

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ILLITERACY AMONG MALES IN WILSON'S
RUN ALL AGE SCHOOL**

by

Stephanie Ophelia Smith

A thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Masters of Science in Education – Reading Degree

Thesis Chair: Dr. Anne Stinson

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- WHITEWATER

December 12, 2006

The University of Wisconsin – Whitewater

Thesis Approved

Stephanie Ophelia Smith

Date: _____

Committee Members: _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have now completed the final journey to fulfilling one of my many dreams and there are many people I wish to thank for their continued support.

I thank Dr. Anne Stinson who not only believe in me, but also believe in the children of my country- Jamaica. You have in more ways than you can ever imagine left a positive and indelible mark in my life. To Dr. Susan Bronowski for all of her help and advice in all the other case studies leading up to this research.

I wish to thank my friend Shane Smith for giving me all the help he could and spending endless hours working with me on this project. To all the students, teachers, parents and principal of the Wilson's Run All Age School, without your help and willingness to participate, this would not have been possible.

I thank my husband Clive, for his love and support. To my two wonderful daughters, for taking care of themselves while I was working on this study. To Martin and Seoma for their never ending support and knowledge that I could accomplish this. Thanks a lot.

And finally to Chris Kutz, you have been there for me from my very first day at this institution- helping me to sort out classes, teaching me about the culture, giving me words of encouragement, making me laugh, just for being there. This world is a better place because of people like you Chris. Thanks.

One Love!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Introduction	1
Purpose of Study	2
Hypothesis	2
Research Statement	2
Scope of the Study	3
Limitations of the Study	3
Assumptions	4
Definitions of Terms	4
Significance of the Study	5
Chapter Two: Literature Review	7
Introduction	7
Important Research Findings	8
Gender Roles	12
Language Barriers	17
Do the Boys Really Care?	18
Attitudes toward Reading	19
Chapter Three: Methodology	21
Participants	21

Instrumentations	22
Procedures	23
Ethical Issues	24
Reliability and Validity	24
Chapter Four: Results	25
Results of the Structured Interview by Teachers	25
Results of the Structured Interview by Parents	27
Results of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey	29
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations	42
Conclusions	42
Limitations	44
Recommendations	45
Tables	
Table 1: Grade One Boys Average Scores	30
Table 2: Grade Two Boys Average Scores	32
Table 3: Grade Three Boys Average Scores	34
Table 4: Grade Four Boys Average Scores	36
Table 5: Grade Five Boys Average Scores	38
Table 6: Grade Six Boys Average Scores	40
References	45
Appendixes	48
Appendix A: Cover Letter	49

Appendix B: Consent Forms	50
Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions for Parents	51
Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions for Teachers	52
Appendix E: Sample Questionnaire for Students	53
Appendix F: IRB Forms	54
Appendix G: Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey	55

Abstract of Thesis

Stephanie O. Smith

Factors Contributing to Illiteracy among Males in the Wilson's Run All Age School

December 12, 2006

Dr. Anne Stinson, Thesis Chair

The University of Wisconsin- Whitewater

Abstract

Factors Contributing to Illiteracy among Males in the Wilson's Run All Age School

It is a well-known fact that most boys who drop out of school are likely to have weak or poorly developed literacy skills. These dropouts become vulnerable to a life of underemployment, unemployment and for worse, are at higher risk of becoming criminal offenders. There is some evidence that boys and girls may learn different orientations to school work and to learning and in this respect are influenced differently by the mother and the father (Connell et al., 1982).

Addressing issues posed by the literacy gap has become more urgent than ever before, especially in developing countries like Jamaica, where social conditions, such as poverty can jeopardize children's well-being. These social conditions can make the challenge of bringing these affected children to a high level of literacy seem overwhelming. It is known however, that engaged readers have a much greater chance of staying in school, expanding career and life options, and maturing into self-actualized adults (Brozo, 2002). This study will consider factors that contribute to the high illiteracy rate in the Wilson's Run All Age School in Trelawny, Jamaica.

The community is located high in the Cockpit Country of Trelawny. It is a secluded, tight-knit community, where everybody is familiar and are all related. It is a small farming community, where the farmers cultivate mainly yams on small plots of land. The women of the district are also mostly farmers or stay -at-home moms or if employed are mainly domestic helpers. The community members enjoy a very simplistic

lifestyle, from carrying water on their heads and gathering woods from the hill for their domestic needs, to playing football in the street to pass the time away. The participants were the teachers at the school, students attending the school and parents. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was given to the students to see what attitudes they held towards reading for pleasure or reading to learn. The teachers were interviewed to get their feedback on students' attitudes toward learning and their reading strategies, while the parents were interviewed for their feedback on their role in their children's education.

The results from this study will be shared with the school and the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture. It is hoped that from this study some measures can be put in place to start correcting the problem of illiteracy in the school.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Wilson's Run All Age School is situated in the rural, western part Jamaica. It can be found in the Cockpit Country (mountains) in the parish of Trelawny in an area commonly known as the "crown lands." The tranquility of the area is so heavenly that one is at first sight captivated by its serenity and lush beauty. This is a very quiet community with one accessible route. The community has a small school with a population of one hundred and twenty-three students of which sixty-four (52%) are boys.

The school has five teachers; three females and two males including the principal, who teaches grades five and six which are combined to form one class. This is done due to the lack of space and the low student-teacher ratio, according to the Ministry of Education, which has to sanction the school getting additional staff; it has not done so. The community consists of mostly small farmers with functional literate abilities; that is, most of them are able to read the scale to weigh their produce and calculate their earnings. Of the five teachers who work at the school, one is from and lives in the community.

There are five churches and a few small grocery shops, where the residents get their basic domestic items. The small school library is the only literary institution in the community; community members are welcome to borrow books, but never do. Some of the students borrow books to take home. The children of this community are almost secluded as its closest neighbor is three miles away. There are no children from outside the community enrolled in the school. There is also a basic school, which is the feeder school to the All Age School.

Purpose of the Study

The fundamental purpose of this study was to investigate some of the factors contributing to illiteracy among boys in the Wilson's Run All Age School, and ways to identify and eliminate them. An example of the reading problem that exists in the school can be simplified as thus: Out of the 2003 grade 4 class of eighteen boys, one reads at the grade level, three read at the grade three instructional level and fourteen read at grade one or below level. This statistic is typical as to the reading level (trends) of all the boys in all the grades in the school.

Hypothesis

Factors such as negative attitude toward reading, absenteeism, lack of adequate reading materials, classroom space, and teacher training may contribute to the illiteracy rate.

Research Statement

In order to address concern for the high illiteracy rate among boys in the Wilson's Run All Age School in Trelawny, the attitudes and perceptions of the boys, teachers and parents will be documented.

Scope of the Study

Accumulative data collected at this school over the past several years have shown the disturbing trend that boys are been failing in all core subjects areas within the school's curriculum. The Grade Four Literacy Test, which is the standardized test given to all grade four students in May nationwide, has shown that the boys at Wilson's Run All Age school have not been performing well. On average, for the last four years, the statistics showed that 40% of the boys had to take remedial class during the summer to pass the test; 30% passed the test, but are considered at risk. While teachers and parents debate as to whom or what is the problem, there appears to be no end in sight to stop the deterioration of adequately preparing these boys to function to their full academic potential. From this research, it is hoped that factors contributing to illiteracy will be identified and the proper strategies can be implemented to decrease and then gradually eliminate illiteracy among this group.

