LITERATURE, THE YOUNG GIRLS’ CLUB:
GENDER, MOTIVATION, AND UPPER-LEVEL ENGLISH ELECTIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender and motivation in relation to senior secondary school students' decisions to take English Literature 12, and to discover why so few male students choose to take English Literature 12. Moreover, the study attempts to assess the impact of the Canon Debate on female students' perceptions of upper-level English courses in secondary school.

Motivation was assessed using 31 7-point Likert scale questions from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). The scales from the MSLQ were designed to measure students' Goal Orientation, Task Value beliefs, and Self-Efficacy perceptions. Students' attitudes toward English electives, especially English Literature 12, were analyzed using 11 questions relating to the study of English, attitudes toward Shakespearean works, attitudes toward poetry, and beliefs about the utility of literature in general.

Ninety-one grade 12 students from Prince George Secondary School participated in the study. Data was analyzed using a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney U). Significant results from this test were further analyzed using single-factor ANOVA. Tukey's HSD test was used as a post-hoc error protection measure.

Results of the study suggest that declining literacy levels may be closer to the heart of the Literature 12 enrolment anomaly than either course content or gender. Students who had not chosen to take Literature 12, regardless of gender, felt that the study of Shakespearean works and poetry were irrelevant to them. The study concludes with a discussion of the implications of the research for English educators and curricularists.
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DEDICATION

For my Father, who would not have cared at all about the words on these pages, but who would have—as he always did—loved me despite my follies. I regret ever having been too busy to go fishing with you.

And for my sons, whom I love: I hope you never have cause to say the same of me.
Chapter One: Introduction

For years western educators and upper-level literati have been engaged in a debate over which works of literature ought to be taught to students in language arts and English programs from grade school to graduate school. This complex intellectual discussion is generally referred to as the “Canon debate,” and, at the risk of grossly oversimplifying a multi-faceted, complicated issue, can be loosely divided into two broad schools of thought: that of the Revisionist, (postmodernist), and that of the Perennialist (conservative).

As a teacher of Literature 12, I have experienced some of the curricular fallout from the Canon debate: many educators criticize the content of the course on the basis that it elevates the works of white, male writers to an unwarranted level; at the same time, Literature 12 marginalizes the voices of female writers as well as other, non-western authors. This criticism has always puzzled me, since I have also noticed that very few male students elect to take the course: if the curriculum is indeed in need of reformation on the basis that it is sexist, it should be the case that more boys than girls are enrolling in Literature 12. However, this is simply not so.

Far from wishing to justify a racist, sexist or otherwise biased curriculum, my research is aimed at debunking some of the myths surrounding the Canon controversy as they relate to the curriculum of Literature 12. My concern is that, by overemphasizing the impact of actual course content on students’ decisions to take (or not take) Literature 12, curricularists and educators run the risk of overlooking far more significant issues
such as boys’ declining literacy levels, biased utility beliefs concerning English courses in general, and misinformed preconceptions about curricular content in literature classes.

Theoretical Framework

Revisionist arguments.

Revisionist thinkers condemn modern English curricula on the basis that they are repositories of racial, sexual and class discrimination, and maintain that the literary canon upon which high school curricula is based should be expanded to include more works by minority writers and women. These postmodern critics attack established literary canons, arguing that the works represented there are not necessarily better than anything else, they simply serve a particular social purpose. Conservative scholars, the revisionists maintain, insulate canonic works within dense layers of literary criticism in order to remain “faithful to the essentially . . . didactic mission of humanistic studies: to honor and preserve the culture’s traditionally esteemed objects . . . its canonized texts” (Smith, 1989, p. 1320). Critics such as Smith (see also Eagleton, 1994; Graff, 1994; Guillory, 1993) suggest that there is an overt hegemony at work within educational systems whereby those in power seek to control what works of literature are taught. Revisionist arguments predominantly centre on race, gender, or class criticisms of canonic works.

Both Graff (1994) and Guillory (1993) invoke, to some degree at least, the notion of class in their criticisms of the canon. “In the canon,” argues Guillory, “there has been a distinction made, throughout history, between the language of ‘literature’ and the genres which are . . . subliterary or nonliterary” (p. 132). By valuing one work over another, schools become the “exclusive agents for the dissemination of High Canonical works” (p. 132). This valuing creates an elitism in the form of an ideological rift between
those possessed of literary language and those without it. For example, knowledge of a Shakespearean play should not give one power—in the form of symbolic capital—over another, or ensure a better quality of life for the possessor of literary language. Yet, because society—and the educational system—values that knowledge and that language, those who have it form an elite who can, through a hegemony of language, marginalize those who do not. Hence critics of the canon argue that the educational system perpetuates an inequitable class system by privileging one type of language and knowledge over other, less traditional ways of speaking and knowing.

Purves (1990) refers to this class system as a *scribal society*, and argues that the information explosion has left fewer and fewer people in possession of the arcane knowledge required to be a member-in-good-standing of the scribal society. Purves maintains that language is used as a type of *gate-keeping* mechanism; those possessed of the correct genres—the sacred lore—are able to control the flow of information within society. Cox (1991) uses the works of Shakespeare as an example of just this sort of sacred lore, arguing that

"...the establishment of a canon, a list of great masterpieces, works of genius, removes the chosen texts from history and from human actualities, and places them forever behind a veil of pieties; it fosters a reverential rather than a critical approach. This explains the bardolatry that has dominated so much writing about Shakespeare." (p. 69)

Thus, those who criticize the canon for its class elitism, sexism, and/or its cultural bias, argue that those in power seek to keep their power by shielding certain privileged literary works from the current of mainstream literary criticism. These
critics underscore the need for meaningful dialogue surrounding all works of literature, regardless of their status within established literary canons. Such a dialogue has been freely entered into by a number of perennialist writers.

**Perennialist arguments.**

Perennialist thinkers assert that there is an inherent danger in opening up the literary canon to allow in other works simply because of the race or gender of those writers. Canonic works, they argue, are canonic because they have been sifted, generation after generation, by time and criticism. Canonic works represent the epitome of human thought and achievement, and the politicization of the canon—by making the ethnic background of the author more significant than the artistic merit of the work—can only lead to the loss of some of the finest works in English literature.

Perennialist thinkers have developed a certain indignant outrage over the New Critics' criticism of the works of canonic authors. Ellis (1997), for instance, writes of his shock when he discovered that other literature professors, who had certainly begun their teaching careers because they loved literature, were now attacking those same works that had first captured their imaginations on the basis that they were elitist, sexist, and racist. These same professors, Ellis argues, have ceased to write literary criticism, favouring instead social activism. Ellis is certainly on side with other perennialists (e.g., Cox, 1991; Graff, 1994; Hirsch, 1987; Neatby, 1953; Sinaiko, 1998) when he states that canonic works are canonic because people want to read them again and again, not because there is some conscious effort being made to marginalize groups of people based on their race, class or gender.
The canon debate and the high school English curriculum.

To do justice to any of the scholarship pertaining to the canon debate is well beyond the scope—as well as unnecessary to the focus—of my research. What is important to note, however, is that in general, the balance of opinion with respect to the canonic argument—although perhaps not of research—has tipped heavily in favour of the creation of an organic literary canon (Lo, 2000; Said, 1994) which will constantly grow to reflect societal change as opposed to the current literary canon comprised of a fixed body of works and authors. Such a change will, arguably, decrease the marginalization that minority groups and women experience while immersed in mandatory public education.

It is also important to note that much recent scholarship on curricular reform seems to be based on two unsubstantiated assumptions: one, that the current English curriculum is inherently biased and two, that this bias is detrimental to students. It is my contention that the alleged hegemony perpetuated through the medium of the high school curriculum is of little real significance to the students themselves, and that curricularists and educators have been misguided in their estimation of the impact of course content on students’ perceptions of English courses to the detriment of actual student achievement.

That the canon debate has already impacted curriculum is revealed in the work of authors such as Thomas (1992), who analyzed English education courses at 20 colleges in 11 states in order to study the evolution of the literary canon. The results indicate that “the size of the current literary canon has expanded to include more works by women, minority, and non-western writers,” yet there is a “lack of moderation” with regard to both the contemporary and the classical notions of the canon (Thomas, 1992, p. 1).
Thomas recommended that teachers experiment with multicultural works in order to “develop new ways of knowing and learning” (p. 1). While this is an admirable piece of advice, it really does not provide curricularists with the sort of data they should possess before altering the English curriculum itself. Additionally, Thomas’s study is not readily generalizable to British Columbian high schools as its central focus is on American colleges and universities. Nevertheless, works such as this one clearly point out that there is much work to be done with respect to canonic reform and intercultural curricula.

Research that is applicable to Canadian schools is provided by McNaught (1997), who studied the impact the canon debate has had upon curriculum creation and text selection. McNaught examined high school literary anthologies used widely across Canada, and criticized the entire English curriculum based on the content of these anthologies. McNaught maintains that the English curriculum is eurocentric in nature, and continues to “inculcate imperialistic attitudes towards war and peace” (p. 2), and that teachers, administrators and curricularists must abandon “the great tradition” of literature in favour of curriculum which provides “as diverse a view as possible of the issues in the human condition as are addressed in the variety of literary genres and voices available” (p. 6).

McNaught’s findings are highly subjective—especially since they are based on the unsubstantiated premise that “eurocentric” works have any effect on students’ learning—and do not offer any concrete suggestions for making English curricula that are any less imperialistic. Additionally, McNaught’s study is not based on actual classroom practice, only upon an analysis of texts. The study really only reveals that there are many works
(possibly) taught in high school English courses that are imperialistic in nature. It does not take into account what sort of discussions about those pieces of literature may take place within classrooms, or what supplementary materials might be provided by individual teachers.

Howatt (1997), like McNaught, criticizes the entire British Columbia high school English Language Arts and Literature curriculum on the grounds that it serves to "induce acculturation [of First Peoples] into and acceptance of settler society and hegemony" (p.ii). Howatt's thesis underscores the present belief that all language is ideological (Pappas, Kiefer, & Levstik, 1999), and provides an extreme example of the notion that the study of literature can no longer be limited to the simple reading and discussion of texts in isolation; discourse surrounding literature must be situated philosophically within the prevalent ideologies of the current political milieu.

I feel that Howatt's research lacks objectivity: the author analyzed the content of texts available at the local School District 57 Resource Centre, but included no discussions with practicing teachers, nor any mention of what books were available in the schools themselves. Both McNaught and Howatt seek to bring about change through discourse, yet both of their arguments are based on the unsupported assumptions that the English curriculum is outdated, imperialistic, Eurocentric, and that course content plays a major role in determining how students perceive English classes themselves. Both researchers seek to impose an ideological framework upon current educational practice without the benefit of proleptic data gathered from other stakeholders, especially teachers and students.
The challenge to the established hierarchy inherent in the canon debate is also evident in the words of Gilbert (2001), a high school teacher who argues against the elitism of the current high school curricular canon and for the teaching of contemporary works. Gilbert states:

Previously the new vernacular writers were... a bit like outlaws, hovering on the edge of a town that was run by a cabal. Now the outlaws have swept into the neighbourhood, marginalized, but not obliterated the old guard, and created an enlightened place where everyone’s voice is valued.

(p. 27)

While this valuation of all voices is certainly to be prized, the incorporation of non-canonic authors into already overstuffed curricula must come at the expense of other works. Whether the “new” works are up to the job of replacing the older ones remains to be seen.

Replacing established works which have fuelled the minds of preceding generations with works which, while perhaps easier to read and more relevant to students, may not endure precisely because of their topicality may have as yet unanticipated consequences. This is the stance taken by Fulford (1997), for example, who argues that students must “approach material that at first appears incomprehensible or boring,” such as a Shakespearean play, because “the effort made to assimilate it will turn out to be so enriching that... it will be justified, even if no professional advantage can be anticipated” (p. 587).

