6-14-2022

A Culturally Sustaining Book Club: The Examination of African American students' Motivation and Literacy Achievement

Brittney C. Jones
Florida International University, bjone088@fiu.edu

Recommended Citation

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

A CULTURALLY SUSTAINING BOOK CLUB: THE EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN

AMERICAN STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Brittney C. Jones

2022

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
     College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Brittney C. Jones, and entitled A Culturally Sustaining Book Club: The Examination of African American Students' Motivation and Literacy Achievement and, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
James Burns

_____
Angela Salmon

_____
Andy Pham

_____
Jacqueline Lynch, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 14, 2022

The dissertation of Brittney C. Jones is approved.

_____
Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

_____
Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

      To God, for the continued blessings and strength to carry me all the way. Your grace and mercy allowed me to finish this educational milestone. To my Mom and Dad who raised me to be focused, determined and accomplish my goals. I hope I have made you proud. To the Jasmin crew for being in my corner every step of the way. To my family and friends whose prayers and encouraging words got me through my toughest days. Finally, to my younger self, 7 year old Brittney, a little girl with big dreams and bigger fears, this is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my chair and major professor Dr. Jacqueline Lynch. I will

be forever grateful for your unwavering support throughout this entire journey. You have

inspired me and challenged me in so many ways. To my committee members, Dr. Burns,

Dr. Pham, and Dr. Salmon, I am beyond thankful for your support, feedback, and

encouragement. I would also like to thank the participating school administration and all

participants who took part in the study for sharing your teaching and learning experiences

with me and helping to inform this research.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A CULTURALLY SUSTAINING BOOK CLUB: THE EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN

AMERICAN STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

by

Brittney C. Jones

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Jacqueline Lynch, Major Professor

Culturally sustaining pedagogy includes centering students' cultural identities, languages, and practices in the classroom. Such practices have had positive effects on the reading achievement and motivation of African American students. In particular, communalism and interdependence are cultural themes that are preferred by African American students and parents. Book clubs are a long-standing literacy activity that centers on student voices and social interactions as the basis of student learning.

This mixed-methods intervention study was conducted to determine the effects of a culturally sustaining book club on second- and third-grade African American students' motivation and reading achievement at a Title I school as an afterschool activity. It was also designed to gather student feedback on the intervention, given the limited research on student perspectives. A total of 30 students participated in the study (15 in the intervention group and 15 in the control group). The book club was designed to incorporate culturally relevant books and participants' learning preferences, such as communalism, through peer-led discussions and collaborative work.

Quantitative data were collected before and after the 6-week intervention through a motivation survey (Motivation to Read Profile-Revised) and a reading assessment measure (i-Ready). The results showed no significant difference between the control and intervention groups. Qualitative data were collected through student focus groups, video-recorded book club sessions, voice-recorded peer-led discussions, teacher interviews, and unit work samples. Four major themes emerged: increase in reported reading motivation; comprehending texts and achievement: cultural and personal associations with literature; communal learning; and access to culturally relevant texts. Although there were no significant quantitative findings, the qualitative results corroborated previous research on peer-led collaboration and culturally relevant books to promote motivation and reading achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT   PAGE

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From 2001 to 2015, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was in place, giving the federal government control over school laws that increased accountability and placed a significant focus on standardized tests (Heise, 2017). As a result, struggling schools enforced a rigid curriculum to grow and maintain adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Heise, 2017). After that, NCLB was replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which bears similarities to NCLB but allows for more flexibility. Rather than focusing only on standardized testing, the state has more autonomy to decide its own learning plans in lieu of following the national plan (El Moussaoui, 2017). Henceforth, schools that educate students in poverty are far more likely to be drilled with test-taking strategies and denied meaningful engagement with peers since NCLB (Rouland et al., 2014; Sterponi, 2007). Even with ESSA, issues such as the "one size fits all" curriculum persist (El Moussaoui, 2017). The "one size fits all" curriculum, also known as a prescribed curriculum, is used to address the achievement gap and has been shown to be effective (Duncan Owens, 2009; Ryder et al., 2003). The objective of such a curriculum is to standardize teaching practices for all students. The current study called into question the cultural blindness and neutrality of current teaching practices such as the "one size fits all" curriculum. It attempted to highlight the need for culturally relevant pedagogy in marginalized schools to support reading motivation and academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