Limitations of the Study

This study gathered information from the students, teachers, and parents in the Wilson's Run community in Trelawny, Jamaica, through questionnaires and structured interviews. The location was the district Wilson's Run in Trelawny, Jamaica. The duration of the study was approximately five months. Some of the variables included financial difficulties, attendance and parent involvement. The study was conducted in the target area of Wilson's Run District and the results and findings are therefore only applicable to that district; however it may have some indications for similar districts throughout rural Jamaica.

Assumptions

The researcher was not able to be physically in the community for the whole time of the research, so volunteers were asked to gather information. The researcher had some difficulties at times getting data as postal service is slow from the community and telephone signaling was not always efficient. The researcher is confident that the participants were honest in their answers and responses and the research assistants were diplomatic in conducting the interviews.

Because the research was conducted in another country, there are terminologies that may have different meanings elsewhere. Listed below are some words that may help readers to understand the text.

Definitions of Terms

Feeder school: the main basic school (pre-school) that supplies the primary school with most of its first grade students at the beginning of the school year.

Parent involvement: - the relationship that exist between the school and the parents of the children who attend the school.

Attendance: - the number of times a student is present at school.

Illiteracy: - reading below two or more grade levels.

Achievement: -to accomplish (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004).

Attitude: - the position of something in relation to some thing else (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004).

Cockpit Country: - the mountains in the western part of Jamaica.

Literacy: - the ability to read and write at the expected grade/ability level

Ministry of Education: - The governing body responsible for implementing policy changes in the education system in Jamaica.

Parish: one of the fourteen subdivisions that the country (Jamaica) is divided into

Creole language: - the local dialect (patios) of the people in Jamaica.

All Age School: - an educational institutional which caters for primary and junior high students (in Jamaica).

Readers: - books that are used in the class as the reading material.

Devotions: - the daily morning religious activity which is performed in all public schools in Jamaica.

Don man or don: self-acclaimed area/community leader who demands respect from the members of the community.

Significance of the Study

It is very important for educators to be aware of the community they serve. The community of Wilson's Run All Age School in Trelawny has a problem where literacy is concerned. As teachers face the daily arduous task of finding new and exciting ways to deal with reading challenges, providing teachers with information about their students from outside the classroom can be an avenue to begin addressing possible associated reading problems.

Evans (2001) states, "When we look outside of the school, rather than focus on what happens inside, we can regard education and schooling as a phase in the human life course. Education and schooling are a critical phase in the transition from childhood or youth to adulthood" (p. 8). Our experiences in school tend to determine in some respect the path we take as adults. Too many times as educators we hear young men and fathers regretting not making

the best of their school days, looking back and with laughter talking about their favorite times in school, or teachers they had. It is not uncommon also to hear them talking about a concept they never could grasp, such as telling time (reading the clock) or doing long division.

This study will provide important information which can be used as stepping-stones to address solve the problem of illiteracy in this community. Although the research was done in one district, the recommendations may be used in districts with similar problems, as rural communities in Jamaica are very similar, both socio-economically and demographically.

Even though no two individuals are alike, having valuable information maybe a place to start. The results of this study could form the first step toward creating a more literate Jamaica, thus creating new career opportunities for our graduates. The school motto says, “Education eradicates ignorance and poverty”; through this study, the researcher will discover factors that may cause the boys of this community to be ‘lagging behind’ (educationally) their peers. It is hoped that the students will be given the necessary help they need to realize their dreams.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The desire to discover the truth about us as human intensifies with each passing day. This “need to know” has got everyone working, from the scientists to the environmentalists. Researches have become scientific so as to successfully represent a theory and also to pass to the critics’ tests. In education it is no different; as educators we are constantly searching for that “miracle” way to teach. Policy makers are looking to go down in history as the party who educates and parents want their children to be successful in school.

There have certainly been quite a number of researchers who have examined the role of gender in education. Educators as well as parents want to know if boys are at a disadvantage in the education arena just by being boys. Many argue that males and females have different innate abilities (Gurian, 2001); while others argue that the abilities from both sexes are behavioral. We can see in our daily lives how much gender roles are stereotyped, even though we may want to believe that this is changing; but still, how many males want to become nurses?

In most countries, from the beginning of civilization, men and women have had different roles. While there are a few changes here and there with women in more “masculine” roles, there are many women who still believe that there is truly a limit to what women should do, even sub-consciously. According to Alice Eagly’s (1987; Eagly, Wood and Diekman, 2000) social role theory, this sex- based division of labor leads necessarily to gender stereotypes and sex differences in behavior.

Important Research Findings

As long as we have schools, there will be boys who would rather be elsewhere. The number of young men who religiously attend school without dodging and complaining decrease each day. Mounting evidence suggests that the time has come to begin paying special attention to the literacy needs of adolescent boys. Consider these sobering facts as listed in Brozo(2002):

Boys are three to five times more likely than girls to have learning and/or reading disabilities placement in schools.	(National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).
The number of males earning academic degrees in traditional male professions, such as medicine and law, is decreasing, although the number of these degrees earned by females is rapidly increasing. In 1970, women earned only 8% of medical degrees and 5% of law degrees; today those percentages are up to 39% and 43%, respectively.	(Sommers, 2000).
Of the estimated 500,000 to 1 million students who annually drop out of U.S. high schools, over 55% are boys	(National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).
Five out of six children and adolescents diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are boys	(American Psychiatric Association, 1994).
Boys in elementary school through high school score more significantly lower than girls on standardized measures of reading achievement.	(Pottorff, Phelps-Zientarsky, & Skovera, 1996)
Of the estimated 500,000 to 1 million students who annually drop out of U.S. high school, over 55% are boys	

Fewer boys than girls study advanced algebra and geometry, and more girls than boys study chemistry Boys are less likely than girls to take advanced placement examinations and go to college.	(National Center for Education Statistics, 1998,1999).
Boys are 50% more likely to be retained a grade than girls.	(Kleinfield, 1999).

Research conducted in Jamaica and elsewhere shows that boys and girls learn different skills as they have different socializing experiences at home and are assigned different duties to perform (Robinson, 1995). The relationship between students' academic work, and their ambitions and expectations from society, may be attributed to how well they perform academically. Does our society expect more from our girls? Do parents expect their daughters to excel while their sons are expected to fail? In Jamaican schools boys and girls follow the same formal curriculum, yet educators will tell you that girls seem more enthralled with learning than boys.

Early childhood education in Jamaica

Early Childhood education is concerned with the holistic development of children ages 4 to 6. Education at this level is delivered through community operated Basic Schools, government infant departments in Primary and All-age schools, and kindergarten departments of privately owned Preparatory schools (Ministry of Education, 2004b). In most cases, a community-based sponsoring body manages basic schools, and the government's contribution is in the form of a subsidy – salary, nutrition, and class materials. However, parents are

required to pay a fee whether on a monthly or bi-weekly basis so as to provide further financial support for the day to day operations of these schools. Basic schools, especially those in the rural areas of the country, are mostly taught by pre-trained teachers – individuals who may have successfully completed high school. Currently, there are efforts being made and legislations being drafted to mandate that at least one trained teacher be placed in a Basic school that has a student population of over one hundred. This coincides with the revision of the 3-5 year-old curriculum which is now underway (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture, 2004b). The Ministry has also embarked on the process of extending Early Childhood education to accommodate children from birth to age 3. To this end, an Infant Care Curriculum is currently being piloted.

