

2008

Gender and book clubs in the middle school setting

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Gender and book clubs in the middle school setting

by

Amanda Jayne Forsyth

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Program of Study Committee:
Donna Niday, Major Professor
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Ames, Iowa

2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank those people who gave of their time, energy, wisdom, and kindness in helping me complete this process. I am indebted to the staff at the Waukee Public Library without whose help in securing copies of the books, this project would not have been possible. To Sandy Cutter, my school librarian, I thank you for both your technological assistance and your daily support and encouragement. To my colleagues, Jim Hasty and Laura Bailey, who gave of their time and students to help me implement the book clubs, I am grateful. To those teachers who gave a tremendous amount of time in being teacher facilitators and coders, Mark Finken, Sandi Ellis, James Heithoff, and Samantha Heithoff, I am humbled by your willingness to give so much of yourselves to help me.

I am grateful to my committee members: John Levis, Donna Niday, and Bob Tremmel for their commitment to making this study relevant and thorough. All of you have pushed me to think differently, which has strengthened this study. I am especially grateful to Donna for her endless support and guidance.

Finally, I want to thank my family whose unconditional support has given me the courage and patience to take on new challenges and see them through. To my husband, Josh, I thank you for being patient with me, for always listening to me when I needed a sympathetic ear, and for never questioning why it is that I continue to pursue learning with such passion.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When I started reading Deborah Appleman's book, *Reading for Themselves: How to Transform Adolescents into Lifelong Readers Through Out-of-Class Book Clubs*, my intent was to find new ways to capture students' interest in reading. However, Appleman offered so much more. She delved into many different ways to implement book clubs, including a mixed-gender book club and a boys-only book club. Driven by interviews and other qualitative feedback given by teachers and students, Appleman explores the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches to book clubs. Fascinated, I was compelled to broaden her study to include a girls-only book club, as well as the role of gender in both mixed- and same-gender settings in a quantitative way. My goal was to discover the best way to implement book clubs at the middle school level at which I teach, as well as to glean findings that might transfer to my own classroom.

With all their buzz, book clubs—a group of people who read and informally discuss the same books—might seem like a trend. However, book clubs have been around for at least as long as America. It turns out that Puritan women used to gather to discuss the Bible, and when the men discovered these meetings, they feared what ideas the women might conjure without their input and put an end to the meetings. Despite this, women have continued to gather and discuss what they are reading. More recently, men have begun taking part in similar activities, making book clubs a near phenomenon. Certainly, Oprah's Book Club could be considered nothing less than a marvel. Millions of people all around the world are reading the books Oprah suggests. Many of the books on Oprah's list would never have made it to the top of the charts without her endorsement.

Harvey Daniels, a prominent educational leader, points out that book clubs in the classroom have been around for a long time, too, though they have been called a variety of names: silent reading, literature discussion groups, literature circles, etc. Today's classroom book clubs' common elements include student choice of reading material and authentic discussion about the reading material. Aside from these common elements, most agree that although book clubs may meet inside of the classroom during the school day, this still feels like a school activity and may inhibit students' responses and engagement in discussion. Book clubs that meet outside of the regular school day and at a location other than the school may be more authentic, but any time students read quality literature and share their insights with those who listen to and value them, the chance for those students to become lifelong readers increases.

Research shows that the more students read, the better readers they become. Nancie Atwell, a prominent reading/writing workshop proponent, states, "[T]he single activity that consistently correlates with high levels of performance on standardized tests of reading ability...is *frequent, voluminous reading*" (12). Much of the research also shows that two of the biggest reading motivators are choice in reading and making reading social. Teachers seem to have intrinsically known this for quite some time. Atwell asserts, "Personal preference is the foundation for anyone who will make reading a personal art" (13). Michael Smith and Jeff Wilhelm agree, stating that students want to have control over what they read (33); and for many of them, the social aspect of school is often what students like best about school (44). Book clubs make reading a shared, social activity. Daniels believes that teachers need to demonstrate proficient reading strategies, and one of the best ways to do this is through book clubs where children talk regularly about books and how they came to

understand them (38). Therefore, book clubs may be one way of helping students become better readers, and the purpose of this study is to determine what role gender may play in this activity.

I first present findings as the research addresses the questions presented in this study. I have elected to use the term “gender” in this study. However, other researchers use the terms “sex” and “gender” interchangeably; therefore, some of the quotations may use either term. Because of the research, I include both an analysis of speech production and the motivation and intentions involved in discussion interactions.

The question on which I will focus in my research is, **How does gender influence how book clubs should be designed and implemented?** In order to answer this question, the following secondary questions will guide my research:

- How does gender influence discussions in same-gender book clubs versus mixed-gender book clubs? How do same-gender and mixed-gender student book clubs confirm or refute previous gender research findings?
 - Do males dominate the discussion in mixed-gender book clubs? Do they take more turns? Do they have longer turns? Do they overlap and interrupt more? Do they initiate more topics for discussion? Do they use more explicit language? Do females exhibit more uncertainty by using more fillers, hedges, and qualifiers?
 - Do females do more of the work of keeping discussion going during book club discussions? Do they ask more questions? Do they make more eye contact?
 - Do females participate more in same-gender versus mixed-gender book clubs? Do they take more turns? Do they have longer turns? Do they overlap and interrupt

more? Do they initiate more topics for discussion? Do they use explicit language? Do they exhibit less uncertainty and use fewer fillers, hedges, and qualifiers?

- Do males discuss more plot-related, action-driven elements of a book during book club discussions? Do they make more jokes and offer more comments about traditionally male topics, like sports?
- Do females discuss more character-related elements of a book during book club discussions? Do they offer more comments about traditionally female topics, like relationships, and offer more personal information?
- How does gender influence book selections in book clubs?
 - Do males and females select traditionally masculine, male protagonist and plot driven, and feminine, female protagonist and character driven, books accordingly?
 - Do mixed-gender book club members select books that are more traditionally masculine?
- How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitude toward reading?
- How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitude toward literature discussion?
- How do book clubs influence males' and females' level of textual analysis?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When in 1990 Deborah Tannen published the book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, its audience was eager to hear about the differences in males' and females' communication styles. Tannen's study was seminal in acknowledging and studying these differences. Today, it is generally agreed that males and females do exhibit some differences in the ways in which they use language and how they communicate in discussions. How these differences have been studied and researched has changed over the years. While much of the early research focused on what were the essential differences between the grammatical constructions of male and female speech, current research typically focuses on when and why males and females enact differences in speech constructions.

For the purpose of giving context for this study, I begin with a brief overview of the two schools of thought related to gender differences. This includes exploring the history and views of essentialists, people who believe there are genetic differences between males and females that dictate how each gender uses language and communicates, and constructivists, who believe gender is something that is created by society and other outside factors. I then consider the relevant findings of research related to my research question: **How does gender influence how book clubs should be designed and implemented?** I begin this section by briefly exploring stereotypes and the role they play in enacting and constructing gender, especially as it relates to communication. Then, I look at language differences between and similarities among the genders, looking at specific language features and motivations for enacting the language features. Next, since most of the available research on language was completed with adults, I explore the available research on gender and school-aged kids. I

consider possible explanations for the differences between the genders before moving on to how the genders select books, read books, and discuss books. I conclude with relevant research on book clubs, including Deborah Appleman's research on gender in book clubs, the only study of its kind to date.

Gender Theorists

Two schools of thought exist to explain gender-specific behaviors. Essentialists believe that there are inherent differences in women and men that stem from biological differences. Those who support this position cite brain research to show generally how male and female brains differ in their make-up and function. Those who reject this position feel that there are too many multiplicities among women and men to argue there are any "essential" commonalities (Turner xiii). These constructivists believe that differences stem not from biological differences but sociological differences: boys and girls learn how to be males and females.

Although he is careful to say that gender differences aren't definitive and many males have female tendencies and vice versa, brain researcher Michael Gurian does contend that there are differences between the brains of males and females. He argues that those brain differences result in behavioral differences between the genders. For example, Gurian states that because the amygdala, which is involved in emotional processing, is typically larger in males, males are naturally more aggressive than females. Alternatively, females show stronger connections in the cerebellum, which connects parts of the brain and spinal cord and facilitates balance and speech, resulting in females' superior language and fine-motor skills (20). Gurian elaborates on the brain research findings and gives suggestions for how to use this knowledge to interact with and teach the genders.

According to Thomas Newkirk, educational researcher, biology is likely a factor in the way boys and girls act, but he views gender as a social construction that is subject to change (23). Teacher researchers Michael Smith and Jeff Wilhelm take a similar position for their research:

Social constructivism emphasizes that changing instructional environments, methods, and expectations can change the experience of kids. It can also change how they act, behave, learn, and interact. Therefore, focusing on how society and school influence gendered behaviors like literacy seems to us to be a fruitful and promising avenue for educators. (7)

It makes sense for teachers to investigate what they have the possibility of changing. If even the possibility exists that educators influence gendered behaviors, it should be examined. Consequently, the research here focuses on social constructivism and how gender and language may change depending on the context. The research also focuses on adolescents and their use of language. Adolescence is a time of transition, where much change occurs. According to Laurie Arliss, a constructivist proponent, gender is both an influence on and influenced by communication (xi), and Penelope Eckert, linguistics researcher, argues that adolescence is the prime age to study language and gender since it is a time of establishing gender roles and a group that causes language change. Because of this potential impact on language and how people use language, how adolescents determine gender roles and how they change language should be investigated.

Although earlier research studies portrayed gender as being assigned or determined by a person's biological sex, current research views gender as much more pliable and something that is "done." Jennifer Coates, linguistics researcher, states, "[G]ender is no longer viewed as a static, add-on characteristic of speakers, but as something that is *performed* by speakers. Speakers are seen as 'performing' masculinity or femininity" (138).

Therefore, depending on the situation, anyone can “be” any variety of feminine or masculine. Coates goes on to say, “At any given time a particular version of femininity or masculinity will be dominant. This version is called the hegemonic form” (139). In the examples given by Coates, the hegemonic form seemed to be demonstrated mostly by what speakers said and only slightly by how they said it. Speakers sometimes accepted cultural norms and other times challenged them when they felt comfortable doing so. This suggests that we should consider what girls/boys say as much as how they say it. However, it is informative to investigate gender perceptions and whether or not they are fulfilled and/or perpetuated.

Gender Perceptions

When we first meet people, we immediately seek to identify their gender. Arliss notes that we experience unease whenever we can’t identify someone’s gender, possibly because without that knowledge, we don’t know how to evaluate his or her behavior (2). Whether or not gender stereotypes are earned, people often use them to determine how to interact with and judge others. For example, people may question why a boy has long hair and why a girl is going out for football.

Research has shown that although gender stereotypes may reflect myths, people are familiar enough with them that they accurately identify stereotypical myths as typically masculine, feminine, or neutral; and even more recent studies show that children and adolescents tend to have even more traditional gender attitudes than their older brothers and sisters (Arliss 17). This suggests that stereotypes are learned early but can be changed. However, there are also research trends that suggest that “[C]ontemporary women may be favoring gender-neutral standards in the public sphere, but preserving gender-specific standards in the private sphere” (Arliss 19). If gender stereotypes are modeled at home, it is

probable that children will observe and enact these behaviors. It is possible that as kids are more and more outside of the home, they see more stereotypes broken and are more encouraged to break them themselves. People may encourage crossing gender lines, but they do still take note of it when it happens. For example, people notice when fathers change diapers but not when mothers do (Arliss 24). That people notice it demonstrates, as the research does, that stereotypes are reflected more in perceptions than reality.

Does any research support or refute perceptions, and how do perceptions affect how people behave and react to others? Included in this is how people use stereotypes. People can use stereotypes to speak hypothetically, or people's vision can be so affected by stereotypes that they are unwilling or unable to see others individually. Arliss states, "[T]he line between reacting systematically to a complex world and discriminating against others is a fine one" (9). In other words, if people use stereotypes to process a situation, that is not likely to offend anyone and may be helpful. However, if people use stereotypes to exclude or harass others, that is unproductive and harmful.

Arliss also notes that we utilize sex stereotypes with strangers more than with people we know well and care about (24). Maybe this is because when we don't know individuals, we still need to process new situations and are likely to simplify the situations by using stereotypes, which are no longer needed once we get to know the individuals. Arliss points out that there is also a social stigma attached to expressing stereotypes, so many researchers create a scale that limits responses to what the researcher deems masculine, feminine or neutral (15).

Definitions of masculine and feminine depend upon context. Deborah Cameron, gender researcher, points out that cultural norms mold what members of that culture deem to

be “naturally” masculine or feminine. For example, American citizens may believe that women are “naturally” more refined than men, resulting in refined speech that lacks in vulgarities. However, in Papua New Guinea, there is a genre of speech called a “kros,” which is “a tirade of obscene verbal abuse delivered in monologue,” and this is represented as a primarily female genre (450). Cameron also cites Joel Sherzer who suggests that whatever the culture perceives as the norm for each gender is behaviorally reinforced by its members. For example, if it is believed that women are “naturally” modest, community members might say that women don’t like to speak in public even when there may be evidence to the contrary or there just may be fewer opportunities for women to speak in public in that community, which perpetuates the gendered perception (450).

Schools may also perpetuate gendered perceptions. British researchers Debra Myhill and Susan Jones cite Arnot and Gubb who conclude that schools accept gender differences instead of reducing or removing them (99). Myhill and Jones state that many teachers believe there are “natural” differences between the genders, “believing that it influences attitudes to school, motivation, maturity, responsibility, behaviour and identification with the school ethos. Boys are seen as more negative and as needing competition, discipline, structure and support; girls, as lacking confidence and losing out on teacher attention due to the demands of boy behaviour on teacher time” (99). If teachers believe gendered behaviors are natural, or inevitable, this would explain why teachers don’t try to reduce these behaviors. Many people believe there are natural differences between the genders, while others, like Cameron, believe that gendered behaviors are a result of socialization.

Gender and Discussion

Regardless of why males and females may behave differently, there are many behaviors enacted during discussions that can lead to the perception, and sometimes reality, that one gender is dominating the discussion. John Gray's book in 1992 called *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, which emphasizes the differences between men and women, confirmed for many readers that there are differences, including differences in how males and females communicate.

Discussion Domination

One concern related to males' and females' different styles of communication is that one gender will dominate or silence, intentionally or not, the other gender. Much research has been devoted to determining if one gender does dominate discussions, and if so how. Many factors have been investigated, and the following sections reveal some of the findings as they relate to amount of talk, including the number and length of turns, overlaps and interruptions, topics initiated, minimal responses, tag questions, word choice, fillers, hedges and qualifiers, and compliments.

Amount of Talk

One gender perception that is widely held is that women talk more than men, but Coates points out that even though many people perceive that women talk more, research consistently shows the opposite is true (117). Coates goes on to say that a study she conducted suggested that the men felt as though women had less right to speak because even though the men said 70% of the words, many felt as though they were being silenced by the women (118). Although Coates's conclusion is one explanation, it is also possible that the perception that women talk more made it seem to the men that the women were talking more

than they actually were. This is an important distinction to investigate as perceptions can affect how people analyze a situation, but some studies agree with Coates. Arliss asserts that status and other factors influence who dominates a conversation but, “with other factors equal, sex may function as a predictor of conversational dominance” (48).

In addition to the amount of time each gender talks, research has focused on how the genders take turns. In doing so, researchers have looked at overlaps, where one person miscues and begins talking before another person is finished; interruptions, where the person intentionally interrupts and takes over the conversation; questions; statements; or minimal responses, where the person replies with the most minimal response.

Overlaps and Interruptions

Overlaps and interruptions are one way that speakers take turns. Coates asserts that in male/female conversations, men overlapped and interrupted the women considerably more often. In fact, men accounted for all of the overlaps and almost all of the documented interruptions (114). Arliss’s findings are in agreement with Coates’s. She found that more interruptions occur in cross-sex conversations than in same-sex conversations and that men interrupt more and to make statements, while women ask more questions. She does note that not all research supports these findings, but most of it does (62-3).

According to Arliss, interruption is associated with dominance. “An interruption signifies a lack of concern for the other’s turn, or at least the judgment that the interrupter’s utterance takes precedence” (Arliss 61). Coates states that interruptions seem to be a way of controlling the topic of talk (116). In other words, since men interrupt more, they attempt to control the conversation more and show less concern for listening to their counterparts’ contributions. Additional researchers put forth a similar analysis of statements and questions.

Arliss believes that statements can stand alone and don't necessarily invite interaction, whereas questions invite a response, and depending on how the question is asked may signify an attention on others or a desire to get attention (65).

Topic Initiation

Like overlapping and interrupting, changing the topic is a behavior that can signal a desire to monopolize the discussion. Elizabeth Aries, gender researcher, states, "A change of topic or lack of topic development denies the speaker the opportunity for continued evolution of his or her thoughts" (127). Arliss states that males tend to change the topic more than females (67). Aries agrees stating that "[M]en do less work than women in maintaining conversations and more frequently cut off the development of women's ideas than women cut off men" (128). Arliss notes that regardless of gender, the higher status person (e.g., professor in a classroom) usually changes the topic, which seems to suggest that topic control indicates conversational power (67). However, Arliss also states that more research needs to be done in this area.

Minimal Response

Although minimal response is considered a turn in conversation, it is not a turn that can be interpreted as encouraging or discouraging the current speaker to continue speaking. Both genders use minimal response about equally, but Arliss points out that in her study, men tended to use minimal response at the end of a partner's turn, after which the partner usually fell silent, which whether intentional or not, discouraged interaction. Women in the study used minimal response intermittently, which Arliss interpreted as signifying interest in the speaker (66). This research suggests that it is important to analyze the intent of overlaps and interruptions, statements and questions, and minimal responses since all of these

constructions signify nothing out of context and are used solely for the speaker's intention. However, the perception of the speaking partner is also important in a conversational exchange, so it is crucial to consider both parties' experiences.

Tag Questions

Like minimal response, research provides conflicting results on the tag question's use and meaning. Tag questions are brief questions used at the end of a declarative statement. An example might be, "You like this author, right?" Arliss states that its use could signify subordination to the other speaker, function as a way of asking for clarification, or function as a way of opening a conversation. Sometimes, it could be used to hold power over, such as, "I told you that already, didn't I?" where the question is rhetorical and intended to assert power over the other speaker (56-57). Coates explains that it was originally thought that tag questions signaled uncertainty and would therefore be used more by women. However, later research did not support that contention. In 1984, Holmes analyzed tag questions for their "expression of modal or affective meaning. Modal indicates the degree of certainty about the topic. These are speaker-oriented and require a response to confirm the speaker's idea. Affective expresses the speaker's attitude to the addressee and is addressee-oriented. This can be facilitative of softening" (Coates 91). An example of a modal tag is, "You've already read this book, haven't you?" where the speaker is looking for the addressee to confirm something about which the speaker is uncertain. An affective tag does not indicate uncertainty on the part of the speaker but instead shows more concern for the addressee, such as, "This book was better than the last one, don't you think?" Women used more facilitative affective question tags than men, and men used more modal tags (Coates 91).

Coates goes on to express that facilitators are responsible for making sure the conversation goes smoothly, and women are more likely than men to use tags when acting as facilitators (92), which contrary to the hypothesis, shows women in a position of power. However, women still seem to be polite facilitators. Arliss found that women are more likely than men to phrase imperatives as questions (57) or what Coates describes as mitigated directives, (e.g., “Let’s...,”) or modal auxiliaries, (e.g., “We could... “) (95). Men use what Coates describes as aggravated directives, (e.g., “I want...” “Give me...,”) to communicate their wants (95). Charlotte Krolokke, gender researcher, also suggests that women look for underlying meanings whereas men take words at face-value (99), and people tend to analyze communication the same way they perform it. People who take words at face-value are likely to be more direct.

Word Choice

Perhaps because females analyze language so carefully and males do not, a few differences exist between men’s and women’s vocabulary. One finding is that women use a larger color vocabulary than men, possibly because women’s needs and interests require them to use more precise color words or possibly because men don’t want to sound feminine (Arliss 52). Women also use more evaluative adjectives, calling something “charming” versus “nice,” which might be men’s choice (Arliss 54). Coates asserts that men use more taboo language (97). While men use more swear words, women use phrases with less strength such as, “My goodness!” (Arliss 53).

Fillers

A language feature that both males and females use is fillers, words such as “you know” and “like.” The purpose of fillers can be to fill gaps in thought or to demonstrate

uncertainty, and fillers are considered a weak language construction that many people try to eliminate from their speech. It is inconclusive as to whether males or females use this speech construction more. Some research has shown that females use fillers more frequently; other research has shown that males use fillers more frequently (Mulac 224).

Hedges and Qualifiers

Like fillers, hedges and qualifiers can signal uncertainty. Arliss states that women use more hedges and qualifiers like “I think” and “maybe,” which soften a statement, and disclaimers like “I don’t know if this is right,” which offer a defense against the criticism of a listener (54-5). This could signify (or be perceived as) subordination to the other speaker. Women also tend to use more intensifiers such as “so” and “very,” which has resulted in their talk being perceived as “overemotional and imprecise” (Arliss 58).

Compliments

In addition, Coates notes that women both give and receive more compliments (98), and the ways that men and women give compliments differ. Women use more first and second person compliments, such as “I like...” or “Your hair...” Men use more third person compliments, such as, “Nice haircut!” (99). Collectively, these findings suggest that women and men may generally have different ways of communicating. Arliss concludes by stating that women do have a different style of communication, but it is not inferior. It may be that women are more “other” centered and therefore more tentative in judgment and more emotional (59). Whether males and females maintain these gendered communication behaviors within same-gender discussions is the focus of the next section.

Same-Gender Discussion

Recent gender studies have shifted their focus to investigate not only differences between male and females but also consider differences among females and males (Swann 625). Most of the earlier research focuses on interruptions and grammatical constructions; language studies have changed their focus from speech differences to differences in meaning (Swann 625).

Arliss findings indicated that while in male/female pairings, males interrupted females more often; in same-sex conversations, interruptions were more equal, but she also suggests that more research needs to be done in this area and should include status and other factors (62-63). Krolokke suggests that we should look at the intent of the interruption. Competitive interruptions aim to take over; cooperative interruptions aim to support (101).

In addition to interruptions, same-sex interactions have all of the same elements that different-sex interactions have, such as tag questions, minimal responses, and modality; however, they are interpreted differently. Same-sex pairings use these to be polite and sustain a conversation, valuing the group more than the individual (Krolokke 95-96). Mary-Jeannette Smythe and Bill Huddleston, gender communication researchers, state that women conversing with other women talk more about personal matters and find it easier to talk with each other than with men. They use more verbal back-channel cues, or saying “hmm-hmmm,” “wow,” etc., to provide support for the speaker, more smiling and higher levels of “gaze,” (e.g., more and longer eye contact) (Smythe 252-53, 256).

Discussion Maintenance

Regardless of whether the discussion is with members of the same gender or not, at least one of the participants must encourage interaction or the discussion will end. Questions and making eye contact with the speaker may be ways to invite interaction.

Questions

Those who ask more questions, which Arliss asserts are women, are either helping the conversation along by inviting participation or are seeking attention (65). Coates expands upon this and asserts that although asking questions could be seen as deferring power to the person with the “answers,” questions also could be seen as initiating conversations and controlling the direction of the conversation, which signals power (93). Seen in this light, those who ask questions seek more control. Interestingly, Coates also found that in studies where men and women held similar power and position, men asked more questions (94). It is therefore unclear as to whether asking more questions signals a request for interaction or a desire to control the interaction.

Eye Contact

Another way in which a speaking partner may show interest is by making eye contact with the speaker. However, studies regarding eye contact are inconclusive (Arliss 85). Eye contact can signal that someone is listening, but if someone doesn't break his or her gaze, eye contact can be intimidating. Though researchers may be unsure of why or what it means, women typically make more eye contact with their conversational partner, regardless of who is speaking (Arliss 83-84).

Discussion Topics

What is being said is just as important as how it is being said, and although most research has focused on the how, some research does discuss the what. In most cases the research supports perceptions. For example, research tends to support the perception that women talk more about personal matters, and men talk more about sports (Arliss 50). Also, women share more and accept more disclosure of personal information (Arliss 71). Men offered jokes significantly more often and in greater number than women. There was no difference in preschool but became more apparent at ages 6-11. Laughing at jokes followed a similar trend (Arliss 68-69).

Although there is not much research on this particular topic, it is thought that during literature discussions, males typically discuss plot more than character and females the opposite. The male participants in teacher researcher Deborah Appleman's boys-only book club share their thoughts on these issues. Johnny, a high school student who is a self-declared reader, said, "The books that we read in the boys' book club were focused on plot elements, and there wasn't really much else. It was all kind of surface" (56). He seemed kind of frustrated by this, noting, "[B]ooks that have deeper meanings, more underlying themes, you get, like, new insight every time you read them. There's so much more to analyze there, whereas the plot, what happened is what happened, you just read for the story and that's it" (56). Andrew, another reader, also didn't enjoy the typical boy discussion. He shared, "[T]he basis of our discussion usually revolved around the plot, which was sort of disappointing" (57). When asked what he would have preferred to talk about, he stated, "I guess I really liked questioning yourself, trying to find your identity and all that, sort of like that psychological stuff where it's like not just like...like I don't want to be sucked in by a

plot...I guess what I like in a book is...if I can get something out of it” (57). Johnny commented that he thinks the teachers who picked the books probably assumed that most boys don’t want to work hard enough to find the deeper meaning in a book; Johnny admitted that most guys might fit that description and that he is probably an exception. He feels that girls tend to see the value in reading books and “are willing to devote the time and the effort into reading it and understanding it” (58-59). He implies that because there are girls present, the mixed-gender book club meetings offered a deeper discussion of more complex books.

Gender at School

Although general gender research is informative, it is important to also review gender research in the context of school. Like gender research, this research has produced conflicting results over the years. Joan Swann, linguistics researcher, believes that the focus on competitive versus cooperative may have contributed to a more cooperative style in the classroom, which some consider a feminization of the classroom that could be harmful to boys (626). Although this comment is reflective of the most recent shift in the “gender wars,” there has been a lively debate over the last few decades about classroom practices and whether they are better for girls or boys, implying that if it helps one gender, it may be harming the other gender. Many researchers have investigated these issues, and many others have weighed in on the debate. In the 1980’s most work published about this issue claimed that schools were neglecting, though unintentionally, girls’ proper education; after years of such claims, a surge of literature was published that reacted against these claims, purporting that such a focus on girls may not have been justified and that it has resulted in neglecting the proper education of boys. This fairly recent surge has consequently caused many teachers to once again re-evaluate the ways they teach. Trisha Maynard, educational researcher, states

that some teachers felt that adopting more “boy-friendly” teaching materials and strategies would harm girls; others felt that they were justified in doing so, because girls could “cope” better and have less rigid gender boundaries (138). The debate is far from over.

Smith and Wilhelm believe that there should not be a “war” between boys and girls, because we can help them both at the same time. They indicate that there are boys and girls on both sides since some girls excel at math and some boys love to read. They believe oversimplification causes problems and may prevent educators from addressing all of their students’ unique needs (9). Although these teacher researchers assert a valid viewpoint, it is important to view the body of literature more closely.

Coates cites Swann who “demonstrates that *all* participants in the classroom collaborate to achieve male dominance: the teacher by paying more attention to the boys; the boys by using the interactional resources available to contribute more; the girls by using the same resources to contribute less” (156). Arliss states that at all levels of education, “male students have been reported to speak more often and for longer periods of time than female students,” and male students initiate more communication and receive more positive and negative attention (47). Coates agrees, asserting that in the classroom, boys may be given as much as 2/3 of the teacher’s attention (118). Boys showed that by the age of 15, they were using interruptions to dominate talk (Coates 156). Boys also call out answers, participating actively (Coates 191), while girls listen, participating passively (Guzzetti 17). In general, boys talk more than girls at school (Coates 192), and research shows that as girls progress in school, they grow quieter, believing that their comments are “irrelevant” (McCracken 30). Girls do not talk much in whole class discussion, peer-led small groups, or mixed-gender literature response groups (Guzzetti 17). The results of studies on the effects of the teacher’s

gender conflict but seem to suggest that female teachers allow both males and females to talk more (Arliss 47-48).

Much of the research on gender interaction in school focuses on literature circles, which resemble book club discussions in that students are typically heterogeneously grouped to discuss like literature, often without the presence of an adult. Cherland observed sixth-grade literature response groups by audio recording the conversations and analyzing the content and quantity of the talk. She found that in mixed-gender groups, even ones with only one boy, the highest average length of turn was held by a boy; and girls averaged shorter length turns than the girls in all-girl groups. In the mixed-gender groups, all of the boys' average length turn was higher than the highest girl's average length turn and vice versa. Also, teasing and conflict occurred more often in mixed-gender groups (Guzzetti 20-21).

Some researchers conclude that “[R]eader-response strategies, such as literature-discussion groups, ‘often reinforce sexist stereotypes that the discussions are designed to interrupt,’” which contributes to literature that suggests adolescent girls choose a passive role in such groups (Guzzetti 22). The lack of structure in literature-response groups can also reinforce gendered practices. Barbara Guzzetti, educational researcher, believe teachers should become participants in discussion and help students deconstruct gendered understandings (73), stating that educators should also “call attention to face-to-face interactions related to literacy by modeling how to encourage contributions to a discussion and build on others’ statements” (Guzzetti 19). He goes on to state that reader-response, which is used in many discussion settings, can encourage students to identify with the main character through the lens of their own experiences, which can also reinforce gender stereotypes. She believes students should be exposed to literature where both males and

females break gender stereotypes (Guzzetti 73), forcing them outside of their own lens of experience. Nancy McCracken, educational researcher, claims that many different research communities “all lead to the strong conclusion that gender is a difference in teaching, particularly in the teaching of English” (2). This conclusion should lead us to consider Guzzetti’s suggestions for being aware of gendered practices and knowing how to examine or combat gendered practices when appropriate.

However, the book *How School Short-Change Girls* suggests that this may not be easy to do.

[P]ositive cross-sex relationships may be more difficult to achieve than cross-race friendships or positive relationships among students with and without disabilities. First, as reported earlier in this report, there is a high degree of sex-segregation and same-sex friendships in elementary and middle school years. Researchers have found that the majority of elementary students preferred single-sex work groups. Second, different communication patterns of males and females can be an obstacle to effective cross-gender relationships. Females are more indirect in speech, relying often on questioning, while more direct males are more likely to make declarative statements or even to interrupt. Research indicates that boys in small groups are more likely to receive requested help from girls; girls’ requests, on the other hand, are more likely to be the boys. In fact, the male sex may be seen as a status position within the group. As a result, male students may choose to show their social dominance by not readily talking with females. (American 126-27)

The authors continue by stating that cooperative learning structures may not be enough to overcome these difficulties. Groups often reinforce stereotypes by giving boys the opportunity to be leaders and girls the relegated position of followers. Guzzetti investigated peer-led literature discussion groups and found that not only did both boys and girls prefer same-gender discussion groups but also that most of the conflicts or problems in literature discussion groups were in the mixed-gender groups and stemmed from gender issues. Evans, a researcher, concluded that bossy group members, male or female, were the problem in

mixed-gender groups. Bossiness was not observed in same-gender groups (Guzzetti 24-25). Studies show that females achieve more and show more leadership in same-gender groups. Even though other studies are more optimistic about mixed-gender groups, the authors assert, “[I]t is clear that merely providing an occasional group learning experience is not the answer to sex and gender differences in classrooms” (American 127). Because of these and other reasons, research shows that girls may learn best in same-sex groups (American 132).

McCracken agrees: “Clearly, gender plays a role in both teacher-student interactions and in student-student interactions in classrooms” (3). Susan Gabriel, educational researcher, offers an explanation as to why gender is so present in our lives and why it may be so difficult to overcome in a classroom: “With respect to relationality, the frame of reference, or schema, developed by females and males is markedly different” (129). This is because women do most of the early childcare, and girls identify with their mothers while boys try to define themselves as not being like their mother. In other words, boys define masculinity as that which is not feminine and/or related to females, which is a “negative” definition versus girls defining femininity by their relationship/view with/of their mothers (Appleby 13).

