Project Narrative: Examining the Interplay of Experiences of Participants in an After-School Writing Club

Courtney A. Brown
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, courtneya.brown@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/4713

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradtdq@lsu.edu.
PROJECT NARRATIVE: EXAMINING THE INTERPLAY OF EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS IN AN AFTER-SCHOOL WRITING CLUB

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Sciences and Education
Louisiana State University School of Education
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Courtney Allison Brown
B.S. Tulane University, 1997
M.S. Amridge University, 2007
Education Specialist, Louisiana State University, 2016
December 2018
This dissertation is dedicated to every adult who did not have optimal circumstances as a child. To you, I am tangible proof that dreams still come true. To the single parent, working a full time job with a goal that seems to evade you, you are equipped with the strength to make it even if life renders you delays.

I further dedicate this work to the light of my life and the epitome of resilience, my son Benjamin. To Ty, TJ and Tia who survived my late nights and early mornings, I love you more than my heart can say. To my students who have become my very own children, we did it ya’ll! Don’t ever give up.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my parents, family, and friends. Your patience, support, and prayers have helped me to accomplish one of my greatest dreams. To Mom and Dad, to my sister and childhood partner-in-imagination Shannon, and to my cousin Troy who threw a party just because I got accepted into the doctoral program, thanks for supporting this work. I hope that I have made you proud and honored my ancestors.

To my best friend Gia, there is no way I could have begun and completed this work without you! You believed when I didn’t, and pushed me when I wanted to throw in the towel. We did this together. This is our victory. Thank you!
Acknowledgements

Dr. Barerra, your wisdom and sensitivity towards this journey has been invaluable. During my interview process for the educational leadership program, you suggested the curriculum and instruction trajectory for me instead and it revolutionized my study at LSU. I am honored to be your very first doctoral student and I certainly hope that I have made you proud.

To my committee, Dr. Neil Matthews, Dr. Kim Skinner, Dr. Kim McGregor, and Dr. Kristopher Fletcher, thank you for your guidance and encouragement. It has been amazing to share my love for writing with you. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in navigating through my doctoral process.

Dr. Dowell, you pushing me towards greater exploits in writing has made my time in the doctoral program life changing. You have consistently encouraged me to value myself and my gifts and you’ve connected me with opportunities that have allowed me to grow. Your tangible support will endure far beyond my physical time here at the university.

Dr. Maria Wallace, Dr. Jamie Hipp (“Allison”), and Dr. Margaret Piccoli, thank you all for being who you are. Dr. Wallace, from our first class together, you’ve been my secret mentor. Watching you receive your doctorate let me know that I could complete mine too if I just kept pushing. Allison and Margaret, thank you for keeping me sane through my challenges. Dr. Gansle, thank you for being available to listen and to support me in this process. I couldn’t have done this without you.

To the “girls,” the participants in this study, thank you for allowing me to be a part of your free expression through writing. I appreciate your diligence, your excitement, and your willingness to be a part of this study.
A special thank you to the staff, students, and communities of the Bakerfield, Parkridge, and Claiborne Elementary Schools. Your encouragement, love, and support have catapulted me into places I had only dreamed of before now. Thank you for being kind enough to allow me to spread my wings and fly.

Finally, thank you to Sarah Broome, Principal London Moore, Assistant Principal Kim Williams, and the Thrive Academy family. Because of your kindness, I was able to study and work at the same time. Thank you for making space for me to teach, to train, and to triumph!
Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ ii

ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................................................................................ viii

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 1
  Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................... 2
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................... 4
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................ 4
  Methodological Framework ..................................................................................... 6
  Research Question ................................................................................................... 7
  Significance ............................................................................................................... 7
  Summary .................................................................................................................. 8

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ......................................................................... 9
  Theoretical Applications .......................................................................................... 9
  The Context of Literacy ......................................................................................... 14
  The Context of Adolescent Writing ....................................................................... 18
  After-School Clubs ............................................................................................... 19
  After-School Clubs in the Context of Education .................................................. 21
  After-School Writing Clubs ................................................................................... 22
  Motivation ............................................................................................................... 29
  Motivation in the Context of Writing ................................................................... 32
  Summary ................................................................................................................ 36

CHAPTER 3: METHOD OF THE STUDY ....................................................................... 37
  The Research Setting ............................................................................................. 38
  Participants ............................................................................................................. 44
  Role of Researcher .................................................................................................. 46
  The Writing Club .................................................................................................... 47
  Data Collection ....................................................................................................... 49
  Data Preparation and Management ....................................................................... 50
  Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 51
  Ethical Considerations ........................................................................................... 54
  Summary ................................................................................................................ 56

CHAPTER 4: JEAN’S STORY ............................................................................................ 57
  Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017 ...................................................................... 57
  Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017 .................................. 59
  Vignette Two: First Amendment Rights, September 27, 2017 .............................. 61
CHAPTER 5: MARY’S STORY .................................................................74
Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017 ........................................74
Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017 ....................76
Vignette Two: First Amendment Rights, September 27, 2017................77
Vignette Three: The Real Story, October 4, 2017 ........................79
Vignette Four: Love, October 11, 2017 ........................................81
Vignette Five: When I Grow Up, October 18, 2017 ............................82
Vignette Six: Choice, November 2, 2017 .......................................83
Vignette Seven: Perception, the Ultimate Reality, November 8, 2017 ....84
Vignette Eight: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017 ..........89
Vignette Nine: Ownership, November 29, 2017 ..............................85
Vignette Ten: Who Am I? December 13, 2017 ..............................86
Vignette Eleven: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017 ......86
Post-Interview: Ownership, November 29, 2017 .............................87

CHAPTER 6: MEISHA’S STORY ............................................................89
Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017 ........................................89
Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017 ....................91
Vignette Two: First Amendment Rights, September 27, 2017................92
Vignette Three: The Real Story, October 4, 2017 ........................93
Vignette Four: Love, October 11, 2017 ........................................94
Vignette Five: When I Grow Up, October 18, 2017 ............................94
Vignette Six: Choice, November 2, 2017 .......................................95
Vignette Seven: Perception, the Ultimate Reality, November 8, 2017 ....96
Vignette Eight: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017 ..........97
Vignette Nine: Ownership, November 29, 2017 ..............................97
Vignette Eleven: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017 ......99
Post-Interview: Ownership, November 29, 2017 .............................100

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS ..................103
Discussion ........................................................................103
Implications ......................................................................110
Limitations ........................................................................113
Recommendations for Future Research

Concluding Remarks

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS

APPENDIX C: INFORMED ASSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

VITA
Illustrations

List of Tables

1. Life Academy Writing Trend Data .................................................................42
2. After-School Writing Club Meeting Dates ..........................................................48
3. Frequency of A Priori Codes ...........................................................................54

List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework ........................................................................6
Figure 2. Model of Data Analysis .......................................................................52
Abstract

Writing is a vital part of literacy development. It affords the opportunity for the expression and analysis of comprehensive thought, while simultaneously being a modality for unique and creative communication. In order for productive dialogue about the study of writing to be engaged, the contemplation of its many dynamic parts occurring across a diversity of contexts must be considered in such a way that one writing strategy, process, product or environment is not privileged above another. Each constituent part of writing construction contributes meaningfully to the existing body of research for this field, and when carefully disaggregated can offer specific insights.

This holistic embedded case study purposefully sought to facilitate dialogue about writing through the encapsulation of three adolescents in an after-school writing club situated in a Southeastern Louisiana boarding school (Yin, 2017). In this non-traditional, after-school setting—without the constraints imposed by deadlines, rubrics, grading, teacher led feedback, or test-centered, argumentative compositions—writing naturally occurred. Moreover, without the mediums of social media, texting, or digital word processing, the participants chose to be a part of 11 writing club sessions engaging in the co-construction of meaningful dialogue, the writing of original manuscripts, and the development of a supportive social community. Drawing upon the self-determination, self-efficacy, and sociocultural theories, narratives were crafted for each participant.
Chapter 1: Introduction

As writing is a necessary skill for adolescents’ educational and vocational careers, the fact that writing proficiency is lacking nationally according to the most recently published writing scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the American College Test (ACT) is very concerning (Goldstein, 2017; Graham 2008; Graham & Hall, 2016). According to the NAEP’s 2007 report, only 16% of eighth-graders, and 30% of twelfth-graders write at or above proficiency level (“The Nation’s Report Card: Writing,” 2008). The 2011 report of the NAEP showed only 27% of eighth-graders and twelfth-graders scoring at or above proficiency level (“The Nation’s Report Card: Writing,” 2011). In tandem with NAEP scores from 2007 and 2011, Goldstein (2017) highlights national trend data in ACT writing scores that has not significantly improved over the course of a decade positing,

Three-quarters of both 12th and 8th graders lack proficiency in writing according to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress. And 40 percent of those who took the ACT writing exam in the high school class of 2016 lacked the reading and writing skills necessary to complete successfully a college-level English composition class, according to the company’s data. (ED9)

These writing deficiencies demand that a recursive and deliberate thoughtfulness be given to the multi-stranded experiences of adolescent writers which encompasses a diversity of genres, contexts, experiences, practices and products. This is largely due to the notion that decreased writing proficiency affects adolescents’ current and future academic and non-academic contexts.

More specifically, the current research reports the exhibition of decreased writing proficiency as a critical issue for adolescents in secondary, post-secondary, and career related environments (Graham 2008; Graham & Hall, 2016). Every content area in secondary academic settings requires the expression of comprehension through writing. Additionally, college entrance applications require written responses, and “writing is a gateway for employment and
promotion … employees in business as well as government must be able to create clearly written documents, memoranda, technical reports, and electronic messages” (Graham, 2008, p. 1). The demonstration of literacy through writing is a needful skill for students when attempting to engage the many demands of the 21st century career market. Considering this, it is important for the educational community to carefully analyze writing in its more traditional forms as its presence is evident across many genres, content areas, and careers. However, non-traditional forms of communication also deserve focused attention and further examination (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008; Lwin, 2016).

A broader more expansive contextual perspective—one which does not privilege academic, classroom-based writing—is employed in the current study. Students are not just writing in the classroom. In fact, students are not just engaging in academic writing; thus, academic, classroom based writing assignments cannot be expected to possess all of the answers to the motivations, interests, and processes that influence writing’s developmental evolution in adolescents (Behizadeh, 2014; Graves, 1975). Observing what adolescent writing looks like outside of the classroom offers organic, naturally occurring opportunities for research where students’ lives unfold as stories left untold without an authentic occasion to reveal them (Musgrove, 1999). In order to honor these untold stories, and in order to gain insight into adolescent writing, this study sought to examine the interplay of experiences of adolescent participants in an after-school writing club.

**Statement of the Problem**

Given the current narrative supported by the research, it is believed that adolescents not only lack skills to write; but, that they also do not engage in writing. This stance fails to recognize writing in all its forms, and does not acknowledge the temporal spaces and milieus
where adolescents authentically engage in the activities of writing. When looking at the proliferation of adolescent writing, much of it occurs outside of the classroom through digital mediums inclusive of social media platforms and texting. “According to a recent poll, 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day” (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2017, p. 800). Moreover, “75% percent of teenagers now own cell phones, and 25% use them for social media, 54% use them for texting, and 24% use them for instant messaging” (O’Keeffe et. al, 2017, p. 800). Adolescents are motivated to engage in this type of informal, truncated, short-phrased writing which renders immediate feedback. This type of writing is generally inappropriate for the classroom and more formal, professional contexts although it is a type of writing which is appropriate for informal, casual settings.

As evidenced in the research, students are both consistent and incessant in their social usage of multiple digital portals for written communication (O’Keeffe et. al, 2017). However, in staunch opposition to this pattern of engagement, this study offered students the opportunity to write without social media, texting, or even a computer for word processing. This after-school writing club gave careful consideration to the multifaceted task of writing in a non-traditional setting in order to—through a holistic embedded case study—identify what authentically happened when adolescents processed through the activities of writing. As student writing is not a disconnected, isolated occurrence, it is designated in this study as a part of a continuum of continuously interacting negotiated contexts (Jones, 2014; Van Drie, & Van de Ven, 2017).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the processes of adolescent writers in an after-school writing club in Southeastern Louisiana in order to better understand how adolescents engage in the process of writing. This study is not intended to prescribe solutions to the performance based deficits afore mentioned and substantiated by NAEP and ACT writing scores (Goldstein, 2017; Graham 2008; Graham & Hall, 2016). Instead, by these scores, this study is inspired to evaluate the shape and form that adolescent writing takes when it is not formulated to meet the criteria of assessments, standards, rubrics, or graded assignments.

Theoretical Framework

This study determines that viewing adolescents in a non-traditional setting that provides authentic opportunities for discourse, collaboration, and choice, is a more than suitable way to engage in research as it is lived by the participants of the study. Because the participants co-construct both meaning and community through the experience of writing in this study, the tenets of constructivism work in conjunction with the self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and sociocultural (Lave & Wenger, 1991) theories to ground this study.

Constructivism is a framework used to analyze the way that humans acquire knowledge, skills and perceptions in the world. With this theory, the observer is able to view the world through the presence of both cognitive and social interactions where the attainment of knowledge occurs with human adaptation and assimilation (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). This view is relevant to understanding the individual, and the communities in which individuals traverse. Knowledge and perceptions of reality are co-constructed making individuals powerful agents of transmission as they bring to contexts their experiences, contribute to varying degrees their ideas, and, co-create new expressions with others (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017). This
exchange of life’s experiences resulting in individual and social meaning is a fascinating one
presenting with diversity from person to person.

Considering the relationship of the individual to his social context, constructivism must
be connected to approaches which address both the individual, and the influences of others upon
the individual in order to provide a foundation for analyzing the data in this study. As the
participants in this study brought to the after-school writing club their own ideas and experiences
to contribute, the self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977)
thories are employed. The self-determination theory provided a way to view the adolescents’
engagement in the writing club through the constructs of autonomy, competence and relatedness.
How the adolescents experienced choice, independence, their writing ability, and their
connections to the environment is made more meaningful when evaluated through the self-
determination theory. Also constituting a vantage point for evaluation is the self-efficacy theory;
for what participants believed about what they could do was as important as what participants
actually performed (Bandura, 1977; Stajkovic, Bandura, Locke & Sergent, 2018). Through the
determinants of performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and feedback,
self-efficacy can be observed (Bandura, 1977).

This study acknowledged the individual; but, it also recognized the influence of others
upon the individual. With that in mind, the sociocultural theory was engaged (Lave & Wenger,
1991). Participants’ experiences within their families, communities, friendships, academic, and
social groups all factor into the way that they perceived their experiences in the after-school
writing club. Moreover, the sociocultural theory also gave this study a framework to apprehend
adolescents’ activity in the writing club. A major tenet of the sociocultural theory, the
communities of practice, explains how degrees of participation—whether engaged, unengaged or
indifferent—describe the experiences of people, in this case adolescents in a writing club, within a situated context.

Methodological Framework

This study of adolescents’ experiences with writing in an after-school club appropriately utilized a qualitative methodology with the philosophical lens of constructivism. Additionally, a holistic embedded case study was used to analyze adolescents’ experiences in the authentic setting of an after-school writing club situated in a residential boarding school charter. Through the adolescents’ engagement in the club, their “lived and told stories capture unquantifiable personal and human dimensions” of their lives through writing (Montero & Washington, 2011, p. 231). In this study—through the lens of life itself, without the interruption of numerical determinates and proposed causal relationships—participants’ own stories, writing, and dialogue, created a unique tapestry of creativity offering insight into adolescents’ acts and purposes for writing.
Research Question

This holistic embedded case study evaluated the experiences of participants in an after-school writing club. As a qualitative study, this research adds to the already existing body of knowledge on writing through the guidance of the following research question: What were the experiences of adolescents in an after-school writing club when analyzed through the self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and sociocultural theories (Lave & Wenger, 1991)?

This research question evaluates the interplay of experiences occurring organically within 11 sessions of an after-school writing club situated at Life Academy, a residential boarding school. Through students’ dialogue, writing samples, and many co-constructions of meaning, insight into the students’ supportive, creatively artistic community emerged (Herrington, et al., 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Significance

This study is significant across many contexts because it identified an alternative way to observe adolescent writing. Moreover, it challenged the current narrative that some students don’t engage in writing or have skills to write. “Project narrative: Examining the interplay of experiences of participants in an after-school writing club” utilized the situated context of an after-school writing club as an unconventional, non-traditional way to engage writing without the influences of teachers, tests, standards, or prescriptive, formulaic writing types. Removing these influences rendered participants the opportunity for student choice, collaboration, and creativity—the tangible intangibilities which highlighted the often suppressed facets of the writing process. For adolescents, these constructs have inherent value which can be duplicated in similar situated contexts very easily.
Summary

Writing is multifaceted and complex task. Its analysis cannot be limited to the classroom’s context alone because adolescents are not just writing in academic contexts. This holistic embedded case study chose an after-school writing club to evaluate the authentic experiences and co-construction of meaning occurring in adolescent writing. This qualitative study analyzed participants’ writing and discourse using the self-determination, self-efficacy, and sociocultural theories. As adolescent writers are negotiators of a range of discourses and experiences, this writing club became its own community for its participants. “Writers who develop are people who develop” and ultimately, this is most important (Andrews & Smith, 2011, p. 41).
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The analysis of the research in this section further establishes the importance of this study to the field of education in the area of adolescent writing building first on the foundational truths offered by the theories commissioned. Then, it examines pertinent research addressing literacy and writing, after-school clubs, and motivation.

Theoretical Applications

As previously discussed, this study used constructivism to examine the experiences of adolescents in an after-school writing club. The following section will build on the previously discussed theories’ relevance to the current study. Constructivism, which purposefully grounds the analysis of data in this study, provides beneficial connections to the functioning of the self-determination, self-efficacy, and sociocultural theories in this study.

Constructivism. The assumptions of constructivism are employed as a lens for evaluating how the adolescents in this study negotiated meaning through their interpretations of the world, through contextually historical and social perspectives, and through continuous interactions with various situated contexts (Crotty, 1998; Etherington, 2013). This is because “constructivism is based on the idea that reality is a product of one’s own creation; each individual sees and interprets the world and their experiences through personal belief systems” (Etherington, 2013, p. 13).

To further explain, social constructionism—which connotes meaning created between environments and people—is “embedded within history, context, culture, language, experience and understandings” (Etherington, 2013, p.12). In effect, social constructionism “dispenses with the notion of absolute truth and takes a pluralist position suggesting critical reflection on our truths” (Etherington, 2013, p.12). Within situated environments, not unlike the after-school
writing club in this study, similarities and differences in shared experiences within and without the multi-layered ecosystems provide continual contexts for exploration (Vygotsky, 1962). Social constructionism “values local knowledge constructed between people who actively engage in its development” through their participation or relationships with one another which occurs throughout the 11 sessions of the writing club (Etherington, 2013, p.12).

Furthermore, Vygotsky’s (1962) social development theory confirms the attributes of constructivism. He suggests that the social interactions continuously happening during reading and writing are examples of the functioning co-construction. Undeniably, learning in any context is a display of more knowledgeable others who assist learners in their cognitive development through the zone of proximal development and authentic activities (Vygotsky, 1962). The collaboration occurring through discourse in learning, modeling, and scaffolding requires social interaction occurring in authentic, real life environments which is favored in this holistic embedded case study as participants’ interactions are not analyzed in a laboratory; but in an after-school writing club.

The collaboration which leads to the co-construction of meaning is a foundational principle of this philosophical root, as well as an underpinning to this holistic embedded case study (Yin, 2017). These characteristics of constructivism and social constructionism provide a context for analyzing this after-school writing club as participants constructed meaning based on the experiences they bring to the environment, and based on the responses they construct together in the writing club’s environment.

**Self-determination theory.** “Self-determination (SDT) assumes that inherent in human nature is the propensity to be curious about one’s environment and interested in learning and developing one’s knowledge” (Niemic & Ryan, 2009, p.133). This theory further provides a
framework for understanding motivation through the precepts of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. It is a “macro-theory of human motivation, emotion, and development that takes interest in factors that either facilitate or forestall the assimilative and growth-oriented processor in people” (Niemic & Ryan, 2009, p.134).

The psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness being met during adolescent writing can promote intrinsic motivation. To be more specific, adolescents who build confidence can do so through competence and repeated practice. Becoming a proficient writer, or more importantly one’s belief that he or she is a good writer, is self-efficacious (Bandura, 2005). Autonomy as it relates to writing presents itself in choice. Adolescent writers who have the opportunity to choose activities are more engaged in their process of writing for its intrinsic value (Jacobs & Fu, 2014). In adolescent writing, relatedness refers to the degree wherewith the student can engage in meaningful relationships and schematic connections with what is being written, and topics of interest or value. Used in this study to express how adolescents as individuals self-determine through competence, autonomy, and relatedness, the after-school writing club provided a common context to observe the manifestation of these theoretical constructs.