Primary education

Students progress from the early childhood level to the primary level of education. Primary education is offered to students in grades 1 through 6 between the ages of 6 and 12. This level of education is technically the only ‘free’ education on the island. Historically, this is the level of education where “the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values for further development” (Ministry of Education Youth and Culture, 2004) is laid. This has been for many reasons; primary among them is the fact that it is at this level of education that many poor children stop going to school. However, primary education has gone under numerous reorganization and reforms in recent years with a focus on preparing students for the secondary school system.

Current reforms of primary education include the phasing out of All-Age schools (consisting grades 1 – 9), revised curricula for all grades, increased teacher training, upgrading of school administrators, and a broadened emphasis on school/community partnerships. The

most far reaching reform, however, is arguably the introduction of the National Assessment Program (Ministry of Education Youth and Culture, 2004b). The program, which was first introduced in 1999, monitors how well grade 1 through to grade six students are learning throughout their years in primary school. Through this program, tests are provided to schools for testing students in grades one, three, four, and six. The test is administered to students at grades one, three, and four, by teachers who then use the results to diagnose the students' current level of performance, as well as to determine and devise appropriate strategies to remedy any area of weaknesses identified and to build on students' strengths. At grade 1, the Readiness Inventory is administered to determine the basic skills students have when they first enter primary school. At the end of grade 3, the Grade Three Diagnostic Tests in Mathematics and Language Arts (including writing) are given. At the end of grade 4, students are given the Grade Four Literacy Test which checks their ability to recognize words, read, and understand simple stories, factual texts, directions, lists, and tables. It also checks their ability to write simple stories, reports, and letters. If a student fails this test, then he must successfully complete a summer program before being promoted to the fifth grade (Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture Green Paper, 1999).

With the end of primary education comes the Grade Six Achievement Tests (GSAT), administered in the areas of Mathematics, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Writing. These tests "help students, parents, teachers, and the Ministry of Education find out how well the student has learned the subjects during his/her time in school" (Ministry of Education Youth and Culture, 2004b). Perhaps more importantly, however, is the fact that it is the results of these tests that determine, to a large extent, the high school that a student will attend after completing primary school. To a lesser extent, other considerations for high school placement

include the parents' choice of the high school they want their child to attend, and the distance of the school from the student's home. The GSAT replaced the Common Entrance Exams in 1998 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, 2004b).

The Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) results, since its inception in 1998, have indicated that girls out performed boys in all the subject areas tested. This performance gap continues throughout the secondary schools according to the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC).

Gender Roles

Gender plays an important role in structuring the students' experience in the classroom. Boys will act out on certain behavior so that the teachers may view them differently. They are more likely to be absent from classes and devotions than girls. Such behaviors on the part of the boys are totally opposite to the girls who are usually described as being 'active participants'. Because of this teachers consequently pay more attention to and interact with the girls while trying to encourage and motivate the boys.

However, Robinson (1995) found that in a sample of primary level readers used in Jamaican schools, men and boys were more frequently represented than women and girls, and boys were often represented in active play, whereas, girls were often seen in passive play. Furthermore, men were portrayed in a range of occupations such as managers, astronauts, sportsmen, and musicians, while women in the few cases where they were portrayed as gainfully employed, were presented as helpers, nurses, and teachers. Such readers are a site for gender socialization, for they help to shape students' attitudes toward oneself, to others and to life in general (Robinson, 1995: p.6). Despite these finding it would appear that most boys have

not seen the connections to becoming a pilot and being able to read.

In many classrooms at the primary level it was expected that boys would fight, (even though unacceptable) and girls would protect the classroom and the teaching aids. This also filtered down into the community where when boys get into fights it merely evokes a shrug of the shoulders, but when girls get into fights there are more concerns to get the full details. In the wider community, it is also more acceptable by most parents and teachers when boys are only functionally literate, so much so that it has almost become the norm.

Most of times in schools in Jamaica, one will see girls sweeping the classroom and boys are collecting the garbage. Some teachers would send the student (boy or girl) who is the least literate to run errands, such as going to the post office and buying the teachers' lunches. Parent Teacher Association meetings are always filled with women only and of multiple children from the same home, the boys are likely to be absent more often or report to school looking unkempt. If adults continue to encourage these behaviors and practices, the children and boys in particular can never be held accountable for their poor academic performance in school.

Many teachers' comments of boys in school range from, "Girls take their work more seriously" to "you always have to be behind the boys to get them to work". These varied differences in attitude to school work maybe a result of the different skills, habits, and dispositions children learn at home and in school. The ability to read has been identified as one very important developmental hurdle (Slavin, 1996). Without the ability to read, students may interpret school as punishing, unrewarding or unsatisfying. This could be one of the reasons many lessons are disrupted by a student doing the complete opposite of his/her classmates such as throwing paper balls or drawing, when everyone else maybe engaged with the matter on hand.

According to the social learning theory, children do not learn to behave as boys and girls simply by responding to rewards and punishments (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978, p.97). Children will model (that is observe and imitate) each other. Children's personalities also tend to resemble the personality of their most dominant or attractive parent, not necessarily that of the same- sex parents (Hetherington, 1967). This finding is consistent with other research indicating that children are most likely to imitate people who they perceive to be powerful, warm and high status (Bandura, 1977). It is not uncommon to see secondary school boys in Jamaica copying the dress code and posture of the 'don-man' in the community in which he resides, or the younger boys in the primary school talking about how fast the don's cars are or how big his house is. While many people may agree that he is not the ideal role model, he is the most prominent and respected one.

The fact that there are more female than male teachers in the classroom provides the ideal 'nesting' place where boys can assert themselves and try to behave powerfully. They do this everyday and know they can calm the storm or rock the boat whenever they want to. And yet there are some critics of the educational system that have stated that classrooms are often unfriendly to boys and try to 'feminize' them. (Houston, 1983; Wilkinson & Marrette, 1985; and Fogot, Rodgers & Leinbach, 2000). They argue that boys are not encouraged nor are allowed to act as boys, but are constantly punished and told to tone down.

Many others will argue that society has never accepted the natural behaviors of boys, but has instead created set 'rules' by which boys are judged, thus 'handicapping' them throughout their school life. Because most boys feel that they have to be more than ordinary to be seen, they do break the rules and are then expelled from school in Jamaica more frequent and easily than girls.

Brozo (2002) states; “It is well known that boys who drop out of school are likely to have weak or poorly developed literacy skills. These dropouts become vulnerable to a life of underemployment and unemployment and far worse, are at the higher risk of becoming criminal offenders. It is also known, however, that engaged readers have a much greater chance of staying in school, expanding career and life options and motivating into self-actualized adults” (p. 3). Many of our young men will unfortunately see the connection with being able to read and better paying jobs and career opportunities too late in their school life. Many of the subjects offered by the curriculum do not make that connection, and where the connection exists many of our teachers are not able to relate it to their students in a concrete way due to the lack of resources. In my experiences in the classroom, I have observed that the boys would easily remember a lesson in science, where they were actively participating in doing an experiment. They would grasp the concept of spending money, because they could relate to it, it being part of their everyday life. However when it was time to read, they appeared to be confused, uninterested and unmotivated.

Many educators seem to have a concern for the boys who are not reading (Wilhelm, Smith, & Evans). Many of them have no doubt tried, failed, and are constantly trying to help. But it is also a mammoth task to get the boys motivated and captivated. There is some evidence that teachers treat girls and boys differently. Several researchers have found that some teachers tend to be more lenient in accepting wrong answers from girls, saying, in effect, “Well, at least you tried”. But when boys give the wrong answers, the teacher is more likely to say, “Try harder or you can do better”.