Fulford’s argument also brings up the notion of relevance, as there seems to be a current revisionist movement to make English curricula more relevant for students. This
call for change seems to be driven by the business sector, which claims that today’s graduates are not adequately prepared for the world of work. In British Columbia, the recent Technical and Professional Communications curriculum, which is now being offered as an alternative to English 12 and Communications 12, is certainly a reaction to this notion that high school English should teach practical skills readily transferable to the workplace.

Studying—even briefly—the canon wars provides a unique view of one of the grand discourses of human history. It is imperative to see, however, that these wars will never end, and that, paradoxically, that is the true victory. If it is ever commonly held that “the canon is full, and no other works need apply,” intellectual stagnation will set in and academic entropy will begin; conversely, the conclusion that no work of literature has any worth beyond its timely political topicality can only lead to the nihilistic babble of intellectual lip-service to the ever-changing currents of the stream of politically correct thought. It is only through mutually respectful discourse concerning the various literary genres that progress can be made.

**Gender differences and the canon debate.**

Central to the revisionist critique of current high school English curricula is the prevalent, yet largely unsubstantiated belief that literature is an “old boys’ club”—an exclusive group that conspires to marginalize the voices of female and non-white writers, and keep the reigns of power firmly in the grasp of white males. Nonetheless, this perception is belied by research into the effect of the current literary canon on female students’ enrolment and achievement in high school English classrooms. In the early 1970s, researchers (e.g., Gunderson, 1972) were discovering that, despite a Eurocentric,
male-centred English curriculum, female students were consistently more successful than males in English courses, and that boys displayed considerably more frequent and severe instances of reading disabilities than did girls.

Gunderson (1972) studied course content in college English programs, and reported that gender-based discrimination was evident in text choice because most college materials were "heavily slanted in favour of males and male pursuits," and that "literature is traditionally and obviously male centred" (p. 10). Despite this male bias, course enrolment and completion rates revealed that more females were successfully completing English literature courses than were males.

It must be noted, however, that neither the fact that girls are outperforming males in English courses, nor the fact that girls enrol in English programs in greater numbers than do males, necessarily proves that the English curriculum is not sexist: it may be that girls are simply being very successfully acculturated into a patriarchal system in which they excel. Although such acculturation would be extremely difficult—perhaps impossible—to measure, researchers in this area must be aware of its potential impact on their results, especially in relation to motivational factors.

Gunderson's (1972) results were substantiated by Clagett and Diehl's (1988) study of course pass rates in Maryland's Prince George's Community College, where female students consistently outperformed males in all subject areas. They reported the most pronounced gender difference in English courses, where females had course pass rates 13% higher than that of males.

Gunderson and Diehl's research suggests that gender-bias within the curriculum is not a major factor contributing to male students' lack of success—or even interest—in
English courses, and makes clear the fact that other attributional studies must be conducted if researchers hope to be able to understand why high school boys are choosing not to take English electives, and why boys consistently perform less well than do girls in English classes. If the gender bias inherent in the literary canon lacks explanatory power, it must be the case that there are other factors needing consideration. Exploring some of these other factors is the purpose of my research.
Problem Statement

I studied gender differences in relation to motivational factors affecting students’ perceptions of English, including their beliefs about its utility as a subject, and compared the attitudes expressed by students who had elected to take English Literature 12 with the attitudes expressed by students who had chosen not to take Literature 12. As the curriculum for the course is often criticized by reformers as being elitist, sexist, and out-of-date, it should be the case that course content proved to be a major factor affecting students’ decisions governing course selection; however, I believe that the revisionist argument is unfounded—or at least seriously overstated—since my experience has been that considerably more females choose to take the course than do males.

Thus, I believe that the data I collected will reveal that other motivational factors—not course content—contribute to students’ academic choices regarding course selection. Despite the revisionist assertion the literature is a kind of elitist “old boys’ club” in which living white males strive to protect the works of dead white males from critical scrutiny, and young men are given the discursive “keys to the kingdom,” much of the actual scholarship on the subject suggests that, in the case of students enrolling in high school English electives at least, this is not the case.

Background to the Problem

Over the last seven years, I have taught English Literature 12 to 290 students in eleven different classes. Of those students, only 50 have been male (approximately 17%). Because the English Literature 12 curriculum prescribes the study of works of British and Commonwealth writers, from the 9th Century to the present, and because the vast majority of these writers are male, I could not help but wonder why so many female
students—and so few male ones—chose to take this course. If the revisionist argument is sound, surely more young men should be choosing literature courses. It would seem that factors more significant than course-content alone must affect students’ academic decisions.

In recent years I have become increasingly concerned over the fact that male students are performing less well academically than female students, and that their literacy rates are continuing to fall. In the school district where I work and elsewhere, boys score lower on standardized language arts tests, are over-represented in special education classes, are more likely to be labelled as learning disabled, dominate school discipline statistics, and enrol in fewer advanced courses, fewer college courses, and have higher dropout rates than female students (Taylor & Lorimer, 2003). Male First Nations students are especially at risk (Ministry of Education, 2000, Provincial Overview section, pp. 8-10), and although the revisionists may well be correct in blaming an outdated, culturally insensitive curriculum, I believe that that is not the only issue of significance.

Motivational factors relating to the problem statement.

Recent motivational research (e.g., Gurian & Ballew, 2003) has produced some interesting findings regarding domain-specific gender differences in terms of students’ goal orientations and other motivational variables. I applied similar methods in order to examine the decision-making processes of students in my district. Using a modified form of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991) (see Appendix A), and ten written-response questions I created, I examined some of the cognitive variables that most significantly affected students’ decisions to take English Literature 12 as well as some of the other variables affecting
students' course selection decisions. Using this research, it may be possible to encourage more male students—those who have an interest in the subject, yet do not value it because of environmental or task-value factors, for instance—to choose literature over other courses in which they may not excel, yet value more.

It is clear that the literacy gap between males and females is growing, and educators must do whatever is necessary to get more male students interested in English courses. If it turns out that simply creating more inclusive curricula will accomplish that task, then that is what must be done. However, I think it is necessary to first analyze some of the motivations students have when taking English courses, and whether there are any gender-specific differences between boys and girls in relation to these courses. It would be extremely useful to know that we could encourage more male students to excel in Language Arts classes by targeting some of their preconceptions—perhaps even misconceptions—about literacy and language.

Rationale

Whether encouraging more boys to choose English electives is a desirable outcome is certainly an area for further research. For instance, it would be interesting to survey college and university students who had taken English electives in order to determine what perceived benefits, if any, taking high school English courses—above and beyond the requisite English 12—has had in relation to their performance in their post-secondary studies. It could be argued, for instance, that elective English courses such as Literature 12 develop important literacy skills and analytical abilities that are not domain-specific. However, without data to support this claim, it is no more than intuitive
speculation, yet it seems logical and expedient to assume that literacy skills are extremely important.

Naturally, there is considerable academic debate concerning the utility of English as it is currently delivered in secondary schools, but the arguments tend to follow the pattern of the canon debate; many people believe that English courses are inherently useful and that the study of literature is equally valuable, but I can find no studies that quantify this impression. Nonetheless, I conducted this research under the assumption that English courses are necessary, not only because they impart essential literacy skills to students, but also because the study of literature undertaken within English courses helps build valuable critical thinking skills, and exposes young people to the “big ideas” of human thought and experience.

*Gender-based decision-making differences.*

Although the utility of English may be substantiated only by unfounded belief, what is clear, however, is that gender differences exist in relation to students’ attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding various high school subjects, including English. Recent motivational research (e.g. Wilson, 1994) provides compelling evidence that gender differences do significantly affect goal orientation, task value, control beliefs, and self-efficacy perceptions, and that these differences in turn affect students’ academic choices. Boys tend to choose math and science electives, while girls tend to choose courses in the humanities, as evidenced by my enrolment figures for female students in Literature 12.

Evidence of this perceived course-selection bias is provided by the research of Wilson (1994), who studied the academic choices of 947 undergraduate students. Wilson found that stereotypical gender roles were a good predictor of students’ programs
of study, and concluded that, although it is quite clear that gender affects students’
decisions, what is not clear is whether this observable phenomenon is caused by social
values, differences in goal orientation, task value beliefs, some other unknown factor, or
some combination of external, environmental constructs, and internal, cognitive
constructs.

Additional support for the existence of gender differences in academic decision-
making is provided by Thibert and Karsenti (1996), who conducted a study using 538
elementary-school students, 1,519 high-school students, and 2,434 college students, and
concluded that gender-related differences in motivation were apparent in students as early
as grade 6, and as late as first-year university. Evidence of even earlier gender
differences “in the nature of preschool boys’ and girls’ play with objects of interest to
them” was reported by Renninger (1992) (cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 297).

Thibert and Karsenti (1996) reported that male students were less self-actuated
than females, and attempted to link this motivational factor with the 42% dropout rate for
boys (compared to 28% for girls) observed in the Montreal area where the study was
conducted. These researchers further state that there is a need for more studies of gender-
specific motivational differences, in particular research designed to determine the causes
and effects of these differences.

Domain-specific gender differences.

The evidence shows that gender plays a role in determining students’ attitudes
toward school in general, but there is compelling evidence to suggest that gender
differences are even more apparent when studied in relation to specific courses. Young
(1992) studied the goal orientations and cognitive strategies of 600 6th and 7th grade
students using various self-report measures, and found that boys and girls adopted different goal orientations in different subjects, and that gender differences in goal orientation were most apparent in English classes. Girls were more likely to be intrinsically motivated in English, and adopted cognitive strategies designed to facilitate task-mastery, whereas boys were more likely to be extrinsically motivated, and adopted cognitive strategies aimed at various performance goals.

Young’s (1992) study suggests that these observed domain-specific differences in goal orientations between male and female students are a good starting-point from which to begin the task of understanding the role gender plays in students’ decision-making processes. It is also an important study because it treats gender as a separate construct from ethnicity, whereas much of the research on gender roles does not separate the two, making it very difficult to determine the impact of gender alone (e.g., Church & Katigbak, 1992).

**Course modification based on gender differences.**

While it is apparent that gender affects motivation, little research has been conducted on the subject of whether or not educators should attempt to modify their teaching styles accordingly (e.g., Graham & Reese, 1995), and I can find no studies that offer any concrete justification for the belief that educators should attempt to affect students’ academic decisions, gender-biased as they may be. My research is undertaken on the assumptions that the study of English is extremely important, and that only by changing male students’ perceptions of English will more boys begin to choose English electives when given the opportunity.
Despite the lack of theoretical validation for the alteration of young peoples’
domain-specific, gender-based educational perceptions, the modification of female
students’ perceptions of mathematics and science courses is rapidly becoming
commonplace in many British Columbia school districts, where both provincial and
district-level initiatives have been aimed at changing girls’ attitudes toward math and
science. (For studies outside British Columbia, see Heller & Ziegler, 1996; Maitra &
Kumari, 1996.)

Evidence of the efficacy of recent district-level initiatives aimed at encouraging
female British Columbia secondary school students to take upper-level science electives
can be seen through a comparison of yearly Ministry of Education TRAX Reports. These
documents reveal a steady increase in participation rates for female students in Biology
12 and Chemistry 12 from 27% and 18% (respectively) in 1993 to 37.9% and 22.7%
(respectively) in 2000 (Ministry of Education, 2000, Provincial Overview section).

It seems correct to think that if resources are being channelled into affecting
female students’ academic decision-making, it is only fair to direct some attention to
male students’ choices. Thus it is my hope that my research will make students,
educators, and counsellors more aware of some of the perceptual biases surrounding
course selection so that everyone concerned can make the most informed choices
possible.
Significance of the Study

Researchers have given considerable attention to the fact that females are not choosing to take math and science classes, yet very little attention has been given to the fact that males are not taking English. Based on the assumption that both academic fields are equally important, it seems natural to want to understand why fewer males are taking English electives. It is considerably easier to simply attribute gender-based academic decision-making differences to biology—boys naturally like math and science, and girls naturally like writing and reading—or to some institutional bias inherent in the mandated curricula; nonetheless, such intuitive speculation is surely an oversimplification of a complicated issue. If there are other social, environmental, or internal factors at work, it would be useful to gain a better understanding of them, if for no other reason than to provide all students with more information about their academic choices, and how those decisions will affect their futures.