Because of these (and other) reasons, some schools are offering same-gender classes. By doing so they hope to improve students’ learning experiences and outcomes. After seeing fifth grade same-gender classroom participants’ scores rise, Carol Garman, principal of a public school in Missouri, is expanding same-gender classrooms to fourth grade (Heavin). While Garman recognizes that one year isn’t enough to draw a “statistical conclusion,” she is certain of the benefits. Her students state that they are better able to focus, and Garman says she saw their confidence increase; the students began to “see themselves as learners” (Heavin). A Florida elementary school is implementing a similar approach. Westside, Florida

principal Charles Johnson shares, “Any little avenue we can give (students) to have a better opportunity to be successful, I want to take” (Marrero). His school is piloting one same-gender classroom per grade level; all participants are volunteers. Teachers confirm what expert Dr. Leonard Sax, their trainer, expressed: boys’ and girls’ brains develop differently. These teachers are eager to address these differences. Parents feel that their children may be better able to concentrate in school, and the students are intrigued by the idea and willing to try it (Marrero).

Gender Difference Rationales

Many researchers have explained the differences between the ways the genders communicate as females using a cooperative style and males using a competitive style. Pilkington completed research in all female and all male groups; the research showed that the female group followed the cooperative style and the male group followed the competitive style. Both groups were aware of the styles and found theirs to be superior and comforting (Krolokke 97).

Although the same constructions are found in the language of each communication style, how the constructions are used differs. Coates states that in a collaborative style, minimal responses encourage the speaker to continue and give the speaker support, hedges protect the speaker when sharing personal information, questions invite people to participate, and speakers don’t take turns in the traditional sense, with speakers often completing each other’s sentences as an indication of involvement and support (130-132). In a competitive style, a speaker might take on the “expert” role and hold the floor for a considerable time, questions encourage members to take on the “expert” role or to introduce a new topic, verbal (can be friendly) sparring takes place, and there is a preference for one speaker at a time and

therefore overlap is seen as an “illegitimate” way of gaining the floor. This competitive style may function to create a different sort of solidarity among group members (Coates 133-138).

Coates states that communicative competence, knowledge of how language is used in a given society, differs from men to women (86). For example, women use minimal responses very competently with other women and to continue the work of conversing with men. Men may use these to gain power (87-8). Women may use these hedges, words or phrases such as “I think” or “In my opinion” that prolong a sentence, more, but their uses may differ. Women may use hedges to show uncertainty, but they may also use them to show confidence. It depends on the context and the intonation (Coates 88). One study indicated that women and men used them virtually the same number of times but that women used them to show confidence more often while men used them to show uncertainty more often (Coates 89). Also, Coates quotes Irwin: “Research focusing on adolescent speakers claims that young people use *like* as a hedging device ‘to partially detach themselves from the force of utterances that could be considered evaluative, either positively evaluative of self or negatively evaluative of others’ (Irwin 2002: 171)” (Coates 89). This was not qualified by gender and suggests that the types of constructions as well as how the constructions are used may be more a function of position or power instead of gender.

Additionally, Swann cites Roger Hewitt who challenges previous uses of the word “cooperation,” stating that it has been used politically and not analytically and that more attention should be given to how competition and cooperation are used functionally. Swann demonstrates how the same situations could be viewed two entirely different ways by two different people, one as cooperative and one as competitive. They question the value of these descriptions and seem to be encouraging researchers (and others) to analyze speakers’

intention vs. equating certain language acts as being inherently cooperative or competitive (626-8). For example, two sets of researchers interpreted the same situation very differently. A boy and girl were assigned to write a story together. Two male researchers believed that the girl had led the interaction and the boy was less willing to assert himself. Two female researchers believed that the boy controlled the situation by taking charge of the writing, and the girl was more cooperative, seeking approval from the boy for all of her suggestions and ideas (Swann 628). Clearly, how one uses language can be interpreted differently by different people. Additionally, Smythe and Huddleston point out, “[D]ifferences in perceptions (both self and other) of male and female communication behaviors have been consistently more robust than empirical differences would seem to warrant” (259). In other words, men and women perceive that they communicate more differently than the data suggests.

Gender and Book Selection

Although Newkirk does not want to get caught in the “gender wars,” where helping boys is pitted against helping girls, he states, “Generalizations about gender *at best* can only describe tendencies and patterns—not deterministic limitations” (22), Newkirk does wish to look at “narrative pleasure” and what boys enjoy versus what is “accepted” by schools (20-21). His experiences do not support the claim that males had/have all of the educational advantages (Newkirk 26). Many agree with Newkirk and cite girls’ test scores as evidence that girls may be receiving educational advantages. Others state that girls may score higher on reading tests, but studies have shown that it may just be on the literary selections. Boys do well on the expository text sections on standardized tests, which supports the belief that girls read/like/do better with fiction and boys read/like/do better with nonfiction (American 36). Newkirk, Smith, Wilhelm, and others would likely advocate that all kinds of text be available

to students and valued by teachers. The key is to recognize justified generalizations without dissipating individual differences. McCracken states,

Martin argues eloquently that if women were socialized exactly as men, then identical educations for both sexes would be effective, but since men and women are clearly socialized differently, they have different strengths and weaknesses that must be taken into account by educators if the end result is equal opportunity to achieve. (2)

William Brozo, educational researcher, cites several studies to purport that the males who participated in these studies overwhelmingly preferred the following genres: humor, horror, adventure and/or thrill, informational and/or picture, science fiction, crime and detective, monster and/or ghost, sports, war, biography, fantasy, and historical (Brozo 93). Although Brozo recognizes others' fears about boys reading books that feature and reinforce stereotypical males, he feels that getting boys to read outweighs this fear. He also suggests that the books with the archetypes he is suggesting boys will like may dispel stereotypes (Brozo 19): "Reading books that appeal to and affirm young men's masculine identities in positive ways may transform a boy's sense of self and expand his academic possibilities" (Brozo 22). Brozo also suggests bringing in positive male role models to read with/to male students (97). He is implying that boys will see reading as less "feminine" if they see other males they respect reading.

Another concern for researchers is that students' choice of what to read can reinforce gendered practices. Non-sanctioned reading has a powerful impact on students, which demonstrates how important it is to bridge school and non-school readings. Students should be taught how to read non-school texts, specifically how to deconstruct them and read critically (Guzzetti 74). Maynard notes, however, that this is much easier said than done: "[I]nvolvement in this project made me acutely aware that teachers are required to please a

whole range of ‘onlookers’—for example, parents, governors and inspectors. Opting to use such texts, therefore, might not be a decision they feel they are entitled to make” (Maynard 137). The texts referred to are comics and other types of pop culture. Many of these texts are materials that would have special appeal to boys and girls that do not like traditional literature. These texts might be more appealing to adolescents, but many of these texts foster gender bias and gender stereotypes (Maynard 138). Only when these texts are “allowed” in the classroom will teachers, as suggested earlier, be able to teach students to deconstruct these texts and to read them critically.

Gender and Reading

Beyond what the genders choose to read, how and why the genders read is another area of concern. Richard Beach, educational researcher, offers compelling reasons for reading. He states,

Literature is powerful, at least in part, because it allows us to examine the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of other men and women without the necessity of taking direct action ourselves. We can reflect upon, evaluate, and make sense of the lives and language with which literature presents us—we can participate actively in deciding what a piece of literature might *mean*—but this is very different from our active participation in the events of our daily lives. In reading we may feel as if we were ‘really there,’ but in the final analysis we are not, and it is precisely because we are not that literature provides such a unique opportunity to consider the questions we cannot often address when we are ‘really there.’ (19)

Teacher researcher Jeffrey Wilhelm agrees and cites Aidan Chambers who argues that the decisive quality of literature is that it is “transformational” and can change our views and experiences (36). Wilhelm goes even further and states that if schools are to “help create empowered and attentive citizens who can both pursue fulfilling and fruitful individual lives

and who can contribute in transformative ways to the life of a democracy, then literature must take a central place in the curriculum” (38).

If literature does take a central place in the curriculum, the way teachers encourage students to read it becomes the next issue. Although there are many ways to read and respond to literature, reader-response, or personal response, is most naturally the foundation of book clubs. And even though research presented in this chapter has brought attention to some of the limits of personal response, much more research speaks to its accolades. Daniels states, “[T]he pathway to analysis, to more sophisticated and defensible interpretations of literature, must go through personal response, not around it” (38). In other words, personal response must be the starting point that may lead to something more complex. Mark Faust, et. al. use Louise Rosenblatt’s theory to justify a response approach to reading. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory emphasizes that reading (and writing) is a social construct that is never the same twice even for the same reader. Faust, et. al., write, “We embrace her claim that the ultimate value of aesthetic reading—for all readers not just literary specialists—lies in its potential to generate insights that increase self-awareness in the process of acknowledging other points of view...Hardly anything in our lives feels as personal as the connection we have with certain books yet we understand that these experiences are profoundly ‘social in their origins and in their effects’” (177). Faust, et. al., also profess,

Our work similarly place emphasis on the quality of our own lived-through experiences with literature and that of our students as we seek to expand the range of possibilities that are open to us as readers and as teachers. We are hopeful that the co-existence of gendered reading practices, for so long a source of conflict, may now begin to be viewed as a stepping stone to a more complex view of literary reading, one that allows for a multiplicity of stances including a recovery of respect for amateur readers and reading. (8)

Respecting all readers may improve literacy skills, an area about which educational researcher Richard Whitmire is concerned. He discusses a recent United States of Education report, which conveys that boys are “fifty percent more likely than girls to repeat grades in elementary school, one-third more likely to drop out of high school, and twice as likely to be identified with a learning disability” (15). Whitmire also states that girls outperform boys on reading and writing tests, and the gap has increased in the last decade (15). The key to improve all of these areas, according to Whitmire, is to focus on improving boys’ literacy skills (17).

Although Smith and Wilhelm agree that the available data indicate that boys underachieve in literacy, they believe that the data don’t tell the whole story (4). They note that many studies suggest that reading has become a “feminized” activity, and if boys perceive reading to be feminine, they will go to great lengths to avoid it (Smith 12-3). However, instead of supporting these findings, their research suggests that boys perceive reading as schoolish, making it unappealing (78). Newkirk agrees: “In fact, boys often feel that an open show of enthusiasm for schoolwork, particularly in the language arts, can undermine their identity as a ‘real boy’” (39). Although Smith and Wilhelm caution us against over-generalizing because of the danger of not seeing students as individuals, they did create a list of helpful generalizations that can aid teachers in helping boys (without harming girls). For example, boys take longer to learn to read and read less than girls, girls tend to comprehend texts better than boys, and boys tend to be able to retrieve information better than girls. Also, boys provide “lower estimations of their reading abilities” than girls, value reading less than girls, and are more likely to read for a purpose than for leisure (Smith 10-11). Finally, as was discussed in the previous section, boys and girls are inclined to read

different types of text with boys reading more non-fiction, informational, humorous, visual, science fiction, and fantasy texts while girls read more fiction texts and texts with both male and female protagonists (Smith 10-11).

Smith and Wilhelm caution teachers against using gender generalizations to reinforce preconceived notions versus expanding on or redefining gender tendencies (12). They cite Worthy, Moorman, and Turner who found more similarities than differences in boys' and girls' reading interests, but Smith and Wilhelm state, "[O]ur experience with teachers and with some of the young men in our study suggests that the conventional wisdom is still intact" (Smith 141). There may also be more differences among boys and girls when we look at other factors present in reading situations.

A variety of researchers have looked at boys' and girls' reading habits in isolation. Researcher Margaret Finders focused on girls, investigating literacy differences between "popular" girls with less popular girls. The "popular" girls' use of teen magazines was found to be an exclusive social act that assigned girls special status, and the girls found their own lives and meanings in the text (59). The girls particularly enjoyed these magazines because they were non-school and non-parent sanctioned. Even though one of the girls really enjoyed reading books, she never revealed to her peers or teachers that she read anything but magazines, because enjoying books didn't complement the image she worked hard to maintain (Finders 76). Other girls, the less popular and financially struggling girls, valued independence in reading and did not see it as a social act at all. They didn't want advice on what to read and interacted with their families (specifically mothers and sisters) more than friends regarding their reading...and other aspects of junior high life in general (Finders 114-115). Finders concluded that not all adolescents sever ties with adults. Some value those ties

more than peer ties (Finders 122). An implication of this finding is that teachers should encourage and foster relationships with those students who might benefit from and value those relationships such as might develop in book clubs.

In studies worldwide across many decades, boys lag behind in literacy, especially in the reading of longer fiction. But many of Smith and Wilhelm's students resisted the data and proved to excel in literacy (xix). The researchers feel that the assessments don't capture their students' complexity (Smith xix). For example, contrary to prior conclusions, the boys in their study did not "reject reading or other forms of literacy; what our boys rejected about literacy is within the power of teachers and schools to transform" (Smith 84). One important way our schools can transform is to help boys feel more competent in school reading. Smith and Wilhelm note that the boys in their study engaged in literacy practices they felt a degree of competence with at home and were able to immediately apply their increased competence in social situations. The authors write,

[T]he chances to build on competence in supportive social situations in school were much more limited, and the boys often felt that school put them in a position of being incompetent or feeling incompetent. Some of the boys indicated that they would rather avoid work that made them feel incompetent and suffer the consequences, expressing the attitude that 'it's better to say the reading assignment is stupid than to admit or look like you are stupid.' (98)

Teachers can increase all students' feelings of competence by using texts that are relevant to their experiences and teaching reading strategies, which will help them read all texts more competently. Also, the boys in Smith and Wilhelm's study saw reading as "schoolish" and "insufficiently social behavior" (Smith 78). Teachers who allow students the opportunity to talk about their reading in an authentic way (versus formalized teacher-led discussions) will allow students to see that reading can be a social act. Finally, Smith and Wilhelm recommend

that we allow students more choice in what they read. The boys in their study felt as though reading fed preexisting interests versus sparking interests, which is why choice is so important to them (108). Choice is one of the dominant features of book clubs.

McCracken advocates using gender research to instruct how we approach literature, stating, “Because we understand the power of literature as a way of knowing, it is important to look at the effects of reading of literature in light of what is known about gender” (60). In other words, what influence does gender have on how people read literature? Gabriel’s study on reader identification doesn’t show that women identify with males better than males identify with females, but it does suggest that that they both respond to texts based on gender schema (137). McCracken argues that boys and girls read like boys because of the texts they are generally presented with and that they both should be taught to read like girls, too. She states, “What I am proposing here is that we invite students to read with their full gender experience intact, to resist the central point of view when it contradicts that experience, and to seek artistry both in the particulars and the universals” (60). Everyone (including white, middle-class men) can teach “new” literature written by women if they (1) “read themselves freshly,” freeing themselves from traditional gendered critical readings and (2) share their readings (McCracken 57).

Guzzetti cites a study conducted by Moore, who investigated a boy and a girl in an AP Literature class who displayed both male and female gender tendencies. Guzzetti says that Moore “analyzed literacy events using a guide constructed of categories including social and intellectual relationships, conversational moves, and conversational contents to assist in identifying language patterns in discussions” (18-19). The female student, Heather, held the conversational floor for quite some time and initiated topics without the teacher’s permission.

She also wanted validation and called a story cute. The male student, Alex, interrupted others and often had the last word but also encouraged others (Guzzetti 18-19). Certainly, gender is present in these actions, but it seems to be only one factor of many that influences how these students engage in and interact with one another about reading.

Adolescents do not all have the same experience. It would be unfair to group them all together (Finders 121). Students read texts in a multiplicity of ways (Guzzetti 75). How people read/interpret is impacted by many elements, including experiences, memories, etc. Gender is only one element that affects how readers perceive information (Gabriel 127). Researcher Nancy Comley agrees, saying, “Reading is not an innocent act. We come to a text laden with cultural, social, ideological, and literary baggage, all of which influence our responses to that text” (69). Many previous studies have not disclosed (or considered important) factors beyond gender, such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. Studies that have investigated African American adolescents showed that African American females dominate discussion regardless of how many males are present. They might silence their voices in the presence of white students, though (Guzzetti 37-39).

All of Smith and Wilhelm’s study participants saw value in school’s ability to prepare them for the future; it’s just that not all of them *liked* school in the present (62). Therefore, it takes more than just teaching the reading skills students need. Instead of excusing whatever teachers are doing as something students will need in the future, teachers have to accept responsibility for school in the present (Wilhelm 69). Believing that reading is important for future success is not enough to entice a student to do it; it must be interesting to the student (Smith 80). Therefore, educators must tend to the genres and topics that appeal to students. Newkirk advocates for giving popular literature a place in the classroom (in addition to

“higher” literature)...that boys especially will benefit from a view that you don’t have to read literature to become a better person...you can become a better person without literature, and you can read literature simply for pleasure (78-79). Furthermore, Smith and Wilhelm emphasize that we should ask what quality of reading experience we can give them (50). There are many benefits to reading if the reading experience is a quality experience. Reading leads to abstract thought, psychological health, introspection, and understanding of others’ experiences (Smith 3). These benefits only result from an appealing reading experience.

Many of the authors describe Csikzentimihalyi’s “flow” experience as something readers can, and should, attain if they are to get the most out of reading. People who attain flow are usually passionate about the activity (Smith 30). In order to experience flow, one must feel competent yet appropriately challenged, have choice over the experience, and have the ability to “get lost” in the experience. As was alluded to before, people, and boys in particular, do the things with which they feel competent; they are hesitant to try something, or spend much time trying to improve, something with which they feel little competence. This could have negative implications for students who perceive themselves as poor readers (Smith 31). On the other hand, without an appropriate amount of challenge, the activity isn’t satisfying (Smith 36). In addition to competence with a certain level of challenge, students like control over what they are reading (Smith 33). Brozo states that teachers should work hard to help boys find an “entry point” into literature by suggesting titles of books that appeal to boys’ imaginations (14). Much research supports that one of the best way to develop readers, boys and girls, is to find literature that is interesting. Teachers should try to match their students’ reading with their interests (Brozo 17). One of the easiest ways to do this is to allow students to choose what they read.

Regardless of the way people read or what they read, reading more is the best way to improve reading skills. According to teacher researcher Harvey Daniels, much research shows that independent reading is the single, biggest factor in making gains in reading. The more a person reads, the better he or she gets at reading (33-34). The key, then, is to get students to read. Wilhelm asserts, “In order to develop readers, we must encourage and foster the creative attitudes and activities of engaged readers” (11). Daniels describes the thinking activities that proficient readers engage in: “[T]hey make personal connections with the text, they ask questions, they look for important elements or themes, they create sensory images, they make inferences and judgments, and they create ongoing summaries or syntheses as they read” (38). He goes on to say that teachers need to demonstrate proficient reading strategies, and one of the best ways to do this is through book clubs where children talk regularly about books and how they came to understand them (38).

The authors of *Student Book Clubs: Improving Literature Instruction in Middle and High School* claim that a large part of their own education about how to read was how to talk about their reading. Their reading ability has grown with their ability to articulate their responses to their reading (Faust 35). Beach shares Alan Purves’s goals of a response-centered approach to literature instruction: Students can “articulate their own responses...trust the validity of their own responses...extend and expand on their responses...(and) recognize the differences and similarities between their own and others’ responses” (44). Other goals include for students to “experience literature as enjoyable...acquire literary and social knowledge through reading literature...infer the symbolic meanings of text... (and) define their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the books that they read” (Beach 44).

Faust, et. al., assert that Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetic reading "underlies our belief that student book clubs open up a space where all students not just the 'best and brightest' can begin to think about the role of reading in their lives" (177). The "best and brightest" are typically already readers, so one of the most powerful aspects of book clubs are that those students who are not necessarily proficient readers can engage with and learn from very proficient readers. It's a level playing field that makes reading fun. Faust, et. al., subscribe to Bakhtin's theory of carnival consciousness where laughter (comic vs. satirical) opens up new ways of thinking. Book clubs allow students to engage in conversation that is at once light-hearted and serious. They also allow students to step outside of what Bakhtin describes as dominant genres of language and speak in new ways that allows them to listen to and connect with others with whom they may not have previously been able to relate. Faust, et. al., state many students (and adults) comment on their surprise at the connections they were able to make with others in the club (Faust 180-1).

Gender and Literature Discussion

In addition to making connections with others, students may discover what they believe through conversations about books. Jim Burke, teacher and educational researcher asserts that talking about reading helps students to figure out what they think, as well as to bring energy to the classroom. He states, "We talk more than we will ever write or read. Conversation is one of the primary ways we make meaning: through sharing, asking, discussion, clarifying" (Burke 23). Beach agrees, stating that studying literature provides students practice with the skills they will need in all genres of reading, which "should empower students to become more generally literate and, in the long run, more articulate and productive members of the society" (17). They will feel as though they have something to

contribute and may gain the confidence to share it. Researcher Cheryl Hancock notes that students get excited when they believe their thoughts, ideas, and statements are valued (Faust 74).

In addition to hearing our students' opinions about what to read, we should hear their opinions about the text as they read. The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation shares, "The authors [of *Women's Ways of Knowing*] suggest that an acceptance of each individual's experiences and perspectives facilitates students' learning. They argue for classrooms that emphasize collaboration and provide space for exploring diversity of opinion" (American 125). Finders similarly advocates for a more honest (and possibly uncomfortable) discussion of literacy. For example, she encourages allowing students to disagree and encourages revealing the politics that keep them silent. They are allowed to "argue" and articulate multiple perspectives (126). Book clubs allow students to talk freely, not only about reading but also about any issue brought about as a result of reading.

Bruce Appleby, educational researcher, points out a potential problem in how we group students: "My major concerns are that we are incorporating into our classrooms, without serious question of the gender implications, practices which are doomed to failure before they start because we have not looked at the gender and language implications of such pedagogy" (19). He says that when advocating for small-group work in the classroom, educators have ignored gender research and should consider gender differences (and similarities) when placing students in small groups (20).

Guzzetti recommends that teachers keep track of call outs, teasing, interrupting, contradicting, using gaze aversion, ignoring responses, and dominating the conversational

floor with number and length of turns. She also recommends creating questionnaires that ask students for their observations and feelings about discussion to discover social relations that impact participation (41). Newkirk reminds us that reading is the most invisible literacy skill (48), which is further support for these types of questionnaires. Guzzetti also states that teachers should be aware of gender messages in text. They should also include nontraditional literature in the curriculum and teach students to read against the text. Teachers should incorporate literature-study groups but be aware of the limitations of reader-response and require critical and collaborative study of texts (Guzzetti 75-77). Book clubs reflect this instructional style.

Gender and Literary Analysis

Wilhelm labels various interactions with text dimensions. He describes three dimensions: evocative, connective, and reflective. The evocative dimension is where readers visualize the action and characters. Males and females may differ in how they demonstrate this dimension. Wilhelm said, “Flynn (1987) and Bleich (1987) found that males tend to take a more detached, action-oriented stance toward stories, and that females tend to have a more intense sense of participation in the inner lives of characters, finding themselves, as Bleich says, ‘in the teller and the tale’” (54). Males may be more prone to “watch” the scene, and females may be more prone to “become” a character. What is clear is that many struggling readers do not demonstrate this dimension (Wilhelm 65), which is an important dimension in making reading come to life.

The connective dimension involves two moves: elaborate on the story, exploring alternatives to what is written; connect personal experiences to the characters and to connect reading with choices the reader might make in life (Wilhelm 65). Wilhelm states, “The data

suggested that *without the bringing of personally lived experience to literature, the reverse operation, bringing literature back to life, did not occur*. This, I think, is a key finding” (70). Again, struggling readers may not participate in the connective dimension, which may mean that literature is not coming to life for them.

The reflective dimension is the most complex dimension. Readers operating on this dimension fill in for what the author has not given them in the text and then question why it was left out. Wilhelm describes it: “[T]he readers consciously recognized that the text was constructed by a human and fallible author. Moreover, they expressed recognition that the author, through the textual construction, and they themselves as readers had to work together to create meanings” (79). Operating on this dimension exhibits an understanding of the relationship between author and reader in constructing meaning, which in turn exhibits a high level of reading. No research has yet been done to reveal whether or not book clubs will help students naturally participate in these dimensions, which would signal a natural and sophisticated interaction with text.

Gender and Book Clubs

Daniels notes that literature circles, by varying names, have been around for a long time (30-31). Burke recommends the following twelve “ingredients” for a successful literature circle:

1. Children choose their own reading material.
2. Small, temporary groups are formed, based on book choice.
3. Different groups read different books.
4. Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule.
5. Kids use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion.
6. Discussion topics come from the students.
7. Group meetings aim to be open, natural discussions.
8. In newly formed groups, students play a rotating assortment of task roles.
9. The teacher serves as a facilitator.

10. Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
11. A spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room.
12. New groups form around new reading choices.

(21)

Daniels shares that collaborative learning requires “(1) clear expectations, (2) mutually developed norms, (3) shared leadership and responsibility, (4) open channels of communication, (5) diverse friendship patterns, and (6) conflict resolution mechanisms” (35-6). Perhaps because of these challenges, Michelle Commeyras and Linda DeGroff, educational researchers, state that book clubs are more likely to be used at lower grade levels versus middle or upper grade levels, and the participants in their study indicated that although they liked the idea of book clubs, they did not participate in them themselves and did not currently use them in their classrooms (448-452). However, given all of the benefits of book clubs, especially for adolescent readers, book clubs are increasing in number around the nation.

Burke recommends that teachers be model readers, telling students about their own reading, sharing how they select and read books (18). Wilhelm shares a story from a student: “Joanne asserted that the best thing a teacher could do was ‘to recommend a good story to me, and give a chance to talk about it...Most teachers must not read,’ she said, ‘or they’d know how to teach reading and not ruin it for us’” (34). Wilhelm asserts that part of encouraging students to read is the teacher knowing a variety of texts and exposing students to them, so they experience the scope of genres and authors in order to discover their own tastes (34). In book clubs, readers choose when and where to read, as well as what. Teachers can demonstrate a commitment to reading by encouraging independent reading and helping (not dictating) students select what to read. Faust, et. al. emphasized that students need help

finding their reading personality and selecting texts worth reading (28-9). Once they develop their own “reading personality,” they can select their own reading materials. Educational researcher Kenneth Donelson states, “Fortunately, we no longer expect all students to read and love a single book. In the best schools, teaching revolves around small groups reading books of their choice and talking about them. Whatever teachers and librarians can do to help kids communicate and cooperate across gender lines will be all for the good” (45). Brozo cites Juliet Turner’s findings: “[T]wo critical ways for creating meaningful incentives for students to read and learn [are] *choices* of texts and tasks and *control* over learning” (18). Choice and control increase motivation, which leads to better understanding and recall of texts (Brozo 18). Smith and Wilhelm state that we need to know about young adult literature, “popular culture texts,” and our students in order to help students see what their options are, so *they may choose*. Even when the boys in their study were given limited options (such as with literature circles), they appreciate that freedom. They recommend doing more of this, as well as initiating book clubs or free reading time in school (197).

In addition to providing choice, as has been established, educators need to allow students the opportunity to talk about their reading. One of the most compelling reasons for this is because of the importance of social to students; by making reading social, educators will entice students to read. Smith and Wilhelm state, “[T]he social was the most important way to make experiences immediate and enjoyable to them.” The boys in their study talked about how their family and friends impacted their literate activities, they valued relationships with their teachers, they enjoyed working in groups and they developed relationships with “textual characters, authors, or directors” (142). The boys discussed what they thought about things like movies, and friends helped them to share their opinions, which was important to

them (106). Smith and Wilhelm emphasize, “*In essence, when the literate activity provided the occasion for social connections, the boys had intrinsic motivation for their engagement*” (147). Everything was better with friends (Smith 42). Newkirk agrees and states, “Many nonreaders don’t read because they ‘have’ to read in isolation” (49-50).

Faust, et. al., believe that each reader has a story and that guided collaborative reading “has the potential to enrich each reader’s story” (33). Although most life-long readers identify early memories of reading as reading with a loved adult, the social part of reading remains unrealized or dormant for most readers. Reading is a social act, which reveals the multiplicity of possible readings. Sharing reactions also changes how one views texts. Faust, et. al., see these as positive aspects of book clubs (34).

Beach points out that, “Ultimately, of course, the dynamics of this discussion or any discussion within a classroom are shaped by the social and cultural context of schooling. That context includes the norms, conventions, expectations, and goals influencing teachers and students in the classroom, the school, the community, and the larger society” (7). Students may seek to “please” the teacher (Beach 7). Therefore, we must recognize that even though the benefits of a book club are abundant, students’ interactions may not be as genuine in a school setting as somewhere else.

For this reason, Appleman advocates that book clubs differ from the regular classroom in setting, selection, and approach. She suggests that the setting be outside of the regular school day and if possible outside of a classroom. Furthermore, participants choose to be present and books are not taught and are instead read for “pure pleasure” (15). Appleman shares that for her book clubs, she and the teachers choose a variety of books that are current, enjoyable, easy to discuss, and appeal to both genders, with students helping to select books

(19-21). One of the schools she worked with implemented a regular book club and a boys-only book club called, "Guys Quarterly." The reason for this, as stated by the school's librarian, was that there were not enough male role models for reading and this was one way to address that (55). The program has been successful in attracting boys that did not join the all-school book club (66). In another area where Appleman worked, two schools, one urban and one suburban, decided to join together for a book club. The reason they chose to do this was to break down some of the barriers that existed between the two drastically different environments: the suburban school with its mostly white, affluent, high-achieving students and the urban school with its diverse, sometimes struggling students (74). Students involved in this club had very positive experiences, citing both the level of discussion about the book and meeting and hearing from people with different backgrounds as highlights of the meeting (77-78).

In conclusion, males and females are different, but why they are different is still debated. Gender studies have produced conflicting findings, but the majority of the studies indicate that in discussions males tend to be more competitive and therefore tend to dominate over more cooperative and timid females. Most of this research was done with adults; there is very little research available on gender and discussion as it relates to adolescents. Inside of the classroom, males typically prefer to discuss topics like sports and plot, while females typically prefer to discuss relationships and characters. Both genders seem to prefer to read books with a protagonist of their own gender. Book club studies show that the elements of student choice in reading materials and shared reading experiences make book clubs a positive experience for students. Appleman's research, the only research of its kind, indicates that a boys-only book club may offer a different experience for a different set of participants.

The purpose of this study is to build upon the basis of research provided by prior studies, and to fill the holes in the research field, particularly on gender and discussion with adolescents and gender and book clubs.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The main research question of this study is, **How does gender influence the design and implementation of book clubs?** In order to answer this and the secondary questions of who dominates the discussion, who supports the discussion, how males and females select reading materials, how males and females enjoy reading and literature discussion, and at what level of analysis males and females discuss literature, I elected to design a study in the school where I teach. I first describe the school and teacher facilitators. Then, I describe the student participants, giving detailed information about each of the case study students.

Context

Hudson Middle School (pseudonym) is a building with 634 eighth and ninth grade students where 92% of students are Caucasian, 3% are African American, 3% are Hispanic, and 2% are Asian. Eight percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Forty-nine percent of students are male, and 51% of students are female. The district is the fastest growing district in the state and is therefore in a constant state of flux. The community is very supportive of the school district and has never failed a bond issue.

The school offers many athletic and fine arts extracurricular opportunities for students to become involved in. However, there are currently no core academic clubs for students. There are not many opportunities for students to become involved if they do not wish to be involved in an activity where a performance or competition is the culminating event. Because many students are already committed to before and after school activities, the book club was offered during the school day.

Two language arts teachers who had third period planning agreed to facilitate the book club sessions. Susan (pseudonym), the female teacher facilitator, has been teaching for twelve years. This was her ninth year teaching eighth grade language arts at Hudson Middle School. She has a Master of Arts degree in education. Mike (pseudonym), the male teacher facilitator, was in his second year of teaching and first year teaching eighth and ninth grade language arts at Hudson Middle School. His first year of teaching was at an alternative school for students who are unsuccessful in mainstream public schools. Like Susan, he has a Master of Arts degree in education. Neither of them had ever facilitated any type of book club before, but both saw the potential benefits and were supportive of this type of program. Both of them were instructed to stay in the background of the book club meetings as much as possible. They could sit with the students or not, but they should not ask questions or share insights unless the students really seemed to be struggling to find something new to talk about.