Some popular authors have argued that schools tend to reward the passive, cooperative behavior of girls (Gurian, 2001). From infancy through the preschool years, most studies found

new differences between boys and girls in overall mental and motor development or in specific abilities. During the school years and beyond psychologists find no difference in general intelligence on the standard to minimized sex differences. However scores on some tests of specific abilities show sex differences. For example, from elementary through high school, girls score higher than boys on tests of reading and writing and fewer girls require remediation in reading (Berk, 2002, Halpern, 2000).

Halpern and LaMay (2000) summarized the research as thus:

Although there is no sex differences in general intelligence, reliable differences are found on some tests of cognitive abilities. Many of the tasks that assess the ability to manipulate visual images in working memory show an advantage for males, whereas many of the tasks that require retrieval from long-term memory and the acquisition and use of verbal information show a female advantage. Large effects favoring males are also found on advanced tests of mathematical achievement, especially, with highly select samples. Males are over represented in some types of mental retardation.”
(p.229).

Because the ability to read is used as the measuring stick on academic performance, the other intelligences or capabilities of males who are not reading are not focused on so as to develop. With limited resources in Jamaican classrooms, many of the teaching aids are made by the very students, usually the boys who are not able to read well but are very artistic. This is the same for most of the athletes and members of the drama club.

Language Barriers

Many educators in Jamaica strongly believe that our major contribution to illiteracy in both males and females is due to the language differences. The language spoken by the teacher is different from the language used in the homes of the students. The rules for a language define how words should be put together to form sentences. Dialects appear to differ in their rules in these areas, but it is important to remember that these differences are not errors. The fact that the language is different affects spelling, as pronunciation or phonemes are different. Like many other post colonial societies where speakers of different languages have come in contact, Jamaica has a Creole language derived from the languages of the colonizer and the colonized language of the former colonizers is more extensively accepted. In recent times, there has been a change in thinking about what constitutes a language, and consequently about Creole (Jamaican dialect) and its place in schools. In the 1980s, the English teachers recognized the validity of the use of Creole in the Jamaican classroom. They advocate that teachers should accept and validate the child's first language or at least not to disregard the language that the child brings to school. Today many teachers accept that position. Many would also be willing to use the Creole to explain a concept where this is necessary. Yet there are so many instances where, when some teachers wish to insult a student, they may use the Creole- an act that signals their lack of respect for the Creole, for the child's native language as well as for the child (Evans, 2001).

The school is a very important site for the formation of personality and identity, and an important aspect of that identity is ones masculinity and femininity. The interactions that girls and boys have with each other and with the teacher, the valuations that they come to make of

themselves as boys or girls, and the inferences that they make causes their consequent behaviors, which is form by society's expectations and molded during school.

Do the boys really care?

Wilhelm and Smith (2004) carried out a study on 49 middle and high school boys from different backgrounds, ethnicities, social classes, and levels of academic achievement. They choose to work with such diverse group of boys so that they could examine whether there were sufficient similarities within the group to warrant generalization. They also evaluated whether other issues, such as past school experiences, social class, or ethnicity, might be more important categories than gender for teachers to consider. The direction in which in their data pointed them was that the energy and enthusiasm the boys expressed about their own competence and that of others raises questions about the question of their own notion that boys are in trouble or that boys reject literacy. They added that, unfortunately, the data also suggest that our informants rarely felt efficacy or experienced competence and "flow" in their literate lives in school. In my experience, it is not uncommon to hear young fathers talking regrettably how much they wish they had not wasted their time in school and recounting the things that were hardest for them to learn. These would include mathematical problems such as telling time and long divisions. With laughter they would also talk of the teachers who they learned the most or the least from.

Boys tend to read at an older age than girls, take longer to learn, and comprehend narrative text less easily. Boys also value reading less and see reading as a way to get information rather than as a recreational activity (Simpson, 1996; Smith and Wilhelm, 2002). While some researchers differ on whether boys of color see reading as 'acting white' (in

America), and thus something to be avoided, one study of African American boys found that they resented activities they define as school work, believing that they will never benefit from an education (Tanksley, 1995).

Attitudes Towards reading

Perhaps because males are occupying positions of power and prestige in society, boys are assumed to be more self-reliant than girls are. Nonetheless, study after study consistently points to the underachievement of some boys. A key to revising this perspective is to start getting struggling learners with low self- efficacy to become involved in sufficient effort to persist on tasks, to work to overcome difficulties, to take on increasingly challenging tasks and to develop interest in academics. A teacher can also play an important role in shaping students' attitudes towards reading. Teachers need to ask themselves questions about how students value reading, if at all; do students see reading as a tool and do they think they can solve problems with reading. There are three components when it comes to reading attitude. First there is the cognitive component, which means what one's beliefs or opinions are about reading. Second, there is the affective component, which means one's evaluation of feelings about reading. Third, there is the behavioral component, which is where one has the intention to read and actually does read (Vacca & Vacca, 1999).

Students have interests as well as self-concepts when it comes to reading attitudes. Students' interests help them decide when, why, and how often they read. Their self-concept has to do with how they see themselves as readers. The experiences they have had in the form of reading instruction or with the act of reading will affect the student's attitude toward reading. John McNeil claims that, "learners have perceptions and feelings about themselves as readers

that affect their performance” (Vacca & Vacca, 1999, p. 147). Therefore, depending on past experiences, students may approach a reading task in a positive or negative way. Self-perception affects behavior but it has to do with how an individual feels about him or herself.

Overall, the teacher acts as decision-maker deciding which material to use as well as techniques or strategies for instruction. The teacher controls the approach that may be used, that is, traditional or literature-based, and how it is used in the classroom as it pertains to a lesson. There are more female teachers in the Jamaican classrooms than males and this trend may not change for a long time. How a teacher encapsulates all the students in his or her classroom ultimately depends on the skills and passion that the teacher has for her profession. As educators we have to be move from a “one size fits all” belief and be cognizant that individuals differ.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Many studies will not become known, unless their findings reveal something new and marvelous or if the results further cement an idea that is already popular and well received. Critics may approve or disapprove the results from a study for many reasons ranging from questionable measurement to the researchers' background. This chapter will detail the procedural description of this study including the subjects chosen, the instrumentation used to collect reliable and valid data, and the statistical analysis to be performed. I hope that the results will be well received.

Participants

The participants in this survey were all of the male students on roll at the Wilson's Run All Age School, which is sixty-four in total. All the parents of the students were asked to participate in the survey in the form of a structured interview (See Appendix B and D) as well as the teachers at the school. All the participants resided or worked in the community. Neither the participants nor the researcher's assistants were paid to participate in the study. Only students who have had their consent forms returned and signed by their parents were allowed to participate in the study.

The community is situated in deep rural Jamaica, where there is hardly any significant impact from the outside world on the residents' lifestyle. The students have two socializing agencies: the school and the church. Their typical after school chores include tending the

family's farm animals, which may include a goat, a pig or a cow; carrying water from the public stand pipes, making several trips, or playing football (soccer) or cricket in the street. This community does not have a playing field. Where there is a television set in the home, it is only turned on under parental supervision to watch the evening news. Therefore, most students are aware of any significant news or unusual incidents that happened in the country and are usually very excited to discuss this news with their teachers and classmates at school. The students who participated had the questions read to them.