"Achievement gap" is a term that refers to the resource, opportunity, teacher quality, and expectation gaps in schools. It is almost always used to describe the learning outcomes of African American students in comparison to their White counterparts (Ford & Moore, 2013). "Urban" is a term covered by many negative connotations, such as crime, poverty, violence, and African American stereotypes (Ford & Moore, 2013). As a result, some students who learn in urban settings are at an academic disadvantage compared to their rural and suburban counterparts (Cartledge, 2002). This academic disadvantage is due to various circumstances, including the environment, family issues, lack of early opportunities, and teacher disinterest (Ford & Moore, 2013; Hart & Risley, 2003). Still, no one variable is responsible for the achievement gap (Ford & Moore, 2013). The current study focused on specific African American urban students in poverty. According to Ford and Moore (2013), poverty risks apply to all children who are living in poverty, and educators should avoid presumptions and assumptions that income and race are synonymous or that either factor alone or together determines academic achievement. The current study acknowledged an achievement gap and recognized that it is not solely based on race. Moreover, middle-class African American students outperform poor students, ethnicity aside (Hodgkinson, 1991). Many factors affect low achievement, including social, cultural/familial, and individual ones, which can also be associated with low teacher expectations and sparse educational opportunities (Steele, 2010; Valencia, 2010). Rushton et al. (2003) explained that educators possess the power to influence learning outcomes based on their expectations and started a call to action that educators set realistic and mindful expectations. Furthermore, prevalent teaching styles favor and

promote White middle-class ideals, leading students who do not meet the criteria to believe that they must deviate from their cultural norms to be academically successful (Emdin, 2017).

I am arguing that there is a need for urban educators to adopt equity-based, culturally sustaining approaches to educate African American students more adequately (Ford & Moore, 2013). Educators have the responsibility to be culturally aware and culturally competent. By not doing so, it can perpetuate the cycle of underachievement (Barton & Coley, 2009; Ford & Moore, 2013). African American students are eager for opportunities to ignite their potential, creativity, and attention (Strickland, 1994). Strickland (1994) postulated ways to mitigate the issue and infuse culturally sustaining pedagogy, including more use of supplemental texts alongside the curriculum instead of textbooks as the primary source of knowledge and merging oral language with literacy learning. In addition, favoring students' cultural resources of knowledge and using them to set goals and steer education is beneficial (Lee & Ball, 2005). In research, funds of knowledge describe the life experiences and competence of underrepresented communities (Aguilar et al., 2011). Although the benefits of adopting culturally sustaining practices have been documented, education over the past two decades has focused on standardizing curricula, or prescribed curricula, likely for different reasons, such as closing the achievement gap and standardizing teacher instruction (Sleeter, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the infusion of culture and culturally sustaining pedagogy through a book club with African American students attending a Title I school setting. This infusion included culturally sustaining teaching materials and learning preferences

that appealed to the student's culture. Mansilla and Rivard (2014) postulated that learning the complexity of culture through literature opens a window to the world and illuminates obscurity. The purpose of this study was to open the window and create a mirror for the African American students to see themselves, their families, and their culture represented in this book club.

The goal was to examine the association between a culturally sustaining book club and student reading motivation and academic achievement. Specifically, grade two and three students were targeted for this study, given that these grades are a pivotal time in early childhood for reading success. As Chall and Jacobs (2003) put forward, students in stages 1 and 2 (typically in grades 1-3) learn to read and decode new words. Specifically, Spira et al. (2005) suggested that readers who struggle at the end of second grade are likely to continue struggling throughout schooling. Second- and third-grade students are also at the end of early childhood, and by this time, students should have built a strong foundation for later literacy learning. Information-rich data were collected for the current study through observations and field notes from recorded book club sessions, teacher interviews, and participant focus groups. This qualitative data provided insights into the reading motivation of African American students, along with other rich data that honors the voices of the participants. A standardized reading test and a motivation questionnaire were used to collect quantitative data.

The participants chosen were second- and third-grade students reading below grade level and were identified based on teacher recommendations. Also, they attended a school in a low socioeconomic area, with a significant percentage of the population qualifying for free or reduced lunch. This study was conducted during the after-school

4

program with students enrolled in said program that is led by school staff and certified teachers from neighboring schools.

Significance of Study

According to research, Afrocultural characteristics include orality, affect, and movement in the classroom (Rouland et al., 2014). Heath's (1983) seminal ethnographic study focused on the orality or nonliterary aspects of socialization of different cultures, including African Americans. Specifically, Heath described how communities acquire language and literacy as cultural norms and values. There needs to be a reiteration of the orality and cultural norms at home for students whose cultures vary from the mainstream culture. Moreover, Boykin et al. (2005) conducted research on cultural themes. The cultural theme of communalism (i.e., a focus on interdependence among similar people) was highly preferred by African American students and their parents. Communalism is a part of the African American experience (Boykin et al., 1997; Boykin et al., 2005; Rouland et al., 2014).