Subjects

There were fifteen student participants, but one did not obtain permission to participate in the study, so the data will reflect that there were eight boys and six girls. Although ninth graders were invited to participate, they chose not to participate probably due to an increased course load their freshman year; therefore, all of the students in the study were eighth graders. Because the book club was a new type of offering for students, at least four of the fourteen book club participants had not been involved with any other club or activity at Hudson Middle School. Because the book club was offered during a period when one of the advanced language arts classes met, ten of the fourteen of the participants were students enrolled in eighth grade advanced language arts. Although any student can enroll in

advanced language arts, it is recommended that students be in the 95th percentile on the Reading Comprehension section of Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, maintain an “A” average in regular language arts, demonstrate strong writing skills, and exhibit a strong work ethic. Thirteen of the participants were Caucasian, with one participant being of Middle Eastern descent. Most of the participants came to the book club as readers, although some might have joined just because their friends convinced them to. Two boys and one girl were absent for the same-gender book club meeting, but all participants were present for both of the mixed-gender book club meetings. Case study students, one talkative male, one quiet male, one talkative female and one quiet female, were selected based on teacher feedback and the students’ willingness to participate.

The talkative case study male, Chase (pseudonym), is a 4’10” blond male who lives with both of his parents in a suburban area. He participates in football, basketball, and track; he considers himself a good reader and enjoys reading. Although Hudson Middle School is a large school, most students and teachers know Chase. He can be seen in the halls socializing and having fun with many friends. The teacher who recommended him described him as active and talkative, which was also witnessed by the book club facilitators. The quiet case study male, Ron (pseudonym), is a 5’2” brown-haired boy who lives with his parents and siblings in a suburban area. His father is a well-known local editorialist. Ron participates in football, basketball, and track. He succeeds in school, is in advanced language arts, and feels that he is a good reader but doesn’t always enjoy reading, joining the book club after his good friend joined. He can be seen in less traveled areas of the hallway visiting with the same two or three guys. He was described by the nominating teacher as quiet and respectful with a sense of humor.

The talkative case study female, Molly (pseudonym), is 5'5" with sandy blond hair. She lives with her mom, step-dad, and brothers in a suburban area. She is involved in volleyball and basketball. She excels in school, is in advanced language arts, and considers herself a good reader who enjoys reading. She aspires to be a lawyer or meteorologist. Molly is seen with groups of boys just as often as she is seen with groups of girls. She was described by the nominating teacher as opinionated and independent. The quiet case study female, Reagan (pseudonym), is 5'2" with mousy brown hair that is always pulled up into a ponytail. She lives with her parents and siblings in a suburban area. Reagan does not participate in any school-related activities but used to ice skate. She is in advanced language arts and takes school very seriously, and her parents openly discuss wanting her to take the best higher-level courses available, which might mean transferring school districts. She is rarely seen standing in the hallway; she goes to her locker and then to her next class where she might visit with the students who sit closest to her. The nominating teacher described her as a quiet, serious, respectful student.

Schedule

Since there were four book club meetings, one mixed-gender meeting at the beginning, one same-gender meeting for each gender in the middle, and another mixed-gender meeting at the end, the subjects each read three books. Due to time constraints, the teacher facilitators selected the first mixed-gender book and the same-gender books. Although the two teacher facilitators had to agree on the mixed-gender book and they each gave suggestions for the same-gender books, ultimately the decision of which same-gender book to use was up to the individual facilitator. The student participants selected the second mixed-gender book. One mixed-gender meeting took place to select this last book. Student

participants nominated book titles, discussed the nominations, and then voted on the book(s) they would prefer to read. For the book club discussions, participants checked in with their regular third-period classroom teacher and then reported to one of the teacher facilitator's classrooms, where the forty-minute book club meetings took place. The students were given snacks and water at the beginning of each book club session, and then they were invited to sit on the floor wherever they preferred as long as it was in range of one of the two cameras that each captured half of the participants.

Although it would have been ideal to give each student his or her own copy of each book, funding for the project did not materialize. Therefore, I worked closely with the public library to obtain through inter-library loan the necessary copies of each book. The library chose not to charge us for this service as it was a school-related activity. We were also allowed an extended check out period.

The schedule of the book club meetings is below. A more detailed schedule can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1. Book Club Schedule Overview

Date	Session Type	Book Title
March 28, 2008	First Mixed-Gender Meeting	<i>Peak</i>
April 11, 2008	Boys Same-Gender Meeting	<i>Son of the Mob</i>
April 14, 2008	Girls Same-Gender Meeting	<i>Life As We Knew It</i>
April 28, 2008	Second Mixed-Gender Meeting	<i>Godless</i>

Data Collection

Because of the nature of this study and in order to acquire the most reliable data possible, I used triangulation and collected a variety of data points from a variety of data sources. I collected quantitative data in the following forms:

- pre-survey
- post-survey
- coding: number of turns, length of turns, overlaps and interruptions, topic initiation, language, fillers, hedges and qualifiers, questions, amount of eye contact

I collected qualitative data in the form of reflective teacher journals from the teacher facilitators, as well as audio taped interview sessions with the case study student participants.

Quantitative Data Collection

Students were given pre- and post-surveys. See Appendix B.

Coding Process

Prior to the first book club meeting, I used a videotaped twenty-minute classroom discussion to train two volunteers to code for language usage during the videotaped book club sessions. They coded for the number of times each person spoke and changed topic. They also coded for the following: questions, fillers, hedges and qualifiers, and interruptions and overlaps. To keep the coding manageable, I chose not to include in this study some of grammatical constructions that were addressed in the review of literature, including minimal response, tag questions, and compliments. In a separate session, the volunteer coders also coded for the number of times each participant held eye contact with the speaker. Since there were two cameras, the coders were only coding for half of the students at one time, making

coding the eye contact manageable. They achieved 80% consistency before coding the book club meetings.

When coding for the book club meetings, the coders were given larger versions of the coding table. (See Table 2.) They then viewed the video from one of the cameras. I instructed them as to which students on camera correlated to which names in the chart. They only coded for those students at that time. They made a tally mark under each column when they noticed that particular feature or construction, including each time a student took a turn, changed the topic, asked a question, used a filler, used a hedge or qualifiers, or interrupted. Often, the coders needed to put a tally mark under the number of times talked column and one of the other columns, like change of topic or question. The coders stopped the videotape frequently to keep up. The coders then watched the same video again, coding only for eye contact this time. They watched carefully to see that the participants had made eye contact with the speaker (who was sometimes off camera) and then tallied for each eye contact. Then, the coders moved on to viewing the video that showed the discussion from the other side of the room. They did this for each of the book club meetings. Separately, I viewed the videos and used a stopwatch to determine the length of each turn.

Table 2. Coding Chart

Student Participant	# of times talked (or turns taken)	# of topic changes	# of questions asked	# of fillers	# of hedges & qualifiers	# of interruptions and overlaps	# of times made eye contact with speaker	length of turn
Chase (talkative case study)								
Ron (quiet case study)								
Boy 3								
Boy 4								
Boy 5								
Boy 6								
Boy 7								
Boy 8								
Molly (talkative case study)								
Reagan (quiet case study)								
Girl 3								
Girl 4								
Girl 5								
Girl 6								

In addition to the coding data, for each use of a grammatical construction that was coded, I analyzed what I believed to be the speaker's motivation: to dominate or control the conversation or to support or sustain the conversation. There were instances where a student was simply not engaged in the conversation, and I therefore did not analyze the motivation. I also analyzed the focus on the conversation: plot or character, in addition to noting any emphasis on traditionally male or female topics. I also noted any explicit language used by students. Finally, I analyzed what dimension, as defined by Wilhelm, the students were operating on. For this data, I used the transcripts I typed for each of the book club sessions.

Qualitative Data Collection

Case Studies

The case study student participants were selected on the basis of how talkative their language arts teachers perceived them to be during class literature discussions. The four case study participants were individually interviewed following each book club meeting. For the interview questions for each session, see Appendix C. Each interview session was audio taped.

Teacher Journals

The teacher facilitators recorded their observations, thoughts, celebrations, concerns, etc. in teacher journals throughout the months that the book club meetings took place. These provided additional qualitative feedback on how gender may influence book clubs and how they should be constructed and facilitated. For copies of the questions provided to the teachers to assist in writing their journal entries, see Appendix D.

I used this combination of quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a clear and balanced view of the answers to the research questions. The quantitative data provides the more scientific view of what happened, and the qualitative data provides a lens through which to interpret what happened. Both types of data are helpful in making decisions about educational practice.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The data gathered begin to answer the research question: **How does gender influence the design and implementation of book clubs?** The five secondary questions are designed to address this question, specifically how it relates to the middle school level. For each of these secondary questions, I first present the findings from each of the book club sessions chronologically to give a complete picture of what happened. Then, I analyze how the data addresses each of the research questions. Question 1 is the main focus of the data gathered and includes the most significant findings in addressing the question of how gender influences the implementation of book clubs in a middle level setting. Questions 2-5 are secondary in addressing this concern. For this reason, Question 1 encompasses the majority of this chapter.

Although student participants in this study were certainly well aware of the camera, as is evidenced by discussions about candy wrapper noises and unattractive faces being picked up by the camera, none of the participants actually looked at the camera or seemed to edit themselves because of the camera. I believe the data honors what a book club discussion would look and sound like even without cameras present.

Question 1: How does gender influence discussions in same-gender book clubs versus mixed-gender book clubs? How do same-gender and mixed-gender student book clubs confirm or refute previous gender research findings?

This initial question encompasses who dominates the discussion, who takes more responsibility for sustaining the discussion, how members participate in discussion, and the topics members choose to discuss. Each of these categories includes several sub-questions

that help to answer the overarching question. For who dominates the discussion, the sub-questions include who takes more turns, who takes longer turns, who overlaps and interrupts more, who changes the topic more, who uses more explicit language, who uses more fillers, and who uses more hedges and qualifiers. For who takes more responsibility for sustaining the discussion, the sub-questions include who asks more questions and who makes more eye contact with the speaker. For how members participate in the discussion, the sub-questions compare the same behaviors from the mixed-gender setting to the same-gender setting. For the topics members choose to discuss, the sub-questions include who discusses plot versus character, who makes more jokes, and who shares more personal information.

There are two figures for most of the questions: a total and an average or a percentage. Since there were eight boys and six girls, it is important to compare not just the total contributions but also how those totals break down into averages. The averages give a more accurate comparison, which is necessary in answering the overarching question. For each of the questions, I share the males' data and then compare the females' data to it. I begin each of the sections with a brief overview of the book read for that meeting, as well as brief excerpts from that meeting's discussion.

Mixed-Gender Book Club Meeting: March 28, *Peak*

The first book club meeting was mixed-gender. The teachers selected the first book, *Peak* by Roland Smith. Published in 2008, this book chronicles the climbing adventures of Peak, a young man who after getting caught scaling skyscrapers in his hometown of New York City, is court-ordered to live with his absentee father, a famous climber himself, in Thailand. Peak soon learns that his father plans to make him the youngest person ever to climb Mount Everest. Peak discovers that his father's motives are not entirely selfless, and

Peak befriends a young man whose presence at the camp is mysterious. This story is full of adventure and angst as Peak pushes himself to his physical and emotional limits. The section of dialogue below comes from the book club meeting about *Peak*. The participants are discussing Peak's father.

Peak Meeting Excerpt

Girl 4: I didn't like the dad...the dad or whatever.

Chase (overlap): He's a jerk.

Girl 5 (overlap): He was selfish.

Girl 4: Joshua Wood. I didn't like him. I was—

Boy 7 (overlap): He got better in the end, though.

Girl 4: Not really.

(Laughter.)

Molly: I don't think he did.

Chase: He got worse in the end.

Boy 7: He said he would write to him, which is one step, so

Girl 5: Yeah...

Chase (interrupt): Yeah, but he like refused all of the letters.

Girl 4 (overlap): Yeah.

Chase: He's a jerk.

Laughter.

Susan: What about step-dad?

Chase: He was nice. I liked his two little sisters.

Girl 4: Yeah. I liked the step-dad better than the regular dad just 'cause he's like there more for him than like the Joshua. Because the Joshua told him to call him Josh so it's kind of like he knows that he wasn't like his dad and kind of like accepts that, which doesn't make it any better because he's not really trying, so...

This excerpt is in ways typical and in other ways atypical of the whole discussion. Like the rest of the meeting, although there were several students engaged in this discussion, there were more participants who did not attempt to contribute their opinion or provide any additional evidence of Joshua being a good or a bad dad, the girls had as many turns and sometimes longer turns than the boys, the discussion was not developed for a lengthy period of time, and both boys and girls were willing to disagree with one another. On the other hand, this excerpt shows males interrupting a lot more, which is not representative of the whole meeting where females interrupted at least as much if not more than males. This excerpt also shows a female introducing the topic, which did not happen very often during the meeting, and it shows the students talking about character, which happened in the meeting but not as often as plot.

Peak Meeting Data

Amount of Talk: Number of Turns

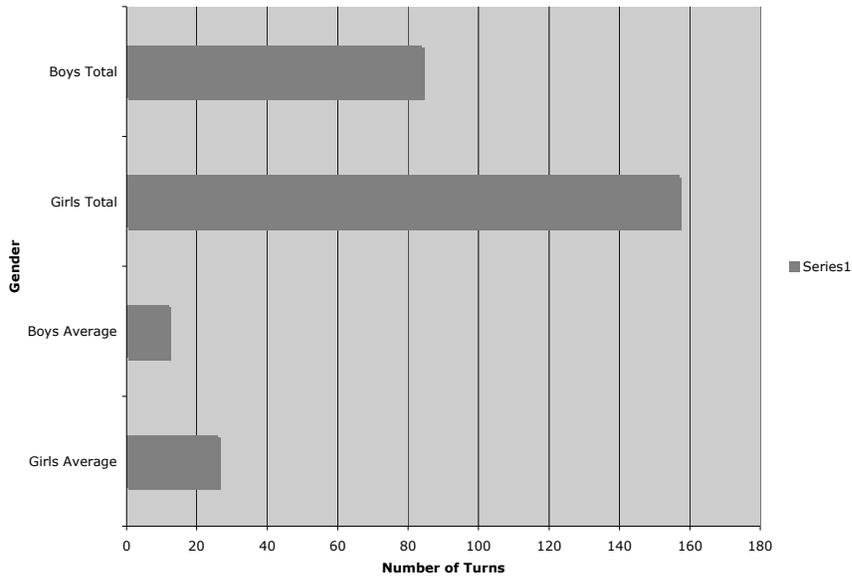


Figure 1. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Turns by Gender

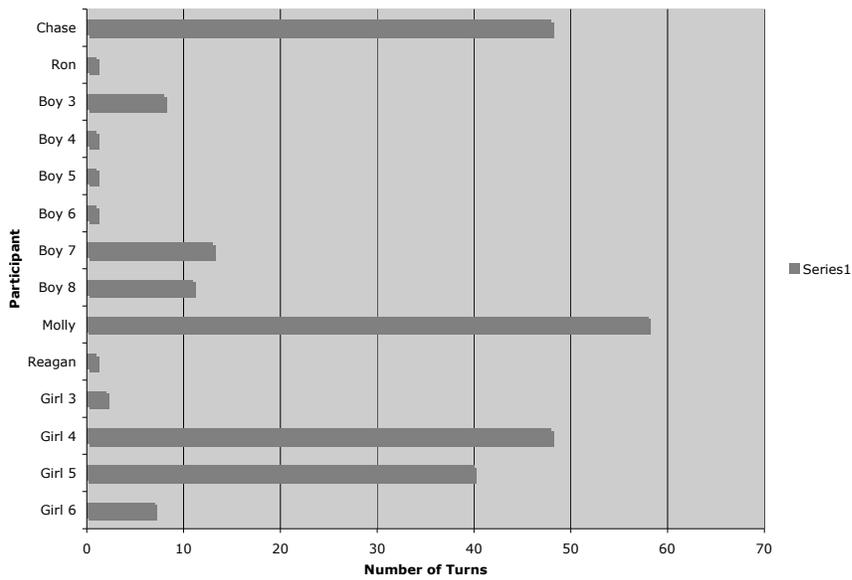


Figure 2. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Turns by Participant

One measure of how much a participant spoke was the number of turns each participant took. For the purpose of this study, a turn was defined as anytime a participant spoke, even if it was a one-word utterance. Asides that were not part of the main discussion or could not be picked up by the video or audio recorders did not count as turns. During the *Peak* book club meeting, the eight boys took a combined eighty-four turns; this averaged out to be twelve turns per boy. However, Ron, the quiet case study male, and two other boys spoke only once each and one of the boys, Chase, the talkative case study male, spoke forty-eight times.

During the same meeting, the six girls took a combined 157 turns, which averaged as twenty-six turns per girl. This is a much higher average than the boys' average for the first meeting. However, Reagan, the quiet case study female, and another girl took only one or two turns, and Molly, the talkative case study female, and two other girls took more than thirty turns each.

Amount of Talk: Length of Turns

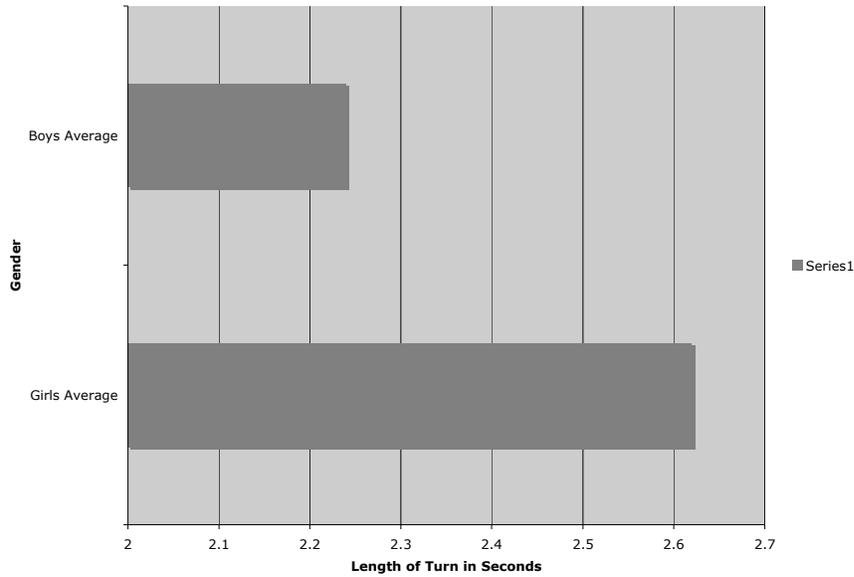


Figure 3. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Average Length of Turn by Gender

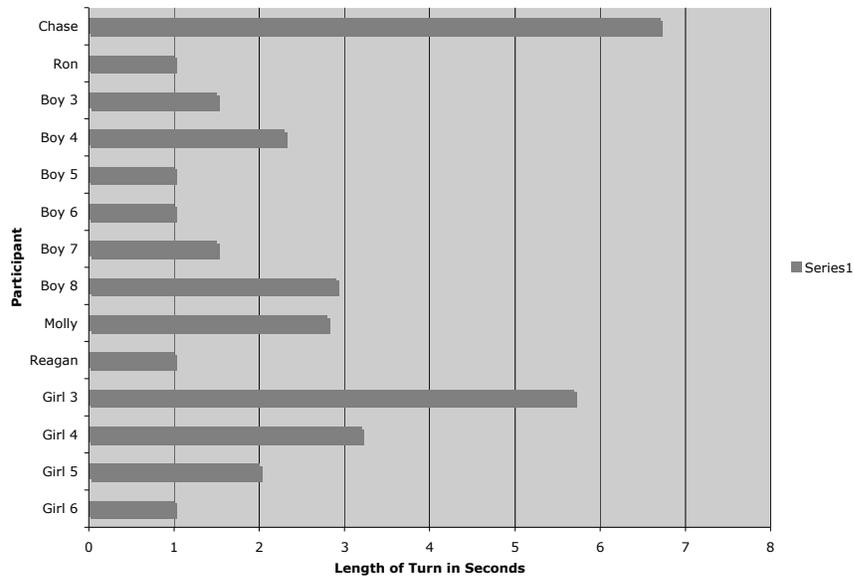


Figure 4. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Average Length of Turn by Participant

Another measure of how much a participant spoke was how long each turn lasted. For the purpose of calculating average lengths of turns, no turn could be less than one second,

and all times over one second were rounded to a tenth of a second. During the *Peak* book club meeting, the boys spoke for 31% of the total time for the discussion. The average turn for the boys was 2.2 seconds. Similar to the number of turns, a few of the boys' average length of turn was a second, while Chase's average turn was 6.7 seconds.

The girls spoke for 69% of the total time for the discussion. The average turn for the girls was 2.6 seconds, slightly longer than the boys' average for the same meeting. Like the boys, a couple of the girls' average turn was one second, whereas Molly spoke for an average of 5.7 seconds per turn.

Overlaps and Interruptions

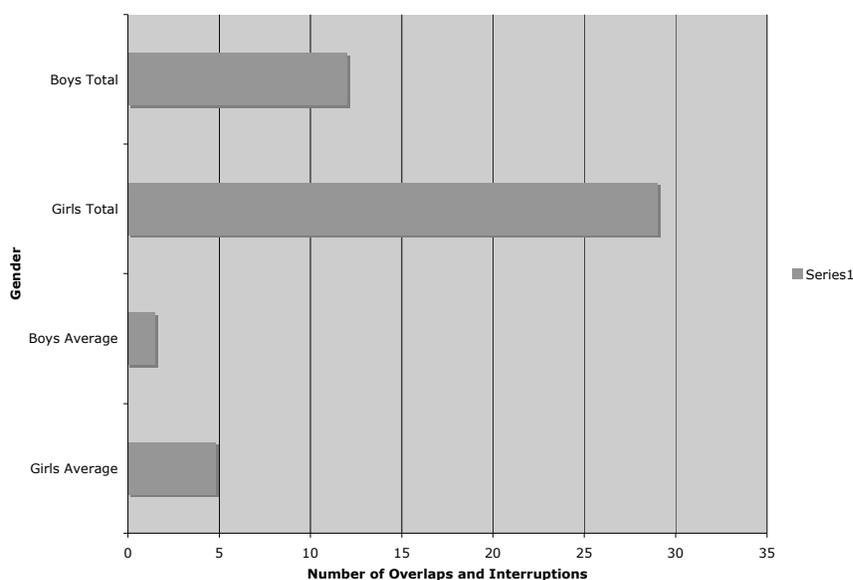


Figure 5. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Overlaps and Interruptions by Gender

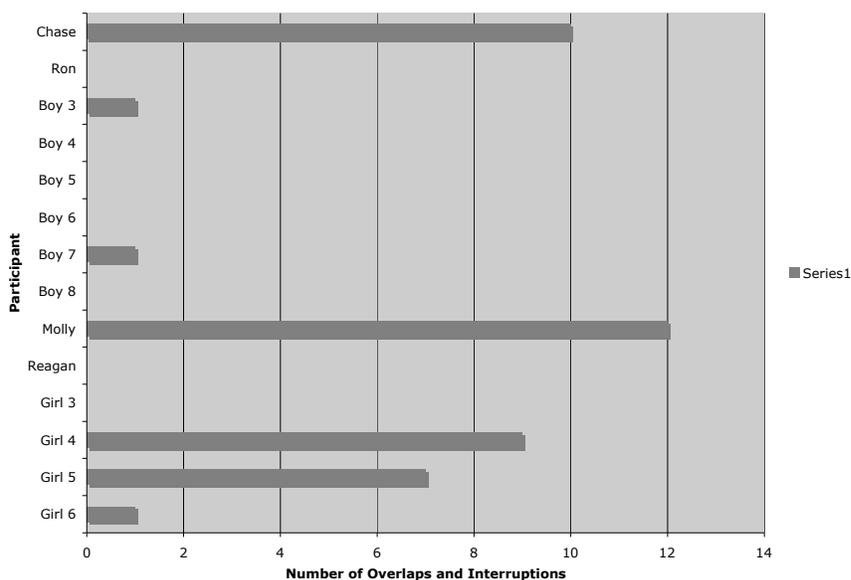


Figure 6. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Overlaps and Interruptions by Participant

Overlaps were defined as accidentally starting a statement before another person had completed his or her thought, and interruptions were defined as more than a word or two overlap of another speaker who was speaking first. During the *Peak* meeting, the males had a total of twelve overlaps and interruptions, which averaged out to one-and-a-half per boy. Most of the boys didn't overlap or interrupt at all; two of the boys interrupted once, and Chase overlapped or interrupted ten times.

The females had a total of twenty-nine, an average of almost five per girl, overlaps and interruptions, significantly higher than the boys' average for this meeting. Molly overlapped or interrupted twelve times, two more girls overlapped or interrupted seven or eight times, one girl overlapped once, and two of the girls did not overlap or interrupt at all.

Topic Initiation

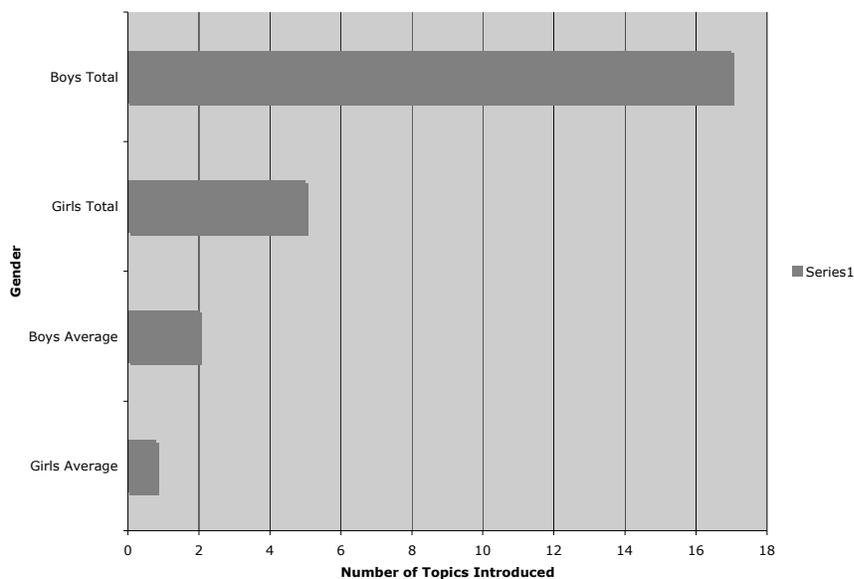


Figure 7. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Topic Initiation by Gender

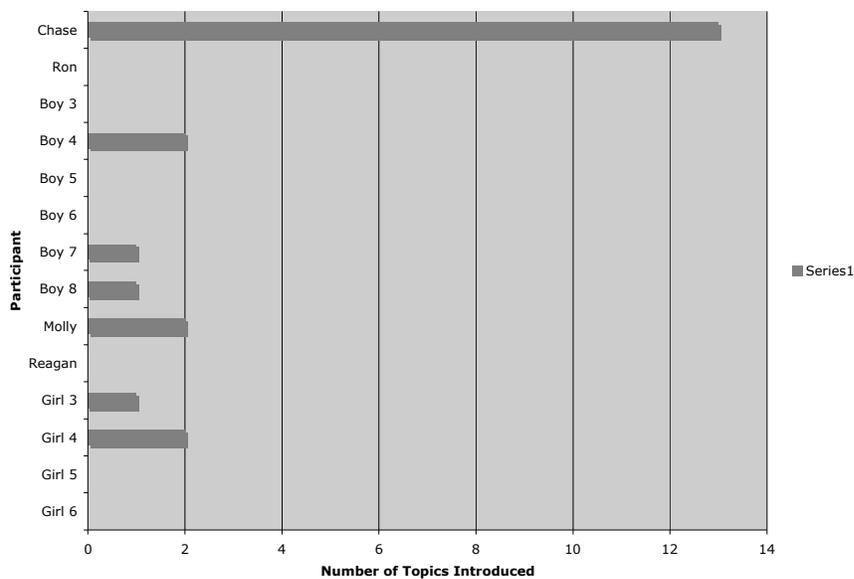


Figure 8. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Topic Initiation by Participant

A new topic was defined as a question or statement that did not extend the conversation immediately prior to the comment. During the *Peak* meeting, the boys

introduced a total of seventeen new topics. This was an average of about two per boy and accounted for 77% of the new topics introduced during the meeting. Chase was responsible for initiating thirteen, Boy 4 initiated two, and two boys each initiated one new topic.

The girls introduced a total of five new topics. This was an average of less than one per girl and accounted for 23% of the new topics introduced during the meeting, which is significantly less than the boys' average for this meeting. Two of the girls, including Molly, initiated two new topics each; one girl initiated one topic; the other four did not introduce any topics.

Word Choice

For the purpose of this study, explicit language was defined as curse words or words that are derogatory in nature. Neither males nor females used any explicit language.

Fillers

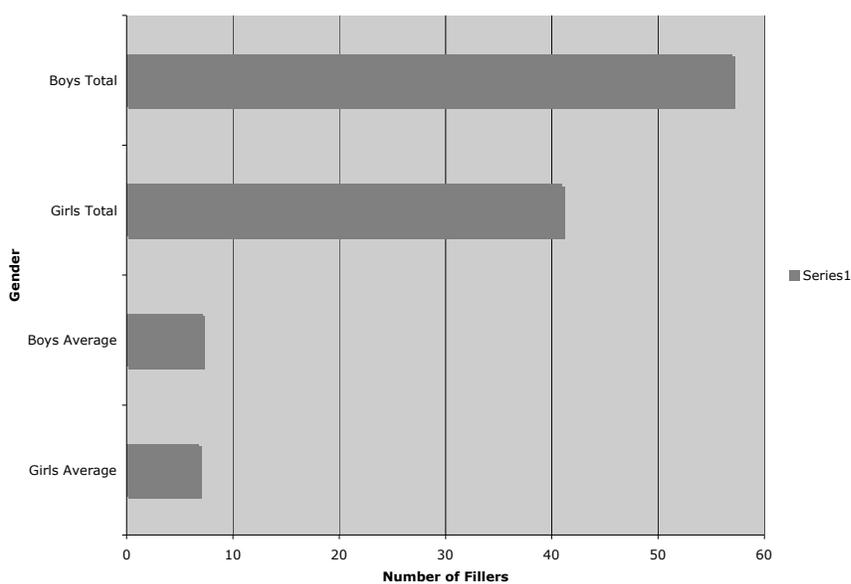


Figure 9. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Fillers by Gender

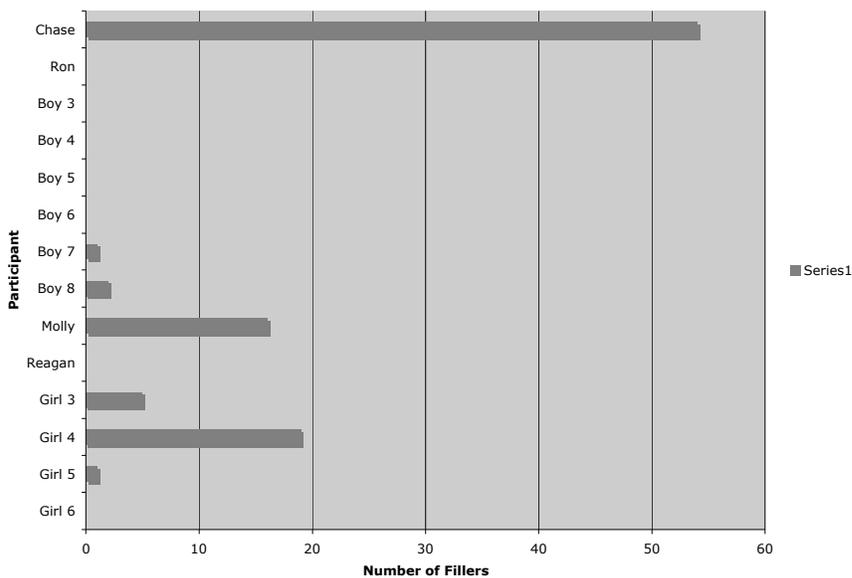


Figure 10. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Fillers by Participant

During the *Peak* meeting, the boys exhibited fifty-seven fillers, which averages out to less than eight per boy. Only three boys exhibited fillers in the first meeting with Chase accounting for all but three of them. The girls had a total of forty-one fillers, less than six per girl, in the first mixed-gender meeting. Similar to the boys, one girl accounted for most of the fillers in the first meeting.