Instrumentations

Students' attitudes were measured using the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (McKenna, M. C., & Lear, D. J., 1990) (see Appendix G). The purpose for using this attitude survey was to determine what students' attitudes were towards reading. The survey consisted of twenty questions. Ten were questions relating to recreational reading while the other ten related to academic reading. After reading each question aloud two times, the researcher asked students to circle a Garfield that best represented their feelings for that question. There were four expressions of Garfield; the first represented the happiest Garfield and had a score of 4. The next Garfield expression was slightly smiling and had a score of 3. The third expression was a mildly upset Garfield and had a score of 2. The last expression of Garfield was an upset Garfield and had a score of 1.

Once the students completed circling the expressions of Garfield, the researcher scored each student's responses and determined an average based on the scale. A score for recreational reading and one for academic reading were determined and then a total score was taken.

Individual scores and whole class scores were determined. Students were not identified; instead a B for a boy and a G for a girl was written at the top of the first page. The students were given the attitude survey at the school during instruction time. Prior permission was requested of the school. (See Appendix A).

The structured interviews (See Appendix B and D) were formulated with the intention of eliciting responses from the teachers and parents that were pertinent to the research questions. The structured interview method was chosen because the scores were easy to compile the data from, it was more cost effective, and was always available for further clarification if need be. The material was also user friendly and so the research assistants were able to administer it accurately so that the results represented an accurate description of what it measured.

Procedures

The parents and teachers participated in the survey through structured interviews. They choose a location in which they felt most comfortable at the time of the interview. These were places such as an office, the classroom, their homes, on the street, or on their farms. The structured interviews were done with the teachers in order to understand, from their perspective, what is the main cause for the high illiteracy rate in the school. The teachers who participated in the study had from three to twenty-five years teaching experience. For the parents it was to get an understanding of how much they value education for each of their children. (See Appendix C).

The results from the survey, along with the recommendations made by the researcher, will be communicated at an announced P.T.A meeting. The main objective of this study was to

find out what factors contribute to the high rate of illiteracy in this community. The research was conducted in as cost efficient a manner as possible, while at the same time not compromising the true results of the tests. The data collected from this survey will be kept for a period of one year.

Ethical Issues

The IRB (Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subject) was contacted to receive permission to conduct this study. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (Jamaica) was also contacted for permission to conduct this study and permission was given on the Ministry's behalf by the principal of the school. Each participant, whether child or adult, was told that he or she need not answer questions that he or she was not comfortable with, and that if at some time during the interview he or she decided to withdraw his or her participation, the information obtained from them him or her would be destroyed immediately (See Appendix B). The participants' names would not be used, so they were not required to submit a name.

Reliability and Validity

The P.T.A meeting that was held prior to the start of the study outlined the significance of the study. It is hoped that that meeting had motivated the adults to be truthful in their responses. The researcher gave the adults the option of being interviewed in a private location if they so desired. The students were placed in a pre-determined seating order so that their responses on the attitude survey were more likely to represent their own personal feelings.

Chapter 4

Results

Results of the Structured Interviews with Teachers

Throughout this chapter the reader will read results that were derived from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey that was given to the students to find out what attitudes they had toward reading as well as responses from the structured interviews from the teachers and parents. The measures were used in order to address the following research questions: Why are the majority of boys at Wilson's Run All Age School not reading at their grade levels? How can the factors be that contribute to the high illiteracy rate be eliminated?

Four out of the five teachers on staff participated in the structured interview. Of this number, only one teacher responded that she is teaching in her qualified position. All the teachers are graduates of a Teachers' College. Due to the small number of teacher-participants, answers to questions that could identify them by the response were deleted from this study. These include responses to questions such as, how long have you been teaching at this school, how long you have been a teacher, and which grade do you teach.

Structured Interview Question #1: Describe attendance trends for your classroom. All the teachers in grades one to three indicated that females were absent more regularly than males, while the teachers in grades four to six reported that males were more regularly absent in their grades. The teachers reported that the days that registered the most perfect attendances were Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Structured Interview Question #2: Why do you think students are absent from school? Illnesses and financial difficulties were the two reasons the teachers stated were the most common excuses for absenteeism. Illnesses were described as the common cold or ‘flu’, while financial difficulties were described as not having money for lunch or for breaks (recess).

Structured Interview Question #3: What do you think are the reasons the boys are not reading at the functional level in your class? To the question of boys and reading, all of the teachers stated that the boys are not interested in learning. When asked to justify their opinion, two of the teachers stated that that the boys hardly ever do their homework, they come to school late, and they get into the most fights. One teacher said that he can tell from their attitudes and the other stated that they do not listen. Three of the teachers stated that the parents do not put a keen interest on the boys’ welfare as much as they do for their girls. Two of the teachers stated that the boys are lazy. One teacher said that the boys need help at home as the school cannot do it (teach) alone. One teacher also stated the boys do not have any role model in the community.

Structured Interview Question #4: Describe your classroom and resources? The teachers all stated that the lack of resource materials such as books and teaching aids, especially for subjects like Science and Social Studies are the greatest problems that challenge their teaching. All the teachers said that their classroom space is very limited and this limits seating arrangements and display areas. One teacher indicated that not being an artistic person is a challenge that she faces. Two of the teachers stated that they have enough books for the children to read in the school library.

Structured Interview Question #5: How do you diagnose reading difficulties? Only one teacher responded to the question on assessing learning disabilities in the school, indicating that there is

no structured method of diagnosing learning disabilities.

Structured Interview Question #6: How often do you participate in professional development activities? Three of the teachers responded that they only attend workshop when mandatory, while one said he attends most of the time whenever they are held. All of the teachers stated that they have not attended a workshop for a very long time. When asked to describe how long, none of teachers have attended any since the start of the school year. One teacher spoke about a computer course that she is currently doing adding that this is for personal rewards.

Structured Interview Question #7: Describe the support you receive from the parents and the community? All the teachers stated that they receive very good support from the community. These supports were described as manual labor for planned work days, students having their basic writing tools (book and pencil), students coming to school regularly and parents attending meetings.

Structured Interview Question #8: What motivates you as a teacher? One of the teachers stated that the success of the students motivates her. Another two of the teachers stated that when students grasp concepts and apply them in other activities, it motivates them as teachers. One teacher also stated that it motivates him when he sees the students trying to work hard.

Results of the Structured Interviews with Parents

The number of parents participating in the structured interviews was sixty. Their occupations range from housekeeping (55% or thirty-three), farming (40% or twenty-four), teaching (3% or two) and driving (2% or one) (See Figure 1). Of the parents who participated

in the survey, 73% or forty-four own their house, while 27% or sixteen rent. The most commonly reported reasons for absenteeism were financial difficulties (52% or thirty-one), illnesses such as influenza or the common cold (46% or twenty-eight), a child's decision to stay home (2% or one). One parent stated that the weather may determine if her child goes to school as he is sickly.

All the parents who had both sexes attending the school (82% or 49) responded that their girls were performing better than the boys. When asked to state why this happened, their responses range from: Boys don't care (45% or twenty-seven), boys are lazy (31% or nineteen), boys waste too much time (20% or twelve) and some of the teachers don't care (4% or two). The parents who had children in the age range 6-8 years, stated that the girls did better. In the age range 9-10, the girls were thought of as performing better than the boys. The same was said of the girls in the 11-12 age range.

Only 13% or eight of the parents indicated that they have age appropriate books in the homes. When asked to describe these books, the answers range from "one book from a family friend (12.5% or one), to the *Bedtime Bible Stories* (87.5% or seven).

Thirty-three percent or twenty of the parents indicated that they help their children with homework. This percentage was for the parents who have children in the lower grades (grades 1 and 2). Three percent or two of the parents indicated that they help with homework for the children in the higher grades (grades 3-4). The reasons given for the remaining 64% or thirty-eight parents for not being able to help with homework were they do not understand the work (8% or three) and they cannot read well (92% or thirty-five).