Forasmuch as the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) renders a conceptual framework for understanding competence, autonomy, and relatedness, it also offers useful definitions for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These concepts are noteworthy in constructing meaning from the behavioral, verbal, non-verbal and written expressions of adolescents in the after-school writing club. Intrinsic motivation then, denotes behavioral expressions that are carried out without an external stimulus. These behaviors have inherent worth and are valuable, enjoyable, and interesting. From an internal locus of control, adolescents
who have the opportunity to experience competence and autonomy will sustain the rewards of intrinsic motivation. Conversely, extrinsic motivation characterizes itself with low autonomy and choice. Adolescent writers who are extrinsically motivated will show varying degrees of regulation outside of the self as governed by the desire for a reward or the avoidance of consequences. This type of writing is often exhibited when the context requires rubrics, scores and test results (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, 1982; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, this study utilizes the tenets of the self-determination theory for its affordance of a theoretical approach to understanding adolescent writers’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivational exhibitions specifically in the areas of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Self-efficacy theory.** In addition to the self-determination theory, this study also applies the self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) theory to the evaluation of participants’ experiences in the after-school writing club because this theory profoundly describes the human’s belief about his ability to influence his life and the world around him. Bandura (1977) purports that all people have this optimistic confidence which can be developed over the course of performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback. In this theory, actualized capacity is influenced by what one believes about his own ability based on how he performs, what he learns from others’ experiences, what he is persuaded to do by others and any emotional responses that occur because of his beliefs about his ability. As individuals in this study, the adolescent participants’ beliefs about themselves as writers is privileged and reviewed over 11 sessions.

**Sociocultural theory.** The sociocultural perspectives on learning asserts that individuals process information within the contexts of their experiences and participation in communities of practice. Learning is not a static, individual endeavor, neither is it an event occurring in isolation.
from the interaction of variables outside of the classroom. Learning is a continuous experience which must consider many negotiations and renegotiations of meaning for all participants in a socially constructed environment (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The sociocultural approach to learning “embraces the core sociocultural assumption that knowledge ultimately resides in the context of its use, in the practices of knowledge communities, in which case, learning involves meaningful participation in the practices that characterize a community” (Hickey & Zuiker, 2005, p. 278). In short: “People do not live their lives autonomously. Many of the things they seek are achievable only through socially interdependent efforts” (Bandura, 2005, p. 26).

Situated learning, a foundational tenet of the sociocultural theory of learning, provides a necessary bridge to connect the applicable cognitive processes of writing to the “generative phenomenon” of social interactions that continuously emerge (Lave & Wegner, 1991). With this premise in mind, the concept of writing is always evolving through the transmission of meaning as abstract paradigms are transformed into tangible ones for contextual interpretation. With specific respect to writing, this study fundamentally positions itself perceptually in the awareness that writing is a continuous, recursive practice that happens within temporal spaces over time. Each situated context that a writer participates in adds valuable content to a writer’s product.

The participants in this study were given the unique opportunity to transmit their experiences to the club, to receive others’ experiences, and then to co-construct and co-create writing and a sense of community. In a comfortable and safe environment, participants naturally constructed meaning and displayed attributes of the self-determination, self-efficacy, and sociocultural theories.
The Context of Literacy

To begin this section, a thoughtful pointed contextual definition of literacy must be provided in order to render meaningful background for the ensuing content. According to Gee (1989), literacy is the command of secondary uses of language or discourse where secondary language refers to the language that one contacts outside of his micro-system. This secondary discourse is used to interact in a socially acceptable manner with the rest of the world while primary discourses allow one to engage effectively with those more intimately accessed like family and close friends. Interestingly enough, because the participants in this study live where they attend school, their primary and secondary discourses are enmeshed and transferable. Even more still, the demographics describing the participants’ and those in their ecological systems represent lower socio-economic statuses. This is pertinent because:

...lower socio-economic black children use English to make sense of their experience differently than do middle-class children; they have a different primary discourse. And this is not due merely to the fact that they have a different dialect of English. So-called Black Vernacular English is, on structural grounds, only trivially different from Standard English by the norms of linguists accustomed to dialect differences around the world. Rather, these children use language, behavior, values, and beliefs to give a different shape to their experience. (Gee, 1989, p.22)

Thus, in order to define literacy accurately—even in its most traditional denotation of reading and writing proficiency—one must consider this difference of the upmost importance. The participants in this study employ literacy as a means to give voice to their value systems and beliefs which is a much more profound usage of language than just the appearance of writing in a writing club.

Considering this distinction, a holistic embedded case study to view the writing experiences of the participants in the writing club provides a more than insightful look into the depth of the language used. Beyond what is spoken or written, authentic experiences give the
meaningful privilege of rendering unspoken, and oft times in mainstream society, unacceptable voices, a platform (Gee, 1989).

Historically, this platform in literacy research was primarily used to describe the researchers’ literacy, or the literacy of others of the same educational stature without explicit methodological distinctions (Barkhuizen, 2014; Duff, 2012; Palvenko, 2002). Autobiographies, confessionals, and creative performance texts—poetry and non-descript prose—were paramount in early approaches to literacy research (Alverman & Haygood, 2000; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Montero & Washington, 2011). This made research in literacy limited in its scope of usage. More specifically, researchers used the examination of already existing oral and written autobiographical experiences as a primary data source for many attempting narrative inquiries into literacy (Bell, 1995; Chandler-Olcott, Nieroda, J., & Crandall, 2014; Lapadat, 2004; Lazar, 2007; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Perry, 2007, 2009; Rogers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006; Syed, 2008). Discussions of the many limitations of unclear methodologies were often identified in this earlier research, and the final presentation of full-length articles appeared as monographic literature focusing on and privileging one particular idea or issue (Montero & Washington, 2011).

The evolution many approaches to literacy research—to include narrative inquiry—has now broadened in range to include established research methods of ethnography, case study, and grounded theory along with the incorporation of several data sources. Transcripts, interviews, field notes, journals and artifacts, for examples, provide researchers the ability to address more extensive definitions of literacy which is needful for studies that challenge ideas about literacy and its representation (Barton, 1994; Hamilton & Barton, 2005; Street, 1995; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This definition includes “social, cultural, historical, and political dimensions of literacy”
while also giving credence to new literacies and multiliteracies represented in “linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural ways” (Montero & Washington, 2011, p. 334). Present in the research on literacy which utilizes holistic embedded cases are the themes of social inclusivity, agency and voice to underrepresented groups and recursive co-construction of meaning.

**Social inclusivity.** Through holistic embedded case studies, literacy can be understood through the eyes and cultural ecosystems of those who engage in it. From the voices of incarcerated youth, holocaust survivors, and ethnic groups suffering the effects of segregation and socio-economic disparagement, literacy can be viewed in a holistic way instead of in the isolation of one particular context (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Hoover, Sarris, & Hill, 2015). The consideration of literacy from different perspectives is facilitated through holistic embedded cases.

For example, the African American community privileges church as a space contributing to literacy development (Washington, Bauer, Edwards, & McMillon-Thompson, 2008). The reading of the Bible, participation in the activities of Sunday School, and Baptist Training Union classes promotes collaboration, comprehension, interpretation, and oral representations of language. Moreover, the sermons or orations from the pulpit model engaging performance styles, vocal inflections, cadence, and story-telling which are indicative of the black church and its community. This type of literacy, although it is not traditional, can be privileged in holistic embedded case studies because they are culturally sensitive and give a stage to many unheard voices in mainstream society.

**Agency & voice of underrepresented groups privileged.** “Largely represented in published autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs, there exist unheard voices that are equally relevant to understanding human experiences” (Montero & Washington, 2011, p. 336). Literacy
“creates a space to listen to the voices of the unheard and to learn from them in a representation of their voice” (Montero & Washington, 2011, p. 336). Examples of case studies favoring these unheard voices have focused on the literacy of immigrant populations (Kronick, Rousseau, & Cleveland, 2018; Santoli, 1988), Native Americans (Peters, 2018; Strong, 2018), and students in rural areas with limited resources (Abshier, Harris, & Hopson, 2011; Clegg, 1997). The literacy presentations of these marginalized groups often appear flat and unexciting in traditional research modalities; however, the stories, cultural diversities, linguistic nuances, and richness of stylistic voice present in visual, kinesthetic, poetic, arts, and performance based exhibitions is full of powerful insight useful to the educational research community.

Much of this insight becomes available through the interpretive space that exists between researchers and participants during the execution of case studies. The distance between researcher and participant is decreased and the power of the researcher is shared because experiences are recursively co-constructed by those involved.

Co-constructed & recursive. Written with the participant, case study narratives are recursively co-constructed. Through many revisions and versions before finalization, the acknowledgement of the researcher’s role, biases and potential subjectivity are identified while still rendering agency to the participant (Barusch, 2012; Montero & Washington, 2011). Moreover, case study narratives afford a “collaborative document; a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 11). This process is iterative and is comparable to the hermeneutic approach to analysis which considers both the whole and the parts of a whole in its interpretation (Barusch, 2012; Czarniawska, 2008).
The Context of Adolescent Writing

According to researchers Clandinin and Connelly (1990), “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). Educationally speaking, these stories are continuously constructed, co-constructed, negotiated, and re-negotiated throughout content and grade level matriculation for both teachers and students. Writing is an important part of literacy occurring in every grade level and in every subject; thus, its study is important to educational research.

Literature associated with adolescent writing presents co-constructions of narratives between the researchers and participants. Of those studies, common constructs emerge for consideration to include but not be limited to: non-verbal discourse, meaning-making, well-being, psychological functioning, and pro-social behavior. Bamberg (2004), from his narrative inquiry of adolescents found that their facial expressions and non-verbal cues were as important if not more than, what participants were actually saying. What language existed beyond the words of students? What story did students tell in their silent moments? Discourse as actual language far-reaches beyond words and sentence construction to the intentions not spoken, yet shown in demonstration. As adolescent writers engaged writing in this holistic embedded case study, writing occurred in verbal and non-verbal discourse, and silent pauses. The environment of an after-school writing club provided the context to fully experience these occurrences naturally.

Meaning-making, well-being, psychological functioning and pro-social behavior were thematic concepts that recurred in the literature on adolescent writing (Bamberg, 2004; Chen, McAnally, Wang & Reese, 2012; Mclean, Breen, Fournier, 2010; Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne, 2010). In adolescents aged 12-21, increased exposure to low and high point events in their lives
influenced identity construction (Chen et al., 2012). Adolescents draw meaning from the important events in their lives and develop their view of people and the world from them (Chen, et al., 2012; Mclean, et al., 2010). These subjective biases are evident in adolescent writing and should be expected by both researchers and teachers. Additionally, the ever evolving nature of adolescent thought requires self-reflection which is also present in adolescent writing (Chen, et al., 2012; Reese, et al., 2010). Adolescent writers see the world in light of their own perspectives which are ever changing just as their personal narratives are. The ability to self-reflect and to make-meaning is an ability that develops from early childhood (Mclean, Breen, Fournier, 2010; Reese, et al., 2010).

Narrative coherence in stories of adolescents varied according to gender as adolescent boys with higher coherence having lowered presentations of well-being and adolescent girls showing higher presentations of well-being based on higher coherence (Chen, et al., 2012). Occurrences of pro-social behavior were present more in the co-constructed narratives of older adolescents. The individuation of adolescents through the coherence of their narratives and pro-social behavior are particularly interesting to the current case study as these constructs present themselves in the participant’s writing.

In literacy, holistic embedded cases are socially inclusive, privilege the unique voices of all groups and demographics to include underrepresented ones, and are co-constructed. This co-construction is a collaborative and recursive process where the agency of the participant is respected as the authority. Who better to express the story of the participant than the participant?

**After-School Clubs**

More than five decades ago, in the 1960s and 1970s, researchers were concerned about the poor academic performance of minority students of Color who were positioned in poor neighborhoods with minimal resources and inequitable access to opportunities. That concern
continues to be a pressing educational issue in US public education.

Contemporary suggestions such as year-round schooling or lengthening the school day are proposed to address low achievement and the disparity existing in resources between fully supported and underfunded schools (Meier, Hartmann, & Larson, 2018; Strauss, 2011). However, if schools are already without resources, qualified staff, and stable academic trajectories while also experiencing the negative effects of transient student populations, minimal parental support, and vacillating community involvement, will lengthening the school day or school year put urban schools on track for success? Doing more of the same thing is unconscionable (Fader, 2014; Larner et al., 1999; Strauss, 2011).

Students need more than a strong curriculum, good teachers, and time in the classroom to succeed. Afterschool program have long known that they can embrace the hours between the time school closes and parents return form work to provide children especially those who don’t have access to other activities, with exciting, engaging experiences that will help them learn academic, social and professional skills. The research is clear: children in quality afterschool programs are more likely to come to school and stay in school, more likely to hand in their work and get better grades. (Strauss, 2011, p.1)

After-school clubs and programs must be considered as a creative solution to improving education. Certainly after-school programs can be intimidating because they expand past the school day and its regulatory constraints to more easily connect to community partners. The potential to offer programming in sports, music, self-esteem, culture, art, economics, college and careers is evident for after-school programming (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2013; Meier, Hartmann, & Larson, 2018; Strauss, 2011). Additionally, the setting of an after-school program is not subject to the school day’s routine setting and is liberated from the anxiety associated with high stakes testing.

Historically, “scholars from traditions outside education—such as anthropology and linguistics—looked beyond schools to family and community settings to understand how urban
schools might reach students from cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds that differed from the mainstream” (Hull & Shultz, 2001, p. 578). The after-school clubs and enrichment programs serve as a means to bridge the gap between school, home and the community providing lasting benefits socially and educationally.

**After-School Clubs in the Context of Education**

According a study conducted by researchers in Simmons School of Education and Human Development, “school-age children who participate in structured after-school activities improve their academic achievement” (Springer & Diffily, 2012, p.1). In this study of 719 participants in the Boys and Girls club, students’ grades improved, school-attendance was steady, students had greater motivation, and decreased occurrences of unlawful behavior (Springer & Diffily, 2012). Children in after-school clubs develop social skills, improve in their academics and have the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with adults (Eccles, 1999; Larner, Zippiroli, & Behrman, 1999; Meier, Hartmann, & Larson, 2018). In addition to advanced school performance, studies show middle school participants in after-school clubs’ self-esteem is influenced positively (Eccles, 1999; Larner et al., 1999; Meier et al.). Sarikas (2015), reports in the literature on after-school clubs, that high school students who are involved in after-school clubs perform better in class than those who don’t, build social and academic skills, and are more apt to volunteerism (Zaff, Donlan, Jones, & Lin, 2015). The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2003) reports that children experiencing the effects of low-income or limited English proficiency who engage in after school clubs are more engaged in school and have less unacceptable behaviors.

In agreement with the research on after-school programming are researchers Kidron and Lindsay (2014) who recorded several key findings in a meta-analysis of programs that provided
increased learning time on both academic and non-academic outcomes. Thirty studies comprising this meta-analysis of summer programs, out of school programs, expanded learning time schools, and year-round schools, determined that additional time to learn is a chance for struggling students to improve and for proficient students to advance even when that learning is in a non-traditional setting (Kidron & Lindsay, 2014). More specific results from this analysis identified:

- Programs that used a traditional instruction style improved literacy and math achievement. Programs that used an experiential learning instruction style improved socio-emotional skills. Increased learning time improved the literacy achievement of students performing below the standards and the social-emotional skills of students with attention deficit disorder. (Kidron & Lindsay, p. 1, 2014)

In the current holistic embedded case study of students in an after-school writing club, an experiential learning style is adapted where students facilitate their own processing within the context of their environment. According to this Kidron and Lindsay’s (2014) meta-analysis, these students may show improved socio-emotional skills. Herrington, Reeves and Oliver (2013) would further extrapolate that it is the authentic learning environment of students that promotes development of both academic and non-academic skills that “enable students to develop robust knowledge that transfers to real world practice” (p. 401). It is that real world practice that is most important to students’ ability to operate in life past the classroom setting which further validates the importance of analyzing learning—and in the case of the current study of writing—within the most authentic setting possible.

**After-school Writing Clubs**

Writing occurs in school and during out-of-school contexts. Devoting research to non-traditional mediums—such as the after-school writing club of this study—is beneficial because it occurs in an authentic setting and is not governed by the potential restrictions of the school day.
In fact, during the last two decades, researchers from a range of disciplines have documented the considerable intellectual accomplishments of children, adolescents, and adults in out-of-school settings, accomplishments that often contrast with their poor school-based performances and thereby suggest a different view of their potential as capable learners and doers in the world. (Flores, 2018; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Pacheco, 2018).

Seven years ago, Hall and Shultz (2001) identified the merging of linguistics and anthropology to form what is referred to in the literature as the ethnography of communication—where psychological efforts have centered on language in various contexts—to include writing (Flores, 2018; Pacheco, 2018). Coinciding with this language focus, Soviet psychologist Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD development, and the inclusion of social contexts broadens these communications’ theories to include language occurring in and out of school where “writing is a sign system that is especially note-worthy for its far reaching effects on thinking” past, present, and future (Hall & Shultz, 2001, p. 581). Students’ writing in this framework is understood in light of what they learn from others, the media, family, culture, their teachers, and each other in every place where interaction occurs.

A significant way to utilize all parts of the school environment, and to engage students in writing is after-school learning clubs. The inclusion of literacy clubs that focus on writing occurring after-school or out-of-school, supports academic skills, promotes social skills, collaboration, motivation, and positively influences self-esteem, and confidence (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2013; Meier et al., 2018; Strauss, 2011). During the traditional school day, students are exposed to writing opportunities; but generally these are content focused, standards heavy, and assessment driven (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, 1982; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Out-of-school writing not encumbered with those mandates can “increase students’ feelings of competence as
writers, broaden audiences and purposes for writing, create continuity between home and school writing,” and “reduce students’ disaffection with school” (Novelli, 2009, p. 1).

Focusing attention on the contexts where students are writing outside of school sheds light on the what adolescents are really doing when they write. For example, schools must consider the “internet, after-school programs, youth focused organizations, and digital media that students come into contact with every day” (Novelli, 2009, p.1). Without this acknowledgement, the many reservoirs, or funds of knowledge that students present with when coming to class remain unacknowledged (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrilo, Collazo, 2011; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). The opportunity to fully access students’ funds of knowledge will draw from a well of experiences from the students’ home culture, religious affiliations, and life’s perspectives—an invaluable resource in writing.

In practice, many after-school writing clubs, institutes, workshops or community outreach partnerships that are documented in research literature, allow participants the freedom to access their funds of knowledge. The written works produced through these after-school writing activities support a variety of genres and purposes. The out-of-school time spent on writing was identified in a variety of contexts, exhibited multi-layered support, was socially inclusive, and offered safe spaces for participants to write.

Supports a variety of genres and purposes. The research on after-school writing activities for students supports a variety of genres and purposes. Participants are able to express their writing through digital media, songs, fiction, journaling, comics, illustrations, plays, narratives, and in poems. In writing conferences, community outreach partnerships, workshops, and connections with local schools, the Writing Our Lives project in Syracuse, New York, the Mighty Writers of South Philadelphia, and the Write It Out institutes of Chicago, all allow
participants to broadly experiences all types of writing in a safe and supportive environment (Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014; Muhammad, 2012).

Exposure to these types of writing influences participants to explore different purposes in their writing not dictated by classroom assignments but by their authentic voices. For example, the Young Voices Rise program in the urban Southwest supports poetic expressions of language where participants are able to compete in local and national poetry slam competitions with their original works. In a case study of three Young Voices Rise workshop participants, Williams (2015) found that activism, art, and therapy were pervasive themes. Because participation in the workshops was so diverse culturally, one participant utilized his platform to speak his truths about both sides of his heritage-Latino and American. This student who failed English, took summer school classes, and then joined the Young Voices Rise community of poets during the fall, attributed much of his success just a year later to being a part of the writing program. As a graduating senior, this participant became an honors English dual-enrolled student with expectations of becoming an English teacher. Another participant used her poetry as an artistic expression sometimes creating new combinations of literature through writing letters to her future self and song lyrics. The final participant case discovered purpose in spoken word poetry as his therapy or as a means of cathartic communication whereby he could productively, progressively, and positively use his voice to heal himself, and others (Williams, 2015).

This medium of spoken and written poetry within the context of after-school learning suggests possibilities for meaningful entry into the traditional school day. Activism in poetry could be paired with content lessons in history (Williams, 2015). The figurative language presented in artistic poetry would be outstanding in an English class’ lessons in a very natural way (Williams, 2015). Social constructivism in shared environments would be promoted
through the cathartic therapy present in student work (Williams, 2015). More than tests or standards, students are humans who present with funds of knowledge from many contexts that are fundamental to understanding how they see the world. The encouragement of diverse genres helps students to determine purpose or to answer the profound question why they write. This process develops unique voices that deserve space in the world. Working without allowing this presentation is to suppress genuine writing.

**Occurs in a variety of contexts.** A very distinct concept in the literature on the writing of adolescents after-school is its dispersion in many contexts. Writing conferences, workshops, after-school clubs, and community outreach programs comprise the four-pronged approach to the Writing Our Lives program schedule which has existed successfully for eight years (Haley, 2015). This program’s inception was a response to disgruntled parents in the Syracuse area to the lack of growth in student learning which was expressed in community meetings that Dr. Marcelle Haddix attended. As a Dean’s Associate Professor and Chair of the Reading Department at Syracuse University, she developed a revolutionary way to effect change specifically in writing in Syracuse. Starting with free writing workshops at the local library, the Writing Our Lives program has now partnered with a local school on Monday’s after-school, and a community center on Sunday evenings. Thematic workshops occur annually and give participants opportunities to collaborate with graduate students, authors, community partners and one another for the sole purpose of utilizing their authentic voices to write.

When describing the Writing Our Lives conferences, Haddix says:

…we are trying to foster and create a community of writers that is inclusive of adults and youth across backgrounds, race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. It really is to create a space for all of us who love to write and who have stories to share. It’s a way to tell those stories and learn how to listen, receive and bear witness to others’ stories. (Haddix qtd. In Haley, 2015, p.2)
Like Haddix who includes community outreach into the Writing Our Lives programming, Loeper (2014), Muhammad (2012), and Williams (2014) also indicate connections to the communities where students live. Loeper’s (2014) study of ten students in the Mighty Writers program occurred in a community writing center specifically designated for after-school programming in literacy. Participants experienced a three-dimensional after-school experience first having homework help, then writing break-out sessions related to interest, and free time to play games. The ten students selected for the study struggled with writing and presented disinterest in the process. After giving these students opportunities to engage writing from an interest perspective, Loeper (2014) found that the boys displayed the following: “banter and physicality; frequent breaks to talk about form and content with peers and adults; sharing work with the writing community throughout the writing process; and sharing work beyond the writing community” (p. 38).

