

## ABSTRACT

### Understanding High School Freshman Students' Attitudes Towards Reading: A Case Study of an Oilfield High School in West Texas

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In a West Texas oilfield school district of 33,000 students, many freshmen high school students continue to fail their English standardized test, the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness English I End of Course exam (STAAR EOC), at astounding rates. One cause of this unfortunate trend is that students choose not to bolster their reading skills through the act of practice. Students' failure to read is problematic in many ways. It inhibits students' achievement on standardized tests, reduces the chance of students developing a voice and personal advocacy skills (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016), and makes it difficult for students to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace and society (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). Each problem raises concerns for the future of the oilfield students, of the school district, and of the community of West Texas. Students' attitudes towards reading may be related to their reading skills (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007), impacting their self-esteem, academic development, and values (Kaniuka, 2010). To address these concerns, teachers must understand students' attitudes toward reading and be responsive to them. This

responsiveness means that teachers should consider students' attitudes as they plan to engage their students meaningfully in the practice of reading (Afflerbach & Cho, 2011).

This study investigates the effects of oilfield culture on education, specifically on students' attitudes toward reading. This study reveals a correlation between oilfield culture and students' attitudes towards reading through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant-created journals, and open-ended questionnaires with four freshmen students.

This study is significant because there is little research exploring the effect of oilfield culture on education. Culture is one of the defining factors in students' identity (Gee, 2015) and informs their self-concept as a reader (McKool, 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to determine if students in oilfield communities exhibit different attitudes toward reading than students from other, similar areas of the state. With the determination of a difference, the state, the community, the school district, and the teachers will be empowered to address the specific cultural issues these students face and restructure their efforts to provide the students with the educational opportunities they deserve.

Understanding High School Freshman Students' Attitudes Towards Reading:  
A Case Study of an Oilfield High School in West Texas

by

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A Dissertation

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP: Advanced Placement courses

CCMR: College, Career, and Military Readiness

CTE: Career and Technical Education

ELAR: English Language Arts and Reading

EOC: End of Course

ESL: English as a Second Language

IB: International Baccalaureate

IRB: Institutional Review Board

NLS: New Literacy Studies

RAT: Reading Attitude Theory

SES: Socioeconomic Status

SSR: Silent Sustained Reading

STAAR: State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness

TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

TEA: Texas Education Agency

TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

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## DEDICATION

To the freshmen students of Kirby High School and all of the current and future students of Tenby's school district. You deserve the best education, access, and opportunities.  
This study is dedicated to you and your future.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction to the Problem of Practice

#### *Introduction*

The choices, abilities, destinies, and lives of this nation's current youth will determine this country's future; therefore, educators in the West Texas town of Tenby (pseudonym), with 33,000 students, have shifted their focus to enrich students' experiences in education. With the improvement of quality instruction, educators aim to raise students' performances on the English I STAAR End of Course Exam (EOC). District officials of the Tenby school district posit that one of the leading causes of the high rate of students' unsuccessful attempts on the English I STAAR EOC is that students choose not to read (S. Chambers (pseudonym), personal notes, March 14, 2017).

Research reveals that parents who make more money tend to have children who read more (Mansor et al., 2013). Baş (2012), for example, confirms that students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds often have negative attitudes towards reading. According to the United States Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics 2012, a negative attitude towards reading leads to lower academic achievement (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). One might assume that many of the students in the Tenby school district come from a low SES background since their standardized test scores are so low. However, with the oilfield booming over the last ten years, the annual median family income is approximately \$63,145. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (2021) United States Department of Health and Human Services, the threshold for poverty—which usually serves as the income-based marker for low

SES—for a family of four is \$26,500. As a result, assuming the correlation holds, one could expect a higher level of motivation for these West Texas students to read independently and score better on the English I STAAR EOC since the annual median income of families within the district does not indicate the majority of students are from low SES backgrounds.

This study addresses the aforementioned problem by exploring the effect of the oilfield on students' attitudes toward reading. This exploration enables the school district to make decisions and implement strategies in their quest to improve students' attitudes toward reading. With an improvement in attitude, students' motivation and likelihood to read should increase and generate higher student achievement and performance on the English I STAAR EOC.

### *Statement of the Problem*

According to Cunningham and Stanovich (1998), there is a correlation between students' performance on standardized tests and their active reading habits. They posit that reading has “cognitive consequences that extend beyond its immediate task of lifting meaning from a particular passage” (p. 5). If students read, their academic performance will improve. Furthermore, students who do not read for pleasure often do not perform well in school or on standardized tests. They have fewer chances of becoming a contributing member of society (Snyder & Dillow, 2013).

Research reveals that many adolescents do not read for pleasure or for in-depth academic purposes in the classroom. In 2007, less than 33% of all 13-year-olds engaged in self-directed reading for pleasure or academic purposes. Further, the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing for pleasure has doubled (from 9% to 19%) over the last 20

years (Musu-Gillette, 2015). The *American Time Use Survey 2017* reports that 15–24-year-olds only spend 7.2 minutes per day reading for personal interest (Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, 2018).

This research supports what is occurring in the West Texas oilfield town of Tenby. According to the state's accountability reports, less than 50% of students in this school district who have taken the English I STAAR EOC within the last five years have earned passing scores (Cadena, 2018). Using other school districts with similar demographics and no dependency on the oilfield as models, Tenby's school district has implemented several initiatives and programs. However, teachers still report that students who know how to read are choosing not to engage in classroom reading or self-directed reading outside of school. According to Ms. Chambers (pseudonym), Tenby's literacy director, the number of students who actively read in class has declined despite the programs and interventions embraced by the school district (S. Chambers Focus Group, personal notes, March 14, 2017). To date, the students in the school district have experienced no significant changes in their reading scores at the freshmen level, despite the aforementioned median increase in family income; however, the state average score on the English I STAAR EOC has continued to increase (Cadena, 2018).

Mansor et al. (2013) asserts that two significant factors often determine the development of students' reading habits: parents and resources. Parents have opportunities to model good reading habits, set expectations, and provide reading and discourse opportunities for their children. All of these contribute to children developing strong reading habits. Reading is a habit that students must nurture and sustain (Mansor et al., 2013). If it is not, more students fall into the world of the not-reader, the aliterate,



or the reluctant reader: those who can read but choose not to read also known as not-readers (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015). Initial support and nurturing must begin with parents. Unfortunately, even if parents aim to nurture and encourage their children to read their children's chances of becoming an avid reader may diminish if resources are not available to them because of financial stress or lack of resources in a community.

As a population increases, it influences the family and the availability of resources. In 2019, the Permian Basin became the number one oil supplier globally (Worland, 2019). The Permian Basin includes a West Texas community where freshman students consistently perform poorly on the English I STAAR EOC tests. In this West Texas school district, when oil production began to boom again in 2013, the number of students who attended school in this district increased from 30,796 to 33,159 in 2019 (Texas Education Agency, 2018). As oil production increased, the number of high-paying jobs also increased (Worland, 2019). Surprisingly, with the rise in income, the percentage of low SES students enrolled also increased from 50.8% to 56.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2018). These high-paying jobs also come at the cost of employees working 80 or more hours a week or working on a rig for fourteen days straight with a five-day break before repeating the cycle. Unfortunately, many of these jobs remove workers from their families at home. As parents, these workers cannot provide the foundation of modeling good reading and discourse that Mansor et al. (2012) posit as essential for promoting healthy reading habits. With the economic increase, one could expect reading resources, such as books, to be more readily available in the community. However, there is currently not one bookstore in town, and, according to the most recent renovation plaque that hangs

outside its walls, the county library was last updated in the early 1990s. This booming oilfield town has few resources to offer hungry readers.

The West Texas oilfield affects the culture of a town, which also has implications for education. As oil production increases, the number of migrant oilfield workers with children who become students in Tenby also increases. Not only does the population increase, but the amount of money that floods into Tenby also increases (LeCompte & Nicol, 2005; Worland, 2019). With the rise in oil money, the number of high-paying jobs requiring a low education level rises. Only by exploring the effects of the oilfield industrial atmosphere on students, their families, and the education system, can a school district construct and implement curricular and educational plans to improve students' academic achievement. This academic achievement, or lack thereof, begins with the skill of reading.

In conclusion, the students' scores on the English I STAAR EOC test reveal a trend indicating that ninth-grade students in this West Texas school district are not as academically successful as others across the state of Texas. The culture of the oilfield may be the culprit of this outcome. Before the release of the English I STAAR EOC test as the state's standardized test, this district scored within five percent of the state's average score on the previous test. Once Texas implemented the English I STAAR EOC test and the oilfield boom began, the distance between the average state performance and the district performance continued to increase (Cadena, 2018). While multiple factors contributed to this drop in achievement scores, such as the level of rigor of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test to the English I STAAR EOC or the fact that the oilfield was not booming at the time, studies have yet to identify which

factors had the most significant impact on scores. The money the oilfield brings to the area should make resources more readily available to its students in their quest to be academically successful. However, the opposite is occurring in the West Texas town of Tenby. Parents have less time to spend at home, students see models of workers in the oilfield who spend many hours each week away from their families rather than models of readers. As a result, education appears to be less of a priority in the community. Further research is necessary to explore this correlation to determine the impact of the oilfield on student achievement and the reading habits among ninth-grade students who attend the Tenby public school district.

### *Purpose of the Study*

There are two purposes for this study. First, this study explored the attitude of freshmen students who live in and have been influenced by this oilfield industry towards reading to find the impact of oilfield culture on their motivation to read. Secondly, informed by the research that supports how culture influences students' attitude towards reading (Gee, 2015), this study explored the correlation between oilfield and education. Since no research currently explores oilfield culture and its relation to families and education, this study fills the gap by linking how oilfield culture affects students' attitudes towards reading.

This study's primary research question is: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude toward reading? Three research sub-questions help nuance this research and direct its focus. First, how important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading? Second, what social and familial factors are

most influential in the students' attitude toward reading? Finally, how do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?

This study explored the influences on students' attitudes and habits toward reading to enlighten and challenge three specific groups. First, this study provides insight into students' current attitudes toward reading to administrators and teachers within the school district. Teachers must know their students' attitudes towards reading so they can customize instructional experiences that allow students to embrace the practice of reading in a more favorable manner. Administrators must also be cognizant in order to implement programs, allocate resources to benefit students, and address the issues uncovered in this study. Second, this study sheds more light on this dilemma for Tenby's parents and community members. This study benefits the community because it provides vital and culturally relevant insights into students who live there. It reveals students' perceptions of their community and how those perceptions impact their motivation to read. This study also challenges community members to evaluate the reading resources available to students within the community. Finally, this study also provides pertinent information for other educational researchers. The oilfield influences culture, society, and education in rich and unique ways. Unfortunately, this culture remains ignored, as do many other under-investigated industrial areas. This study brings attention to these issues so that communities can ensure no child is left behind in the educational journey. Ultimately, this study provides insight into the oilfields' impact on education to improve instruction for the students in the oilfield high school in this West Texas community.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The blended frameworks from two theories, Reading Attitude Theory (RAT; Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016) and New Literacy Studies (NLS; Gee, 2015), form the theoretical foundations for the study. These two theories serve as the lenses that inform every aspect of this research. Each pushes this area of study forward to investigate reading education as a whole, and reading instruction in a specific locale, the West Texas oilfield community of Tenby.

The framework of NLS (Gee, 2015) advocates that one must study literacy in an integrated way, incorporating its full range of contexts and practices to understand how readers engage in social and cultural practices. Culture affects students' reading and students' identity (Gee, 2015). Discourse in homes and classrooms of the oilfield and social interactions contribute to the students' self-conception as readers or non-readers (McKool, 2007). Ivanic (1998) views literacy as the actions around events and not just the event itself. Literacy is more than just the ability to read, but the application of that ability. Reading is not a neutral set of skills but is a social act of making meaning and links back to students' identities.

Within NLS, readers ingest the information they read and hold it up to their known social and cultural norms to decide how to apply what they have ingested. Readers decide whether to apply the information to their understanding of the world or reject the information. Further, students then inject these ideas into their culture and either affirm or challenge that culture.

In RAT, Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) posits that attitude is an essential ingredient for students to maintain good reading habits and become lifelong readers. This

theory asserts that reading attitudes affect a students' achievement, practice, and skill in reading by synthesizing multiple studies. Further, Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) advocate for the study of the relationships or possible relationships between "reading attitude, individual background variables, and school variables" (p. 428). One can identify these variables by studying the culture and climate of the students' contexts. Like NLS, RAT illustrates that one cannot consider attitudes in isolation; one must look at relationships between background, school, and culture because they all inform students' attitudes.

This study explored students' attitudes toward reading while also attempting to understand their self-concept as readers and the culture around them that shapes these attitudes. These insights offer hope for teachers and administrators in making decisions that positively impact student achievement and ultimately impact their attitudes towards reading.

### *Research Design*

This qualitative study was designed as an embedded, single case study that examines four participants' perspectives, all of whom live in a shared cultural context, an oilfield community (Yin, 2014). The study was bound by a single high school location, Kirby High School (pseudonym), in a single city, Tenby, in the West Texas oilfield. This study also was bound by time. The data spoke to freshmen students' attitudes in the fall semester of their first year of high school. Four freshmen students who have lived longer than five years in the West Texas oilfield and who attended school in Tenby's school district served as participants, or embedded units, for the study.

According to Yin (2014) and Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative case study was the best design for this study. Yin (2014) posited that case study design is an appropriate design to use when researchers seek participants' perspectives. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that case studies explore an "issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration" (p. 96). This study sought to develop an in-depth understanding of freshmen students' attitudes about reading in a real-life contemporary setting (Yin, 2014).

This study contained the case-study features explained by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2014). Case studies are bounded and defined within a select set of parameters. This study was bound by the location, Kirby High School, in the community of Tenby, and the time frame, September 2020 to December 2020. Further, case studies seek to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study sought to understand students' attitudes toward reading. This study explored this concern by examining many forms of data to identify patterns (Yin, 2009) to build an in-depth understanding of the case. Finally, the study discussed the themes and assertions as Creswell and Poth (2018) describe.

Because of the time constraints on this study, the most effective investigation focused on a single case study conducted in one high school in one oilfield community. This narrow focus enabled the study to delve deeper into the participants' perspectives to truly understand the students' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design helped to shed light on the perspectives of four freshmen students who attend Kirby High School in the oilfield community of Tenby. Their perspectives and insights provided an opportunity for analysis across the four participants

(Yin, 2014) and provided a more robust understanding of the attitudes of the four participants as embedded units of analysis.

Although there were several possible qualitative approaches to this research, a single case study was the best approach to explore and understand the attitudes of the participants from Kirby High School in an oilfield community. Further, this single case study attempted to draw conclusions and consider multiple perspectives, so this study looked at multiple participants as embedded units rather than a single narrative story. Finally, this study sought to draw “naturalistic generalizations” or generalizations that people can learn from and apply to other situations, or cases, in similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 206).

### *Definition of Key Terms*

*Aesthetic Reading:* An established purpose for reading where the reader allows the text to engage with “the sensuous, the affective, the emotive, [and] the qualitative” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1068).

*Attitude:* “Attitude is a set of acquired feelings about reading that consistently predisposes an individual to engage in or avoid reading” (Jang et al., 2015, p. 240).

*Efferent Reading:* An established purpose for reading that involves reading a text to extract information and causes unintended blindness to the intricacies and nuances of a text (Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012).

*Literacy:* to achieve literacy is to “master discipline-specific norms, values, and conventions for reading and writing” (O’Shea et al., 2019, p. 2). It is a “complex and contested set of social practices” (O’Shea et al., 2019, p. 2).



*Migrant Oilfield Worker:* A migrant oilfield worker is any person who is employed in the oilfield industry who moves to follow the wells that are operational at any given time. Following the wells means that the worker lives in one town, location, or lease for six weeks up to a year or more, depending on the oil prices and the volume of oil at any given oil derrick. Like any migrant worker, they move to follow the jobs (LeCompte & Nicol, 2005).

*Nonreader:* A person who does not have or has not gained the skills necessary to read (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015).

*Not-Reader:* A not-reader (not to be confused with a nonreader) is a person who seldom or never chooses to read for pleasure (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015).

*Reader:* A reader is a person who identifies themselves as a reader. They engage in extended reading, find reading to be a pleasurable recreational activity, and consider reading to a part of their daily life (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015).

*Reading Reluctant:* A reluctant reader is a student who can read but chooses not to read (Pandian, 2000). To be reading reluctant means a person often decides to do something besides reading.

*State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR):* STAAR is the fifth variation of a standardized state assessment for Texas. The state set the phase-in process to begin in 2012 and to be fully implemented by 2014. It is the current state assessment for Texas for all third - eighth graders (Texas Education Agency, 2019b).

*STAAR End of Course (EOC):* Texas Education Agency (TEA) requires high school students to take the STAAR EOC exams at the end of English 1, English 2, Algebra

1, Biology, and U.S. History. The students must pass at least three of these five tests to graduate (Texas Education Agency, 2019b).

*Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)*: TAKS is the fourth variation of a standardized state assessment for Texas, launched in 2002 and phased out by STAAR in 2012. It met and exceeded standards later put in place by the No Child Left Behind Act (Texas Education Agency, 2007).

*Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)*: The legal and detailed explication of skills and knowledge required to be taught at each grade level and in every subject taught in Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

### *Conclusion*

In Tenby, an oilfield town in West Texas, freshmen students do not exhibit the same academic achievement on the English 1 STAAR EOC tests as other school districts that are unaffiliated with oilfield culture. Research demonstrates that students' willingness to read is the most significant predictor of success, not just on standardized tests but also in other life areas. This study investigates how the West Texas oilfield students perceive themselves in relation to reading skills: as readers, nonreaders, not-readers, or reluctant readers. It also examines the impact of oilfield culture on their perceptions. The following chapter examines literature pertaining to the skills and practices of reading, as well as how culture influences attitudes and motivations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Reading is a skill that many literate individuals often take for granted. The ability to read opens many doors of opportunity. In education, student achievement scores on state standardized tests attempt to measure students' ability in specific skills, including reading. Since the inception of the STAAR test in Texas, there has been a decline in student achievement, particularly in areas where the oilfield industry is prevalent (Cadena, 2018). The following issue unfolds in four steps within this chapter. First, this chapter surveys the research on the importance of reading as a lifelong skill. Second, this chapter sheds light on the national crisis of youth choosing not to embrace the reading process. It analyzes the leading research strategies used by many schools to engage students in reading and argues that reading engagement in schools is not enough; a holistic approach to reading is necessary. Students' academic success related to reading skills takes families, communities, and schools working together to build strong readers. Third, this chapter brings these findings into conversation with the discussion of the impact of culture, identity, and circumstance on students' motivation to read. Finally, this chapter concludes that the influence of culture and identity on students' academic success warrants further research. The Texas Education Agency's (2019a) strategic plan calls for all Texas students to be college, career, or military ready (CCMR) by the time they graduate from high school. These expectations include students who live in oilfield communities. This research is vital, as it provides insight to administrators, teachers, and

parents into why oilfield students are not engaged in the process of building strong foundational reading skills.

### *The Importance of Reading*

Reading among high school students, or more specifically the lack of reading, has been an issue for some time. Many studies claim a correlation exists between the amount of time students spend using technology and technology-related devices and the lack of time they spend reading. These studies posit that technology is to blame for the decrease in the percentage of time students spend reading (Gu et al., 2013; Rideout et al., 2010; Shimray et al., 2015). Other studies posit the correlation between the limited amount of reading teachers assign in the classroom and the decrease of students who read for pleasure is the cause of the increase in students becoming not-readers. These studies concluded three things that were foundational for this study into freshmen attitudes toward reading in the oilfield. First, Americans, ages 14–18, spend less time reading, either for school or for pleasure, than in years past. The average national reading scores of 17-year-olds have steadily declined since 1992 (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Second, reading comprehension skills, especially those that demonstrate student achievement on standardized reading tests, continue to decline. Finally, these declines in reading skills have profound civic, social, and cultural implications (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b; Snyder & Dillow, 2013).

In the world of high-stakes testing within public schools, students are expected to perform well on tests. Student performance on these tests often influences students' future ability to attend institutions of higher learning, students' ability to advance to the next grade, and the schools' ability to receive funding. Test scores, while undoubtedly

important, are not the focus of this study. The implications of students not reading voluntarily or for pleasure reach beyond these test scores.

Reading is more than comprehending words on a page; it encompasses many skills and many benefits. Reading is a skill developed in the brain, which enables a wide range of cognitive abilities. It is the foundation of learning (Kenney, 2005). Unfortunately, students experience long-term implications for not building solid reading skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Lupo et al., 2018; Martin-Chang et al., 2020; Willingham, 2015).

Willingham (2015) explains that regardless of reading ability, children who start reading for pleasure at an early age show more exceptional literacy skills and higher performance on standardized tests. Reading often leads to an improvement in student literacy and success on standardized tests. Regardless of individual opinions of standardized tests, it is still the standard that many public-school districts use to measure student mastery of skills. Literacy is an integral part of a child's education, and without it, students find themselves unable to experience many opportunities in their future (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b).

As readers are exposed to more words, they develop more robust vocabulary and comprehension skills. Their writing skills improve, knowledge on various topics increases, empathy builds, and positive reading attitudes and reading habits develop (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; Martin-Chang et al., 2020). The improvement of vocabulary and writing skills is just the beginning; students' literacy skills are intrinsic to more significant cognitive development. Students who read for pleasure achieve higher marks and display greater academic success.