Hedges and Qualifiers

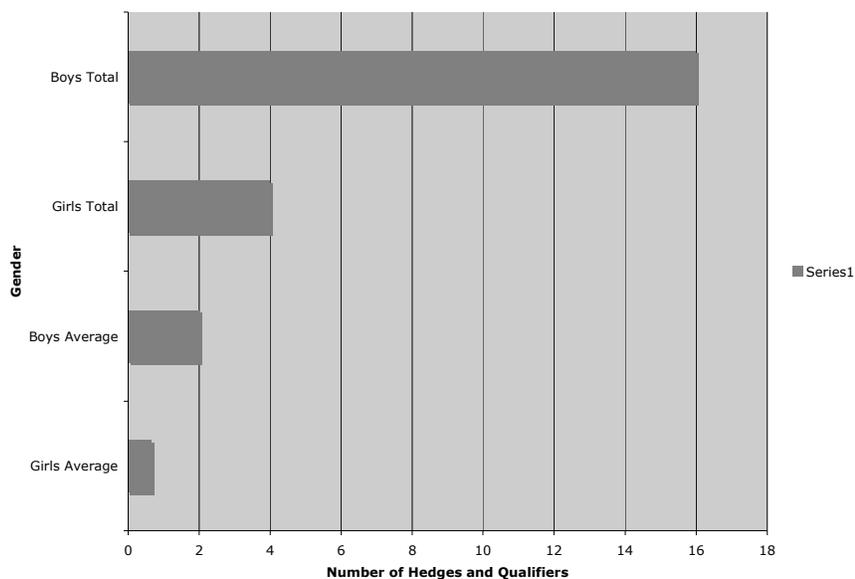


Figure 11. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Gender

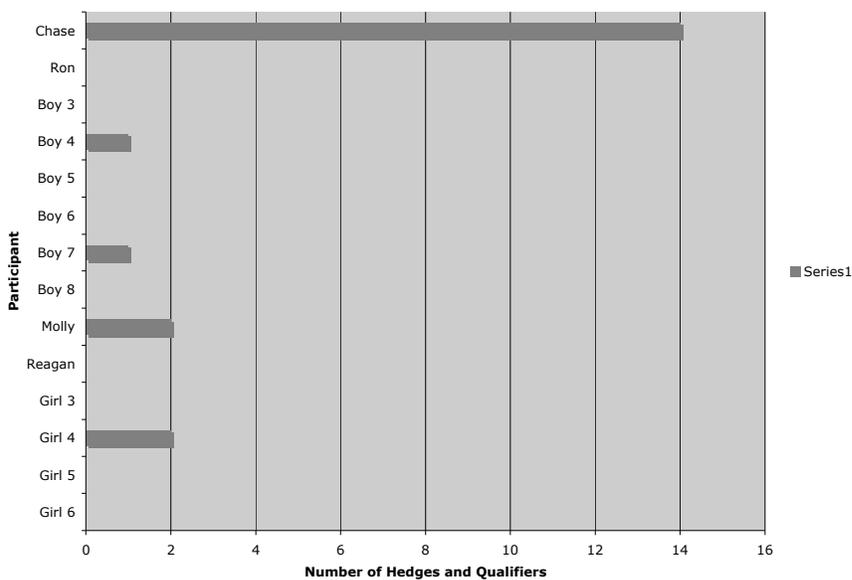


Figure 12. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Participant

For this study hedges and qualifiers were grouped together in one category and were defined as words or phrases, such as “I think,” or “maybe,” that ended and unnecessarily prolonged a sentence, seemingly demonstrating hesitancy or uncertainty in the utterance. During the *Peak* meeting, the boys had a combined sixteen hedges and qualifiers. This averaged out to two per boy. However, Chase was responsible for fourteen of the males’ qualifiers. The girls had a combined four hedges and qualifiers. This averaged out to less than one per girl. Molly and one other girl each had two qualifiers.

Questions

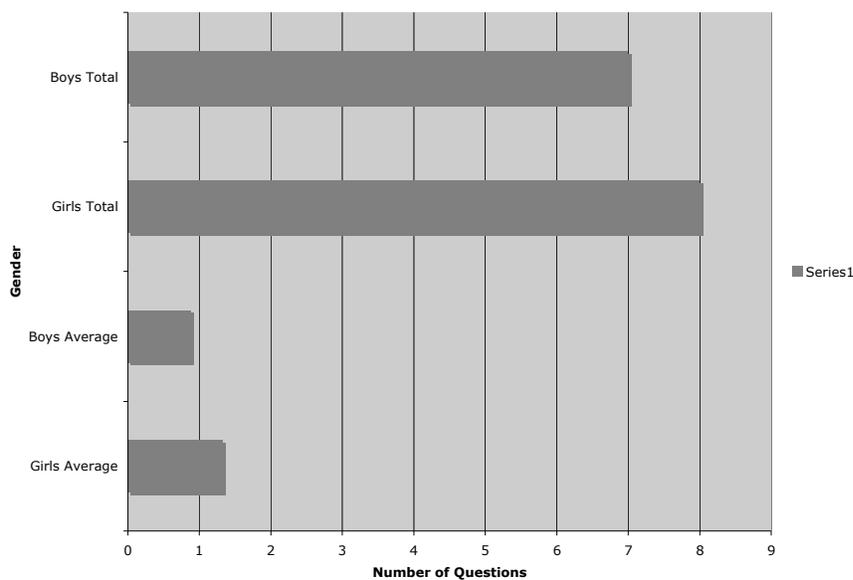


Figure 13. Peak (Mixed-Gender): Number of Questions by Gender

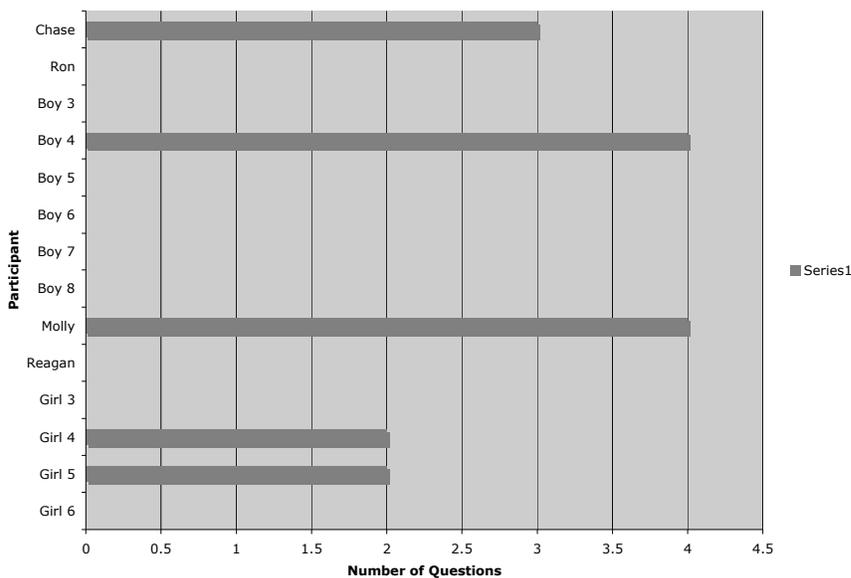


Figure 14. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Number of Questions by Participant

During the *Peak* meeting, the boys asked a total of seven questions, an average of about one question per boy. Chase and one other boy were responsible for asking all seven of the questions. The girls asked a total of eight questions, an average or more than one question per girl. Molly and two other girls asked all eight questions during the first mixed-gender meeting.

Eye Contact

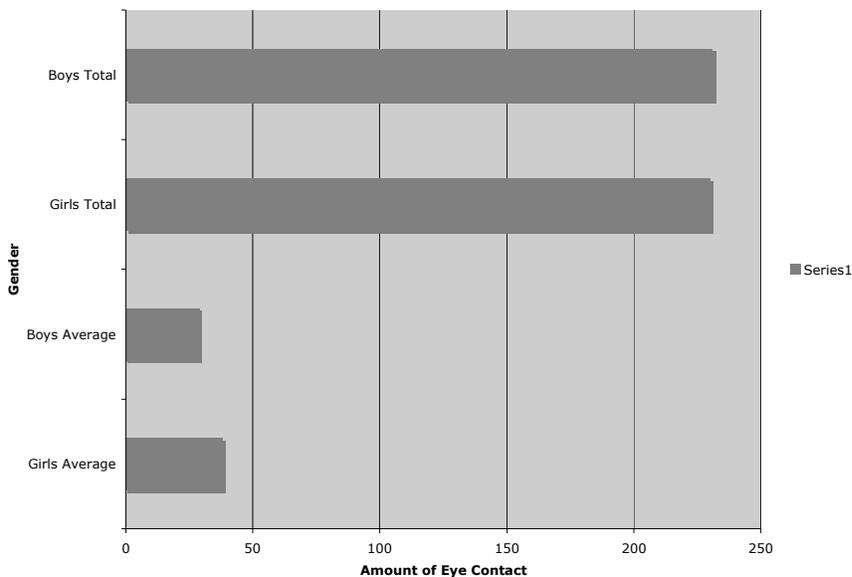


Figure 15. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Amount of Eye Contact by Gender

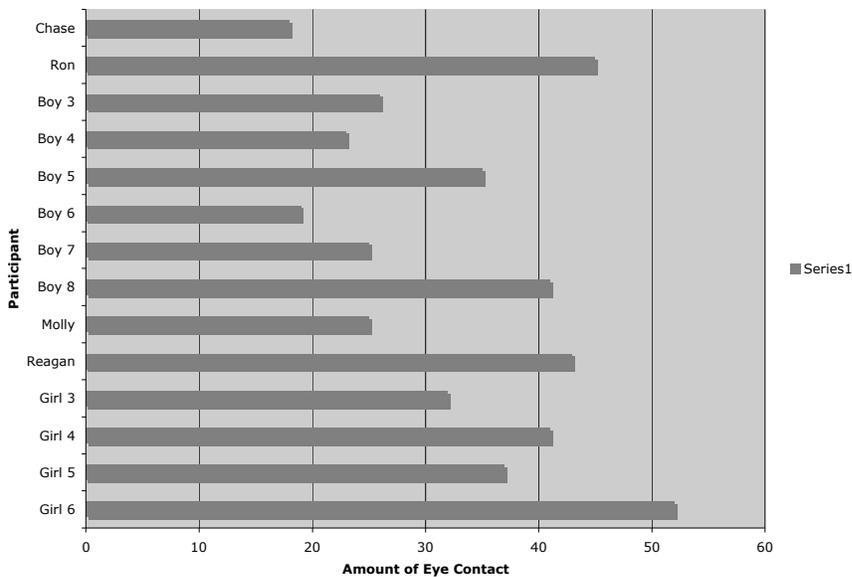


Figure 16. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Amount of Eye Contact by Participant

For the purpose of this study, the coders were instructed to tally each time a participant made eye contact for at least a second with the person speaking, even if it was one

of the teachers. This time frame was selected because the average length of turn was so short. The boys had a total of 231 eye contacts during the *Peak* meeting. This averaged out to about twenty-nine per boy, with Ron making the most eye contact at forty-five and Chase the least at eighteen. The girls had a total 230 eye contacts. This is an average of about thirty-eight per girl; Reagan had above-average eye contacts with forty-three, and Molly had the lowest number of eye contacts with twenty-five.

Discussion Topics

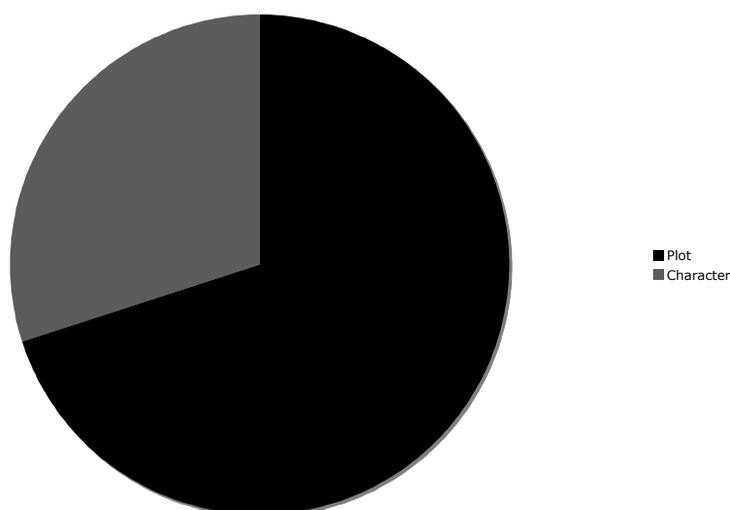


Figure 17. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Topic Total Percentages

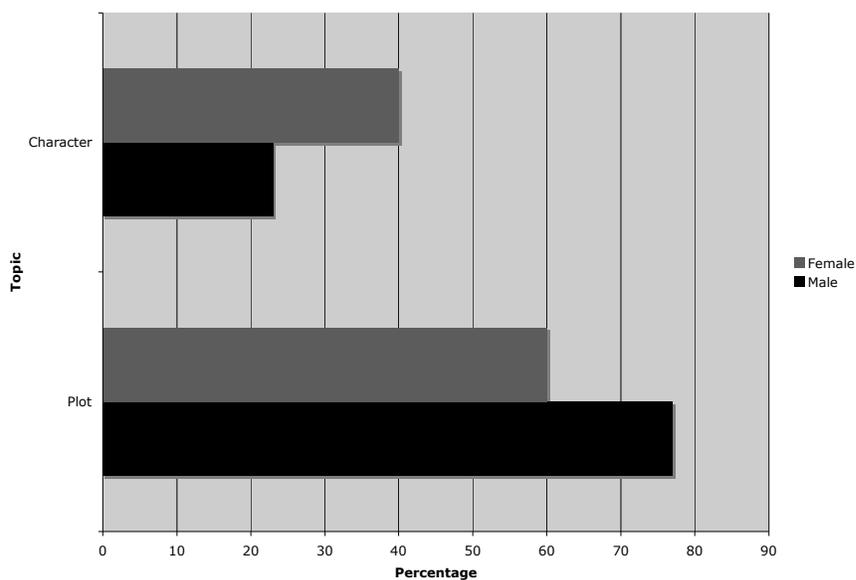


Figure 18. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Topic by Gender

The category of discussion topics is broken down into three parts: plot versus character, jokes, and traditionally male topics versus traditionally female topics. The percentages for plot and character are based on the total amount of time spent discussing each one. All comments were classified as one of these or were not counted. An example of something that was not counted would be an aside about the candy the students were invited to eat during the book club meetings. I counted the total number of jokes that each gender made. I also counted the number of topics that were discussed that were about “male” topics like sports and compared that number to the number of topics the males had initiated, as well as the total number of topics discussed.

During the *Peak* book club meeting, the boys discussed plot-related book elements for about 77% of the time and character-related book elements for 23% of the time. The boys did make two jokes in the first mixed-gender book club setting. They engaged in discussing

traditionally male topics twice during the first mixed-gender meeting. This accounted for 12% of the topics initiated by the boys and 9% of the total number of topics discussed.

The girls discussed plot-related book elements for 60% of the conversation and character-related book elements for 40% of the conversation. The girls did not offer any jokes during any of the book club meetings, and the girls brought up personal issues, a traditionally female topic, only once. This accounted for 20% of the topics initiated by the girls and 6% of the total number of topics.

Case Study Students: Reflections on the First Discussion

Chase (Talkative Male). When interviewed about how the *Peak* book club meeting went, Chase shared, “I thought it went pretty good. It was a little awkward at first. We didn’t really know how to get it started, but after it got going, it went really well.” When asked what things happened to make it better, he said, “I think when people disagreed, they kind of explained their idea on why they thought that way.” He liked the disagreements because it was easier to talk because it wasn’t quiet. He didn’t like that there were “kids who just kind of sat there and didn’t really contribute to the conversation at all.” When asked if there was anyone who dominated the discussion, Chase thought that he and two girls contributed more because “I think they’re more comfortable talking in front of a group they don’t know or something. Maybe they’re just more outgoing.” He mentioned Ron and a few others in particular as being students who didn’t contribute much at all. “I think they were more kind of like shy maybe.... Either maybe they didn’t finish the book or maybe—I don’t know—they just didn’t like it and they just kind of kept it to themselves or something.” When asked about how to get those kids more involved, he said, “I think some of the group members should maybe get them in the conversation so maybe ask them some questions about what

they thought of the book.” He felt he contributed well and wished that others had contributed more. Differences he wanted to see at the next book club meeting were everyone contributing more and even more conversation about controversial topics.

Ron (Quiet Male). About the *Peak* book club meeting, Ron shared that he thought the discussion went well. “Um, I think it went pretty good. There was a lot of discussion and some people talked too much or too little, but it was pretty good.” His favorite part was when they talked about the conclusion because a lot of people shared opinions about it. He noted that Chase probably dominated the conversation. “He was just the one that kind of started conversations, and he was the one kind of answering his own questions, too.” When asked if it bothered him that Chase talked so much, Ron said, “I thought it was fine. He started a lot of discussion.” He did admit that Chase talking so much may have prohibited others from talking, though. He himself “did not talk that much, because Chase had it under control.” About his future participation, Ron said, “I think it depends what the question is and what we’re talking about, who’s talking, and who’s running it.” He noted that after they took a short break, the boys all sat on one side of the room and the girls all sat on the other side. He felt that there was more discussion at this point because the teachers didn’t sit down in the group with them. He appreciated it when someone took the lead and asked questions or brought up new topics when it got quiet, and he wanted to see that again at future book club meetings.

Molly (Talkative Female). Molly shared her thoughts on the first mixed-gender book club meeting. She said, “I thought it was good. It seemed like a lot of people didn’t read the book. A lot of people didn’t say anything; they just kind of nodded.” She liked when everyone shared their opinions, saying, “I liked it when we like talked about our own

opinions of the book and stuff, if it was good or if it was bad.... I like to hear other people's opinions about it and how they thought about it compared with how I thought about it, how everyone thinks of it differently." She didn't like it when someone said one sentence and no one else added to it. It was awkward. She didn't feel as though anyone dominated the discussion, saying, "I think it was pretty even for the people who talked. There were the people who talked and the people who just kind of sat there.... I think some people didn't talk because they just didn't want to. Some people probably didn't talk because they didn't read the book. Some people maybe didn't talk because they felt intimidated. I don't know." When asked what might help those students to contribute more, Molly shared, "I think it might help more in the boy and girl groups actually because I think the boys are like, 'Oh, I don't read books,' but then they'll get together and they've all read the same book and they'll be like talking about it. I think the girls might be like that, too. I don't know, like, they don't want to embarrass themselves in front of the boys who might think they're like smart or something." About her own participation, she said, "I said my opinion and tried to like build on, so we could actually have a conversation about one thing, so every time someone said something, I wouldn't be just like, 'Yeah.'" In general she said she liked that the teachers didn't talk much and the kids led the discussion; she noted that they all probably talked more after the teachers left the circle.

Reagan (Quiet Female). Reagan shared that she thought the meeting about *Peak* went pretty well. She said, "I didn't talk very much. I think we all could have talked more, especially probably me. Other than that, I thought it went pretty well." She didn't feel like anyone dominated the discussion, but she and at least one other person didn't contribute anything. When asked why she and the others didn't contribute, she said, "Maybe they were

nervous because it was the first book club meeting.” She did think everyone had the opportunity to talk had they wanted to. She liked it best when people asked questions and everyone shared their opinions. On the other hand, she said, “I didn’t like it when someone asked a question and I didn’t really know how to answer it.” When probed about a specific example, she shared that other people had already shared her opinion so she didn’t know what else to say. She did have other opinions that she didn’t share and would like to contribute more in the future “because, um, I have my own opinion and I can share that with the group and maybe bring more discussion to it.” As far as what she wanted to see at future book clubs, she liked that a lot of people shared and didn’t interrupt one another.

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on the First Discussion

Mike. Mike was surprised at how much the students talked at the first book club meeting, saying, “The majority of students were more talkative than I thought they would be at the first meeting.” He also noted that it was individual students versus “boys” or “girls” who dominated the discussion, sharing, “There were girls that dominated the discussion, and there were girls who never said a word, and the same thing goes for the boys.”

Susan. Susan noted that one boy and two of the girls seemed to contribute more than the other students during the *Peak* book club meeting. She also recorded, “Occasionally the opposite gender would comment/disagree with something that had been said, but my perception was that commenting/following-up what was said seemed to happen along gender lines.”

Boys-Only Book Club: March 11, *Son of the Mob*

The same-gender meetings took place between the two mixed-gender meetings, and the teachers selected the books for the students. The boy-only meeting took place first, and

two of the boys were absent from school that day. Mike, the male teacher facilitator, selected *Son of the Mob* by Gordon Korman, for the boys to read. Vince Luca, the book's protagonist, is an average seventeen-year-old boy, trying to survive school, friends, sports, and girls. However, Vince also has a special problem: His dad is a mob boss. Vince desperately wants to stay out of the business, but his family makes it difficult for him. Struggling with the morality of what his dad does, he decides to help out Jimmy Rat, a family business associate who's behind in his payments, and Vince learns what it's really like inside the "family business." To complicate matters, Vince falls head-over-heels for the daughter of the FBI agent assigned to his father. This story is funny and fast-paced. In the dialogue excerpt below, the boys are discussing Vince's first encounter with Jimmy Rat while he's on a date with Angela, the hottest girl in school.

Son of the Mob Meeting Excerpt

Boy 8: Yeah, like he should have stopped, um, after Jimmy Rat gave him his money.

Boy 7: He shouldn't have even gotten involved with that, I think.

Ron: He should have just like right in the beginning, he should have just let Jimmy Rat go right at the beach.

Boy 7 (overlap): I know.

Boy 4: I thought—

Chase (interrupt): Or he should have just unrolled the blanket off of him and kept him in the trunk and then—

Boy 7: It's all bloody, though.

Ron (overlap): A bloody blanket?

Boy 4: Yeah.

Chase: Well...

Boy 8: Kinda what we're sayin'.

Chase: ...accidentally drop it in the water.

Boy 7: Then it'd be wet.

Chase: Yeah, so a wet—

Boy 8 (interrupt) Or, I think the moral of that chapter is always carry an extra blanket in your trunk.

Chase (same time as Boy 8): —blanket is better than a bloody blanket.

Boy 7: Mmm, hmm.

(Laughter.)

Ron: Well, maybe not in your trunk again.

Boy 8: Yeah, in your—

Ron: Back seat.

Boy 7 (same time as Ron): With you.

Boy 8: Right.

Ron: In your pocket.

(Laughter.)

This excerpt shows five of the six boys present for the meeting talking. It also demonstrates the light-hearted atmosphere that seemed to perpetuate the boys' book club meeting. They finished each other's sentences and occasionally overlapped and interrupted one another. They often extended the text, playing out many "What if?" scenarios.

Son of the Mob Meeting Data

Number of Turns

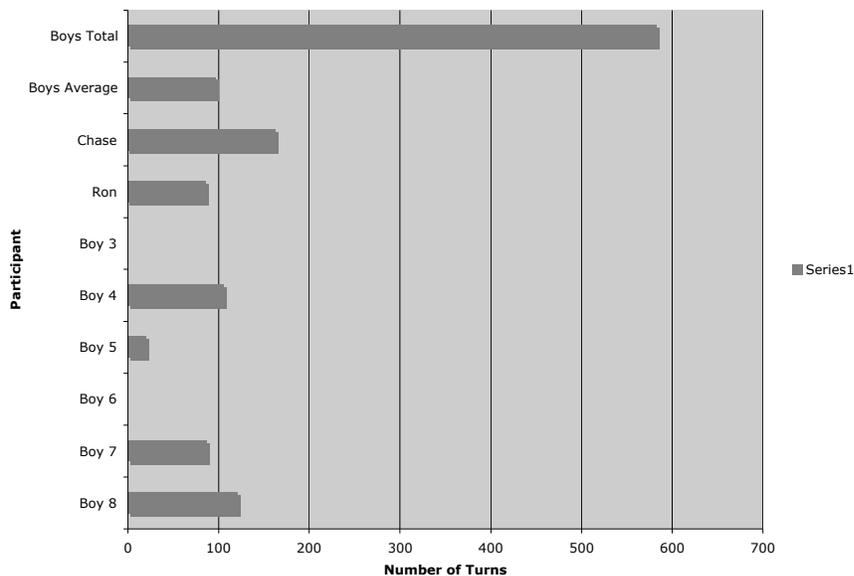


Figure 19. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Number of Turns by Participant

The boys took a combined total of 583 turns in the same-gender book club meeting. Two boys were absent for this meeting, so it averaged out to about ninety-seven turns per boy. Although Chase still took more turns than the other boys, all of the boys contributed something. Even though one boy only took a total of twenty turns, all of the others took more than eighty turns each with Ron taking eighty-six turns.

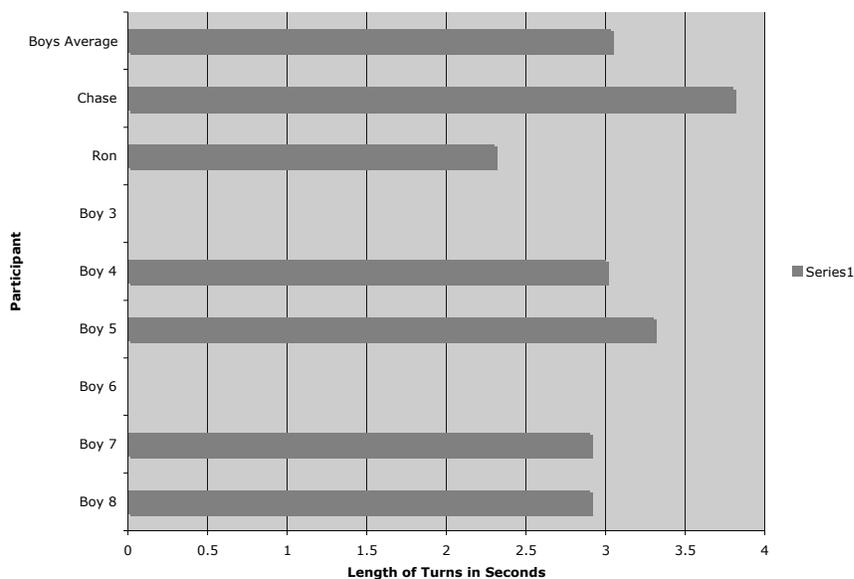
Length of Turns

Figure 20. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Average Length of Turn by Participant

The average length of turn for boys in the same-gender book club meeting was less than three seconds. Chase's average was slightly higher, and Ron's average was slightly lower, but the average turn was very consistent among the boys.

Overlaps and Interruptions

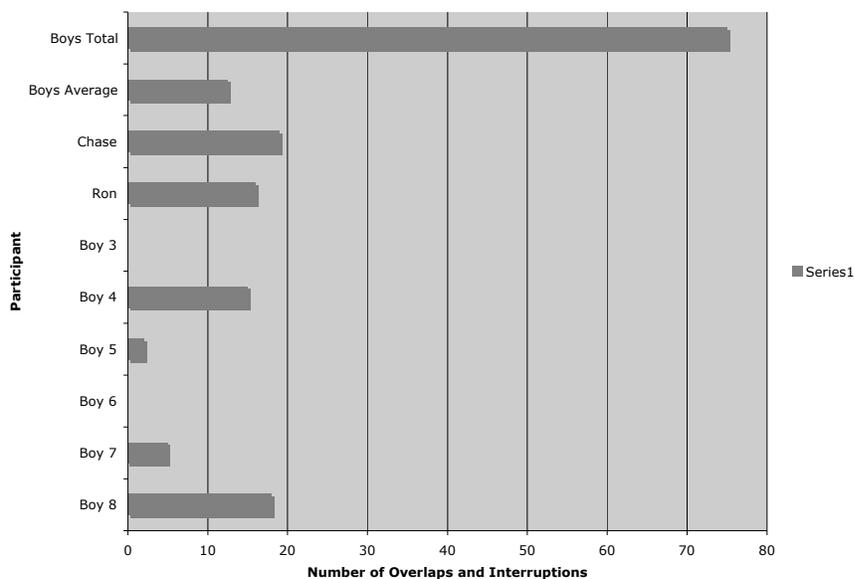


Figure 21. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Number of Overlaps and Interruptions by Participant

The boys had a total of seventy-five overlaps and interruptions. This was an average of twelve-and-a-half per boy. All of the boys had at least two overlaps or interruptions. Two of the boys overlapped or interrupted less than five times each, and four of the boys overlapped or interrupted at least fifteen times. Chase accounted for nineteen, and Ron accounted for sixteen.

Topic Initiation

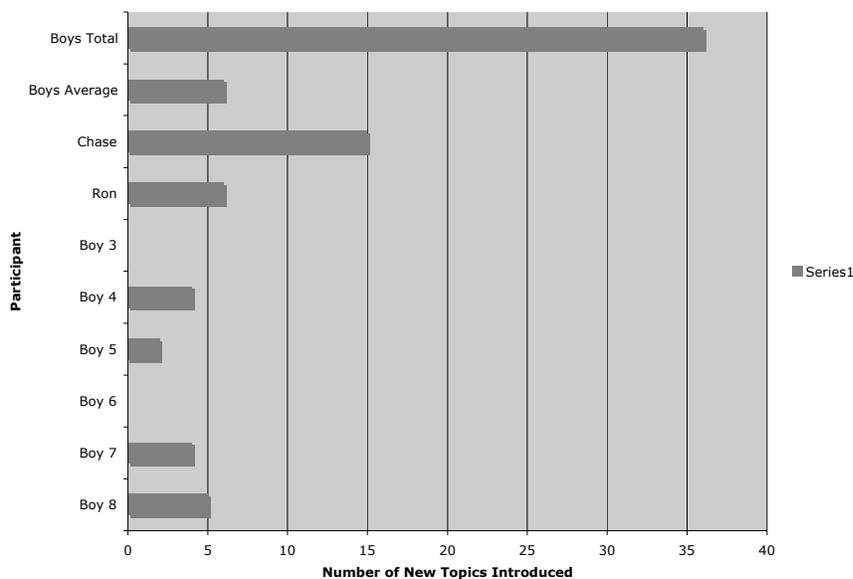


Figure 22. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Topic Initiation by Participant

The boys initiated a total of thirty-six new topics during the same-gender meeting. Chase initiated fifteen of the topics with each of the other boys initiating at least two new topics. Ron initiated six topics.

Word Choice

Although no explicit language was used, one of the boys did resort to calling a prostitute in the book a “hooker,” saying, “Well, that’s what she is.” Another boy followed this comment by saying, “You might have to bleep that out,” in reference to the cameras.

Fillers

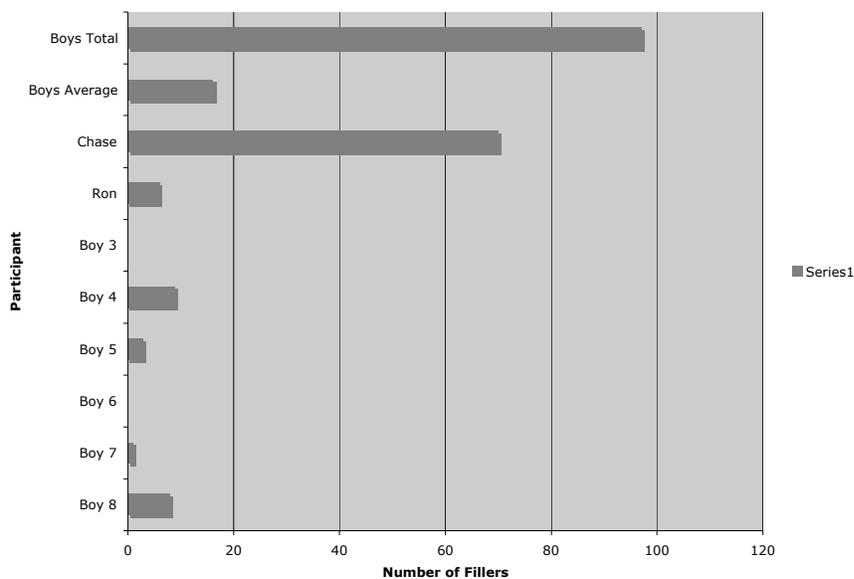


Figure 23. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Number of Fillers by Participant

In the *Son of the Mob* meeting, the boys had a total of ninety-seven fillers, which is more than sixteen per boy. Chase had seventy fillers, and the other boys had fewer than ten each, with one boy having only one.