The context of summer institutes and workshops was also evident in the literature on after-school writing experiences. Chandler-Olcott, Nieroda, & Crandall (2014) conducted a formative experiment over two years with entering ninth graders for a summer institute. This summer institute in an urban area conducted itself in much the same way as the National Writing Project does. It was staffed with teachers and university representatives designed as “enrichment, not remediation, for a heterogeneous group of students, and a learning experience, not just a teaching opportunity for practitioners” (Chandler-Olcott, et al., 2014, p. 15). Write it Out in Chicago functions as a five-week summer institute (Muhammad, 2012). Workshops appear frequently in the research on writing experiences occurring after school inclusive of the ones mentioned in this literature review.
**Exhibits multi-layered support.** In order for after-school writing clubs to be successful, multi-layered support is imperative. Prevalent in the literature was the indication of several different layers of recursive feedback from many sources to include, teachers, peers, community partners and volunteers (Loeper, 2014). The environment is collaborative and meaning is co-constructed. With a variety of participants in the activity being engaged, feedback becomes intriguing and evolutionary. Student writers are rendered multiple perspectives to write from and are able to generate ideas based on them (Chandler-Olcott, et al., 2014; Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014; Muhammad, 2012).

**Socially-inclusive.** Another pervasive observation of the literature on after-school writing clubs was that of social inclusion. People of all backgrounds indiscriminate of race or class, gender or gender identity, religion or spiritual trajectory were given a voice in writing clubs, workshops, and institutes (Chandler-Olcott, et al., 2014; Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014). College and graduate students worked alongside students from disadvantaged communities (Haley, 2015). Teachers, volunteers and researchers, wrote with 15-year-old adolescent boys (Chandler-Olcott, et al., 2014; Loeper, 2014). Persons of dissimilar cultural heritage, economic status and writing ability were all given the opportunity to exist together and to construct original works in a safe space.

**Offers safe spaces.** Writing occurring outside of the classroom reviewed in this literature revealed the benefit of safe spaces. Rules essential for creating this safe space are establishing respect, bravery, and the privileging of individual voices according to Williams (2015). Students who have had negative experiences in the classroom setting with the writing process benefit from these rules and the space to develop as writers in a way that promotes revision positively. Open disclosure thrives in environments of non-judgment which is why safe
spaces provided for students is a great attribute of after-school writing experiences that could be transferred to the classroom (Loeper, 2014).

Taking a fresh look at the pedagogy of writing and how it is implemented provides relevant access to naturally occurring attributes of writing which should be considered. The literature revealed the need for diversities of genre, purpose, context and support in writing. Additionally, social inclusion and safe spaces are identified as instrumental in the development of writing. These concepts offered insight into the after-school writing club in the current study.

Motivation

For the purposes of this case study, motivation denotes the energy and position of the source which activates behavior. It is a construct that helps to define the why behind the observable presentations of what in human deportment. Motivation is “the impetus, instigation, or reason that triggers an individual to make a decision or take an action” (Blaskova, 2014, p. 416). Why that decision persists or elicits sustained pursuit is where motivation offers meaningful and insightful explanations that may be applied to a diversity of different contexts to include writing (Niermann & Schmutte, 2014; Yukseloglu & Karaguven, 2013).

Historically, many theorists agree that motivation serves as a catalyst to energize behavior and to provide that behavior with meaningful, purposeful direction (Huitt, 2011; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981; Franken, 2006). From the philosophical influences of Aristotle, Plato, and Descartes (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2011), to the contributions of the psychoanalytic (Freud 1916; Jung, 1953; Erikson, 1993; Sullivan, 1968), content (Alderfer, 1969; Maslow, 1943;1954; McClelland, 1967), social learning (Huitt, 2004), process (Huitt, 2003; McClelland, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Thompson, Grace & Cohen, 2001), and cognitive theories (Huitt, 2003), each offered the fundamental idea that the construct of motivation is the fuel that empowers humans
to meet a goal, to satiate a desire, or to make connections with self, others, or organizations. Motivation is furthermore considered the “driver of guidance, control, and persistence in human behavior” originating in and being precipitated by variations of both internal and external loci of control (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2011, p. 820). More specifically, the level of motivation and its orientation varies from person to person (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Its influence “cuts across all areas of economic as well as social life” to include choices in career, public and private affiliations, and education thus making its analysis important to this holistic embedded case study on writing (Blaskova, 2014, p. 415).

**Intrinsic motivation.** Intrinsic motivation refers to the inherent desire to complete a task without the influence of an external reward. “When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 56). For example, a healthy, growing, developing child is generally curious about discovering his environment without the presence of incentives. This naturally occurring behavior is most assuredly a “critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one’s inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills” and can be observed in the writing of adolescents (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, “intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on any external pressure” to complete (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012, p. 821). For examples, the current study identifies assessments, graded class assignments, and minimal student choice in writing as external pressures that suppress the expression of intrinsic motivation in adolescents. This holistic embedded case study analyzes student writing through the constructs of autonomy, competence
and relatedness —tenets of the self-determination theory— to explain intrinsic motivation in their writing and dialogue (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Extrinsic motivation.** Extrinsic motivation pertains to activities done in order to attain an outcome or reward separate from the activity itself. It contrasts with intrinsic motivation, “which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 60). This type of motivation originates outside of an individual. Examples include monetary rewards, good grades, tests scores, successful job evaluations, the threat of punishment, and sports related competitions.

Concepts of extrinsic motivation important to a comprehensive understanding of it are external regulation, introjected regulation, identification and integrated regulation provided by Ryan & Deci (2000) in their sub-theory of the self-determination theory (SDT). Called the Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), extrinsic motivation is specifically addressed in terms of how much autonomy is expressed (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In alignment with traditional definitions of extrinsic motivation, external regulation, much like operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938) denotes activities that present minimal autonomy. Introjected regulation is driven by self-esteem enhancers like pride or the guilt of not completing a task (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, 1982; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

To the contrary of integrated regulation and introjected regulation are the more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation—identification and integrated regulation. In identification, humans internalize an external regulation as relevant to himself while integrated regulation is the point at which an externally driven motivation becomes internally accepted. Continuous integration of this sort produces what Ryan & Deci (2000) call self-determination.
Motivation in the Context of Writing

Paramount to this case study is the connection between motivation and writing. The literature on adolescent writing motivation suggests constructs to understand this phenomenon. The link between reading and writing is a major component of adolescent motivation. Relevance, autonomy, competence and opportunities for collaboration and feedback, are all themes found in the literature on adolescent motivation and writing. Further investigating these themes helps the researcher to evaluate what motivates students to write.

The reading-writing connection to adolescent writing motivation. Called the nexus [core] by the foundational research of Nelson (2008), reading and writing are an undeniably significant connection in the study of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Writers who are able to make revisions and superior inferences were also readers who were able to do the same (Nelson, 2008; Schnotz, 1984). Because writing is an intentional act, writers may be conceptualized as readers of their audiences where writers make determinations about what their audiences know, want to know, would find interesting, informative or controversial (Nelson, 2008). Adolescents engage in writing for the reader in classroom settings for their teachers, for test graders during end-of-year high-stakes testing, and for the popular social media sites wherein what they post elicits a particular response from the receptors of the information. The opposite is also true. Readers of writing often contextualize the true intention of the writer (Nelson, 2008). On some occasions understanding the background of the author gives clarity to why a text’s language is as it appears. Pastors, priests and ministers often in sermons or homilies render the relationship between authors and settings in order to build relevant hermeneutical bridges for listening parishioners. Adolescents engage in this same connectedness when doing research, in conversations with friends, family, school-related or after-school activities like the writing club.
in the current study.

“In response to what is seen as an issue of aliteracy”—where adolescents can read and write but choose not to—teachers in hypervigilant attempts to be relevant, cater assignments to genuinely try to engage students in writing and reading (Reed, Schallert, Beth, Wooruff, 2004, p. 252). However,

Is it that adolescents are not reading books as much as previous generations? Is it that they are not able to write cogent arguments? In terms of promoting an appreciation of the motivation needed to develop ever more sophisticated literacy practices, we believe that looking at what adolescents are doing can inform what we want them to do. Thus, it may be that these adolescents are actually reading and writing extensively, but the literacy activities that captivate them are not the ones that their teachers and parents traditionally value. (Reed et al., 2004)

Moreover, exposure to a variety of different genres of text to read promotes increased context in adolescent writing (Flockemann, 2005). As important as it is for adolescents to see themselves represented in literature, it is equally as important to see others. The concept of mirrors and windows speaks to the dynamic of awareness of one’s own culture and beliefs while respecting the same about others (Mullen, 1999; Flockemann, 2005; Wearden, 2018).

The present study considered, the reading-writing connection to motivation is a nexus to the analysis of adolescent motivation in writing. The skill set needful to write for a variety of audiences, and to perceive what the author’s purpose was in composing the read text are valuable nuances for constructing one’s own compositions. Additionally, researchers must consider what adolescents are reading and writing in order to best determine what motivates them to do so because adolescents are extensively literate in ways that may not fit into the literacy standards that they are governed by in school settings. Finally, motivation through the reading-writing connection must also contemplate the need for both mirrors and windows in adolescent literacy. Adolescents must see themselves in literature; but adolescents must see the diversity of other
cultures present as well in order to have a contextually well-rounded approach to writing.

**Relevance, autonomy, and competence in adolescent writing motivation.** Ryan and Deci (2000) record three attributes of intrinsic motivation to be relevance, autonomy and competence. In order to influence motivation in adolescents, writing experiences must be grounded in connections that can be made. When writers are able to grasp the meaning of a text based on personal, cultural, literary or experiential context, they are able to write from an informed perspective. In argumentative writing, this content basis yields a more fruitful debate. Even more, adolescents who are able to connect to the writing environment experience motivation to write (Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014; Olcott et al., 2011). As youth are social creatures, an organic environment where collaboration is promoted is paramount like the environment of the present study.

Autonomy or choice in writing experiences facilitates motivation in that it gives adolescents the privilege to engage their interests and the genres that they most feel representative of their evolving styles in presentation. “Allowing children to pick topics that are personal and relevant helps them to find meaning and purpose for their writing” (Jacobs & Fu, 2014).

Competencies in writing help students to build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The ability to complete writing’s process and the belief about the ability to complete the process are the building blocks to confidence which influences the motivation of adolescents. Foundational researcher Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes the competence that develops in adolescent writers as *flow* “the feeling of being fully absorbed in a challenging but enjoyable task” (Loeper, 2014). According to Loeper (2014),

…identifiers of flow are involvement of both body and mind, deep concentration, clear intentions, and awareness of the quality of the performance. A person who is in a flow
state has no fear of failure, no self-consciousness, and no awareness of the passage of time. (Loeper, 2014)

This holistic embedded case study of adolescent writing considers motivation through the SDT’s attributes of relatedness, autonomy, and competence but also gives credence to the idea of flow. In an environment that motivates adolescents to write, flow should be present and observable.

**Opportunities for collaboration and feedback in adolescent writing motivation.** To be considered in adolescent motivation to write is “what motivates their non-school personal and social writing” (Lenhart, Arafah, Smith & Macgill, 2008). The immediacy of responses of instant messaging or texting, and the collaborative environment of Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat provide gratification for adolescents (Lenhart et al., 2008). Certainly, writing in these modalities is not always representative of perfect uses of language conventions, and may not be academic in nature (Jacobs & Fu, 2014); yet, they provide a look into the “self-exploration, self-presentation, and social connection” pertinent to understanding adolescent motivations (Lenhart et al., 2008).

Loeper (2014) indicated that adolescent boys benefitted from opportunities to receive feedback from and to collaborate with one another as well as from a trusted adult. The Mighty Writers also were motivated by receiving feedback from sharing their work outside of the writing community with the community at large. Williams’ (2015) study of Young Voices Rise also highlighted feedback within the spoken word poetry workshops as indicative to participants’ success in school and comfortability with presenting their work to competitive audiences where they received feedback. Haddix, founder of Writing Our Lives (Haley, 2015), connects writers across ability levels, cultures, classes and religions to form an expansive writing community that can provide many layers of collaborative co-construction and feedback. This feedback and community of sharing is present in the current study.
Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to make theoretical applications, and to discuss the relevant research in the areas of literacy, after-school clubs, and motivation. Although writing is riddled with complexities, it can be deconstructed for observation and research. The beginning of such deconstruction is to release writing’s confinement from the context of the classroom because writing is being composed by adolescents in non-traditional settings continually. Reflecting on the literature presented on literacy, after-school writing clubs, and motivation, the current study emerges as a viable study on adolescent student writing.
Chapter 3: Method of the Study

This qualitative, holistic, embedded case study design (Yin, 2017), was selected to investigate the interplay of experiences of participants in an after-school writing club. Purposeful observation, evaluation, and reflection of writing through the self-determination, self-efficacy, and sociocultural theories gave a methodological framework necessary to understand the many negotiations and renegotiations of meaning presented during the acts of writing analyzed (Bayne, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The remainder of this chapter presents the setting, participants, role of the researcher, writing club, data collection procedures, data management, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Rationale for qualitative research. A qualitative research stance was chosen because it provided a framework for understanding the experiences of adolescents in an after-school writing club through a holistic, embedded case study (Yin, 2017). A qualitative stance also allowed for the observations of the phenomenon of the after-school writing club and the three participants’ in a natural, uncontrived setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through a qualitative stance the researcher was afforded the unique opportunity to be a participant observer and to use “qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviewing, observation, and document analysis” (Kawulich, 2005, p. 466).

Holistic embedded case study. Yin (1984, 2017) describes the case study method as one in which the analysis of a phenomenon and its context are observable within real-life settings where many sources of evidence are utilized. Case study research is characterized by its real life settings. In this study, the real life setting is that of an after-school writing club.

In the present study, using a holistic embedded case study broadened the view of experiences that would potentially be constrained if a single case was chosen. By observing
three participants’ interaction with the phenomenon of the writing club a variety of different interactions were examined (Yin, 2017). The natural setting of the club shared by all three participants gave a holistic view of their experiences as the interplay continuously occurring between the participants and writing gave way to many negotiations and constructions of meaning (Yazan, 2015). Thus, a holistic embedded case study was employed.

**The Research Setting**

In this section, the setting of this study is presented. First, the community and neighborhood are discussed to provide an understanding of where the school is located. Next, the school is discussed with attention given to its uniqueness of being boarding school. This section ends with a focus on writing and the implementation of curriculum to influence writing at the school.

**The community/neighborhood.** The southeastern Louisiana school in this holistic embedded case study is located on the south side of Baton Rouge, Louisiana’s capital city. Life Academy is a charter boarding school currently located in the Highlands/Perkins neighborhoods of Baton Rouge. In that area and of its nearly 20,000 residents, approximately 12,000 are White while 4,000 are African American. Although the median home value in 70820 is about $263,000, most people living in this area are renters who have an average household income of approximately $26,000. The demographic population of this community is comprised of a large percentage of single young adults. There are not many families, middle aged adults or young children (“Zip code,” 2014).

**The school.** Life Academy is a public boarding school founded in March of 2011. For five years, the school was governed by a local school district in southeastern Louisiana. Beginning in the 2017–2018 school year, the governing power of the charter transferred to the
state of the Louisiana. This change in governance made Life Academy a local education agency (LEA) where all teachers and staff became state employees, and where the boarding school could recruit students from all over the state as opposed to just the local school district. Students are at promise—a more positive term than at risk—experiencing the challenges indicative of poverty, low socioeconomic backgrounds, and inequitable resources (Stuart & Bostrom, 2003).

Currently, there are approximately 160 students enrolled, and of this demographic population 99% are African Americans, and .018% Caucasians (“2015-2016 School Report Cards,” 2016). Of the student population, 9% receive special education services with 99% of students considered economically disadvantaged.

Although Life Academy has experienced growth in its student population, educational and residential staff, its school performance score has steadily declined. Important to note is that both the staff and student body have undergone inconsistency and transience each year. For example, not one teacher from the original staff when the school began in 2012 still works at the school, and only 11 of the original students still attend the school.

**Boarding school environment.** The consideration of the boarding school option for underprivileged students was historically an option for alternative education and has come back to the forefront because “a disproportionate number of students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds continue to be underachievers in school settings at a staggering and increasing rate” (Bass, 2013, p. 17). According to Bass (2013) “this has troubled and perplexed educators and educational researchers for decades” (2013, p. 17). The boarding school has been and still is viewed as a tool of transformation in the hands of skilled educators, administrators, and residential staff who help to minimize the effects of poverty and unequal access to opportunities by providing resources to students in a safe and nurturing environment. He further
contends that boarding schools have the potential to provide greater stability for students through promoting appropriate social skills, increased cultural exposure, access to educational opportunities, and better prospects for career readiness. Bass (2013) explains:

> Boarding schools pose an excellent alternative for urban students who come from culturally poor and unstable homes. The structure of the boarding school is designed to proceed students with capital benefits that they would not otherwise benefit from unless there is some form of intervention. The capital benefits may not only serve as an equalizer, but also protect urban students from becoming part of negative statistics. (p. 31)

Because the participants in this study attend Life Academy’s boarding school, the context of its environment cannot be ignored. Being at a boarding school poses “a unique set of circumstances and interactions that delineates the experiences of boarding from day students” (Martin, Papworth, Ginns & Liem, 2014, p. 2010).

> Many of the students currently at the boarding school were not academically or behaviorally successful at traditional schools. Students from diverse familial, religious, and social backgrounds, found that traditional schools gave “little application of classroom exercises in their daily existence” (Nicolini, 1994, p. 56). The environment and instruction of traditional schools provided a lack of relevance or relatedness to students who were suffering the continual effects of inequitable resources, lack of opportunity, and scarcity in all levels of their communities of practice. The free public boarding school charter is designed to alleviate the effects of these factors and from this major precept, Life Academy was born.

> At Life Academy, sixth through eleventh grade students reside on campus from Monday to Friday leaving campus on Friday afternoons, and returning Sunday evenings. Free lodging and meals are provided to all students. Students have the instructional support of teachers during the day and mentors in the evening during residential life hours. In a student/mentor ratio of 10:1, students have mandatory study hall and interest based extra-curricular activities after the
school day is completed. Special programming occurs periodically to promote literacy through activities such as reading marathon days sponsored by the literacy department. Another example is financial literacy classes through a partnership with a local bank that occur once a month. Field trips are earned monthly through positive behavior, compliance to school rules, and superior academic performance. Life Academy plans to expand the above mentioned programming to twelfth graders for the 2018-2019 academic year. Direct recruitment for the student population has historically come from local traditional public schools; but in 2018-2019 will extend into all parts of Louisiana.

**Focus on writing.** All things considered with the steady decline in test scores, administrators at Life Academy have targeted writing as a specific area for academic improvement. Deliberate focus was placed on writing at Life Academy because using both Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and more recently the Louisiana standards, revealed weaknesses in this academic area. Results from the state of Louisiana high stakes testing program revealed significantly decreased proficiency in writing scores for four consistent years per state of Louisiana designed rubrics (“2014-2015 School Report Cards,” 2015; “2015-2016 School Report Cards,” 2016; “2016-2017 School Report Cards,” 2017; “2017-2018 School Report Cards,” 2017). Table 1 delineates writing test results by year.

Certainly, standardized test results do not reflect the totality of student growth in writing or any other content area. They are an important predictive tool used in rubrics that determine proficiency ratings for both teachers, schools, and students. As a result, academic administrators at Life Academy, not unlike many other schools, required teachers to stress product, test preparatory based writing in lesson planning and execution (France, 2003).
These directives focused on performance with minimal regard for the value of the writing process itself.

Table 1. Life Academy Writing Trend Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Proficiency</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, several interventions have been instituted at various times to address student literacy and writing performance at Life Academy. For four of the five years of the school’s existence, an hour of the academic day was dedicated to providing support to classroom instruction in English Language Arts. Writing was a primary focal point during this hour along with reading fluency, and comprehension. An additional hour directly after the conclusion of the school day was used to strengthen deficient skills in all content areas specific to performance on weekly student test data. In this accountability hour, students were given the opportunity to get one on one support from instructional staff. Although these systems were in place, the boarding school’s school performance score did not improve.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, accountability hour after school was eliminated from the daily schedule and the former intervention hour within the school day was replaced with a new literacy block during school across middle school classes grades six through eight. The intention of the literacy block was to support students’ English Language Arts classes with additional reading practice, standards based activities to enhance comprehension, explicit writing
instruction, and choice reading. This literacy block attempted to address literacy deficiencies in existing and incoming students as many incoming students presented with non-proficient test scores in English Language Arts. Again, literacy proficiency at Life Academy did not improve.

Moreover, within the 2017-2018 school year, a research-based online reading program was been adopted school-wide to provide remediation and intervention to students during the school day and during after-school hours. Reading volunteers through a local construction company in partnership with Life Academy worked with students one on one to assist with the reading of non-fiction texts, the answering of comprehension questions, and the writing of responses to critical thinking prompts during school hours. Sessions lasted from one to two hours at a time once per week. In the evening hours after school, volunteers from a local private Christian high school provided one on one reading tutoring to students at Life Academy on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for two hours each night. Unfortunately, writing scores suffered an even greater decrease.