### *Reading and Civic Mindedness*

Not only does reading affect a student's academic achievement, but it also has implications on students' civic participation. Reading changes lives. It is a "powerful and transactional experience" where students interact with a text and experience the world through perspectives, opinions, and experiences that are not their own (Wilhelm, 2018, p. xiv). This experience aids in the growth of students' confidence and agency and is, therefore, more than an isolated school issue; it is a "civil rights and social justice issue" that affects the democratic life of the student (Wilhelm, 2018, p. xv). Seeing the world through others' lenses teaches readers compassion. This compassion allows readers to "imagine the feelings" of the characters and people in the text they are reading (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 45). This transference builds the students' capacity for empathy. In short, reading is a social activity that increases students' civic involvement in society, especially through voting and volunteering (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b).

The most common measure of civic participation is a person's participation in the voting process. The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) administered a survey to discover if participants voted in the most recent presidential election and then correlated that information to various reading habit questions. They discovered that voting activity increased in relation to the reading skill level of the participant. Proficient readers demonstrated more significant curiosity about current events, public affairs, and government activity. That curiosity translates directly into voting activity at the polls (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b).

As reported in *To Read or Not to Read* (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b), volunteering is another civic activity. This study discovered that readers are more than

twice as likely as nonreaders or not-readers to volunteer or perform charity work (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007a; Nichols, 2007). Bradshaw (2004) discovered a positive correlation between volunteering rates among citizens and the number of books they read over the past year. Furthermore, this correlation between readers and volunteerism makes a case that readers show more empathy than not readers or non-readers.

One final activity of good citizenship is the demonstration of empathy. According to the National Endowment for the Arts (2007b) research survey, “literary readers lead more robust lifestyles than non-readers. These findings contradict commonly held assumptions that readers and arts participants are passive, isolated, or self-absorbed” (p 90). Self-absorbed citizens usually refrain from taking advantage of volunteer opportunities to reach out and help others. They typically do not care about things going on around them by taking the time to vote. An argument exists that people who do not read for pleasure are often passive, isolated, or self-absorbed members of society. They often do not participate in volunteer opportunities and sometimes fail to demonstrate empathy (Bradshaw, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b).

Reading allows readers to experience others’ feelings and see the world through the lens of another’s perspective. This opportunity to feel what others feel and see the world through another’s eyes is both enlightening and frightening. Through these experiences, a person develops the ability to feel empathy and compassion for others (Beers & Probst, 2017). It is through the development of active empathy and compassion that readers contribute to civic and social improvements.

### *The Lack of Reading Among Youth Nationally*

Despite all the positive effects of reading, “Americans between 15 and 34 years of age devote less leisure time than older age groups to reading anything at all” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b, p. 9). In 1984, 31% of 17-year-olds read for fun almost daily, but in 2012, only 19% reported that they read daily for pleasure (Musu-Gillette, 2015). Further, the percentage of 17-year-olds who never read for fun increased from 9% in 1984 to 19% in 2004 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007b). *American Time Use Survey–2006* (2006) reported that 54% of Americans engaged in the personal reading of books, magazines, and newspapers for 0–1 hour, and 34% read for 2–5 hours (Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, 2007). *American Time Use Survey 2017* reported that 15–24-year-olds only spent 7.2 minutes per day reading for personal interest while spending two hours a day watching TV (Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, 2018).

There are theories that students refrain from reading for pleasure because of advanced technology and increased opportunities for leisure activity. According to Ryan (2018), the number of homes with computers increased to almost 90%, and of those homes, 81.9% of families had internet. So, in a time where the internet is readily available to students, scholars hypothesize that the correlation of increased access to the internet and the opportunities to participate in other leisure activities has led to a decline in students’ desire to read for pleasure.

### *Socio-Economic Correlations*

Mansor et al. (2013) expresses that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the same advantages as students who come from a middle-class



background (p. 363). They face more everyday obstacles that often do not exist for students from upper- and middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. They often lack access to books and early childhood programs and resources, which affect their ability to read. As a result, these students and families find themselves dependent on schools to simulate situations that encourage reading habits. It is not enough that a library may be present in the neighborhood; teachers must engage with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to facilitate their reading and foster a positive reading attitude.

According to McKool (2007), students from blue-collar backgrounds often find it difficult to read at home because of chores or responsibilities that involve caring for younger siblings. Parents from this demographic tend to work long hours during the day and then come home to spend time with family and relax. Many of these families rely on schools to educate their children and tend not to emphasize leisure-time reading habits. Additionally, they often fail to place high importance on literacy activities, such as reading aloud to their children. Another characteristic of families living in lower socioeconomic brackets is the failure to prioritize procuring books (McKool, 2007). Instead, families prioritize purchasing food, clothing, housing, and other items for leisure time and activities, such as mobile devices, television, and other technology.

Most students from low socio-economic backgrounds lack examples of adults who engage in reading for pleasure. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds also tend to see “their parents reading the newspaper or materials related to work” but “rarely see anyone in their home reading books or novels for enjoyment” (McKool, 2007, p. 122). This lack of examples of adults who read for pleasure limits students’ exposure to the

idea that reading can occur for other purposes besides work and school. According to Strommen and Mates (2004), students who read for pleasure learned from their families that reading could be an entertaining, enjoyable, and worthwhile activity. Students who do not have the opportunity to learn from their family that reading is more than an academic exercise tend not to become avid readers (Mansor et al., 2013).

### *National Strategies in Schools*

When exploring students' attitudes toward reading, it is imperative to examine best practices for engaging students to read. This section offers four strategies often used by teachers to encourage students' interest in reading (Willingham, 2015). First, teachers should help students find books that interest them. Second, teachers need to find a social connection, a place for students to connect with peers and talk about their interests. Third, teachers should aspire to make it easy for students to access the books, either digitally or in print. Robinson (2013) found that 80% of students, aged 9–17, prefer to read print more often than they prefer to read digitally, while Loh and Sun (2019) found that most students prefer to read on digital devices than to read hard-copy printed versions. Regardless of preference, books need to be accessible to students in their preferred method, digital or print. Finally, teachers need to ensure that students understand the difference between academic reading and pleasure reading and provide more opportunities to incorporate pleasure reading into the classroom.

### *High-Interest Books*

McGeown et al. (2015) assert that high-interest books, especially fiction books, build students' reading motivation and increase the amount of time students spend reading and engaging with literary texts. Fiction also tends to develop students' interest in

reading (Martin-Chang et al., 2020). Baki (2018) discovered that students' motivation to read often affects their attitudes towards reading. So, if teachers aspire to build a reading culture and improve students' attitudes towards reading, the genre of fiction is an excellent place to start. Fiction engages students' imagination and encourages them to connect emotionally with characters. This quick connection and engagement with imagination provide students with something authentic to discuss within their peer groups (Beers & Probst, 2017; Kumar & Ansari, 2010; Mansor et al., 2013; Martin-Chang et al., 2020; Wilhelm, 2018). Students have a greater chance of engaging with literature if their reading moves beyond efferent reading into aesthetic reading (Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018). This strategy is valid across different educational and cultural contexts, across different age groups, and increases student comprehension using various assessment tools, including standardized or high-stakes tests (McGeown et al., 2015).

Another strategy that builds on high-interest reading is self-selected reading. Self-selected reading is the process of allowing students to select books that are on their reading level and of high interest to them. This strategy provides an opportunity for teachers to customize each student's reading instruction and creates an authentic opportunity for students to see themselves as readers (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015). According to Stairs & Burgos (2010), as students shift from learning to read to reading to learn in secondary grade levels, the texts students read shift from self-selected to teacher-selected or district-mandated. This shift away from self-selected books often causes a loss of interest for students in the reading process and a tendency for struggling readers to struggle even more (Smith, 2012). However, allowing students to select texts of interest often leads to altered views of self, self-reported changes in

students' decision-making processes, and opportunities to improve student attitudes toward reading (Stairs & Burgos, 2010).

### *Social Opportunities*

Allowing students to engage in social opportunities has proven effective in encouraging students to read. By allowing the students to engage in conversations about the texts they read, teachers use their social characteristics to build the students' capacity and likelihood to read (Mansor et al., 2013). Smith (2012) uses a group discussion model that engages students and allows them to move from a predetermined meaning of the text to an aesthetic purpose. One of the most significant forces that encourages and sustains students' reading interests develops from peers with similar interests. By allowing students to engage in social reading, teachers provide students with exposure to positive peer influences that ultimately diminish reading reluctance (Mansor et al., 2013).

Incorporating a library period into the structure of a class or going to the library and checking out books allows students from lower SES backgrounds to access an abundant supply of books. By taking time out of class to visit the library, teachers demonstrate the importance of reading and make this process just as important as any other classroom activity. Further, making books accessible to students becomes imperative if growth in reading ability and improvement in students' reading attitudes is the goal (Kumar & Ansari, 2010).

### *Digital Media*

While many people believe that technology is one of the causes for students' failure to focus on books and reading, Willingham (2015) argues that the brain is adaptive and constantly changing. If the brain is changing, technology is helping it to

rewire itself into different patterns of thinking. Still, rewiring does not correlate to any substantial study or research that proves that students are worse at sustaining their attention than earlier generations. Students can sit through long (multiple hours in length) movies and quickly consume novels that they enjoy. Willingham (2015) asserts that technology is not changing students' attention but changing their expectations. Further, he says that students' attitude towards books usually follows the lines of: "reading means books written by dead people who have nothing to say that would be relevant to [my] life" (p. 181).

Interestingly, when Loh and Sun (2019) studied students from Singapore, they found that students wanted to read texts in print and digital media. More students engaged with the texts successfully in a digital format because it gave them access to fellow readers' social networks. Shimray, Keerti, and Ramaih (2015) examined students' mobile reading habits and discovered that students read using digital platforms, such as tablets and smartphones. These devices grant access to digital books that help students enhance their reading experience, build personal libraries on their devices, and customize the text to their preferences through scan, search, select, highlight, and other functions (Maharsi et al., 2019).

### *Reading for Pleasure*

It is important to note a difference between academic reading, also known as efferent reading, and pleasure reading, also known as aesthetic reading. Academic, or efferent reading, includes any reading conducted for academic or learning purposes and not solely for the sake of pleasure. Readers engage in pleasure or aesthetic reading for the sake of enjoyment, and readers pay attention to the impact of the text beyond literal

meaning (Beers & Probst, 2017; Gallagher, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018). Gallagher (2009) further notes that students most likely confuse the two and that teachers should explicitly teach students the difference. If students do confuse the two, then reading becomes work and not something that has intrinsic value. Reading, then, becomes a coerced activity (Willingham, 2015). Further, students who only engage in efferent reading and solely look for the correct answer tend to develop a blindness to the rich intricacies of a text and the nuances of the authors' messages. This blindness causes struggling readers to continue to struggle, leading students to become emotionally numb to the text and often even causing them to stop reading and give up on a text at the first sign of difficulty (Smith, 2012).

One way to encourage students to read for aesthetic pleasure is to provide uninterrupted silent sustained reading (SSR) time in the classroom for students to engage in self-selected texts (Chua, 2008; Texas Education Agency, 2017). One study demonstrates that the number of students reading books for pleasure increases, as do the number of students who agree that reading books is pleasurable after teachers implement a robust SSR program into their classrooms (Chua, 2008). Allowing students time to read and enjoy texts encourages them to continue reading (Wilhelm, 2018). While observing younger students in classroom settings, researchers find that in a 90-minute reading block, the average student read for only 15 minutes (Brenner et al., 2009). Sometimes this lack of reading is due to distraction on the part of the students, but often it is a result of not having the whole 90-minute block to read. According to Gallagher (2009) and Willingham (2015), teachers need to set aside time in the classroom for silent pleasure reading. This should not just include time to read, but time to read without an external

mandated purpose requiring students to look for an answer to a question, but a time for the students to just read and experience the book (Beers & Probst, 2017; Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018). Many researchers agree that this strategy is the best solution for students who have no interest in reading. “The latest data indicate that it *probably* improves attitudes, vocabulary, and comprehension” (Willingham, 2015, p. 172).

### *Conclusion*

There are four broad strategies that studies demonstrate impact students’ attitudes towards reading and their academic achievement. The inclusion of high-interest, fictional books, and students’ opportunity to self-select texts in the curriculum are potent ways to enable students to use their voice and improve their reading skills. Building time into the classroom for students to visit the library and interact with each other to discuss and engage socially with the texts allows classroom teachers to impact students’ perceptions of themselves as readers and their perception of reading. Keeping digital media in mind as a tool and not as an enemy in the classroom raises the chances of engaging reluctant readers by providing alternative opportunities to engage digitally with texts. Establishing an understanding of the purpose of reading and communicating that reading can have many purposes helps students engage authentically with texts and look for more than just the correct answers. It also allows students the freedom to explore and enjoy texts. Finally, scaffolding in uninterrupted time for students to read could be the most potent agent of change for students, as it proves a teacher’s investment in the classroom’s reading culture.

Studies reveal the effectiveness of these classroom strategies. Unfortunately, Tenby's ninth-graders' achievement scores reveal that these strategies alone will not ensure students master reading content. Even though teachers in the community use them, ninth-grade students still struggle with reading. Ninth grade students in Tenby are not reading (S. Chambers Focus Group, personal notes, March 14, 2017), and the achievement scores are not improving (Cadena, 2018). There is a piece of the puzzle missing; therefore, it is essential to examine the culture within this oilfield community to understand students' motivation and attitudes towards reading (Convertino et al., 2016).

### *Culture Informs Attitude and Motivation*

Teachers need to consider students' culture when establishing classroom goals. Garces-Bacsal et al. (2018) surveyed 146 teachers in a Singapore training program. They discovered that a sizeable number of surveyed trainees do not think it is their responsibility to motivate students to read. They can, however, list strategies that are good literacy instructional strategies. This study concludes that teachers are accountable for promoting lifelong reading and that this promotion should be "culturally positioned within locally shaped realities and perceived from within the unique configuration of the results-driven context of the...educational landscape" (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018, p. 95). Teachers must consider the culture of students when preparing lessons and building curriculum goals. According to Convertino et. al (2016), teachers need to "put culture to work" (p. 35) in the classroom. To do that, however teachers must know the culture of their students and understand how to make connections between the students' culture and the goals of the classroom (Cook, 2019).



Students' attitudes and motivation to read do not develop in a vacuum. Gender, peer attitudes, how much reading they engage in, the social structures surrounding the student, parents, community, and the students' identity all affect their attitude and motivation. Teachers and administrators must choose processes and strategies to improve students' scores on standardized tests. This process points to a more holistic approach to reinforce reading and the skills associated with it.

### *A Holistic Approach to Reinforcing Reading Among Youth*

Contrary to widespread belief, students' failure to read and their lack of desire to read should concern all stakeholders. Communities must work together to help make gains in these areas. Parents alone cannot fix this problem. Schools cannot, by themselves, wield enough influence to adjust student mindsets. The lack of reading is an issue that warrants a joint effort by all stakeholders to address and remedy.

Parents influence students' ability to read and impact their attitude towards this activity. The parents' willingness, especially that of the mother, to engage their children in reading activities at a young age seems to be the first in a series of factors that contribute to a child's love for reading (Mansor et al., 2013). Children often reflect their parent's attitude towards reading. According to Willingham (2015), students who come from homes where reading is the norm—usually homes of educated parents—tend to be more willing to read and understand literacy's importance in general.

Schools and families must work together to support students' reading, both the acquisition of the ability and the development of a support system to foster good reading attitudes. During early childhood, creating a literary environment at home and in school has been linked to developing students' ability to read. It plants the seeds that foster

students' willingness to continue reading as they grow older (Mansor et al., 2013). As students mature, they tend to become reading reluctant (Pandian, 2000). It becomes the schools' job to ensure that students can use reading as a social building block and read in a social context (Howard, 2008) to build a reading culture (Maharsi et al., 2019). Parents must support this work and encourage children at home to be active participants in the reading process.

### *Extensive Reading and Reading Motivation*

While the idea of extensive reading may seem redundant, one way to build a positive attitude toward reading in students is to engage them in extensive reading for pleasure. Finding books that students like and allowing them to read as many books as possible builds an intrinsic enjoyment and increases their feelings of positivity towards reading (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; Maharsi et al., 2019). The more students read, the better readers they become. The better the reader, the more the student enjoys reading (Willingham, 2015). It is essential that reading is a process shared between home and school to develop the internal desire to read more and receive all the benefits of having advanced reading skills.

The importance of extensive reading increases when students come from cultures that do not value reading. Teachers must determine the students' cultural context; this is a critical step in education (Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019). Teachers who value reading as a lifetime skill for their students should help students overcome obstacles created outside of the school settings.

### *Gender and Reading Motivation*

Many studies compare the motivation of students across genders. These studies advocate that to improve students' attitudes towards reading, teachers and parents should approach males and females in different ways to ensure all students learn (Brozo et al., 2014). Many studies have found that males are less likely read and posit that teachers and parents should provide activities and texts that appeal specifically to males to help them find a text that interests them. Further, it is practical to structure classroom activities to provide an opportunity for extrinsic motivation to motivate males in class to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Baş, 2012; McGeown, 2013; McGeown et al., 2012). Interestingly enough, almost as many studies refute these findings and offer no differences that can be linked solely by gender (Eccles et al., 1993; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Pitcher et al., 2007; Wolters et al., 2014). Most of these studies contend that other contributing factors affect students' attitudes more significantly than gender.

While gender may play a role in a student's attitude towards reading, gender is not the sole factor in determining a student's likelihood to become a reader. Communities and groups of people tend to correlate certain expectations or roles with specific genders. Understanding perceptions of gender identity and the expectations of gender roles is vital because they become ingrained in students. These expectations can cause students to reject becoming readers or develop poor attitudes towards reading just because it is expected (McGeown et al., 2012). A students' culture directly affects their perceptions of self and likelihood of reading, just by the expectations put on the different genders (Baş, 2012; Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019; Kane, 2006; Ünal, 2010).

### *Peer Attitudes and Reading Motivation*

According to Mansor et al. (2013), the most significant force that contributes to students' reading motivation, after parents, is a students' peer group. A student who is a member of a reading peer group is more likely to engage in reading than a student who is not. Students who read tend to read the same material as their peers and use reading as a form of social bonding. These students actively seek to share their ideas about what they are reading, exchange texts, and follow the same books (Kumar & Ansari, 2010; Mansor et al., 2013; Smith, 2012).

To change or encourage students' attitudes toward reading, the process of reading must become a culturally relevant and social event (Cook, 2019; Gallagher, 2009; Wilhelm, 2018; Willingham, 2015). Students need an opportunity to select texts to read that speak to the culture from which they come. They need an opportunity to witness their peers reading and responding to the same book (Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019; Smith, 2012). Students must have opportunities to share what they are reading. Further, they need to perceive themselves as a peer group member who has established a reading culture (Willingham, 2015).

### *Reading as a Social Event on Reading Motivation*

The social event of reading occurs when students have a peer group or, more importantly, family members with whom they can share what they have read. The students read a text and socially engage in discourse with those around them about what they have read. The group often reads the same text and discusses, or all read separate books and share what they have read. Making reading a social event is critical to

students' development as readers (Beers & Probst, 2017). It also enables the students' to change their perceptions of themselves as readers (Smith, 2012; Stairs & Burgos, 2010).

Studies show that engagement with others in the reading process increases student engagement in reading. Loh and Sun (2019) studied six secondary schools in Singapore. They found that when students interacted with each other digitally during reading assignments, they were more likely to read than when reading in isolation. This research proves Mansor et al.'s (2013) findings that reading becomes more tenable and more enjoyable for students who use reading as a form of social bonding. Reading the same text and engaging in critical conversations about that text allows the student to become members of a community of thinkers. Wilhelm (2018) found that students who read extensively are active or become active in a community of readers. Most readers in his study experienced a shift in their self-concept (their identity) when they engaged with peers to discuss and engage with texts.

Students' active involvement in a community of readers allows them to access new, variable, and appropriate reading material. Many not-readers in Strommen and Mates' (2004) study stated they were readers until a certain age, and then when they grew out of the book series they were reading, they stopped reading. Unfortunately, they never found an alternative series that they were willing to explore. Being a member of a community of readers exposes not-readers to new series and piques their interest in reading (Cook, 2019).

### *Parents and Reading Motivation*

According to Mansor et. al (2013), parents are the primary influence in developing reading habits among their children. If children grow up in a home where

parents read, they are more likely to read. Further, McKool (2007) states that voluntary reading is “related to the value placed on reading and in particular to the value placed on reading in the home” (p. 120). Parents who are professionals and classified as middle-to-upper-class tend to produce relatively small families with only one or two children (McKool, 2007). The class into which one is born is significant because it enables students to “readily and easily” access reading resources (p. 361). Students who grow up in these middle-class families often find it easier to access a steady supply of books (Mansor et al., 2013). According to Maharsi et. al (2019), beyond access, students are exposed to their parents’ reading culture as they grow up. If their parents read, then, more than likely, the students will read, too. If the parents do not read, then, more than likely, the students will not read either. This cause-and-effect relationship provides the critical need for parents to work with teachers to ensure students experience a vibrant reading culture in home and school settings.