Students whose school learning preference reflects their home culture perform better in schools (Boykin et al., 2006). Consequently, communalism is associated with outstanding academic performance for African American students in cooperative learning settings (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Coleman et al., 2021; Jagers, 1988; Love & Kruger, 2005). Interdependency was determined to contrast strongly with the current American classroom that focuses on competition and individuality (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Boykin et al., 2006).

The current study was conducted in the southeast region of the US, where African American students' retention rates are staggering compared to their White counterparts

(Florida Department of Education, 2019). Retention may be attributed to failing grades and test scores and, in some cases, teacher bias, student attendance, school conditions, or other factors. Cambourne (1995, 2001) posited that teacher expectations for students should be high to challenge them. He also posited that high teacher expectations could promote students to take responsibility for their learning.

Au (1998) suggested research should account for the literacy achievement gap in societal conditions. The fact that second- and third-grade education weighs heavily on students' later educational progression should be taken into account when intervening for students in these grades. The study intervention included an examination of possible cultural differences that may contrast with school learning preferences.

Rouland and colleagues (2014) examined how cultural classroom practices like social interactions influence the academic achievement of African American fifth graders. The classroom culture, including reading and math ability and social skills, was assessed, and the results showed that African American students performed well in an Afrocultural-focused classroom. However, the researchers recommended that a mix of both mainstream and Afrocultural learning are integral to academic achievement (Rouland et al., 2014). The study results further revealed that of the various socioeconomic status of the African American participants, students attending low-SES schools were less likely to receive Afrocultural learning, and students attending middle-class schools were more likely to receive it (Rouland et al., 2014). In another study, Tyler et al. (2010) examined home-based communal activities with collegiate academic achievement for Black and White undergraduate students. The study's results confirmed

the importance of culture, namely the communalism aspect of culture, in the motivation of African American undergraduate students.

The impact of culture is vital to African American learners. By making instruction meaningful and relevant, culture fosters connections in students (Jackson, 2005). Increased motivation can result from infusing culture because motivation is the brain's realization of relevance and meaningfulness (Jensen, 1998). Researchers have sought best practices in learning for low-income African American students and ways to mitigate the achievement gap (Foster et al., 2003). Given the communal learning preferences of African American students, a book club was chosen as the intervention for the literacy program for this study.

Book clubs have been effective in literacy classrooms because of social interactions (McMahon & McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Stover et al., 2015). Namely, book clubs implement the social interaction between peers that Piaget (1932) credits as being more effective in fostering cognitive growth than child-adult interactions. African American students effectively learn through peer interactions, which can be culturally responsive based on the communal learning preferences of African American students (Boykin et al., 2006). Children's interactions with peers in early childhood have been consistently linked to their social and academic outcomes (Rudasill et al., 2013). The social nature of the book club may impact motivation and reading ability.

Johnson (2015) explored the social interactions of kindergarteners with a focus on literacy. He connected reading with a peer and joined school-related tasks to enjoy social interaction while fostering academic learning spaces. Sterponi (2007) observed and noted the preference of kindergarten students for collaborating with their peers while reading

7

texts in school settings. Book clubs encourage self-expression and can encourage movement. Students are not limited to their desks; they can get up and move to an alternative seat. Also, during book club time, students are likely provided with a chance to make their book selections, which is very effective as a motivational tool (Smoldt, 2001). Book clubs are a key tenant of literacy classrooms because they create a social dynamic where students lead their discussions, reading, writing, and collaborating (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Socializing as a mode of learning and sharing information is especially important in urban school settings. McMahon and Hauschildt (1993) found that book club settings encourage open dialogue and contributions from student participants. Creating a safe space for students to share experiences and rich discussions about literature can lead to motivated students.

In addition to the book club being culturally sustaining, early intervention is also a critical factor in the current study. Early interventions, such as those that incorporate reading skills in small group settings, have proven to be effective (Matthews, 2015). Mills and Calkins (2014) suggested that reading in the early grades is essential because children in the early formal school years learn the habits and practices that develop into inquiry, which affects all subject areas.

This study was grounded in sociocultural and critical race theories. The sociocultural theory focuses on literacy as a social practice and how it can impact student outcomes, including measures of students' literacy development. Sociocultural theory recognizes the strong connections between social action and culture (Vygotsky, 1978). The current study sought to converge social practices and literature through the book club, with consideration of sociocultural theory. The Critical Race Theory acts as a lens

to challenge power dynamics that marginalize people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical Race Theory is used in education to challenge the power systems that exclude people of color. In this study, I examined ways to promote, guide, and empower African American youth to enhance reading motivation and academic growth through the incorporation of rich discussions and culturally relevant texts through the book club intervention. "A thriving learning community begins through conversation, giving value to unique approaches to literature" (Petrich, 2015, p. 1). By acknowledging that the current system has opportunities for improvement in meeting the needs of marginalized African American students, the goal of the study was to reveal the capabilities of a group of students who have been traditionally negatively labeled and counted out of literacy success.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the reading achievement of African American students as measured by i-Ready? If so, in what ways?

2. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the motivation of African American students as measured by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised? If so, how?

3. What are African American children's views of a culturally sustaining book club compared to their other literacy experiences?

4. What are teachers' views of students' learning for those who participated in a culturally-sustaining book club versus those that did not participate?

Delimitations of the Study

The current study examined reading motivation and academic achievement. It was conducted with Black/African American students in grades 2 and 3 attending an inner-city school in the southeast region of the United States. For generalization purposes, it would be ideal to focus on multiple grade levels, but the scope of this study was limited to a particular population.

Limitations of the Study

As there was a specific target population selected for this study and a vastly different book club method used, the results from this study may not be generalizable to all Black and African American students or students beyond the specific region in which the data were collected. However, the themes gleaned from the qualitative data can push the field forward through further research by understanding topic-specific and population-specific reading strategies that motivate students to read and improve reading. Furthermore, my experience as a second-grade reading teacher for multiple years has informed the decision to choose second and third grade. While I taught second grade, I had the opportunity to conduct a book club, and I noticed the growth in my students' discussions, motivation, and comprehension. My previous experiences with book clubs were not a part of a formal research project, but as an educator, I got to witness how book clubs foster collaboration and motivate my classroom students.

Operationalization of Terms

Applicable terms to the current study are defined below and are operationalized in context unless identified.

- African American- African Americans are people who identify as American with African ancestry, also known as Black American, minority, Black, or person/ people of color (Nelson, 2017). African Americans are tied to race due to physical attributes.

- Black- The term Black is attributed to the physical attributes of people of African Ancestry. However, the term Black does not automatically denote African American. Black can be from a myriad of places, including the Caribbean, etc.

- Book club- A book club is based on the educational theory that student learning begins with social interactions (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). A book club is a social, student-centered activity that highlights students' voices (Heller, 2006). Book clubs introduce students to reading for pleasure, which is especially important in early literacy (Webber & Shropshire, 2001). Book clubs intend to honor the functions and forms of the books, which is different from seeing books as an additional piece of instruction (Raphael et al., 2001). This is what distinguishes book clubs from reading class instruction.

- Culture- Culture is defined as social practices, interactions, and customs that belong to a group of people. The fluidity of culture ensures that it is never binary or finite. However, as it relates to the current study, culture is described as that of African American culture. Ethnicity and culture are strongly correlated because they both involve practices and beliefs.

- Culturally relevant pedagogy- Culturally relevant pedagogy focuses on upholding students' cultural identities. Three main components make up culturally relevant

11

pedagogy: student learning, cultural competence, and critical literacies (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

- Culturally responsive pedagogy- Culturally responsive pedagogy is a student-centered way of teaching that builds upon students' prior knowledge, cultural strengths, and connections to promote academic achievement (Burnham, 2021).

- Culturally sustaining pedagogy- Culturally sustaining pedagogy draws from prior research on asset-based pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally sustaining pedagogy includes sustaining cultural and linguistic practices while simultaneously giving access to dominant cultural capital (Paris, 2012).

- Motivation- an individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs about the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study focused on the merging of a prominent literacy practice — a book club with culturally sustaining practices and using culturally relevant texts. The study used culturally sustaining practices because a culturally sustaining pedagogy includes all the aspects of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies to engage students in learning. However, the current study incorporated other aspects of reading practices, such as explicit vocabulary instruction and reading lessons during the opening community share, while still centering on prior knowledge and use of culturally relevant texts. Grant (2010) explained culture as a deep-rooted, shared set of norms and values that encompass self-worth, beliefs, and collective responsibility. The primary focus of the current study investigated how incorporating culturally sustaining literature into an after-school book club affects the reading achievement and motivation of African American students in a Title I school setting.