It is also extremely important to understand as much as possible about boys’ perceptions of reading and language. Recent statistical analyses of provincial data such as Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests and provincial exam results have shown that girls are significantly outperforming boys in a number of academic areas, and that there is an ever-growing disparity between male and female reading levels, with girls again significantly outperforming boys. If we can better understand how boys are motivated in relation to Language Arts courses, perhaps we can help improve their literacy levels, thereby increasing their academic performance in a wide range of subject areas.
Specific Research Questions

As a teacher of literature at Prince George Secondary School, I have noticed that very few male students choose to take English electives, especially Literature 12. Based on previous research of motivational variables, it is clear that gender differences exist in relation to students' academic decision-making. Through my research, I hope to determine what differences, if any, exist between girls' and boys' perceptions of upper level English classes in general, and Literature 12 in particular, and to offer some insights into how more boys could be encouraged to take English courses.

I believe that an understanding of some of the misconceptions boys have about courses like Literature 12 will aid educators in changing male students' attitudes toward the subject, and allow students and teachers to make the most informed academic decisions possible: for teachers, an understanding of male students' attitudes toward English courses could provide educators with new insights into how to make English courses more attractive and accessible to boys; additionally, this research may help clear up some of the misconceptions students have about academic electives such as Literature 12. In my efforts to realize these goals, I examined the following research questions:

1. Do gender-based differences exist in relation to male and female students’ attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where neither male students nor female students have taken English Literature 12?

   1.1.1. Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?
1.1.2. Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 report higher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English courses in general than male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?

2. Do gender based differences exist in relation to male and female students' attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where both males and females have taken English Literature 12?

2.1.1. Do female students who have taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also taken English Literature 12?

2.1.2. Do female students who have taken English Literature 12 report higher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English courses in general than male students who have also taken English Literature 12?

3. Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of males students who have taken English Literature 12 in relation to

3.1. Task value assigned to English classes in general?

3.2. Self-efficacy beliefs?
Limitations of the Study

One of the chief limitations of my research arises from the fact that I am attempting to analyze cognitive processes, and I must therefore operate under the a priori assumptions that there are such *processes* and that they directly account for behaviour. This problem is compounded by the fact that I must extrapolate information about other human beings’ motivations from a series of questions: rather crude instruments with which to delve into such a complex area as thought. Indeed, it could be convincingly argued that the variables measured on the questionnaires I designed fall more under the area of affect than that of cognition.

For the purposes of my study I will maintain that cognition is a result of the conceptions and preconceptions one has about the world around him or her, however irrational, misguided, or simply incorrect those perceptions might be. Thus, by asking students to rate their ideas about English electives, I am indirectly analyzing cognitive processes.

Another limitation of my research results from the number and variety of variables that could influence students’ decisions to choose one program of study over another. I am attempting to account for as many cognitive variables as possible, and will ignore the impact of external variables such as familial and peer group attitudes toward English, differing societal beliefs, socio-economic status, and other factors. By limiting my research to only the role of cognition, I hoped to determine whether there would be any reason to go beyond the cognitive domain in an effort to understand why fewer boys choose to take English electives. I felt justified in studying internal processes based on the fact that theoretical perceptions about the detrimental effects of the male-dominated
literary canon—a markedly external phenomenon—on female students of literature have not been supported through research.

A final limitation for my research involves the collection of data. It would have been extremely useful to be able to obtain completed surveys from every grade 12 student at Prince George Secondary School; however, due to the difficulty of obtaining completed parental and student consent forms, not to mention getting teachers to take time out of their pre-provincial exam class schedules so that their students could complete the surveys, it was possible to obtain only 91 completed questionnaires. I was, however, able to obtain a completed survey from every Literature 12 student, although the small sample size (n=21) makes generalization from the data tenuous at best.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

My review of relevant literature is organized around motivational variables measured by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), since the MSLQ is the test I have chosen to use to analyze students’ attitudes toward English and English Literature.

The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), developed by Pintrich et al. (1987), is an 81-item self-report instrument used to assess motivation and learning. The MSLQ contains 15 different scales, designed to be used together or singly, and was designed to be modified to suit the needs of the researcher (see Appendix D: A Manual for the use of the MSLQ for details). Of interest to me in this research are the scales that relate to goal orientation, task value, control beliefs, and self-efficacy. I also collected data on test anxiety from the MSLQ, but I did not use the responses in this report, as I believed the data on test anxiety were not as relevant as the other factors.

Construct-related validity of the MSLQ has been reported in a number of studies (e.g., Pintrich, et al., 1993). The MSLQ has been modified to meet respective researcher needs in a number of cases (e.g., Higgins, 2000).

Before moving on to an examination of the data collected from the MSLQ and the students’ written responses, it is important to first briefly define the variables being questioned and analyzed, and discuss some of the previous research that links gender differences to each of these variables.
Goal orientation.

Questions 1, 16, 22, and 24 of the modified MSLQ (see Appendix A) are designed to test students’ tendencies toward intrinsic, or mastery, goal orientation, while questions 7, 11, 13, and 30 are designed to measure extrinsic, or performance, goal orientation. For the purposes of this study, intrinsic goal orientation was defined as “motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake” (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 405), and extrinsic motivation was defined as an activity undertaken “as a means to an end” (Pintrich & 2002, p. 404).

Recent motivational research has attempted to go beyond a simple biological explanation for the apparent gender differences relating to students’ respective goal orientations. Davis (1995), for instance, studied dispositional differences between boys and girls—assessed using a self-report measure—and found, consistent with previous research, that males and females adopted different goal orientations. Boys were more likely to demonstrate performance (extrinsic) goal orientations, and adopted cognitive strategies consistent with task completion, whereas girls were more likely to be intrinsically motivated, and adopt cognitive strategies aimed at task mastery.

If this research is accurate, it is compelling to think that boys are more likely to choose math and science classes because they perceive that those types of classes are more likely to rely heavily on task-specific cognitive strategies such as rote memorization, whereas girls choose courses in the humanities because they perceive that those types of classes lend themselves more readily to mastery-oriented cognitive strategies associated with independent research and creative writing.
I should note, however, that it is not my contention that math and science courses consist solely of dry memorization of trivial, soon-to-be-forgotten facts, nor am I suggesting that no one could be intrinsically motivated to study science or math. Such a generalization—entirely apart from being strongly questioned by teachers of those disciplines—is irrelevant to my research. What is significant, however, are the perceptions, however unfounded, of the students. After all, these invisible cognitions, biases, and overgeneralizations lead directly to the reality of the individual student’s decision to take one course over another. Thus my research is aimed at examining students’ beliefs about different types of classes, not the actual classes, so that we can possibly discover why males choose classes that emphasize performance, while females choose courses that emphasize mastery.

In a study of students’ extrinsic motivation and its effect on creativity, Baer (1998) found that work for reward “lowered the creativity of middle school girls, but not that of boys” (p. 18). These findings are consistent with the idea that perceived differences in the structure of different types of classes may be partly responsible for the apparent course-selection gender bias, yet they are far from conclusive. Clearly there is a need for further research into gender-based differences in goal orientation and academic choice.

Task value.

Questions 4, 10, 17, 23, 26, and 27 of the MSLQ relate to task value, which is best defined as an expectancy-value construct relating to “subjective beliefs about reasons for doing [a] task” (Pintrich & Schunk 2002, p. 408). Task value is clearly an important variable to consider when examining reasons why males are less likely to choose English
electives than are females; unfortunately, much of the research regarding gender-differences and task value has been conducted in relation to girls’ perceptions of science and math (e.g., Heller & Ziegler, 1996; Maitra & Kumari, 1996). Nonetheless, there are some salient studies that can be cited that do relate to language arts courses.

McKenna (1997) conducted a study of students from kindergarten to grade 8, and found that the majority of students, both male and female, felt that reading was more appropriate for girls than for boys, and that this perception became more pronounced in the higher grades. From this it is an easy leap to conclude that task value is a major factor contributing to male students’ apparent de-valuing of English elective courses, yet it is still a deduction in need of confirmation.

One serious limitation of McKenna’s (1997) study is that it does not present any findings to indicate why students felt that reading was for girls. Additionally, the subjects of the research were all from low-income families, so socio-economic status cannot be ruled out as a partial cause. It would be both interesting and beneficial to attempt to replicate this study in schools where subject-groupings were less homogenous in terms of their socio-economic status in order to determine whether or not SES correlates with gender stereotyping in the context of academic choice. Young’s (1992) separation of ethnicity from gender provides a good model, but does not consider SES as in McKenna’s study. Clearly there are three important factors to consider when studying perception so task value: gender, SES, and ethnicity.

Schweigardt, Worrel, and Hale (2001) found that task-value for humanities courses was a significant factor contributing to course selection at a summer enrichment program for high school students. Female students selected language arts courses more
often than did male students, and were more likely to cite course enjoyment, or another internal factor, as the reason for their choices. The findings of Schweigardt, Worrel, and Hale serve to support an ever-growing body of research that indicates that, for whatever reason, boys tend to be more drawn to mathematics and science, while girls tend to be more attracted to humanities courses.

In a study of gifted students’ attitudes toward mathematics, for example, Terwilliger and Titus (1995) found that boys indicated higher levels of motivation and interest in math than girls, while Zammit (1993) found that boys found language courses significantly less enjoyable than did girls. Both studies serve to further emphasize the gender-specific dichotomy that exists between boys’ and girls’ valuations of different secondary school courses.

Wilson (1994) built on previous research indicating that female students prefer history, language, and writing courses while male students generally prefer mathematics and science courses. Wilson’s study of gifted students’ course selection at a Duke University summer institute supported this assertion, and further reported that girls were more likely to choose courses because they felt they would be challenging, unusual, or unavailable at their regular schools, whereas males were more likely to choose courses based on their perceived utility. From this it is clear that the gender difference apparent in students’ enrolment in English Literature 12 may well be explained—at least partially—by the task-value construct: perhaps male students do not generally feel that English will be of much use to them in the future, whereas female students may feel that courses like English Literature and Writing 12 are challenging, creative and unique.
Control beliefs.

Questions 2, 9, 18, and 25 of the MSLQ relate to students’ control beliefs, which are defined by Pintrich and Schunk (2002) as “expectations about the links between an agent and the ends” (p. 403). In terms of gender differences and control beliefs, it is difficult to find a consensus within the literature. Most of the research supports Pintrich and Schunk’s observation that females are more likely to “attribute success to external causes (luck, ease of task) or unstable causes (effort, trying hard)” and failure to “internal stable causes such as lack of ability” (p. 133). Boys were more likely to blame their failures on unchangeable factors, either internal or external. For a complete discussion, see Leung (1995), Vermeer, Boekaerts, and Seegers (2000), and Allen and Dietrich (1991).

The findings of the above researchers have clear implications for the study of students’ choices, since males may be less likely to take courses in which they have not done well in the past because they attribute their lack of success to uncontrollable factors, and therefore believe that they will never be successful in that particular subject. Females, on the other hand, may attribute past difficulties to effort, and therefore be willing to try harder in order to achieve better results. Nonetheless, Luzzo (1995) linked control beliefs to academic choices and reported that self-efficacy perceptions were a much better predictor of undergraduate students’ career choices than were their control beliefs.

Self-Efficacy.