### *Community and Reading Motivation*

Many studies debate the merits of urban versus rural living. There are usually smaller class sizes in rural towns and cities but fewer resources and a smaller variety of those resources. Most urban schools have larger class sizes and larger schools, but they also tend to have more resources, both within and outside of school (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016).

Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) contend it is not the school’s size that matter, but the community surrounding the school. Surprisingly, Ünal (2010) and Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) both found that students’ reading attitudes from rural schools were lower than students’ attitudes from urban schools. Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) mentions

that rural communities tend to have fewer bookstores and lack extensive public libraries, whereas urban students often have more resources available to them. Access to books has a direct correlation to reading attitudes and practices, according to Allington et al. (2010). With this correlation in mind, it makes sense that students from rural areas who lack access to books might find it challenging to develop a strong motivation to read. Regardless of the location, the community's resources and attitudes directly affect the students who live there (Convertino et al., 2016).

### *Identity and Reading Motivation*

According to Willingham (2015), students' self-concept as readers is significant in their decision to read or not to read. Students decide to read when they see themselves as readers. Students' attitudes towards reading impact their motivation to read. Their motivation to read affects their academic achievement (McGeown et al., 2015).

Students who identify as readers find themselves falling easily into what Willingham (2015) called "the Matthew effect," named after the biblical verse. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matthew 25:29, New King James Version). In other words, those who read more often will develop skills that make it easier for them to read well. Reading well may lead to the enjoyment of the activity, leading to a better attitude toward reading. A better attitude towards reading may lead students to read more often. If students read more often and enjoy the activity, they are more likely to identify as readers. Students who enjoy reading and identify as readers may also choose reading over other forms of entertainment.

Turkyilmaz (2015) discovered that students' positive attitude towards reading increases the more their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies increases. The more students are aware of the metacognitive strategies that enable them to comprehend the text, the more likely they are to have positive reading attitudes. Therefore, it becomes imperative to teach students these strategies at school. Further, students who have a high reading frequency and a love for reading tend to have a "higher level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies" (Turkyilmaz, 2015, p. 16). Incorporating these skills into classrooms may assist in the promotion of autonomous learning and help students build their independent reading capacity (Kumar & Ansari, 2010).

Evidence pinpoints that regardless of reading ability, children who begin reading for pleasure at an early age show stronger literacy skills and higher performance on standardized tests (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016). Exposure to more words develops their vocabulary skills. Furthermore, the literacy skills students develop are intrinsic to more significant cognitive development. Students who read for pleasure achieve higher marks and display greater success academically. Moreover, when students read for pleasure independently, they often experience growth in their academic success. As such, independent reading may help close the achievement disparities between subgroups of readers (Snyder & Dillow, 2013).

### *Conclusion*

Students' culture often informs their motivation and attitude towards reading. Teachers and other stakeholders in education must consider the variables of culture that most directly affect students' desire and ability to read fluently. Although student cultural norms may not reflect value in reading skills, teachers and stakeholders must confront



these norms. Though studies disagree on the impact of gender on attitude and motivation, research supports that some of the differences in students' desires to read could be related to cultural gender norms. The attitude and culture of students' peer groups directly affect their reading habits. Teachers should create a classroom atmosphere and reading culture to reflect how students' interactions with books can be social events. However, teachers must consider the cultural impact of parents, the community, and the student's self-identity in the process. It is important to note that if students are not part of cultures that value reading, teachers must build a culture of reading to bridge the reading gap often created between home and school (Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019; Gallagher, 2009; Smith, 2012; Willingham, 2015).

### *The Unique Elements of Oilfield Culture*

This study attempts to understand the reading attitudes of students who live in the oilfield community of Tenby. To that end, an investigation into oilfield culture is necessary to understand students' attitudes towards reading. Creswell and Poth (2018) observe that exploring a culture is exploring how a group of individuals who share space and characteristics engage and interact with each other and their environment. The group shares common beliefs, languages, behaviors, and attitudes. Further, when a group has been together for an extended period, their shared patterns of behavior and attitudes merge into discernable patterns. These patterns provide a framework for understanding the group and their shared characteristics. Further, Garces-Bacsal et al. (2018) exhorts that in order for any change to be effective, one must position that change within the "local realities" present in the context of the problem. Therefore, one must understand the culture present in the oilfield before they can conduct any explorations into the oilfield.

Because this study investigates student attitudes toward reading, understanding the culture they are a part of is critical. To understand the culture, one must examine the unique composition of the community, the economy, the school district, and the characteristics of the oilfield students.

### *The Community*

Bussert-Webb and Zhang, (2016) posit that one of the major influencers of students' attitude toward reading is the community surrounding the school, as it is the community that drives access to books and literary experiences beyond school. What a community prioritizes is apparent in their businesses, community activities, and schools.

Tenby, the oilfield town that was the setting of this study, has diverse demographics. In 2017, 13.8% of the population were born outside of the United States, and 91.1% were U.S. citizens. There are more Hispanic/Latino men and women than any other ethnicity. In the community of a little more than 154,000 people, 53,700 are White, and 6,400 are Black/African American. There are 36 languages spoken within Tenby's city limits (Deloitte, 2020), providing a diverse, resident culture.

First established as a small ranching town and stop-over to water cattle on the Texas and Pacific Railway, the city quickly grew into a launching pad for all oilfield-related things when oil was discovered in 1927. It was during this time of challenging possibilities that the town revealed its resilience and perseverance. This spirit of perseverance followed the town through the difficulty of the Great Depression and the struggle to continue producing oil during WWII. Overcoming considerable obstacles and thriving under challenging environs is almost Tenby's motto (Johnson, 2012; Weaver, 2010). This can-do attitude is visible in the pride the citizens have for their people. For

example, Buddy West, a state legislator who grew out of the oilfield man-camps, is a town hero (Johnson, 2012; Sandate, 2008).

Unfortunately, this mindset makes it difficult for the town to rally around change. Maintaining the status quo and cherishing it as a deeply rooted tradition causes education to become a low priority for many people. As a result, there tends to be a lack of vision for the future, especially regarding the opportunities an education can provide. In 2012, only 63% of the citizens voted for a bond to build three new elementary schools and renovate two high schools. The population was growing at the time, and Kirby High Schools' student population almost doubled in two years. The bond barely passed (Hayes, 2019). Five years later, Kirby's population reached 3,600 students, and the school district went back to the community and asked for more money to repair buildings and address the overcrowding in 90% of the district's schools. Sixty-two percent of the citizens voted against the bond. The overwhelming opinion was that the previous bond money should have remedied the overcrowding and repair issues (Hayes, 2019). The citizens of the community expressed, through their votes, that local educational opportunities are not their highest priority.

Interestingly, at the same time the community rejected the district's request for funds, the community sent a clear message to the district's teachers in 2018 when 62% of the citizens voted for teacher pay raises. Along with the increase in teacher pay, the tax ratification enabled the school district to secure the entrances to all buildings, replace buses that were not safe, and complete roof repairs on multiple campuses. According to the district superintendent, the community's message was that they cared about and valued people. Although the school board questioned the community's trust in the school

district, the community's concern for the students' and teachers' safety and well-being was evident (Hayes, 2019). This distrust echoes the history of Tenby. After carving an existence out of the arid grasslands and fighting for survival in summers without rain, this town demonstrated its perseverance. It stood shoulder to shoulder with its neighbor to overcome obstacle after obstacle (Weaver, 2010). This message of valuing people over programs, entities, and processes is not uncommon in rural Texan values (Stone, 2018).

### *The Economy*

McKool, (2007) observes that students who come from a blue-collar or low SES background are less likely to read than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. With this research in mind, it is important to consider the economy of the oilfield. The oilfield is an interesting dichotomy of high wages and low education. Though the local community college and university now have classes explicitly geared towards the oilfield to entice students, most oilfield jobs do not require anything more than a GED or high school diploma (Ballinger, 2012). In 2017, the university only awarded 2298 degrees to students in a town with over 154,000 people (Deloitte, 2020). In this oilfield town, the most significant domestic product is oil. In 2015, the oil was worth \$290 billion. In 2019, that number grew to \$2.15 trillion, and experts expect it to reach \$2.8 trillion by 2045 (Deloitte, 2020). With the oil industry generating so much money, the oilfield is the highest paying industry in the town. The town's median income is \$59,528. The median salary for oilfield workers is \$62,294 (Deloitte, 2020). With 10,300 people employed in the oil industry, the oilfield is the largest and highest-paying community employer.

With the increases in income and profit from the oilfield, many people take advantage of the opportunity to make money. Still, not everyone in the community

benefits from the influx of workers and capital. One area the oil boom adversely affected is housing, which includes home ownership, rental properties, and apartment complexes. Rent skyrocketed after the boom began, and from 2016–2017, the cost of housing increased by 7.57%. The lack of affordable housing led to more people finding themselves in situational homelessness. The number of homeless families and individuals includes anywhere from 200–300 cases in the town of approximately 154,000 people (Borchert, 2019). Though the number of homeless cases has not fluctuated drastically, the demographics of those cases have changed. The largest group in the town below the poverty line is females from 18–27 years old (Deloitte, 2020). These females, unfortunately, are not alone in their homelessness; they are predominately single mothers with multiple children (Borchert, 2019). In 2018, 18,900 people, primarily white, lived below the poverty line, while oilfield workers' largest income distribution fell between \$75,000 and \$100,000 (Deloitte, 2020). These circumstances drive students, who might have previously looked at education to better themselves and get out of the oil town, to seek work or the oilfield after high school.

### *The School District*

In 2017, Tenby's school district, via an email from the deputy superintendent, announced its adoption of a new mission statement, "Our Students...Our Future." The intent was to encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility to all stakeholders associated with the district. This mission statement is the district's promise to improve every student's educational experience, with the belief that by doing this, student achievement will increase. It is an expression of the district's commitment to educate all students and help them reach their full potential.

In their continuing drive to improve achievement and instruction in the district, the literacy director for the district conducted an open forum meeting with teachers within a few months of the new mission statement's proclamation. She engaged teachers in the quest to determine the most significant struggles they were experiencing to improve the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) skills of the district's high school students. The secondary ELAR teachers' final consensus reveals that most students do not choose to read outside of school and, as a result, struggle with reading more complicated texts. The short answer to her question is that students no longer read (S. Chambers, personal notes, March 14, 2017).

Students, specifically freshmen high school students, experience difficulties drawing conclusions, making inferences, and making decisions based on texts. According to the Texas Education Agency (2017) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards (TEKS) (2017), students must master these skills to be proficient readers. The state of Texas values these skills as necessary milestones on the STAAR and STAAR EOC (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Without proficient reading skills, it is likely that many students will not master these standardized tests. English I exam data from the final two years of TAKS testing until 2018 revealed that freshmen students' performance declined. In 2009 and 2010, the school district was within two percentage points of the state average on the TAKS test. Then, when English I STAAR EOC phased in, the district dropped to 13 percentage points below the state average and, unfortunately, has remained between 11 and 15 percentage points below the state average (Texas Education Agency, 2018; Cadena, 2018). In short, the students in this oilfield town do not perform as well on standardized

reading assessments as they once did under the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests between the years 2002–2012. In the last six years of the English I STAAR EOC test, the district has never had more than 49% of its students pass this exam (Cadena, 2018). When a student fails to meet state standard achievement on the STAAR EOC test, they have the opportunity to re-take the test. So, these numbers do not reflect just the performance of ninth-grade students, but all students on the campus who took the test.

### *Oilfield Students*

One of the driving forces of students' attitudes toward reading is their self-concept. If a student sees themselves as a reader, then they are more likely to read. Students who do not have an example of reading or do not identify as readers are less likely to read (Willingham, 2015). Tenby is one of the lowest-performing districts across the state of Texas in its comparison group. It underperforms every district but one. In 2019, 57% of the kindergarteners who attended district provided Pre-K in the district were not kindergarten-ready. In 2019, 65% of all the kindergarteners from the district were not kindergarten-ready. This statistic indicates that 65% of the future graduating class of 2031 began their formal schooling academically behind peers across the state. In 2019, 66% of the district's third-graders were reading below grade level. These statistics demonstrate that students of all elementary ages either begin school or spend the first few years academically behind (Hayes, 2019).

Unfortunately, these alarming statistics currently reflect an ongoing problem in the district. Only 6.5% of students who graduated from the district in 2013 have completed a level one or level two certificate, a two-year college degree, or a four-year

college degree. That means that 93.5% of students who graduated in 2013 either did not pursue any further education after high school or did not complete the program that they entered. In 2018, there was a 44% chance that a senior from this community would not be college, career, or military ready (CCMR) when they graduated. Unfortunately, only 55% of the students who graduated that year enrolled in college or a certificate program. For district students, there is a 29.5% chance that a special education student will not graduate and a 20.8% chance that an English language learner will not graduate (Hayes, 2019). Considering these statistics, it appears that education is not a top priority for many of the towns' citizens.

While the statistics above paint a bleak picture of the district, one can discern some bright spots. Six hundred fifty-nine students earned an industry-based certification in 2018. Students in the AVID program (312 total) have a 99% chance of graduating on time. The fine arts, music, and athletic programs are award-winning, and the students involved attend school at a higher rate than their non-fine arts peers and earn an average of 200 points higher on the SAT. The district recognized twenty-two seniors as International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma candidates, and nine received their IB diploma. The students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) classes have an 89.7% chance of graduating on time (Hayes, 2019).

### *Conclusion*

Oilfield culture is unique and runs strong in the veins of its students. The community does not highly prioritize education, and this mentality reflects in students and their struggles. Since research is scant, the degree to which oilfield culture impacts students' attitudes towards reading is not well understood. However, as research into the



impact culture has on students' attitudes toward reading shows, students reflect their parents, peers, and community. Therefore, it is necessary to consider culture when analyzing a student's attitude or motivation. The school district, the community, and the economy all affect the student, the child, and their feelings, beliefs, motivations, and attitudes.

### *Conclusion*

Reading is a vital part of a student's future, and all students deserve the opportunity to learn. Teachers must implement strategies to assist struggling readers and encourage all readers to use their reading skills in their everyday lives. Teachers, unfortunately, cannot help students read on their own. It takes a holistic approach, a concerted effort by all stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, school board, and community members) for students to receive all of the opportunities they deserve. Teachers cannot effectively teach, and students cannot truly learn in a vacuum. Educators must consider culture.

Students, regardless of where they live or the culture that defines their context, deserve the chance to receive the best education available. With so much research emphasizing the importance of the cultural context but the lack of research into the implications of the oilfield on education, it is not surprising that the oilfield students have struggled to succeed on the English I STAAR EOC. These students come from a culture of pride and independence, and that culture informs their very identity. This study is vitally important as it aims to open discourse and encourage further exploration of this unique oilfield culture to improve all students' educational opportunities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

This single case study aimed to understand the attitudes of freshmen high school students towards reading. To answer the research questions, four purposely selected freshmen students participated in the case study and functioned as embedded units of analysis within the single case study. Participants' perceptions provided an in-depth look at the complex social phenomena in the specific context of this study (Yin, 2014). As this study focused on students in the oilfield and there was no research into the oilfield's social dynamics, this research served as an initial investigation into how the oilfield impacts students' motivation to read.

In the West Texas oilfield city of Tenby, where this study took place, student achievement on the state standardized test (STAAR English I EOC) taken by freshmen students had declined. This test, which served as a graduation requirement, assessed a student's ability to read and write effectively. Students who failed this test faced the consequences of not being able to graduate from high school. Less than 50% of students in the school district who had to take the English I STAAR EOC in the last five years had earned a passing score (Cadena, 2018).

To investigate this decline, the literacy director for the district hosted a focus group of teachers. The teachers discussed several issues and made many observations. The most pertinent to this study was the group's consensus that students who know how to read chose not to engage in classroom reading or self-directed reading for pleasure.

According to the literacy director, the number of students who actively read in class had declined despite the district's programs and interventions (S. Chambers Focus Group, personal notes, March 14, 2017).

This study sought to address the primary question: How do freshmen high school students in one West Texas oilfield community describe their reading attitude? This study also investigated three secondary questions: First, how important (or not) do freshmen students find reading skills? Second, what social and familial factors are most influential in the students' attitude toward reading? And finally, how do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read? The quest to understand students' attitudes toward reading opened the door for conversations regarding familial and community involvement in students' literacy education. Further, it provided an in-depth look into the perspectives of four students who live in this oilfield community.

### *Researcher Perspective*

In a qualitative study such as this, the writing reflects the researcher. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher becomes a part of the study. What they write reflects their "own interpretation based on their cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics" (p. 228). With this in mind, in this study the researcher disclosed her perspectives.

The researcher has worked as an educator in the field of education for twelve years. She served the first five years of her career as a freshmen English teacher in Tenby. During her time in the district, she taught seventh grade through twelfth grade English classes on all levels: inclusion (special education students included in the class), English as a Second Language (ESL) inclusive classes, grade-level classes, Pre-

Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, AP Language and Composition, AP Literature and Composition, and Dual Credit (classes where students take college courses for high school credit and college credit simultaneously) classes. She also served for six years at the local university and five years at the local community college as an English adjunct instructor, teaching lower-level literature classes and composition courses. Regardless of the class she taught, she spent time advocating for and developing students' voices in what they read and wrote at the most appropriate skill and proficiency level.

The researcher's passion for teaching students was what drew her to this research. Working in a district where teachers worked hard to prepare students for the EOC standardized exams only to see dismal passing rates continue was disheartening. The researcher yearned to see improvement in students' reading habits, reading ability, and self-efficacy, and this desire drew her to investigate how students in the oilfield perceive reading.

Not only had she worked in this school district for the last twelve years, but Tenby was also the city where she was born and raised. The researcher was a product of an oilfield community. She experienced first-hand, as a child and as a student, the effect the oilfield opportunities had on a person's perspective. Even though she grew up in an educator's household and not an oilfield worker's home, the oilfield directly affected her family's income and community's ideals. As a result of her background, the researcher entered this research with an insider perspective.

Some of the researcher's experiences, however, might have led to a certain level of bias and potentially impacted interactions with the participants. She was an avid reader for as long as she could remember. She often disliked what her teachers asked her to read

and did not read for academic purposes; however, she read voraciously for pleasure. Her love of reading led a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in English. So, while the researcher has witnessed the reciprocal relationship between the increase of oilfield productivity and prices and the decrease in the amount of reading and investment of students in education, it did not adversely affect her attitude toward reading as a student growing up in this West Texas community.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Just as the researcher's background and positionality affected the research, so did the theoretical framework that guided and provided the lens for interpreting data. This study used a blended framework informed by two theories: Reading Attitude Theory (RAT; Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016) and New Literacy Studies (NLS; Gee, 2015). These two theories were described in more depth below.

#### *Reading Attitude Theory*

RAT's focus on the relationship between student's background and their attitude towards reading was foundational to this study. Bussert-Web and Zhang (2016) explained that when considering a student's background, the researcher must consider a student's values and disposition, reading for pleasure vs. required reading, beliefs, stances, curiosity, contexts in which students enjoy reading, and places that are conducive to reading. This theory required researchers to build a profile of students' context and their key influencers to build an accurate picture of their attitude. Not building this understanding could lead to an incomplete picture of the student's attitudes and could potentially lead to a study that did not reflect an accurate picture of attitude and its implications. This framework informed the research questions of this study.

Table 3.1 outlines the connection between RAT and each research question at the heart of this study.

Table 3.1

*Theoretical Framework Connections: Reading Attitude Theory*

Research Question	Reading Attitude Theory
1. How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?	Students' attitudes were not formed in isolation; they were dependent on the student's cultural context and multiple variables that informed their background.
2. How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?	Values and dispositions from the student's backgrounds and experiences informed what they valued.
3. What social and familial factors are the most influential in the students' attitude toward reading?	Exploring the student's context, social and familial, helped to reveal the student's background.
4. How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?	The values and dispositions of the oilfield affected the students' perceptions and, therefore, their attitudes toward reading.

Students learned what to value through their cultural upbringing experiences (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016). For this study, the value students placed on reading comes from the value they saw placed on reading by their parents, teachers, peers, and society in general. The importance they placed on this skill and their definition of reading revealed the society's values in which they regularly engaged. With this in mind, it was critical to discover how students defined reading and what they perceived was the purpose for reading.

Students built their identity and sense of self-concept as readers or not-readers, based in part on the interactions between social, familial, and cultural backgrounds (McKool, 2007). This case study allowed the researcher to understand what societal and

cultural conditions the student was familiar with and uncover the effect these norms have on the students' disposition towards reading. Research question three allowed the researcher to explore the participants' reading experiences at home, parents' value on reading, and participants' perception of their peers and teachers concerning reading.

According to RAT, the culture in which students lived influenced their attitudes toward reading. Specifically, the culture and attitudes inherent in the students' context affected their perceptions of themselves and their perceptions of reading, in general. Therefore, research question four allowed the researcher to explore how the participants perceived the oilfield. Though not an ethnography, this study did have to build a profile of the oilfield based on students' observations and stated perceptions.

#### *New Literacy Studies*

NLS served as the second theoretical framework of this study. NLS required this study to explore the literacy events in a student's experience, explore the social practices inherent in the experiences, discover the power implications revealed in those experiences, and explore the literacy practices in which the students engaged both at school and home. Further, NLS challenged the researcher to consider the power implications that the exploration revealed to address social injustices. Table 3.2 outlines the connections between NLS and this study's research questions.