Hedges and Qualifiers

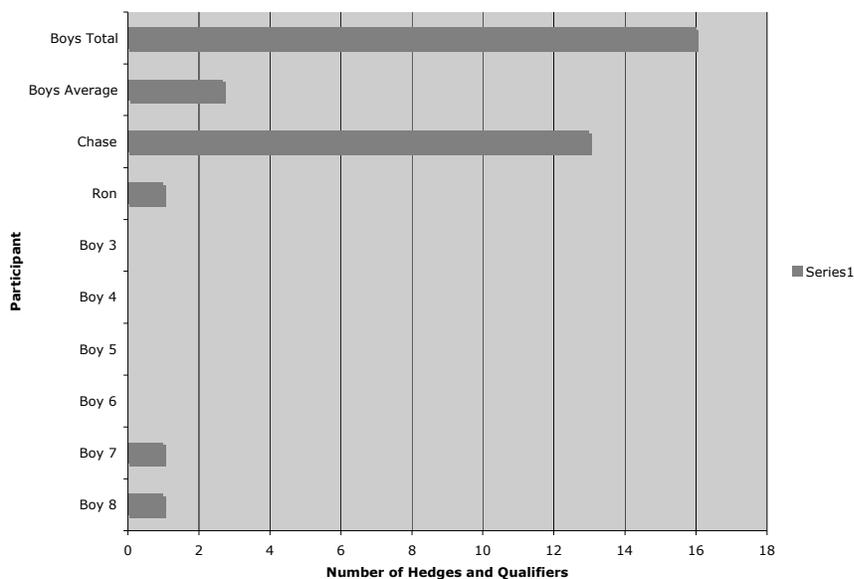


Figure 24. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Participant

The males had a total of sixteen qualifiers in the same-gender meeting, which averaged out to almost three per boy. Although the total number remained the same as the *Peak* meeting, the average increased since there were fewer males present at this meeting.

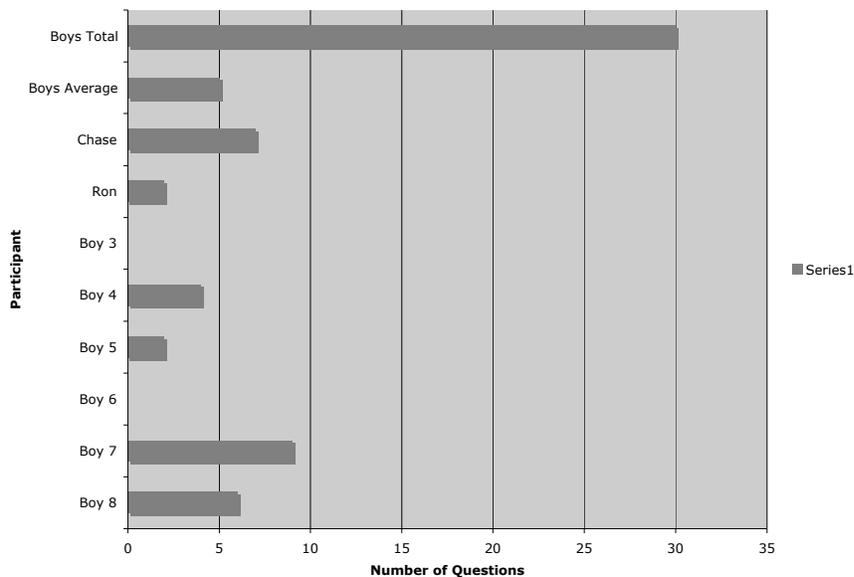
Questions

Figure 25. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Number of Questions by Participant

The boys asked a total of thirty questions, an average of five per boy, in the same-gender meeting. Every boy present at the same-gender book club meeting asked at least two questions.

Eye Contact

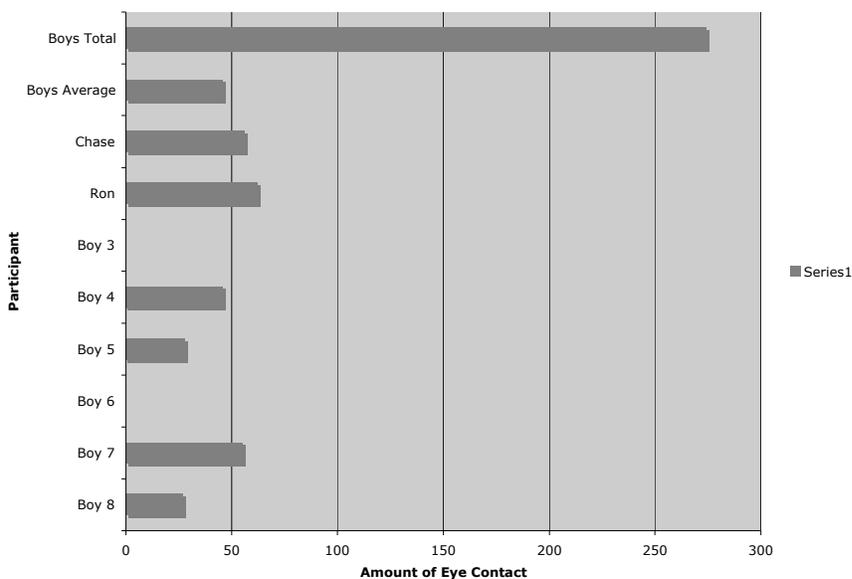


Figure 26. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Amount of Eye Contact by Participant

During the same-gender meeting, the boys had a total of 274 eye contacts, an average of about forty-six eye contacts per boy. Ron had the most eye contacts with sixty-two, and Chase was the second highest with fifty-six eye contacts.

Discussion Topics

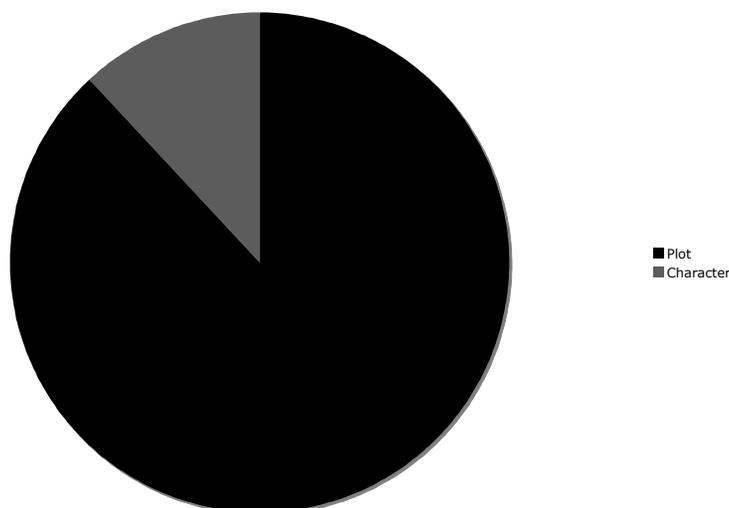


Figure 27. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Topic Total Percentages

The boys made eight jokes in the same-gender setting. They discussed traditional male topics ten times during the same-gender meeting. This accounted for 28% of the total number of topics discussed. Regarding *Son of the Mob*, the boys discussed plot about 88% of the time and character 12% of the time.

Case Study Students: Reflections on the Boys-Only Discussion

Chase (Talkative Male). Chase felt that the *Son of the Mob* meeting went “a lot better” than the *Peak* meeting because there were better topics and more people talked. “I don’t know if it was because the girls weren’t there. I don’t really think that’s it. This book, it was good because it had a lot of controversial topics, and there was a lot more to talk about in this book than the other one.” He admitted that girls probably would not have had as much to say about the book that the boys read because of the book’s focus on the mob and what guys think about in general but especially about girls. He didn’t think anyone dominated the

discussion. "I think everybody had a fair amount of the discussion.... I think that there were so many things to talk about in this book that you couldn't really take somebody else's idea. There was always something else to talk about." He felt as though only one person didn't contribute very much, which is supported by the data. When asked why he thought this student didn't say very much, Chase said, "I'm not sure, but I think maybe it's because he didn't finish the book. He didn't want to say something that everybody thought was wrong or something. I'm not really sure." Chase compared his own contributions to the *Peak* discussion, saying this time he felt as though he had contributed "a little less but enough." He said during the meeting he "Just kind of looked for parts in the book we could discuss because once you find a part you can talk about, it kind of gets going better." Chase particularly liked one part of the discussion where many of the participants expressed their opinions. "You got to see different views. You didn't get to see it just from one way; you got to see it from a lot of different views." Even though he brought it up to discuss, he described discussing CeCe, the prostitute in the book, as "kind of awkward," because there was a teacher in the room. He would have liked more time to hear even more of everyone's opinions. Regarding what he would like to see happen again, he said he liked how much everyone contributed. "I think everyone did a much better job of contributing. Like at the last book club meeting, Ron and John (pseudonym) didn't really talk, and I think everyone contributed a lot more." When asked what he would like to see that he hadn't necessarily seen, he said, "I would like to hear everyone's opinion." At this point, Chase felt that the same-gender book club was better because everyone felt more comfortable and contributed more.

Ron (Quiet Male). Ron thought that the *Son of the Mob* meeting went better than the *Peak* meeting. “[T]here was less people so more people contributed.” He thought that everyone talked and contributed about the same. When asked if anyone dominated, he said, “Maybe Chase a little bit. Um, it was pretty much the same [as last time], but with everyone else talking, it just seemed like he did less.” Regarding what he himself did during the book club, Ron shared, “Um, I think I started a few conversations, and I added a little bit.... I think I contributed just enough because I didn’t dominate the discussion, but I still contributed just as much as everybody.” He thought that this book club discussion felt natural. “It kind of felt like a conversation instead of just like they had to say something. I think more people were relaxed and more comfortable because they were more used to it.” At the next book club meeting, he said that he’d like everyone to contribute the same as they did in this meeting. He thought he preferred the same-gender over the mixed-gender meeting. “I think, uh, more people felt comfortable at the same-gender.”

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on the Boys-Only Discussion

Mike. About the *Son of the Mob* book club meeting, Mike said, “I was impressed by their ability to keep conversation going. They were, in fact, driven to do so. When there was a moment of silence, someone always chimed in with something, just to break it.” Mike also felt that the boys may have been more talkative in the boys-only book club meeting than they had been during the first meeting. “Some of the boys may have been a bit more talkative in the girls’ absence, but this may also be attributed to this being their second attempt at a book club discussion.”

Girls-Only Book Club: March 14, *Life As We Knew It*

One girl was absent for this meeting, so the total number of girls was five. Susan, the female teacher facilitator, selected the girls-only book, *Life As We Knew It* by Susan Pfeffer. Miranda, the teenage protagonist of this story, begins her journal by expressing her utter annoyance at how all of her teachers decided to give them “moon” assignments because of the upcoming “moon event.” An asteroid is supposed to hit, and until the day it happens, Miranda is unimpressed. However, when the asteroid hits the moon, it causes the moon to come much closer to the earth. This causes volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Even though Miranda lives in Pennsylvania, where there were no immediate effects of the moon’s displacement, there is mass panic. Miranda thinks her mom is overreacting when they join in the run on the local grocery store, but she is grateful later when it is revealed that the crops in the Midwest have been destroyed and ashy skies prevent the sun from reaching new crops. Miranda and her family do their best to conserve food and heat to survive, all the while watching neighbors and friends die from disease and malnutrition or leave in search of hope. Miranda and her brothers mature through the course of this book, which ends inconclusively but optimistically. In the dialogue excerpt below, the girls are discussing when Miranda’s father and step-mom have stopped by on their way out-of-state.

***Life As We Knew It* Meeting Excerpt**

Molly: Oh, I was, I felt awkward, like myself, when they were sitting at dinner. (Laughter.) Like, I can’t imagine my dad coming over and eating dinner with like my mom and my step-dad and my family. And like...

Girl 4 (overlap): And your boyfriend.

(Laughter.)

Molly: Yeah. That'd be so awkward. I'd just be like, like, I can't even imagine it. Like I had the feeling of something awkward was going on in like my own life.

Girl 4: Yeah, like whenever I got done reading like a chapter in the book, I'd think that it was actually happening. Just cause, I don't know why, but like...

Molly: Yeah.

Girl 4: I would like read it, and then I'd get it shut, and then I'd like feel like, Oh no. And then I'd come back, like, it's a book. But she does kind of make it seem like, I don't know how she does it, but...

This excerpt demonstrates how the girls related the book to their own lives, typically a female topic, and how they supported one another. It also shows that the girls held slightly longer turns than the boys.

Life As We Knew It Meeting Data

Number of Turns

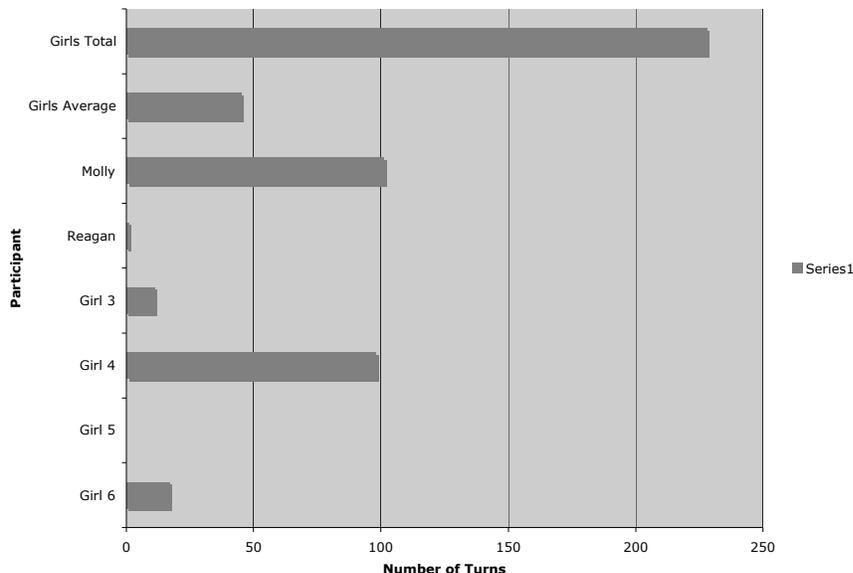


Figure 28. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Number of Turns by Participant

The girls took a combined total of 228 turns in the *Life As We Knew It* book club meeting. One girl was absent for this meeting, and it averaged out to about forty-five turns

per girl. Although Molly and another girl still dominated the discussion with about one-hundred turns each, girls who hadn't spoken during the *Peak* meeting spoke. Reagan still had only one clear turn, though she nodded in agreement and laughed more during the same-gender meeting than in either of the mixed-gender meetings.

Length of Turns

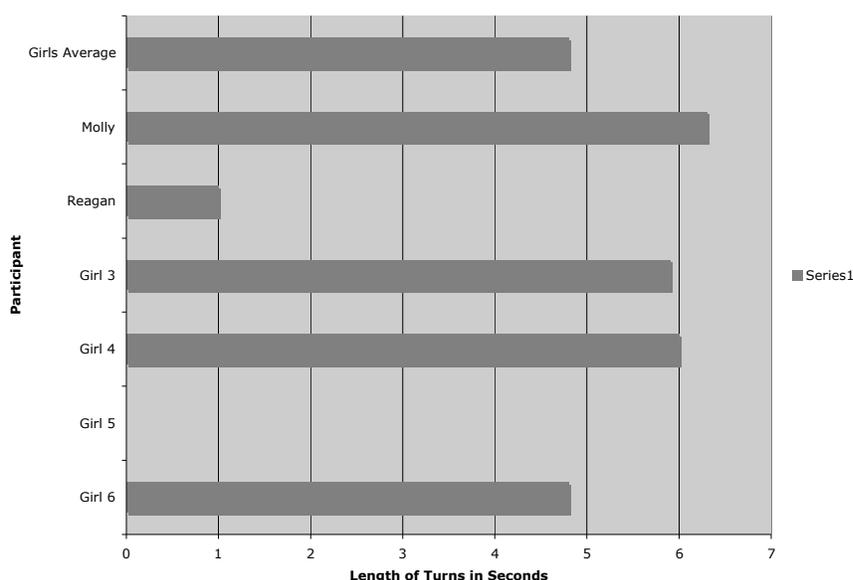


Figure 29. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Average Length of Turn by Participant

The average length of turn for girls in the same-gender meeting was less than five seconds. Although Molly's average was more than six seconds, and Reagan's average was about one second, the girls' average was pretty consistent among participants.

Overlaps and Interruptions

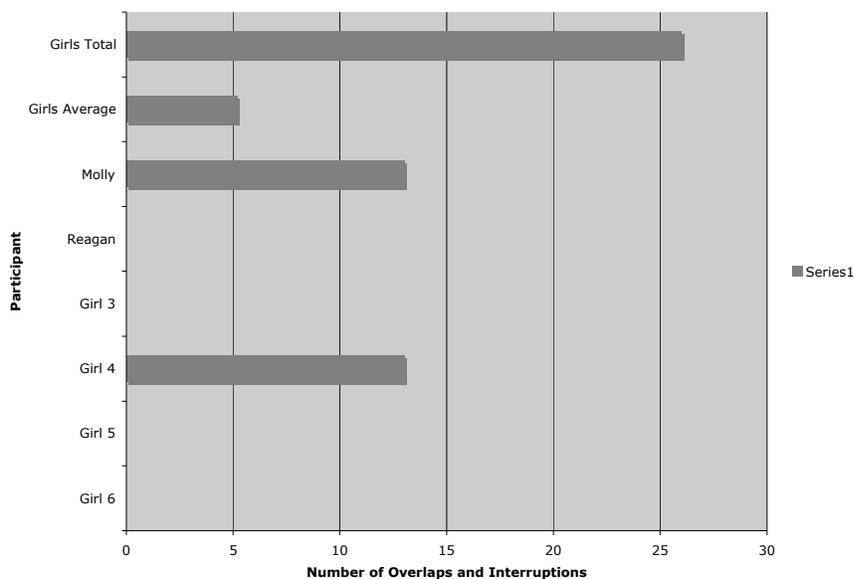


Figure 30. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only) Number of Overlaps and Interruptions by Participant

The girls had twenty-six overlaps and interruptions total, which was an average of more than five per girl. The girls who contributed less to the meeting had no overlaps or interruptions. Molly and another girl each overlapped or interrupted thirteen times.

Topic Initiation

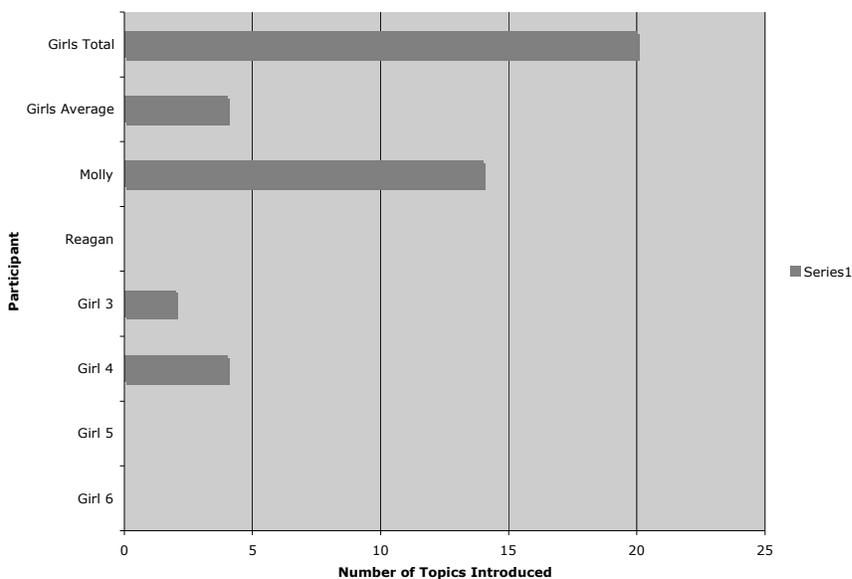


Figure 31. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Topic Initiation by Participant

Molly initiated fourteen of the twenty topics, and two other girls were responsible for introducing the other six topics. The remaining girls, including Reagan, did not introduce any new topics.

Word Choice

The girls did not use any explicit language.

Fillers

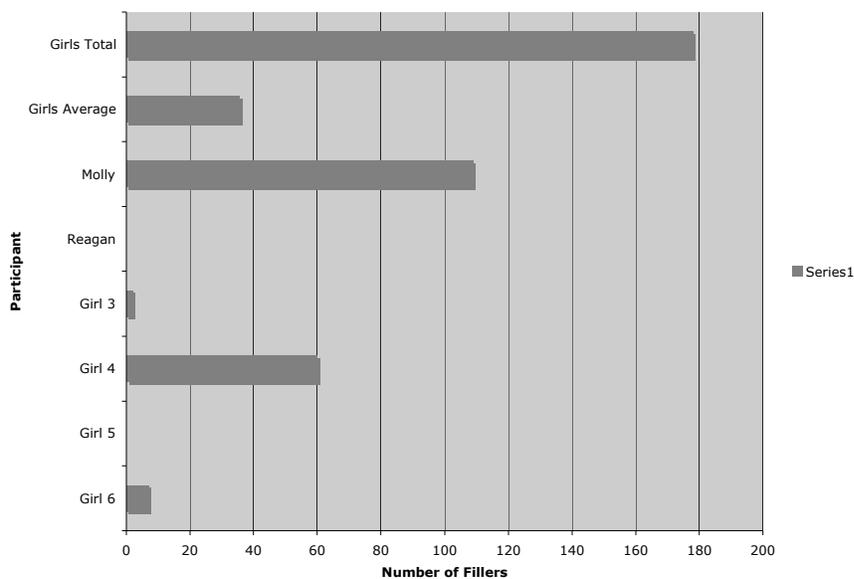


Figure 32. Life As We Knew It (Third, Girls-Only): Number of Fillers by Participant

The girls displayed 178 total fillers in the *Life As We Knew It* meeting, equaling more than thirty-six fillers per girl. Molly had over a hundred, another girl had sixty, and the others had less than ten, with Reagan having none.

Hedges and Qualifiers

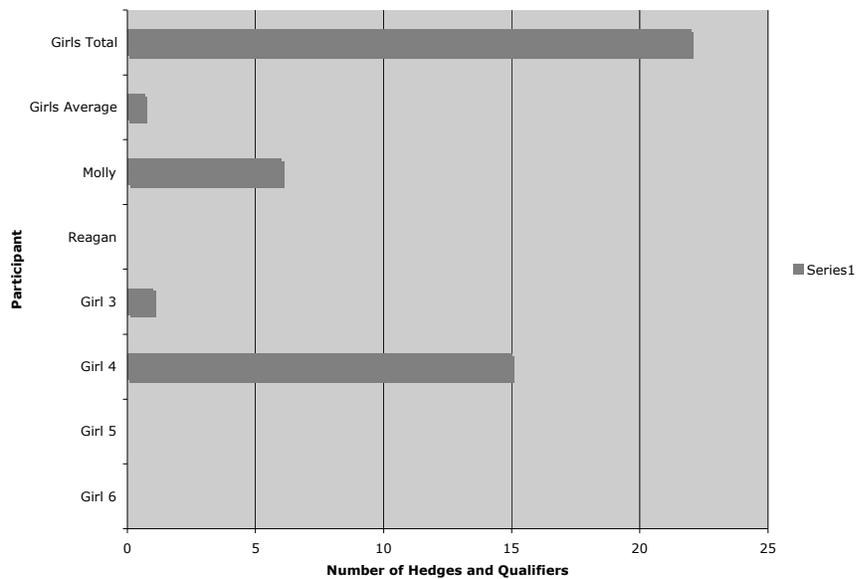


Figure 33. Life As We Knew It (Third, Girls-Only): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Participant

The girls had a total of twenty-two hedges and qualifiers, which averaged out to more than four per girl.

Questions

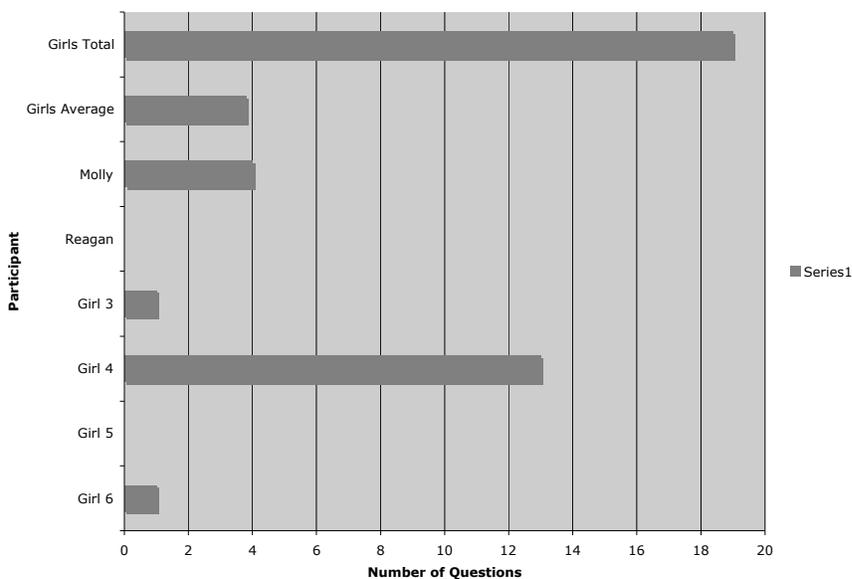


Figure 34. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Number of Questions by Participant

The girls asked a total of nineteen questions, an average of less than four per girl, during the same-gender meeting. Although one of the girls asked a majority, thirteen, of the questions, Reagan was the only girl who didn't ask at least one question.

Eye Contact

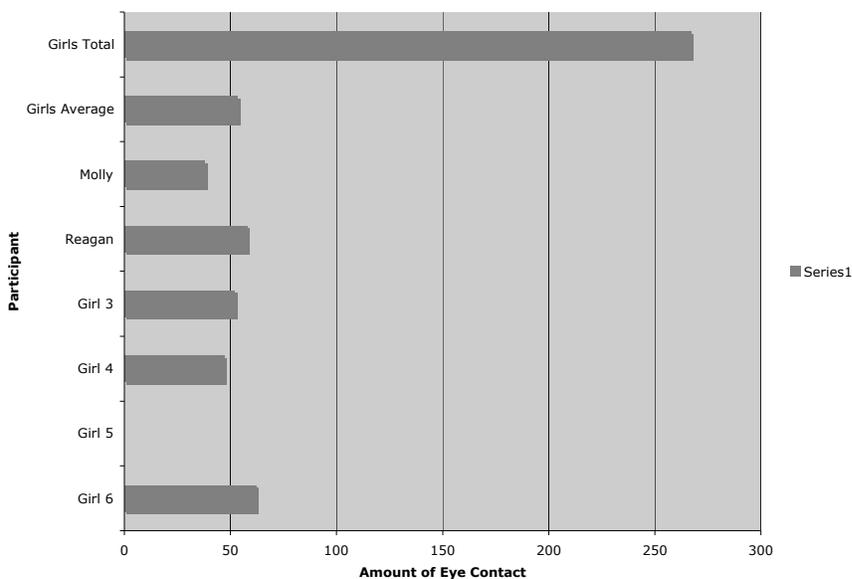


Figure 35. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Amount of Eye Contact by Participant

The girls had a total of 267 eye contacts, which averaged out to about fifty-three per girl. Molly had the lowest number of eye contacts with thirty-eight, and Reagan has the second highest with fifty-eight.

Discussion Topics

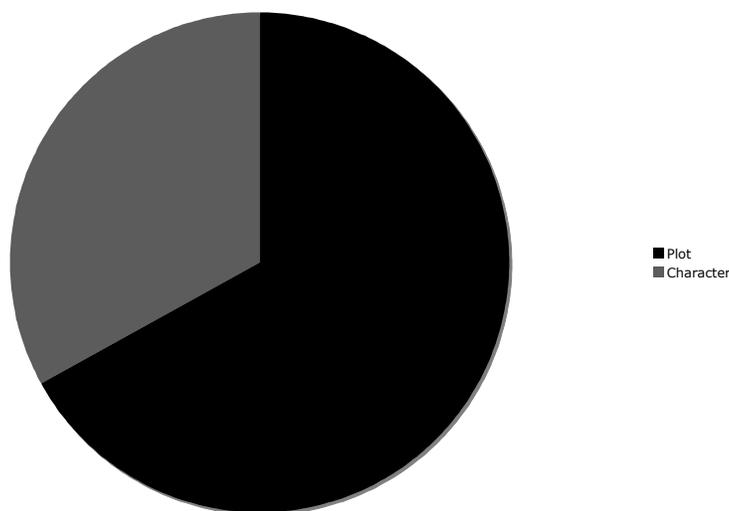


Figure 36. *Life As We Knew It* (Third Girls-Only): Topic Total Percentages

Regarding *Life As We Knew It*, the girls talked about plot about 67% of the time and character 33% of the time. The girls did not offer any jokes during any of the book club meetings. The girls discussed personal issues three times, which accounted for 16% of the total number of topics discussed.

Case Study Students: Reflections on the Girls-Only Discussion

Molly (Talkative Female). Molly thought the *Life As We Knew It* book club meeting went better than the *Peak* meeting. “I think it was better than the other time. I thought more of the girls talked, it seemed like, that didn’t talk the other time. I don’t know if it was just because it was the second time or because the boys weren’t there or what. It was like a wider variety of people I think.” Molly liked that everyone was interested in hearing what everyone thought. She didn’t feel like anyone dominated. “I thought it was pretty equal, because everyone had questions and everyone answered everyone else’s.” She felt like she

contributed just the right amount in “asking questions, answering questions, and listening.” She did feel there were some members who didn’t talk as much as others. “Maybe they didn’t talk as much because they’re not as comfortable with the people because it’s not generally people we hang out with or something.” She noted that they discussed everything she wanted to and discussed the book in depth. “I liked how we like got into the depth of the book.” When asked what the best part of the discussion was, Molly said, “I think when we talked about like how we—I liked when we—the best part for me was when we talked about how we felt, like certain situations, like with everyone dying and everyone had like different input. And it was interesting to hear what everyone had to say about that, because everyone was like way different.” Molly thought she preferred the same-gender book club because “It seemed like everyone was more comfortable, so that makes the discussion go better, I think.”

Reagan (Quiet Female). Reagan also felt that the same-gender meeting was better than the first meeting. “Everyone was contributing, including me this time. I think it was probably easier to talk without the guys there. I don’t know why, but it was.” She said, “It was like a normal conversation.” She didn’t think anyone had dominated the discussion because it was a smaller group. She said there wasn’t anyone who didn’t contribute at all, but she noted that she could have contributed “just a little bit more.” When asked to explain, she said, “There were some things I wanted to say, but I just like couldn’t think of how to say it so I decided not to.” The best part for her was “Just when we were all talking, and everyone gave their opinion.” She didn’t like it when it got really quiet and no one could think of anything to say, which she thought only happened twice. Regarding what she’d like to see again, she said, “For the discussion to feel natural.” Reagan said at this point she preferred same-gender over mixed-gender because more people talked.

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on the Girls-Only Discussion

Susan. Susan felt as though the girls were much more open and natural in the same-gender book club meeting. She wrote in her journal, “Girls who hadn’t spoken in the mixed-gender group spoke this time. There seemed to be a lot of agreeing with one another and chiming in that I didn’t recall from our mixed grouping.... My perception was that the girls seemed more comfortable and social with one another than they were with the boys there.”

Mixed-Gender Book Club Meeting: April 28, *Godless*

The last book club meeting was mixed-gender. The student participants selected the last book, *Godless* by Pete Hautman. How the students selected this book is outlined in the section below on book selections in book clubs. The main character and narrator of *Godless*, Jason, gets knocked out by a bully, Henry Stagg, and when Jason comes to, he’s staring at the water tower. This gets him to thinking. His Catholic mother is always pressuring him to go to church, but he’s never really bought into religion. But he was staring at water: the source of all life. He decided to start his own religion, Chutengodianism, that honors water as its god. The problem with this is that his best friend, Shin, takes it all too seriously and devotes his time to writing the religion’s bible and worshipping the tower. In the meantime, Henry, a convert, convinces Jason and his friends to climb the water tower not once but twice. There are many tense moments when there’s a lightning storm while they’re swimming in the town’s water supply and when Henry slips off the ladder too close to the top of the tower. Jason is left wondering how it is all of this happened and why all of the adults are blaming him. The selection below is taken from the first part of the book club meeting where students are discussing what they thought of the book.

Godless Meeting Excerpt

Chase: It was pretty peculiar.

Girl 4: I didn't like it.

Chase: That's my opinion.

Molly: It was different.

Chase: Not very many books like this.

Girl 4: Yeah.

Molly: His friend was really weird. How he like believed the, the water tower was channeling him or whatever.

Girl 5: Shin.

Molly: Yeah. And he was like talking to the water tower.

Chase: Yeah, he's psycho.

Molly: He has like problems.

Boy 8: I agree.

Chase: Well, you never know. It could be God.

Girl 4: Okay.

(Laughter.)

This is the very beginning of the discussion about *Godless*, and it set the tone for the rest of the discussion, where students rarely expressed any positive opinions about the book. Most of the comments were short and undeveloped as shown here.