Questions 5, 6, 12, 15, 20, 21, 29, and 31 of the MSLQ relate to students’ self-efficacy, defined by Pintrich and Schunk (2002) as “one’s perceived capabilities for
learning or performing actions at designated levels” (p. 407). Few studies have linked academic choices to self-concept. Dai (2001) studied academic motivation in 208 Chinese students, and found that “girls tend to have higher verbal self-concepts and boys tend to have higher math self-concepts” (p. 30). From Dai’s (2001) study, it is easy to assume that the Literature 12 enrolment anomaly can be explained in relation to a domain-specific sense of self-efficacy: boys, whom research has shown tend to be more likely to be motivated by performance goals, choose to take math classes because they expect to do better in them. Clearly this is an important area for further study.

The extensive research on gender differences in relation to self-efficacy does not relate to academic choice, but focuses instead on simple differences in self-concept between males and females. Girls tend to perform better than boys in school, yet have lower senses of self-efficacy (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). See Bauer (1987), Harris (1999), Klassen (2001), and Titus and Terwilliger (1990) for a complete discussion of this phenomenon.

Test anxiety.

Questions 3, 8, 14, 19, and 28 of the MSLQ relate to test anxiety. It is not clear at this time whether test anxiety affects students’ decision-making processes, but it is possible that there is a connection based on general perceptions of testing in respective types of courses. The literature is consistent in its reporting of the fact that female students—who tend to achieve higher marks on tests than their male counterparts—report consistently higher levels of test anxiety. Hence, it is feasible to conclude that girls avoid classes in which the majority of the mark is determined through testing, as is often the case in mathematics and science courses. Nonetheless, I will not be using the data on test
anxiety for this research because my research design did not allow for the collection of teachers' course evaluation methods. For instance, although I have separated Literature 12 students out from the rest of the sample, I have no information regarding the assessment procedures used in that class. I did this so that the teaching practices of individual teachers could not be questioned or criticized based on my research.
Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

Subjects

Of the 217 Grade 12 students from Prince George Secondary School in June of 2004, 91 respondents gave their consent, returned parental consent forms, and completed the survey. These 91 students had already met British Columbia high school graduation requirements—short of having written applicable provincial exams—so had the benefit of being able to look back critically at their school careers and the courses they had taken.

By limiting my study to one large school, I hoped to minimize the effects of certain contaminate variables such as the influence students’ perceptions of different teachers might have had on course selection, or the impact different neighbourhoods’ socio-economic status might have had on students’ general attitudes toward English classes.

Instrumentation.

Subjects completed a modified version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, et al., 1987), (see Appendix A for the measure; see Appendix D for the manual governing the use of the MSLQ). The survey also included 11 questions pertaining to students’ attitudes toward English classes. Students were also asked to state whether they had taken English Literature 12, and to list what Grade 12 electives they had already taken, or were currently taking. See Appendix A for the measure.

Part A of the MSLQ consists of the original 31 questions posed by Pintrich, et al. (1987). I call it “modified” because I changed the wording of the questions from the general wording, “this course” used by Pintrich, et al, to the more specific “English class”
throughout the survey. There is considerable precedence for such modification within the literature (see Higgins (2000) for a recent example).

Part A of the MSLQ (see Appendix A) was administered to assess the students’ goal orientations, task values, and self efficacy beliefs as they related to their perceptions of English Literature. The MSLQ is a self-report measurement developed at the University of Michigan, and consists of fifteen different scales falling under either the category of motivation or learning strategies. Only the scales relating to motivation were useful for my research, so I did not administer the other scales to the students.

Students responded to 31 questions from the MSLQ. Internal reliability coefficients were calculated by the designers of the instrument, and ranged from .52 to .93 (Pintrich, et al., 1987), a significant enough result to indicate predictive validity, albeit in the moderate range.

I wrote Part B of the measure, basing the questions on an older motivational study designed by Arenz and Lee (1989) to measure gender differences regarding computer science courses. These questions are designed to assess students’ attitudes toward course content, as opposed to their respective motivations (as analyzed by Part A of the MSLQ).

Data Handling and Analysis

Approximately one week before the questionnaire was completed, I distributed parental and student consent forms (See Appendix B) to all grade 12 students at Prince George Secondary School during their block B classes. This was accomplished with the cooperation of second period (block B) grade 12 teachers. Forms were also available at the office for students without a block B class.
I went from class to class and administered the survey to students who had completed the necessary permission forms. In order to minimize disruption to classes, students wrote the questionnaire as a group during class—B block grade 12 teachers and administration at Prince George Secondary School had already given me permission to take class time for the study.

I then sorted the completed questionnaires into four groups:

1. Males who have taken Literature 12
2. Females who have taken Literature 12
3. Males who have not taken Literature 12
4. Females who have not taken Literature 12

Since I obtained survey data, I chose the Mann-Whitney $U$ test. It is an appropriate measure for ordinal data, and has been used in similar circumstances to compare gender differences (e.g., Arenz & Lee, 1989). Male students' scores comprised one independent sample, while female students' scores comprised a second independent sample. I ran the Mann-Whitney $U$ test for each question posed on Part B of the survey, comparing the scores of students who had taken Literature 12 with those of students who had not taken Literature 12. I also compared each question posed on Part B of the survey by gender, comparing male students' responses with those of the female students regardless of Literature 12 elective.

*Formulas and procedures.*

The procedure for the Mann-Whitney $U$ was followed as recommended by Hurlburt (2003). Whenever sample sizes were greater than 20, I converted the $U$ statistic to a $z$ score. Based on the assumption that samples greater than 20 are approximately
normally distributed, I also used an ANOVA to re-test $z$ scores that exceeded $z_{cv}$. My justification for this lies in the fact that, having already rejected the null hypothesis using the non-parametric $U$ test, I had already determined that a statistically significant result existed; thus, by running the ANOVA, I increased the power of my tests, and was able to run a post-hoc test—none are available for non-parametric tests. Similar procedures were used by Arenz and Lee (1989), and Higgins (2000). All tests were conducted using Microsoft Excel, and procedures and formulas were taken from Hurlburt (2003).

For all post-hoc error protection data analyses I used Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test. This test is designed to measure all possible pairwise null hypotheses in order to determine which variable is responsible for the rejection of the null hypothesis. I chose this post-hoc test because it is one of the most commonly used, and the formula is quite simple (see Hurlburt (2003), p. 371 for a full discussion).

I used the same procedure for Part A of the MSLQ. I compared the results for Part A based on groups of questions (scales) relating to task value, self-efficacy beliefs, and goal orientation. I have included Box and Whisker Plots in some sections of this study in order to show the range of data for certain variables. The Y-axis shows the range of scores (1-7 on the Likert scale) for each scale or individual question; the box shows where the median of the scores falls, while the upper and lower whiskers show the upper median and lower median scores.

A comparison of the box and whisker plot for males and females for the goal orientation scale (see Figure 1), for example, reveals that the median female score was just below 5 on the Likert scale, and the median male score was 4.5; the lower median for females was just above 3, and for males 2.5; the upper median was approximately 6.5 for
both. Such a graphic representation allows for a visualization of the data that is not possible by examining either parametric or non-parametric test results.

After examining my three main research questions, I analyzed the data using a Two-Way ANOVA in order to see whether gender was a stronger influence on attitudes toward English than having taken Literature 12. The Two-Way ANOVA requires equal numbers of subjects, so I randomly selected data from 9 male students who had not taken Literature 12, data from 9 female students who had also not taken Literature 12, data from 9 Literature 12 students, and the entire male Literature 12 cohort. Obviously this method is not overly reliable, but I wanted to satisfy my curiosity regarding the influence of these two variables. These results are included in the subsection entitled Other Observations from the Data.
Chapter Four: Results

The data collected from the 91 student respondents (48 male, 43 female) to the MSLQ, when analyzed using both the Mann-Whitney $U$ test and a combination of One-Way and Two-Way ANOVAs, revealed the following results. I have grouped the findings according to my original research questions.

**General Attitudes Toward English and English Literature**

**Research question 1:** Do gender based differences exist in relation to male and female students’ attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where neither male students nor female students have taken English Literature 12?

Table 1 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney $U$ tests for each of the 11 questions from Part B of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The data shows statistically significant results for question 1 (I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys) $z_{obs} = -3.399$, $p < .05$; and question 2 (I feel...
that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant) $z_{obs} = -3.133$, $p < .05$.

Table 2

*One-Way ANOVA for Question #1: I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys. Non-Literature 12 Student Responses Analyzed by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 1 by Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.441</td>
<td>1.561</td>
<td>0.2677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.583</td>
<td>2.005</td>
<td>0.3342</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
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<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>22.811</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>0.0100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>221.132</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>243.943</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F v M</td>
<td>-1.142</td>
<td>-2.003 to -0.282 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. $F_{cv} = 4.00$  
$\alpha = .05$

Table 2 shows the results of the One-Way ANOVA for question number one (Part B) of the Modified MSLQ. With an alpha level of .05, the effect of gender is statistically significant, $F_{1.68} = 7.01$, $p = .01$. The Tukey post-hoc test ($p < .05$) revealed that there was a significant difference between females’ and males’ attitudes toward English electives. Males believed more strongly than did females ($M_{male} = 3.583$, $M_{female} = 2.441$) that English electives like Literature 12 were more for girls than for boys.

Table 3 shows the results of the One-Way ANOVA for question number two (Part B) of the Modified MSLQ. With an alpha level of .05, the effect of gender is statistically significant, $F_{1.68} = 7.49$, $p = .0079$. The Tukey post-hoc test (again with $p < .05$) revealed that there was a significant difference between females’ and males’ attitudes toward the
study of Shakespearean plays. Males believed more strongly than did females ($M_{male} = 4.972$, $M_{female} = 3.647$) that the study of Shakespearean works in English classes was useless and irrelevant.

**Table 3**

One-Way ANOVA for Question #2: “I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant.” Non-Literature 12 Student Responses Analyzed by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 2 by Gender</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>34</td>
<td>3.647</td>
<td>1.840</td>
<td>0.3156</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.972</td>
<td>2.184</td>
<td>0.3640</td>
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<table>
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<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
<td>30.706</td>
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<td>30.706</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>0.0079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>278.737</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.099</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F v M</td>
<td>-1.325</td>
<td>-2.291 to -0.359 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. $F_{cv} = 4.00$

$\alpha = .05$

Research question 2: Do gender based differences exist in relation to male and female students’ attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where both males and females have taken English Literature 12?

Table 4 shows the Mann-Whitney U scores for all 11 questions asked of students on Part B of the Modified MSLQ. These students ($n = 21$, 9 female, 12 male), were all currently taking Literature 12 as part of their Advanced Placement Language and Literature Course.
Question number 8 (I plan on taking more English elective courses in the future) revealed a significant result ($U_{female} = 30.5 < U_{cv2-tailed} = 26$), indicating that more females than males expressed a desire to take post-secondary English electives.

Table 4
*Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Literature 12 Student Responses Analyzed by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>$U_{male}$</th>
<th>$U_{female}$</th>
<th>$P_{2-tailed}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>0.4639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>0.4639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>0.9723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>0.4221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>0.3824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>0.8078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>0.6016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>30.5*</td>
<td>0.111*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>0.8621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>0.2773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>0.2469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * indicates a statistically significant result.
n=21 (9 female, 12 male)
$U_{cv2-tailed} = 26$
$\alpha = .05$

The One-Way ANOVA and the post-hoc Tukey’s HSD (Table 5)—the alpha level for all tests was set at .05—confirms an honestly significant difference between the future plans of females regarding English courses and the future plans of males. More females than males intended to take English electives after graduation.
Table 5
One-Way ANOVA for Question #8: I plan on taking more English elective courses in the future

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Quest. 8 by Gender} & \textbf{n} & \textbf{Mean} & \textbf{SD} & \textbf{SE} \\
\hline
F & 12 & 6.000 & 1.279 & 0.3693 \\
M & 9 & 4.111 & 2.619 & 0.8731 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Source of variation} & \textbf{SSq} & \textbf{DF} & \textbf{MSq} & \textbf{F} & \textbf{p} \\
\hline
Gender & 18.349 & 1 & 18.349 & 4.75 & 0.0414 \\
Within cells & 72.889 & 19 & 3.836 & & \\
Total & 91.238 & 20 & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Contrast} & \textbf{Difference} & \textbf{Tukey 95\% CI} \\
\hline
F v M & 1.889 & (significant) \\
& & 0.081 to 3.697 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Notes. \( F_{cv} = 4.35 \)  
\( \alpha = .05 \)

Research question 3: Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of male students who have taken English Literature 12?