NLS explored a student's literacy to reveal information about the society in which the student lives, its social practices, and any power imbalances, whether real or perceived, that existed. So, seeking to discover how students describe their attitudes toward reading, the researcher asked students to share their cultural definition and understanding towards reading and discovered how those impacted them as readers.

Table 3.2

*Theoretical Framework Connections: New Literacy Studies*

Research Question	New Literacy Studies
1. How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?	Literacy was bound to society and its power structures. Therefore, looking at a student's attitude and perceptions revealed information about the society, its social practices, and highlighted power distribution.
2. How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?	Within literacy practices, students should start applying reading beyond the classroom.
3. What social and familial factors are most influential in the students' attitude toward reading?	Literacy was a social practice and did not occur in isolation. Investigation into Literacy practices occurred in school and at home and influenced the student's self-perception as a reader or not-reader. With any social practice, there were power implications.
4. How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?	NLS closely attended to the issues of cultural, political, and economic ideology through researching literacy events.

Gee (2015) posited that authentic literacy practices, when internalized, were applied beyond the classroom. Using this framework then, research question two allowed the researcher to explore the classroom practices that students engaged in to determine how much of those activities transferred to their personal reading experiences outside of school. Further, the researcher explored classroom practices and technology's impact on students' perception of reading and its importance. The researcher explored all of this with the focus of determining the students' perceived importance of reading.

Since literacy was a social practice that did not occur in isolation, as NLS posits, the interactions and relationships between the participants, their family, and their peers informed the participants' perception of themselves as readers or not-readers (Gee, 2015).



This perception was foundational to whether a student read independently, which lead to questions of whether students chose to further their education after high school. Along with these important questions evolved the question of power. Question three opened the door for this study to explore questions of equity and access.

As there was no existing research on oilfield culture, it was impossible to explore the oilfield's cultural, political, and economic ideology from established empirical studies. This study used question four to help discover the participant's perspectives of the oilfield and its opportunities. Specifically, question four solicited the value of education and reading in the oilfield and the likelihood of students working outside of the oilfield once they graduated from high school.

### *Conclusion*

Most students in the district did not appear to read for pleasure nor read the material required for academic classes; therefore, they did not perform well on standardized tests (S. Chambers Focus Group, personal notes, March 14, 2017; Cadena, 2018). One possible explanation for this drop in the scores on such tests warrants the purpose of this research study. Was the students' failure to do these tasks, as mentioned previously, resulting from their reading attitude? Therefore, it seemed logical to seek students' perceptions about their attitudes towards reading. Following this framework, it became imperative to discover the importance students placed on reading and the most influential factors (such as family, peers, future job, opportunities).

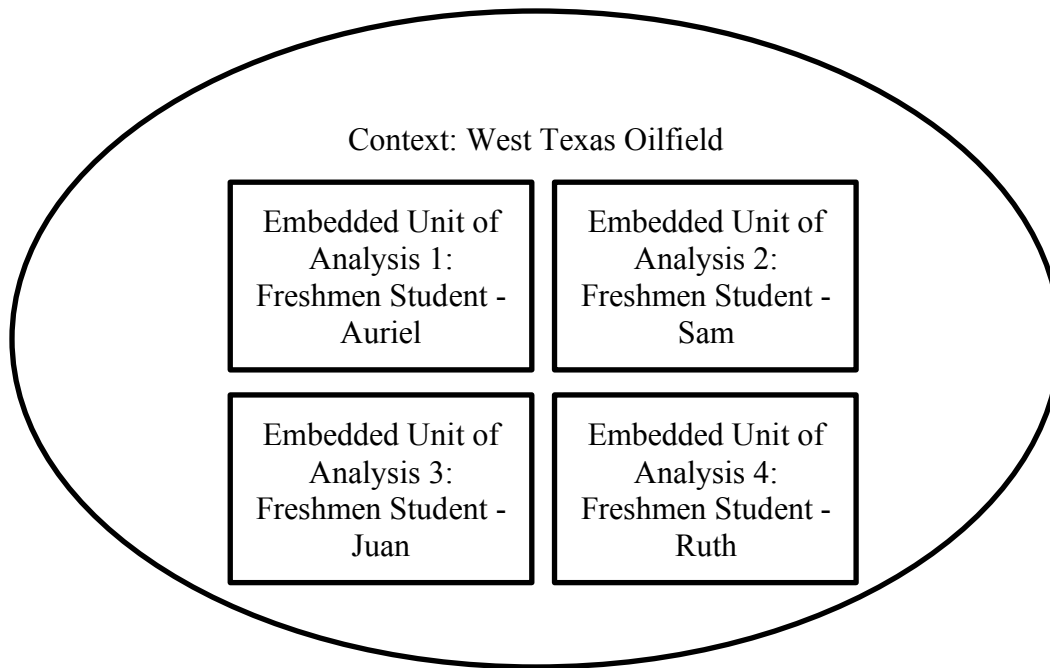
These frameworks influenced the data collection process by emphasizing student voice and outside influences in investigating attitudes. To keep student voice at the center of this study and ensure the results were a true reflection of the participants, the

researcher collected the data through various mediums that intentionally elicited student voice and perspectives. Interviews and open-ended response surveys, the data collection methods, were designed to intentionally help uncover students' perceptions about reading.

When combined, these two theories provided robust frameworks for this study. Understanding that attitude impacts students' inclination to read and that the cultural and social contexts surrounding students informed their reading attitude offered educators a platform to encourage their students to read or look for ways to affect student achievement positively. The connection between these two frameworks formed the foundation of the case study to reveal students' attitudes toward reading and explore the impact of oilfield culture on those attitudes.

### *Research Design*

This qualitative study used an embedded, single case study design (Yin, 2014). An embedded case study design used multiple units of analysis within a single context. For this study, the units of analysis were the freshmen student participants. While students within each unit have factors that affect their attitude, they all share the West Texas oilfield as their context (See Figure 3.1). A case study provided a bounded framework that enabled the researcher to dive deeply into the nuances of individuals' perspectives and allowed the researcher the opportunity to see from the participants' perspective (Yin, 2014).



*Figure 3.1.* Embedded single case study design in the West Texas oilfield.

Time and location bound this study (Yin, 2014). The goal was to investigate students' attitudes toward reading in a single West Texas oilfield city, Tenby. Further, the student participants enrolled at the same high school, Kirby High School. The study was bound by time in that researcher was looking at the students' attitudes during the fall semester of their freshman year of high school in 2020. If other researchers were to conduct the same study with the same participants as juniors in high school, their attitudes towards reading might not be the same. Though this design served best for this study, it only shed light on four students' stories and limits its applicability to the larger population of the school district in the oilfield city.

This study took place at one of five high schools in Tenby, Kirby High School. The researcher selected the high school because of convenience, as it was located a few blocks from the researcher's office of employment and less than five miles from the researcher's home. According to the principal, the student population in grades nine

through twelve at Kirby High School, in the fall of 2020, was 3,652 students, a decrease in enrollment due to COVID-19.

### *Site Selection and Participant Sampling*

Four high school freshmen students were the units of analysis for this study. These students were ideal for this study because they were administered the state's standardized reading test to measure college, career, and military readiness (CCMR). Further, the freshmen year was the first grade of high school, so these students were new to the high school setting and its culture of education and were gradually acclimating to the high school culture.

Using purposive, criterion-based sampling, the researcher chose students for the study that represent the school population, meaning that the students selected were a cross-section of the current freshmen population at the Kirby High School. The students mirror the diverse genders, SES, cultures, and racial groups present in the freshmen class. Table 3.3 outlines the pertinent participant descriptors.

To aid in the process of participant sampling, the researcher administered a questionnaire to all freshman English I classes at Kirby High School. This questionnaire was administered using Google Forms and accessed via a QR code (See Appendix B for the questionnaire.). The questionnaire asked for basic demographic information such as age, ethnicity, and gender. The questionnaire additionally asked how many years the students had lived in West Texas, how many years they had attended schools within Tenby's school district, how many times they had taken English I, and if their parent or guardian was currently employed in the oilfield. After gathering this information, the questionnaire asked if the student would like to participate in the study and asked for

contact information for the researcher to make contact and obtain consent. After collating the data collected through the questionnaires, the researcher contacted the students who were interested in taking part in the study. After meeting with both the students and parents, obtaining assents and consents (see Appendices D and E), four students were invited to become participants in the study.

Table 3.3

*Participant Descriptors*

Unit of Analysis	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Number of Years in the West Texas Oilfield	Number of years in the School District	Connection to the Oilfield
Auriel	15	Female	Hispanic	15	10	Parents are students. Father no longer works in the oilfield
Sam	15	Male	African American/Black	15	5	Father worked on the rigs
Juan	16	Male	Hispanic	12	10	Brother works in an oilfield support role
Ruth	15	Female	White	8	8	Lives in oilfield culture

*Data Collection*

The researcher collected data for this study in three ways: through three in-depth interviews with each participant, open-ended questionnaires completed by the participants, and weekly journals created by the participants. The data collection process of this study consisted of three phases. Phase one's objective was to obtain consent and

build trustworthiness with the participants. Phase two examined participants' attitudes using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Phase three was designed to collect participant thoughts and feelings from visual and written journals. See Table 3.4 for an outline of each phase.

Before the study began, the researcher contacted the Kirby High School principal and the appropriate Tenby school district administrator to request permission to conduct this study with Kirby High School students. Once the administrators granted permission, the researcher contacted the English department chair and supplied a QR code for student questionnaires. The department chair presented the English I teachers the QR code to post into their Google Classroom. Each English I teacher allowed each class a small amount of time to fill out the initial demographic questionnaire. Nine hundred and seventy-two freshmen students responded. Of those responders, 215 indicated a willingness to participate in the study.

The researcher collected the information obtained from the questionnaire to select a sample of students who were representative of the freshmen class and met the criteria of living in the West Texas oilfield for at least five years. Only 75 students met these requirements. Using the contact information provided in the questionnaire, the researcher contacted the potential participant's parents, or guardians, to share more information about the study and obtain consent. Only 20 parents were willing to meet initially. Out of the 20, only eight families and students consented to be a part of the study. During the consent meeting, the participant's parents answered a few questions to build trustworthiness with the researcher and shared information about the student's family culture and home environment.

Table 3.4

*Data Collection Phases*

Researcher Roles	Participant Roles	Data Collected
<i>Phase One</i>		
Write and distribute participant questionnaire Zoom meetings with parents or guardians of potential participants to obtain consent to participate and build initial background.	Potential participants complete the questionnaire Potential participants and guardians take part in Zoom meetings to learn about research and ask questions	Completed demographic questionnaires Consent forms Family background information for participant profiles
<i>Phase Two</i>		
Write and conduct semi-structured interviews based on emerging themes from collected data	Participates in three semi-structured interviews throughout the semester	Transcripts from interviews Completed questionnaires
<i>Phase Three</i>		
Send reminders to students to complete journals	Complete journals once a week through the semester, reflecting on what they think about reading	Student-created journals (written or video)

The second phase of the data collection process consisted of conducting three semi-structured interviews via Zoom with each participant during the fall semester. See Table 3.5 for an outline of the interview timeline. During this phase, the researcher followed a four-step collection process: The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant. The participant completed an open-ended questionnaire over the course of the semester. The researcher transcribed the interviews and coded for emerging themes about students' attitudes towards reading. She then used the coded information from the interviews, journals collected from phase two, and completed

questionnaires to create the new questions for the next round of interviews and questionnaires.

Table 3.5

*Interview Timeline*

Interview	Completion Window
Interview One	Late August–Early September
Interview Two	Mid-Late October
Interview Three	Late November–Early December

The third phase of the data collection process was the collection and analysis of participant-created journals. As these data helped inform the questions investigated in phase two, this phase ran concurrently with phase two. Students reflected over almost four months, from September 21–December 11, on their English I class’s activities. The participants also journaled about what, if anything, they were reading. Participants created the journals either as digital documents written and submitted digitally via Google Docs or as video reflections sent via Google Drive and email. Once the researcher received the weekly journal submissions, she coded the information for emerging themes about students’ attitudes towards reading. She then compared the themes with the emerging themes from the interviews to inform questions for future interviews and questionnaires. Only four students completed journals and chose to continue in the study.

*Data Analysis*

Throughout phase one of the data collection processes, the researcher transcribed each interview and coded the data to reflect emerging themes. During phase two, the researcher coded the student’s journals separately for emerging themes. The researcher



read the texts, made margin notes, and formed initial codes. The researcher cross-referenced data from each phase for themes that carried across analysis units and for consistency in the participants' responses. The researcher used these emerging themes to guide the next round of interviews.

The researcher kept a spreadsheet to track the emerging themes from both phases of the research, continually updating the tracking sheet. This sheet gave the researcher a broader set of data to create overall themes, developing thoughts, ideas, and predictions, and keeping track of each participant's collected data. After coding all texts, the researcher used aggregation to establish themes or patterns in the data. The researcher analyzed these patterns across the units of analysis, looking for similarities and differences. The researcher then drew "naturalistic generalizations" that, in the future, might transfer to a similar context (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 206).

As previously stated, the researcher prepared and stored all data in a digital filing system according to each unit of analysis. The researcher created a master sheet of emerging themes to serve as a quick cross-reference from each master file. For each piece of data collected, the researcher named initial codes from the words and created a list of code categories and descriptions. The researcher then applied those codes to the units of text and reduced them to themes. She analyzed the themes across units of analysis and then interpreted them to draw conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher maintained this study's validity through triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014) and member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher triangulated the data from phase one with phase two and across units of analysis. Triangulation involves drawing conclusions based on multiple data sources (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Before the final publication of this study, the researcher shared the interpretations and findings with the participants. Participants had the opportunity to check for accuracy. Participants examined the rough drafts to ensure it represented their true thoughts and feelings.

As student voice and self-concept were at the center of this study, the researcher gathered and used detailed descriptions from participants' responses to developed rich, thick descriptions of their stories. Using member checking, the researcher ensured the authenticity of their voices. Each participant had the opportunity to read the study results and add to or clarify any information. To preserve the participants' voices, the researcher included their comments in many places of the findings.

#### *Data Validation*

According to Yin (2014), data validation in a case study comes through the description's quality. Valid data should be significant, complete, and consider alternative perspectives. Further, studies should display sufficient evidence to prove their generalizations and assertions and should be composed engagingly to ensure validation.

This study met the significance and completeness requirements through the corroboration through multiple data sources, also known as triangulation. Participants were interviewed, they completed journals, and shared extensive thoughts through their responses to open-ended questions. The researcher analyzed each source separately for memoing, coding, tracking themes, and discovering themes. Further, each unit of analysis, or participant, was analyzed independently and was cross analyzed. These steps ensured that the patterns were consistent, not just with participants, but across the entire

case. The quantity of data collected provided extensive evidence from which to draw conclusions.

Member checking enabled the process of considering alternative perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After each interview, the interview transcript was provided to the participants to review and offer comments. Some participants chose to extend their thoughts and clarify points that were confusing after the interview. Member checking continued after the researcher finished analyzing results of the study. Each participant was provided a copy of the study and invited to comment or respond. The researcher included these comments, observations, concerns, and responses in the final published study.

The study met the requirement of sufficient evidence to support assertions and generalizations through “rich, thick descriptions” of the participants and their words (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 209). Using extensive quotes from each participant data source, a strong foundation of evidence and opportunity allowed the researcher to tell each participant’s story. Finally, this rich evidence further enabled the researcher to share the participants’ stories, explore the participant’s attitudes, communicate the factors that contributed to the participant’s formations of these attitudes, and draw and articulate conclusions in an engaging manner.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Before beginning the study, the researcher requested and received authorization to proceed with this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Baylor University (See Appendix A for the approval). Further, the researcher asked district and campus administrators permission to conduct this study, and they granted their consent.

All participants and their parents or legal guardian received an email disclosing the study's purpose, along with a consent form. Then, all participants' parents or guardians signed a consent form. Each participant also signed either an assent or consent form. The researcher hosted a Zoom meeting to discuss the study with all participants and their legal guardians in order to answer any questions or concerns related to the study.

Because of students' age and the potential for power imbalances between the researcher and the student, the researcher avoided leading questions and biased questions by requesting a review of items from an objective third party. Further, the researcher withheld sharing personal impressions during interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) remind researchers that interviews are not "completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners" (p. 173). Further, interviewers rule the interview, and, therefore, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend a collaborative process in interviewing, analyzing, and reporting the data found.

The participants and their families' privacy were of utmost importance, so the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym and removed any identifying information from the study. The researcher employed the same process for the school district, district personnel, the town, and the campus. Further, the researcher supplied the rough draft of this report to the participants, the participants' legal guardians, the school principal, and the district superintendent before publishing the manuscript. This process enabled the researcher to ensure that the words of the participants reflected their true stories. Further, member checking is one of Creswell and Poth's (2018) suggestions for participant lens validation. By allowing the participants to check their stories along the way, not only ensures authenticity of their voice but that the memoing and coding is

accurate. Finally, Creswell and Poth (2018) posit that when participants act as co-researchers in a study, the study's findings are more likely to be employed by interested parties. Further, Yin (2014) describes quality case studies as having researchers who consider other perspectives than their own as they conduct their research and discuss their findings. Member checking allows the participants to voice their opinions and share their perspectives as true co-researchers.

The researcher stored all data in three places. The first place the researcher saved it was in the password-protected Google Drive in an account created just for this research. She stripped all documents stored in the cloud of identifying information and used only the coded pseudonyms. All files were also downloaded and saved on a flash drive that was stored in a locked filing cabinet in her home office. The flash drive contained the data, including identifying information and coding matrices. The researcher printed and filed in a locking filing cabinet in a secured office all data that was printable, which was everything except the videos. The paper copies ensured that if anything happened to the online files or the flash drive, the research was still accessible.

### *Limitations and Delimitations*

There were several limitations to this study. The most significant limitation of this study was the uncertainty of school-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. As a result of schools potentially not opening, there was difficulty in contacting the students. Due to the health concerns raised by COVID-19, meeting with students was not advisable, so only students who had access to a computer and the internet could participate. Further, with many classes only taking place in a virtual environment, the researcher had limited classroom access.

A second limitation of this study was the timeframe of the study. This study's design only allowed an in-depth look at the students' attitudes in a small window of time, from September through December of 2020. Collecting data within a short timeframe limited the chances that students would significantly change their attitudes toward reading and enabled greater consistency in student responses and collected journals.

Finally, this study asked participants to engage in multiple activities over several months. If a participant failed to complete some of the activities, they were not used as a unit of analysis in this study. The failure to complete these activities caused several students to drop out of the study.

The significant delimitations of the study include the selection of the participants. The researcher did not limit the study to any specific demographic subgroups, nor did the researcher intentionally exclude any. Likewise, participants were not selected based on gender, income, usual grade range, or family structure. Though these criteria were not limited, the researcher did limit the study to participants who had lived in the West Texas oilfield for five or more years and had a close relative who engaged in oilfield work. Both of these criteria ensured that the participants were exposed to the oilfield in their everyday life.

Another delimitation of this study was that the researcher did not make direct contact with the classroom teachers. This lack of communication prevented the researcher from influencing classroom activities. Further, it limited any preconceived thoughts (from the researcher) about assignments from rising in the conversation and interviews with the students.

### *Conclusion*

This single case study used semi-structured interviews, short answer questionnaires, and student-created journals to explore students' perspectives and attitudes towards reading. This study's results have implications for teachers' instruction and future research into the impact of the oilfield on education. To that end, the following chapter examined the results of this study and discussed the implications of the research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Implications

#### *Introduction*

A single case study with four embedded units of analysis was used in this study to investigate freshmen students' attitudes toward reading in the West Texas oilfield community of Tenby. This study intended to explore the impact of peers, family, and oilfield culture on first-year high school students' attitudes. By conducting interviews with participant freshmen, analyzing open-ended questionnaires and student created journals, the researcher is looking to answer the following research questions:

1. How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?
2. How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?
3. What social and familial factors are most influential in the students' attitude toward reading?
4. How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?

As this study sought to understand how students approach reading and the impact external factors have on their willingness to read, it was a single case study with four freshmen student participants as the embedded units of analysis. Though parents participated in the initial interview, they only provided background information and are not significant units of analysis for this study. As researchers conduct case studies within a bounded framework that enables a deep exploration into participants' perspectives



(Yin, 2014), this study involved participants from one of five high schools in Tenby, a West Texas oilfield community.

This chapter discusses the study participants, their familial background, the participants' perceptions of the oilfield community, the emerging themes that were revealed through the aggregation of the collected data, and the findings related to the research questions. Further, this chapter explains the connection between this study and the theories that serve as its framework and discusses the study's connections to extant literature. Finally, in this chapter, the researcher draws "naturalistic generalizations" that can be transferred to similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### *Participants: Embedded Units for Analysis*

The participants of this study were selected using purposive, criterion-based sampling. Since the study's purpose was to explore students' perceptions in an oilfield community, one high school in that community, Kirby High School, was the choice setting to assemble a participant sample. The researcher administered a questionnaire to 972 freshmen students at the high school and then invited students who were representative of the school's population to participate in the study. The goal was to have a cross-section of the current freshmen population within the high school represented through the various genders, SES, cultures, and racial groups. These participants served as the units of analysis in the single case study.