The career paths that parents want for their children were, for males, policemen (25% or fifteen), doctor (15% or nine), firefighter (9% or five) and lawyer (5% or three). For the

females the career paths were teacher (20% or twelve), nurse (18% or eleven), and lawyer (8% of five). All the parents stated that these career goals are realistic if the children will work harder.

Eighty-five per cent or fifty-one of the parents stated that they have a good relationship with the school. The description of the support that the parents give to the school ranges from; donating money, to helping with cleaning the school and attending Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) meetings and Sports Day. Sixty-seven percent or forty of the parents indicated that they are happy with their child's school experiences, while 33% or 20 said they are not too happy with their children's school experiences. The reasons given for their dissatisfactions with the school were beatings (corporal punishment) for being late (75% of fifteen) and for not doing homework (25% or five).

Results of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

The following tables represent each grade and each boy in that grade's attitude toward recreational and academic reading. An analysis of the results from the tables follows.

TABLE 1

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
13 Boys
Grade One

R.R. = Recreational Reading

A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	3.6	3.5	3.55
Boy 2	2.7	3.3	3.0
Boy 3	3.1	3.3	3.2
Boy 4	3.1	2.8	2.95
Boy 5	2.9	3.0	2.95
Boy 6	3.6	2.3	2.95
Boy 7	2.9	3.2	3.05
Boy 8	2.9	2.8	2.85
Boy 9	3.2	2.2	2.7
Boy 10	3.1	2.5	2.8
Boy 11	2.5	3.7	3.1
Boy 12	2.7	2.6	2.65
Boy 13	2.4	2.2	2.3
			<u>Grand Mean</u>
Mean	2.98	2.88	2.93

4.0 = Happiest Garfield

3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield

2.0 = Mildly Upset

1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade One scored a mean of 2.98 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Recreational Reading and 2.88 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 2.93, which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. According to the survey results, the boys in grade one have an overall positive attitude toward reading. They scored higher by a tenth of a point for recreational reading (2.98) than for academic reading (2.88). The grand mean of 2.93 shows the overall reading attitude, which can be further concluded that the boys do have a positive reading attitude. It should also be noted that only one boy scored low points for both recreational and academic reading. Five of the boys also scored low marks for their attitude toward academic reading.

TABLE 2
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
8 Boys
Grade Two

R.R. = Recreational Reading
 A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	2.7	3.0	2.85
Boy 2	2.3	3.0	2.65
Boy 3	2.7	2.6	2.65
Boy 4	2.7	3.6	3.15
Boy 5	3.6	3.2	3.4
Boy 6	3.6	3.6	3.6
Boy 7	2.5	2.5	2.5
Boy 8	3.2	2.0	2.6
Mean	2.91	2.94	<u>Grand Mean</u> 2.93

4.0 = Happiest Garfield
 3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield
 2.0 = Mildly Upset
 1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade Two scored a mean of 2.91 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Recreational Reading and 2.94 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 2.93, which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. Table 2 shows that the boys in grade two have a somewhat positive attitude toward reading for both academic and recreation. The boys' responses indicated that they have a slightly better attitude toward reading to learn than for reading for fun. Even though this margin is narrow it is information that the classroom teacher can use for lesson planning. Only one boy scored a low of 2.3 for Recreational Reading and another scored 2.5 for both recreational reading and academic reading indicating a negative reading attitude.

TABLE 3
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
8 Boys
Grade Three

R.R. = Recreational Reading

A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	3.2	2.9	3.05
Boy 2	3.7	3.7	3.7
Boy 3	3.0	3.0	3.0
Boy 4	3.1	2.8	2.95
Boy 5	3.2	3.0	3.1
Boy 6	3.1	2.6	2.85
Boy 7	3.0	3.5	3.25
Boy 8	3.4	3.0	3.2
			<u>Grand Mean</u>
Mean	3.21	3.06	3.14

4.0 = Happiest Garfield

3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield

2.0 = Mildly Upset

1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade Three scored a mean of 3.21 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Recreational Reading and 3.06 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 3.14, which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. The test results for the grade three boys showed that in both recreational and academic reading they scored over 3.0 indicating a positive attitude toward reading. All the boys scored 3.0 or more for recreational reading, while the lowest score for academic reading was 2.6 points.

TABLE 4

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
9 Boys
Grade Four

R.R. = Recreational Reading

A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	3.4	3.6	3.50
Boy 2	3.2	3.5	3.35
Boy 3	3.6	3.8	3.70
Boy 4	3.1	3.2	3.15
Boy 5	3.6	3.4	3.50
Boy 6	3.3	3.2	3.25
Boy 7	2.9	2.7	2.80
Boy 8	3.6	3.4	3.50
Boy 9	3.0	3.3	3.15
			Grand Mean
Mean	3.3	3.34	3.32

4.0 = Happiest Garfield

3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield

2.0 = Mildly Upset

1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade Four scored a mean of 3.3 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Recreational Reading and 3.34 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 3.32, which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. For both recreational and academic reading, all the boys in grade four scored over three points. This would indicate that they have a positive reading attitude, as the grand mean also shows.

TABLE 5

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
11 Boys
Grade Five

R.R. = Recreational Reading

A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	2.8	3.3	3.05
Boy 2	2.7	3.0	2.85
Boy 3	3.0	2.9	2.95
Boy 4	3.2	3.5	3.35
Boy 5	3.6	2.8	3.20
Boy 6	2.4	2.9	2.65
Boy 7	3.4	3.3	3.35
Boy 8	2.1	3.2	2.65
Boy 9	2.6	2.9	2.75
Boy 10	2.8	3.7	3.25
Boy 11	2.8	3.0	2.90
		Grand Mean	
Mean	2.85	3.14	3.0

4.0 = Happiest Garfield

3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield

2.0 = Mildly Upset

1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade Five scored a mean of 2.85 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Recreational Reading and 3.14 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 3.0 which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. The test scores for the boys in grade five indicated that for Recreational reading they scored an average of 2.85 which would indicate a positive reading attitude and 3.12 points for academic reading, which also indicate their positive attitude toward reading for fun. Of the eleven boys sixty-four percent (64%) or seven scored within the two points range for recreational reading. This could be interpreted as not having a keen interest for fun reading as they do for academic reading which has the lowest score of 2.8 points.

TABLE 6
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scores and Averages
15 Boys
Grade Six

R.R. = Recreational Reading

A.R. = Academic Reading

	<u>R.R.</u>	<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Average</u>
Boy 1	3.3	3.0	3.15
Boy 2	3.8	2.9	3.35
Boy 3	3.1	2.7	2.90
Boy 4	3.4	3.1	3.25
Boy 5	3.2	3.1	3.15
Boy 6	3.0	2.9	2.95
Boy 7	2.5	3.5	3.00
Boy 8	3.2	3.1	3.15
Boy 9	3.2	3.6	3.40
Boy 10	3.6	3.2	3.40
Boy 11	3.0	3.1	3.05
Boy 12	3.2	3.2	3.20
Boy 13	2.6	2.8	2.70
Boy 14	3.3	3.0	3.15
Boy 15	3.6	3.1	3.35
			<u>Grand Mean</u>
Mean	3.2	3.1	3.15

4.0 = Happiest Garfield

3.0 = Slightly Smiling Garfield

2.0 = Mildly Upset

1.0 = Very Upset Garfield

Boys in Grade Six scored a mean of 3.2 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Rec- reational Reading and 3.1 (Slightly Smiling Garfield) for Academic Reading. They scored a Grand Mean of 3.15, which represents their overall reading attitude.