Table 6 shows the Mann-Whitney U test results for male students compared by literature elective. These tests revealed statistically significant results for question 1 ("I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys") \( U_{\text{lit}} = 247.0, U_{\text{nolit}} = 77.0 \); question 2 ("I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant") \( U_{\text{lit}} = 244.0, U_{\text{nolit}} = 80.0 \); question 9 ("I think that the books, stories and plays we have to read in English classes are out of date and irrelevant") \( U_{\text{lit}} = 238.0, U_{\text{nolit}} = 80.0 \).
to me”) $U_{lit} = 243.5$, $U_{nolit} = 80.5$; and question 11 (“I feel that math and science courses are more for boys than for girls”) $U_{lit} = 236.5$, $U_{nolit} = 87.5$.

**Table 6**

*Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Male Literature 12 Student Responses Compared to Male Non-Literature 12 Student Responses (Part B)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>$U_{lit}$</th>
<th>$U_{nolit}$</th>
<th>$z$</th>
<th>$p_{2-tailed}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>247.0</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>-2.4*</td>
<td>0.0134*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>244.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>-2.31*</td>
<td>0.0209*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>200.5</td>
<td>123.5</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>0.2801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>115.0</td>
<td>209.0</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>166.5</td>
<td>157.5</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.9124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>116.0</td>
<td>208.0</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>180.5</td>
<td>205.5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.2225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>106.0</td>
<td>218.0</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.1164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>243.5</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>-2.3*</td>
<td>0.0214*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>186.5</td>
<td>137.5</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
<td>0.4965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>236.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>-2.1*</td>
<td>0.0357*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. * indicates a statistically significant result

$n = 45$ (9 male Literature 12 students, 36 male non-Literature 12 students)
$z_{cv} = \pm 1.97$
$
\alpha = .05$

One-Way ANOVAs, followed by post-hoc Tukey’s HSD tests—as usual, alpha levels were set at .05 for—confirmed the results of the U tests (Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 respectively).

Table 7 shows significant ANOVA and Tukey’s HSD test results for male student responses to question 1 (Part B) ($n = 45$, $F_{1,43} = 6.54$, $p = .0142$, alpha = .05). Male students who had not elected to take Literature 12 ($M_{nolit} = 3.583$) believed more strongly than male students who had taken Literature 12 ($M_{lit} = 1.778$) that English electives were more for girls than for boys.
Table 7
One-Way ANOVA for Question #1: I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys. Male Student Responses Analyzed by Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 1 by Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.778</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>0.4339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.583</td>
<td>2.005</td>
<td>0.3342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>23.472</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.472</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>0.0142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>154.306</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>177.778</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit v NoLit</td>
<td>-1.806</td>
<td>-3.229 to -0.382  (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Fcv = 4.08
α = .05
n = 45; 9 Lit, 36 No-Lit

Table 8 shows significant ANOVA and Tukey’s HSD test results for male student responses to question 2 (Part B) (n = 45, F_{1,43} = 6.66, p = .0134, alpha = .05). Male students who have not elected to take English Literature 12 reported significantly higher scores in response to the question, “I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant” (M_{no-lit} = 3.583) than did male students who had elected to take Literature 12 (M_{lit} = 1.778).
Table 8

One-Way ANOVA for Question #2: I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant. Male Student Responses Analyzed by Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 2 by Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.889</td>
<td>2.088</td>
<td>0.6961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.972</td>
<td>2.184</td>
<td>0.3640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>31.250</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.250</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>0.0134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>201.861</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.694</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>233.111</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit v NoLit</td>
<td>-2.083</td>
<td>-3.712 to -0.455 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $F_{cv} = 4.08$

$\alpha = .05$

$n = 45; 9$ Lit, 36 No-Lit

Table 9 shows significant ANOVA and Tukey’s HSD test results for male student responses to question 9 (Part B) ($n = 45, F_{1,43} = 6.13, p = .0173, \alpha = .05$). Male students who had not elected to take Literature 12 reported significantly higher responses ($M_{nolit} = 4.528$) to the question than did the Literature 12 male cohort ($M_{lit} = 2.667$), indicating that male non-Literature 12 students were more likely to feel that the works they studied in English class were out of date and irrelevant than were male Literature students.
Table 9

One-Way ANOVA for Question #9: I think that the books, stories and plays we have to read in English classes are out of date and irrelevant to me. Male Student Responses Analyzed by Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 9 by Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>1.581</td>
<td>0.5270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.528</td>
<td>2.104</td>
<td>0.3507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
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<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>24.939</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.939</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>0.0173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>174.972</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.069</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>199.911</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit v NoLit</td>
<td>-1.861</td>
<td>-3.377 to -0.345 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. $F_{cv} = 4.08$

$\alpha = .05$

$n = 45; 9$ Lit, $36$ No-Lit

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA for Question #11: I feel that math and science courses are more for boys than for girls. Male Student Responses Analyzed by Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quest. 11 by Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.444</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>0.3379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.778</td>
<td>1.807</td>
<td>0.3011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>12.800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.800</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.0398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>122.444</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135.244</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit v NoLit</td>
<td>-1.333</td>
<td>-2.602 to -0.065 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. $F_{cv} = 4.08$

$\alpha = .05$; $n = 45$ (9 Lit, 36 No-Lit)
Table 10 shows significant ANOVA and Tukey's HSD test results for male student responses to question 11 (n=45, $F_{1,43} = 4.50$, $p = .0398$, alpha = .05). Male students who elected not to take Literature 12 ($M_{not} = 2.778$) believed more strongly than male students who had elected to take Literature 12 ($M_{lit} = 1.444$) that science courses were more for boys than for girls.

Motivational Factors

Research question 1.1.1—Task value. Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?

None of the Mann-Whitney $U$ results for questions relating to task value revealed a significant result. Figure 1 shows Box and Whisker plot comparisons for all non-Literature 12 students in the areas of goal orientation, task value and self-efficacy beliefs, and the similarity of means between groups suggests that further statistical analysis is not warranted.

Figure 1. Box and Whisker Plot Comparisons of Non-Literature 12 Student Responses by Gender GO: Goal Orientation; TV: Task Value; SE: Self-Efficacy
**Research question 1.1.2—Self-efficacy beliefs.** Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 report higher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English courses in general than male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?

Figure 1 reveals a marked difference between females and males who had not elected to take English Literature 12 in their respective responses to questions about self-efficacy beliefs (n = 73, 34 female, 39 male), with higher self-efficacy beliefs reported by females. This suggests that females feel more competent in their skills and abilities in relation to English courses.

An analysis of all questions pertaining to self-efficacy beliefs using an alpha level of .05 revealed a statistically significant result for question number 5 (Table 11): “I believe I will receive an excellent grade in English this year” (F_{1,71} = 8.14, p = .0057).

**Table 11**

*One-Way ANOVA for Part A, Question #5: I believe I will receive an excellent grade in English this year. Non-Literature 12 Student Responses Analyzed by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5 by Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.818</td>
<td>1.424</td>
<td>0.2479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.700</td>
<td>1.843</td>
<td>0.2913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>22.609</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.609</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>0.0057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>197.309</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.779</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219.918</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Tukey 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F v M</td>
<td>1.118</td>
<td>0.336 to 1.900 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. F_{cv} = 4.00  
α = .05  
n = 73, 44 male, 33 female*
The female students in this study reported higher self-efficacy beliefs ($M_{female} = 4.818$) about themselves in relation to English classes than did their male peers ($M_{male} = 3.700$).

Research question 2.1.1—Task value. Do female students who have taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also taken English Literature 12?

The male and female Literature 12 students' responses ($n = 22, \ 13 \ male, \ 9 \ female$) were highly homogeneous with regard to all questions relating to task value (see Figure 2), and an examination of each question using One-Way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant results.

Figure 2. Box and Whisker Plot Comparisons of Literature 12 Student Responses Compared by Gender
GO: Goal Orientation; TV: Task Value; SE: Self-Efficacy

Figure 2. reveals the similarity of responses amongst male and female Literature 12 students.
Research question 2.1.2—Self-efficacy beliefs. Do female students who have taken English Literature 12 report higher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English courses in general than male students who have also taken English Literature 12?

Again the Box and Whisker plots (Figure 2) reveal homogeneity of responses within the Literature 12 cohort on measures of self-efficacy. No further statistical analysis was warranted.

Research question 3.1.1—Task value. Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of male students who have taken English Literature 12 in relation to task value assigned to English classes?

Figure 3. Box and Whisker Plot Comparisons of Male Student Responses Compared by Literature 12 Elective
GO: Goal Orientation; TV: Task Value; SE: Self-Efficacy

A comparison of male students’ (n = 51; 9 literature, 42 non-literature) responses to questions pertaining to task value using One-Way ANOVAs factored by English
elective revealed no statistically significant results. Figure 3 shows a comparison of means for these two groups, and reveals the similarity of the two groups’ responses to task-value questions.

Research question 3.1.2—Self-efficacy beliefs. Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of male students who have taken English Literature 12 in relation to self-efficacy beliefs?

Figure 3 shows a significantly higher mean score ($M_{\text{lit}} = 5.667$) for Literature 12 students than for non-Literature 12 students on questions relating to self-efficacy ($M_{\text{non-lit}} = 4.286$). A One-Way ANOVA and a post-hoc Tukey’s HSD test (Table 12), both with alpha levels set at .05, revealed a significant result for question number 6, “I am certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for my English class” ($F_{1,49} = 5.74, p = .0204$), indicating that students—regardless of gender—who had not elected to take Literature 12 felt less confident in their abilities in English classes than did students who had elected to take Literature 12.
Table 12

One-Way ANOVA for Part A, Question #6: I am certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for my English class. Male Student Responses Analyzed by Literature Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.667</td>
<td>1.118</td>
<td>0.3727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.286</td>
<td>1.642</td>
<td>0.2534</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>14.134</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.134</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.0204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>120.571</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.461</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134.706</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit v NoLit</td>
<td>1.381</td>
<td>0.223 to 2.539 (significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes.  
$F_{cv} = 4.98$  
$\alpha = .05$  
n = 51, 9 lit, 42 nolit

Other Observations from the Data

Figure 4 compares Literature 12 students’ responses to questions relating to measures of goal orientation and task value (Part A of the Modified MSLQ) to the responses of students who did not elect to take Literature 12.
Figure 4 represents the differences in means between Literature and Non-Literature students (Mean\textsubscript{GoLit} = 5.361; Mean\textsubscript{GoNolit} = 4.639; Mean\textsubscript{TVLit} = 5.130; Mean\textsubscript{TVNolit} = 4.00), with Literature students expressing higher measures of intrinsic goal orientation and higher measures of task value related to English courses. An analysis of the data using Two-Way ANOVAs (alpha levels = .05) (Tables 13 and 14) reveals statistically and practically significant results for both goal orientation and task value in relation to course selection.
Table 13
2-Way ANOVA: Goal Orientation Analyzed by Gender and Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GO by Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.208</td>
<td>1.264</td>
<td>0.2979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.792</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.2093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GO by Literature</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.361</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>0.2179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoLit</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.639</td>
<td>1.161</td>
<td>0.2736</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.563</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.563</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.2460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>4.694</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.694</td>
<td>4.20*</td>
<td>0.0488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x Literature</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.8147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>35.806</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.125</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. * Indicates a statistically significant result
$F_{1,32} = 3.32$
$\alpha = .05$