#### *Participant 1—Auriel*

Auriel is a fifteen-year-old Hispanic female. She lives in the same oilfield city she has lived in for the last fifteen years and has attended school in the same school district her entire life. She is highly active in the music program at Kirby High School and has

been successful in most of her musical endeavors, such as solo and ensemble, UIL concert contests, and All-City tryouts. She expresses her music is what motivates her to get up and go to school. “If I didn’t have Choir, I wouldn’t go to school. It is what helps me wake up in the morning. When classes are boring, or kids are mean, I remind myself that choir is coming.” Auriel’s enjoyment of school comes not from learning or education but rather from the social interactions between her peers and her engagement in an activity that she finds enjoyable, her music.

Auriel comes from a blended family. She lives with her dad, stepmother, two-step sisters, and a half-brother. She is the oldest child in the family, and her father worked in the oilfield until 18 months before this study was conducted. He left his job working on the rigs to take a lower-paying job with more consistent hours. This job change is necessary because he and his wife both began taking college classes to earn their bachelor’s degree. Auriel sees her biological mom every other weekend, as she lives in another city. “I don’t see my mom as much, but she pushes me to do good in school. She talks all the time about when I graduate high school and what kind of job I can get closer to her.” Though Auriel’s mom does not have a college degree, she pushes her daughter to do well in school and graduate. Her mother’s influence on her to complete high school and find a good job seems to be one of Auriel’s most motivating factors to do well in school.

The majority of Auriel’s friends are also involved in choir. They spend much of their time singing and talking about the events occurring in choir. “Choir is like its own little school in Kirby. We kind of all do our own thing, but when we get together, it’s about choir.” Because of COVID-19, Auriel has not built many relationships on campus

with students outside of choir. Further, she explains the most important people to her on campus are her choir friends.

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* When asked about reading, Auriel explains that she hates to read. The last book she read from beginning to end was when she was in elementary school and participated in Renaissance Accelerated Reading (AR).

Reading [independently] is a waste of time. I don't read for school; the teachers tell us what the texts say. I can answer the questions on STAAR without reading the passage, and I don't have time at home to read anyway.

To Auriel, reading on her own for pleasure or even for academic purposes is not essential. In fact, since her teachers spend class time reviewing what was read at a comprehension level with minimal extension or enrichment, Auriel chooses not to read the texts assigned.

Reading has not been a pleasure for Auriel since she left elementary. Further, she struggles with access to high-interest books.

The last book I read for fun was in elementary school. But I guess that wasn't for fun...it was for AR, but AR was fun. We got prizes at the end of the year if we read a certain number of points. That was fun. I don't remember going to the library in middle school, and we don't shop for books here. So, even if I wanted to read, I couldn't. No books. It's not really an issue, though; I don't like to read.

AR provides Auriel with extrinsic motivation to select a book and read. She finds pleasure in reading and earning a prize. However, since she left elementary school, she no longer has access to books or AR, and therefore lacks the motivation to read self-selected texts. Auriel does not see this lack of access as an issue because she does not like reading anyway.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* Interestingly, although Auriel finds reading on her own to be a waste of time, she thinks reading is essential. “Reading is very important.” Auriel talked about how her teachers have told her that reading is important and that she needs to read, but after elementary school, she never had to read another book to succeed in school. “You’ve gotta be able to do the work in the classroom...but once class is over, I don’t read anything.” She seems to understand the importance of reading in the classroom and having the ability to read, but she does not think that reading for entertainment or learning beyond the classroom is essential. Auriel understands that she shows what she values through the amount of time she spends on those activities. When asked what is important to her, where she spends her time, she responded, “I like to sing and watch TV in my free time. I only read at school.” So, even though she knows that reading is important, it does not hold value for her. Singing and watching TV is where she spends her spare time.

*Research question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the students’ attitude toward reading?* Most of Auriel’s friends are not-readers, meaning they read the material needed for classes but nothing else. “My friends watch Netflix, and we listen to music together.” Rarely does Auriel have conversations with her friends about what they have read in class. Most often, their conversations revolve around music and other high-interest activities.

Even though Auriel sees her father and stepmother attending college and engaging in reading, she does not see reading as a critical activity.

I know that dad and Karen read. They have to study for classes. But that’s college. They have to read a lot to pass their classes; I don’t. Karen told me that I needed

to read to pass my classes, but I don't. Besides, I don't think I want to have to read as much as they do. I don't think I'm going to go to college. If I do, I'll read then.

Even though her step-mother and father read for school and engage in conversations with Auriel about how important reading is, she does not see herself as a reader, nor does she see herself as a college-goer. Interestingly, outside of reading for school, neither Auriel's dad nor stepmother engages in reading. They do not read for pleasure or as a leisure activity.

I never see Karen or Dad read unless it is a textbook. That is really boring. My favorite part of the day is sitting down and watching Netflix. I love when Dad comes in, and we watch together. We like some of the same shows...Karen and I cook sometimes, that's fun.

Auriel never sees her parents read for pleasure. She sees them engage in other activities for fun. She even participates in leisure activities with them.

*Research question 4: How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?* Auriel does not have a goal of working in the oilfield, primarily due to her gender role. "I'm a girl. What would I do in the oilfield?" Her plans include moving out of the area and pursuing a career in music.

I'd like to be able to get on a show like *The Voice* and win a recording contract, but if that doesn't happen, I guess I'll go to college and see if I can get a music career that way...whatever it takes, I am getting out of [Tenby]."

College is a backup plan for Auriel. She dreams of building a music career. Regardless of the road she has to take, Auriel is determined to leave Tenby and the oilfield behind.

The lack of bookstores and access to reading material has made it harder for Auriel to read. "When I was in elementary, we went to the library all the time. In middle school, we never went to the library. I don't know where the library is at Kirby." She

remembers when she was little going to the bookstore with her parents, but now, her parents make their purchases online.

*Summary.* Auriel is not a high-achieving student but does plan to go to college if she does not succeed in her musical ambitions. Her focus is primarily on music and her social interests. Though she understands the value and importance of reading, she limits reading to schoolwork and does not find value in reading for pleasure. Auriel has family support from both parents and her stepmother to succeed in school and graduate. While her father and stepmother support her efforts to attend college, her biological mother does not encourage Auriel to seek post-secondary education, preferring, instead, for Auriel to move and get a job located closer to her. Auriel, being a very social fifteen-year-old, chooses to engage in activities that lend themselves to high peer interaction.

Though she can see the value in being able to read, Auriel does not recognize that reading transfers to more success in school. Interestingly, she recognizes the difference between reading for academic purposes and reading for pleasure but chooses to engage in neither. Her reasoning behind not engaging in reading for academic purposes is that her teachers provide summaries of what the students should have read. So, even if she did read, she would just hear the same information again. She finds no value in hearing the same material twice. Further, she finds no joy in reading for pleasure. In part, Auriel does not have access to high-interest books through her school or bookstores in Tenby. Also, she does not have an example, either in her peers or her family, of reading for pleasure.

#### *Participant 2—Sam*

Sam is a 15-year-old African-American male. He has lived in three different oilfield towns but moved to Tenby when he was ten years old. He attended middle school

and now Kirby High School within the local school district. Sam is athletic and considers himself to be a “gamer.” His favorite activity is playing basketball at a park near his home or playing his X-Box with his friends.

Sam’s father is employed in the oil field, working away from home for approximately two weeks at a time with no break, and he comes home for one week off before returning to the rig. Sam’s mom is a receptionist and often works late hours. Sam feels blessed that his grandmother is in the picture to pick him up from school and be at home with him until his mother gets off work. Sam has an older brother who drives a truck for an oilfield hotshot company, a baby sister, and two nephews. An oilfield hotshot company is a trucking company that carries volatile substances that private shipping companies cannot legally transport and other items required on the rigs as they are needed (truckstop.com, 2021). Sam does not like that his father is away from home so much. “It is really hard sometimes. He spends the first few days at home just sleeping. I know it is hard [work], but I just want to hang sometimes...you know? He’s always too tired.” Sam desires to spend time with his father in leisure activities, but Sam’s dad is gone for fourteen days and only home for seven because of his work in the oilfield. Most of those seven “off days” are spent sleeping or resting before returning to the rigs. Sam is frustrated by his father’s lack of time, but he knows they need his father to make money, and Sam tries to be understanding.

With Sam feeling like his parents are not around, he expresses that he usually leans on his friends more than his family for his social interactions. Sam spends his afternoons playing basketball in the park or chatting with his friends as they play video games together. “I hang with a cool group. We shoot hoops around the corner. They just

put lights up on the court, so we can play after dark now.” Sam considers his friends to be his “brothers.” They “have each other’s backs” and they “get each other.” Most of his friends plan to move into the oilfield after graduation and make money. Sam’s best friend, John, plans to go to college, but “he is super smart and book-y. He helps me with my [school] work and stuff when I need it. He’s going to go to college or something after high school.” Sam plans to “get out of this place,” but has no clear idea of how he will do that. “I’m not a book-y guy. I’m not smart like John.” Sam does not identify himself as an intelligent reader. He knows that he wants to leave Tenby and the oilfield behind but does not know how he will achieve this goal.

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* Sam does not have a very high opinion of reading. “I read when I have to...books, and I have a hate-hate thing going on.” Though Sam talked about being pushed to read by his teachers, he does not enjoy reading, nor can he find any significant reason to engage in reading.

I read if I have to for school. Mostly my teachers tell me what I read, so I don’t have to read myself. If I do have to read, I can, but I don’t like it. It’s boring, and there is no point...Everything I need to know I can find on videos or somewhere.

Reading for pleasure is not something that Sam considers when he looks to fill his free time. “Reading isn’t fun. Hoops is fun. X-box is fun. Even laps in PE is fun.

Reading...nah.” Further, when Sam does begin to read novels or other texts for school, he struggles to focus on the reading. “Reading puts me to sleep...it’s just boring.” For Sam, reading is not fun. Reading for school is pointless as his teachers tell him everything he needs to know. On the rare occasions when he does read, he struggles to



focus on what he reads, preferring to be physically active rather than stationary while reading.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* Sam has heard that reading is important. He has heard about its importance from his teachers and his grandmother his whole life. “Reading is important, I guess. I heard it lots my whole life.” However, because he does not see its necessity in school, he has difficulty considering reading to be necessary. “How important is it really? I have Bs and Cs. I’m gonna graduate, but I don’t read. I don’t have to. We go over everything, so I kick back and wait. They’ll give me the answers.” Sam struggles to see value in an unnecessary activity. If the teacher will give him all of the answers, he does not see why he should go looking for the answers in a text. He knows he will graduate from Kirby with little effort and be able to get on with life. He has been able to succeed in school without reading this far and does not think anything will change moving forward in high school.

*Research Question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the student’s attitude toward reading?* Sam struggles to view himself as a student. He identifies with being a teenager, a basketball player, and a video gamer.

When we moved here, I was in sixth. Everything was different than my last school. It was hard. I hated everything and had no friends. The kids in my hood were all about gaming and basketball. They became my friends...My teachers didn’t help much with school. Mom and Dad couldn’t help. I failed and had to do that year again. It was the worst. I am just not a booky kind of person. I don’t need it; I’m going into the oilfield like [his brother] D’Wayne.

Because of his school experiences, specifically repeating the sixth grade, Sam struggles to find value in what happens on campus. Instead, he focuses on relationships with his friends.

My friends and my family are my number one. They get all of me. When I have kids, they're gonna get all of me. I gotta make money. People go to college, and that doesn't mean they're gonna make money. [In] the oilfield...I can make money.

Because Sam does not see the value in education, he does not see the value in reading.

“Why would I read at home? I go to school. I get what I need there. Home is for chillin’ and hangin’, not work.” Following the model of his father’s work schedule, Sam associates home with time off work, fun, and relaxation. Because reading does not happen in his home, reading is associated with school, where work happens. Thus, reading is not something that Sam feels should happen outside of school, and he does not engage in reading for pleasure.

*Research question 4: How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students’ decision to read?* Growing up, Sam’s grandmother told him stories about his grandfather, who left school when he was in fifth grade. He never finished his formal education but, instead, went to work at an early age and worked hard to support the family. His grandmother also never graduated from high school. Both of Sam’s parents graduated high school, but neither went to college or sought post-secondary training, military, or schooling. Sam’s older brother graduated from high school and now makes good money in the oilfield. “My Papaw took care of his family, my dad takes care of us, and D’Wayne makes bank!” With these examples of success in his life, Sam does not plan to continue his education after high school. Further, he does not see reading as an important part of life but rather a school activity that he has figured out how to

circumvent. “Yo, I haven’t read a book for school since I moved here!” Sam does not find school to be necessary with the oilfield in his family and proof of his family’s success through the oilfield. He can follow in his brother’s footsteps and make a substantial amount of money. Further proof that reading is unnecessary for Sam is that he has been successful in school without reading a single book for school.

*Summary.* Though Sam just recently moved to Tenby, he has lived in the West Texas oilfield all of his life. His grandfather, father, and brother have all been involved in the oilfield through employment opportunities. Though not a high achieving and diligent student, Sam is determined to pass his classes and graduate from high school after failing and repeating the sixth grade. He is concerned about making money and supporting himself and any family he has in the future. Though his closest friend is interested in going to college, Sam does not identify himself as a good student or a student who could go to college. The rest of his group of friends seem to think the same about themselves. Sam is not encouraged at home to read and explore opportunities beyond the oilfield.

Because he sees reading as not necessary and a waste of time, Sam does not value reading. Further, Sam struggles to focus on what he reads, finding it hard to sit still. Further exacerbating this problem is that Sam has a large group of friends who predominantly do not read or plan to go to college. Sam expresses that he would much rather spend time with his friends, either playing X-Box or basketball, than reading because reading is boring.

### *Participant 3—Juan*

Juan is a sixteen-year-old Hispanic male who has spent the last ten years of his life in Tenby. Juan is a diligent student, determined to pass his classes and qualify for a

college scholarship. He played football for his middle school campus and hoped to play football for Kirby but quit the football team when he took a local fast-food restaurant job. He chooses to work for a particular restaurant because it has a scholarship program available to employees. Juan wants to become a lawyer to help people who are in situations like his mother. "My dad did her dirty. He left and took everything, and there was no one to help her. I want to help people so that they don't go through what we did." After experiencing the difficulties of watching his mother work herself to exhaustion to support him, Juan is determined to help other people not experience the same hardship. Further, to help support his family, Juan prioritizes work over extracurricular activities and is determined to go to college. He has set his sights on a demanding career, but at the heart of his goal is his desire to help others.

Juan lives in a single-parent home. His father left when Juan was six years old. Juan's mother works two jobs to support the family. As soon as Juan was eligible to get a job, he did. "I gotta make sure my brothers and sisters have what they need...Mama works too hard. She needs a rest too. It's my time to help her." Though Juan and his mother are the primary sources of support for Juan's three siblings, Juan's uncle is nearby with his family. "My tio lives here. He helps us." Tio Miguel works as a hotshot driver for an oilfield company and keeps odd hours, but he supports the family emotionally and when needed, financially.

Juan is very close to his younger sister and brothers, but he does not have many friends.

I don't have a whole lot of friends. The kids at school are only interested in parties and getting drunk or high. They just don't get it...so immature. The guys I work with are either struggling to make money or going to college. They are all older than me, so it is hard to make friends.

Because of how quickly circumstances forced him to mature after his father left, and due to his focus on making sure his family is taken care of, Juan struggles to identify with students his age. Further, because he is the youngest employee at his job, he struggles to make friends with his coworkers. With these divides between Juan and his peers, his main social group is his family.

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* Juan sees reading as a tool to learn. He does not enjoy reading outside of school, but neither does he have time to explore various books.

I read at school. When teachers want us to learn something, they assign us the textbook...sometimes I read it, sometimes I don't. Some teachers...the textbook is just to keep us busy and quiet. I hate those classes...I see some of my classmates reading books that aren't assigned by the teacher, and I wonder what they are about. I don't have time to read for fun. I sometimes can get home in time to read with Sissy, but mostly she already sleeping.

While he understands that reading is important for school and learning, he finds that reading is a luxury in life and not something that he can take advantage of right now.

Maybe one day I'll be rich and have time to just kick it and read, but not right now. I can't even buy myself a book. When the bookstore [book fair] comes to the school and Sissy wants to buy something...we don't have money for that. I don't have time to go to Middleton [the next city over] to shop for books and don't have the money to buy 'em even if I had the time.

Juan dreams of a day when he can sit back and read for pleasure, but he does not have the time right now. He is focused on helping to support his family. They cannot afford books even when there is access to them. Some campuses in Tenby host book fairs where students can purchase books and reading accessories. Further, if Juan did have the

money, he does not have the time between work and school to drive thirty miles to the next city just to visit the bookstore.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* To Juan, it is important to be able to read to gain knowledge and be successful in school and work.

My job...when I got it, I had to read all this stuff about what I can and cannot do. If I couldn't read, I'd've been in trouble. It is important. Reading helps us gain knowledge...Reading for fun is an extra, like ice cream. It is good, if you like it, but not required.

Reading is a luxury of which only some are privileged enough to partake. Outside of school and what teachers require and provide, books that he can read are hard to get, and to Juan seem like a luxury item.

At home, Juan takes the time to support his family's needs, not just financially but also educationally. He is determined to make sure that they have as bright a future and as full of opportunities as possible.

Because Mama works, I try to keep the boys and Sissy doing what they need to. But work keeps me out late a lot. I'm supposed to get off at 10, but that usually doesn't happen. When I am home, I read to Sissy before bed and make sure everyone has their homework done. School is important. We're never going to survive without making money and going to college will make sure that happens. So, I check homework and make sure all the projects are done. I want the kids to go college, even if I can't.

Juan values education and tries to instill this in his siblings. For Juan, reading and education go hand-in-hand. He spends his rare nights off reading to his sister and ensuring that his brothers have completed all their homework, even reading. He understands that his siblings' future is dependent on their ability to break the cycle of poverty. For Juan, the key to breaking this cycle is to get a college education. Sadly, even though he has big dreams for his future, Juan understands and recognizes that he might

not make it out of Tenby and into college to achieve his goals. Regardless of this understanding, he is determined to ensure that his siblings will reach their goals.

*Research question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the student's attitude toward reading?* While Juan watches a few of his classmates read books for fun and listens to his coworkers, who are currently attending the university, talk about reading for school, he finds himself in the problematic place of lacking financial means, time, and access to books. "I don't have time to sit around and read. I am either working or watching the boys and Sissy...I read in class, for school...I guess I am just not a reader." Even though his lack of time is the root cause of his lack of reading, Juan is redefining himself as a not-reader. Even though he reads for school and recognizes its value, time constraints keep him from indulging.

Due to his SES, Juan is not able to gain access to high-interest texts. Even if he could gain access, he would not be able to indulge because of his school and work schedule. This lack of access and time is detrimental not just to Juan but also to his siblings.

The thing that bothers me the most, it isn't just that I can't buy books or go to the bookstore. I can't buy Sissy books, and she is too smart not to have books! My brothers are smart and would read if I could read with them and give them something written before 1920. No offense, but the [county] library sucks! But I can't. What do I do?

Though Juan values reading and would provide an example to his siblings, he is unable to read because of his lack of access to high-interest books. Perhaps because of the realities of working for a living and supporting a family, Juan has a very positive attitude toward reading.

*Research question 4: How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?* Juan's uncle is currently a manager and driver for an oilfield company. He has offered Juan the opportunity to come and work for him and make a substantial amount of money right out of high school.

My tio, he's a manager and said 'Come work for me.' He told me the job would be easy for me and not a lot of work, but that's not how I want to make my money. The oilfield goes up and down, you know. Sometimes Tio has lots of money and can help Mom out, but other times he isn't making as much. I want to know that I have money, not wonder. If I don't get a scholarship, I'm going to have to take a job, but I am going to try for college first.

Juan's focus is to go to college and get a degree to find stable employment. However, his uncle works for an oilfield company and has offered to give Juan a job. Juan's concern is the instability of the oilfield and being able to support his family. If the bottom drops out of the oil prices, he will at best take a pay cut, and at worst, lose his job. He watches his uncle live through the hard times when money is tight, and he sees him live through times when money is plentiful. Juan plans to seek his college degree first but will keep his uncle's job offer as a backup plan.

The oilfield community of Tenby seems to prioritize and value avenues other than reading. Part of what Juan struggles with is that there is not a bookstore in Tenby. The closest bookstore is thirty miles away. Further, the county library "sucks!" It does not contain books that interest Juan or his siblings. So, even though he finds reading important and wants to set an example for his siblings as a reader, he cannot.

*Summary.* Even though Juan is from a family that struggles financially and cannot afford to purchase books to read for pleasure, he understands the importance of reading and the impact education can have on his future. He has an opportunity to move into the oilfield and make money, which is an opportunity that he keeps as a backup plan



just in case he cannot get a scholarship to attend college. Ideally, he wants to find a job with stability because he has lived the last twelve years of his life in the West Texas oilfield and understands the way jobs and pay fluctuate. He has a very mature belief that even if he “can’t get out of here and get a college degree and make something of myself, at least I can get a job and make money so that Sissy and the boys can have a better future.” Selflessly, Juan is focused not just on his future but also on his siblings’ future. He wants to be an example for them and provide a means for them to do more than work in the oilfield or at a fast-food restaurant.

#### *Participant 4—Ruth*

Ruth is a 15-year-old white female who moved to Tenby when she was seven years old. Her father moved to open an oilfield-related business shortly after graduating with his Bachelor’s degree, and her mother is a teacher in the school district. Ruth is planning to try out for the cheerleading squad but is currently a member of the school’s dance team. She is a high-achieving student who loves to spend time with her family and friends.