A comprehensive look at prior research on culturally responsive pedagogy, reading motivation, and reading achievement was conducted. Each of these topics has been well-researched individually. Based on the literature review, there are also connections between the areas. For example, culturally responsive pedagogy can lead to better learning and motivation. Implementing culturally responsive pedagogy essentially challenges the "melting pot" concept, which assumes the homogeneity of all students. Akbar (1978) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy could improve reading outcomes. The literature supports the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy in

African American spaces (Au & Kaomea, 2009; Bell & Clark, 1998; Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Leonard & Hill, 2008; Siwatu, 2009). Also, the usefulness of book clubs has been established through prior research (Hill, 2012; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Lewis & Zisselsberger, 2019; Webber & Shropshire, 2001). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the use of culturally sustaining pedagogy within book clubs and its possible effects on African American students in a Title I school. Leonard and Guha (2002) stated that culture should be used as a springboard to enrich learning. Ervin (2022) postulated a culturally sustaining curriculum could be utilized even with a prescribed curriculum. Drawing from sociocultural and critical race theories, I intended to bridge the gap in the literature regarding how culturally sustaining pedagogy in book clubs can support reading motivation and achievement.

The following literature review provided an overview of the foundational and other applicable studies that establish a case for implementing a culturally responsive book club for African American students. The first section highlighted the study's theoretical background and the lens through which I developed the study. The final section outlined the connection between culturally responsive pedagogy, use of multicultural texts/culturally relevant literature, motivation, reading comprehension, and vocabulary to the implementation of book clubs. Lastly, I summarized several studies that informed the practice of implementing an after-school culturally sustaining book club.

Theory/Perspective

Vygotsky (1978) believed that social learning proceeds development and that learning is inherently social. "Every function in the child's cultural development appears

twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level. This applies equally to voluntary attention, logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Sociocultural theory situates learning as an act of enculturation through the cultural activities that contribute to the learning process (Perry, 2012). The sociocultural theory was used to explain and understand the role of a culturally responsive book club in improving reading achievement and motivation. Sociocultural theory incorporates the role of culture in the learning process and views literacy as a social practice (Street, 2001).

Literacy as a social practice is beneficial because it fosters interest and makes connections between literature and their lives. Perry (2012) postulated that students are more likely to engage in cultural practices if they are meaningful. Smith (1977) argued that reading is more than decoding written language; it also involves connecting meaning with print. Vygotsky (1962) stated that development could not be separated from its social and cultural context. According to Scott (2013), sociocultural has been used to move the field of education forward by addressing current flaws in the education system. By using this theory, educators can begin to use literacy instruction that is inclusive (Scott, 2013).

A culturally sustaining book club has strong ties to sociocultural theory because social and cultural development is the framework upon which a culturally responsive book club is built. During book club, teachers are encouraged to establish "cultural practices," which are ways for students to support and interact with each other (Israel, 2017). Cultural practices are integral to book clubs because researched pedagogical

15

theory and best practices without a genuine attempt to bridge the cultural gap between home and school are insufficient to meet students' needs (Bailey & Pranky, 2005). Furthermore, believing that inequity in resources and teaching should be improved will not produce an equitable learning environment (Bailey & Pransky, 2005). Therefore, there must be a conscious effort to consider bridging the cultural norms of students in the classroom.

Previous literature suggested that social interactions appeal to the learning preferences of African American students, which can impact reading achievement (Boykin et al., 2006; Coleman et al., 2021). This research showed that instructional methods that afford more opportunities for student involvement and student response effectively reach African American students. Furthermore, the ability to interact connects the students with knowledge (Na'im, 1978). Vygotsky's (1962) work on social development can explain why marginalized students could have difficulty learning in schools, such as when the instruction does not follow their community's cultural values and standards for behavior. Moreover, studies have shown that American public-school instructional practices and curricula have been proven to mirror or represent specific cultures, values, and beliefs that do not include marginalized populations (Pai & Adler, 1997; Sleeter, 2011b). The mainstream pedagogy used in American classrooms reflects middle-class European-American ideals, culture, and beliefs (Heath, 1983; Pai & Adler, 1997; Payne, 1998). Delpit (1996) suggested there is a disparity between the learning preferences of African American students and the curriculum and instructional practices in the past and present.

Sociocultural theory is also linked to Critical Race Theory by focusing on the importance and issues of power, specifically on how educators and researchers understand how power affects marginalized communities (Perry, 2012). Critical Race Theory places race as the focus of critical analysis (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical Race Theory is used in education to challenge power systems that exclude people of color. Brown and Brown (2010) argued that, although there has been a growing inclusion of African American literature in classroom textbooks, the chosen stories tend to intentionally focus on stories of struggle to distort and oversimplify African American history by centering racism and violence towards African Americans. The lack of various African American stories with a diverse focus undermines multicultural literature. Critical race theorists noted that legal victories like *Brown vs. Board of Education* made strides in multiculturalism in schools, but they faltered in getting to the structural issues of schools, such as in teaching practices and consideration of culture in the curriculum (Ladson Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical Race Theory allows students and teachers to recognize and question the inconsistent discourse of Black culture and race within children's literature (Yenik-Agbaw, 2014). In addition, Critical Race Theory provides a lens to challenge the reading practices currently implemented in schools and offers alternative methods that include culturally sustaining pedagogy. Tatum (2008) posited that there has been a lack of interdisciplinary depth and focus on responsive pedagogy necessary to provide an adequate education for African American students. This lack of responsive pedagogy in schools is credited with the tension and unrest in schools because of racial and social class discussions (Tatum, 2008). Critical Race Theory framed this research to address the

lack of culturally responsive teaching practices in schools. Using Critical Race Theory as the underpinning of the analysis, I challenge African American students' limited access to culturally responsive texts.