The Two-Way ANOVA of measures of goal orientation shown in Table 13 reveals a statistically significant result for the Literature factor ($F_{1,32} = 4.20$, $p = .0488$). Gender is not a significant factor. Students—regardless of gender—who chose to take Literature 12 were more likely to adopt intrinsic goal orientations in relation to English classes than were non-Literature 12 students.
Table 14
Two-Way ANOVA: Task Value Compared by Gender and Literature 12 Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SSq</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MSq</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.5111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>11.485</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.485</td>
<td>5.69*</td>
<td>0.0232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × Literature</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.8463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within cells</td>
<td>64.617</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77.071</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. * Indicates a statistically significant result

Similarly, the Two Way ANOVA of measures of task value shown in Table 14 also reveals a statistically significant result for the Literature factor ($F_{1,32} = 5.69, p = .0232, \alpha = .05$) but not for the gender factor. Students—regardless of gender—who chose Literature 12 reported greater levels of task value for English classes than did students who had not chosen to take Literature 12.
Table 15
Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations, and Standard Errors of Scores for Non-Literature 12 Student Responses to Part B Questions by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.441</td>
<td>1.5607</td>
<td>0.2677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.676</td>
<td>2.0556</td>
<td>0.3379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.647</td>
<td>1.8403</td>
<td>0.3156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.865</td>
<td>2.2905</td>
<td>0.3700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.559</td>
<td>1.7266</td>
<td>0.2961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.135</td>
<td>1.6357</td>
<td>0.2689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.412</td>
<td>1.3952</td>
<td>0.2393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.972</td>
<td>1.5581</td>
<td>0.2597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.676</td>
<td>1.7359</td>
<td>0.2977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.306</td>
<td>1.7041</td>
<td>0.2840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.235</td>
<td>1.8207</td>
<td>0.3133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.111</td>
<td>1.8327</td>
<td>0.3054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.824</td>
<td>1.5269</td>
<td>0.2619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.333</td>
<td>1.6388</td>
<td>0.2731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.382</td>
<td>1.8751</td>
<td>0.3216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>1.6437</td>
<td>0.2739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.853</td>
<td>2.1339</td>
<td>0.3680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.528</td>
<td>2.1042</td>
<td>0.3507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.618</td>
<td>2.3357</td>
<td>0.4006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.333</td>
<td>2.1247</td>
<td>0.3541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.059</td>
<td>1.4342</td>
<td>0.2460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.777</td>
<td>1.8065</td>
<td>0.3011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 compares male and female responses to all 11 questions asked in Part B of the Modified MSLQ; although there were no other statistically significant results, some of the scores are quite interesting. For example, both males and females responded similarly to question number 6: "I feel that learning about poetry in school is useful and relevant" (Mean \(_{\text{male}} = 3.111\), Mean \(_{\text{female}} = 3.235\)). This indicates that both male and females felt that the study of poetry in school had little relevancy and/or utility.
Discussion

General Attitudes Toward English and English Literature

*Research question 1: Do gender-based differences exist in relation to male and female students’ attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where neither male students nor female students have taken English Literature 12?*

The difference between males’ and females’ attitudes toward the study of Shakespeare and the utility of English electives is thought-provoking. In response to questions 1 and 2 (I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys; I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant) respectively, girls clearly felt that English electives had value and were important, whereas boys clearly felt that this was not the case. Obviously a gender difference does exist—at least in relation to the study of Shakespeare—amongst senior secondary students. Boys feel that studying Shakespeare, as well as poetry in general, is a waste of their time.

In terms of the Canon debate, this result is exceptionally interesting. Curricular revisionists argue that the study of the works of dead white males is inherently sexist, and alienates female students, yet this result belies this assertion. Obviously there are other factors at work with regard to males’ and females’ differing perceptions of English electives in general, and the study of Shakespeare in particular. I believe that this is an important area for further research, as the works of Shakespeare are clearly a watershed for the debate surrounding English curricula, and a subject that students feel quite strongly about.
Research question 2: Do gender based differences exist in relation to male and female students' attitudes toward English courses in general in groups where both males and females have taken English Literature 12?

This study suggests that gender may not be as significant a factor in understanding male attitudes toward English as previously thought. Indeed, it would seem that there are other factors that make Literature 12 students, regardless of gender, unique; however, the small sample size (n = 21), and the fact that these students were in an Advanced Placement course rather than a regular English Literature class makes the data less reliable. Obviously further research is required, using a much larger sample size, in order to more completely understand how and why the attitudes of Literature 12 students differ from those of the general student population.

Another important finding is revealed by the results for question 8 of Part B of the MSLQ (I plan on taking more English courses after graduation) (Table 4). The finding that more females than males intended to take English electives after graduation would be an interesting phenomenon to track at the university level. It begs the question why, in a class where both males and females have been exposed to the same course content, are males less likely to continue with their studies than females? In terms of the Canon debate, this result is also intriguing: according to the revisionist argument, the biased course content of Literature 12 should have discouraged female students from wanting to take more English classes; however, the results for question 8 shows that in this class, at least, the course had exactly the opposite effect.
Research question 3: Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of male students who have taken English Literature 12?

The results for male students compared by Literature elective (Table 6) revealed the most significant results of any of the comparisons I made during this study, adding further support to the notion that male students’ attitudes toward and perceptions regarding English electives are responsible for the lack of male enrolment in courses like Literature 12. Clearly the male Literature 12 students do not share the same perceptual biases about Literature 12 as other male students; however, it is not possible to ascertain exactly why or how this has occurred based on the data I collected. Clearly further research is warranted.

I find it extremely interesting that responses of both the non-literature cohort (research question 1) and the male literature vs non-literature cohort (research question 3) are statistically and practically significant in response to question number 1: “I believe that electives like Literature 12 . . . are more for girls than for boys.” When we examine the attitudes of students who have taken English Literature 12 (research question 2), there is no significant difference between males’ and females’ responses; however, when we compare males’ attitudes toward the subject (Table 7), a significant result emerges, suggesting that it is their perceptions about English Literature—not the course itself—that lead students—especially male students—to avoid taking it.

Clearly the study of Shakespeare in English courses is a contentious issue for students, especially boys (Table 8). I feel that this finding, although based on only a small sample, casts a shadow of doubt upon the revisionist argument that English curricula are sexist because of their reliance on the works of dead white males such as
Shakespeare; the male students who have not elected to take Littérature 12 also have rather serious misgivings about the study of Renaissance literature, whereas female students felt that Shakespeare’s plays bore some relevancy.

Although my research suggests that female students outperform male students in English classes, and that females place more value on the actual course content of those classes (Shakespearean plays, for example) than do males, I have no way of knowing whether these findings indicate that course content is neutral, or whether females have simply been acculturated into male-dominated curricula. It may be the case that girls have simply learned how to “speak boy” and, ironically, are better at doing so than the boys themselves. What is necessary, I believe, is an in-depth study of the role of—as well as students’ perceptions of—the study of Shakespeare in secondary English classrooms. By narrowing the research focus to just Shakespearean works, it may be possible to understand more fully the impact of male-centred curricula on female students.

The difference in scores between the two groups of male students (Table 10) in response to question 11 (“I feel that math and science courses are more for boys than for girls”) is not as pronounced as it is for questions 1, 2, and 9, but it is still significant, and again, not especially surprising. It would seem that male students are placing more value on math and science electives, and discrediting the utility of English courses.

The comparison of male Literature 12 students’ responses with those of male students who chose not to take Literature 12 is extremely important in that it reveals a great deal about students’ perceptions of English classes, the content of those classes, as well as their perceptions about the content and nature of science classes. (Tables 6; 7; 8;
Males apparently perceive English classes as being more for girls, whereas science and math classes are more for boys. Additionally, male students seem to feel that the content of English classes is not relevant to them; nonetheless, the scores of male students who chose to take Literature 12 do not reflect these same biases.

It is necessary to conduct further research into this phenomenon in order to determine why male Literature 12 students do not share the attitudes of their non-Literature 12 counterparts. However, it seems intuitively correct to think that males' perceptions about their language skills skew their attitudes toward English courses: males who feel confident in their reading skills put more value on English as a subject, whereas males who are not confident in their reading abilities devalue English course content. I suspect that this is a face-saving technique: it is much more self-gratifying to say that a course is useless and irrelevant than to say, “I lack necessary skills and abilities that would enable me to succeed in this particular course.”

**Motivational Factors**

*Research question 1.1.1—Task value. Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?*

The fact that none of the results for questions relating to task value reveal significant results indicates that, in terms of task value, both females and males who have not taken Literature 12 (n = 73, 34 female, 39 male) value English courses in similar ways. This is an interesting finding, suggesting that there are other domain-specific factors at play in relation to course selection that are more significant than gender.
Research question 1.1.2—Self-efficacy beliefs. Do female students who have not taken English Literature 12 report higher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English courses in general than male students who have also not taken English Literature 12?

That female students reported higher self-efficacy beliefs regarding English courses is consistent with what little literature is available concerning self-efficacy beliefs and gender (e.g., Dai, 2001; Terwilliger & Titus, 1995; Wilson, 1994); however, because this study was conducted at the end of the school year, this result may simply reflect the fact that female students actually outperformed male students in their English classes. Without access to students’ transcripts, it is not possible to determine whether this is the case.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that boys report lower verbal self-concepts than girls. Clearly self-efficacy beliefs play a role in determining whether boys choose to take English electives or not: it is unlikely that a student who feels that he will not be successful in a class—or that he is not capable in that subject—will elect to take more courses in that subject area. This is an area requiring further analysis and study.

Research question 2.1.1—Task value. Do female students who have taken English Literature 12 assign higher task value to English classes in general than do male students who have also taken English Literature 12?

The similarity of the male and female Literature 12 student responses is compelling; clearly gender is not the most significant factor in determining English elective choice; rather these Literature 12 students share similar beliefs about Literature 12—beliefs which are unique from other grade 12 students—and are not gender-specific. The observation that both male and female students value literature in similar ways indicates that gender is not a reliable predictor of course selection.
This observation also casts doubt on the revisionist argument that sexist course content negatively impacts females’ attitudes toward the study of English and English Literature. The students in this study had all completed Literature 12—thus they had been exposed to the purported marginalizing influence of the curriculum—yet females’ beliefs about its value as a subject did not differ from those of males.

Research question 3.1.2—Self-efficacy beliefs. Does a difference in overall attitudes toward English classes exist between the subgroup of male students who have not taken English Literature 12 and the subgroup of male students who have taken English Literature 12 in relation to self-efficacy beliefs?

That male Literature 12 students reported higher measures of self-efficacy than non-literature students supports the idea that many male students may feel that they are not as academically capable in reading and writing as are other students. This goes a long way in explaining why boys are not electing to take courses like Literature 12 which are perceived as being highly academic and involve a great deal of reading. It would seem that general literacy levels may be closer to the heart of the issue surrounding Literature 12 participation than actual course content and the entire Canon debate.

This idea supports and builds on the findings of Luzzo (1995) who found that boys’ perceptions of their own abilities were better predictors of their undergraduate course selection than other motivational factors; hence, if male students believe that they are poor readers—whether they are or not is irrelevant—they will not choose electives involving considerable amounts of reading. In turn, males will begin to de-value those types of courses, seeing them as pointless and irrelevant.
Other observations from the data.

Although there is no gender difference to discuss, the finding that all students in the non-Literature 12 cohort appear to dislike studying poetry certainly has implications for English teachers and curricularists. The relatively low means of both the male and female groups suggest that most students—regardless of gender—feel that poetry is not especially useful. Before teachers can encourage more students—boys or girls—to take English Literature, or any other English elective, for that matter, they must first understand and overcome students' negative attitudes toward poetry.

Also of significance to English teachers—although it is likely no surprise—ought to be the mean scores for question number 9: “I think that the books, stories and plays we have to read in English classes are out of date and irrelevant to me”. The boys in this group of grade 12 students felt quite strongly that the English curriculum currently being taught is not especially relevant to them. In terms of the Canon controversy, this is significant. If the revisionist argument is sound, female students should report significantly lower utility value for the course content of their English classes. The data suggest that female students actually find English course content more relevant than do males.