Using a non-academic context, enrichment activities providing opportunities for creative writing were also instituted at Life Academy. For three years, interested students have participated in a Poetry Slam where submissions of original works were submitted to be judged by local celebrities. In a partnership with a local bookstore, winners have been allowed to orally present their works to the public and to win prizes. Students were also rendered the opportunity to submit works to Life Academy’s yearly anthology. All editors, typesetters, writers and format specialists on the publishing committee were students.

As the interventions of the accountability hour and literacy block have not substantially affected student performance in writing, the need for literacy programming with emphasis on writing is a critical issue. Restricting analysis to classroom writing would not provide a wide
enough lens to view adolescent writing. With the unique opportunity of student availability through residential living, a non-traditional setting was perfectly provided for the study of adolescent writing.

Participants

This portion of the chapter addresses the recruitment of participants from Life Academy and the substantiation of ethical regulations through informed consents. For this study, two purposive sampling schemes—criterion and convenience—were appropriate (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Criterion was selected as the writing experiences of adolescent writers was the focused phenomenon in this study. Convenience was also suitable as participants were students within the residential public charter boarding school where the researcher works.

In keeping with established procedures, a voluntary sample of students from seventh to eleventh grades from the boarding school was offered the opportunity to participate in the after-school writing club. Open enlistment for clubs occurs every year at Life Academy in August. During student orientation in August of 2017, five female students volunteered for the club through Life Academy’s already existing sign-up process. This process provided students with all of the clubs that would be offered during the school year and students were allowed to choose what to participate in based on interest. The lists of interested students were then given to the already designated club sponsors for review. Upon receiving the list of students interested in the writing club, brief, pre-determination conversations were conducted with students’ teachers, residential mentors, and administrators to determine if students who signed up were a good fit—expressing interest in writing, collaboration, and availability—for the writing club. All five students who expressed interest in the club were accepted for membership. These five students ranged in age from 12 to 16 and from grades eight to ten. From these five students, three were
selected to serve as cases for this study based primarily on their availability to be present during all of the club’s sessions. They are briefly introduced below using pseudonyms as descriptions of them are present in the openings of their respective narratives.

**Jean.** Jean is a 13-year-old eighth grader at Life Academy. She has attended the boarding school since sixth grade. Jean became a student at Life Academy due to a tumultuous home life where her basic needs were not met.

**Mary.** Mary has also attended Life Academy since sixth grade; however, she is a 15-year-old ninth grader. Mary’s mother abandoned her as a young child and as her custodial guardian aged, Mary became difficult to care for; thus, she enrolled in Life Academy.

**Meisha.** Meisha, a 14-year-old ninth grader was experiencing her first year of enrollment at Life Academy. Unlike both Jean and Mary, Meisha became a student at the boarding school because her guardians’ work schedules left her unattended at home too frequently. Life Academy provided a safe environment for Meisha as being at home would have rendered her unsupervised.

**Informed consent.** Because the club is situated on the school’s campus, administrators of the boarding school also rendered consensual approval for data to be collected, and for student participation. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and rendered approval for the study before data was collected or analyzed. Prior to collecting data, student participants and their parents were given acceptance letters. These letters informed students and their parents of the meeting times, location, and commitment requirements for participation. Additionally, ethical regulations were satisfied by having participating students and their parents sign informed consents before the after-school writing club’s sessions began. Informed consents were kept
confidential and separate from the collected data in a locked cabinet file in my home office. Students and parents received copies of their consent forms.

**Role of Researcher**

As previously discussed, being a participant observer was the role I took as the researcher. Adhering to the definition of Kawulich (2005), as the participant observer in this study, I facilitated the functioning of the after-school narrative writing club while maintaining enough distance to gather data and to analyze student interaction. As the researcher is primarily responsible for analyzing and carefully interpreting the data sources and personal stories of participants, the researcher cannot be removed from the landscape of the study (Bakhtin, 1935; 1981; Fairbairn & Carson, 2002; Patton, 2002). In conducting narrative inquiry, I was a researcher that had to “accommodate the story, the teller, the context, and the listener by melding data collected from various sources into a collective narrative” (Montero & Washington, 2013, p. 332).

Students were made completely aware of my position and did not view me as a member of their club. Initially, I was very involved in the facilitation of the club as it related to logistical items such as when to journal how to use the quotes and stems to write. However, as the club sessions progressed, the participants took ownership of the writing club which caused my role to fluctuate. Before the collection of data, the researcher clearly described what would be collected and what the data would be used for to the participants. A culture of openness was established so that participants were free to ask questions about my role, the club, or the process of the writing club at any time.
The Writing Club

The participants of the after-school writing club met in Room 104. The classroom used for the club sessions was during the day the setting for English, Civics, Algebra II, and remediation courses. Chairs were placed in collaborative groupings of four, there was a large dry erase board at the front of the classroom, and a smart television for student usage. A library of approximately 100 books was present in the room representing books of many genres. The club met from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM during the fall semester of 2017 for 11 sessions (see Table 2).

Each session began with participants entering to soft jazz playing in the background while they gathered materials to complete their journal writing. Because research has shown that music aids in concentration, instrumentals with no words were chosen for the onset of club sessions to create a conducive environment for participants’ writing (Moore, 2007; Tierney & Kraus, 2013). For seven minutes in at the start of each session, participants chose quotes, writing stem, or free writing to engage their thoughts. A similar practice, writing into the day, used in sessions of the National Writing Project, is an activity deemed very helpful to engaging the writing process (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). The rationale for providing these options—quotes, stems, and free writing—was to again make the writing experience a favorable and fluid one for participants. Quotes and stems are helpful to the generation of ideas (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006). Examples used in club sessions were popular, quaint sayings such as “birds of a feather flock together,” and “you can’t change anything you tolerate.” Free writing could encompass the students’ days’ events, personal experiences and more. It was the participants’ choice to read or not to read their journal entries to the club after journal writing was completed. When participants’ shared entries, discourse occurred between participants.
Following the completion of journaling, students interacted with a video clip, song or song lyrics to promote more discussion, and to generate ideas about the writing topic for the day. These clips and songs were chosen by the participants and the participant observer based on interaction with popular media, environmental concerns, or critical issues present in the participants’ situated context. For examples, video clips of the NFL’s National Anthem protests, The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs, and the Great Flood of 2016 were shown and generated rich discussion. The after-school writing club afforded space for students to openly co-construct meaning about point of view, love, and resilience.

Table 2. After-School Writing Club Meeting Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>20, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>4, 11, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>2, 8, 15, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>13, 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only did participants write choice journals—using quotes, stems or personal thoughts—building on co-constructed thoughts precipitated by videos, songs or discourse; but also, participants contributed to a compiled list of topics from which they could choose to write. Romance, hate, outside, friendship, school, space trips, favorite animals, birthdays, future, heart, feelings, favorite sad songs, mess, imagination and life were among the topics on the list that student participants created.
Data Collection

In this section, the collected data sources are presented. Foundational to this study is the choice of data sources and the way in which they were accumulated for review in this study of the experiences of participants in an after-school writing club. The data collection began during the 2017 Fall semester from September through December. Data was comprised of pre and post interviews, audio-visual recordings, journal entries, writing samples, and re-storied narratives (Etherington, 2013; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2012). Further description of the individual data sources follows.

Interviews. Pre and post interviews were conducted with the three students selected for this study in room 104 on September 19, 2017, before the first club session and on December 20, 2017, after the last club session. The pre and post interviews were an important data source to this narrative inquiry of multiple cases because:

We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into other person’s perspectives. (Patton, 2002, p. 341)

Interviews were comprised of open-ended questions in order to allow participants to construct narratives about writing and writing club experiences (see Appendix A). Sample questions included: “Do you see writing as important to your academic success and future?” and “Where do you enjoy writing?” There were approximately six hours of pre and post interviews to include one half hour per participant per interview.

Participants’ oral discourse. Audio-visual recordings—a substantially rich informational source for this study—included all of the discourse that occurred during the writing club’s sessions. Participants were aware of the recordings as the boarding school records
all activity on campus. There was a total of eleven hours and fifteen minutes of oral discourse recorded.

**Participants’ written discourse.** Journal entries included free writing on topics of the participants’ choice as well as responses to famous quotes for example “birds of a feather flock together.” Writing samples were created from participants’ compiled list of subjects to write about. A total of 33 journal entries and 35 writing samples were collected for review during this study.

**Data Preparation and Management**

Multiple copies of these artifacts and samples were made to avoid altering the original samples during the analysis process. In order to preserve the genuine presentations of the students’ work, in this study, any quoting of original text was offered just as it was originally written with no corrections made within the presentation for grammatical or mechanical errors.

**The transcription process.** Transcription occurred using a digital platform with password protected document capability in a home office using the recordings after each session for interviews and participants’ oral discourse. Verbatim transcribing was accomplished as pause and rewind capabilities were enabled on the recordings. After initial transcriptions were made, the researcher listened with the document in order to correct any possible discrepancies. Following this, multiple physical copies of the transcriptions were made in order to answer the research question.

In the preparation of the transcription documents, emphasis was given to words and phrases which were of auditory salience in order to preserve authentic moments as they actually occurred. An example of this is from Jean’s pre-interview as the transcript reads: “With a writing test, I have to explain and explain and explain. It takes waaaaayyyyyyy too long.” (Jean,
personal communication, September 13, 2017). Writing way with additional letters is meant to indicate that the word dragged on when spoken.

An important consideration in the conducting of research is data management. Data management must safeguard against inferior data, loss of data, or unsecured storage of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, this study stored parent, student, and school consent forms in a secured locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office along with hard copies of journal entries, writing samples, interviews transcripts, and writing club sessions’ transcriptions. Secondary and tertiary copies of journal entries, writing samples, interview and writing club session transcriptions were saved onto the researcher’s personal, password protected computer’s hard drive, and to her digital, online password protected storage file. All audio-video files were kept on a personal, password protected computer’s hard drive uploaded to a digital, online password protected storage file.

Data Analysis

For this study of adolescents in an after-school writing club, a holistic embedded case study was used to analyze the data sources collected. As previously discussed, a holistic embedded case study was appropriate to fully evaluate the experiences of adolescents in an after-school writing club. Using the lens of constructivism and connections to the self-determination, self-efficacy, and socio-cultural theories, the phenomenon of the writing club was examined. Through the construction of narratives, the adolescents’ lived experiences are presented (Chase, 2018). The process of analysis for this study is described in Figure 2.
A priori codes were identified for each theory used in this study. The a priori codes were:

- Self-determination
  - autonomy
  - competence
  - relatedness

- Self-Efficacy
  - performance
  - vicarious experience
  - verbal persuasion
  - feedback

- Sociocultural
  - co-construction
  - situated learning

A priori codes were used to examine transcripts and copies of collected data sources for each participant in chronological order: (1) pre-interviews, (2) session discourse (11 chronological sessions), (3) journal entries, (4) writing samples, (5) post-interviews.

Frequencies of code occurrences were recorded by theory.

Coded data was then used to compose re-storied narratives which was represented in 11 chronological vignettes.

Figure 2. Model of the Data Analysis Process.

**Coding of transcripts and data sources.** In this study, transcripts of both pre and post interviews, 11 writing club sessions, journal entries and writing samples were examined using a priori codes (Saldana, 2016). These a priori codes were based on the three theories used to
ground this study. Five copies of each data source were made and separated by participant in order to maintain the integrity of all original writing, and to render sufficient working space for coding and note taking.

A sequential, chronological approach to coding the data was taken as sources were examined in this order for each participant: pre-interview transcripts, transcripts of ordered sessions, journals, and writing samples by date, followed by post-interviews. A total of nine a priori codes were applied to the data sources to include: self-determination autonomy, competence, and relatedness; self-efficacy performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and feedback; sociocultural co-construction, and situated learning. Coding for the presentation of these theories produced the frequencies noted in Table 3.

**Re-storied narratives.** Using the evocative examples from the process of a priori coding, re-storied narratives were constructed to represent each participant’s experiences within the writing club (Clandinin & Huber, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin 2006). Careful consideration was given to privileging each individual’s voice by maintaining the students’ actual discourse and writing without altering it for grammar or word choice as this study’s intention was to discover the organic experiences of adolescents’ when writing. Pseudonyms were maintained for each participant and for individuals’ named within their writings and discourse. Thus, each narrative contained salient verbatim expressions from the pre and post interviews, 11 sessions—called vignettes in the narratives—student journals, and writing samples.

Several iterations of the narratives were constructed as the interim research texts were open to interpretation, negotiation and further investigation (Clandindin & Huber, 2006). Each iteration of participants’ narratives took into consideration the elements of a good story ensuring that setting, plot, characters in addition to temporality, sociality, and place were accurate,
engaging and present. When available, student participants gave input and feedback on their narratives to afford opportunities for co-construction ensuring that the “mutual process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying” privileged the unique voices of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 4).

Table 3. Frequency of A Priori Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Priori Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autonomy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relatedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vicarious experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbal persuasion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-construction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situated learning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethical Considerations

This study occurred on the same site where I was employed as a teacher and instructional specialist. Knowing the students of the school caused me to bring personal experiences to the writing club sessions. These personal experiences rendered contextual background for creating an organic, non-contrived environment for student participants of the after-school writing club.

Ethics in this study focused on “negotiation, respect, mutuality, and openness to multiple voices” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 52). When retelling the stories of the participants, these characteristics were imperative considering that the participants’ “lived and told stories are who they are and who they are becoming and that these stories sustain them” thus making “confidentiality and anonymity” of the utmost importance (Clandinin & Huber, 2006, p. 15).
Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was established in three ways: triangulation, reliability and reflexivity. The way in which these criteria were met in this study is discussed in this section.

Triangulation. Foremost, the triangulation between the three cases’ data in this holistic embedded case study is an important aspect of trustworthiness. Having several sources of information to analyze provided needful triangulation between data sources (Charmaz, 2002; Freeman deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Denzin, 1978; Glense, 2011; Patton, 2002). “Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods” which then minimizes the potential for bias or limited evaluations (Patton, 2002, p. 247; Maxwell, 2005). Instead of one or two participants being used as cases for this study, three were selected as cases for analysis and were analyzed within the authentic setting of the after-school writing club.

Reliability. Intercoder reliability was established through a second coder. A doctoral student enrolled in the Curriculum and Instruction Program at Louisiana State University was enlisted to serve as a coder to establish inter-rater reliability. She coded the first two sessions’ transcripts along with accompanying journal entries and writing samples representing approximately 10% of data, an established standard (MacGregor, personal communication, 2017). Discrepancies between the first coder and the second coder were 20%. The session’s codes were discussed resulting in an 80% consensus intercoder reliability. Although reliability in qualitative studies may have diminished relevance due to the subjective interpretations of the researcher, enlisting an additional coder helps to diminish bias (Yin, 1984). The second coder assisted in making this study both credible and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reflexivity. The recognition of my reflexivity or positioning within this study was an important factor in the execution of this study. As a participant observer, I was aware of the
possible influence that I may have on the participants (Maxwell, 2005; Kawulich, 2005; Spradley, 2016). However, in an effort to reduce this influence, I was both “attentive to and conscientious of the cultural, political, social linguistic, and ideological origins” of the researcher’s own perspectives and the perspectives of those within the study (Patton, 2002, p. 299).

Additionally, Clandinin and Connelly’s (1990) constructs of qualitative trustworthiness were also met. Apparentness, verisimilitude, and transferability are all enacted in this qualitative study to ensure that it is easy to understand, believable, true, and able to offer opportunities for meaningful connections for researchers across disciplines (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Montero & Washington, 2011).

**Summary**

This section explored the research methodology through which this qualitative holistic embedded case study was conducted. Informal conversations were held with educators, administrators, and appropriate residential team members to determine the three students who would be participants in this study. Pre and post interviews were conducted with case study participants to address their sentiments about writing. Eleven club sessions were conducted and transcriptions of all interviews and sessions were carefully made. From the transcriptions and the utilization of evocative examples, narratives were created expressing each participants’ experiences while in the writing club. The researcher operated as a participant observer who fluctuated in role as the club’s sessions progressed. From this study and its analysis, other educators can derive meaningful information about how adolescents engage and experience writing.
Chapter 4: Jean’s Story

Jean is a 13-year-old student at Life Academy. She is an eighth grader who has been a student at Life Academy for three years. At the beginning of the school year when all of the clubs and sports activities were available for membership, Jean chose the writing club to be a part of. Her narrative is retold below in vignettes. Both Jean’s pre and post interviews are also present. To preserve the authenticity of the participant’s language, and writing as presented in journals and written samples, examples were transferred exactly as they were written or transcribed. Pseudonyms were utilized to represent the names of the participant and the people she describes.

Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017

Jean entered room 104 for her pre-interview after the school day was officially completed at approximately 3:45 PM. As I opened the door and asked “how are you?” Jean answered, “I’m good Ms. Brown…wassup with you?” The two of us exchanged pleasantries about the new school year’s inception before sitting at two desks in the classroom to begin the pre-interview process. Before beginning, I thanked Jean for being a part of the writing club acknowledging openly that she could have chosen any extra-curricular activity to engage in during the semester. Saying that I felt honored to have Jean on board, I explained that the interview would involve a few questions to get Jean’s thoughts on writing before the club meetings were set to begin. Jean agreed to answer the questions as clearly as possible and to let me know if at any point she felt uncomfortable so that the questioning could be discontinued.

Foremost, Jean was asked to describe herself as a writer to which she initially responded, “I’m a good writer,” only to correct herself moments later with the disclaimer, “let me change that. I’m a moderately good writer.” Jean described herself as not the greatest; but, certainly not
the worst writer of all writers. Laughing frequently through this exchange, Jean qualified her description of herself with examples of times she’d written in class and with the time that she’d participated in Life Academy’s poetry slam. She perceived her writing to be interesting to herself, and to the others who’d had the chance to read her work.

Fluidly, the interview between myself and Jean continued and included a discussion of where Jean liked to write. Jean exposed that she enjoyed writing anywhere. Assignments including writing in class, more creative forms of writing outside of class and everything in between were all options for her. I agreed with Jean and affirmed the admission that she could literally write anywhere for any cause to which Jean replied, “makes sense to me you being an author and such.” Smiling and nodding at Jean’s knowledge of my writing background, I asked Jean if she needed a break or if she was willing to continue the interview. Jean eagerly told me “not at all…shoot. I’m ready!”

The next question required Jean to identify her preference between two types of assessments—multiple choice or essay. Interestingly, Jean chose multiple choice tests. I paused a moment for elaboration asking the question, “why, since you like writing so much?” Jean responded, “I like it very much. I just don’t like writing for tests! On a multiple choice test, the answers are all there. With a writing test, I have to explain and explain and explain. It takes waaaaayyyyyy too long. Multiple choice all the way.”

Jean and I laughed at this comment. I continued the interview with a poignant question about whether or not Jean thought writing to be important to her academic success and to her future? Jean answered very articulately saying that she was clear that writing was important for academic success as she was being asked to write in every content area. According to Jean, writing in school couldn’t be avoided. Her academic experiences challenged her with having to
provide written answers to constructed response items in every content area. For example, even in math, a content area traditionally focused on computation, often required her to explain and to defend her process for arriving at the answers that she had chosen. However, as it related to her future, Jean did not believe that she would need writing.

As the interview was coming to a close, I asked Jean about her motivation to write.

“OK...so do you feel like your motivation towards writing is more intrinsic or extrinsic. In other words, do you write because of your inner desire or because of reward outside of yourself?”

To this, Jean asked, “Can you give me an example of a reward?”

Not having a problem with clarifying this for her, I responded “like writing your poem to win a contest. That motivation is extrinsic.”

Having now this qualification, Jean answered: “Then I’m intrinsically motivated. I like writing because I like writing. Point blank period.”

For her answers and willingness to participate in the interview, I thanked her. When Jean was asked if she had any questions, she had only one. She wanted to know when club meetings would begin. Jean and I exchanged friendly goodbyes and Jean left the room.

**Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017**

September 20th had finally come! Jean’s last question before leaving me only a week before was “when is the first meeting?”

The day was here. The after-school writing club was fully engaged and she was a part of it.

Upon entering the room, there was soft jazz music playing in the background. Jean greeted the other club participants and chose a seat, ready to write. She found a journal on the desk and writing utensils with the instructions, “please choose a quote or free write,” given by the other club members. Students wrote about whatever they chose. Jean quickly wrote
something down. She waited for the others to complete their journal entries so that everyone could share.

About 10 minutes into the first meeting, Jean asked to speak first saying that she hadn’t much to say. As a matter of fact, all she’d written in 10 minutes was “today, my day was good.” When asked if that was all that she had written, Jean replied: “Yeah! That’s it and that’s all.” Jean responded to the chuckles in the room from other participants with a deep laugh herself. It appeared that she was gratified by creating a humorous moment.

After this, I described the structure of the club, the expectations, what data was to be collected for analysis, the participants’ rights as club members, and the importance of their participation in the case study. Following this explanation, and an opportunity for questions given, the first writing activity began. Using the theme “thinking out loud,” participants were asked to consider their lives, ideas, future and presently situated contexts in order to write out their thoughts of themselves. No few minutes passed before Jean requested Ed Sheeran’s “Thinking out Loud” to be played in the background. The topic and song’s title were exactly the same and as Jean heard the song, she began to sing—first softly, then with great volume.

About 15 minutes before the session ended it was time to share out. Only, Jean had not written anything at all! Spending her time singing and conversing with others seemed to distract her from her own creative work for the day. Joking about not writing this day, Jean explained “Well in that case I take half the credit” for collaborating with others on their work.