Working with African American students requires an acknowledgment of differences in culture and a willingness to listen to communities and families to understand their best practices. Emdin (2012) urged educators to teach to children's differences in order to improve their academic success. Aikenhead (2001) believed teachers are educational culture-brokers who understand there is a border to be crossed and help guide students back and forth across the cultural border between mainstream and non-dominant cultures. Ladson-Billings (2009) claimed that teachers are "dream keepers" and should view all children as capable and able to produce knowledge instead of viewing them as mere consumers of knowledge. Educators bear incredible responsibility for ensuring that students are seen and represented. It is recommended that educators consider the vital signs of readers, which include their culture, home life, environment, economy, and language. Considering the vital signs of readers builds a bridge of support between the teacher and the student (Tatum, 2008).

Literature

Culturally Responsive/Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy is central to the academic success of African American students, who have been inadequately served by the American public school system (Ladson-Billings, 2000). She puts forward that culturally responsive pedagogy should fit the school's culture to the students who attend it by infusing the students' culture. A synergistic relationship between home, culture, and school is developed when

culturally responsive pedagogy is adequately implemented. The implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy helps students better understand themselves, which, conversely, affects their academic achievement. For example, when students and families see themselves represented and acknowledged in the school, it can help promote culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy is founded upon Ladson-Billing's (1992) desire to prove that students in urban settings are capable of achievement and can excel with proper instruction.

Ladson-Billings (1992) hoped to help scholars see that research on African American students is worthy of study and replication (McCarter & Davis, 2017). Through the infusion of culture, teachers demonstrate their value and respect for the students and the community's culture (Israel, 2017). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that culturally responsive pedagogy rests on three criteria: 1) Students must experience academic success; 2) Students must develop and maintain cultural competencies; and 3) Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a growing topic of study in educational research. However, since the basis is culture and its meaning is fluid and growing daily, culturally responsive pedagogy is also evolving (Ladson-Billing, 2014).

Delpit (1996) found a mismatch between dominant cultural norms in education and the cultural norms of non-dominant communities. This mismatch of cultures was not beneficial to the students with whom she worked. She recognized the importance of recognizing the cultural capital that individual students bring into the classroom. Cultural mismatches in school do not benefit students from a non-dominant culture because

universalizing education can silence the culture and inherently prevent teachers from recognizing the actual needs of their diverse students (Bailey & Pransky, 2005). Producing literacy opportunities to challenge the limitations of traditional offerings is an essential task to adequately address the needs of African American students (Jefferies & Jefferies, 2013).

Yet, Meier (2015) emphasized the scarcity of African American literature being published and the misuse of excellent African American literature that is available. Educators can misuse African American literature by only using it as supplemental text during February to acknowledge African American culture (Meier, 2015). Adichie (2009) delivered a TED talk wherein she talked about the dangers of a single story. The single story tends to subscribe only to the narrative shown in mainstream media and the curriculum. Portraying a group of people in only one way can have dangerous effects (Adichie, 2009). Lack of complexity and diversity in the curriculum pushes the single-story approach, thus reinforcing the importance of exposing students to multiple types of literature (Chang et al., 2019). Reading about one's own culture provides an opportunity for children to connect with characters who go through similar experiences, which can assist them with developing coping skills and positive self-esteem (Brinson, 2012; Jenkins & Austin, 1987). The following studies utilized culturally responsive pedagogy to effect change.

Hilaski (2020) conducted a qualitative study to examine the mismatch between mainstream Eurocentric practices and the diverse students in classrooms. According to Hilaski (2020), this conflict between home and school can have long-term negative consequences for students. The study participants were four reading teachers who wanted

to incorporate culturally responsive practices into their classrooms. Data were collected through interviews, professional development sessions, teaching observations, and journals. The culturally responsive practices used for the study were book selection, teacher-created books, and co-constructed texts. This study involved teachers, parents, and students who co-constructed lessons. The findings revealed teachers were successful in determining ways to engage the students. They challenge the mismatch and cultural clash between school and home such as making links between students' knowledge and the classroom lesson and encouraging students to be active participants in their own learning. The researchers found a way to highlight students' cultural, social, and linguistic knowledge to bridge the gap between the familiar and unknown to improve literacy.