Godless Meeting Data

Number of Turns

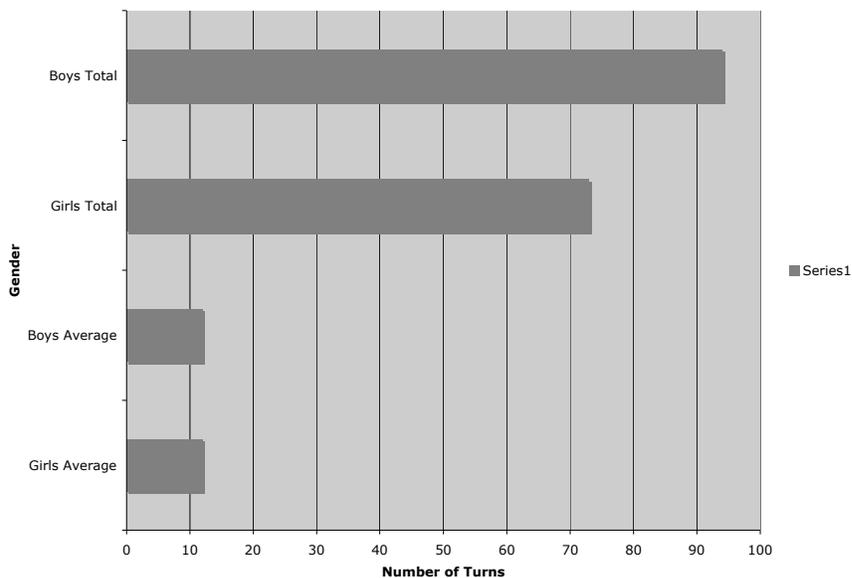


Figure 37. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Turns by Gender

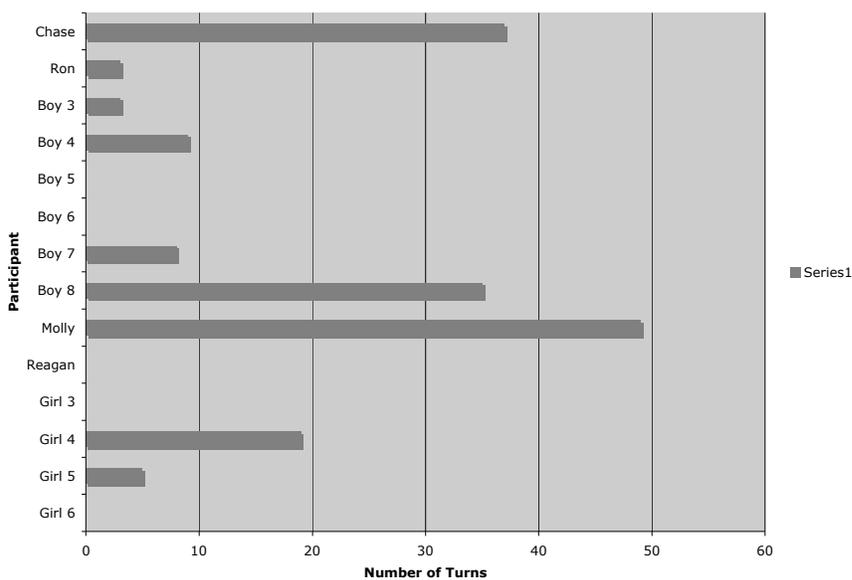


Figure 38. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Turns by Participant

During the *Godless* book club meeting, the boys took a combined ninety-four turns, which averaged as twelve turns per boy. Similar to the first meeting, several of the boys took three or fewer turns, and two of the boys took more than thirty turns each. The girls took a combined seventy-three turns, which averaged as twelve turns each. This is the same average as the boys' average for the second meeting. Similar to the boys, several girls did not take any turns during this meeting, including Reagan, and Molly took forty-nine turns.

Length of Turns

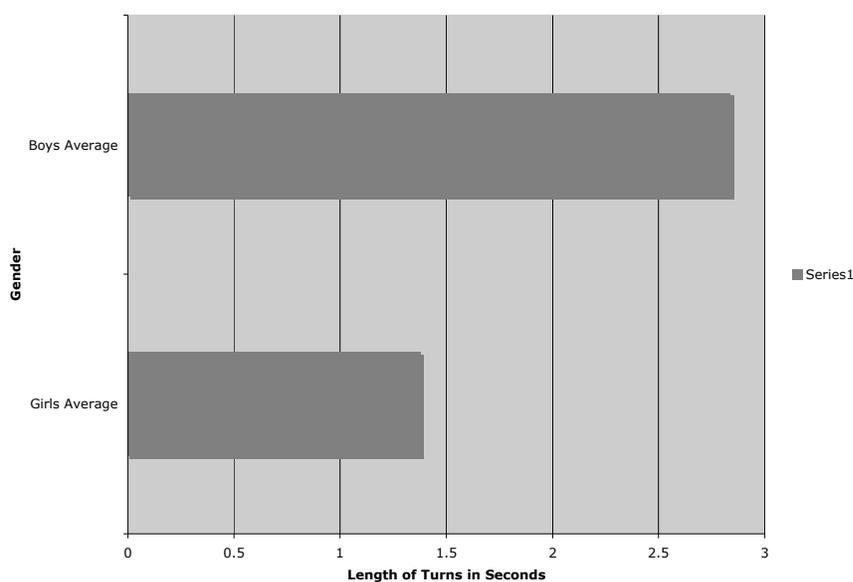


Figure 39. *Godless* (Fourth, Mixed-Gender): Average Length of Turn by Gender

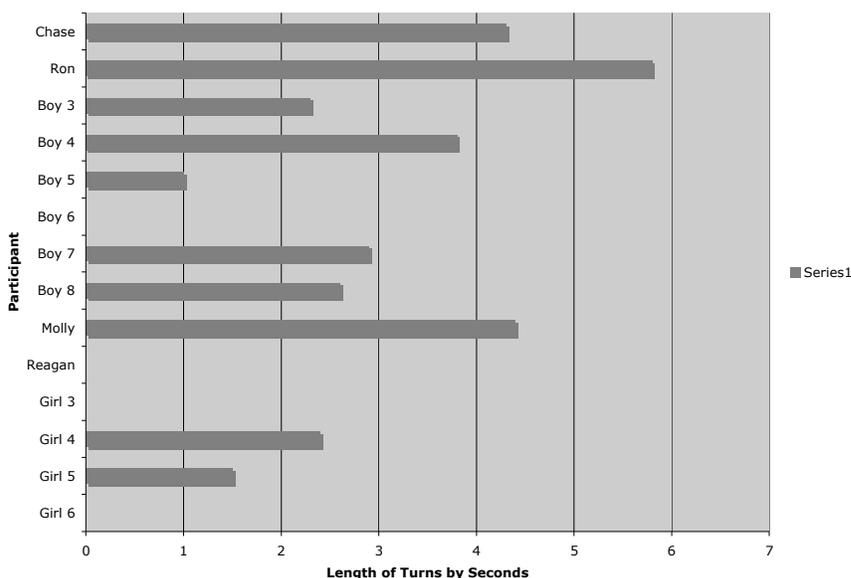


Figure 40. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Average Length of Turn by Participant

During this meeting, the boys spoke for 73% of the total time for the discussion. The average turn for the boys was 2.8 seconds. The breakdown for individual boys was more even for this discussion than it had been previously. Most of the boys had an average turn of more than two seconds, with one not speaking at all and three, including Chase, with an average of more than three seconds.

The girls spoke for 27% of the total time for the discussion. The girls' average length turn was 1.4 seconds, significantly shorter than the boys' average for this meeting. Three of the girls, including Reagan, said nothing at this meeting, which brought the girls' average down considerably.

Overlaps and Interruptions

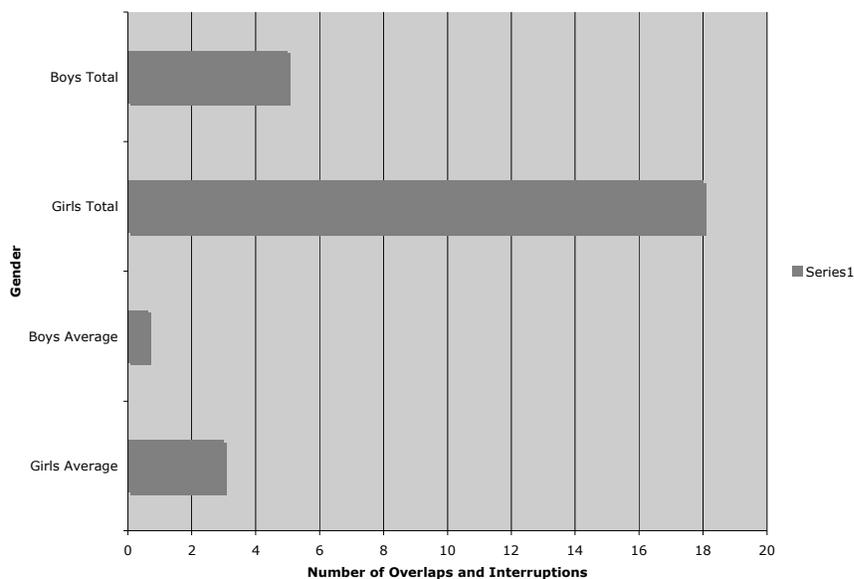


Figure 41. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Overlaps and Interruption by Gender

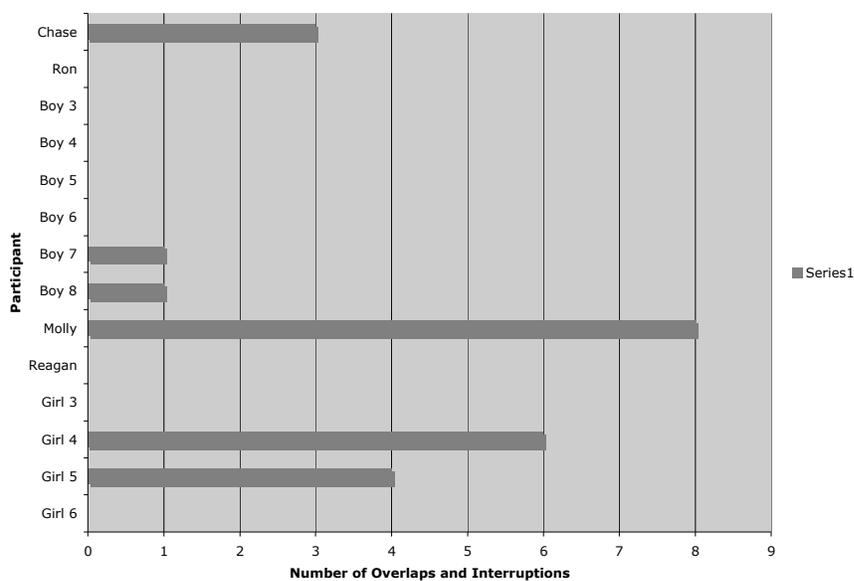


Figure 42. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Overlaps and Interruptions by Participant

The boys had a total of five overlaps and interruptions, which averaged out to less than one per boy. Regardless of the average, Chase was responsible for four of the overlaps

and interruptions, with Ron also interrupting once. The girls had eighteen overlaps and interruptions, which averaged out to three per girl. Three girls didn't have any overlaps or interruptions, two girls had four and six each, and Molly had the most with eight.

Topic Initiation

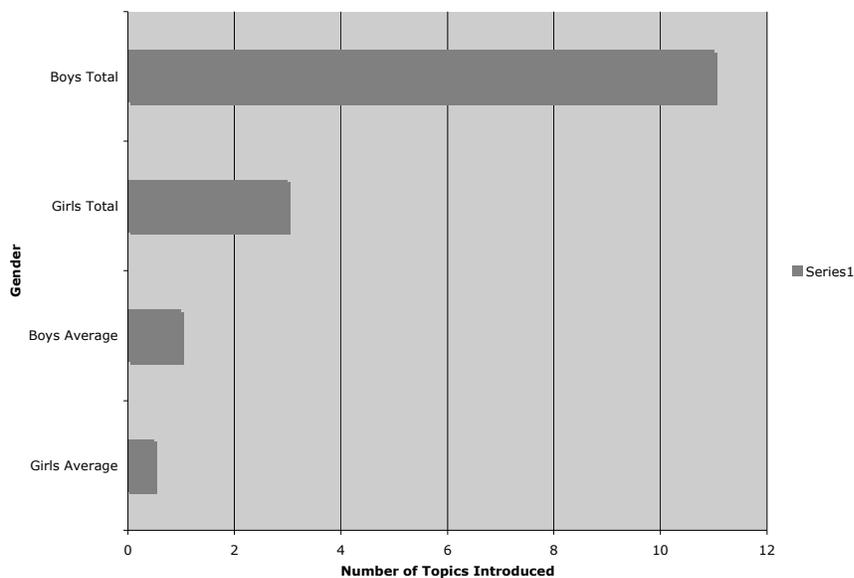


Figure 43. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Topic Initiation by Gender

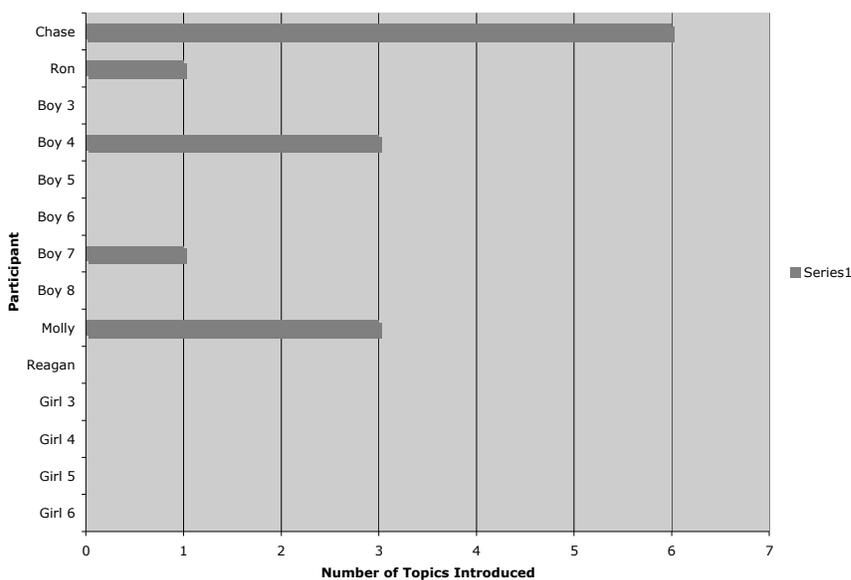


Figure 44. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Topic Initiation by Participant

During the second mixed-gender book club meeting, the boys introduced a total of eleven new topics, averaging out to less than two per boy. This accounted for 79% of all of the new topics introduced during the meeting. Chase initiated six of these new topics, another boy initiated three, and Ron and another boy each initiated one new topic.

During the second mixed-gender book club meeting, the girls introduced a total of three new topics. This was an average of less than one per girl and accounted for 21% of the new topics during the meeting, another significant difference from the boys during this meeting. Molly initiated all three of these new topics; the other five girls did not introduce any new topics.

Word Choice

Neither males nor females used any explicit language.

Fillers

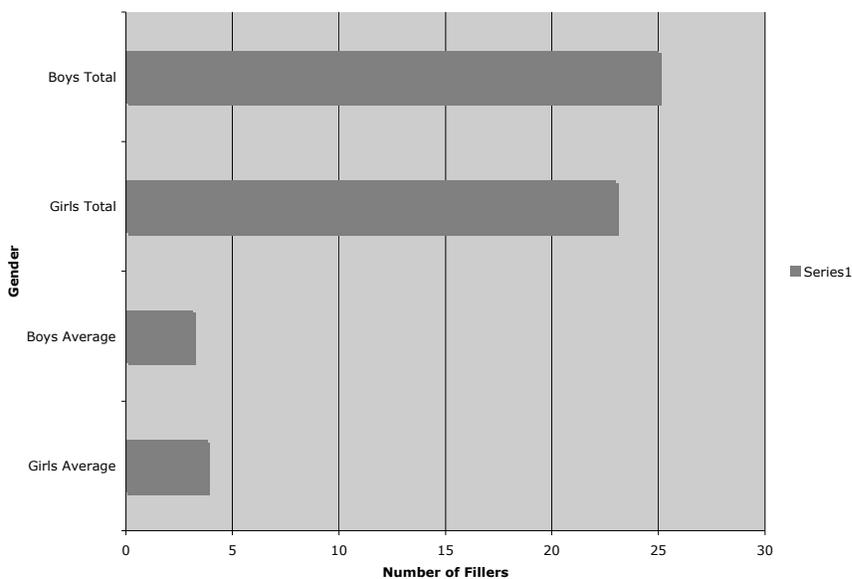


Figure 45. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Fillers by Gender

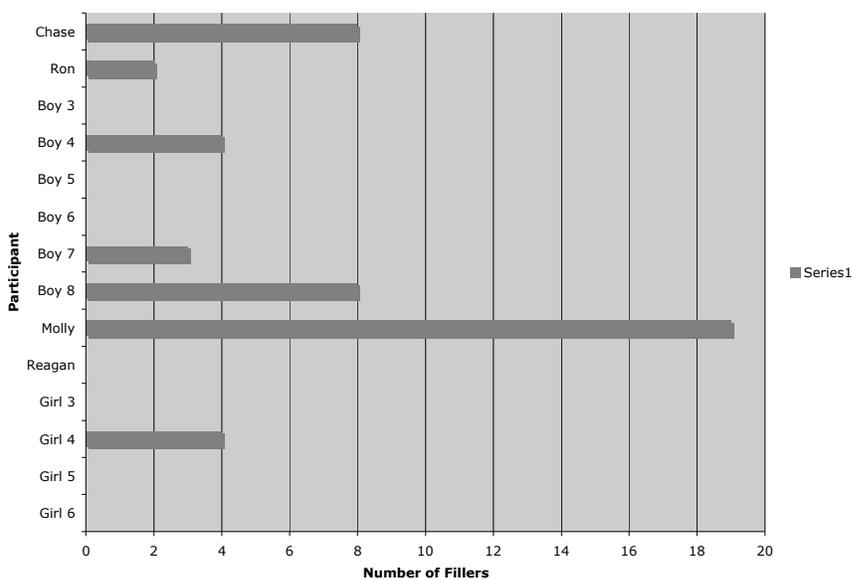


Figure 46. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Fillers by Participant

During the second mixed-gender meeting, the boys exhibited twenty-five fillers, which averages out to a little more than three per boy. Three boys had no fillers, three boys had between two and four, and Chase and another boy each had eight. The girls had a total of twenty-three fillers, less than four per girl. Four girls had no fillers, one girl had four, and Molly had nineteen.

Hedges and Qualifiers

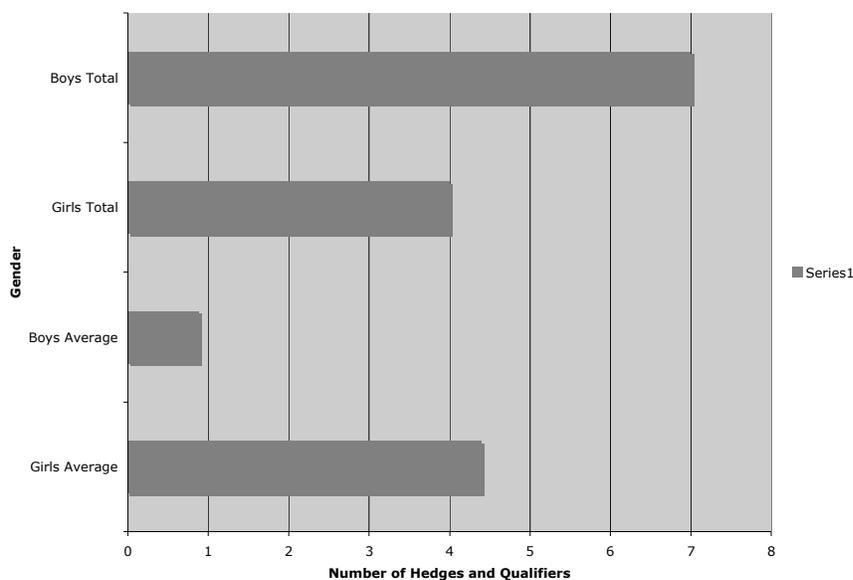


Figure 47. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Gender

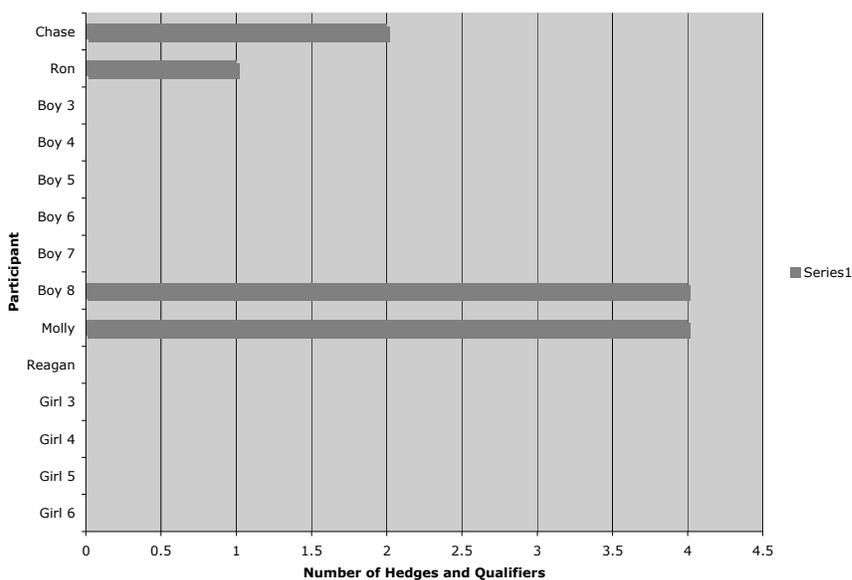


Figure 48. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Hedges and Qualifiers by Participant

The boys had a combined seven hedges or qualifiers, or less than one per boy. Chase was only responsible for two of the qualifiers in this meeting. Another boy had four, and Ron had one. The girls had a combined four hedges and qualifiers. This averaged out to less than one per girl, but Molly had all of the qualifiers in this meeting.

Questions

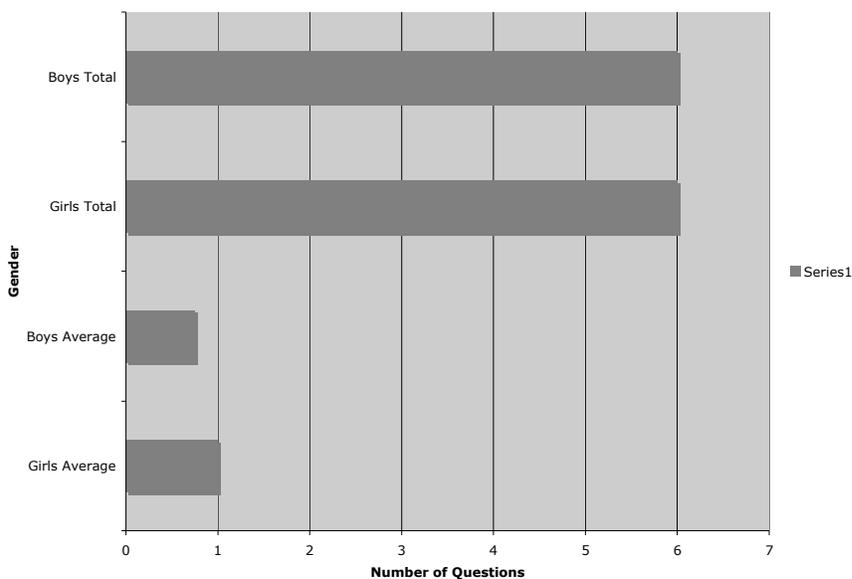


Figure 49. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Questions by Gender

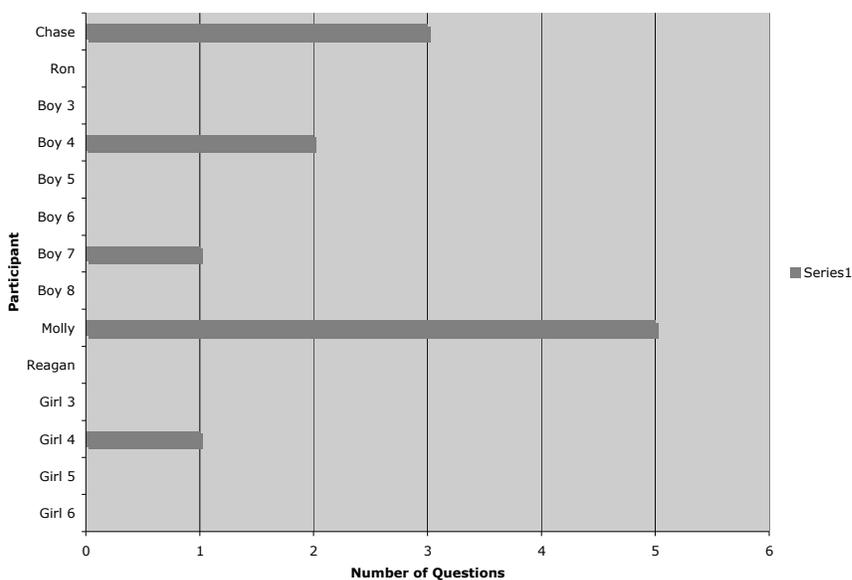


Figure 50. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Number of Questions by Participant

The boys asked a total of six questions, an average of less than one question per boy, in the *Godless* meeting. Chase and two other boys were responsible for asking all six of the questions. The girls also asked a total of six questions, an average of one per girl. However, Molly and another girl asked all six of the questions.

Eye Contact

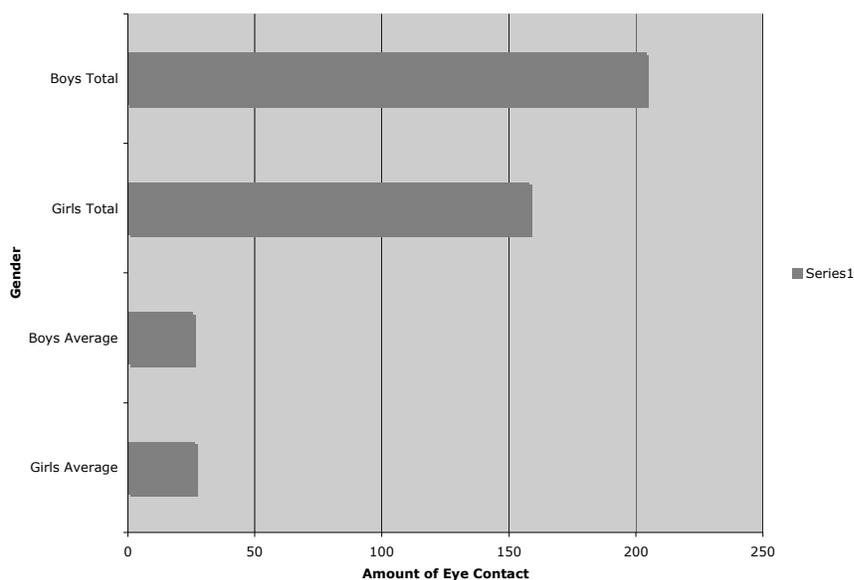


Figure 51. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Amount of Eye Contact by Gender

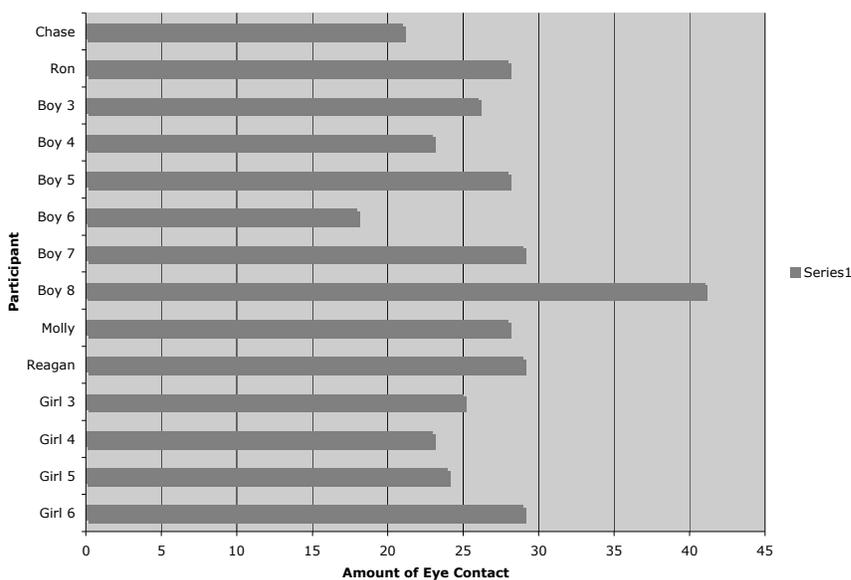


Figure 52. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Amount of Eye Contact by Participant

During the *Godless* discussion, the boys had a total of 204 eye contacts, averaging out to about twenty-five per boy. The breakdown for this meeting was fairly even ranging from eighteen to thirty-one, with both Ron and Chase falling in the middle. The girls had a total 158 eye contacts, or about twenty-six eye contacts per girl. All of the girls' numbers hovered around this average.

Discussion Topics

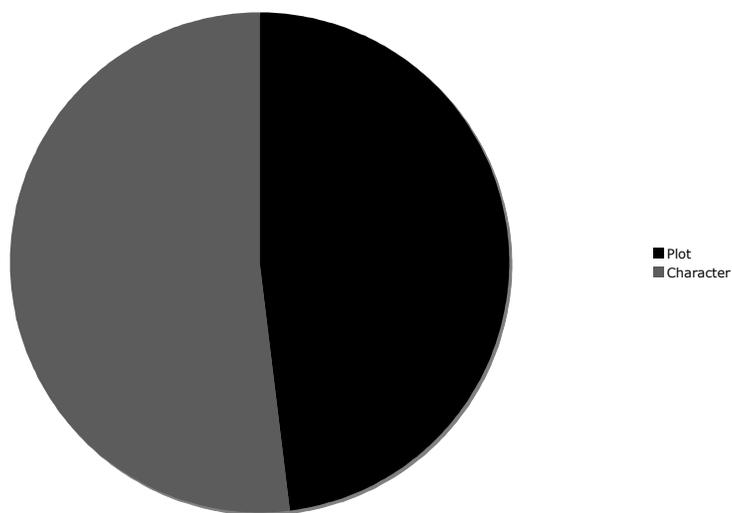


Figure 53. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Topic Total Percentages

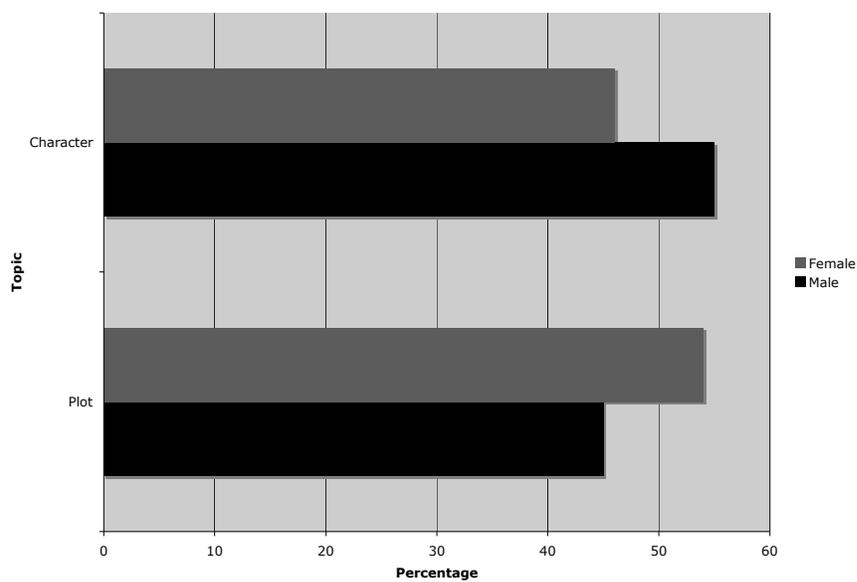


Figure 54. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Topic by Gender

During the last book club meeting, the boys discussed plot-related book elements for about 45% of the time and character-related elements for 55% of the time. The boys made two jokes in the second mixed-gender setting. They discussed traditional male topics once, which accounted for 9% of the total topics discussed. The girls discussed plot about 54% of the time and character 46% of the time. The girls did not offer any jokes during any of the book club meetings. The girls did not bring up any traditionally female topics.