Ruth’s family consists of her parents and an older brother. Her father is the sole proprietor of a business specializing in supporting oilfield companies in their fieldwork. Consequently, when the oilfield is booming, business is good, but when it is busting, business is bad. Ruth’s mother has been a teacher all of Ruth’s life.

Mom’s always been a teacher. She was a teacher while Dad was going to school. I think my dad worked while Mom went to school. It took a while for Mom to graduate because she had Brent, and that slowed her down. But Dad believed in her, and she was able to graduate and get a job in Houston. After she started teaching, I was born!

Ruth's older brother, Brent, is currently attending a university in East Texas and plans to attend medical school to become a pediatric oncologist. "I am super proud of Brent. He's going to save lives. I'm not as smart as him, but I'm going to go to college. I'll probably be a teacher or something like that." Ruth sees herself going to college and working in whatever field she studies, even though she does not know what that is yet. Though she does not see herself as a person who is as intelligent as her brother, she has internal confidence that she is intelligent enough to go to college.

Ruth has a large number of friends that she hangs out with regularly. Whenever she has time away from school and extra curriculars, she can be found with this group of friends.

We spend lots of time together on the weekends. We used to go to the mall a lot, but then COVID. Now we hang out at my house or one of their houses. During the summer we were at my house because we have a pool.

She has known this group of friends for the majority of her schooling in the district. She considers them to be very close friends who she can talk to about almost anything.

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* For Ruth, reading is more than just important for educational purposes; it is an important part of her life.

Reading is important. If I couldn't read, I couldn't get an education, and that would mean that I would be stuck working here with no future...I love reading! My favorite book series of all time is *Harry Potter*, but I like Ransom Rigg's books too, they're weird. My favorite thing to do with my mom is go to [the bookstore] in Middleton and just browse the books. I love the new book smell...I can't imagine not having books.

Not only is reading important for Ruth's education but also her sense of self. Ruth self-identifies as a reader. She loves to read and has developed a taste for a particular genre of books. Reading is an intrinsic part of her life.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* Ruth is focusing on her future and the dream of “getting out” of Tenby, where she currently lives. She plans to go to college in East Texas, and to get there, she has to be able to read.

I am going to go to college. I don’t know what I am going to do when I graduate, but I am going to college. I can’t go to college if I can’t read. So, reading is the key to like, my whole future!

Ruth is determined to go to college and believes that reading is the key to her future. She wants out of the oilfield town and to “make something” of herself.

Even though she understands that she has to read to go to college, Ruth does not read for academic purposes.

It is sad. I love my books. Reading for school is awful. I hate what they assign us. In English the books are boring. In the other classes, we don’t have to read because the teachers just tell us what the books say. I know that they are doing it because kids don’t read, but why would we?

Even though she reads incessantly, her focus is on the books she loves. Ruth does not find reading for school to be important because her teachers tell her what the books say. She goes one step further to say that her English teachers do not pick high-interest books, so even though those books are novels, they are not interesting.

*Research question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the student’s attitude toward reading?* Ruth’s mother and father both demonstrate avid readers’ habits to their children, and Ruth grew up in a home where earning a post-secondary degree was demonstrated and valued. This experience instilled in her the innate drive to read and achieve.

I make good grades; my mom would kill me if I didn’t. She’s a teacher; it’s what they do. Dad wants me to do what I love, but he wants me to have a degree to fall back on just in case.

Though Ruth's father understands that Ruth may want to follow a non-traditional career field, like dance or art, he wants Ruth to earn an academic degree to ensure that she has a "plan B." Both parents prioritize education and expect Ruth to go to college.

Ruth's mom and dad are both avid readers, a habit that Ruth has adopted. She enjoys family time, and her parent's example has made it easier for her to find her love for reading.

My dad reads his books every night in the den. He reads autobiographies and other boring; I mean nonfiction books. Mom reads too, but her books are all about teaching...or she is reading her students' work to grade it. I like to spend time with them, so when they read, I get my books and read too.

For Ruth, reading is a social event. It is an opportunity to spend time with her family. Because of the variety of books and texts read by her parents during the evening reading times, Ruth has built a broader understanding of what it means to read.

Even though Ruth follows her parents' example, there are times that her friends pull her away from reading.

My friend, Trinity, facetimes me all the time. We have fun talking, but she doesn't get why I read so much. She decided she was going to 'save' me from my books...I have to ignore her calls sometimes...most of my friends don't get why I like to read. I don't talk to them about it.

Socializing is important to Ruth, and she uses it as a time to build relationships. Unfortunately, her close friend Trinity does not understand why reading is so important to Ruth. Trinity does not prioritize reading, nor does she have examples of readers outside of Ruth in her life. Trinity is not the only friend that does not understand the importance of reading. Ruth's circle of friends does not include any avid readers, and sometimes Ruth feels disconnected from her peers because they cannot relate.

This one time, I made a joke that I thought was hilarious. No one got it. Then I was like, 'Duh; they didn't read that book.' Sometimes that happens. I hint about

something I read or mention it, and they all look at me like they don't understand me. Sometimes they're nice and laugh, but sometimes it's just awkward silence.

Ruth finds that reading enables her to make connections that others do not always understand. She finds that she feels more isolated as a reader than she would if she were a not-reader. Fortunately for Ruth, she has strong relationships with her mother and father, and those relationships help her "stay true to who she is." She can maintain her self-image as a reader. Further, she is encouraged to continue reading by her family at those times when she begins to "leave my love of books."

*Research question 4: How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?* The oilfield itself does not seem to interfere with or contribute to Ruth's decisions to read, other than by providing access to money that enables access to books. "It takes almost thirty minutes to drive to [the bookstore] from my house. Me and Mom talk about all kinds of stuff. It is our bonding time." Because Ruth has money and time, she has access to books and an opportunity to build a strong relationship with her mother.

*Summary.* Even though the last book that Ruth read for school was completed during her grades in middle school, Ruth describes herself as an avid reader. She expresses she cannot imagine her life without books. She is supported in her reading habits by her parents, both of whom have earned a post-secondary degree, and her brother, who is attending a university intending to become a medical professional. This support has helped Ruth make plans to attend college and gain a post-secondary degree. Her family's support has helped her foster her love of reading even though her peers, who are also high achieving and highly active students in her school, do not understand.

### *Emerging Themes*

Each participant, as an embedded unit of analysis, engages with and responds to semi-structured interviews, records their thoughts and ideas in a journal, and answer an open-ended questionnaire to explore their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about and towards reading. These data were coded and analyzed to identify emerging themes. These emerging themes are discussed below.

#### *Narrow Definition of Reading*

The students who participated in this study have a very narrow definition of reading. When asked about reading, each student immediately answered questions and engaged in the interview from the perspective of reading for school. It was only with prompting that the students think the idea that reading can also occur outside of school. Juan defines reading as “picking up a textbook, or passage in English class and reading.” Auriel says, “Reading is a class we take in elementary school to learn how to read.” After thinking for a few minutes, Ruth exclaims, “reading is what we do to keep busy in class,” and Sam explains that he did not have to read to pass school. He has not read a single book since moving to the school district in the sixth grade.

Once the participants started thinking about reading outside of school, they still do not consider more extensive reading definitions. Auriel, a musician, does not consider reading music as a form of literacy and reading. Sam’s X-box playing is a form of digital literacy. Further, the work that Juan engages in at his job contains elements of reading. While these may not all be examples of reading for pleasure, they are literacy events.

Further, the students are very limited on what school reading, academic reading, is. Though in their journals they talk about reading various stories in class, all of the journal entries echo the same idea. Juan writes:

We read “The Mask of the Red Death” today. It was a neat story, but confusing...we didn’t do anything but listen to it. [The teacher] asked questions, but no one answered them. I don’t know why we have to have English class. It seems pointless.

In her journal written around the same time, Auriel writes: “Our homework last night was to read. I didn’t read. I don’t think anyone read. Why would we? [The teacher] basically spent the whole class time telling us the story.” They all agree that reading is “important” to their future education and careers, but they do not see the purpose in a class that requires reading literature. Sam further demonstrates this narrow definition of reading when he says:

Reading in history, I get. Even reading in biology makes sense. But a class where all we do is ‘read’ stories? That is a waste of time. Maybe if we actually had to read to pass the class, it would make more sense, but all [the teacher] does is tell the story. Dumb.

Sam understands reading to learn in classes such as history. However, he does not seem to understand what he should be learning in his English class. If students are reading to learn, then they should be learning the content of the text. However, that is not the purpose of an English class.

### *Peer Influence on Reading*

Two of the four participants in this study are influenced in their leisure reading habits by their peers. Auriel and Sam are both surrounded by peers who are not interested in reading. While this study does not prove that these two students would read more with a different group of friends, it reveals that their friends’ choices reinforce and support

Auriel and Sam's decisions to read or not read. Sam's friends meet and helped him to prioritize events like basketball at the park or X-box over reading. Auriel's friends support her decision to gather and sing rather than read, which is an independent activity. Auriel expressed, "If I have to choose between my friends and being alone, I am picking my friends." For Auriel, her socialization with her friends is more important than an activity performed in isolation, such as reading.

Ruth explains that her peers influence her enthusiasm to talk about books. Unfortunately, this influence is not to get Ruth to speak about what she is reading. Her friends influence her to not talk about the books she was reading.

I remember once; I was talking about *Miss. Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. One of my friends actually threw a pillow at me. I think that may have been the last time I tried to talk about a book with them.

Even though her friends enjoy her company and like to have her around, they do not want to hear Ruth talk about her reading. They actively work to keep her from sharing. Perhaps this rejection is because Ruth frequently speaks about her books. Perhaps it is because her friends just do not understand her references. Regardless of the reason, her social circle of peers actively works to discourage Ruth's sharing. Fortunately, Ruth can talk to her mom and dad about what she is reading, and they are encouraging.

Similarly, Juan is surrounded by his co-workers who are reading for their college classes, while others read for pleasure. Even though they are reading, Juan reiterates that he is not like them.

I am the man of the house. If I don't work and bring home a paycheck, it falls on my mom. She can't do it all. It's my responsibility. I'm not like [my co-workers]. They don't have people depending on them. I kind of wish I could kick back, but I can't.



Though he wishes he had the time, neither he nor his family can afford for him to stop working long enough to read.

All four participants discuss the fact that their peers influence their reading habits for school. “No one reads,” Auriel said. Juan sums up the experiences in the classroom:

One time, a kid in my class did read and tried to answer questions. He was the only one who read. He was new. A bunch of the kids got so mad at him because the teacher yelled at us for not reading because he did. I felt bad for him.

Juan’s story paints a picture where students who read to learn are actively discouraged from continuing by their peers. The classroom seems to be an environment where students do not have any reason to read independently, even though the teacher expects them to.

### *Familial Influence on Reading*

Greater even than their peers’ influences, the participants in this study are influenced by their families. The students whose families have a background of education (Auriel and Ruth) understand the importance of reading and getting a post-secondary education. Juan, though, did not come from a highly educated family and still sees the need for a steady income and an education. Sam, whose family has no education beyond high school, but has a long history in the oilfield making a living wage, sees no benefit to post-secondary education.

Interestingly, just because the participant was exposed to family members who read does not mean the participants engage in pleasure reading or academic reading. Both Ruth and Auriel were exposed to parents who read. Ruth’s parents read every evening for pleasure. Auriel’s father is working on his post-secondary degree and, therefore, studies

at home. Despite this, neither participant engages in academic reading, and only Ruth engages in pleasure reading.

### *Access to Books*

The greatest obstacle to reading, other than motivation, revealed by the participants of this study is a lack of access to quality, high-interest books. Auriel spoke about not having access to the campus library. Juan revealed that he could not travel to the closest bookstore, more than 20 miles away, to purchase books. “Even if I could get to [bookstore name], I couldn’t afford to buy anything.” Ruth, an avid reader, spoke about the books available in the school library, “There is not a book in the library that I would check out. They are all old and boring books. I wish they would get better books.” So, even though Ruth can access books at Kirby’s library, she does not find the books that are available to be interesting. The books themselves are older novels or packaged in unattractive covers that do not strike Ruth as interesting.

All four participants indicate that they prefer to read physical books rather than digital books. Ruth says, “I love that new book smell. When you open the book, and it just surrounds you. It makes me feel at home and comfortable. Ebooks don’t do that.” Sam scoffed, “If I bought an ebook, I’d have to read it on my X-box. I got better things to do on there than that!” Ruth prefers the experience of opening a book and feeling the pages, and smelling the glue. Juan does not have time to read; neither an ebook nor a physical book will help. Auriel does not have a device on which to read an ebook. “All I have is a small phone. I couldn’t read more than two words at a time on it! No, I’d want a real book.” Her desire for an actual book because she lacks a device is similar to Sam, who does not want to read a book on his X-box.

### *Success in the Oilfield*

The oilfield plays one of two roles for the participants. It either serves as something to get as far away from as possible, or it serves as a safety net to fall back on if other goals do not materialize. Auriel said, “Even if I don’t make it as a musician if I hate it near my mom, I can always come back. This place isn’t going anywhere.” Sam, who plans to go into the oilfield right after graduation, says, “The money is in the field, not school.” Even Juan, who decided he wanted a post-secondary degree, said, “If it doesn’t work out, I’ll come work for Tio, in the oilfield.” Auriel and Ruth are both determined to leave and not look back. They both said, “I can’t wait to get out of this place.” Though the oilfield contains many opportunities to make money, its inconsistent and volatile economy makes it harder for it to be someone’s first employment choice. Further, because of Tenby’s remote nature, many young people including Auriel and Ruth, cannot wait to go somewhere less remote and more urban.

Ruth is the only participant who alludes to the fact that reading is necessary to succeed in life. The other participants all stated that they could be successful without reading. Reading affects their success in school. Auriel said, “I don’t have to read to sing.” Success for Sam, Juan, and Auriel means making enough money to be comfortable without worrying.

### *Summary of Themes*

The earlier sections of this chapter provided introductions to and presented the data from the four participants’ interviews, journals, and open-ended questionnaires. These data were memoed, coded to organize into theory categories and themes, and finally processed through pattern matching analysis to address this study’s four research

questions. Further, the previous sections discussed the themes that emerged through the analysis process. These themes included: a narrow definition of reading, the influence that peers have on a student's reading attitude, the influence of families on reading attitudes, the impact of access, or the lack thereof, to books, and finally, the impact of the oilfield on students' reading attitudes. The remaining sections of this chapter are dedicated to discussing the findings, implications, and conclusions of this study.

### *Discussion*

Cross-unit analysis reveals five major themes that align with the study's theoretical framework and the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The five themes, discussed previously, pertain to the definition of reading, peer influences, oilfield opportunities, familial influences, and access to reading material. The researcher examines the four research questions and applies these themes to the data. Below, the significant findings from this analysis for each of the four research questions are discussed. Further, from these findings the researcher identifies and discusses the three overarching themes revealed and four significant findings that go beyond the research questions. Finally, the connections between the findings and the literature review and the connections between the findings and the theoretical framework of the study are discussed.

### *Interpretation of the Data*

The purpose of this study is to understand students' attitudes towards reading in the West Texas Oilfield. The research questions are designed to gather information from the participants about their reading perspectives, the factors that influence them, and how

the impact they perceive the oilfield has on them. This study's four research questions are:

1. How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?
2. How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?
3. What social and familial factors are most influential in the student's attitude toward reading?
4. How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* Three significant findings emerge from the four participants within the analysis of the interview, journals, and questionnaires.

- The participants found that engaging in the assigned classroom reading was pointless.
- Reading is time-consuming and not always a good use of that time.
- The participants remember that reading self-selected texts was fun and engaging in elementary, but it is not engaging now.

Participants do not engage in school-assigned reading. Out of the four participants in the study, only one student, Juan, engages in reading in school. Juan, however, admits that he did not always read the assigned reading. All four students consider their teacher-assigned experiences using assigned reading as “busy-work” and as a tool to “keep us busy and quiet.” Further, all participants explain that completing the assigned reading is not important because the teacher covers the same material the next day. Ruth expresses her ideas about the instruction when she says:

It would be okay to go over the reading, I think, but we don't do anything with it. I mean, they could ask us questions about it. And I don't mean questions like “Do

you get what this sentence is saying?” But questions that actually mean something. I mean, we aren’t stupid.

While the students do not all seem opposed to covering the information and reviewing what is read, they do find the instructions to be not just pointless, but insulting, when they do not include extension or enrichment questions.

Reading is not always the best use of precious time. Ruth is the only participant that did not agree that reading is not a good use of time. She believes that reading is an important part of her life. The other three participants either find no point in reading because they are “goin’ into the oilfield, so reading don’t matter,” or they cannot find the time in their schedule. Juan shares, “I’d love to read, but duty calls, and so does my boss.” In the choice between working and reading, for Juan, work has to come first.

Reading self-selected texts is fun and engaging in elementary school for all participants. All of the participants mention they are required to participate in AR when in elementary school. This program requires students to read a book and then take a test to gain points. At the end of the year, the students earned a prize if they reach a certain number of points or “win” the competition. “The only time I read was in [elementary school]. My teacher promised a pizza party if we got to a specific number of points. I wanted pizza. We don’t eat pizza at my house. So, I read.” Sam, though he professes that he and books have a “hate-hate thing goin’ on” finds the motivation to read a book. Unfortunately, AR only occurs in elementary school for all participants.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* By analyzing the interview, journals, and questionnaires, three significant findings emerge when the participants are asked how important (or not) the skill of reading is.

- Reading as a skill is important.
- Reading to learn is important if you are going to college.
- Reading self-selected texts is a luxury and not as important as academic reading.

Reading as a skill is important. As a basic skill, all of the participants agree that it is important to be able to read. “Yo, if you can’t read, you can’t do nothin’,” Sam points out that it is impossible to function in today’s society if one cannot read. From reading labels in the grocery store to reading the employee handbook at a new job, reading is a gatekeeper skill that can keep someone from being successful in life.

Reading to learn is important if one is going to college. Ruth asserts that reading to learn is the key to her future because it is what will “help her get into and stay in college.” Auriel, though not as dependent on education to help her “get out of Tenby,” believes that reading to learn is important because she’s “got to learn how to read contracts and stuff for my music career. Besides, if that doesn’t work out, I need to go to college too.” Juan understands the need for a career to help support his family. “Reading helps us gain knowledge,” and that knowledge will help him either get into college, his first choice, or help him find a dependable job. The only participant who does not plan to attend college is also the only participant who did not find reading important.

Reading self-selected texts is a luxury and not as important as academic reading. Juan expresses his desire to sit and just read whatever he wants, but he admits that this would be a luxury that he cannot afford. “I don’t have time to read for fun,” he states, because he has to work, go to school, and help his mother take care of his siblings. Auriel only reads at school. She is focused on her music and not a college education. “Reading for fun is not on my to-do list at all. I have better things to do with my time.” When asked

about reading a self-selected text for fun, Sam responded with “Nah” and went on to say that reading was not for him.

*Research question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the student’s attitude toward reading?* Through the analysis of the interview, journals, and questionnaires, three significant findings emerge when the participants are asked about their families and their peers.

- Students mirror parent’s presence and example in their attitude toward reading.
- Students mirror their peers’ attitudes towards reading unless they have a strong contradictory influence from their parents or life circumstances.
- SES influences the students’ attitude toward reading.

Students mirror parent’s presence and example in their attitude toward reading.

The participants who had parents at home who set an example tend to be students who have a positive attitude toward reading. The participants who have parents who do not set an example of a reader tend to have a more negative reading attitude. Ruth, who has a very positive attitude towards reading, has parents who are both educated, support her reading, and are examples of reading for pleasure. Juan, who has a positive attitude towards academic reading and a neutral attitude towards reading for pleasure, has a mother present in his life as a breadwinner who provides an example of the cost of not earning an advanced degree and finding a high-paying job. Auriel, who has a negative attitude towards reading for pleasure and a neutral attitude towards academic reading, grew up in a home with parents who were not readers and did not have a degree. A few years prior to this study, Auriel watched her dad and stepmother work towards and earn their college bachelor’s degrees. This process serves as an example of reading



academically. But neither parent reads for pleasure. Finally, Sam, who has a negative attitude towards reading, does not see his parents much because they are working full-time. Sam comes from a long line of oilfield workers and plans to follow in their footsteps, so he does not see the value in reading. Freshmen students tend to mirror the model of the attitude their parents display towards reading.

Students mirror their peers' attitudes toward reading unless they have a strong contradictory influence from their parents or life circumstances. Sam, the participant who had the least parental involvement, mirrors the negative attitudes toward reading shared by most of his peers. "We don't read, we game, we play ball. We're all gonna be in the oilfield rakin' in the dough while everyone else is still in school." Auriel has strong parental influences, but they only recently include reading. Thus, her attitude more closely reflects her peers. "Most of my friends plan to go to college. I might go to college, but I want to try music first." Even though Auriel speaks of them all going to college, they do not read for pleasure, nor do they read in school. Juan, facing life circumstances beyond his control, does not mirror his peers' attitudes toward reading. Ruth's friends have a decidedly negative attitude towards reading; however, Ruth can stand against their attitude and maintain a positive attitude towards reading with her strong parental support.