Analysis. The grade six boys scored almost identical numbers for both recreational and academic reading with recreational reading scoring higher by only a tenth of a point. This indicated that they have a positive attitude in both areas of reading. Only two of the boys or 13 percent scored below three points for academic reading, while for recreational reading, four or 27 percent of the boys' scores below three points.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine some of the contributing factors to illiteracy among boys in the Wilson's Run All Age School in Trelawny, Jamaica. The researcher sought to examine the following statement in this study: In order to address concern for the high illiteracy rate among boys in the Wilson's Run All Age School in Trelawny, the attitudes and perceptions of the boys, teachers and parents will be documented.

This chapter will attempt to address these concerns according to the information gathered from the survey and structured interviews conducted in the area of concern.

Conclusions

The structured interviews were used to assess the teachers' perspectives of the boys in their classes and reading, as well as responses from the parents. When looking at the responses from the teachers interviewed in question, attendance was deemed to be more regular for three out of the five school days. The responses given to question three recorded that all the teachers stated that the boys are not interested in learning and that parents do not put as keen an interest on their boys' welfare as well as they do for their girls.

Other responses were boys are lazy, they do not have any role model in the community, and that they need help at home. According to the results obtained through the attitude survey, all the boys at this school have an interest in recreational reading or academic reading or both.

From the structured interview conducted with the parents, 82 percent responded that the girls were out performing the boys where they have both gender attending the school. Their reasons for this were that boys don't care (45%), boys are lazy (31%), boys waste too much time (20%) and some of the teachers don't care (4%). From the interview given to the parents also, only 33 percent of the parents who have children in the lower grades help their children with homework. The remaining 64% of parents who do not help their children with homework reasons were that they do not understand the work given (8%) and they cannot read well (54%). To the structured interview question about having appropriate books in the homes only one parent indicated having a book from a family friend and seven parents having the Bedtime Bible Stories book. This is an indication that majority of the students are not from literate homes and are therefore in contact with literature of any form is only at school.

From the responses gained through the structured interview from teachers (question 2), the lack of resource materials and limited classroom space were some factors that all the teachers stated were their greatest challenge. The teachers were also asked how reading difficulties were diagnose; only one teacher responded to that question stating that there is no structured method used within the school. Structure interview question six asked teachers how often they participate in professional development activities such as workshop or on-the-job training. Seventy-five per cent or three of the teachers responded that they only attend mandatory workshops; one teacher attends most of the time. All of the teachers stated that they have not been to one in a long time, also indicating that they have not attended any since the start of the school year. One teacher is currently doing a computer course for personal rewards. With the limited resources that the teachers have available to them, every opportunity to attend professional development workshop should be taken, so that they will learn and have more

creative ideas of how to make the best use of what limited resources they have.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was used to measure students' attitudes. (Refer tables 1-6). Each boy has two scores, an Academic Reading Score and a Recreational Reading Score. The score for all the boys for Recreational Reading and Academic Reading were averaged. The average score for grades one through six was 2.93.

According to the result form the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, all the boys in the school have an overall positive attitude toward reading. In both academic and recreational reading, sixty-six percent of the boys scored three points or higher out of a possible highest score of four points. The remaining thirty-four percent or twenty-two boys scored two points or higher but less than three points. Of this thirty-four per cent only nine boys scored less than three points in both recreational and academic reading.

Limitations

There are three main limitations to this study. The first limitation deals with the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Due the limited resources that are available to the school, students have become accustom to having only test items printed during examinations time. Normally they would copy work from the chalkboard. As a result many of the students took the survey as a test, which may have increased their anxiety which could have altered their responses. The second limitation was that the researcher was not physically in the survey location at the time when the interviews and survey were done. The possibility therefore exists that some of the instructions given were not as clear, accurate, or precise as they could have been. The fact that the research was conducted in another country also may have impacted the data as there were problems with communication, cost, as well as lengthy delays in receiving

the data.

The small numbers of teachers on staff may have been a factor to the reserved responses from teachers, as they were cognizant that they could be easily identified by their responses.

Recommendations

From the structured interview given to the parents and their responses, they are overall satisfied with the school's performance. While they do not blame the school for the poor performance of their boys, they should therefore, place more emphasis on the interest and educational goals of their male children. This could be as simple as constant words of encouragement, commending them for all their achievements in class and providing them with reading materials.

Regardless of the limited resources that a school may have, at the beginning of primary school, students should be exposed to a wide genre of stories. Teacher can create short stories along with students and use the students' artistic skills for pictures. Too many times are boys in our classrooms told to "be quiet and listen;" it is becoming quite obvious that while they may be quiet, many of them are not listening. Reading instruction will succeed only if children are immersed in print and are provided with opportunities to observe, imitate, and participate in meaningful and fulfilling reading activities as well as a positive learning environment. Teachers who are able to create this type of atmosphere promote positive attitude towards reading.

Reading workshops should be held by the Ministry of Education on a more scheduled basis and in more centralized locations and made mandatory so that teachers are kept updated with the current trends in reading education. Also, a centralized resource center should be established where teachers can acquire materials for their classrooms and share their own materials with

others.

Boys, by nature, are competitive; the school and teachers can have reading competitions and incentive programs in class and between classes. This can be done with students who are reading at the same level from different classes. The chance exists that a student may feel embarrassed that he is put to read with someone from a lower grade or younger, but with tact and skill on the part of the teacher this can be overcome.

The school should outline to parents its academic program, goals, and objectives. Each class can hold parent conferences and outline to parents in simple terms what their children will be learning in a particular term and how the parents can help. This will help to further build support for the school as the parents will feel more involved with the school's mission. Additionally, the school should start a reading/literacy program for the parents. Many schools in Jamaica have programs of this nature and although not very successful, parents will know that such a program exists for them.

Finally, a longitudinal study could be done to determine the reading strategies that the girls in this school practice in comparison to the boys. All the students are exposed the same environment in the school, the reasons for the reading gap between the boys and the girls needs further observations.

REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Berk, L. (2002). *Infants, children, and adolescents*. (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brozo, W. G. (2002). *To be a boy, to be a reader*. TN. International Reading Association.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Diekmann, A. B. (2000). *Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal*. In T. Eckes & H.M. Traunter (Eds.), *The developmental social psychology of gender*. Pp. 123-173. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Evans, H. (2001). *Inside Jamaican schools*. Kingston. The Press.
- Fagot, B. I., Rodgers, C. S., & Leinbach, M. D. (2000). *Theories of gender socialization*. In T. Eckes and H. Trauter (Eds.), *The developmental social psychology of gender* (pp.65- 89). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Frieze, i.h., Parsons J. E., Johnson, P. E., Ruble, D. N., & Zellman, G. L. (1978). *Women and sex roles: A social and psychological perspective*. New York: W.W. Norton
- Gurian, M. (2001). *How do boys and girls learn differently!: A guide for parents and teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Halpern, D. F. (2000). *Sex differences in cognitive abilities*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence, Erlbaum.

Halpern, D. F. and LaMay, M. L. (2000). *The smarter sex: A critical review of sex differences in intelligence*. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12, 229 – 246.

Hetherington, E. M. (1967). *The effects of familial variables on sex-typing, on parent-child similarity, and on imitation in children*. In J. P. Hill (Ed.), *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (vol 1) (pp. 82 –107). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Houston, A.C. (1983). *Sex-typing*. In P.H.Mussen (Ed.) *Handbook of child psychology: Socialization, personality, and social development* (Vol. 4, pp. 388 – 467). New York: Wiley.

