships with students is best practice. The teacher-student relationship should never be an obstacle to learning; it should be the tool to unlocking learning and a passion for learning.

Conclusion

The most notable lesson teachers can take from this study is the value of their relationships with their students. Because male students value personal care from their teachers, educators should be intentional. To form a relationship with male students in the classroom, teachers should respect and encourage students, manage the classroom fairly and consistently, support students to reach learning goals, and model appropriate behavior. In addition, teachers should also demonstrate interest in boys' lives outside of

the classroom. Asking after family members, checking in on personal stories, and attending sporting events and extracurricular activities show students that the teacher cares about the student as a whole, not only about the academic side of the student. As the aforementioned research suggests, these strategies are particularly effective in forming positive relationships with male students because they encourage the teacher to understand the student as a person, not only a learner.

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Appendix A: Assignment Sheet for *The Things They Carried*

Assignment
Tim O'Brien writes his novel, *The Things They Carried*, through the use of nonlinear narrative. By not telling his story with a chronological plot structure, readers are able to understand *The Things They Carried* in new ways.

For this assignment, write a fractured fairy tale changing the traditional plot structure to a nonlinear structure (as we practiced in class) in order for your readers to understand the traditional fairy tale in a new way.

Reminder: A fractured fairy tale is a story that uses fairy tales you know and then changes the characters, the setting, points of view, or plots.

Requirements

- Must show a clear use of nonlinear plot structure as the main fractured element
    - Establish a minimum of two plot lines
    - Flashback (more than three)
    - Use minimum of TWO characteristics of nonlinear narrative (narrator, time manipulation, theme, characters, action to frame plot)
- Must change on other element other than the plot structure. This can be a character, the setting, or the point of view (can overlap with the nonlinear changes).
- Minimum of 2 pages. Times New Roman, Double Spaced, 12pt Font
- Creative title unique to your facture
- Use engaging dialogue
- Use showing details
- Establish interesting characters
    - What do your characters look like?
    - What is their attitude/personality like?
- Submit a ½-1 page reflection (double spaced) explaining how you fractured your fairy tale to make it fit a nonlinear plot structure. What was your process? What did you have to add or take away?

Fairy Tale Options
Choose a fairy tale on the list below to fracture. Once you have chosen your fairy tale (based on your own prior knowledge) be sure to re-read/look over your fairy tale.

<u>Story Choices</u>
Rapunzel, Show White, Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard, Cinderella, The Three Little Pigs, The Frog Prince, The Gingerbread Man, Hansel and Gretel, Puss in Boots, The Hare and the Tortoise, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. *You can choose your own fairy tale to fracture, but you must get approval.

Due Dates
Story Chosen and Re Read:
Getting Started:
Rough Draft:
Final Draft:

Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography Packet for *Night* Expository Essay

Part 1: What is an Annotated Bibliography?
This can also be called an annotated works cited. This is a list of your sources in correct MLA format, along with a brief description. For this essay your descriptions will be the three direct quotes you will be using, along with a description of how they will fit within your essay.

Requirements:

- Have both of your outside sources in correct MLA format (for a works cited entry)
- Three quotes from your outside sources that you plan on using.
- After each quote, include a small (1-2 sentence) description of how you will use that quote.

Example Set Up:
Source #1:
"Resources." *Home*. Stopbullying.gov, n.d. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/index.html/>.

Quote #1: "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology" ("Resources").

I will use this source to clearly define what cyberbullying is in order to expand on how people do not realize that bullying also takes place online.

Source #2:

Part 2: Thesis Statement
This can be a working thesis statement. This means that as you write, you may change the direction you want to do with your essay. If this happens, be sure to go back to your thesis and revise.

Remember, your essay is not persuading or arguing, but informing and explaining how the issue you chose is getting worse or continuing because people do not say anything or enough about it.

Thesis Breakdown
Specific Topic (silence)
+
Particular stand or feature (your topic)
+
Main Points (min. two body paragraphs)
=
Effective thesis statement

Example: Silence only making violence worse can be clearly seen in the world today through an understanding of three types of bullying: verbal, social, physical.