Case Study Students: Reflections on the Last Discussion

Chase (Talkative Male). After the *Godless* book club meeting, Chase again shared his perspective. “I thought it was good because it was a pretty controversial book because some people liked it because it was really different. I think some people didn’t like it because it was so different.” He liked the number of people in the mixed-gender book club meetings so you could hear a lot of different ideas and viewpoints. When asked if anyone dominated the discussion, he said, “I thought it was pretty even. Everybody got a chance to talk, but some people were still quiet.” As to why he thought those people didn’t talk as much, he said, “I think just because they’re quiet, and I think their opinions were just like everyone else’s, and they didn’t have to contribute because everyone already said what they thought.” About why those people don’t speak up sooner before others already share their opinion, he said, “Um, I think it’s just where they’re so shy, they hope someone says it, and if they don’t, maybe they’ll get a small word in, but if they do, they just agree and stay quiet.” He did feel as though people who hadn’t talked at the first meeting did talk at the *Godless* meeting because they had gotten more comfortable. Regarding what he did during book club he said, “I kind of just got a topic going. I’d try and start some so other people would start talking.” He also shared, “I think I just talked a little too much to where some people didn’t get a

chance to talk.” He felt that in general everything went pretty smoothly. Ultimately, after participating in two mixed-gender and one same-gender book club meetings, Chase felt that the boy-only book club was the best because the quiet boys talked a lot more during this meeting, which the data supports, and the boys were able to talk about things that they wouldn’t have talked about with the girls there. That comfort was more important to him than having larger numbers of people with which to discuss the book. He thinks that a boy-only book club might be controversial but most people would be okay with it.

Ron (Quiet Male). Ron also shared his thoughts about the *Godless* book club meeting. He said, “I think it went kind of the same, uh, as the first book we read. Cause we kind of had the same people talking and the same kind of stuff talking about. It was good and bad, I think, cause it got the same people talking and the same kind of stuff so everyone was used to it, but it wasn’t different.” He liked comparing this book to other books, but there were parts he didn’t like. “We had a lot of kind of awkward silences.” When asked why he thought that was he said, “I think people felt uncomfortable talking about a book they didn’t really understand.” He thought it was a hard book, and he didn’t really understand why the author wrote it. He felt that Chase dominated again but did so in an attempt to get others talking who didn’t follow his lead. “He started a lot of it, but he tried to get people into it, too.” He thought there were a few people who didn’t contribute, but he couldn’t remember specifically who. About his own contributions he said, “I contributed a little bit but not enough. I think there was more that we could have talked about, but we didn’t, and I could have or should have brought that up.” Regarding why he didn’t, he said, “I don’t think I realized at the time, because we were all talking about the same thing.” When asked about how everyone who talked said they disliked the book, Ron reflected, “I think there were

some people who liked the book, but they didn't feel comfortable saying it in front of everyone." Concerning what he would like to see again, he said he liked a leader, like Chase, who got discussion going. After participating in all of the book club meetings, he said that he liked the larger number of participants in the mixed-gender meetings, but he felt that the participants were much more comfortable in the same-gender meeting.

Molly (Talkative Female). About the second mixed-gender book club, Molly said that this was the worst meeting yet. "Not many talked, and no one really had anything to say. Yeah, it was a really bad one. I don't know why." She attributed some of it to the book. "I myself just didn't have that much to say about the book because I just didn't like it. And I couldn't really, I kept trying to think of something to talk about with it, but I don't know, I just couldn't really think of anything. I guess no one else could cause it was really quiet." She didn't like it when everyone was just sitting there not talking. Since not many people talked, she didn't feel as though anyone dominated the discussion. She did note that some people who hadn't talked before talked this time, but there were a lot of people who didn't talk at all. "More of the boys talked that hadn't talked before, but a lot of the girls were just still quiet." Concerning why she thought that was, she said, "The girls had nothing to say or were uncomfortable talking about it with the boys they don't know or something." When asked about who she thought talked more, she thought it was about even. "The guys talked a lot, but the girls who talked probably talked as much as the guys. I think overall more guys talked than girls." She thought she herself talked as much as others and tried to get the conversation going; it just didn't work. Ultimately, although she is okay with mixed-gender or same-gender, she thought that the same-gender book club meetings would be better

because “for discussion sake, it seemed like everyone was more comfortable without the boys there,” and it was good to hear everyone’s contributions.

Reagan (Quiet Female). About the *Godless* book club meeting, Reagan said she felt as though this meeting was better than the first mixed-gender meeting because “Everybody was talking and everybody was asking questions, and it was just really natural.” Like last time, she didn’t like the awkward pauses. “No one knew what to say,” and that made her feel uncomfortable. She didn’t feel like anyone dominated the discussion. She also didn’t feel like one gender had dominated the discussion. Regarding whether there was anyone who hadn’t contributed at all, she said, “Well, they all at least nodded in agreement or something.” She said she herself didn’t contribute much because she forgot to read the book and felt maybe others had, too. Listening to the discussion made her interested in the book, though. Ultimately, Reagan liked same-gender book clubs better because she felt you could talk about anything with people of the same gender.

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on the Last Discussion

Mike. About the *Godless* book club meeting, Mike said, “It was a little like pulling teeth this time.” When comparing the boys-only meeting to the last mixed-gender meeting, he noted that, “[S]ome of the boys who were talkative during our boys-only meeting were more-or-less silent during [the last] meeting.”

Susan. During the last meeting, Susan noticed several boys talking that hadn’t talked at the first meeting, but it was the same girls speaking. She also noticed that “The boys would throw their buddy under the bus to get a person to talk... The kid asking wouldn’t comment on the text himself—just throw out a question to the buddy.” This was not seen in the first mixed-gender meeting.

Discussion Domination

Do males dominate the discussion in mixed-gender book clubs? Do females show more hesitation and uncertainty in mixed-gender book clubs?

There are many ways in which who dominates a discussion might be measured. I chose to focus on the number of turns each participant took, the average length of those turns, the number of interruptions each participant enacted, how many topics each participant initiated, and whether or not participants used explicit language.

Amount of Talk: Number of Turns

On the pre-survey given to all of the participants prior to the first meeting, all of the boys and girls indicated that they would share their opinion during book club meetings. On the post-survey given at the conclusion of the last meeting, three of the boys indicated that they did not share their opinion during book club meetings. This is reflected in the data. Two of the girls indicated that they hadn't shared their opinions during the book club meetings. The data reflects this statement; however, Reagan, who took two turns lasting for about two seconds through the course of all three meetings, stated on her survey that she had expressed her opinion.

The findings from Coates and Arliss in the review of literature suggested that the boys would take more turns than the girls. However, this did not occur in this study. The girls took as many and more turns than the boys, with a few boys and a few girls taking the majority of the turns and a few boys and a few girls taking few if any turns. These contradictory findings could be because the students who spoke here were more uncomfortable with silence, which gender might not influence; they knew each other better and felt more comfortable, which is not a result of gender; or they had a lot to say about the

books because they either really liked the books or really disliked them, which gender likely did not influence for these books. Also, another factor could be that all of the girls in the book club were in advanced language arts, so those girls may be more confident in their ideas in general. Although four of the boys were also in advanced language arts, the boy who spoke the most, Chase, was not in that class, and the statistics indicate that the advanced language arts boys generally spoke less than the other boys.

Amount of Talk: Length of Turns

The pre- and post-surveys asked students to agree or disagree with the statement “Boys talk more than girls in literature discussions.” On the pre-survey eleven of the fourteen participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. On the post-survey two of the eleven changed their answer from strongly disagree to disagree, one changed from disagree to agree, and two changed from disagree to strongly agree. Therefore, at the conclusion of the study most of the participants believed that boys do not talk more than girls in literature discussions, but several of the participants changed their initial analysis of this statement.

Contrary to findings by Coates and Arliss in the review of literature, which suggested that males would hold the floor longer than females, the females in this study had longer turns and spoke for a significantly longer total time in *Peak*, the first mixed-gender book club meeting. However, *Godless*, the second mixed-gender book club meeting, produced results more consistent with the expectations of previous research. During this meeting, the males had longer turns and spoke for a significantly longer total time. The difference between the genders was greater in the *Godless* meeting. This could explain why some participants changed their answer on the survey regarding boys dominating the discussion to “strongly

agree.” This meeting where the boys did talk quite a bit more than the girls would have been freshest in their minds. However, when looking at all of the data, the boys did not dominate, in terms of amount of talk, in the mixed-gender book club meetings. It was almost evenly divided between the genders. When looking at the individual average lengths of turns, one boy did hold the longest average turn, but the next two highest were girls.

Overlaps and Interruptions

Previous research from Coates and Arliss has shown that overlaps and interruptions signal dominance, and males would traditionally interrupt more often. However, in this study males did not interrupt more than the females. Rather, the students who talked the most interrupted the most, with the talkative girls interrupting more during the first mixed-gender meeting. When analyzing the motivation for each of the interruptions, most of them were the result of more than one conversation happening at once versus the result of one person trying to take over the main conversation. However, there were instances where the interrupter was clearly trying to take control of the floor. In general, when the girls interrupted, they stopped themselves partway through the sentence after they realized that someone else was talking, too. In general, the boys did not stop themselves; it is uncertain whether or not they realized that someone else was talking. Therefore, we could conclude that while both boys and girls interrupt and both do so carelessly, the boys might do so to control the floor of the discussion, which is consistent with prior research.

Topic Initiation

Based on previous research by Aries and Arliss, the boys could be expected to initiate more topics, possibly as a way to control the conversation. The boys in this study fulfilled this expectation by initiating more topics for discussion than girls, with one boy introducing

the majority of them and a few others contributing as well. The motivation is less clear. Most of the new topics were initiated after a period of silence. It seemed as though the boys were less comfortable with the silences as they often initiated a new topic by saying, “Um...I thought it was weird how...” and then seemingly filled in the blank with the first thing that came to mind versus initiating a topic they had had on their mind and really wanted to explore with their fellow book club members. Although the boys certainly did control the discussion in this way and this might have been their motivation, my analysis of their motivation is that they felt compelled to fill the silence and were therefore less concerned about being the one talking than having someone talk. On the other hand, when the girls introduced a new topic, they appeared to have given the topic some thought and wanted to explore it with their peers. They expected to explore one topic for a greater amount of time, and if the topic wasn’t explored, they weren’t eager to introduce a new topic even if that meant there was silence. In that way, the boys may also have controlled the conversation, however unintentional.

Word Choice

Probably because there were teachers present in the room during the book club discussions, neither males nor females used any explicit language.

Fillers

If fillers were considered a weak grammar construction, based on other generalizations it would be expected that females would exhibit more fillers than males. However, that was not the case in the previous research, and that is not the case here. From both genders’ overwhelming use of the words “like” and “um,” it is likely that these teens used these words to distance themselves from a statement that could be considered

judgmental as was suggested by Coates or to simply formulate their thoughts. It is perhaps more a function of their age than of their gender.

Hedges and Qualifiers

Contrary to findings by Arliss in the review of literature, which indicated that females would have more hedges and qualifiers, the males in this study surpassed the females in this grammatical construction. However, since the boys' average decreased from the first to the second mixed-gender meeting, the boys seemed to gain confidence and feel less need for hedges and qualifiers over the course of time. The girls' average remained low at both meetings, suggesting that those girls who spoke at both meetings were fairly confident in their statements at both meetings. However, since fewer females spoke than males, they may have shown their uncertainty through lack of utterance versus using hedges and qualifiers.

Case Study Students: Reflections on Dominance in Mixed-Gender Book Clubs

The case study students provided qualitative data on who dominated the mixed-gender book club discussions. In general, the case study students had a positive experience in the mixed-gender book club meetings, with all of them disliking any awkward silences. Chase and Molly seemed especially comfortable in the meetings, while Ron and Reagan recognized that they hadn't contributed as much as they could have. Both boys seemed to recognize and had no problem politely pointing out that Chase (and others) had dominated the discussion, but neither of the girls was willing to make that declaration. Perhaps both of these girls felt that "dominate" was a negative word, and they didn't want to negatively label anyone in the meeting. This exhibits traditional male/female behavior.

Do males dominate and females show uncertainty in mixed-gender book clubs?

Even though the boys in this study collectively spoke more than the girls, there were two more boys than girls in the study. When the numbers were averaged among all of the participants, the boys actually took fewer turns and shorter turns than the girls. The statistics indicate that Chase and another boy have similar numbers of turns and longer length turns than Molly and another girl. These four students are all outgoing both inside and outside of the classroom, which I believe contributed to their comfort in the book club meetings, explaining why they contributed far more than others. They are also very competitive inside and outside of the classroom, which could be why they felt comfortable dominating the conversation. Interestingly, Chase felt as though he had dominated the conversation but had done so for the sake of keeping the discussion going. Like Chase, Molly felt that her contributions were in an attempt to spark more conversation, but unlike Chase, she did not recognize that she had dominated the discussion. Perhaps the word “dominate” was too negative for her to want to attach it to something that she felt was done for good reasons. Both of these students seemed frustrated that others didn’t talk more; they saw their role as taking on the responsibility of keeping the discussion going when others wouldn’t. Though Chase realized that he might have inhibited others from speaking, he ultimately felt comfortable with how much he had contributed because others hadn’t spoken up more.

As for the most talkative participants, neither gender tended to dominate the discussion. However, when looking at the remaining participants, it becomes unclear. Both genders had about three participants who contributed nothing or almost nothing to the discussion. When looking at percentages, though, 38% of the males contributed very little, while 50% of the females contributed very little. These numbers would suggest that the

males, in general, felt more comfortable talking and sharing their opinions in the mixed-gender setting.

When looking at overlaps and interruptions, the boys either interrupted the same number of times or far fewer times than the girls. Even when averaged out, the boys interrupted less. These findings are somewhat surprising given the findings in the review of literature, which indicate that males traditionally take more and longer turns and interrupt as a way of controlling the discussion. However, many of the researchers cautioned against coming to a conclusion based on numbers alone and advocated for analyzing the motives behind the actions. The girls interrupted more in the mixed-gender setting, but I do not believe it was to gain the floor because when the girls interrupted, they rarely finished their thought after they realized that someone else was talking. The boys, too, interrupted when they weren't really paying attention to the current conversation, but unlike the girls, they usually finished their thought even if they realized someone else had been speaking first. Interruptions were a disruption to the conversation, but in most cases, all of the participants finished voicing their thought at some point, so the interruptions didn't deter the persons speaking from continuing to contribute. However, it is possible that the persons that hadn't contributed were deterred from contributing in the future because they didn't want to be interrupted. Therefore, even though the males did not have more interruptions than the females, they used them to control the floor more often.

Fulfilling the expectation set forth by the findings in the review of literature, boys did suggest more topics than girls in the mixed-gender meetings. When looking at the breakdown, Chase initiated most of the new topics, and he did so when there was even a brief span of silence. He seemed eager to fill any silences even if it was with the word, "Um."

However, by saying anything, he did take control of the speaking floor, and rarely did anyone challenge that; they waited for him to finish his thought, which he often formulated on the spot since the goal seemed to be to fill the silence versus to thoughtfully comment on the book. The girls who suggested a new topic either had a question pop into their head or they seemed to have been thinking about something for a while before putting the new idea on the table to discuss. Though the girls rarely suggested another new topic immediately after someone had just started a new line of conversation, the boys, especially Chase, often suggested a new topic versus trying to develop one that had just been initiated. In this way, the boys did dominate this portion of the discussion.

Neither the girls nor the boys exhibited any explicit language, probably because there were teachers in the room. Therefore, the boys did not dominate the discussion with their words, but it was a highly controlled situation, so it is unclear what would happen without teachers present.

Setting and Participation

Do females participate more in same-gender versus mixed-gender book clubs?

Since the research in the review of literature suggested that males would dominate mixed-gender discussions and females felt more comfortable in same-gender settings, I investigated the same language behaviors in the same-gender book club settings as I did in the mixed-gender book club settings. I did investigate the boys' behavior as well to see if it was valid to assume that only females might behave differently in a same-gender setting. The same questions were investigated for each.

Amount of Talk: Number of Turns

Although the group sizes were less than half of the mixed-gender book clubs, the total number of turns in the same-gender meetings is more than double that seen in the mixed-gender book clubs. Therefore, both the boys and girls spoke more in the same-gender setting. Also, all of the participants present for the meetings spoke during the same-gender meetings, whereas several participants did not speak during the mixed-gender meetings. Girls and boys who didn't speak at all during the mixed-gender meetings found their voices in the same-gender meeting. Ron, who spoke very little during the mixed-gender meetings, had the third highest number of turns in the same-gender meeting. Given the findings in the review of literature from Krolokke that both genders prefer their own style of communicating, it is not surprising that in this study, the volume of talk increased during the same-gender meetings. The participants seemed much more comfortable with their own gender.

Amount of Talk: Length of Turns

Previous research by Smythe and Huddleston that females feel more comfortable in same-gender groups leads us to believe that females would feel more comfortable and therefore take more turns and longer turns in a same-gender setting. This study confirmed these findings. A greater number of the girls spoke, and they held much longer turns, exploring one topic for longer, demonstrating that they felt more comfortable in the same-gender book club meeting than the mixed-gender meetings. Interestingly, the boys, too, had a greater number of participants who took a greater number of longer in the same-gender meetings, suggesting that they, too, felt more comfortable in the same-gender setting. This is a positive for both genders.

Overlaps and Interruptions

During the same-gender meeting, the boys had a lot more overlaps than the girls. Though the girls overlapped and interrupted more during the mixed-gender book club meetings, their overlaps and interruptions stayed about the same during same-gender meetings while the boys' overlaps and interruptions increased dramatically during the same-gender meetings.

Previous research by Coates and Arliss indicated that both males and females would overlap and interrupt less in a same-gender setting. However, in this study, all of the girls overlapped and interrupted about the same amount regardless of the setting, demonstrating that this might just be a part of their communication style, whereas boys who didn't interrupt at all during the mixed-gender meetings interrupted several times during the same-gender meeting. This suggests that the boys might have been trying to be more polite during the mixed-gender meetings and were not as concerned about this in the same-gender meeting. More of the same-gender interruptions were to gain control of the conversation, especially with the males. As was seen in the mixed-gender meetings, the females typically stopped if they interrupted, showing that it was accidental. The males typically kept talking. Both of the genders usually came back to the person who was interrupted. In fact, Ron's friend advocated for him several times so he could express an opinion that had been interrupted, usually by Chase. Contrary to previous research, the boys in this study seemed much more comfortable interrupting each other than interrupting the girls. They sometimes even teased each other when it happened. Ron, who was interrupted the most, was unwilling to do anything about it and acted as though it didn't bother him, thereby contributing to the pattern of interruption.

Topic Initiation

Although Chase and Molly, in addition to other more outgoing students, initiated most of the new topics in their respective meetings, Ron and other quiet students, initiated more topics in the same-gender setting than they had in the mixed-gender setting. Again, previous research by Aries indicated that females might initiate more topics in a same-gender setting than they had in a mixed-gender setting. This was true here. Both boys and girls initiated more topics in the same-gender setting. Given the previous findings in this study that more of the boys and girls talked more in the same-gender book club setting, it is not surprising that they also initiated new topics.

Word Choice

Again, possibly because there were teachers present, neither gender displayed any use of explicit language in the same-gender meetings. Chase saying, “hooker,” seemed to embarrass the boys.

Fillers

There was no available research about the use of fillers in same-gender versus mixed-gender settings. However, since in the mixed-gender setting, the more students talked, the more fillers they used, it is reasonable to expect that the increased amount of talk in the same-gender meetings would increase the number of fillers. This proved to be true in this study. As stated previously, fillers seemed to be a function of this group’s age rather than gender, and these findings support that conclusion. The more a participant talked, the more fillers they used. It is interesting that the girls in this study have such a dramatically higher usage of fillers when with their own gender. This could reinforce the belief that this construction is used more by females and that it shows uncertainty. The girls in this meeting

did struggle to formulate their thoughts and were very conscious of others' opinions and did not want to cause controversy. They seemed to want group solidarity and therefore took longer and were more hesitant to complete their thoughts during the same-gender meeting.

Hedges and Qualifiers

Previous research did not indicate how males and females would use hedges and qualifiers differently when with their own gender. Since the males seemed more concerned about being polite, as shown through fewer interruptions, in the mixed-gender setting, it is reasonable to expect that they would also have more hedges and qualifiers in the mixed-gender setting. However, the males in this study actually increased the number of hedges and qualifiers they used in the same-gender setting. This could be because the volume of speech increased so dramatically during the same-gender meeting, although it's also possible that they were less certain when there were just boys there.

Given the findings here that the females used far more fillers and demonstrated more caution in the same-gender meeting, it is reasonable to expect that the females would use more hedges and qualifiers in the same-gender setting, too. The females fulfilled this expectation with a dramatic increase in qualifiers. Similar to the fillers, the females seemed to use more hedges and qualifiers because they didn't want to offend or disagree with anyone. They didn't care as much about this with the males present. However, it is also important to note that the volume of speech during the same-gender meeting also likely affected the number of hedges and qualifiers.

Case Study Students: Reflections on Same-Gender Book Clubs

All of the case study students had very positive experiences in the same-gender book club setting. Although Molly and Chase felt comfortable in the mixed-gender meetings, they

recognized that more people talked more in the same-gender meeting, which they felt was due to the participants' level of comfort with the opposite gender, and they both felt that this was a positive outcome of the same-gender meetings. Both Ron and Reagan felt more satisfied with their contributions to the same-gender book club even though Reagan hadn't truly contributed any more to this meeting than to the mixed-gender meetings. Her perception may have been driven by how much she felt like she was a part of the group versus how much she said, and she clearly felt more comfortable with other girls.

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on Same-Gender Book Clubs

Both of the teachers felt as though the same-gender book club meetings were more successful and might be a good choice for students this age who are especially self-conscious around the opposite gender.

Do females participate more in same-gender versus mixed-gender book clubs?

Both genders spoke more and longer in the same-gender setting, indicating that they felt more comfortable with their own gender. Even though outgoing personalities, versus a particular gender, seemed to dominate the discussion in mixed-gender meetings and to a lesser extent in same-gender meetings, the quieter students were much more willing to express their opinions in a smaller setting with their own gender. The boys in particular seemed more comfortable interrupting one another during the same-gender meeting, and even though it made them a little uncomfortable, one student did use the word "hooker" that he might not have used in the company of girls. Reagan made a point to say that the girls could be more open without the boys there. In general, the same-gender book clubs went more smoothly and allowed everyone to contribute more. Chase said that he thought he had contributed less in the same-gender setting, whereas the data would indicate that he

contributed a lot more, but more of the participants contributed a lot more, too, which may be why he perceived his own contributions as fewer. All of this supports earlier findings by Krolokke that each gender better understands how they themselves communicate, feeling that their style is superior. It is more natural to them, so they naturally prefer it, which explains why they would prefer meetings with people who communicate the way they do.

Discussion Maintenance

Do females do more of the work of keeping discussion going during book club discussion?

Although Chase and Molly, the talkative case study students, would say that simply talking is what keeps a discussion going, the researchers in the review of literature state that one person talking isn't a discussion and there are certain behaviors that encourage a discussion to continue. Those include asking questions that encourage more discussion and making eye contact with the speaker showing support for the speaker and what she is saying. Females traditionally exhibit these more often than males. Females also traditionally exhibit more hedges, words and phrases that either soften a statement or act like vocal fillers while a speaker formulates her thought. This section evaluates whether the girls and boys in this study confirm or refute previous research.

Questions

The research by Arliss in the review of literature indicated that questions can mean different things according to their intent, but in general, questions show an interest in the conversation and females ask more of them. Given this, it is reasonable to expect to see females ask the most questions in the mixed-gender meetings and also to see females have even more total questions and males have fewer total questions in a same-gender setting. When looking at the data, the girls' average was slightly higher than the boys' in the mixed-

gender meetings. Although this might suggest that girls indeed did more of the work of keeping the discussion going in this way, the difference between the genders is probably not significant enough to draw this conclusion. Chase and Molly, as well as one other girl, stood out as the ones who asked more questions in an attempt to get the conversation going again. Most participants asked no questions in the mixed-gender book club setting. During the girls-only meeting, as expected, the total number of questions increased, and all of the girls but Reagan asked questions, taking responsibility for keeping the discussion going. The boys performed slightly contrary to expectations. They kept pace with the girls in the mixed-gender setting, and they asked many more questions in the same-gender setting, probably because they all talked a lot more during that meeting. The boys did ask even more questions than the girls in the same-gender setting, but the females had longer turns so they wouldn't have needed to ask as many questions or change the topic as often to continue the conversation.

Eye Contact

Previous research by Arliss suggests that eye contact supports speakers, and women support speakers more than men, so the expectation was to see higher levels of eye contact from the girls in this study. This proved true: the girls' average was higher than the boys' in each of the meetings. When looking at the amount of eye contact from each participant, it is clear that the participants who spoke the least had higher numbers of eye contacts, and those who spoke the most had fewer numbers of eye contacts. It makes sense that this would be the case since it's impossible for the speaker to make eye contact with himself. So even though some of the participants didn't contribute much in the way of comments, many of the quieter participants played a large role in supporting the speakers.

Do females do more of the work of keeping discussion going during book club discussion?

Since no questions were asked of the case study participants or the teachers to address this question specifically, the entire analysis must be based upon the data. The numbers suggest that the girls did do a little bit more of the work of keeping discussion going during the mixed-gender meetings. However, the boys had no problem taking over these behaviors when they were on their own.

Discussion Topics

How does gender influence what males and females discuss during book clubs?

Although the books themselves present a certain set of topics, participants select out of those what they want to discuss. What participants choose to or not to discuss reveals something about the participants. Gender might influence what topics participants tend to discuss.

Do males discuss more plot-related, action-driven versus character-related elements of a book during book club discussions? Do they make more jokes and offer more comments about traditionally male topics, like sports?

Peak, the first mixed-gender meeting, and *Son of the Mob* and *Life As We Knew It*, the same-gender meetings, seem to support earlier findings by Appleman that boys tend to discuss plot more than character. However, *Godless*, the second mixed-gender meeting, seems to contradict those findings. It is important to note that during this final meeting, the teachers did much more prompting due to several prolonged silences, and most of the teachers' questions related to character, so the boys did not initiate these character-related conversations but were willing to engage in them.

The boys did make jokes in all of the meetings. This finding supports earlier research by Arliss that demonstrates that boys often like to joke and laugh. They also discussed traditionally male topics several times throughout the meetings. Compared to the total number of topics discussed, the numbers here are low, but it is interesting that the number during the same-gender meeting was so much higher than the mixed-gender meetings.

Previous research by Appleman indicates that boys might prefer to discuss plot over character, make more jokes, and gravitate towards discussions about sports and other typically male topics. Since the teachers were so involved in the second mixed-gender meeting, it is difficult to assess whether or not the boys in this study preferred plot to character in the mixed-gender meetings. However, it is clear that they preferred plot in the same-gender meeting. This could be because they felt more comfortable in this setting. Supporting this theory is the fact that the boys made more jokes and discussed more typically male topics in the boy-only setting, which we expected given earlier findings. Although the books might lend themselves to different topics, the findings here suggest that the boys were aware of the kinds of topics they were discussing with the girls present and were less willing to discuss typically male topics with them. It is unclear whether that is because they didn't think girls could discuss these topics, they didn't want to discuss these topics with girls, or they were trying to be respectful of the girls.

Do females discuss more character-related elements of a book during book club discussions? Do they offer more comments about traditionally female topics, like relationships, and offer more personal information?

Although previous research by Appleman indicates that girls might prefer to discuss character over plot, the findings here show that these girls did not. In each meeting, the

percentage of plot discussion was greater than character discussion. However, it is important to note that the percentages were much more even during the same-gender conversation. The girls spent much more time discussing character when they were talking with just girls. This indicates that either they were unable to forward their character agenda with the boys or they were conscious that the boys might not want to analyze characters as deeply as they would and therefore didn't push this agenda.

Also, the girls did share more personal issues, though not many, with the same-gender group. This could demonstrate that they were more comfortable with just girls but not comfortable enough to divulge too much personal information yet.

Case Study Students: Reflections on Discussion Topics

None of the case study questions were geared towards answering this research question, but Ron (quiet male) said about the second mixed-gender book club meeting, "I think we discussed like what the book was about more and that kind of stuff, and we didn't really discuss the characters as much and what their part was in the book." Chase (talkative male) did note that the boys discussed some things that they probably wouldn't have if the girls had been present. Primarily he was referring to when they talked about CeCe, the prostitute, and how much the guys in the book think about sex. They would not have felt comfortable discussing these things with the girls. Chase also liked the disagreements during the first meeting best and stated that he would like to see more controversial topics and discussions at future book club meetings. He thought the last book club meeting went okay because it was a controversial book. He indicated that some people liked it because it was different. (This was not revealed in the book club recordings. Only students who disliked the

book spoke up.) He liked the parts of the discussion where they disagreed, and he didn't like the parts of the discussion where everyone had the same opinions.

Reagan (quiet female) simply stated that she liked that not many people interrupted one another. Molly (talkative female) didn't comment specifically on there being too much emphasis on conflict, but she did state that she felt that the conversations in the mixed-gender book clubs didn't go as deep as she would have liked. About the first discussion she said, "I thought the discussion was okay, but I like it better when it's in our class.... It was like basic and not deep into the book, which is what I like to do." When asked what makes it deeper, she said, "Maybe like thinking about it before and maybe know what we want to talk about. Like when we have the worksheets in English. I think that helps make it deeper and stuff." She would have liked to analyze the characters more and get deeper into the book in general.

Teacher Facilitators: Reflections on Discussion Topics

The teacher facilitator comments about the content of the discussion were limited. Susan noted that she was surprised that much of the first mixed-gender meeting did *not* revolve around plot points.

How does gender influence what males and females discuss during book clubs?

Although the expectation that the participants would discuss plot and character along gender lines did not prove true in the mixed-gender meetings, the fact that the boys discussed a lot more plot when it was only boys and the girls discussed a lot more character when it was only girls demonstrates that there could be a difference between the genders in what they choose to discuss out of all of the options that a book gives them. Susan's comments reveal that she expected inexperienced book club members to focus on plot, and even though the

numbers reveal that the first mixed-gender discussion was dominated by plot, her expectation was not fulfilled because there was discussion about characters, which surprised her.

Additionally, Chase's comments reveal a preference for what researchers might call a competitive approach to conversation, whereas Reagan's comments reveal a preference for what researchers call a cooperative approach to conversation. These are traditional male/female stances. This is further support for the theory that the boys and girls were each more comfortable with their own gender.

Question 2: How does gender influence book selections in book clubs?

Due to time constraints, Susan and Mike selected the first two meetings' book club selections. They agreed upon *Peak* by Roland Smith for the first mixed-gender meeting. They decided upon this book because it had a male protagonist and a lot of action for the boys, as well as complex characters and relationships for the girls. Susan selected *Life As We Knew It* by Susan Pfeffer for the girls to read because it has a strong female protagonist with many complex issues about life and what's most important in life that Susan felt the girls would be able to discuss in depth. Mike selected *Son of the Mob* by Gordon Korman for the boys to read because it has traditionally appealed to boys but also had interesting relationships to explore. For the third book, the participants were all invited to write down suggestions and then they would vote.

In order to model for the participants what their suggestion(s) might look like, Susan nominated *Godless* by Pete Hautman, explaining that, "The main character, Jason, is a teenage boy who is struggling with many things, including religion, friendship, and leadership. In an attempt to entertain himself, he creates a new religion worshipping the water tower. After all, water is the source of all life, right? Things get a little out of hand

when Shin, his best friend, devotes his life to writing the Bible for their new religion and Henry convinces them to climb the water tower. Through the sarcastic voice of Jason, this book explores issues that many teens face.” Students were then encouraged to write down titles and reasons they felt the book would be good to read together. The following table breaks down what books were nominated and by whom, the number of pages in each book, why each title was suggested, and why each title was rejected.