Kleinfeld, J. (1999, Winter). *Student performance: Males versus the females*. *The Public Interest*, 134, p.3-20.

McKenna, M.C., & Kear, D. J. (1990). *Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers*. *The Reading Teacher*, 43 (9), 626-639.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEYC). (2001, June). *Jamaica Annual Report*. Retrieved October 14, 2006, from <http://www.deljam.cec.eu.int/en/Jamaicaannualreport/2001>

Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEYC). (2004b,). *The whitepaper – The way upward*. Retrieved October 14 from <http://www.ibe.unesco>.

National Center for Education Statistics (1998). *The condition of education, 1998*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics (1999). *Digest of education statistics, 1998*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics (2000). *Trends in educational equity of girls and women*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Pottorff, D. D., Phelps- Zientarsky, D., & Skovera, M.(1996). *Gender perceptions of*

elementary and middle school students about literacy at school and home. Journal of Research and Development in Education. Vol., 29, p.203-211.

Robinson, E. (1995). *Examination of grade 6 readers to determine possible contribution to gender bias.* BEd. Study, University of the West Indies, Mona.

Simpson, A. (1996). *Fictions and facts: An investigation of the reading practices of girls and boys.* English Education, 28, 268 – 279.

Slavin, R. (1996). *We shall overcome: Key developmental hurdles to children's school success.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Meeting, New York.

Sommers, C.H. (2000). *The war against boys: How misguided feminism is harming our young men.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tanksley, M.D. (1995). *Improving the attendance rate for African American male students in after school program through parental involvement, positive role models, and good tutorial instruction.* Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University. Fort Lauderdale, FL (ED. 394, 119).

Vacca, R., Vacca, J., (1999). *Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum.* Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley

Wilhelm, J.D., and Smith, M.W. (2004). *Reading don't fix no chevys. Literacy in the lives of young men.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wilkinson, L.C., & Marrett, C. (Eds.). (1985). *Gender influences in classroom interaction.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Appendices

Appendix A

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
University of Wisconsin- Whitewater

October 12, 2005

Mr. Clayton Collins (Principal)
Wilson's Run All Age School
Wilson's Run District,
Troy P.O.,
Trelawny.

Dear Mr. Collins:

The problem of illiteracy among boys is an ever-present problem facing many countries of the world. Finding out the causes that contribute to this phenomenon is an ongoing task.

This research will specifically look at the factors contributing to illiteracy among boys at the Wilson's Run All Age School. The result from this study will be shared with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture.

The students at your institution will be asked to complete an attitude survey during their instructional time. We would greatly appreciate it if you would allow us to carry out this aspect of the research at the school. Enclosed you will find a consent letter for the students' parents to sign before they will be allowed to participate in the study.

The tentative date of completing the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey by students will be January 17, 2006. This research has been approved by the University's Research with Human Subjects review committee.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Stephanie O. Smith
Graduate Student

Appendix B

Structured Interview Protocol

Participant ID _____

What is your occupation?

Do you rent or own your house?

How many children are in your family? Boys: _____ Girls: _____

Please answer the following questions for each of your children attending Wilson's Run All Age School:

	M / F Age:	M / F Age:	M / F Age:	M / F Age:	M / F Age:
How often does this child miss school?					
What is the main cause for his or her absence from school?					
How would you describe this child's performance in school?					
Tell me about your relationship with the school? Are you happy with this child's school experience(s)?					
Do you have age-appropriate story books in your home? Describe.					
Do you help this child with his or her homework? Describe.					
What would you like this child to be? Is this a realistic expectation?					

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

PARENT

I _____ grant permission to my child
name of parent

_____ to participate in a study of literacy rates
name of child
 among males students at Wilson's Run All Age School.

I understand that:

1. The purpose of this research is to identify factors contributing to illiteracy rates among male students in order to ultimately provide opportunities for success equal to that of female students;
2. The study will begin in January, 2006 and be completed before the end of the school year (June, 2006);
3. Every effort will be made to safeguard my identity and personal information in presentations and/or publications derived from this study;
4. Results of this study may be shared with the Jamaican Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Education;
5. Should I or my child become uncomfortable with our participation at any time, we are free to remove ourselves from the study without penalty;
6. I may contact Denise Ehlen in the Office of Research and Sponsored programs at UW-Whitewater with any questions concerning our participation: 262.472.5212. I may also contact Dr. Anne Stinson at 262-472-1973 or Stephanie Smith at 262-472-9083.

Signed:

 Parent's signature

 Date

 Student's signature

Date

Note: This form will be presented orally and in writing to the participants during the structured interview.

Appendix D

Structured Interview Protocol

Participants ID _____

What grade do you teach?

Level of education:

1. Describe attendance trends for your classroom. (Prompts: Are boys more or less likely to attend than girls? How often do you have perfect attendance? Why do you think students are absent from school? Etc.)
2. Describe your classroom and resources? (Prompts: Do you have enough materials? Books, Space?)
3. What do you think are the reasons boys are not reading at the grade level in your class?
4. Describe the support you receive from the parents and the community?
5. How do you diagnose reading difficulties? (Prompts: So you use authentic assessments? Formal assessments? Etc.)
6. How often do you participate in professional development activities (workshops, classes, etc?)
7. What motivates you as a teacher?

Appendix E

TEACHER

I _____ agree to participate in a study of literacy rates
name of teacher

among males students at Wilson's Run All Age School.

I understand that:

1. The purpose of this research is to identify factors contributing to illiteracy rates among male students in order to ultimately provide opportunities for success equal to that of female students;
2. The study will begin in January, 2006 and be completed before the end of the school year (June, 2006);
3. Every effort will be made to safeguard my identity and personal information in presentations and/or publications derived from this study;
4. Results of this study may be shared with the Jamaican Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Education;
5. Should I or my child become uncomfortable with our participation at any time, we are free to remove ourselves from the study without penalty;
6. I may contact Denise Ehlen in the Office of Research and Sponsored programs at UW-Whitewater with any questions concerning our participation: 262.472.5212. I may also contact Dr. Anne Stinson at 262-472-1973 or Stephanie Smith at 262-472-9083.

Signed:

 Teacher's signature

 Date

Appendix F

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

STUDENT

I _____ agree to participate in a study of literacy rates
Name of student

among males students at Wilson's Run All Age School.

I understand that:

1. The reason for doing this research is to identify factors contributing to illiteracy rates among male students in this school.
2. The study will begin in January, 2006 and be completed before the end of the school year (June, 2006);
3. Every effort will be made to safeguard my identity and personal information in presentations and/or publications derived from this study;
4. Results of this study may be shared with the Jamaican Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Education;
5. If I become uncomfortable during my participation at any time, I am free to remove myself from the study without punishment or penalty.
6. I may contact Denise Ehlen in the Office of Research and Sponsored programs at UW-Whitewater with any questions concerning my participation: 262-472-5212. I may also contact Dr. Anne Stinson at 262-472-1973 or Stephanie Smith at 262-472-9083.

Signed:

Student's signature

Date

Appendix GElementary Reading Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet

Student Name _____

Teacher _____

Grade _____ Administration Date _____

Scoring Guide

4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

Recreational reading

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Academic reading

11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Raw score: _____

Raw score: _____

Full scale raw score (recreational + Academic): _____

Percentile ranks

Recreational

Academic

Full scale

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



13. How do you feel about reading in school?



14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



16. How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?



17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?