SES influences the students' attitude towards reading. The two participants facing difficult socioeconomic situations, Juan and Sam, respond differently to their situations, but neither have access to books because of their SES. The two participants who live in homes with two working, college-degreed parents have access to books. Though Auriel does not take advantage of her ability to access books through the internet, she has more

access than Juan and Sam. Ruth enjoys the SES of established parents with college degrees and enjoys access to the bookstore thirty miles away.

*Research question 4: How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?* Two significant findings emerge when the participants are asked about reading through the analysis of the interview, journals, and questionnaires.

- Limited opportunities are available because of physical location as well as a lack of non-oilfield-related access.
- Higher wages are available in the oilfield as opposed to other fields that are dependent on higher education.

There are limited opportunities available for interests outside of the oilfield.

Though the oilfield provides opportunities for financial growth, there is a distinct lack of opportunities for those interested in other areas to participate in or engage with those activities. Because Tenby is located so far from any of the large urban centers in Texas, there is no opportunity for Auriel to engage in professional training or growth in her music. To get training that will help her be competitive when she steps into the professional music world, Auriel “will have to move at least six hours away, probably more.” The biggest issue that the physical location of Tenby causes for all of the participants is that the city has no bookstores. The participants can buy books from bestseller sections at big-name grocery and retail stores. Still, there are no dedicated bookstores within Tenby's city limits or even within the county. The nearest dedicated bookstore is thirty miles away in Middleton, a neighboring town in a neighboring county.

Students can make more money in the oilfield with a high school diploma than in other fields with a bachelor's degree. The average driver of a hotshot company, a

trucking company that carries volatile substances that private shipping companies cannot legally transport other required items to the rigs, only needs a high school diploma to be employed, and they make on average \$78,000 per year (truckstop.com, 2021). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the national median annual income for a recent graduate with a bachelor's degree is \$64,896. This \$14,000 and four-year difference influenced Sam's attitude that reading and school were not important to his goal of supporting his family. This knowledge of how much money is available in the oilfield also affected Juan. He is determined to get a college degree, but is keeping his oilfield connections, his uncle, as a backup just in case school does not work out.

### *Summary of Significant Findings*

The purpose of this case study is to understand the attitudes of freshmen students in the West Texas oilfield toward reading. After analyzing the significant findings from each research question, the data reveals three overarching themes.

- The significance placed on reading in the classroom through pedagogical choices contributes to students' self-image.
- Familial interactions are critical influencers in student's desire to read and can be supported or challenged through other social interactions.
- Reading is not a luxury but a necessity, and as such, all students should have access.

Students describe their attitude towards reading in relation to their experiences with their peers, teachers, and parents. However, the students begin their discussions with a statement of self-identity. The students who identify themselves as readers had a more positive attitude towards reading than those who identify themselves as not-readers. While not a hard and fast rule, as the concept of attitude is complex, these perceptions

form the student's attitude. Other outside influencers work in conjunction with these interactions to influence students' attitudes.

The data collected from this study indicate that students determine the importance of reading, first based on their definition and understanding of what reading is and of what it consists. This understanding is built in school through pedagogical practices as well as direct, intentional instruction by teachers. Students further assign importance to reading based on their social interactions with parents, family, and peers.

Social interactions are key to the student determining their identity as readers or not-readers. The first key interaction for the participants of this study was the interaction between student and parent. More often than not, the student mirrored the parents' perception. When the parent is absent or recently engaged in a transformative activity, such as attending college, the participant assigns greater weight to their interactions with peers and, in one instance, with family members.

Though the oilfield is not actively working to distract students from attending college or reading, this economy's very existence acts on the students and their decisions to read. Students from lower SES brackets are more likely to lean on the oilfield either as a primary career goal or as a backup plan just in case school is not successful. With the oilfield there to catch anyone who does not make it, reading becomes less critical to a person's financial success and ability to live.

#### *Additional Significant Findings Beyond the Research Questions*

By analyzing the interviews, journals, and questionnaires, the researcher identifies additional significant findings related to student's attitudes toward reading: the pedagogy of the ELAR classroom, student access to reading and literacy, and power. These findings

are beyond the scope of the research questions detailed above but are significant enough that they should be discussed. Further, these findings inform the implications and recommendations provided by this study.

*Pedagogy of the ELAR classroom.* The participants of this study discuss a few different experiences they had in their English classrooms. The first is an experience that encourages them to read. In elementary school, the students are encouraged to read books for points towards earning a reward. While the program itself raises issues of burnout in one of the students, that is caused by the teacher requiring a certain number of books and points each grading cycle rather than allowing the student some choice and freedom to read at their pace and interest level. The second experience is students not having the opportunity to engage in what they are reading. The instruction in the classroom usually stays at the comprehension level of Bloom's Taxonomy and never moves beyond it (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Rather than teachers challenging the students to move beyond the text's surface level and explore connections, they focus on whether the students understand the story and could recall the events. The final experience of the participants is that they have not visited the campus library since elementary school. Another participant recounted that she had visited the library at Kirby High School, but no books of interest were available.

*Student access to reading and literacy.* One of the participants expresses that reading high-quality and high-interest books is a luxury. Reading is only a luxury when it is not accessible to all. Students do not have access to books when the county library does not contain recently published, high-interest books. Further, students' access to reading material is denied when they must travel to another city to find reading material.

Additionally, when high school freshmen cannot read or purchase books because they must work to feed themselves and their siblings, access is not readily available. Finally, students' access to literacy is prevented when they are denied access to literacy events. All the participants of this study revealed they were denied access to literacy or reading through one of these circumstances.

*Power.* The lack of access raises the question of where the power lies in the community of Tenby. The students with higher SES have greater access to bookstores and books, allowing them a privilege not enjoyed by others. Where does the funding for the county library come from? Who decides what books are contained in the library? Who decides what businesses to encourage to move into Tenby? The answer to these questions could reveal a deeper issue in the community of Tenby.

Further, teachers, through their pedagogical choices, withhold or provide literacy events from their students. The participants share stories of how the teachers assign books or reading for them to complete. However, in contradiction to the best practices discussed in chapter two, the teachers did not select high-interest texts or provide social opportunities to explore the text and make it relevant. Once the reading assignment was due, rather than allowing the students to engage with each other in social interaction or another strategy to make the reading relevant (Beers & Probst, 2017; Gallagher, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018), the teacher summarized the content that should have been read independently. This choice robbed the students of the literacy event that would allow them to engage in learning, and also provide the impetus for the student to begin reading. By making these choices, the teacher retained the power in the classroom and kept the students from exercising their agency.

### *Literature Review Connection*

When analyzing the emergent themes in relationship to the literature from chapter two, the researcher finds that each participant shares experiences and thoughts that align to the literature. The themes include: a lack of reading among youth (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Martin-Chang et al., 2020; Willingham, 2015), the necessity of effective school strategies (Mansor et al., 2013; Willingham, 2015), cultural influences (Mansor et al., 2013; McKool, 2007), the impact of student's identity and the influence of oilfield characteristics (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Wilhelm, 2018). Table 4.1 illustrates these themes and their application to each participant.

Table 4.1

#### *Themes Aligned with the Literature*

Participant	Lack of Reading	School Strategies	Culture	Characteristics of the Oilfield	Identity
Auriel	Dad is a student, and stepmom works, bringing the family a lower income (Mansor et al., 2013; Strommen & Mates, 2004)	Auriel does not read in class. Her teachers cover the material in such a way that reading is not necessary (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Smith, 2012; Willingham, 2015).	Dad reads for school only, neither step-mom nor biological mom read for pleasure, and her peers do not read (Mansor et al., 2013; Smith, 2012; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015)	It is harder for a female to find a job in the oilfield, so her only option is to leave the oilfield to pursue her future (Baki, 2018; Cook, 2019; Howard, 2008; Willingham, 2015)	Auriel sees herself as a singer and musician, not a scholar nor a reader; therefore, she does not read (Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Willingham, 2015)

Participant	Lack of Reading	School Strategies	Culture	Characteristics of the Oilfield	Identity
Sam	Low-income background, and he does not prioritize education (McKool, 2007; Strommen & Mates, 2004)	When Sam refuses to complete his work, his teacher provides him with enough information to pass the class (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Howard, 2008; Maharsi et al., 2019; Smith, 2012; Willingham, 2015).	Making money is very important and prioritized over family and education. His peers do not prioritize reading (Convertino et al., 2016; McKool, 2007; Willingham, 2015).	The most money to be made is in the oilfield, so Sam intends to go into the oilfield. Education is not required (Baki, 2018; Convertino et al., 2016; Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Willingham, 2015).	Identifies himself as a gamer, not a scholar nor a reader; he has determined that he is an oilfield worker and money maker (Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Willingham, 2015)
Juan	Understands the value of reading but does not have time to engage in reading (Kumar & Ansari, 2010; Mansor et al., 2013; McKool, 2007)	School uses reading as a tool of classroom management not as a teaching tool (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Kumar & Ansari, 2010; Mansor et al., 2013; Smith, 2012; Willingham, 2015)	Mom does not have time to model reading habits, but peer readers surround him (Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019; McKool, 2007; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015)	Though seeking education, the oilfield is a fallback just if he does not make it as a student (Baki, 2018; Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Willingham, 2015).	Identifies as a provider and example of taking care of others, not a student (Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Willingham, 2015)



Participant	Lack of Reading	School Strategies	Culture	Characteristics of the Oilfield	Identity
Ruth	Does not fit into the category of a not-reader (Mansor et al., 2013; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Willingham, 2015)	Does not participate in nor prioritize reading in the classroom (Logan & Johnston, 2009; Smith, 2012; Willingham, 2015)	Discusses books and reads with parents, but not peers (Beers & Probst, 2017; Howard, 2008; Mansor et al., 2013; Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018)	Provided opportunities to access and higher income because of father's business in the oilfield (Baki, 2018; Kumar & Ansari, 2010)	Ruth considers herself to be an avid reader. (Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Willingham, 2015)

*Lack of reading.* Participants explain the reasons why they did not read. Of the four participants, only one acknowledges that she engages in reading outside of school. Though Auriel engages in reading through her music and Juan through his job, they do not recognize these activities as reading. Additionally, all but one participant are members of families who are considered “blue-collar” (McKool, 2007). Further, two of the participants do not have strong models of reading in their home.

*School strategies.* Research identifies four strategies that should take place in schools to build prolific readers. First, the teacher must provide high interest books to students (Beers & Probst, 2017; Gallagher, 2009; McGeown et al., 2012) Second, the teacher must provide social opportunities for students to participate in as they read, which includes building a culture of reading in the classroom (Beers & Probst, 2017; Kumar & Ansari, 2010; Maharsi et al., 2019; Mansor et al., 2013; Martin-Chang et al., 2020;

Wilhelm, 2018). Third, the teacher must ensure access to books in the format the student is most comfortable (Baki, 2018; Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016; Loh & Sun, 2019) and fourth, the teacher must teach the students and help them understand the different purposes and kind of reading (Beers & Probst, 2017; Gallagher, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1994; Smith, 2012; Wilhelm, 2018; Willingham, 2015). According to the participants' journals, there is a lack of exposure to high-interest texts. The students read texts that are classics or passages from previous STAAR tests. The schools do not provide easy access to other texts. The participants either do not know how to access the library or cannot find texts of interest. The participants do not engage in activities that turned reading into a social event. The participants do not understand that reading is more than running one's eyes across a page and making meaning. According to Mansor et al. (2013), this understanding that reading (literacy events) happens outside of school must be explicitly taught to students.

*Culture.* The context surrounding the participants impacts their choices to read and their attitude towards reading. Peers' choices to not read directly impacts all of the participants. Familial obstacles, challenges, and supports either aid or impede the participants' choices to read. Gender is one element of the context of the students that is debated in the literature. Though there are many studies that found gender not to be significant to a person's attitude (Eccles et al., 1993; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Pitcher et al., 2007; Wolters et al., 2014), this study found that, of these participants, males are more likely to be not-readers than females and in greater need of supports from the school to help them be successful (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Baş, 2012; McGeown, 2013; McGeown et al., 2012).

*Characteristics of the oilfield.* The oilfield characteristic that is the most impactful to the participants in this study is the oilfield economy. The participants each understand the impact of the money of the oilfield. The volatile nature of the oilfield is also recognized by the students, either driving them away or not deterring their determination to be a part of the industry.

*Identity.* The students who read perceive themselves as readers. Those who did not read identified themselves not as readers but as something else. This self-perception affected not just their choices and attitudes toward reading, but the choices about and trajectory of their future (Stairs & Burgos, 2010).

#### *Theoretical Framework Analysis*

The students' attitudes toward reading are analyzed using a framework based on combined aspects of NLS and RAT (see Table 4.2). Both theories build on the idea that students are not readers or not-readers in isolation, but their identity is determined by external factors influencing the internal. NLS supports that literacy is a social event, and to understand what happens in that event, one must understand the culture and practices of those involved in the events. Literacy events happen everywhere, and the study of these events can highlight the culture of the social practices and the location of power within that culture (Gee, 2015). As such, researchers should look at the social practices behind reading and the literacy practices both in the school and the home. RAT compliments NLS. It posits that there is a close relationship between students' background and their attitude towards reading and the school's background and students' attitude towards reading (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016). The stories and thoughts that

participants of this study shared revealed that their background and contexts did inform their attitudes toward reading.

Table 4.2

*Emerging Themes Aligned with Theoretical Framework*

Participants	NLS			RAT and NLS	
	Definition of Reading	Peer Influences	Oilfield Opportunities (Regional Culture)	Familial Influences	Access
Auriel	X	X		X	X
Sam	X	X	X	X	X
Juan	X		X	X	X
Ruth	X			X	

Examining the results from a theoretical perspective, all four students have a limited definition of reading, and their family heavily influence all four in their attitudes toward reading. Two participants are heavily influenced by their peers, while two are not. Further, the opportunities of the oilfield influence the attitudes of the two male participants. All but one student are affected by the lack of access to books.

*Implications*

The aim of this case study is to explore the attitude of West Texas oilfield freshmen students towards reading. Though there is no empirical data explaining the uniqueness of the oilfield, the participants' experiences and perspectives paint a picture of the oilfield from their perspective. Further, this study explores not just participants' attitudes toward reading, but the factors that inform these attitudes. The participants who

share their perspectives are all freshmen students at Kirby High School and articulate their experiences in ELAR classrooms, interacting with peers, engaging with parents, gaining access to books, and facing challenges that life threw at them. Thus, this study's findings reveal several issues that provide implications for the school district, campus administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders.

### *School Districts*

Some students make it through their secondary education without reading for pleasure. Teachers, coaches, and school districts need to revisit best practices for ELAR classes. Further, since many students struggle with access to high-quality and high-interest texts, all efforts should be made to alleviate this issue. If possible, the district should make the funding available to campuses for new high-interest books to be purchased for classrooms and campus libraries. Further, the district should facilitate relationships in the community to facilitate or provide funding for all students to access high-interest books.

### *Campus Administrators*

Campus administrators must be aware of the pedagogical practices teachers utilize in the classroom. Campuses need to build strong relationships with students' parents so that parents can learn the importance of reading and encourage their children to read. Further, this strong relationship will enable campuses and parents to work collaboratively to enrich and improve each student's education. Part of these relationships should be responsiveness to the needs of the families. Students should never be unable to access resources. Further, students and families should be made aware of the available resources. If the campus library does not contain the needed resources, administrators

should take steps to update it. Finally, administrators need to support their teachers in keeping up with the new best practices and ensuring that all students receive the best education possible. The support of best practices may include creating time in the master schedule for students to engage in self-directed reading during the school day.

### *Teachers*

Teachers, especially ELAR teachers, are tasked with a heavy load; however, in light of this study, teachers' roles matter. A student should not be able to sit through a class and never read. Teachers need to deploy best practices in their classrooms. Building literacy into social interactions using high-quality and high-interest texts will help to capture students' attention. Teachers must reach out to district officials and administrators to advocate for their students to have access to high-interest texts. Literacy is more than just reading academic texts. There are all kinds of literacy. Teachers need to leverage these literacies to help students view themselves as readers. Because not all students have time to read outside of school, teachers must provide time within the school day for students to read.

### *Parents*

While parents cannot change their background or SES, they can provide a home environment that encourages and sets expectations for children to read. Children need to see their parents reading and engaging in literacy events. Further, reading must become a social event in the home. Parents should ask their children what they are reading and engage in conversations about those texts. Even though parents may not have access to a bookstore, parents can enter into conversations with administrators and district officials to ensure that high-quality and high-interest texts are available to all students.

### *Community Leaders*

Educating students is a community endeavor and takes more than the school district personnel. This study highlighted the lack of access that students from lower-income families have to books because of the city's lack of bookstores. While a thriving bookstore in the city may not be possible, it is possible to update or create a community library. This effort should focus on high-interest, high-quality books that students can access and read. Community leaders should listen openly to the students' feedback to ensure that the books represent the community and the students' interests. Lack of reading is a whole community problem, not just a school district issue.

### *Summary and Conclusion*

The attitude towards reading of the participants of this study is consistent and clear. Though they understand that reading is an essential life skill, they feel that reading is unnecessary in school. Further, for most participants, reading is considered boring and causes a disconnect between them and their friends. It also causes them to feel isolated. Since they all know how to read, the participants questioned why they were required to attend an ELAR class, especially when reading is unnecessary. The students do not experience an ELAR class where the books and stories they are reading are presented and taught to help them build connections to the texts. They do not experience how reading the texts can change their thinking (Kenney, 2005), help them gain insight into other people (Wilhelm, 2018), build empathy (Beers & Probst, 2017), and build skills that transfer to their communication skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; Martin-Chang et al., 2020).

Several factors play a role in the development of these attitudes. Participants from lower-income families often do not have equitable access to high-quality reading material. Further, some participants do not have the time to read extensive texts outside of school. The opportunities available in the oilfield industry provide a safety net for students; however, sometimes, the industry's money leads students away from pursuing further education or valuing and taking advantage of the public education they have access to before graduating from high school.

Peers and parents also influenced the attitude of the participants. In the homes where parents provide a healthy model to read or show they value education, the participants direct their steps towards higher educational aims. The participant who came from a background of successful people who did not have post-secondary education did not see value in reading.

Though not all students come with identical backgrounds or goals, they deserve the opportunity to understand the importance of reading and practice reading in all of its iterations. This understanding of and opportunity to practice reading is vital to students' success. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that all students have equitable access and opportunity to engage with age-appropriate and high-interest books.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Distribution of Findings

#### *Executive Summary*

Reading is a lifelong skill that students often take for granted. It is a skill that opens doors of opportunity and student achievement. The school district in Tenby found that students are not reading texts that teachers assigned in class. Further, few students were reading self-selected texts outside of school (S. Chambers Focus Group, personal notes, March 14, 2017). This lack of reading is concerning because reading is a foundational skill for all learning (Kenney, 2005) and there are profound implications for students who do not develop this skill. Literacy skills that students develop through reading lead to greater cognitive development. They develop writing skills, enhance their knowledge on many topics, build empathy and develop positive reading attitudes, which foster better reading habits (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015; Martin-Chang et al., 2020).

Though academic performance was not the focus of this study, it is part of the problem that served as this study's exigence. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) posited that a correlation exists between performance on standardized tests and students' reading habits. Therefore, when a district or campus has consistent difficulties achieving a satisfactory score on standardized tests, such as the English I STAAR EOC, entities must dig into students' reading habits and attitudes in an effort to discover solutions. The district must determine if students are engaging in reading outside of the classroom for pleasure, outside the classroom for academic purposes, inside the classroom for pleasure,

or inside the classroom for academic purposes. If they discover that students are not engaging in these opportunities to read, the district must investigate and determine the cause and extent of this issue. Tenby school district began to dig into the lack of academic achievement, and they discovered many of their ninth-grade students opted not to advance their reading skills outside of school. Further, the county's oilfield statistics suggest that there might be a correlation between oilfield culture and students' attitudes towards reading.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of freshmen students toward reading. Gee (2015) posits that culture has the potential to influence the attitude of students towards reading. Oilfield culture has not been explored in research prior to this study, so it is explored through the participants' perceptions in this single case study. With Kirby High situated in the West Texas oilfield, this study explores the correlation between the oilfield and students' attitudes toward reading. This study aims to provide information to aid teachers, district administrators, and community members to make informed decisions about possible changes to the district and instructional plans in an effort to impact students' attitudes toward reading in a more positive light.

#### *Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures*

Using an embedded case study design (Yin, 2014), this study looks at four units of analysis, freshmen high school students selected through criterion-based sampling from one high school, Kirby High School, in the oilfield community of Tenby (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study is bound by the single context of Kirby High School within the public-school district within this community. The four participants reflect the demographics of the campus.

The data collection is in three phases. Phase one involves the researcher gathering consent forms and building initial family background information. In phase two, the four participants each engaged in three semi-structured interviews that occur throughout the fall 2020 semester. They also complete an open-ended questionnaire. Finally, in phase three, the students submit journals they created, either written or video recorded, where they reflect about their classroom activities at school, particularly those centered around reading. Specifically, they discuss their reading assignments and their thoughts about the reading assignments and activities associated with them.

After collecting all the data, the researcher engages in memoing the transcripts, journals, and questionnaires and begins the data analysis process. The researcher codes the data and organizes them by the main theory categories derived from the theoretical frameworks. She frames the themes and analysis through the lenses of RAT and NLS. The second round of coding consists of the researcher identifying subcategories. Finally, the researcher engages in pattern matching across all four units of analysis to draw “naturalistic generalizations” that can be transferred to similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 206).