Jean was not ridiculed for lacking a writing sample to share, and she offered no explanation for her behavior. Jean merely interacted and conversed with the other girls about their work until it was time to leave and then she volunteered to pick up the supplies.
Today, Jean arrived to the writing club and immediately began journaling. With soft jazz playing in the background, she wrote for the entirety of the time allotted and offered to share her writing first. She began her recounting of the day’s events which included being falsely accused of breaking up a popular middle school couple. In her journal entry, Jean defended the notion that she’d had nothing to do with the breakup at all. “Kalin went around saying that she was single and they blamed it on me because I was around them. I didn’t have anything to do with that.”

Upon the closure of this portion of the session, I introduced a controversial topic for discussion. The participants were asked if they knew anything of the protests begun by Colin Kaepernick in the NFL. Immediately, students began to excitedly speak of social media posts and YouTube videos that they had seen of various protests. Jean listened intently to the comments made about the protests. Others made connections to things that they’d heard their social studies teacher say about the issue. When the conversation quieted, I introduced a short video clip detailing Kaepernick’s protest to the national anthem and then asked students to determine whether or not the protest was justified. Furthermore, students were asked to decide where they stood on the issue of racism and how to productively stand against it.

Jean continued to engage in conversation about the issues. The conversation meandered around the issue and included other relevant issues such as the President’s ideas about the protests. Such interjections as “he’s going to build a see through wall” and “I know we don’t like Trump,” were made by Jean. Naturally, Jean phased out of the conversation in order to write. Jean specifically asked before settling in to write, “can you play some music?” I allowed
the club members to select the songs that they wanted to hear and I played as many as I could before their hour in writing club was done.

Jean asked a few clarifying questions about the details of Colin’s protests to and mentioned how cute she thought he was with a chuckle. While writing, she looked up at me and said “and I don’t want to go to New York no more because of 9/11.” Interestingly, this statement had no written or discussion based connection. It sparked conversation in the other members about where it was safe to live. Jean retorted, “I’m gonna look up good places to live other than the United States.” I reminded Jean of the writing focus for the day and she got back to writing. A little later Jean announced that she would be moving to the United Kingdom. Intermittently, writing was sprinkled with conversation about the current president, the former president, where to live, and current issues with North Korea. The conversation was free flowing with interaction predicated on knowledge of current events surfacing while writing continued.

Before the end of the session, the students had an opportunity to present their writing samples. Jean’s sample was influenced by the conversation and video clip.

Donald Trump should keep his comments to hisself. He had no right to say anything about Collin K.
I would, well me personally would respect what Collin did. His oppion is his oppoin and everybody should respect that Now if it was up to me I would tell Collin to keep doing what he is doing because he is doing the right thing.

Vignette Three: The Real Story, October 4, 2017

With soft jazz playing in room 104, members of the writing club entered. Jean got her journal and said: “why every time we come in here I have a story?” I replied with “that’s funny” Jean retrieved her supplies and the room fell silent as journal writing began.

There was some discussion about the phrase “birds of a feather flock together” as the students wrote; but Jean was unengaged in this as she chose to write out her feelings about an
occurrence earlier in the school day. Her journal entry described her upset because another student was looking at her and desiring her help on an assignment. According to Jean, “I’m thinking about how people always use me for my work please just leave me alone I’m going to get your paper all wrong.” Jean shared her journal with the rest of the group and there was no discussion about it. I merely reached out and touched Jean’s shoulder to reassure her while saying “I’m sorry you had a rough day.” I transitioned into a discussion on point of view.

Jean did not contribute to the discussion at all as another participant expounded on point of view. As a surprise, I played a video of *Three Little Pigs*. Laughter filled the room as Jean reminisced about the first time she’d heard this story and about how unrealistic it seemed now. Jean laughed and talked with the girls during this conversation. Then, I offered another point of view, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* from the perspective of the wolf. Jean really enjoyed this video clip. Although Jean laughed through the others’ comments, she did not contribute verbally to their discussion.

Following the video clips, the challenge assignment was to retell the story of the Three Little Pigs once more from yet another perspective. Jean was not enthusiastic about this assignment. As a matter of fact, Jean decided to write about a completely different topic for her writing sample. This one she did not read to the group.

I feel the start of something new. I feel like I’m becoming a better person because usually I would have been went off on the girls I’m surrounded by. I don’t know why but some people think I want their boyfriend but to be real to me they not even mature to me. I like to go with boys older than me.

**Vignette Four: Love, October 11, 2017**

This fourth session began just like all the others. The club members entered and grabbed their journals and supplies in order to begin their writing for the day. Jazz was playing in the
background to greet the students and they engaged in light banter back and forth about the events of their day before truly settling down to write.

As Jean was accustomed, the opportunity to share journal writing with the group was given. Again, she decided to go first. Much like her other previous journal entries, Jean wrote about the events of her day.

Today was not my day because these lil 7th graders are always spreading rumors. Eighth grade doesn’t like 7th grade but I don’t have anything to do with that. So Marquise and me broke up. He told Infinity that he was going to get his sister to fight me. He just wants my name in his mouth cause I know it tastes good. So that’s all I have to say.

I was taken aback by this comment as was evidenced in her response of “excuse me? wow!” Jean gave no rebuttal to my shocked response. She merely sat in attention waiting for the next person to read. Unrelatedly, during the reading of other student responses, Jean asked me “when are we going to have another poetry contest?” The answer was April, to which Jean replied “that’s my birthday month” and although Jean had steered the conversation away from the journal reading, she turned to another participant and asked “when are you going to start reading?” Mary laughed and read her journal for the group.

Following this exchange and the reading of the other participants’ journals, I transitioned into the topic of love. Jean, in choral voices with the other participants, almost as if she was cued, began singing “we found love right where we are,” (Ed Sheeran, Thinking Out Loud, 2014). I posed the question, what is love? Jean explained that love was a strong feeling for someone and that the term was used too loosely among middle schoolers. As a matter of fact, Jean explained that she only tells her mother that she loves her because she loves no one but her family. “No boys, no girls, no teachers…not you Ms. Brown, I love you!” Jean makes an exception to her love rule by including me.
Jean teased and joked with the other members as they read their entries. How to show love was the natural progression of the conversation to which Jean had examples. She disclosed that love for others is exhibited in what you do. For her, cleaning her grandmother’s house when she is too ill to do it is love. Another club member refuted this statement with, “that’s not love, that’s obedience.” Of course, Jean didn’t agree with this statement at all contending that her love for her family is evidenced in her actions.

Other club members shared their ideas about how to show love and the consensus of the writing club is that love is connected to obedience, trust, loyalty and food. All of the girls firmly established the fact that people who love each other are bound to share meals and to provide nurturing to one another.

This exchange led to me showing a video I’d created about my experiences with the Great Flood of 2016. Jean watched with the intention of identifying who I loved. The discussion following the video review was a remarkably sensitive one where Jean spoke about how much I must love my dogs for them to be in so many frames of the video. She further indicated that she perceived me to love my family and home. Another video clip of vignettes was shown of scenarios where people were too busy or too distracted to show love. A brief discussion ensued.

Students naturally began to write about love after the video clips and discussion. Jean wrote very little this day after having had so much to say during the discussion. Her writing sample demonstrated: “I could show love in many ways. I can show love to my family. I help my grandmother even when I don’t want to and I take care of my sisters.”
Jean entered room 104 with a pressing request to use the restroom. She danced around until I motioned that it was alright while laughing at Jean’s colorful display. This day, the members were so engaged in their writing, they asked for extra time as they were not completely done with their journals. Once more, when it was time to read journal samples, Jean asked to be first. Jean chose to write about the quote, “you can’t change what you tolerate.” From this quote, Jean extrapolated that it is difficult to break free from things when you’ve been accustomed to them for a while. To give evidence of this point, Jean offered the example of being stuck in an abusive relationship and being afraid to leave. Others offered their approval of this assessment and shared their own journals.

Thereafter, students were offered the challenge of writing about their futures. What will life look like in 10 years? Students were offered the chance to write out their dreams with no restrictions. I allowed students to listen to music of their choosing as she played the requested songs.

This space gave Jean time to write the following:

10 years from now I’ll be 25. So, I see myself having my own business with the following: nail shop, makeup and hair salon all in one place. I will have only one child and I don’t care about the relationship. I want to live in a nice size house or a condo. My education level will be successful because I will have my master’s degree. My child is gonna be named Aarianna and if a boy King.

After each participant had the chance to share, I pulled out a sheet of paper and asked the students to brainstorm a list of topics that they would enjoy writing about for the second half of their club’s sessions. Jean was elated about getting to contribute to such a list. To this list she contributed mess [gossip], imagination, and life. After turning this list back in to me for safe keeping, Jean helped with gathering the supplies and putting things away.
Vignette Six: Choice, November 2, 2017

Jean entered room 104 with singleness of heart. She got right down to the business of journaling with only quick “hellos” given to the other participants. Sitting down, she began to write. When time had elapsed to speak about journals, Jean decided not to share. It was the first time in their shared sessions that Jean was not the first to disclose what was written in her journal even if it was only one crafted line.

Having access to the written journal entry for review later, I found that Jean had written a response to a quote that focused on it not being a good idea to use someone’s past against them. In her analysis, Jean stated that doing so could really hurt that person deeply. There was no specific example granted. There were only general statements about the damage that could be done to him who was trying to become a better version of himself while being held down with the demons of the past.

With great enthusiasm, I pulled out the paper of topics from the week prior to make it visible and accessible for use. After selecting a topic, participants brainstormed ideas. Feedback occurred during this process as Jean jotted her ideas down.

Jean chose to write about mess [gossip] and fighting. She brainstormed ideas about how mess can ruin reputations and start needless fights. I expressed how much I was looking forward to reading this work. Not unlike the other sessions, Jean helped with picking up all of the supplies before leaving for the dorms.

Vignette Seven: Perception, the Ultimate Reality, November 8, 2017

Jean entered room 104 ready to write as evidenced by the immediacy in her getting to her journal. Jean chronicled her thoughts and was ready to share them when it was time. Other
participants proceeded her in urgency when speaking their written journals this day, so Jean spoke last.

Today was a good day I guess. In Mr. Damien’s class we played Jeopardy. We got in trouble by Mr. Samson because we was too loud. In his class it was boring. I still didn’t do his packet. Next was Ms. Goom’s class. Her class is always my favorite class. We read another progress report in the book “Flowers for Algemon.” I went to the bathroom and Malcolm tried to hit me like always. IDK why he always messing wit me. The rest of my day was good except for when Marissa tried to fight. I an want her to get in trouble.

Jean again used her journal to detail her thoughts on her school day and had no problem with sharing her thoughts with the other group members.

Knowing very well the flow of the club’s structure, Jean, without prompting, began to work on building her writing around her ideas on mess [gossip] and fighting that she’d begun the week before. She offered her writing sample to me for comment and review. Jean was open to suggestions. That day, my major feedback centered around the word mess and what it meant in accordance with Jean’s writing sample. Working hard on giving and receiving feedback, Jean and I lost track of time and had to be reminded of when it was time to go. Jean helped me pick up journals and writing utensils before it was time to go.

Vignette Eight: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017

Jean entered with club participants in the middle of a conversation. Jean made sure to say hello to me before grabbing her journal to begin writing. The club flowed as it normally would. Jean periodically checked the clock to ensure that she wasn’t spending too much time on her journal. She kept the other girls on track by reminding them when there was 3 minutes left.

At the 10-minute mark, Jean volunteered to read her journal entry. Once more, Jean wrote about the events of her day. She spoke about having completed all of her work in English class which was fun as usual for her. Moreover, she shared that when she woke up from an
unexpected nap, there were marks in her face. One of the other students had pranked her and drew pictures on her face as she was asleep. Jean went on to disclose the completion of assignments in her computer class and in math.

The other members read their journals and then I was asked if it was time to continue working on their writing. I nodded and motioned for the girls to get to work. Jean began working right away. She suggested music and I played the songs as they were requested. A few moments into writing, Jean looked up to ask me, “how am I supposed to continue my writing?” I replied, “from your thesis statement, begin to assess your thoughts there.” Jean thanked me for helping her to get focused, and got right back to work.

In the same fashion that was customary for Jean, she offered information that was not related to the task at hand. While she was writing, she offered the fact that she was going to bible study later on that evening. I acknowledged her comment with “cool.” The girls continued to work for several minutes. Near the end of the hour, each had an opportunity to share their progress and revisions on their writing. Jean had no problem sharing her writing that day as she’d added an example of what mess [gossip] was and how it could adversely affect relationships.

Fighting is not going to solve anything. There was this girl I thought was my friend. I used to call her my twin. One day when I went to class, she asked me if I wanted to fight. I said no. She took it to heart. The little-est things can mess up a relationship. You shouldn’t let mess get in the way of a good relationship.

During this session, Jean had the opportunity to work and rework her writing. Of her own volition, Jean worked diligently on doing this. There was no grumbling or complaining as I had often seen from students in class when it was time to revise a piece of writing. Jean seemed to enjoy sharing her work with the other club and me.
Vignette Nine: Ownership, November 29, 2017

Jean entered with her usual greetings and sat down to write in her journal where her narration of the day’s events ensued. Because it was Jean’s pattern, the expectation was that she would write about her day, want to share first, and always steer the conversation to an unrelated topic. With little deviation, this is what Jean had done since the very first session. Now, in session nine, it was evident that Jean knew exactly how the club was to be run. It had become her club. She was invested in its work and this was evidenced by her participation and initiative.

Jean alerted the club members of when time was up for journal writing, she read her entry first which told of her being teased to the point of tears because of an accident she’d had over the weekend. Generally, Jean’s journals had been lighthearted stories of girl/boy drama, potential fights avoided, and student pranks. These accounts would hardly be acknowledged or discussed. But, this time was different.

Jean had been hit by a car over the weekend! Several gasps filled the air. Jean assured everyone that she was fine. She just didn’t like being teased about something so serious. This admission totally changed the feel of the room. I expressed my concern and asked if she was really alright. Again, Jean assured me that she was fine. She just didn’t want to be teased about it. I guaranteed her that she would not be teased while at the club’s meeting and offered a hug while wiping my own eyes because I could not imagine having come to the club’s meeting with her not being there.

Even though Jean tried to refocus everyone on the normal routine of writing and sharing out, the club’s purpose that day had shifted. Their writing club’s space had shifted to one of support, comfort, and flexibility where intimate details were important enough to pause to address.
This time before Jean helped to pick up the journals and supplies, she was not alone. The other girls stayed to help as well and each of them made it a point to hug I before they departed for the dorms.

**Vignette Ten: Who Am I? December 13, 2017**

Today, Jean entered room 104 late. She’d missed the journal writing session and the initial conversations about the journals. However, she jumped right into her normal routine. Jean grabbed her journal and began working on her piece of writing on confrontation and conflict or mess [gossip] and fighting to use Jean’s words.

There was light conversation as writing occurred. With Jean’s agreement, it was decided that there would be no sharing out today. Diligent work continued. Like the session before, Jean with the other participants put away their things supplies and walked together to the dorms.

**Vignette Eleven: The End? December 18, 2017**

“My girls…I can’t believe that we’ve been together a whole semester already. It’s funny how time flies when you’re having fun huh?”

I opened their last writing club session with the question above. The girls all smiled and laughed. Jean agreed with me that the club was a delightful space: “Yep! This was a lot of fun.” Jean and the girls wrote in their journals and then shared their entries aloud. Following this, the girls were challenged with a fun culminating activity. Each was challenged to create a guidebook for teenage dating including tips on what should or should not be avoided. The girls decided to work together and to combine their ideas. I did not object to this collaborative effort.

**Post-Interview, December 20, 2017**

In much the same fashion as she’d done many times before, Jean entered room 104 for her post-interview. “Are you ready to do our closing interview?” I asked. Jean answered, “not
really Ms. B. This was incredible! I loved our club!” I expressed how elated she was to know that Jean had enjoyed her time in the club. Jean continued with “For real, I looked forward to coming every week ‘cause it was something that I got to choose to do. I wasn’t forced to come to write. I wanted to be here.” What an awesome testament to the writing club—wanting to be there and wanting to write.

I asked Jean if she was ready to answer the interview questions now that she had experienced the writing club. They started with the question about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In the first interview, Jean described herself as intrinsically motivated and still, at the end of the semester, she described her motivation to write the same way. According to Jean, she didn’t need anything outside of herself as an incentive to write. More specifically, Jean stated, “like I don’t need a prize or a good grade to do it (writing). I just like it.”

I then reminded Jean that she’d described herself initially as a moderately good writer. Jean was asked if this description had changed. For her, this had not changed. However, she acknowledged that she still needed assistance in writing but found that the club was a great way to practice. To the question about the contexts in which Jean enjoyed writing she contended that she still enjoyed writing anywhere. However, she qualified her statements more with these specific sentiments: “Writing anywhere is cool….but after being in the club, I’d have to say writing here was better. I could just write and hang out and talk and help others’ with their writing in class too. I like writing without doing it for a grade. That’s so much better to me.” To this I replied “really?” And Jean elaborated: “Yes! When you write for a grade, you have to change it a lot to make the writing say what the grader wants. They are right and you are wrong. I didn’t feel like that in the club. What I thought about things was important cause I didn’t have to worry about that part…the grade part.” Intrigued by this answer I asked a follow-up question.
“The feedback that you were given or that you gave, did that feel like grading?” To this, Jean answered: “No, it felt like talking…like a conversation really where I could get better or be more clearer. And it was fun that it was students telling me and not you or another teacher telling me what was wrong and what I needed to do for a higher grade.”

In contrast to the first interview, Jean’s answer was much more descriptive and specific to how she viewed the club in comparison to classroom writing. Several distinctions between how it felt to have student feedback, collaboration and discussion and the relieved pressure from grading were made.

Jean went on to say that she still preferred a multiple choice test to an essay test because the test based writing is different from the writing done in the club. Jean’s exact words were, “give me multiple choice all day.” Additionally, Jean’s perspective on writing being important to academic and future success was the same. She saw writing in school as unavoidable because it was required in every subject. However, she didn’t think she’d need writing skills past high school and college.
Chapter 5: Mary’s Story

Mary is a 15-year-old student at Life Academy. She is in ninth grade and has been a student at the boarding school for three years. Mary, a student athlete and dance team member, always made sure to schedule her presence at practices around her standing engagement with the writing club each week. Like Jean, Mary’s experiences in the writing club are contained in 11 vignettes in addition to her pre and post interviews. In an effort to maintain the authenticity of Mary’s oral discourse, journal writing, and written samples, examples have been transferred exactly as they were written or transcribed. Pseudonyms were utilized to represent the names of the participant and the people she describes.

Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017

I greeted Mary when she arrived for her pre-interview with “hey girl! How are you today?” Mary responded with “I’m good Ms. Brown. How are you?” Very pleasant conversation ensued between us and I steered the conversation towards the reason for our meeting that day—to get Mary’s ideas about writing before beginning the writing club’s journey as a collective body. Mary was made aware at the onset of the pre-interview that she could discontinue the interview at any time if she felt uncomfortable and that she could ask clarifying questions at any point during the interview.

First, Mary was asked to describe herself as a writer. She replied in a very colorful manner. “I hate to brag Ms. Brown but I am an awesome [emphasis mine] writer! I always express myself well on paper. I’ve been told many times that my writing is clear and easy to understand too!” Mary didn’t qualify this statement with any specific examples. She merely paused and waited for the next question.
The next question was posed. Mary was asked to discuss the types of writing she enjoyed and the settings in which she felt most comfortable doing this writing in. Mary began to laugh as she disclosed she would write anywhere. There was not a particular place that she believed herself to be most comfortable writing in. However, Mary indicated that she most preferred writing poetry and short stories. Mary further elaborated “I really like telling about real life stuff that’s going on.”

I thanked her for answering so honestly and then asked which she preferred, multiple choice tests or essay tests. Mary’s answer was delayed. She was asked if she needed more time to think about her response. Mary explained that she didn’t need more time to answer the question; she was merely taking the time to think of examples of experiences she’d had with both types of tests. Probing into these potential insights, Mary was asked if she minded sharing any of the examples she was thinking through. Mary candidly replied:

I don’t mind sharing. I can remember having an English test last year. I liked doing the writing part more than the multiple choice. My writing grade was real good! It was some question about Odysseus and his character traits. I rather write my answers out ‘cause I can really get into what I’m thinking about what the question is asking. With a multiple choice tests, I’m kinda limited to whatever answers the question gives.

To ensure that the interview question about testing type preference was being answered directly, Mary was asked which she favored most—multiple choice or essay. Mary was emphatic about essay assessments would be her choice. Having received an answer, I asked the next question which inquired about whether Mary saw writing to be an important skill for both academic and future success. Mary was of the opinion that academic success demanded the ability to write. Her exact words were “without it you can’t do work in math or English or science or civics or anything. Man I’m glad I can write.” About her future and writing’s
possible relevance in her being successful, Mary did not see the importance of writing. It was her intention to choose a career path that didn’t require much writing.

Before the interview ended, Mary was asked what her sentiments were on her own writing motivation. Was she intrinsically or extrinsically motivated? Did she see herself as motivated to write for inward or external reward? According to Mary, she was motivated intrinsically. “I like to write because I like to write. If I get a reward for it, that makes it even better!” To this comment both Mary and I laughed a bit. I asked if Mary had any questions about anything before we ended the interview and she had none.

**Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017**

Soft non-lyrical jazz played as Mary entered room 104 on the very first day of the writing club. Mary danced to the music a bit as she greeted everyone and sauntered to a seat. She smiled freely and opened her new journal and began to write. For this first session, Mary had been given the choice of free writing or choosing a quote to elaborate on. Mary chose a quote and had no qualms about sharing her thoughts with the rest of the group.