Bui and Fagon (2013) incorporated a culturally responsive teaching framework, which included cooperative learning and multicultural literature, to integrate 5th-grade students' personal experiences with their school learning. In addition, an informal reading inventory was used to measure students' reading before and after the intervention. There was an intervention group and a control group. The intervention group read multicultural texts and worked together, while the control group read mainstream texts and worked independently. Although the findings were not statistically significant, the mean growth in word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retelling indicated that incorporating culturally responsive practices improves reading comprehension.

Petrie (2021) sought to explore how culturally responsive teaching impacted the motivation of sixth-grade students. This 8-week qualitative study collected data through student journal entries, peer discussions, teacher observations, and surveys before and

after the infusion of culturally relevant literature into the classroom. The findings showed that students made connections with the texts based on their interests and real-life experiences. Furthermore, students were motivated to read culturally relevant texts. McClain (2018) made similar findings in a study that explored culturally relevant pedagogy and the motivation of fourth-grade English language learners. Again, the findings showed that students were motivated through the use of tenets that are closely connected to culturally relevant pedagogy.

In another qualitative study, Leonard and Hill (2008) examined the academic discourse that arose from reading books on a culturally relevant topic, the Underground Railroad. The study findings showed that culturally relevant texts fostered high levels of vivid academic discourse for third- and fourth-grade African American students. Moreover, the cultural nature of the books' stories and the topics of freedom and equality caused some students to put themselves in the story and discuss how they would react. Qualitative data were collected through audio and video-recorded lessons from teachers on the topic of the Underground Railroad. Researchers were able to observe students' expressions during lessons and teacher delivery. Furthermore, each student completed a computer module on the same topic of the Underground Railroad (Leonard & Hill, 2008).

Another study by Green-Gibson and Collett (2014), wherein they used a causal-comparative design, compared the instructional practices in two predominantly African American schools and each school's adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP was measured using a standardized test. The results showed a significant causal relationship between student data and cultural infusion, wherein African culture is infused into the curriculum. Specifically, schools that infused African American culture into the curriculum resulted

in a significantly higher AYP performance among grade 3 to 6 students. The infusion of African American culture puts the cultural needs of African American students as a priority to inspire and improve the quality of education (Shokley, 2007).

Cultural infusion through lessons has proven to be effective. Sampson and Garrison Wade (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study exploring African American students' preferences toward culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons. This 6-week study took place with high school students enrolled in an American history class. Culturally relevant lessons incorporated historical connections, a culturally relevant field trip, music, and oral traditions, while the non-culturally relevant lessons used the school's standard curriculum guide. Based on responses from a feedback questionnaire, the African American students much preferred the culturally relevant lessons compared to the non-culturally relevant lessons.

Culturally responsive teaching is helpful for student motivation. Pajkos and Klein-Collins (2001) found that White students outperformed African American students on state standardized exams because teachers favored Westernized teaching approaches in their classrooms. Motivation was assessed through researcher observations. The findings suggested that students and teachers were more enthusiastic and motivated after the implementation of culturally responsive approaches in math, such as the theory of multiple intelligences and the works of diverse mathematicians.

Furthermore, Kelley and colleagues (2015) found that engaging in culturally responsive teaching strategies can bridge the gap between the White, middle-class norms in the curriculum and what inner-city students are experiencing in their everyday lives. In the past, little research was dedicated to discovering if culturally responsive teaching

affected student self-efficacy for reading (Siwatu, 2009, 2011). Self-efficacy is the belief that one can persist through a task even through difficulty, because of their belief in their ability (Bandura, 1986). Siwatu (2009) incorporated culturally familiar reading material into middle-school students' lessons. The introduction of these materials was to see the effects on students' self-efficacy. The findings showed an improvement in students' beliefs that they could complete the task assigned. When self-efficacy is increased for culturally diverse students, reading could translate into other domains, laying the foundation for academic success (Siwatu, 2011).

Additionally, Gibson (2016) sought to find a relationship between literacy and self-efficacy among inner-city minority students, specifically young black adolescent females who have a traditionally marginalized status. To help students relate, Gibson (2016) used stories, specifically from the genre of urban fiction. Urban fiction was chosen for this study because this genre has been able to reach adolescent black girls, namely because urban fiction includes many African American stereotypes. In the article's discussion, the researchers explained that the representation of the black heroine in the story builds participants' self-efficacy for reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). In addition, the study presented the evolution of this particular genre of books and explained how the representation of black culture could boost students' self-efficacy. There is an integral connection between self-efficacy and motivation to read, particularly for students who have experienced failure in reading. Furthermore, improving reading motivation can mitigate frustration and avoidance associated with failure (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003).