Due:

Appendix C: Outline Packet for *Night* Expository Essay

1. **Catchy Title (You can come back to this at the end.)**

2. **Introduction**
   a. **HOOK**
   ***Examples of Possible Hook Types:**
   - ◊ Startling Statement: All human beings are capable of the most gruesome crimes imaginable. It is only because of the customs and controls of civilization that we do not become brute savages.
   - ◊ Rhetorical Question Worth Asking: How would you feel if you found out that the murderer of the person you loved most in the world was about to be set free after only two years in prison.
   - ◊ Shocking Statistic: On a recent anonymous survey, over ninety percent of high school males admitted to secretly enjoying the music of One Direction and to practicing their "hot dance moves."
   - ◊ Thought-Provoking Quote: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, which most frightens us." –Nelson Mandela

➡ Write your own hook:

   a. **THESIS**

Paper topic (silence)

Example: Silence only making violence worse can be clearly seen in the world today through an understanding of three types of bullying: verbal, social, and physical.

Your topic/stand

Main Points (2 minimum)

➡ Write your own thesis:

TRANSITION (Choose an appropriate word or phrase from the box below, or write one of your own. Follow the word or phrase with a brief explanation of what comes in the next paragraph and how it relates to this paragraph.)

Comparison: Likewise, Similarly, In the same way, In comparison **Contrast**: Although, Instead of, Despite, On the other hand, Nevertheless **Addition/Elaboration**: Furthermore, Moreover, In addition, Also **Example**: For example, For instance, Specifically **Supporting Statements**: Thus, Because, As a result, Consequently

 Write your transition:

3. **Body Paragraph 1: First Sub-Topic/Main Point**
    a. **TOPIC SENTENCE:** What will this paragraph discuss or argue? (Remember to mention your first sub-topic/main point.)

    b. **EVIDENCE** (Cited correctly): Lead in, state your evidence, and then cite it (Author's last name page).

    c. **EVIDENCE** (Cited correctly): Lead in, state your evidence, and then cite it (Author's last name page).

    d. **CONNECTION**: Explain how your evidence proves your topic sentence and thus your thesis. (You might try explaining by using key words from your thesis, in this case "silence" and "violence".)

TRANSITION (Choose an appropriate word or phrase from the box on page one, or write one of your own. Follow the word or phrase with a brief explanation of what comes in the next paragraph and how it relates to this paragraph.)

4. **Body Paragraph 2: Second Sub-Topic/Main Point**
    a. **TOPIC SENTENCE:** What will this paragraph discuss or argue? (Remember to mention your first sub-topic/main point.)

    b. **EVIDENCE** (Cited correctly): Lead in, state your evidence, and then cite it (Author's last name page).

    c. **EVIDENCE** (Cited correctly): Lead in, state your evidence, and then cite it (Author's last name page).

    d. **CONNECTION**: Explain how your evidence proves your topic sentence and thus your thesis. (You might try explaining by using key words from your thesis, in this case "silence" and "violence".)

TRANSITION (Choose an appropriate word or phrase from the box on page one, or write one of your own. Follow the word or phrase with a brief explanation of what comes in the next paragraph and how it relates to this paragraph.)

5. **Conclusion**
    a. **SUMMARIZE your essay**: Review your sub-topics and main ideas. Briefly summarize how they relate to the overarching theme or thesis.

    b. **RESTATE your thesis**: Remind your reader what your thesis is. Reword it; do not copy and paste it from the introduction.

    c. **EXTEND the argument**: Why should your audience care about your topic? What does this mean for your audience, for your community, for the world? Should we take action? If so, how?

Appendix D: *Night* Unit Calendar

Night Unit Calendar

Nov 23 Watch Elie and Oprah Winfrey	**24** Finish watching video	**25** No School	**26** No School	**27** No School
30 Discussion parts 1 & 2 (pgs. 3-46)	**Dec 1** Phase 1 questionnaire Expository essay assignment Topic research time in lab	**2** Instructions on annotated bibliography and thesis Choose groups and complete reflection #2 & discussion #1 worksheet Work time	**3** Discuss part 3 (pgs. 47-66) Reading time: part 4 (pgs. 66-98)	**4** ***Annotated bibliography due at the end of the hour*** Outline work time
7 Work time for outlining or drafting	**8** Discuss part 4 (pgs. 66-98)	**9** ***½ of draft due*** Work time in lab	**10** ***Complete draft due*** Conferences and revisions	**11** Discuss end (pgs. 98-112)
14 Work day for essay and final exam study guide	**15** Phase 2 questionnaire	**16** Review for final exam	**17** Final exam ***Essay due***	**18** No Class: Final Exams 4-6