Mary chose to discuss “you won’t change anything you tolerate.”

I strongly agree with this quote because if you let things be what they are, nothing will change. For example, if people are messing with you and you act as if you’re okay with it your problem won’t be solved. You can’t change what you let happen. It’s funny I say this because I need to listen to it.

There wasn’t any discussion on Mary’s response. As she was the last to share out, the first club session proceeded to the writing sample for the day. Mary was excited to write about the topic, “thinking out loud.” The writing assignment asked the participants to write about their lives, how they viewed themselves and the people and events in it. When it was time to disclose her first writing sample to the writing club, Mary was happy to make the connection that the songs that played in the random playlist following, the requested “Thinking Out Loud” by Ed
Sheeran helped to inspire and to guide her writing. “Fast Car” sung by Tracy Chapman, and “Golden” sung by Jill Scott made a marked impact on how Mary interpreted her life in the world which she discussed in her very first writing sample. As a matter of fact, Mary reported that she had only gotten as far as jotting her thoughts down in an outline form.

“Thinking out loud”

- He wants the woman to love him too
- He wants her to be his wife and believe they’ve found love

Her intention was to create a poem or a song to express her ideas. Mary quickly realized that she was not confined to a particular structure, essay form, or short story format. Her writing not being restrained; Mary took the liberty to select a writing form not traditionally used in the classroom; however, her writing was incomplete. Mary explained, “I just made a little outline. You know art takes time. I was just thinking my thoughts out on paper and hadn’t put them in the form of a song or story yet… just jotting them down.”

OK...for the most part I used the music that was playing to guide my writing and was going to compare those things to myself. Like “Fast Car” for example. It tells the story of wanting to leave but wanting to stay… wanting to get away but wanting to stick it out where you are. Shucks! All of us deal with that...Then “Thinking Out Loud” it makes me want to be in love for real...“Golden” really got me together today. You know sometimes Ms. Brown I forget that it’s up to me to be as great as I want to be so I can live a “golden” life right now if I want to. And guess what? I want to!

To her comment about wanting to be as great as she could be, I agreed and revealed that I desired the same for myself. I thanked Mary for being a part of the club and as the supplies were collected and put away, Mary said goodbye to everyone and proceeded to the dorms.

Vignette Two: First Amendment Rights, September 27, 2017

Soft jazz playing in the background, Mary entered room 104, grabbed her journal, and started writing. Although she greeted everyone, she was very quiet in comparison to her
engagement and participation the week prior. Mary shared her journal which revealed her preoccupation with a friend’s birthday the next day and her desire to provide comfort for another friend who had been going through a lot. After she shared her journal, she returned to being quiet, not commenting on anyone else’s journals or participating in the discussion at all. She was unaffected by the conversations about Colin Kaepernick, about the president’s comments towards the NFL, or club members’ discussion of safe places to live outside of the United States.

Instead of engaging in the dialogue or writing about where she stood on the topic of racism, Mary chose to creatively continue her writing from the week before. She used her writing time to create two poems from the former week’s outlines.

“Golden”

I was born on the most beautiful day, I live
everyday like I’m wealthy. I treat life like its a person. In my life I do
what I want and I continue to give others
respect. I have a friend named Mindy
and I teach her how to love her surroundings
and to live life like it’s all she knows. I enjoy myself
and plan to until I die. I have a boyfriend and his
body language when I met him reminded me of me. I liked it. When we first met we talked about life. He’s wonderful
and lives like a celebrity.
The Golden life of us is wonderful people.

“Thinking Out Loud”

He killed me with kindness
And showered me with love
he gave me thing I wanted
and knew my favorite soap was dove

he showered me with kisses
said he wanted to be in my life
talked about the future
said he’ll make me his wife

We came to be older
life was just right
he tried to be cheat on me
I didn’t put up a fight

I understand he loving
and I wish it wasn’t the end
to keep inaffectionate
I said, “let’s just be friends.”

In a hurry, without sharing her writing sample that day, Mary left after writing club was
over without saying goodbye.

Vignette Three: The Real Story, October 4, 2017

Mary entered the writing club’s third session in a jovial mood. She noticed that the
journals weren’t sitting out like they normal would be so she made sure to as — once her eyes
connected with what appeared to be the journals— “it’s these right here right?” Mary determined
that she would respond to a quote for her journal entry and in 10 minutes, Mary wrote her
interpretation of “birds of a feather flock together.” Interestingly enough, she’d chosen the same
quote as another participant which was very amusing to Mary. Mary joked about being writing
twins with the other participant before she read:

To me this means that with friends, you protect each other and keep each other safe and
out of trouble. This means you don’t let one fall because if you let one fail, so does the
rest. This means keep positivity around your friends. Comfort them and help them to be
better.

Before moving forward to the writing sample assignment for the say, I offered another
interpretation of “birds of a feather flock together” for Mary including traditional elucidations of
this quote. The idea that suppositions about members of a group are often determined by the
commonality that exists between them was a connection that Mary could make. Mary added that
her grandmother had once told her that others would judge her by the company she kept. When
Mary was able to make a clearer connection between the quote and what her grandmother had
said to her in the past, she laughed heartily at the acknowledgement that her personal interpretation of the quote was wrong.

From here, the writing sample assignment for the day was introduced with the concept of point of view. Mary led the discussion with a well-rounded depiction of how point of view works complete with examples of stories, songs and commercials that are told by narrators, and third person by-standers and more. Mary was surprised by my showing a video of the traditional *Three Little Pigs* followed by the non-traditional, but humorous *Real Story of the Three Little Pigs* where Mary was immediately able to tell the differences in the story in point of view. Mary found the perspective of the wolf extremely amusing and engaged in discussion with participants about how unbelievable the wolf’s perspective was.

Watching the two points of view and having a bit of discussion led directly into the students’ challenge to write the story of the *Three Little Pigs* from a point of view of their choosing. Mary decided that she wanted to collaborate with other participants to act out a play. She was so interested in the assignment that she wrote a separate depiction of another point of view. Her personal writing was a very creative depiction of *The Three Little Pigs* from the perspective of the youngest pig’s secret daughter. Reading her writing aloud was a highlight of the session because Mary creatively changed her voice to become the little pig’s daughter. Her storytelling’s expression made the construct of point of view come alive.

After laughing and talking and enjoying the childhood story of *The Three Little Pigs*, Mary collected her supplies and neatly put them on a desk near the door of room 104 before saying goodbye to me and the other participants. From there she headed to the dorms.
Vignette Four: Love, October 11, 2017

With festive jazz playing softly in the background, Mary entered for the fourth session of the writing club. She wasted no time in grabbing her journal and writing supplies to begin writing thus ending the conversation that she was having when she came in. Mary again used a quote to generate her thoughts for her journal writing. This day, she discussed what a shame it is to use a person’s past against them.

Using someone’s past against them makes you a bad person. Being a bad person doesn’t make you not liked. It just makes you a non-do gooder. People have used my past against me but I have not cared because people have tried to shame me but they were vulnerable and in need of attention. People who used the past against you are to me seen as bullies.

Mary confidently shared her journal with the club and respectfully listened to the other opening journal entries for the day. She waited with anticipation for the writing assignment for the day which centered on love. Mary began to sing in unison with the other club members the lyrics “we found love right where we are” (Ed Sheeran, Thinking Out Loud, 2014). Seeing that the other club members were singing the exact same song caused Mary to bellow out a genuine laugh at their synchronicity.

Sharing gracefully about what love is, Mary disclosed, “love to me is the base. It’s showing that you have affection for someone. It means [pauses] that you would go an extra mile for someone… or for someone that you know would do the same for you.” Mary engaged in the conversation about love collaborating openly in order to arrive at a club consensus of what it is and its connection to obedience, trust, loyalty, and food.

Mary then watched the video clips for the day which were inclusive of a personal video of my experiences during the Great Flood of 2016. To this video, Mary responded with her observations. She could tell that I loved my family, my son and my dogs. She posed the
question to the group of whether or not dogs could be considered family which sparked some brief conversation before another short clip of vignettes about love was shown.

After the discussion subsided, the participants began to write about love and their perceptions of it. Towards the end of the session, Mary shared her profound assessment of love.

Love is an unselfish feeling. Love is caring and giving without feeling like you deserve something. Love is truly identifying others as the most important thing you have. Love is feeling hurt about things that you have deep feelings about.

Vignette Five: When I Grow Up, October 18, 2017

Today, not unlike the other sessions, Mary used a quote to generate her journal writing. This day, Mary wrote “if it doesn’t challenge you, it won’t change you.” She generously shared her analysis in writing and orally with the club members.

Ok ...If it doesn’t challenge you it won’t change you. Challenges make you better. When my Momma left, I felt like it was my fault and it hurt me a lot to think that. But I changed for the better. Now I’m friendlier. I felt like when my Momma left she was young and I was little. I’m challenged...I would just say whatever comes to mind. When people told me how I acted, it was mean. But now I’m nicer. I’m not going to say I’m nice. But, I am nicer than I was and I feel like people are going to stay in my life. I don’t feel like people are going to leave me. Recently, my best friend left Life Academy and I felt like it was my fault.

Hearing Mary’s assessment, I asked Mary if she realized that it was not her fault that her friend left the school to which Mary explained her past experiences caused her to feel this way and that she didn’t blame herself for this friend’s departure.

The day’s activity was to write about how they saw themselves in ten years. They were to be as specific as they could be about their occupations, mates, dreams and goals. I allowed the students to be inspired with whatever music they wanted to hear as they worked. I played their requested songs while asking students to contribute potential writing topics to a list that they would frequent during the next sessions. Mary was super excited to add her ideas to the list. She added the following topics: future, heart, feelings, and favorite sad songs.
In the same fashion that Mary often did, her writing sample was merely a beginning outline of brainstormed ideas about what she’d planned to write about. She jotted down ideas about being a musician/singer, working on a master’s degree, being married with one child, and being in a position to take care of her immediate family.

Vignette Six: Choice, November 2, 2017

Mary entered the writing club singing and smiling. She appeared to be happy and eager to work. Mary retrieved her journal and a writing utensil and began writing. For the very first time in six sessions, Mary chose to free write in her journal instead of using a quote. How monumental! Her journal sharing did not disappoint for it was a recapitulation of an event from the prior evening.

In a very dramatic voice, pausing to give effect to her narrative, Mary described:

Yesterday was so scary. I felt like death was calling me. I had a panic attack in the back of the van. I was just happy that I had people back there to help me. They helped until my breathing got back to normal. I was kinda in a rush to get out of practice. I was like...they had to lean me over so that I could get air…

I was noticeably disturbed by the anxiety attack and asked if she was alright and she assured me that she was. Following this, the list of topics that Mary had contributed to was placed in full view so that it could be revisited. The intention was to have Mary to select a topic that she was interested in to brainstorming on and to work on an introduction. Brainstorming was no problem for Mary at all because she generally wrote an outline or bullet pointed list of her ideas before writing.

After finishing her brainstorming, Mary asked if she could write a poem as her introduction to which I agreed wholeheartedly. I reiterated that her writing was her own creative expression to which she had the freedom to construct however she chose. Mary exhaled at this comment and continued to write for some time until she asked me if I’d review her poetic thesis.
Mary had decided that she would write in free verse poetry while simultaneously disclosing three points that she’d chosen to analyze within the text. The thesis appeared as followed:

I have dreams about my future. They always seem to be the same. The main three things I plan on building a family, getting a great education, and starting my career. I want everything around me to be positively influenced.

Today, Mary asked me to read her sample to the group. Attempting to read in a dramatic way like Mary would have, I read her writing to the group.

**Vignette Seven: Perception, the Ultimate Reality, November 8, 2017**

Today, Mary was late for the writing club. When she arrived she apologized for being tardy and got right to work on her journal. However, she hadn’t very much to say. “Today was a good day until I got scratched trying to break up a fight.” For the second week in a row, Mary had chosen to free write in her journal to recount a particular event of concern to her.

Mary was given the rest of the time to continue working on her writing sample about her future. When it was time to share, Mary chose not to read her progress but to talk about it. She punctuated her statements with, “I’m going to keep writing about my future because today was full of drama!”

This day, the club session ran a little over time as feedback and collaboration continued. Mary reminded me when it was time to go. She departed for the dorms.

**Vignette Eight: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017**

Mary entered room 104 in a conversation with other participants. She paused to say hello to me before beginning to write her journal entry for the day. Without any interruption or
direction from me, Mary knew when journal time was completed, when to share out and when to begin working on her writing sample.

This day, Mary was visibly working through her ideas, crafting her poem and determining what information to add and subtract. Before asking for feedback today, Mary perused through her own writing meticulously finding ways to creatively describe her future. Finally, she offered her draft for feedback. Mary was open to hearing what someone else thought of her work and ways to make it clear and interesting for others.

**Vignette Nine: Ownership, November 29, 2017**

Mary was a little early for this session. She greeted me and got straight to journal writing. Today, she chose to use a quote to write from. Mary shared her biggest mistake.

The biggest mistake that I have ever made is trusting that someone I trusted before would stay around and not hurt me again. This person was a big factor in my life. When this person came, they always end up leaving. I always hope that this person would stay around. It hurts me so much because I still have hope.

Mary received the reassuring smiles, nods, and comments of other participants who had also experienced similar things. However, this exchange of support was interrupted with a moment that shifted this writing club’s session. Mary’s humanity was called into question as a club participant disclosed her brush with death the weekend prior. Instead of pursuing writing samples that day, Mary prioritized the student’s experience with being hit by a car. Through facial expressions of shock and audible utterances of “what,” “how,” and “oh my God,” Mary expressed her most heartfelt compassion towards this club member. In Mary’s words, “things happen so fast. I didn’t even know that…I can’t even think about what it would be like to come to writing club without you!”

There was no writing that day although Mary tried to follow the usual routine. Somehow, naturally, Mary had decided that supporting her club mate was most important. For
the first time ever, Mary didn’t rush to the dorms. She stayed behind to help with putting up the journals and supplies. Mary hugged me and all of the other club members before they walked to the dorms together.

**Vignette Ten: Who Am I? December 13, 2017**

Light jazz played in the background as Mary entered. She got right to the business of journal writing as she came using a quote as an idea generator. This day, she defined herself best as attractive, nice and loving. According to Mary, she was attractive because others told her she was. She believed herself to be nice because uncomfortable moments did not deter her from doing what was representative of integrity and righteousness. Mary alluded to the fact that the “right thing to do was the right thing to do even if no one else was looking.” In Mary’s opinion, doing the right thing equated to being nice even if it was painful.

Her third self-determined label was loving. “I am loving because even when people treat me wrong, I still treat them right. Just because someone treats me wrong I don’t let myself act like that.” Much like her earlier explanations of what it means to be nice, righteous, and full of integrity, Mary described love as doing right even when wrong is reciprocated in return. She did not give herself the excuse of responding to others based on how she is being treated.

Following the journal writing and sharing, Mary began to work on her writing about her future. She received more feedback on her latest draft from the other club members to which she graciously accepted and integrated. Visually, this writing sample looked less like a poem and more like traditional prose with identifiable paragraphs.

**Vignette Eleven: The End? December 18, 2017**

Mary came in as music played in background. She hugged Ms. Brown and grabbed her journal in order to write. Responding to Ms. Brown’s “time flies when you’re having fun”
question, Mary said, “for real…this was much too much fun. I can’t believe it’s the end of the semester already.”

This last session, Mary chose to write about the events of her day. In sequence, Mary talked about her classes and what things had occurred that day. It seemed to be a pretty uneventful day because all of her classes were preparing for winter break. She’d spent her day being a peer tutor; however, she had a crush on one young man that she assisted.

The culminating activity was a delightful one that required Mary to create a guidebook for teenage dating. She decided to work along with the other club members to finish this activity. Mary offered personal vignettes from her own experiences as introduction to their joint effort. She additionally suggested: “Rule #1: always try to make new friends, just friends even through you like that person because rushing will probably throw everything that could’ve been off.”

Before leaving, Mary hugged me and helped to put up the supplies before leaving for the dorms.

Post-Interview, December 20, 2017

Mary entered room 104 for her post-interview. She asked me how I was doing and I said that I was anticipating Christmas break. Mary agreed that she was also looking forward to the break. For once she wasn’t concerned about gifts or food; just spending time with family and friends.

I asked Mary if she was ready to get started on her post interview questions and she said yes. She was informed again that she could discontinue the interview at any point during the process. Mary was comfortable with this and was ready to discuss her experiences in the writing club.
Mary was asked to describe herself as a writer. From the first interview to the last one, Mary still believed that she was a great writer who expressed herself well in written form. Moreover, Mary had no preference in where she enjoyed writing more. “Anywhere is still good for me. I don’t really prefer one place or space over the other ones ‘cause I’ll still write anywhere!”

My follow-up question to Mary was about her preference in multiple-choice or essay tests. Mary still preferred essay tests to multiple-choice ones. “Essay all the way! It might take longer; but I get to say just what I want to say and most of the times, if I can prove what I’m saying with evidence, I get it right!”

Interestingly enough, Mary’s answer about writing’s importance to her academic and future success had changed. Mary still believed that writing for academic success was unavoidable. However, Mary could not believe that she thought that she’d be able to avoid writing in the future. Her exact words were “Somewhere along the line, I know imma run into having to write again and I’m just glad that I write well….so that won’t be hard for me.”

Nearing the close of the interview, I asked Mary what she thought of her experiences in the writing club and whether or not she saw her motivation towards writing as intrinsic or extrinsic. To this, Mary replied:

First Ms. Brown, let me say that the writing club is the bomb! (I laughed) It was pleasurable. It didn’t feel like a punishment or something that I had to do. I wanted to be here. Every time we met I looked forward to it and I enjoyed coming and being able to collaborate with others. That was really fun! We got to talk through what we were doing and that was really fun.

I followed with the same question about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation again and Mary quickly responded with “intrinsic all the way! No change...”
Chapter 6: Meisha’s Story

Meisha is a 14-year-old student at Life Academy. She is a ninth grader experiencing her very first year at the boarding school. Meisha’s writing club involvement is told through 11 vignettes, pre and post interviews. Because Mary’s actual discourse, journals and writing samples are critical to the analysis of her participation in the club, examples appear as they were written or transcribed. Pseudonyms were utilized to represent the names of the participant and the people she describes.

Pre-Interview, September 13, 2017

Meisha entered room 104 with a big smile. It was time for her pre-interview and she was about five minutes late. She hesitated at the door before coming in and I motioned that it was fine for her to enter as I’d been waiting for her. Meisha explained that her RA [residential advisor] wasn’t sure that I was still on campus since the school day was over. I assured Meisha that I would be sure to communicate with the residential staff so that they would be comfortable allowing her back in the education building when club meetings were to be held.

After clearing up the logistical elements of time and place, I asked Meisha how she was doing and her answer provoked a qualifying question from me. Meisha said that she was Gucci. She explained, “that means I’m doing real good.” I chuckled at this answer and said that I was Gucci [doing really well] too. Meisha was comfortable with my response and commented that I was cool [awesome, acceptable].

I explained to Meisha that I’d be asking some preliminary questions to get her thoughts on writing before the club meetings began. I also gave her the option of discontinuing the interview if she felt uncomfortable at any point, and of asking any clarifying questions necessary.
Foremost, I asked Meisha to describe herself as a writer. Meisha believed that writing was an area that she could and desired to improve in.

I think I’m a good writer. But, sometimes...sometimes I can’t get my thoughts on paper good. It’s been a hard thing to write for me at times...you could say like a struggle…I think I’m a good writer but I know it’s not my best subject you know?

According to Meisha’s answer to my second question, she enjoyed writing in her diary occasionally when there was something noteworthy to write about. Other than that, Meisha disclosed that she only wrote in class. Given this context, Meisha was asked what sort of test she preferred taking — a multiple choice test or an essay test. According to Meisha, this was an easy question to answer. She determined that a multiple choice test was better to take because she never scored well on writing assignments. A follow-up question was asked to delve more into how performance on writing. Meisha specified the areas in which she had difficulty with the following statement: “Mostly my grammar be messing be up. I be writing my ideas down but I don’t always use the right punctuations and stuff like that.”

I thanked Meisha for her honest answer and moved on to the next one. Meisha was asked if she believed writing was important to her academic and future success. Meisha emphatically responded that writing was important to both the present and the future. According to Meisha, “you really can’t get away from it.” Following this, Meisha answered a question about whether her motivation to write was intrinsic or extrinsic. Interestingly, Meisha believed that she was both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Sometimes her writing was motivated by an internal reward and sometimes her writing was motivated by external rewards.

Meisha had no further questions for me so I walked her back to the dorms as she was the last interview of the day.
Vignette One: The Inaugural Meeting, September 20, 2017

The wait was over. It was time for the first meeting of the writing club. Meisha entered room 104 to a festive environment where jazz music was playing in the background. She found writing utensils and journals laid out. Meisha was instructed to choose a quote or to free write as the first club meeting began.

Meisha decided to choose a quote to stimulate her writing. Her first journal entry discussed, “you will not change anything you tolerate.”

I think this means if you have a problem with a group of childish lil boys and you reacting to what they are saying, they will still do it. It won’t change. Today me and Milly had to deal with the little boys who are fake/ One minute they plotting on each other then the next minute they together tryna act all buddy buddy. But they didn’t want no problems with us because they know me and milly are cousins.

She reacted with a gasp, chuckle, and hand to her chest when another participant shared her journal and it was the exact same quote as she’d used. The lighthearted atmosphere invited laughter and open dialogue and Meisha was very comfortable in it.