RAT’s theoretical framework posits a positive relationship between a students’ background (gender, culture, values, motivation, beliefs, stances, etc.) and their attitude. To fully understand a reader’s attitude, one must look at the complex parts that inform that attitude (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016). Students’ attitudes toward reading are informed by the values they learn from their parents, either explicitly or through observation. Further, this study reveals that the participants’ background (their familial history and their SES) informs their reading attitude. Students from a lower SES or with a

history of family working in the oilfield, have less positive attitudes toward reading than the students who come from a higher SES or do not have family who work in the oilfield.

The theoretical framework of NLS illustrates that literacy, or reading, does not occur in isolation. To understand a reader's attitude, one must look at where the literacy events occur, the event's social practices (who is empowered by the event), and the literacy practices involved in the event. Failure to consider these factors can result in the inability to accurately determine the student's reading attitude (Gee, 2015). Analyzing the literacy practices surrounding this study's participants reveals that many teachers do not provide learning activities above the comprehension and recall level of Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Further, the issues of access and power are raised when exploring the social practices around students' choice to read and selection to read. Students from lower SES do not have access to high-quality and high-interest texts. The public library in Tenby does not hold high-quality and high-interest books. Further, there is no bookstore in the city. The closest bookstore is thirty miles away in Middleton. Finally, most literacy events occur at school and not by the student's choice.

### *Summary of Key Findings*

This study sets out to understand students' attitudes toward reading in the West Texas oilfield. With this purpose in mind, the researcher designs four research questions to gather each participant's perceptions about reading, the social and familial factors that most influence their attitudes, and how they perceive oilfield culture as related to these attitudes. The four questions are:

1. How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?
2. How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?

3. What social and familial factors are most influential in the student's attitude toward reading?
4. How do the realities of the oilfield opportunities contribute to the students' decision to read?

*Research question 1: How do freshmen high school students in the West Texas oilfield describe their attitude towards reading?* After analyzing the data across all participants, the study reveals that the participants find that engaging in the assigned classroom reading is pointless. Further, the participants feel that reading is time-consuming, and they question whether spending all that time reading is the best use of their time. Finally, participants remember that reading self-selected texts was fun and engaging in elementary school, but they do not read self-selected texts now because books are not engaging.

*Research question 2: How important (or not) do freshmen students find the skill of reading?* After cross-analysis, the findings for this question are as follows. Freshmen students believe that reading is a life skill and therefore important. If one is going to college, engaging in reading to learn is important. Reading self-selected texts is a luxury and not as important as academic reading.

*Research question 3: What social and familial factors are most influential in the student's attitude toward reading?* There are three major findings for this question after analyzing all four participants' data. Students mirror their parent's presence and example in their attitudes toward reading. Students mirror their peers' attitudes towards reading unless they have a strong contradictory influence from their parents or life circumstances. Finally, SES influences the attitude of students towards reading.

*Research question 4: How do the oilfield realities contribute to the students' decision to read?* This research question raises further questions about power and access along with oilfield characteristics. This study yields two critical findings for this question. First, there are limited opportunities available in Tenby because of its limitations and a lack of non-oilfield-related access. Finally, the higher wages one can earn in the oilfield, as opposed to the wages one can earn with a college degree, decrease the likelihood that students will choose to read.

From these findings, five major themes emerge. The first theme is the participants' definition of reading. Participants define reading very narrowly and focus the definition solely on an educational aspect. The second theme that emerges is the impact of the participants' peers. According to NLS, reading is a social event, and the actions and beliefs of the participant's peer group affect their perspective, feelings, and motivation towards reading. The third theme that emerges is familial influence. The history of a family and the current context of a family affect a reader's attitude toward reading. The fourth theme is related to access. Consistently through the interview process and during their journal writing, the students speak about their ability to gain access to books or their inability to have a book. Finally, the oilfield context works in one of two ways on the participants; they are either highly motivated to move away from the oilfield or embrace it as a safety net or goal. Most participants use the oilfield as an excuse not to read.

### *Informed Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher shares several recommendations for the stakeholders of Tenby's community and school district. These

recommendations are included in this section of this chapter. Recommendations are provided for school districts, campus administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, and future researchers.

### *School Districts*

The Tenby school district should invest in resources to provide access to high-quality, high-interest books to all students. Further, the district should ensure that all teachers use research-based best practice teaching strategies in all ELAR classes. While examining and training teachers in best practices, professional development training should also include Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Convertino et al., 2016; Cook, 2019). Through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), teachers will learn the importance of keeping students' culture at the center of their instructional decisions.

### *Campus Administrators*

Campus administrators should heed the recommendations made above to school districts but personalize it to campus levels. Further, each campus needs to build strong relationships with the parents and community stakeholders to ensure the campus can be responsive to the families they serve. This responsiveness includes addressing the individual needs of the family. No student should be without access to books. Finally, campus administrators need to support teachers in staying up to date on best practices and supporting teachers in implementing those strategies. Further, the campus master schedule should reflect the administrator's commitment to reading by providing time throughout the day for students to engage in self-directed reading.

### *Teachers*

Teachers should ensure they are aware of best practices in the classroom and ensure these practices guide their instructional practices in the classroom at all times. ELAR teachers should build social interactions into their literacy instruction. Further, teachers should engage students with high-interest and high-quality texts that move beyond the literary canon. There are multiple types of literacy. Teachers should leverage those literacies to help change students' self-images from being not-readers into readers. Teachers must understand that not all students have time to read outside of school, so they should provide students time to read within the school day. Finally, teachers should advocate for all students to have access to high-quality, high-interest texts.

### *Parents*

Parents need to be positive role models in their home, showing what it means to read, both for pleasure and academic purposes. Further, parents can make reading a social event by asking questions, engaging their children in conversations about what the children are reading, and sharing what they are reading. They must communicate with the teachers, campus administrators, and school district to create open communication lines about their children's needs.

### *Community Leaders*

Community leaders must understand the school district does not operate in isolation; it will take all stakeholders' effort to ensure quality education for all students. The lack of access to quality books for pleasure reading is a community failure. As a community, students' reading resources should be updated to include current, or at least recent, high-interest and high-quality texts for students to read. The community leaders



should explore options and opportunities to invite bookstores into the city, which will increase access. Finally, community leaders must lead the way in entering conversations with oilfield companies about ways to support the school district's efforts. While the oilfield needs people to work, perhaps they can help educate students on what is required to work in various jobs. Further, oilfield companies could potentially incentivize taking classes at the local community college with the caveat of acceptable academic progress. Further, to encourage students, bonuses for workers who graduate high school with a high grade point average could be offered by the oilfield companies. These steps might encourage students to read.

#### *Future Researchers*

Future opportunities for researchers should include attempts to examine the culture of the oilfield from an ethnographic perspective. Further, research should also be conducted exploring the impact of the oilfield on education, especially in West Texas. This research will help improve education in this area. Finally, future research should consider further investigating reading attitudes, on a broader scale in various other parts of the state and nation.

#### *Findings Distribution Proposal*

In order for a study to have the greatest opportunity to affect change, the researcher must distribute the findings of the study to the intended audience. Further, the researcher must have a plan to distribute or disclose the findings. The following sections detail the intended audience of this study, the method the researcher has chosen to disclose her findings, and finally, the necessary materials for each of her chosen methods.

### *Target Audience*

This researcher's target audience includes all school district's stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, district officials, oilfield leaders in the area, and community leaders of Tenby. These are the members of Tenby's community that will be most affected by the application of these findings. These stakeholders are the individuals and entities that will generate the necessary change in the community for long-lasting impacts.

School officials and personnel must know the findings of this research in order to open dialogue for further studies to enable them to educate students more effectively. The community leaders should leverage power of the community to improve conditions for the students' context. They should implement programs to improve access, resources, and the kind of influence the oilfield brings to the educational system. Including oilfield executives in the distribution of these findings creates the opportunity for the initial conversations of how the oilfield can support education and not act as a hurdle in the lives of the students to begin.

### *Proposed Distribution Method and Venue*

One of the venues for the professional presentation of this study's findings is the district school board's special meeting in September 2021. The audience at this meeting will most likely consist of members of the school board, administrators, teachers, key community leaders, and the public. The presentation will focus on the key findings and recommendations of the study. The school board has allotted twenty minutes for the presentation and twenty minutes for questions and answers. The goal of the presentation will be to highlight the participants' attitudes toward reading and share findings from the

study. The researcher understands that these results do not represent the entire school district, only a sampling from Kirby High. However, it is worth highlighting the issues and discussing the recommendations for addressing them within the community.

Other venues at which this study's findings would be pertinent could be conferences, such as the National Council of the Teachers of English, that focus on the instructional practices in the English classroom. NCTE's national conference assigns presentations to last between 50 and 90 minutes. This study's presentation would need at least 50 minutes to present and would then leave time for questions and answers.

Finally, this researcher or one of the stakeholders could convert this study into professional development opportunities for English teachers who work for Tenby's school district. This presentation would focus on best practices for ELAR instruction. It could also serve as a campus professional development at Kirby High School. The professional development focus could be informational or focus on discovering what the campus staff can do to build literacy events in classes beyond the ELAR class.

### *Distribution Materials*

For meetings within the school district, distribution materials will consist of an Affidavit of Request to Appear, an abbreviated handout and summary of the presentation, and a presentation of the study's key findings and recommendations. The affidavit and the abbreviated handout and summary will be placed on the public agenda and provided to the school board. The communications director will post a copy of the presentation to the school board's web page after the board meeting.

In order for this study to be presented at a conference, the researcher needs to write a proposal and submit it for approval. Once approved, the researcher will convert

her findings to a presentation and a handout. These materials will detail the methodology and pertinent findings of the study. The researcher will adjust which findings were emphasized based on the purpose or theme of conference.

Finally, to convert this study to a professional development opportunity, the researcher or stakeholder needs to abbreviate the findings and emphasize those areas that most affect teachers. Further the researcher or stakeholder will need to prepare a list of strategies or resources to empower the teachers to make changes to their professional practices. Once the presentation has been created, handouts need to be generated and space found to hold the professional development.

### *Conclusion*

All stakeholders must understand how students' culture impacts what they do, both in and out of the classroom. Regardless of background, SES, attitude, or any other identification designation, each student deserves the opportunity to engage in high-quality reading instruction practices and understand the importance of reading. This study provides the first step into understanding the impact of the oilfield on four participants within Kirby High School in the community of Tenby. Suppose each of the stakeholders accepts responsibility for ensuring quality instruction and access for all students and then implements change where they can. If so, communities like Tenby could be transformed through positive reading attitudes.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board Exemption Letter

**From:** Trevino, Jessica <Jessica\_L\_Trevino@baylor.edu>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 19, 2020 1:14 PM  
**To:** Kristen Vesely; Holland, Deborah  
**Subject:** Re: IRP Application Inquiry  
**Attachments:** Is This HSR Booklet - TP (2).pdf

Hello Kristen,

Thanks for reaching out. Your study does not qualify as human subjects research because there is not intention to have generalizable results, rather, this is a case study focusing on one school. Thus, you do not need to submit any documents to our office. Though your project does not fall within regulations, you are still required to conduct your study ethically as discussed in the [Belmont Report](#). Attached is our guidance booklet if you have questions about determinations. Let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards,  
Jessica Trevino

---

**From:** Kristen Vesely <Kristen.Vesely@ectorcountytisd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 17, 2020 8:04 PM  
**To:** Holland, Deborah <Deborah\_L\_Holland@baylor.edu>; Trevino, Jessica <Jessica\_L\_Trevino@baylor.edu>  
**Subject:** IRP Application Inquiry

Good Evening,

My name is Kristen Vesely and I am working on my Problem of Practice for the Online EdD: Leadership and Organizational Change program. I have been asked to inquire as to whether my study will qualify as exempt from IRB approval.

I have tentatively titled my study: Understanding High School Freshman Students' Attitudes Towards Reading: A Case Study of an Oilfield High School in West Texas

I am researching the attitude of high school freshmen (from an oilfield city) students' attitude towards reading. I plan to conduct a case study with its bounded framework. I plan to select and work with 8-10 students from the nearest campus using criterion-based and opportunistic sampling. I will ask the focus group for recommendations as well as ask for volunteer students. The students should reflect the diversity of the school. I will be using semi-structured interviews with the students at least twice through structured interviews via zoom (face-to-face) if possible. I will also have the students journal about their reading practices. I will host at least one focus group with the freshmen English teachers from the campus as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

## APPENDIX B

### Google Forms Questionnaire

#### Participant Questionnaire

Please fill out this form as honestly as you possibly can! This form is to gather demographic information and request participants for a research study. If you have any questions or would like to contact me, my contact information is at the end of this questionnaire.

\* Required

##### Questionnaire Introduction



<http://youtube.com/watch?v=oE1LEfsqhh0>

1. What grade are you enrolled in? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Freshman  
☐ Sophomore  
☐ Junior  
☐ Senior

2. Is this your first attempt at your current grade level? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

3. How old are you? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ 13

☐ 14

☐ 15

☐ 16

☐ 17

☐ 18

4. What is your race/ethnicity? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ Asian

☐ American Indian

☐ Black or African American

☐ White

☐ Hispanic

☐ Two or More Races

5. How long have you lived in [REDACTED]? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ 0-3 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 5-8 years

☐ 8-12 years

☐ 12-15 years

☐ more than 15 years



6. How many [REDACTED] schools have you attended? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ All of my schools have been ECISD schools
- ☐ Some of my schools have been ECISD schools
- ☐ This is my first school to be an ECISD school

7. How long have you lived in the P [REDACTED] \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0-3 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 8-12 years
- ☐ 12-15 years
- ☐ more than 15 years

8. Does anyone in your family work in the oilfield? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. If you have family members in the oilfield, what is their relation to you? (mother, father, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, cousin, etc.)

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10. If you have family members in the oilfield, think about the person who has worked in the oilfield the longest. How long have they worked in the oilfield?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0-3 years  
☐ 3-5 years  
☐ 5-8 years  
☐ 8-12 years  
☐ 12-15 years  
☐ 15-20 years  
☐ more than 20 years

11. If you have family members who work(s) in the oilfield, what kind of job(s) did/do they have in the oilfield? (check all that apply)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ field worker  
☐ office work  
☐ management  
☐ company owner  
☐ truck driver  
☐ seasonal worker  
☐ works on the rigs  
☐ oilfield support  
☐ lay pipes  
☐ land man  
☐ scientist/geologist/seismic work

Other: ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is your average grade in school? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ A+
- ☐ A
- ☐ A & B
- ☐ B+
- ☐ B
- ☐ B & C
- ☐ C+
- ☐ C
- ☐ C & F
- ☐ F

13. Do you like to read for fun? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. I am looking for participants in this study. The participants will be asked to participate in an interview with me via Zoom. Are you interested in participating? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

15. If you answered yes or maybe about participating please fill out the following questions: Parent/Guardian's Name

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16. Parent/Guardian's Phone Number

---

17. Parent/Guardian's Email Address

---

18. Your Email Address

---

**Thank you for filling out this questionnaire! If you said that you are interested in participating, I will be reaching out to you and your parent/guardian in the next few days!**

Kristen N. Vesely  
Doctoral Candidate - Baylor University  
[kristen-vesely1@baylor.edu](mailto:kristen-vesely1@baylor.edu)  
[missyknv@gmail.com](mailto:missyknv@gmail.com)

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This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

## APPENDIX C

### Email to Potential Participants

Good afternoon!

I am a doctoral candidate at Baylor University, and as a part of my program, I am studying high school freshmen students' attitudes towards reading. Recently your student completed a questionnaire and indicated that they are or might be interested in participating in my study. Based on the information your child provided in the questionnaire, they match the criteria and qualify to participate.

With your permission, I'd like to invite your student to participate. Participants will participate in three interviews over the Fall 2020 semester. The interviews will be via zoom and last no more than an hour. We will schedule these interviews around your schedule. Between interviews, I will ask your student to complete a journal/log detailing feelings and opinions about texts they are reading in their English classes and answer three open-ended questionnaires.

If you chose to allow your student to participate, your privacy and your child's privacy will be protected at all times. I will assign your child an alias and withhold all identifying information to maintain your child's anonymity. Data collected from the study will protect identity. There is no risk involved in participating in this study. After completing the study, I will provide a copy of my written report to you and your child to review before publishing.

If you are willing to allow your child to participate, please respond to this email, and we can set up a date and time for an initial zoom meeting where I can answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration! I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Kristen N. Vesely, M.A.

Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX D

### Parent Consent Form

Baylor University  
**Curriculum & Instruction**  
Parent Consent for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Understanding High School Freshman Students' Attitudes  
Towards Reading: A Case Study of an Oilfield High School in West Texas

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kristen N. Vesely

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

**Purpose of the Research:** The purpose of this study is to explore West Texas oilfield freshmen student's attitudes toward reading. We are asking that you allow your minor child to participate in this study because they are a freshman student, enrolled in an English I class for the first time, and have lived in the West Texas oilfield for more than five years.

**Study Activities:** If you consent to allow your child to participate in this study, you consent to your child participating in three interviews, completing a weekly journal about activities in their English I classroom, and completing three open-ended questionnaires.

**Risks and Benefits:** To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks to you or your child for taking part in this study. Others may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

**Confidentiality:** A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your or your child's personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

**Compensation:** There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Questions or concerns about this research study:** You can email or call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our information is listed below:

Kristen N. Vesely                      Kristen\_Vesely1@baylor.edu                      432.202.4060

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254.710.1438. You can talk to them about:

- Your/Your child's rights as a research subject
- Your concern about the research
- A complaint about the research

By signing below, you are providing consent.

---

Signature of the Subject's Legal Parent or Guardian

---

Date

## APPENDIX E

### Minor Student Consent Form

Baylor University  
**Curriculum & Instruction**  
Minor Student Consent for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Understanding High School Freshman Students' Attitudes  
Towards Reading: A Case Study of an Oilfield High School in West Texas

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kristen N. Vesely

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

**Purpose of the Research:** The purpose of this study is to explore West Texas oilfield freshmen student's attitudes toward reading. We are asking that you participate in this study because you are a freshman student, enrolled in an English I class for the first time, and have lived in the West Texas oilfield for more than five years.

**Study Activities:** If you consent to participate in this study, you consent to participate in three interviews, completing a weekly journal about activities in your English I classroom, and completing three open-ended questionnaires.

**Risks and Benefits:** To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks to you for taking part in this study. Others may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

**Confidentiality:** A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

**Compensation:** There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Questions or concerns about this research study:** You can email or call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our information is listed below:

Kristen N. Vesely                      Kristen\_Vesely1@baylor.edu                      432.202.4060

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254.710.1438. You can talk to them about:

- Your/Your child's rights as a research subject
- Your concern about the research
- A complaint about the research

By signing below, you are providing consent.



---

Signature of the Subject

---

Date

## APPENDIX F

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

#### Demographics

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How many years have you lived in \_\_\_\_\_?
4. Do you have family in the oilfield?
5. What jobs do they work?
6. How long have they been in the oilfield?
7. Who lives in your home with you?
8. Talk to me about your family's educational background. Has anyone graduated high school, college?
9. What plans do you have for your future career?
10. What are your plans after high school graduation?

#### English Class Activities

1. What kind of English class are you in?
2. Did you complete your summer reading? Why/Why not?
3. What is your favorite activity in English class?
4. What are you working on as an English class right now?
5. What are you reading as a class?
6. What are you reading on your own?

#### Self-Image

1. Do you think of yourself as a reader or a not reader? Why?
2. What was the last book you read?
3. When did you read it?
4. How many books did you read over the summer?
5. Where do you like to read? Why?
6. When do you prefer to read? Why?
7. Where do you find the books that you read?
8. Where do you find the books you use for your English class?
9. What kind of books do you prefer to read? Why?
10. What makes you want to read a book on your own? OR What could...
11. What was the first book you read that you really liked?
12. Why did you like it?
13. How do you like to read? Technology or paper? Why?

#### Peer Influences

1. Tell me about your friends.
2. Who do you hang out with?
3. What do you do for fun?
4. What do you talk about?
5. How many of your friends read books?
6. Who do you talk to about the books you read?

#### Familial Influences

1. Tell me about your family?
2. Who lives with you?
3. How often do you and your family hang out?
4. What do you do when you hang out?
5. What do you talk about?
6. How many readers do you have in your house?
7. Do any of the readers talk to you about the books they read?
8. Who do you talk to about the books you read?

## APPENDIX G

### Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions

#### Questionnaire One

1. Describe the oilfield. How does it affect you or your family? How does it affect your plans for the future? Tell me everything you know about it. Please include as many specifics as you can.
2. On a scale of 1 - 10
  - a. How important is reading to you?
  - b. How important is reading to your future?
  - c. How important is reading to your friends?
  - d. How important is reading to your family?

Please explain why you chose the numbers you did.

#### Questionnaire Two

1. Tell me about your last experience in your school's library. How long ago was the experience? What school was it? Did you enjoy the experience? Did you find what you were looking for? If you could change anything about the experience, what would you change? Why?
2. What is the last book you read? Who chose it? Why was it chosen? What did you think about it? How much did you read?

#### Questionnaire Three

1. Think about all the times you have interacted with a book, either physically or digitally. What is your favorite memory that involves a book? Give me as many details as you can. Why is this your favorite memory?
2. What has been your favorite activity in English this year? Why?

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