The perceived irrelevancy of English curricula is another issue of particular importance for educators. If we hope to encourage more students to prize English courses, it is necessary to first either change students' perceptions of English course content, or to change the content of those courses to make it more relevant to students. Obviously, if one values the current content, the former solution is the most desirable, although undoubtedly the most difficult.
In terms of both Task Value and Goal Orientation, students' enrolment in Literature 12 was a significant factor, whereas gender was not. Thus, the students who chose to take Literature 12, regardless of gender, reported a greater tendency toward intrinsic goal orientation, and placed more value on English Literature as a subject, while non-Literature 12 students tended toward extrinsic goal orientation, and valued English less. This finding suggests that there is some other factor influencing students' decisions to take Literature 12, and that this factor is not gender-specific.

The Task Value and Goal Orientation results suggest to me that it is necessary to "advertise" the value of English classes. Students are required to take English in school, so it is not necessary to sell students on the merits of choosing to take the course, as is often the case with other elective areas where students are given a choice (Fine and Performing Arts, for example). It is important to talk to students about the benefits of English courses, and make them aware of how English Literature differs from required English courses.
Conclusion

I set out to discover what I could about males’ perceptions of Literature 12, and why so few boys chose to take the course. At the outset of my research, I believed that the entire Canon debate had little real impact on students’ academic choices, and I hoped to cast doubt upon the revisionist argument that an outdated, sexist, elitist English curriculum was responsible for declining enrolment in Literature 12 (as well as other English electives).

Based on the data I collected and analyzed, the revisionist position appears to be, if not unfounded, at least overstated. There appears to be a unique portion of the grade 12 student population, the members of which see value in literature, while a much larger portion of that same population sees little value in English courses. This situation exists independently of gender.

It may be the case that the English curriculum is in need of updating, but this research suggests that there are far more important issues that must be tackled first. For example, boys’ low self-efficacy reports, devaluation of English courses and offhand rejection of English course content appear to stem from poor literacy skills. Boys report little or no value for English classes because they lack the language skills to comprehend more difficult pieces of literature; thus, the literature itself is not the problem: the problem appears to be more closely related to students’ inability to read complex texts. Improving these necessary reading skills ought to be the first goal of educators, because simply introducing easier-to-read books will merely compound the problem.

Nonetheless, I did not directly test literacy levels—only students’ perceptions of their abilities. It would be extremely useful to collect data on actual reading and writing
indicators, and then correlate this data with students’ reports of self-efficacy and task value in order to determine whether students who are good readers and writers believe courses like Literature 12 have greater value than do students who are not good readers and writers.

Also central to the lack of male enrolment in Literature 12 are the misconceptions boys have about the content and utility of Literature 12. The data suggest that males feel that math and science are more appropriate choices for them, and that English electives are more appropriate for female students. It is likely that this perceptional bias is a result of societal conditioning (family, peers, the educational system in general, mass media), but determining what societal factors are most responsible for these misconceptions is well beyond the scope of this paper.

That students, regardless of gender, dislike studying Shakespeare and poetry comes as little surprise to me; however, I am not sure whether the solution is as simple as doing away with both of these components of the curriculum. I believe that the works of Shakespeare, as well as poetic works from all literary time periods, still have relevancy for students today. I cannot prove it, though, and I may well be wrong in my belief. I began teaching English because I love literature, and I hoped to be able to impart some of my love for great works and beautiful words to my students. I would hate to think that those days are gone simply because educators are unwilling to tackle difficult texts with their students.

I do not mean to say that modern, multi-cultural works are not beautiful or difficult, and that only canonical works have literary merit; on the contrary, I believe that students should be exposed to as many works from as many writers as possible. Indeed, I
feel that an author’s gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, et cetera, is entirely irrelevant to the study of his or her work. All that counts is what he or she has written. Brave and beautiful words are timeless, and I would like to cram as many of them as I possibly can into the few months I am able to spend with my students. What I take exception to is the fact that relevancy is so often used by educators as an excuse for not teaching difficult texts from any time period, including our own. I often hear English teachers say that they don’t teach poetry anymore because kids “don’t get it.” I might agree that the sonnet is yesterday’s news, but I don’t accept that poetry has no relevance to modern human beings.

It may even be the case that the issue of relevancy is overemphasized amongst curricularists and educators: while the latest episode of Survivor, Arctic Circle or Who Wants to Marry My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss? may have far more relevance to students than Hamlet or Paradise Lost, I believe there is a downside to always taking the path of least resistance in relation to students’ perceptions of relevancy and tailoring curricula to meet the ever-changing current of popular culture. More and more it seems teachers are asked to train students for a world of work—often nebulously referred to as the real world—yet the jobs I see being created for high school graduates are, McJobs (as Douglas Coupland would call them): low pay, low prestige positions with little opportunity for advancement.

Why, then, should educators capitulate to the demands of the private sector? It should not be the job of the English teacher to ensure that his or her students are merely literate enough to work a cash register. Far more important should be the task of teaching students to read great literature, and to think for themselves; young people who have
wrestled with the big questions posed by great minds throughout human history will undoubtedly be able to make change, but they will also be possessed of something greater than that: the ability to reason and to question.

Implications and Areas for Further Research

I chose to research a complicated issue—one that bore great relevancy to me in my classroom—but at the conclusion of my research, I feel that I have barely begun to understand all of the issues and ideas surrounding the problem of boys and literature. There are so many complex threads of thought woven into the tapestry of the canon debate that following even one is virtually impossible. If I were to conduct this research again, I would limit my design to include only one or two areas most relevant to the study of literature, such as students’ beliefs about poetry or how they feel about studying Shakespearean works in school.

The study of Shakespeare in secondary school is of real significance to the question of why males choose not to take Literature 12, as well as to the Canon debate in general. The results I obtained during my study came as a bit of a surprise to me: I did not expect Shakespeare to arise as such a significant determiner of students’ attitudes toward English courses. If educators hope to encourage more students to take Literature 12, it is important to further analyze students’ perceptions of—and reactions to—the works of Shakespeare as they are presented in secondary schools. Ideally this analysis should be conducted using a qualitative design: since it is already apparent that Shakespearean studies are a significant factor in this debate, a qualitative study, because it provides insight into individuals’ beliefs, feelings, and values, will provide researchers with more robust data than that derived through quantification.
Another important area for future research is the study of poetry in secondary school. Clearly students do not see it as valuable, so it is obviously important to understand why this is so, and to tailor teaching practices and course content to better equip students to comprehend works of literature written in verse.

It seems to me that most of the significant results revealed in the data I obtained can be explained by students'—especially male students'—weak literacy skills. Obviously more research is needed in order to understand just what impact poor literacy skills have upon such things as self-efficacy beliefs, utility beliefs, and task-value beliefs.
Endnotes

1 The word “canon” was first applied to a list of authors by philologist David Ruhnken in 1823 in a paper concerning ancient Greece. He noted that, of the vast number of Greek orators, only the works of ten of them were preserved in the “canon.” Nonetheless, the term “canon” has long been used to categorize biblical texts: those books whose authenticity is certain are termed “canonic”; all others are assigned the term “apocrypha”. To any argument about literary canons, this last point often becomes relevant, as it implies that some works are “correct” while others are not. Certain works and/or authors have the “consensual approval of literary critics,” hence the literary canon has become the rule or measure, “by which all writing is to be judged . . . all else is relegated to the apocrypha, the dustbin of history” (Lo, 2000, p. 1). It is easy, then, to criticize the subjectivity of canon formation, especially from the perspective that it marginalizes the voices of anyone outside the mainstream society.

2 However, Boggiano and Barrett (1992) studied incidences of depression in third-graders, and found that females exhibited more instances of extrinsic motivation, and were more frequently depressed than males.
References


Higgins, B.A., (2000). *An analysis of the effects of integrated instruction of metacognitive and study skills upon the self-efficacy and achievement of male and female students.* Unpublished Master’s research project, Miami University.


Young, A.J (1992). *All content areas may not be created equal: Motivation orientation and cognitive strategy use in four academic domains.* Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association, Michigan University, April 1, Ann Arbor School of Education.
Appendix A: Modified MSLQ Questionnaire
Motivation Survey

Part A: Motivation

The following questions ask about your motivation for and attitudes about your classes. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not at all true of me</td>
<td>very true of me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In a class, I prefer course material that really challenges me so that I can learn new things.

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in my courses.

3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.

4. I think I will be able to use what I have learned in English class in the future.

5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in English this year.

6. I am certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for my English class.
7. Getting good grades in my classes is the most satisfying thing for me right now.

8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can’t answer.

9. It is my own fault if I don’t learn the material for my courses.

10. It is important for me to learn the material in my classes.

11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern is getting good grades.

12. I am confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in my courses.

13. If I can, I want to get better grades in my classes than most of the other students.

14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.

15. I am confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructors of my courses.
16. In class, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. I am/was very interested in the content of the English courses I have taken.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. I am confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in my courses.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. I expect to do well in my classes.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

22. The most satisfying thing for me in my courses is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. I think the course material in English classes is useful for me to learn.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. When I have the opportunity to choose elective courses, I choose classes I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

26. I like the subject matter of my courses.

27. Understanding the subject matter of my courses is very important to me.

28. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.

29. I am certain I can master the skills being taught in my classes.

30. I want to do well in my classes because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

31. Considering the difficulty of the course, the teachers, and my skills, I think I will do well on my English final exam this term.
**Part B: English and English Electives**

Gender (please circle one)  
MALE  
FEMALE

Have you taken/are you taking Literature 12? (circle one)  
YES  
NO

Please list your grade 12 elective courses in the space below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

*The following questions ask about your attitudes about English classes. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.*

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not at all true of me  
very true of me

1. I believe that English electives like Literature 12 and Writing 12 are more for girls than for boys.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

2. I feel that studying Shakespearean plays in English is useless and irrelevant.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

3. I think high school English courses should focus on practical skills more than on works of literature.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
4. I believe that studying literature is important.

5. I think learning to write creatively is important.

6. I feel that learning about poetry in school is useful and relevant.

7. The English courses I have taken in school have been extremely useful for me.

8. I plan on taking more English elective courses in the future.

9. I think that the books, stories and plays we have to read in English classes are out of date and irrelevant to me.

10. I would rather take science electives than English electives.

11. I feel that math and science courses are more for boys than for girls.

Thank you very much for participating in this study!
Appendix B: Sample Student/Parental Consent Forms
**Research Information Sheet (Parent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher's Name/Position:</th>
<th>Mike Carson/ Teacher, Prince George Secondary School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>9685 Shelest Drive, Prince George, British Columbia, V2K 5S8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Numbers:</td>
<td>(250) 962-5766 (home); (250) 562-6441 (work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor's Name/Position:</td>
<td>Dr. Dennis Procter/ Education Professor, University of Northern British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Project:</td>
<td>Gender and Upper Level English Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Project:</td>
<td>Master of Education Project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

As part of my Master of Education degree, I am required to conduct original research on a recent educational issue. As a teacher of Literature and Writing 12, I have noticed a steady decline in the numbers of male students choosing to take upper-level English courses; I have also noticed—and relevant educational literature and statistics support my observation—that male students’ reading levels have been similarly declining. Indeed female students now outnumber boys in most academic programs in both high school and university.

To help understand why boys are underrepresented in English electives, and why they are over-represented in school discipline referrals and in diagnoses of specific learning and reading disorders, as well as to find ways of helping boys experience greater levels of academic success—especially in language arts—I am asking for you to give permission for your child to respond to a brief questionnaire in his or her block B class.

I expect that this survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The surveys themselves are anonymous—no names are to appear on them—and will be viewed only by me. Once I have completed my project (September, 2004, at the latest), I will shred the questionnaires. My statistical analysis of the data collected from the surveys will be published in my project, but there will be no way of identifying individual participants from the published data.