The writing assignment for the day was the theme “thinking out loud.” “Thinking Out Loud” by Ed Sheeran had been requested by another student when the writing topic was mentioned. Several songs played randomly in the playlist after “Thinking Out Loud.” “Fast Car” sung by Tracy Chapman, and “Golden” sung by Jill Scott assisted in the inspiration for Meisha’s writing that day. Meisha’s writing sample was two-fold. She wrote an outline of bullet pointed ideas connecting her life to the lyrics of the songs and she wrote her own song.

Darling I been hating you since the first day. You was never the one for me because you ugly. Im thinking about how I played you, you thought it real. Everybody was laughing at you. You thought I really like you. Baby get out your feelings because you tried to play me. You kissed me I wanted to throw up and laugh. How did you think I wanted you. My boyfriend name is Jesus. I never cared about you. I gave you too many chances. And I been thinking about loud, what you was thinking.
After Meisha had taken the liberty of sharing her writing with the club, she prepared to leave. Meisha carried my personal items to my car and departed for the dorms.

**Vignette Two: First Amendment Rights, September 27, 2017**

Today, Meisha was extremely reserved and withdrawn in comparison to the week before. Although she wrote a journal entry, she chose not to share it with the club. Reviewing her journal revealed that Meisha hadn’t started writing until the discussion of Colin Kaepernick, the NFL and taking a knee ensued. Her journal was written later than everyone else’s although she was present during journal writing time.

Much to my fascination, Meisha had not spoken a word except to greet everyone when she arrived; but when the conversation started about Kaepernick, Meisha shared that she had been talking about it in her Social Studies class. Meisha described how the class both agreed and disagreed with the constituent parts of the racism argument. Then, the reason why she was distant that day finally came out. Meisha said that the new teacher in her Social Studies class would not be someone that she would like. She liked the prior teacher better. Meisha was aware that her former teacher had quit and was not happy with it at all. Moreover, the conversation of the students—which Meisha believed—was that her former teacher had been penalized for not giving she and her classmates enough work. However, she liked this teacher because he was easy going and because she was able to sleep in his class.

I didn’t go into too much detail on the ins and outs of the teacher’s departure from the school except to remind Meisha that she couldn’t believe everything that she heard and that her reason for being at school was to learn no matter what teacher was teaching it. I took a moment to acknowledge her disappointment about losing a teacher; but I also invited her into the opportunity to join the present writing club moment’s space and she did. From that point
forward, Meisha participated in the discussion, added her knowledge to the discussion at hand.

In her dialogue with the other students, she interjected to the best of her ability and knowledge of the protests that had been occurring.

Her writing sample in response to the protests indicated her thoughts towards the topic.

What’s happening is that the football team didn’t stand for the national anthem and Donald trump wants to fire Collins. He was talking about what’s illegal and what’s legal. I feel that donald trump is very disrespectful and stupid because he should’ve never fired him. He should’ve said something like he didn’t like it that they didn’t stand up and that he would want them to stand up to show respect.

**Vignette Three: The Real Story, October 4, 2017**

Meisha entered the club dancing a bit to the music playing in the background. Another participant handed her her journal and she began to write. Today, Meisha chose to use a quote to write about. Interestingly enough, she’d chosen the same quote as another participant again. She discussed the meaning of “birds of a feather flock together.” She determined that this meant that seeing one person do something, even if it’s wrong, may prompt another to do the same thing. She believed that the moral of the adage was that one should not follow someone who was behaving inappropriately because that person is leading you astray and is not a friend. After hearing the other student’s interpretation of this quote and the connections that were made to the participant’s grandmother’s similar sayings, Meisha adjusted her thinking about the quote.

Another participant reviewed point of view for the group before the writing assignment was in full swing for the day. I showed a video of the *Three Little Pigs* followed by a video showing the perspective of the wolf in *The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Meisha enjoyed the videos and engaged in some joking with the other participants about wolves eating pigs and pork not being good for you. It was amusing to watch Meisha interact with the other participants and when it was time to write their stories from another point of view, Meisha participated in a
collaborative play while also writing her own version of the story from the point of view of the wolf’s grandmother.

My grandson called and said, Gary, what kind of cake do you like? And I said raw egg bunny chocolate. He told me, Thank you, and asked me if I had some sugar. I told him to ask his neighbors because I didn’t. Next thing I know, he calling me from jail telling me that he’s been framed while asking his neighbors for sugar and sneezing. He has been framed for 4 years.

**Vignette Four: Love, October 11, 2017**

Meisha came in and got right to work. Once more she chose the same quote as another participant to write from. Today, Meisha chose, “don’t ever use someone’s past against them.” She described in her journal entry the importance of being able to keep secret information in confidence even if you’re not friends with an individual anymore. Choosing to disclose personal information was an act of disloyalty to Meisha.

Writing samples this day were to focus on love, what it is and how it is shown. Meisha actively participated in the dialogue about love and added to the discussion that love was something that you felt in your heart. Although she never qualified this statement, she agreed with the assessment of the other club members that love was embodied in obedience, trust, loyalty, and food. Not disclosed aloud, Meisha shared in her writing sample:

*how do you show love?*

On August 25, 2017, someone had a huge crush on me. I didn’t know until that person came and talked to me. He told me his name was Carlos and that how he wanted to get to know me and date me I gave it some time to think about it. I then told him yes II would date him. From 08.25 till whenever, me and that person always buy each other stuff and plan on going on dates. We also show love by sticking up for each other and we always by each other side, we love each other. And love is when your caring and show a lot of affection to a person.

**Vignette Five: When I Grow Up, October 18, 2017**

This day, Meisha asked for more time to complete her journal entry because she wasn’t finished. It was the first time that she had ever asked for additional time to complete anything
that she was working on. As was her customary practice, Meisha used the same quote that
another participant used as her stem for journal writing that day. She discussed “if it doesn’t
challenge you, it won’t change you.” Meisha equated this quote to studying for school. By her
interpretation, this quote meant if something didn’t take at least two times to understand, a
person would never gain the knowledge of the thing he was attempting to learn.

The writing assignment that followed challenged Meisha to describe herself ten years into
the future. This activity was of interest to Meisha as she began writing and sketching ideas
immediately. While Meisha was writing, a composite list of potential topics was being passed
around that she contributed to. To this list she added romance, hate, outside, friendship,
spacetrips, favorite animals, and birthdays. She continued to write on her life in ten years
without interruption and was ready to share her thoughts when time to do so presented itself.

In 10 years, I will already have become a registered neonatal nurse. And, I would have
my Suburban and twin children. That’s what Carlos says. I will have my own house. We
won’t have any neighbors because neighbors watch you. I will also be doing box braids
and etc. Since I’ll be working with babies, I can get their parents to let me do their hair.

Meisha laughed nervously after sharing her picture of herself. Other participants followed her
lead and laughed as well.

Vignette Six: Choice, November 2, 2017

Meisha was notably disturbed when she came to the club’s meeting today. She greeted
everyone and started writing in her journal. For the first time since she’d been coming to the
club’s meetings, she didn’t use a quote to write about. She wrote about her day. Additionally,
what she had written was so important that she volunteered to read her journal to the group first.
I sat at attention to wait for what she was to say. Seeing me lean in, Meisha addressed me,
frustrated and ready to vent.
Ms. Brown it’s so much stuff that happened today ...and they tried to include me in it. Cause I know I never dated Davis…. And what Trina is talking about she needs to fix that because she’s the one that had sexual relationships with him. And, now she’s trying to come for me.

...I was telling them that they should have kept their business personal and not let everyone know. So Davis decided to show me he and Trina’s messages from when she was talking about me. She was saying stuff like “watch them lil 9th grade girls. Why did she have on your jacket…” because Davis and I never talked and I never wore his jacket. I’m thinking she was talking about Tisha.

There was a brief discussion of the events of this journal. Meisha seemed to feel better as she was able to get these thoughts out and have the support of the group to do so. When the other participants had shared their journals, Meisha was positioned to work on her writing sample. She first brainstormed her ideas and wrote them in bulleted points. From this points, Meisha crafted an introductory paragraph draft.

Feelings can be addressed in many ways. It can express your moods! Or even what you like and dislike! Feelings can be a distraction to accomplishing your goal. Sometimes, you can tell a friend about how you feel and maybe they can relate because they felt like that once. Somebody once in they life felt down o hurt about something. It can be about a dream they wanted accomplish and someone runed it. These are examples of them being expressed.

Vignette Seven: Perception, the Ultimate Reality, November 8, 2017

Meisha asked how to spell the word legitimate before beginning journal writing this day.

She let me know that Mary would be running late, so we began as normal without waiting.

Meisha completed her journal this day with writing about making multiple mistakes.

When a person makes multiple mistakes in their lives they are doing so for a legitimate reason. They either feel that no one cares for them or they made a mistake they will apologize. But, if they make a mistake and don’t apologize, they will keep doing the same thing over and over. Or, they will try and be a better person than they are.

There was not much discussion about the journal entries so, Meisha proceeded to work
on the writing topic that she’d chosen from the list. She continued to work on her introduction. Her introduction became more creative and engaging and she determined she’d save the former introduction to be added into the body of her writing later. The new and improved introduction began: “Have you ever been hurt? Or felt a certain way about love? Those are called your feelings. Feelings are made to be hurt.”

Vignette Eight: Revisions, Revisions, Revisions, November 15, 2017

Meisha entered with the other writing participants with a singular focus today. She greeted me and began working on her journal. This was the last club meeting before the Thanksgiving fall break. Today she wrote about being ready for writing club and even more being ready to work on her writing sample. Observing Meisha naturally presenting her journal and going straight to the work of drafting and revising was wonderful.

Meisha worked individually, gave and received feedback and worked organically without much interruption until the writing club’s time had expired and it was time to retreat to the dorms.

Vignette Nine: Ownership, November 29, 2017

Meisha entered the writing club today and retrieved her materials to work. She oddly meandered around already written pages without ever writing anything down. It was a strange occurrence because she’d never opted not to write before. Without any explanation, Meisha willingly participated in verbally and empathetically responding to other members’ journals without ever sharing any writing of her own.

For the first time since the club had begun, news was shared through a journal entry that demanded a pause in order to reflect, to comfort and to support. Meisha heard the news of a club member being hit by a car over the weekend. She immediately closed her journal and ended her
meandering. After gasping, she sat very still and quiet for several moments before reaching out to hug the other student. Being visibly upset when releasing the embrace, Meisha got up to grab tissues for she and myself. Finally, Meisha spoke and said to the other participant, “don’t ever scare me like that again. You can’t leave us.”

Meisha never got around to working on her writing that day. She offered comfort to the other club members who were stunned by the journal that day. Unlike any other session, instead of rushing off, Meisha stayed behind to help gather supplies and to walk as a group back to the dorms.

**Vignette Ten: Who Am I? December 13, 2017**

Light jazz played in the background as Meisha entered the writing club. As was her most frequent practice, Meisha wrote using a quote to generate her thoughts and she used the exact same quote that another participant had used. Meisha wrote and explained herself in three words.

I describe myself in three words: mean, honest and unreasonable. I am mean because you can’t be nice to everyone. Honest, I am honest because I feel like no one should be lied to if I don’t want to be lied to. I am unreasonable because I am bipolar.

To her comment of being bipolar, I made a distinction between her figurative usage of the term as opposed to it being a real diagnosis with real symptoms. Meisha explained that she merely meant that she deems herself unreasonable because she shuts down. Sometimes she becomes extremely quiet because there’s nothing to talk about. She chooses not to force conversation when there is no reason to have any.

This week Meisha continued to work on past writing. She continued to work on making her introduction cohesive and fluent. After having received feedback she worked on the body of her writing sample. The introduction read:
Have you ever been hurt? Or felt a certain way about love? Those are called your feelings. Feelings are made to be hurt. Sometimes people don’t show their feelings because they feel it’s not right. Most people don’t have feelings because they just don’t care. Sometimes do you ask yourself why should you stay in a relationship? When your hurting, people are not happy. Some people try to let their feelings burning but can’t because there is thing called “fall in love.” People explain this as away of showing their true colors or they way they feel about that person being in their life, once again its called feelings.

Vignette Eleven: The End? December 18, 2017

This last session, Meisha came in and grabbed her supplies ready to work. It was the last session and she was determined to give it her all. The apprehension she felt in the first interview about even entering room 104 had disappeared into the distance. Meisha was comfortable, accepted and unashamed in the sharing of her written work and today was no different. In the completion of her journal, Meisha asked to share out. Today she didn’t use a quote. She wrote about her day.

So, everyone was having break time and 9th grade girls was still in their pod so we decided to look out the window. So, my crush’s name is London. I don’t know his first name yet. So, he was like hey and they just started asking him which one of us he likes and when he pointed at me I could’ve fainted… But I have a boyfriend and we’ve been together for 5 months going back and forth and we’ve been getting back on track. So, I have to respect that because I wouldn’t wanna get treated that way.

She continued to share how good it made her feel to know that she was attractive to others although she was determined to be faithful to her current boyfriend. Meisha interacted with the other participants in joking fashion. Her mood was light not sober or serious which was perfect for the activity that she would be working on that day. Meisha was assigned the task of creating a teenager’s guidebook to dating. She decided to work in collaboration with the other participants in order to do this. Her contributions were rendered in the following steps:

Teenagers guide to dating

Step 1: Wait till you feel it’s the right time for you starting dating and make sure that they want you for who you are and your personality. Not just for what you have.
Step 2: When you find the right one, asking questions get to meet them, see what they like you for. If they say “your cute,” They want for you have “beauty and body.” Do not fall for it!
Step 3: Now, on the other hand, if you have a crush on someone it’s best for you to tell them immediately you don’t know what they might have in plan. Tell them and you have to like them because of their personality because you wouldn’t want nobody to use you. Treat others the way you wanna be treated.

Before leaving that day, Meisha was sure to tell me how much she enjoyed being in the writing club. Meisha admitted that she was nervous about joining considering how poorly she had scored in the past on writing assignments. However, she said this experience was different. It wasn’t stressful and she didn’t feel lesser in ability than the other participants. She felt equal. As she took my personal items to my car, she smiled and hummed.

**Post-Interview, December 20, 2017**

Meisha didn’t wait to enter the room this time as she did for the pre-interview. At her appointed time, she came right in smiling with “Hey Ms. Brown how are you?” I responded by telling Meisha I was doing well and looking forward to winter break. Meisha was elated about being able to see her family and to get lots of Christmas gifts. When she asked what I was planning to do for break, I responded “sleep,” and we both laughed.

I thanked Meisha for being a part of the writing club and told her how much I’d enjoyed working with her during the semester. I explained that we would be closing the semester the same way we began — with an interview. The same guidelines still applied. If she was uncomfortable or had any questions, she was aware that she could stop me or the interview at any point. With that information squarely before us, we began.

I asked Meisha how she perceived herself as a writer. I reminded her that our first interview revealed that she felt like she struggled a lot with writing and didn’t feel confident about her ability although she liked to write. Meisha said that she felt much better about that.
“The difference now is I have more confidence! I’m not scared to write because there’s nothing to be afraid of. And my thoughts are just as important as Mary’s of Jean’s…I’m more confident about that.” I told Meisha how happy it made me to hear this and Meisha retorted, “that’s for real Ms. Brown” in an effort to assure me that she was being honest.

Next, Meisha was asked where she liked to write and in what contexts. Nothing in her first answers had changed. Meisha had no qualms about writing in class or in private. She mentioned that journaling in the club had caused her to write a bit more in her personal diary; but that was all. I commented to Meisha that I had a confession to make. I kept a journal as well. She laughed and said “that is not [student emphasis] surprising.”

I followed this question with a question of choice and preference. When asked if she preferred a multiple choice test to an essay test, Meisha still preferred multiple choice. According to Meisha, it was better not to lose points than to lose them potentially on mistakes in writing. Thereafter, I asked Meisha if she felt like writing was important to her current success in school and her future. Meisha explained “I think it’s important now. I think it’ll be important later and I should be able to do it.”

Questions about Meisha’s experience in the club as well as whether or not she saw herself as her intrinsically or extrinsically motivated were answered at the culmination of our post-interview.

To Meisha I said: “Got it. Thank you. And finally, tell me about your experiences in the club. What was it like for you? And, do you believe yourself to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to write?” Meisha responded:

I have to tell you, the club was a good place for me to grow. There was no pressure. Without worrying about the grade, it was alright for me to make mistakes because no one was gonna “get” me for it. And, Jean and Mary helped me. You didn’t take it over. I didn’t feel bad when I messed up because we were all working together.
I was elated to hear this and reiterated my question about motivation. To this, Meisha replied before leaving:

Meisha: I still feel like my motivation is both. I liked the idea of somebody else thinking my ideas were good. But I also made the choice to come every time because I enjoy writing.

Sad to end my last interview, I thanked Meisha for being a part of the club and told her how much I’d enjoyed her participation. I continued by telling her to have a good break and that I looked forward to seeing her upon her return.
Chapter 7: Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

Chapter seven provides discussions of the narratives of Jean, Mary, and Meisha’s stories presented in chapters four, five, and six respectively. Additionally, implications from the study and conclusions are made.

Discussion

Through the narratives, the participants in the after-school writing club displayed evidence of the theoretical lenses that were used to ground this study. This section provides a comparative analytical discussion of the self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and sociocultural (Lave & Wenger, 1991) theories.

Self-determination theory. As described in chapter two, Ryan and Deci’s (2009) self-determination theory utilizes the characteristics of competence, autonomy, and relatedness as a framework for explaining intrinsic motivation. Autonomy connotes the opportunity to make choices. Competence is evidenced in the ability to complete tasks well while relatedness refers to the connected links existing between persons or events. Analyzing the data of Jean, Mary and Meisha revealed each participant displaying the aspects of the self-determination theory. Both Jean and Mary demonstrated autonomy. Mary exhibited high levels of competence and Meisha revealed relatedness.

Jean and Meisha both showed evidence of the self-determination theory’s (Ryan & Deci, 2000) tenet of autonomy. In Jean’s pre-interview, when asked why she preferred multiple choice tests to essay tests when she enjoys writing so much, she explained: “I like it very much. I just don’t like writing for tests!” (Jean & Ms. Brown, pre-interview, “Jean’s Story”). Jean’s awareness of herself, her likes and her dislikes led to this expression of autonomy. She exercised her right to choose. In the September 20th session, Jean began and ended her journal with “today
my day was good” (Jean, vignette one, “Jean’s Story”). On this day, Jean didn’t write anything other than those words, and she chose not to share this writing with the other participants. In a classroom setting, choosing not to complete the assignment and choosing not to collaborate could have resulted in negative consequences. However, the club’s environment did not support ridicule, condescending comments or judgement. Jean was able to make a decision different from everyone without being ostracized for it which is largely due to the comfortability that exited in the safe space of the after-school club (Loeper, 2014; Williams, 2015). This after-school writing club mimicked Williams’ (2015) definition of safe spaces by promoting mutual respect, open disclosure, positivity, and each participant’s unique, individual voice (Williams, 2015).

Not only did Jean’s pre-interview and journal present exhibitions of autonomy but her writing samples did as well. In the October 4th session—when all of the other participants were working on writing new versions of the Three Little Pigs using varying points of view—Jean made a conscious choice to write about change using the words: “I feel like I’m becoming a better person” (Jean, vignette 4, “Jean’s Story”).

Mary was also an exhibitor of autonomy. Mary took creative liberties to express her thoughts through outlines, brainstorming, poems, songs and plays. Experiencing an environment where autonomy was encouraged influenced this exploration of purposes and genres in writing uncontrolled by an outside force (Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014; Muhammad, 2012). Mary’s choices were individual ones, representative of her unique personality. She was neither intimidated nor afraid to share her thoughts as they came to her. Without hesitation, in her discourse in session one, Mary explained. “I just made a little outline. You know art takes time. I was just thinking my thoughts out on paper and hadn’t put them in the form of a song or a story.
yet…Just jotting them down” (Mary, vignette one, “Mary’s Story”). She was both honest and confident about her writing being a process that occurs within time. Mary here acknowledged, in a few words, that the finished project—a song or a poem—would come after her thoughts were sketched on paper. This choice was hers to make and the writing club gave Mary the freedom to make it.

Examples of Mary’s autonomy occurred within her journal and writing samples as well. One salient example of this occurred in her journal as she was writing to a quote. This quote pertained to not being able to change anything you tolerate. “You can’t change anything you let happen,” Mary said followed by “it’s funny I say this because I need to listen to it” (Mary, vignette one, “Mary’s Story”). Here, Mary autonomously made the choice to advise others while recognizing the need to take her own advice. This is very mature and wise. Another poignant example of this autonomous wisdom occurred in Mary’s writing sample on December 13th when she retorted, “I am loving because I treat everyone like family even if they did me wrong” (Mary, vignette ten, “Mary’s Story”). With regard for the status quo, Mary decides for herself not to treat others badly because they treat her badly but to continue to operate in love anyway. In other words, her disposition towards humanity was not governed by external frustrations but by the decisions of her own will.

Of all three participants, Mary manifested many examples of the self-determination theory’s attribute of competence. From the first interview, Mary declared “I hate to brag Ms. Brown but I am an awesome writer!” (Mary, pre-interview, “Mary’s Story”). Her behavior within the club sessions showed that she believed this about herself. Her journal recounted an occasion that she’d had a panic attack. The prolific description of the incident caused it to engage the reader. Mary competently wrote, “yesterday was so scary. I felt like death was
calling me. I had a panic attack in the back of the van” (Mary, vignette six, “Mary’s Story”). The phrase “I felt like death was calling me” increased the suspense of the event and procured the consideration of the reader. Allowing Mary a less traditional setting to produce her writing influenced the presentation of competence as she was able, without the manipulation of assignments or assessments facilitate her own choices and processing just as researcher’s Kidron and Lindsay describe (2014).