Table 3. Fourth Book Selection

Title	Nominated by...	Number of Pages	Reason for Nomination	Reason Rejected or Selected
<i>Travel Team</i>	Ron and 2 Boys	288 pages	“It’s a good book most people can relate to if they’ve even been ‘not good enough.’” “Quick read and good story.”	Boys arguing
<i>Code Talker</i>	Chase	240 pages	“A good war story of how something bad turned around to be something good.”	Boys arguing
<i>Airborn</i>	Chase	544 pages	“Good read for both boys and girls. Very interesting but a little long.”	Too long
<i>High Heat</i>	Boy	352 pages	“Good book, good read.”	Too long
<i>Soldier Boys</i>	Boy	240 pages	“Fascinating book.”	A boy thought the girls wouldn’t like it
<i>Tangerine</i>	Boy	304 pages	“There were a lot of times in the book where I had to stop and think because it was so bizarre.”	Too long
<i>Just Listen</i>	Girl	400 pages	“It’s really good at describing feelings.”	Girls thought the boys wouldn’t like it and long
<i>Truth About Forever</i>	Molly	400 pages	“It’s one of my favorites and has a lot to discuss about it.”	Girls thought the boys wouldn’t like it and long
<i>Someone Like You</i>	Girl	281 pages	“It’s a really good book.”	Girls thought the boys wouldn’t like it
<i>Twilight</i>	Girl	544 pages	“It’s a really good book.”	Too long
<i>The Taker</i>	Reagan	352 pages	“It’s very well written.”	Not enough copies available
<i>Godless</i>	Teacher	208 pages	Coming of age, humor, controversy	<i>Selected</i> by default because Molly got sick of the boys arguing over the other titles and said, “Let’s just read <i>Godless</i> .”

Although there is not much data to analyze, it is important to note that both genders nominated books that would appeal to their own gender but considered the other gender when actually selecting a book to read together. Also, even though several boys and girls chose not to nominate any book titles, the boys made a combined eight nominations and the girls made a combined five nominations. It is also interesting that it was a girl who tired of the boys arguing over which of the final student-nominated books, *Travel Team* or *Code Talker*, would be better and suggested reading the teacher-nominated title as a compromise. Through a show of hands (eyes closed), all but one student, Chase, voted to read *Godless*, as Molly had suggested. It seems as though this girl may have had the most influence over the final book selection.

Question 3: How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitude toward reading?

Students were given pre- and post-surveys that asked a variety of questions, including whether students enjoyed reading and whether students considered themselves good readers. One boy indicated before the first book club meeting that he wasn't a good reader, but on the post-survey, he indicated that he was a good reader. It's possible that the book club meetings boosted his confidence in his reading ability. All of the others indicated both before and after that they were strong readers. Only one participant, a boy, indicated that he didn't enjoy reading. Most of the surveys showed that students enjoyed reading as much before the book clubs as they did after. A couple of them went from strongly agree to agree. Also, during our last interview, Ron expressed that the book club got him more interested in reading.

Not surprisingly, students who joined the book club were students who enjoyed reading or considered themselves good readers, and although their experience in the book club was positive, it did not significantly change their opinions on reading.

Question 4: How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitudes towards literature discussion?

On the surveys were questions related to how much the participants enjoyed discussing books and specifically with boys versus girls. Most of the surveys indicated a similar enjoyment of discussion before the book club meetings as after. All of the girls indicated that they enjoyed discussing books with boys and girls. Most of the boys indicated that they enjoyed discussing books with boys and girls, but a few of them indicated that they did not enjoy discussing books with girls. All of the participants indicated that they enjoyed discussing books with persons of the same gender; this was true of both the pre- and post-survey.

All of the participants but one indicated on the pre-survey that they understand books better when they discuss them with their peers. This participant indicated on the post-survey that he now understands books better when he discusses them with peers. All of the case study participants enjoyed the discussions but not necessarily more than they enjoyed them before. They did indicate that they all would consider joining another book club.

The students who joined the book club indicated on the pre-survey that they enjoyed discussing books, some with both genders and some with only one gender. Their opinions didn't change dramatically as a result of participating in book club discussions. If anything, the discussions reinforced their previous experiences discussing literature with members of their own and of the opposite gender.

Question 5: How do book clubs influence males' and females' level of textual analysis?

When coding the participants' statements as evocative, visualizing the text; connective, extending the text somehow; or reflective, considering the author; I looked at the

data for each book club meeting separately to also analyze how gender may have influenced their level of textual analysis.

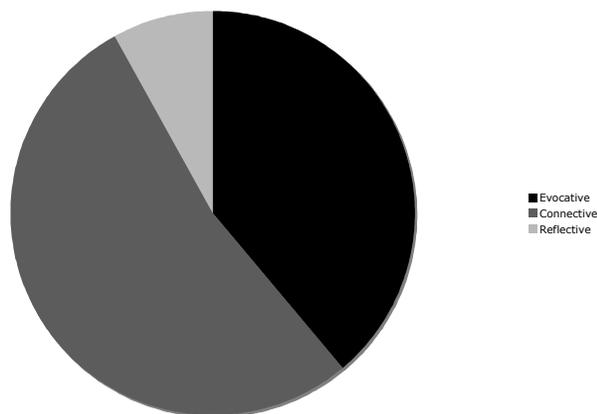


Figure 55. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Level of Analysis Total Percentages

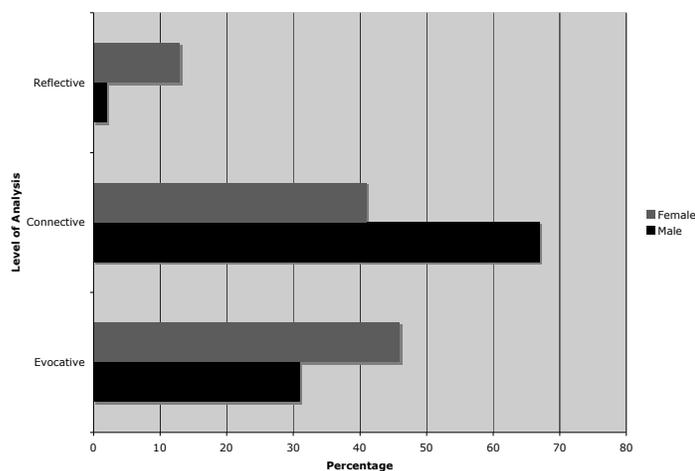


Figure 56. Peak (First Mixed-Gender): Level of Analysis by Gender

During *Peak*, the first mixed-gender book club meeting, students offered evocative statements 39% of the time, connective statements 53% of the time, and reflective statements 9% of the time. Thirty-one percent of the boys' statements were evocative, 67% were

connective, and 2% were reflective. During this same meeting, 46% of the girls' statements were evocative, 41% were connective, and 13% were reflective.

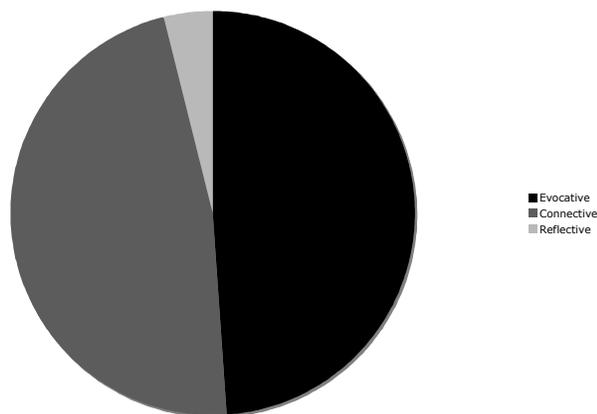


Figure 57. Son of the Mob (Second Boys-Only): Level of Analysis Total Percentages

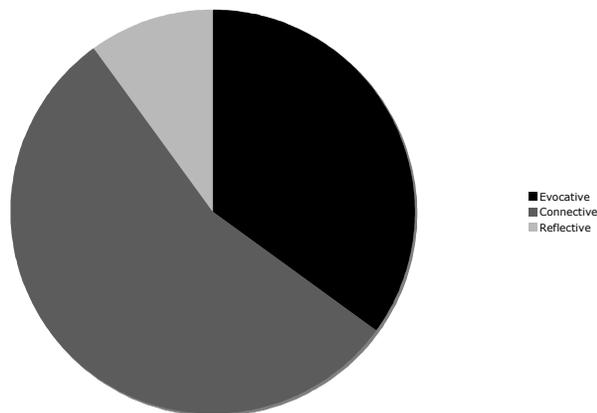


Figure 58. Life As We Knew It (Third Girls-Only): Level of Analysis Total Percentages

During the *Son of the Mob* book club meeting, 49% of the boys' comments were evocative, 47% were connective, and 4% were reflective. Alternately, during the *Life As We Knew It* book club meeting, 35% of the girls' comments were evocative, 55% were

connective, and 10% were reflective. The girls connected with the text, exploring alternatives and relating to the text personally, more during the same-gender meeting.

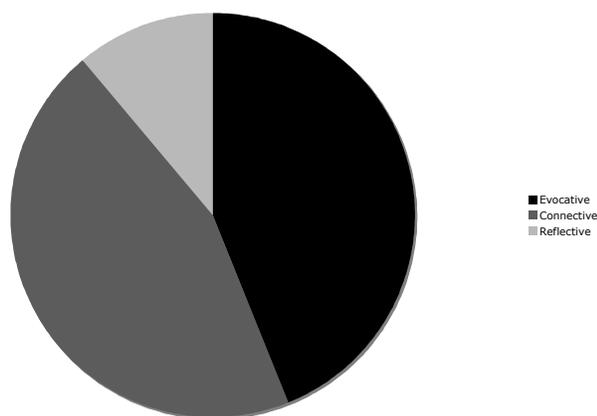


Figure 59. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Level of Analysis Total Percentages

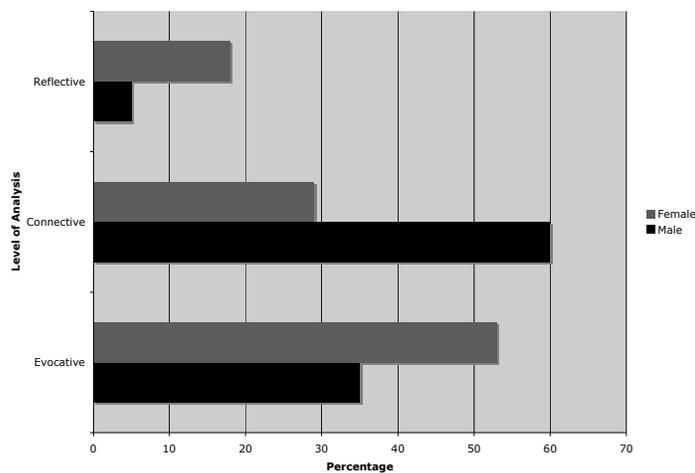


Figure 60. Godless (Fourth Mixed-Gender): Level of Analysis by Gender

During *Godless*, the second mixed-gender book club, students offered evocative comments 44% of the time, connective comments 45% of the time, and reflective statements 11% of the time. Thirty-five percent of the boys' statements were evocative, 60% were

connective, and 5% were reflective. During this meeting, 53% of the girls' statements were evocative, 29% were connective, and 18% were reflective. Although the boys demonstrated a higher percentage of connective statements, the girls demonstrated a higher percentage of reflective comments.

Although the case study students were not asked about the level of textual analysis during the book club discussions, Molly mentioned more than once that what she didn't like about the first mixed-gender meeting was that the discussion didn't go "deep enough," and what she liked about the same-gender meeting was that they "got deeper into the book." Both Susan and Mike felt that the students didn't go very deep into the texts, especially during the mixed-gender discussions. The students didn't give specific details to support their opinions, seemed to miss what the teachers felt were "obvious" plot points, and didn't analyze the text even when they were encouraged by Mike to "explain where the author went wrong."

All of the students in the book club considered themselves good readers, so it is not surprising that they offered many evocative and connective comments. Since they are teenagers leading their own discussions in a relatively new setting, it also is not surprising that they didn't have too many reflective comments. These findings seem to support Molly's concern that the mixed-gender book clubs didn't go "deep enough" for her. She was responsible for the majority of the reflective statements in both mixed-gender and same-gender settings. She often applauded and challenged the author, making it clear that she is very aware of how a book is crafted, the highest level of textual analysis according to Smith and Wilhelm. Most of her peers are not there yet, and since the percentages did not consistently increase from one book club meeting to the next, it is safe to say that these three book club meetings did not increase most students' level of textual analysis. It is also safe to

say that without Molly, the girls would not have demonstrated a significantly higher level of textual analysis than the boys.

Additional Findings

Although these findings are not a part of the actual study, they are interesting to note. Mike, the male facilitator, shared in his teacher journal how hard it was not to say anything. “It was hard as a teacher not to jump in with guiding questions, but I think it was good practice for me as well as for the students.” The teachers did try to keep their speaking to a minimum. However, especially during the last book club meeting where the students didn’t have much to say about the book, the teachers asked several questions. Interestingly, this generally spurred only a one- or two-sentence response on the part of the students. The students did at least as well at generating discussion as did the teachers.

Also, one of the students, Boy 6, was in my advanced language arts class and always contributed to class discussions. In class he was very thoughtful about both his questions and his statements, but in the book club meetings, he said virtually nothing. I wonder now if he didn’t join the book club just because he thought it would please me since he is a “teacher pleaser.” He typically reads books far outside the realm of most eighth graders, books like *The Great Gatsby* and *Of Mice and Men*. At one point in the year, he articulated a respect for studying what he called “classic” literature because of its repute and tradition more than anything. Perhaps the books in this book club, all recently published and easy-to-read (at least for him), did not appeal to him, and he therefore disengaged from the discussion of them. It’s also possible that he just didn’t feel comfortable in a setting where the teacher wasn’t really moderating, and his peers seemed to control the discussion. In retrospect, he would have been an interesting case study.

Last, there were numerous students in my other language arts classes who heard the book club students discussing the book club, and they asked me about the book club. They were really disappointed that they couldn't participate and said they would join a book club if it were offered next year. I believe this reinforces the need and desire for a book club at my school if not all middle level schools.

Differences in This Study

This study differed in important ways from prior studies. First, this study looked more closely at adolescents' use of language in discussion than studies had previously. Also, it looked at gender in the context of book clubs, which only Appleman had studied before, and even then, she looked only at mixed-gender and boys-only book clubs, and the data she presented was qualitative in nature. Additionally, this study showed that boys did not dominate over girls in discussion. Domination seemed to be driven more by personalities and confidence rather than gender. Even though gender participation was fairly equal in the mixed-gender setting and the dominant members were comfortable in both mixed-gender and same-gender settings, all of the participants asserted that for most of the group members, the same-gender meetings were better. The quantitative and qualitative data seem to lead to different conclusions about the main research question of how gender influences the design and implementation of book clubs.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The cumulative answers to all of the questions investigated in this study provide insights into the main research question: **How does gender influence how book clubs should be designed and implemented?** Some of the results were more conclusive than others, but even if the answers led to more questions, each piece of information was important to the study and led to the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: I would recommend that middle school students be offered mixed-gender book clubs because learning how to communicate with members of both genders is important; in real life, both genders must communicate effectively with one another. This is a skill for which educators must present opportunities for students to develop. Also, reading a variety of genres and hearing a variety of perspectives from a variety of people will increase students' ability to think flexibly. This also will help students in real life, where multiple perspectives abound. Additionally, the mixed-gender book club meetings sometimes revealed students at their best: the girls contributed a lot and pushed the discussion to a deeper analysis at times, and the boys listened well and interrupted less. The possibility that this could occur again should encourage educators to implement mixed-gender book clubs.

Recommendation 2: I would also recommend that middle school students be offered same-gender book clubs. This study revealed that the same-gender book clubs were more successful because the students just seemed more comfortable, contributing more and enjoying themselves more; the benefit of this is that students will express their ideas and feel positive about reading and discussing literature. All of the case study students and the two

teacher facilitators agreed that same-gender book clubs are better for this age group, and that is a significant finding.

Although these recommendations seem to contradict one another, the quantitative findings led to the first recommendation, and the qualitative findings led to the second recommendation. Additionally, I believe there is power in balance. Mixed-gender and same-gender book clubs each have their own merits, and students would benefit most from being offered both types of book club experiences.

Summary

In order to further illuminate the recommendations, I summarize the findings for each of the research questions, and if relevant, connect those findings to the recommendations.

Question 1: How does gender influence discussions in same-gender book clubs versus mixed-gender book clubs? How do same-gender and mixed-gender student book clubs confirm or refute previous gender research findings?

In general, the book club participants' behavior in this study did not support previous gender research findings. Contrary to what was expected, the males generally did not talk more times or have longer turns than the females, and males did not interrupt more than females. Males did initiate more topics than the females, which is consistent with previous research, and although it is possible that the males did this to control the floor, it is also possible that Chase, the one male who introduced the most topics, was just really uncomfortable with silences. As predicted by previous studies, the females did participate more in the same-gender book club, but so did the males.

The data shows that females did generally do more of the work in keeping the discussion going, but the difference between the genders was not vast. The difference

between the number of questions each gender asked was too minimal to say that females did more of this work. In fact, in the same-gender book club meetings, the males asked far more questions than the females. However, this is likely attributed to less need for questions in the female meeting. Each gender displayed a similar number of hedges, demonstrating that the data associated with the use of this grammatical construction may be attributed more to the age group versus gender. In the mixed-gender setting, the females did use more overlaps, supporting the speaker, but males did take over this work when females were not present. This is true of eye contact as well. Females did make more eye contact with the speakers, but males increased the amount of eye contact they made in the same-gender setting.

The males and females in this study both supported and refuted the expectations that males would discuss more plot points and females would discuss more character analysis. In all of the meetings, all of the participants discussed plot more than character, but during the mixed-gender meetings, the males unexpectedly discussed character a greater percentage of the time than the females. However, when the other gender was not present, the males focused on plot for a much greater percentage of the time, and the females discussed character for the greatest amount of time of all of the meetings. Neither of the genders discussed typically male or typically female topics a significant amount, but they also did not cross gender boundaries and introduce “other gender” topics.

Together, these findings suggest that both mixed-gender and same-gender meetings had positives and negatives. The mixed-gender setting encouraged males to listen more and females to assert their opinions more, displaying the need for a mixed-gender book club. However, many of the quieter participants did not contribute much in this setting at all, suggesting that not all of the participants’ needs were met in this setting. The same-gender

setting was very comfortable for the students, encouraging more of the participants to contribute more, displaying the need for a same-gender book club. However, fewer diverse viewpoints were expressed, suggesting that these participants were not challenged in their thinking, which is a positive outcome of literature discussions. Again, offering students both mixed-gender and same-gender book club experiences seems to be the best solution.

Question 2: How does gender influence book selections in book clubs?

The males and females did nominate books along gender lines, but when selecting a book to read together, each gender was conscious of the other gender and tried to pick a book that would appeal to both genders. The book that was selected was a good balance. It had a male protagonist who had a sarcastic voice and mostly male friends, which would typically appeal to boys, but the problem in the book was psychological and philosophical, which would typically appeal to girls.

These findings suggest that it is good for students to select some of the books because they are forced to consider the needs of the group. However, since the females ultimately dismissed all of their suggested titles as books that the boys would not want to read, it might be good for teachers to assist in finding books that are not typically male but that would appeal to both males and females.

Question 3: How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitudes towards reading?

All of the participants considered themselves readers and most of them liked reading before the book club, and none of them dramatically changed their answers on the survey after the book club. Therefore, this study cannot make any conclusion about whether book clubs influences males' or females' attitudes towards reading. However, since previous research indicates that the book club elements of choice in reading selection and shared

reading experiences increases students' enjoyment of reading, I recommend implementing book clubs at the middle school level as one way of making reading appealing to students.

Question 4: How do book clubs influence males' and females' attitudes towards literature discussion?

All of the participants said they liked book club discussions before the book club, and they all indicated that they liked book club discussions in general after the book club. Therefore, it is unclear whether book clubs influenced males' and females' attitudes towards literature discussion in general. A couple of students indicated on the post-survey a preference for same-gender over mixed-gender discussion, but there were too few of these types of responses to consider it a trend. Therefore, this study cannot make any firm conclusion about whether book clubs influences males' or females' attitudes towards gendered literature discussion.

Question 5: How do book clubs influence males' and females' level of textual analysis?

Since there was no baseline of males' and females' level of textual analysis outside of book clubs, I cannot draw a conclusion about how book clubs in general influence males' and females' level of textual analysis. In looking at the book clubs from beginning to end, there was not a consistent increase in analysis. Within the book clubs, it seems as though males and females prefer different types of textual analysis. The males exhibited analysis at the connective level the most, and the females exhibited analysis at the evocative level the most. Females were also responsible for most of the reflective analysis. Even though these trends can be seen in this study, given the limited consistent data, I cannot draw any firm conclusions about students' analysis in book club discussions.

Proposed Changes to the Study

I believe it would have proven beneficial to be more explicit in asking students about who was responsible for doing the work of keeping a discussion going, what kind of topics they had discussed or would have discussed had the other gender or teachers not been present, and whether each book club meeting caused them to enjoy reading and/or discussion more or less. This information would have added to the data and possibly given a clearer answer to these questions. Although a short survey is critical in respecting the volunteers' time, adding a few questions to the survey might also have helped to answer several of the research questions. For example, I did not delineate between mixed-gender and same-gender in the questions as much as I could have.

Also, although I did give the teacher facilitators guiding questions to help them when writing their journal reflections, it might have been better to interview them after each book club meeting. The reason for this is because I could have probed them to go deeper with their answers and analyze parts of the discussion that they hadn't. Their answers, like the case study students', would have added to the data and possibly given a more clear answer to several of the questions.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations for this study. Because of time constraints, only three sessions were possible, which limited the data gathered, especially for same-gender book club meetings since we only held one same-gender meeting for each gender. Also, the three sessions were completed in a seven-week time span, which pushed some of the students to finish the books on time. This could have affected how the students participated in the book

club meetings. Also because of the shortness of time, the students were able to select only one of the books, limiting the data on how the book clubs affected students' choice of novels.

In addition to time constraints, the number of students who could participate was limited by the time of day we had to have the book club meetings. Because students at Hudson Middle are highly involved in activities both before and after school, the book club meetings were held during the day to ensure that there would be enough students for the study. However, this also meant that the pool of students who could participate was limited to students in study hall or language arts during the appointed time, which coincided with the teacher facilitators' preparation period. This pool of students was further limited when study hall students shared that they would rather go to chorus than the book club. Ninth grade students also expressed no interest in participating, probably because the freshmen experience a much heavier work load and more extracurricular opportunities than the eighth graders. Therefore, the pool of students all came from eighth grade language arts classrooms, which meant that there were only a total of eight boys and seven girls who signed up. Additionally, one of the girls did not secure permission from her parents to participate in the study, so the total numbers of students in the study were eight boys and six girls. If more students could have participated, the data would be improved. Similarly, it was difficult to discern with certainty whether students contributed more in the same-gender setting because of gender or because the group size was much smaller than the mixed-gender setting.

It would also have been beneficial to include more students as case studies. There wasn't time to interview each student after each book club meeting, but this would have been ideal in getting the clearest picture possible of how each student perceived all of the aspects of the book club.

Finally, due to time constraints, several grammatical constructions were not included in this study. The inclusion of these in the data would have provided a more complete picture of how each gender used language to communicate.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many opportunities for further research related to this study. I think it would be informative to investigate different age groups, especially school-aged students, and compare the gender interactions at each age. Most of the data in the review of literature was gathered about adults, which may explain why there wasn't much congruence between it and the data gathered in this study. Therefore, the more data that is gathered about students, the better informed we will be about how the genders interact and how that might affect book clubs or other discussion groups. Classroom discussions are another area where additional gender studies could be completed. For example, whether boys and girls discuss plot or character more is currently an under-developed research area.

A study that could be completed both inside and outside of the classroom is how where students sit influences how students contribute to discussion. It would be informative to look at how students contribute to discussion both when students self-select where they sit and when they are assigned different areas to sit. In addition to this, one could study how the group size influences how much students contribute to discussion.

Another area for future study is the effect of book clubs on reading level or ability. This longer study would support or refute the academic benefits of book clubs to students. A similar study on book clubs and reluctant readers might accomplish similar goals. Finally, a study on book clubs and race and/or ethnicity might support or refute the social and cultural benefits of book clubs.

In conclusion, as Smith and Wilhelm argue, teachers must begin thinking about how to make reading relevant for students today. Book clubs, an activity that joins reading with socialization, are a way of making reading more enjoyable for reluctant readers at the same time as helping proficient readers, who might not otherwise be involved at school, find a niche in which they feel comfortable. However, teachers should not ignore gender, as Appleby argues they have done previously, when creating these small groups.

Males and females do enact different behaviors, and this should be considered when creating book clubs. This study has shown that neither gender completely dominated the discussion and in some cases demonstrated more politeness in mixed-gender settings than in same-gender settings. This, combined with the reality that males and females must communicate with one another on a regular basis, suggests that mixed-gender book clubs are a positive experience for both genders. However, when looking only at the more quiet participants, it is clear that they felt more comfortable, as was evidenced by the increased amount of talk in particular, in the same-gender setting. This, combined with Krolokke's findings that males and females find their own style of communication superior and Guzzetti's findings that boys and girls both prefer same-gender groupings, suggests that same-gender book clubs are a positive experience for both genders.

I strongly urge teachers to implement both mixed-gender and same-gender book clubs in their classrooms. Even if students are unavailable for a before- or after-school club, teachers can carve out time during their own classes for students to read and discuss common books with one another. I believe this will help students not only to improve their communication and reading skills, but also to improve their attitude about school in general.

Book clubs are an easy way to increase students' enjoyment of reading and school, while at the same time encouraging students to communicate more clearly.

Implications for Education

Although it is difficult to extend any study outside of itself, I recommend that teachers consider implementing book clubs, especially at the middle school level. I also strongly urge teachers to consider gender when designing such book clubs. Beyond that, I suggest that educators everywhere consider gender more thoughtfully and systematically in all of the classroom experiences they create for students. Within every classroom, boys and girls must communicate and work together, and it's important to consider how gender influences these interactions. More and more educators are recognizing how much gender really does influence school experiences, and many of them are electing to separate the genders for much if not all of the school day.

Although I see the benefits of this approach, given the findings of this study, I question any approach that is one-dimensional. I would advocate for a balanced approach, possibly separating the genders for core classes like math and language arts and mixing the genders for electives like music and art. This would allow students the opportunity to feel comfortable in settings with their own gender, which might be an optimal learning environment, and also allow students the opportunity to hone necessary communication skills in mixed-gender settings. Much more research needs to be done before adopting any extreme approach, but there are many studies, this one included, that suggest there are enough benefits to occasionally separating the genders, especially during adolescence, that educators should consider an alternative to the traditional public school design of mixing the genders

for all of their classes. I would advocate that giving students both mixed-gender and same-gender experiences would best meet students' varied needs.

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APPENDIX A

BOOK CLUB MEETINGS SCHEDULE

February 25: Two teachers, one male and one female, who facilitated the book club meetings met and selected the first books to be read. The first book, *Peak* by Roland Smith, was a book that all of the participants read. The next set of books were read in gender-specific groups; there was one book for girls, *Life As We Knew It* by Susan Pfeffer, and one book for boys, *Son of the Mob* by Gordon Korman. The teachers received the questions to guide their reflective teacher journals that were written after each book club meeting.

February 25: I requested seventeen copies of *Peak* from the public library.

February 25: Signs promoting the book clubs were posted around the school, and language arts and study hall teachers told students about the book club.

February 29: Students signed up for the book club by this date.

February 29: Participants were given human subjects forms to sign and return. Human subjects forms were sent home to parents to sign and return.

February 29-March 2: I trained two volunteers to code for language usage in the videotaped book club sessions.

March 3: I asked language arts teachers to help identify participants as talkative or not during literature discussions. I then selected four case-study students: one talkative boy, one quiet boy, one talkative girl, and one quiet girl.

March 5: Case study students were given human subjects forms to sign and return. Human subjects forms were sent home to case study student parents to sign and return.

March 7: I distributed copies of *Peak* to participants.

March 14: I requested eight copies of *Life As We Knew It* and nine copies of *Son of the Mob* from the public library.

March 21: Participants met and discussed their options for the last book. They selected *Godless* by Pete Hautman. This meeting was videotaped. I requested seventeen copies of *Godless* from the public library.

March 28: Participants completed the pre-survey and participated in the first book club meeting for *Peak*. This was a mixed-gender meeting. Participants snacked and settled in for a few minutes, completed the survey for about five minutes, discussed the book for about twenty-five minutes, and spent the last few minutes of class making written recommendations for the final book selection. This meeting was videotaped from two

different angles, as well as audio taped. Participants returned their copies of *Peak* and received copies of *Life As We Knew It* or *Son of the Mob*.

March 31-April 3: Case study students were interviewed. These interviews were audio taped.

April 11: The boys met to discuss *Son of the Mob*. This meeting was videotaped from two different angles, as well as audio taped. Participants returned their copies of *Son of the Mob* and received copies of *Godless*.

April 14: The girls met to discuss *Life As We Knew It*. This meeting was videotaped from two different angles, as well as audio taped. Participants returned their copies of *Life As We Knew It* and received copies of *Godless*.

April 14-18: Case study students were interviewed. These interviews were audio taped.

April 28: All of the participants met to discuss *Godless*. This meeting was videotaped from two different angles, as well as audio taped. At the end of the meeting, students took about five minutes to complete the post-survey. Participants returned their copies of *Godless*.

April 29: I collected the teacher journals from the teachers.

April 29- May 2: Case study students were interviewed. These interviews were audio taped.

May 10-11: I transcribed all of the book club meetings.

May 17-18: Volunteers coded all of the book club meetings.

May 19- June 6: I aggregated and analyzed the data.

June: I confirmed the end of the study with Human Subjects. I submitted my thesis for approval.

APPENDIX B

BOOK CLUB SURVEYS

Code: _____ Date: _____

Initial Book Club Survey

1. I consider myself a good reader.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I enjoy reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I read a variety of genres.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I understand books better when I discuss them with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I enjoy discussing the books I read with boys.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I enjoy discussing the books I read with girls.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I enjoy discussing the books I read with boys and girls.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I think boys talk more than girls in discussions about books.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I will articulate my opinions during book club discussions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I will listen to others' opinions during book club discussions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Code: _____

Date: _____

Follow-Up Book Club Survey

1. I consider myself a good reader.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I enjoy reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I read a variety of genres.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I understand books better when I discuss them with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I enjoy discussing the books I read with boys.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I enjoy discussing the books I read with girls.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I enjoy discussing the books I read with boys and girls.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I think boys talk more than girls in discussions about books.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I articulated my opinions during book club discussions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I listened to others' opinions during book club discussions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX C

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Interview Questions, Book 1

1. How do you think the book club meeting went?
2. What was the best part of the discussion for you?
3. What was the worst part of the discussion for you?
4. Was there anyone (or a group) that you felt dominated the discussion?
5. If so, who?
6. And why?
7. Was there anyone (or a group) that you felt didn't contribute at all?
8. If so, who?
9. And why?
10. Considering who contributed what and how often, how do you think the discussion went?
11. What would you have liked to discuss that wasn't discussed?
12. What did you do during the book club meeting?
13. Did you feel like you contributed too much, just right, or not enough?
14. Explain.
15. What do you hope happens again at book club?
16. What would you like to happen that didn't happen?

Student Interview Questions, Books 2 and 3

1. How do you think the book club meeting went?
2. What was the best part of the discussion for you?
3. What was the worst part of the discussion for you?
4. Was there anyone (or a group) that you felt dominated the discussion?
5. If so, who?
6. And why?
7. Was there anyone (or a group) that you felt didn't contribute at all?
8. If so, who?
9. And why?
10. Considering who contributed what and how often, how do you think the discussion went?
11. What would you have liked to discuss that wasn't discussed?
12. What did you do during the book club meeting?
13. Did you feel like you contributed too much, just right, or not enough?
14. Explain.
15. What do you hope happens again at book club?
16. What would you like to happen that didn't happen?
17. Did you like this book club meeting better than the first one?
18. Why?
19. Do you think mixed-gender or same-gender book clubs are better?
20. Why?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Teacher Facilitator Questions

1. How do you think the book club meeting went?
2. What do you think went particularly well?
3. What do you think didn't go as well?
4. What, if anything, will you do again for the next book club meeting?
5. What, if anything, will you be sure to not do again?
6. Were there any students that you felt dominated the discussion?
7. If so, who?
8. Why?
9. Is it important as the facilitator to make sure no one dominates the discussion?
10. If so, how did, or how will, you do that?
11. Were there any students that you felt didn't contribute to the discussion?
12. What gender specific behaviors did you notice?
13. What do you anticipate may happen next time?
14. What else would you like to add?