Participation in this study is purely voluntary. I have been asked by Dr. Fred Egglestone to conduct my study during block B classes at Prince George Secondary School, and the teachers of those classes, the administration of the school, as well as the District and the University of Northern British Columbia have given me permission to request students to participate; nonetheless, your son or daughter may refuse to participate in, or withdraw from, the project, or you may revoke your permission for me to use your child’s questionnaire at any time. I will not use any questionnaires unless the appropriate permission forms accompany them: one from the parent(s) or guardian(s), and one signed by the student him/herself.
If you have any further questions, or if you wish to obtain a copy of the results of the study, please feel free to contact me at the number given at the top of this form, or by email at mcarson@sd57.bc.ca.

Complaints about the research should be directed to the Vice-President of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia, (250) 960-5820.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, please sign the form below and return it to the school with him or her.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this matter!

please sign and return bottom portion

I __________________________ hereby give permission for
_________________________ to participate in the study

being conducted by Mike Carson, educational researcher from UNBC. I understand that
the survey is anonymous, but that results will be used as part of an ongoing Master of
Education project, and will be published.

Signature of Parent or Guardian
Dear Student,

As part of my Master of Education degree, I am required to conduct original research on a recent educational issue. As a teacher of Literature and Writing 12, I have noticed a steady decline in the numbers of male students choosing to take upper-level English courses; I have also noticed—and relevant educational literature and statistics support my observation—that male students’ reading levels have been similarly declining. Indeed female students now outnumber boys in most academic programs in both high school and university.

To help understand why boys are underrepresented in English electives, and why they are over-represented in school discipline referrals and in diagnoses of specific learning and reading disorders, as well as to find ways of helping boys experience greater levels of academic success—especially in language arts—I am asking for you to give your consent to respond to a brief questionnaire in your B block class.

I expect that this survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The surveys themselves are anonymous—no names are to appear on them—and will be viewed only by me. Once I have completed my project (September, 2004, at the latest), I will shred the questionnaires. My statistical analysis of the data collected from the surveys will be published in my project, but there will be no way of identifying individual participants from the published data.

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If you have any further questions, or if you wish to obtain a copy of the results of the study, please feel free to contact me at the number given at the top of this form, or by email at mearson@sd57.bc.ca.

Complaints about the research should be directed to the Vice-President of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia, (250) 960-5820.
**Informed Consent Permission Form**

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete and sign the form below and return it to your English teacher.

Thank you very much for your time!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research study?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time? You do not have to give a reason.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand that the information you give will be kept confidential, and that your identity will not be disclosed?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand who will have access to the information that you provide?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was explained to me by

*Print Name*

I agree to take part in this study:

*Signature of Student Participant*  
*Date*

*Printed Name of Student Participant*
Appendix C: Manual for the Use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)
A Manual for the Use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

Paul R. Pintrich, David A. F. Smith, Teresa Garcia, and Wilbert J. McKeachie

Grant Number OERI-86-0010

Joan S. Stark, Director
Wilbert J. McKeachie, Associate Director

Suite 2400 School of Education Building
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259
(313) 936-2741
General Description

The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) is a self-report instrument designed to assess college students' motivational orientations and their use of different learning strategies for a college course. The MSLQ is based on a general cognitive view of motivation and learning strategies. McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin, & Smith (1986) present the general theoretical framework that underlies the MSLQ. Other articles that discuss the theoretical framework include Pintrich (1988a,b, 1989), Pintrich & Garcia (1991), and Pintrich and DeGroot (1990).

There are essentially two sections to the MSLQ, a motivation section, and a learning strategies section. The motivation section consists of 31 items that assess students' goals and value beliefs for a course, their beliefs about their skill to succeed in a course, and their anxiety about tests in a course. The learning strategy section includes 31 items regarding students' use of different cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In addition, the learning strategies section includes 19 items concerning student management of different resources. There are 81 items on the 1991 version of the MSLQ.

Administering the MSLQ

The fifteen different scales on the MSLQ can be used together or singly. The scales are designed to be modular and can be used to fit the needs of the researcher or instructor. The instrument is designed to be given in class and takes approximately 20-30 minutes to administer.

A sample cover sheet (p. 33) and demographic sheet (p. 37) are included in this manual. The cover sheet requests the student's voluntary participation and briefly describes the MSLQ. The demographic sheet is an optional form the researcher can include to gather students' background data. Both the sample cover sheet and demographic sheet can be adapted to the individual researcher's needs. The questionnaire itself is located on pages 41-48.

Development of the MSLQ

The MSLQ has been under development formally since 1986 when NCRPTAL was founded and informally since 1982 when we undertook our research on college student learning and teaching. The years 1982-1986 involved using a self-report instrument to assess students' motivation and use of learning strategies that varied from 50 to 140 items. We used these early instruments to evaluate the effectiveness of our "Learning to Learn" class here at the University of Michigan (see McKeachie, Pintrich, & Lin, 1985; Pintrich, McKeachie, & Lin, 1987). These instruments were used with over 1000 University of Michigan undergraduates enrolled in our course. These early instruments were subjected to the usual statistical and psychometric
analyses, including internal reliability coefficient computation, factor analyses, and correlations with academic performance and aptitude measures (e.g., SAT scores). We continually revised items on the basis of these results.

We began the formal development of the MSLQ when NCRIPTAL was founded in 1986. NCRIPTAL was funded for research on college populations excluding major research institutions like Michigan. We began using the MSLQ at three collaborating institutions in the Midwest, a four-year, public, comprehensive university; a small liberal arts college; and a community college. There were three major waves of data collection with previous versions of the MSLQ with students from these three institutions: 1986, 1987, and 1988. The items on these previous versions of the MSLQ were subjected to the usual statistical and psychometric analyses including internal reliability coefficient computation, factor analyses, and correlations with academic performance measures. The first wave of data collected in 1986 included 326 students; the second wave in 1987 included 687 students; and the third wave in 1988 included 758 students. After each of these waves we analyzed the data and rewrote items, and refined the conceptual model underlying our instrument.

Therefore, based on both theoretical and empirical analyses, we revised items and constructed scales. The final version of the MSLQ presented in this manual represents the past five years of work on these various waves of data.

Characteristics of the Sample

The data presented in this document were gathered from a sample of 380 Midwestern college students. Most of these students (N=356) attended a public, four-year university; the remaining students (N=24) attended a community college. This version of the MSLQ was administered towards the end of the Winter 1990 (January to May) semester. Thirty seven classrooms were sampled, spanning fourteen subject domains and five disciplines (natural science, humanities, social science, computer science, and foreign language). Additional demographic information about this sample can be found in Appendix A (pp. 67-71).

Item and Scale Statistics

The MSLQ scales are detailed on pages 9-29. This manual includes descriptions of each scale, as well as relevant statistics such as internal reliability coefficients, means, standard deviations, and zero order correlations with final course grade for each item and scale. Scale correlations are presented in Appendix B (p. 75). The scale correlations with final grade are significant, albeit moderate, demonstrating predictive validity. The Cronbach's alphas are robust, ranging from .52 to .93. Additionally, we have
included results from confirmatory factor analyses in Appendix C (pp. 79-87). These indicate that the MSLQ shows reasonable factor validity.

**Scoring the MSLQ**

Students rate themselves on a seven point Likert scale from "not at all true of me" to "very true of me." Scales are constructed by taking the mean of the items that make up that scale. For example, intrinsic goal orientation (see page 9) has four items. An individual's score for intrinsic goal orientation would be computed by summing the four items and taking the average.

Items marked as "reversed" are reverse coded items and must be reflected before scale construction. These negatively worded items and the ratings have to be reversed before an individual's score can be computed. If an item has to be reversed, a person who has circled 1 for that item now receives a score of 7 and so on. Accordingly, a 1 becomes a 7, a 2 becomes a 6, a 3 becomes a 5, a 4 remains a 4, a 5 becomes a 3, a 6 becomes a 2, and a 7 becomes a 1. The simplest way to reflect a reverse coded item is to subtract the original score from 8. For example, if the original score was 2 to the negatively worded item, one would compute 8 - 2 = 6; 6 being the score for the positively worded version of that question. The statistics reported in this manual all represent the positively worded versions of the items.

**Student Feedback**

It has been our policy at NCRIPTAL to provide students feedback on the MSLQ as a form of compensation for their participation in our studies. We have chosen nine scales of the MSLQ (Task Value, Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance, Test Anxiety, Rehearsal, Elaboration, Organization, Metacognition, Time and Study Environment Management, and Effort Regulation) on which to give students feedback. The student's individual scores, the class' scale means, and quartile information are included in the feedback form. We provide descriptions of each scale and also offer suggestions to students on how to increase their levels of motivation and strategy use. Our feedback form is duplicated in this manual on pages 51-60. Again, the feedback form may be adapted to the researcher's or instructor's needs.

We have not provided norms for the MSLQ. It is designed to be used at the course level. We assume that students' responses to the questions might vary as a function of different courses, so that the same individual might report different levels of motivation or strategy use depending on the course. If the user desires norms for comparative purposes over time, we suggest the development of local norms for the different courses or instructors at the local institution.
II. MOTIVATION SCALES
**Value Component: Intrinsic Goal Orientation**

Goal orientation refers to the student's perception of the reasons why she is engaging in a learning task. On the MSLQ, goal orientation refers to student's general goals or orientation to the course as a whole. Intrinsic goal orientation concerns the degree to which the student perceives herself to be participating in a task for reasons such as challenge, curiosity, mastery. Having an intrinsic goal orientation towards an academic task indicates that the student's participation in the task is an end all to itself, rather than participation being a means to an end.

Item

1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.

16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.

22. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.

24. When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

Alpha: .74

**Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Correlation with Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value Component: Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Extrinsic goal orientation complements intrinsic goal orientation, and concerns the degree to which the student perceives herself to be participating in a task for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others, and competition. When one is high in extrinsic goal orientation, engaging in a learning task is the means to an end. The main concern the student has is related to issues that are not directly related to participating in the task itself (such as grades, rewards, comparing one's performance to that of others). Again, this refers to the general orientation to the course as a whole.

Item

7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.
11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade.
13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.
30. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

Alpha: .62

Descriptive Statistics

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<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
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<td>1.23</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value Component: Task Value

Task value differs from goal orientation in that task value refers to the student's evaluation of the how interesting, how important, and how useful the task is ("What do I think of this task?"). Goal orientation refers to the reasons why the student is participating in the task ("Why am I doing this?"). High task value should lead to more involvement in one's learning. On the MSLQ, task value refers to students' perceptions of the course material in terms of interest, importance, and utility.

Item

4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.
10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.
17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.
23. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.
26. I like the subject matter of this course.
27. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.

Alpha: .90

Descriptive Statistics

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<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
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<td>1.25</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expectancy Component: Control of Learning Beliefs

Control of learning refers to students' beliefs that their efforts to learn will result in positive outcomes. It concerns the belief that outcomes are contingent on one's own effort, in contrast to external factors such as the teacher. If students believe that their efforts to study make a difference in their learning, they should be more likely to study more strategically and effectively. That is, if the student feels that she can control her academic performance, she is more likely to put forth what is needed strategically to effect the desired changes.

Item

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.
9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.
18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.
25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

Alpha: .68

Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
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Expectancy Component: Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance

The items comprising this scale assess two aspects of expectancy: expectancy for success and self-efficacy. Expectancy for success refers to performance expectations, and relates specifically to task performance. Self-efficacy is a self-appraisal of one's ability to master a task. Self-efficacy includes judgments about one's ability to accomplish a task as well as one's confidence in one's skills to perform that task.

Item

5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.
6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.
12. I'm confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this course.
15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.
20. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.
21. I expect to do well in this class.
29. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.
31. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.

Alpha: .93
**Expectancy Components: Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance**

**Descriptive Statistics**

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