In another example included in Mary’s writing sample, her method of brainstorming to write out the following bulleted notes:

“Thinking out loud”

- He wants the woman to love him too
- He wants her to be his wife and believe they’ve found love (Mary, vignette one, “Mary’s Story”)

Her competence as a writer led her to naturally, without the prompting of anyone else, use a process to complete her writing samples.

Meisha displayed expressions of the self-determinations theory’s attribute of relatedness. This relatedness was more often than not exhibited in her connections to the people in the writing club as opposed to potential connections to events or topics. Often, Meisha relied on the connections that she could make to information through club members in order to make decisions about what to write. Meisha’s access to information came through Mary. Also widespread in the literature, after-school clubs provide multi-layered support which does not always reflect the support of traditional settings (Loeper, 2014). In a non-traditional setting like the one featured in this study, peers qualify as meaningful co-contributors to a negotiated
environment which renders the generation of ideas (Chandler, et al., 2014; Haley, 2015; Loeper, 2014).

**Self-efficacy theory.** Established in chapter two was the definition that this study used for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). It described self-efficacy as the belief that one has about one’s ability using the determinants of performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and feedback.

Distinctively, both Jean and Mary demonstrated a great deal of self-efficacy. Both believed that they were good writers. In their pre and post interviews, this internalized belief was present and Jean and Mary behaved during the club as if they believed this. This competence manifested in other logistical ways in Jean. At the ending of each session, Jean always stayed behind to make sure all of the supplies were put away. In other sessions, Jean helped to facilitate by keeping time and leading the club members through the process of completing their journals, discussion writing samples. Kidron and Lindsay (2014) would credit the after-school writing club’s experiential environment with this behavior as Jean naturally took the responsibility of the functioning of the group without being told to do so by an authority figure.

Mary also displayed self-efficacy. Not only did she believe that she was an awesome writer, she acted in such a way that others would see it. Mary, knowledgeable about much of the subject matter presented in the club from both academic and current events perspectives, was able to lead discussions. According to Kidron and Lindsay (2014), Mary’s investment and immersion into the writing club offered the opportunity for improved academic and social skills that mirror real world environments. In collaborative, real world environments, individuals are often challenged with sharing skills and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) where knowledge
is co-constructed and recursive (Barusch, 2012; Montero & Washington 2011). In session three specifically, Mary taught a brief mini-lesson on point of view. The other participants were engaged and appreciated her reviewing the information with them. Other times, Mary’s self-efficacy was present when she chose to utilize the genres of poetry, songs and plays to demonstrate her dexterity as a writer.

Meisha displayed suppressed self-efficacy. In her pre-interviews, Meisha believed herself to be a good writer but had not seen much success in her academic writing as there were always errors in written expression, mechanics and vocabulary. By her post-interview, Meisha saw herself as a more confident writer saying “I’m not scared to write because there’s nothing to be afraid of. And my thoughts are just as important as Mary’s or Jean’s…I’m more confident about that” (Meisha, post interview, “Meisha’s story”). As the perspectives of adolescents are constantly evolving and changing, their personal narratives change (Chen et. al, 2012; Resse et al., 2010). For adolescent females, where narrative coherence—the compatibility between beliefs and reality—is consistent, pro-social behavior occurs (Mclean et. al, 2010; Reese et al., 2010).

**Sociocultural theory.** Both Jean and Meisha shared the commonality of expressing aspects of the sociocultural theory. This is not to say that Mary did not show evidence of these theories in her behavior. It is merely to point out that expressions of the above theories in Jean and Meisha’s narratives’ were more pronounced.

In the first session when Jean chose only to write one sentence in her journal, she was accused by Meisha jokingly of being too nosey with the song Meisha was creating. To this Jean replied “Well in that case I take half the credit” (Jean, vignette one, “Jean’s story”). Here, Jean notes the importance of collaboration in order to clarify what she was doing. This co-creation of
ideas is a tenet of the sociocultural theory of learning (Barusch, 2012; Montero & Washington, 2011).

Jean expressed through her journals the influence of the situated context of the boarding school. She often used her journal writing to expose the contents of her day. For example, “today was so good today I guess. I got into mess today but I’m not worried about it” (Jean, vignette seven, “Jean’s Story”). When Jean wrote this journal, she was present within the club; however, the context of her classroom and social communities of practice were contextually present as well. Another relevant example of this was Jean’s commentary in her session six writing sample where she says “I help my grandmother even when I don’t want to. I take up for my sister. I believe in them” (Jean, vignette four, “Jean’s Story”).

Meisha, like Jean often showed representations of the sociocultural theory. Socioculturally, Meisha used the same journal quotes selected by Mary on the exact same days habitually. In session two, the context of the classroom entered Meisha’s dialogue as she was upset about losing her favorite teacher. Writing this day gave her a vehicle to express her feelings and to make meaning in a positively social way (Bamberg, 2004). Her journal in that session also reflected a great deal of context from the microsystem of the school as she spoke about the events of the football team’s practice earlier during the week.

Mary showed lesser amounts of the sociocultural theories in her experiences in the club. While in the club, she often chose quotes to precipitate her writing instead of disclosing all of the events of her day from her classroom’s community of practice. Her journals were not formulated or shaped around voicing frustration but were spaces for creative thought that she enjoyed sharing in the ecological micro-system of the after-school writing club where the co-
constructions of meaning produced different genres, the presence of style, and the integration of voice not often seen in traditional settings (Flores, 2018; Hull & Shultz, 2001).

It is evident from the narratives findings of Jean, Mary and Meisha that the self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and sociocultural (Lave & Wenger, 1991) theories are demonstrated. These theories were an appropriate way to evaluate the narratives comparatively. Although the students shared the sociocultural environments of both the writing club and the boarding school, the way in which they each perceived these communities of practice was different. Additionally, the students’ experiences outside of their common environments—their families, friends, past experiences, and awareness of popular media, for examples—all created funds of knowledge. These funds of knowledge influenced the discourse and writing of students in the after-school writing club.

**Implications**

The following section will address relevant implications drawn from this study to the field of education in the areas of adolescent writing using the context of adolescent writing, after-school writing clubs, and adolescents’ motivations to write.

**The context of adolescent writing.** Existing literature on adolescent writing presented perspectives on themes of oppression describing struggles with the provision of basic needs (Ellis, 2006). The participants’ presence in the current study was a non-verbal confirmation of oppression narratives because the boarding school specifically recruits students affected by the effects of poverty and inequitable resources. Instead of oppression themes, this study prefers the language of resilience narratives to describe the stories of its participants as the participants described battles with difficult circumstances in their writing; but also described profitable and positive responses to them.
Other ideas present in the literature on adolescent writing were: non-verbal discourse, co-constructed meaning-making, self-reflection, pro-social behavior, social inclusion, and the privileging of unheard voices (Bamberg, 2004; Chen, et al., 2012; Mclean, et al., 2010; Reese, et al., 2010). The current study displayed examples of all of the above. The voices of the three participants were given a platform to speak their truths in the creation of their very own stories. Their non-verbal discourses and co-constructed meaning led to self-reflection which was evident within the discourse of the participants, their writing samples, and their personal answers to questions in interviews. Thus, this study confirmed the current literature on adolescent writing.

Although this study was not one which highlighted the academic environment, being attentive to students’ funds of knowledge in the classroom setting, and the strength of their resilience narratives would promote co-constructed meaning, self-reflection, and positive, pro-social behavior within the instructional context.

**After-school writing clubs.** The literature on after-school writing clubs suggested that being involved in its situated context would promote social skills, collaboration, motivation, and confidence. Moreover, through the acknowledgement of participants’ life’s experiences, after-school writing clubs support a variety of genres, can occur in multiple contexts, require multi-layered feedback, are socially inclusive, and provide safe spaces (Flores, 2018; Meier et. al, 2018; Herrington et. al, 2013; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Pacheco, 2018; Strauss, 2011). In this study, participants’ funds of knowledge through their experiences in their respective communities of practice were honored and respected. Participants’ writing genres were the vehicle for expressing those funds for which they received feedback during the process from each other and from me. Moreover, the participants’ writing club became a community—a safe space for participants to share, to grow, to express happiness or despair.
An awareness of the similarities of the participants’ in this study is maintained. However, an acknowledgement of the diversities within black female voice in this study is also noted. Many times, diversity and social inclusion refer to many overtly different races, cultures, religions, or sexual orientations coming together in acceptance; but, what about the nuances of variation that occur within cultures? The current study is careful not to categorize all three participants as the same as each has a unique narrative of resilience that brought them to the boarding school, and thereby to the writing club.

In an academic context, this presence of diversity within cultural groups is often overlooked as students are many times unfairly grouped by a perceived awareness of who they are. Stereotypes, socio-economic status, school situatedness, and performance scores suppress the agency of individual voices within cultures that is actually privileged in the literature on after-school clubs, and now, in this study of an after-school writing club. The importance of agency and voice considered, this study suggests intentionally crafting classroom environments around the respect and acceptance described in the literature on safe spaces. In so doing, all voices and funds of knowledge will be credible.

**Motivation and adolescent writing.** Present in the literature on student writing motivation was the identification of the reader-writer connection, the tenets of SDT theory—relevance, autonomy, competence—and opportunities for collaboration and feedback. The reader-writer connection was present to varying degrees in participants’ writing. Although participants wrote freely without considerable guidance, the feedback through discourse responses to journal sharing and writing samples showed attention to the reader-writer connection in an authentic way. Previously examined in the discussion section is participants’ expressions of relevance, autonomy and competence.
Limitations

During this study there were four major limitations which are discussed below.

Role of Researcher. The researcher has been an employee of Life Academy for three years. Initially, this was a concern as the researcher is familiar with the participants, staff and the administration of the boarding school. However, the fact that the researcher is an employee helped to render context and accessibility to the participants who joined the writing club. Knowing the participants helped participants to be comfortable with the researcher in the role of an investigator.

All female participants. The only participants who volunteered for the club’s participation were girls. None of the male student population desired to participate. This is a limitation as having males involved in the club’s sessions could have altered the presentations of the themes used to analyze this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

While completing this study, several concepts and ideas developed for future research in student motivations to write.

Digital contexts. Currently, elementary and secondary participants in a local school district in Southeastern Louisiana as well as participants at Life Academy have been provided with laptops. All participants have access to technology to complete class and homework assignments and for many content area high stakes tests, computers are required. Furthermore, recreational activities for participants often involves some type of social media.

Considering this, the researcher would like to add laptops or tablets to the writing club to see if motivations to write are influenced. Additionally, safe, controlled online portals such as blogs may be used for publishing works pending appropriate approvals.
Classroom progress. The researcher is interested in seeing the impact of the writing club on classroom performance in writing. Will participants who participate in the club be motivated to write in the classroom context? Will participants find the skills, writing traits and motivations to be transferable to other contexts and content areas?

Content area writing. The researcher is also interested in expanding this work to include other content areas. The club meetings were student choice driven and there is great benefit to this as analyzed earlier. The researcher is interested in having participants to compile their composite writing lists to include Social Studies, Math, and Science related writing choices. In so doing, participants will have writing exposure in different content areas using topics of their choosing without the pressure of a grade or rubric.

Concluding Remarks

This study analyzed the interplay of experiences of participants in an after-school writing club. This evaluation did not conclude in the development of solutions to writing performance deficiencies as was not its intention. This study achieved the purpose of exposing a creative, effective, and appropriate way to view the process of writing in adolescent participants from a situated context divergent from the classroom setting. Without the pressure of assessments, the critical eye of the teacher, or the instant feedback afforded by access to social media portals, adolescents wrote, interacted with one another, and created a writing community all on their own. Their shared experiences offered a context for evaluating adolescent writing—not on the basis of mechanics, persuasive arguments, or alignment with academic standards—but for the agency of voice, the beauty of authentic language, and the creativity that naturally occurs when co-construction takes place. Using a variety of formats to include prose, poetry, and dramatic
adolescents expressed their experiences, their opinions, their pain, and their potential as writers which in the context of the after-school writing club, flourished.
References


Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Pre-determination Questions

Can you explain why you want to be a part of the writing club?

Are you comfortable in collaborative environments? Give an example of a time when you worked collaboratively.

How would you describe your commitment to attendance and engagement in the writing process?

Do you enjoy writing? Are you interested in writing outside of the classroom?

Educational Stakeholders Questions

Is _____________________ a “good fit” for the writing club?

Describe how this student works collaboratively.

Does ______________ enjoy writing?

Will __________’s schedule allow for committed participation in the club’s sessions?

Pre-Post Participation Questions

What kind of writer are you?

In what context do you enjoy writing? (where)

If you could choose what kinds of assessments you could take, would they be multiple choice or essay?

Do you see writing as important to your academic success?

Is writing important to your future vocation?

Would you describe your experiences in the writing club as intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated?
Appendix B: Consent to Participate (Parent/Guardian)

Project Narrative Club
Parental Permission Form

Project Title: Project Narrative Writing Club

Performance Site: 2825 Brightside    Baton Rouge, LA 70820

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM:

Courtney A. Brown
2825 Brightside
Instructional Specialist –T.A.
(225) 810-9050
cbro195@lsu.edu

Dr. Stan Barrera
220 Peabody Hall
School of Education -LSU
(225) 578-0480
esbarreraiv@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is analyze the experiences of multi-aged students during after-school writing club with respect to motivation.

Inclusion Criteria: Students in 7th-10th grades at a local school in Southeastern Louisiana.

Exclusion Criteria: Students who do not meet the age/grade level requirements and students who are not enrolled as students at the chosen school site.

Description of the Study: 15 students in grades 7-10 will participate in one hour writing club sessions after school once per week during fall semester of 2017. Three of those students will serve as participants in a narrative case study. Writing samples will be evaluated for evidence of the six writing traits at the beginning, middle, and ending of the fall semester 2017. Students will also be interviewed at the beginning, middle and end of the semester to analyze writing motivation.

Benefits: Participants of the study will write in a student driven environment not governed by grades, test scores or graded rubrics. Additionally, participants will make submissions to Project Narrative’s published compilation anthology.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary, and a child will become part of the study only if both child and parent agree to the child's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.
**Privacy:** The assessment records of participants in this study may be reviewed by investigators. Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

**Financial Information:** There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.

**Signatures:**

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dr. Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I will allow my child to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent's Signature: _____________________________ Date:____________________

The parent/guardian has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the parent/guardian and explained that by completing the signature line above he/she has given permission for the child to participate in the study.

Signature of Reader: _____________________________ Date:____________________
Appendix C: Assent to Participate (Student)

Project Narrative Club
Child Assent Form

I, ________________________________, agree to be in a study to help teachers understand how participating in an extra-curricular after school writing club affects student writing motivation. I will have to attend the writing club after school once a week for an hour. I will participate in interviews, submit writing samples, write in my journal, and participate in the activities. If at any time I feel uncomfortable or am unable to participate in the club for any reason, I can discontinue my affiliation.

Child's Signature: ___________________________________________

Age: _____ Date: __________________

Witness* __________________________________________ Date: ________________

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb
Appendix D: IRB

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at: [link]

A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
(A) A copy of this completed form and a copy of parts B thru F.
(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1 & 2)
(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
(D) If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment materials.
(E) The consent form that you will be using in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
(F) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: [link]

IIRB Security of Data Agreement: [link]

1) Principal Investigator: Courtney Allston Brown
   Dept.: EDCL
   P# 2258100050
   E-mail: courtneya.brown@yshoo.com

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
   [name] [department] [rank] [phone number] [e-mail]
   [example: Dr. E.S. Barrera, supervising professor]

3) Project Title: Project Narrative

4) Proposal? (yes or no) yes
   If Yes, LSU Proposal Number
   Also, if yes, either
   ○ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
   ○ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)
   7th to 10th grade students attending from Thrive Baton Rouge
   *Circle any “vulnerable populations” to be used: (children <18, the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other).

6) PI Signature
   Data
   [no per signatures]

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changed, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU Institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ______ Not Exempted ______ Category/Paragraph ______

Signed Consent Waived? Yes / No

Reviewer __________________________ Signature __________________________ Date ____________

LSU
Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb
Part 1: Determination of "Research" and Potential For Risk

1. Is this project involving human subjects a systematic investigation, including research, development, testing, or evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge? (Note some instructional development and service programs will include a "research" component that may fall within HHS’ definition of human subjects research).
   - YES
   - NO

2. Does the project present physical, psychological, social or legal risks to the participants reasonably expected to exceed those risks normally experienced in daily life or in routine diagnostic physical or psychological examination or testing? You must consider the consequences if individual data inadvertently become public.
   - YES - Stop. This research cannot be exempted - submit regular application for IRB review.
   - NO - Continue to see if research can be exempted from IRB oversight

3. Are any of your participants Incarcerated?
   - YES - Stop. This research cannot be exempted - submit regular application for IRB review.
   - NO - Continue to see if research can be exempted from IRB oversight

4. Are you obtaining any health information from a health care provider that contains any of the identifiers listed below?

A. Names
B. Address: street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes. Exception for Zip codes: the initial three digits of the ZIP Code may be used, if according to current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census: (1) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and (2) the initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to '000'. (Note: The 17 currently restricted 3-digit ZIP codes to be replaced with '000' include: 036, 059, 063, 102, 203, 556, 692, 790, 921, 830, 831, 878, 879, 884, 890, and 893.)
C. Dates related to individuals
   i. Birth date
   ii. Admission date
   iii. Discharge date
   iv. Date of death
   v. And all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age. Such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older.
D. Telephone numbers;
E. Fax numbers;
F. Electronic mail addresses;
G. Social security numbers;
H. Medical record numbers; (including prescription numbers and clinical trial numbers)
I. Health plan beneficiary numbers;
J. Account numbers;
K. Certificate/license numbers;
L. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers including license plate numbers;
M. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
N. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs);
O. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers;
P. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints;
Q. Full face photographic images and any comparable images; and
R. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code; except a code used alone or in combination with other information to identify an individual who is the subject of the information.
   - YES - Stop. This research cannot be exempted - submit regular application for IRB review.
   - NO - Continue to see if research can be exempted from IRB oversight.

Continue on the next page
Part 2: Exemption Criteria For Research Projects

Please select any and all categories that relate to your research. Research is exemptible when all research methods are one or more of the following five categories. Check statements that apply to your study:

1. In an educational setting, research to evaluate normal educational practices.

2. For research not involving vulnerable people (prisoner, fetus, pregnancy, children, or mentally impaired): observe public behavior (including participatory observation), or do interviews or surveys or educational tests. The research must also comply with one of the following:
   - a) The participants cannot be identified, directly or statistically;
   - or that
   - b) The responses/observations could not harm participants if made public;
   - or that
   - c) Federal statute(s) completely protect all participants' confidentiality;

3. For research not involving vulnerable people (prisoner, fetus, pregnancy, children, or mentally impaired): observe public behavior (including participatory observation), or do interviews or surveys or educational tests:
   - All respondents are elected, appointed, or candidates for public offices.

4. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
   The research must also comply with one of the following:
   - a) Subjects cannot be identified in the research data directly or statistically, and no-one can trace back from research data to identify a participant;
   - or that
   - b) The sources are publicly available

5. Research or demonstration services/care programs, e.g. health care delivery.
   - a) It is directly conducted or approved by the head of a US Govt. department or agency.
   - and that
   - b) It concerns only issues under usual administrative control (48 Fed Reg 9268-9).
   - e.g., regulations, eligibility, services, or delivery systems
   - and that
   - c) Its research/evaluation methods are also exempt from IRB review.

6. For research not involving vulnerable volunteers (see “2&3” above), do food research to evaluate quality, taste, or consumer acceptance.
   The research must also comply with one of the following:
   - a) The food has no additives;
   - or that
   - b) The food is certified safe by the USDA, FDA, or EPA.
PART 3: Consent Forms

* The consent form must be written in non-technical language which can be understood by the subjects. It should be free of any exculpatory language through which the participant is made to waive, or appears to be made to waive any legal rights, including any release of the investigator, sponsor, institution or its agents from liability for negligence. (Note: the consent form is not a contract.)

* For example consent forms, please refer to our website, www.lsu.edu/irb

* The IRB prefers using signed informed consent; However, if that is impractical, an application to waive signed consent can be requested below. However, even if this waiver is requested, the IRB must be provided with the consent script that will present the information to human subjects regarding the study/research. All consent forms or scripts must include a statement that the study was approved or exempted by the IRB and provide IRB contact information to participants.

I am requesting waiver of signed Informed Consent because:

- (a) Having a participant sign the consent form would create the principal risk of participating in the study.

  or that

- (b) The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which having signed consent is normally required.

Now that your application is complete, please send it to the IRB office for review, the address is listed below, OR you can send it to one of the Human Subjects Screening Committee Members. The list of Committee Members can be found here (http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/human-subjects-screening-committee-members/)

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

[Print Form]
Vita

Courtney A. Brown, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, is the CEO of Somebody’s Answer LLC, a publishing company. A prolific author, Courtney has published eight books of various genres to include inspirational, children’s and academic literature. In addition to being a writer, Courtney has served as an electrifying educator, instructional specialist, National Writing Project consultant, and an adjunct professor at Louisiana State University. She received her bachelor’s in Psychology from Tulane University, her master’s in Ministerial Leadership from Amridge University, and plans to receive her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University in December of 2018.