Paris (2012) extrapolated a necessary shift from the seminal work of Ladson-Billings (1992). Inspired by what it would mean to make learning more responsive and

relevant to the cultural practices of students, Paris delved deeper into the terms "relevant" and "responsive" and questioned if these terms taught tolerance, advanced the monolingual agenda of current school practices or served to foster cultural pluralism and equality in the learning environment. This new wave is referred to as culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Culturally sustaining pedagogy "seeks to perpetuate and foster– to sustain– linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Culturally sustaining pedagogy builds upon the work of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy but is more than responsive or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people (Paris, 2012).

Ervin (2022) also explored how teachers can utilize culturally sustaining practices while adhering to the prescribed curriculum. Her literature review led to several conclusions: prescribed curricula do not have to compromise culturally sustaining practices; however, when implementing culturally sustaining practices, educators can encourage students to be critical of all texts they interact with. Ervin (2022) also found CSP is effective when teachers use non-traditional assessment methods and encourage students to collaborate. Furthermore, CSP involves valuing and maintaining multiethnic and multilingual school settings.

Multicultural Texts/ Culturally Relevant Literature

Children from minority cultures who see their culture as misrepresented, ignored, and stereotyped need to hear authentic voices that show the intricacy and richness of their lives (Jenkins & Austin, 1987; Temple et al., 2019). Sims Bishop's seminal work (1990) refers to multicultural literature as a mirror that allows readers to see reflections in their own lives and experiences. Seeing oneself represented in literature evokes a sense of

25

pride, arousing an interest in the reader and encouraging a sense of involvement in discussions about the book (Temple et al., 2019). Reading about one's own culture, children have an opportunity to connect with characters who go through similar experiences and develop coping skills and positive self-esteem (Brinson, 2012; Jenkins & Austin, 1987). The following studies demonstrated the importance of multicultural and culturally relevant texts.

Buchanan and Fox (2019) examined the library of a university's teaching program. The researchers looked through the university's teaching library and categorized the books based on the content and characters, specifically for race and culture. This explorative study drew from the critical race methodology to address the lack of representation of multicultural literature in libraries. The purpose of the analysis of the library was to discover who gets to find mirror books, or books that show reflections of the reader with characters and experiences that resemble themselves, in the library they were examining. Mirror books are books aligned with a reader's cultural experiences and can validate personal experiences. The findings showed that White, suburban children would most likely find mirrors in that university library. Eighty of the books had White characters, and only 19 books had Black characters.

Culturally specific books capture and accurately represent a culture's nuances and everyday life experiences as they are intertwined into the story's plot (Gray, 2009). Jenkins and Austin (1987) asserted that a good piece of multicultural literature can transcend time. Literacy has historically been a critical component of Black culture. Ford et al. (2019) emphasized that African Americans valued reading, dating back to slavery and anti-literacy laws. Literacy, even when outlawed, was a means of mental escape for

26

African American women. Today, bibliotherapy is proposed to increase racial identity, self-pride, motivation, self-efficacy, and self-acceptance for African American students (Ford et al., 2019). It is reputed that bibliotherapy is effective when used with "mirror books." Bibliotherapy, defined as "therapeutic reading, has been and continues to be a technique individuals and therapists use to understand, escape from, push through, or acquire a solution for adverse circumstances" (Ford et al., 2019, p. 55). Therefore, multicultural books are influential in providing positive messages, images, and interesting content for young readers (Banfield, 1998).

In another study, Cartledge et al. (2016) explored primary grade African American students' preferences for reading content. Data were collected through student ratings of 30 reading passages. The findings suggested that students provided higher scores to stories that they identified with, confirming that students prefer to read stories that connect and relate to their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Furthermore, Marshall (2011) also found positive correlations between culturally relevant texts and reading achievement using surveys, rubrics, and reading scores. Marshall (2011) attempted to mitigate the low reading scores of the study participants by allowing them to choose their own books.

Furthermore, McCullough (2013) conducted a study that provided an opportunity for African American students to interact with multicultural texts, including African American texts, European-American texts, and Chinese American texts. Culturally relevant texts in this study were defined as "stories for which the knowledge, beliefs, values, and practices of an ethnic group are central to their character development, plot, and language" (McCullough, 2013, p. 398). The study also explored whether prior

knowledge or interest was a strong predictor of reading comprehension. One hundred and seventeen (117) eighth-grade African American students participated in the study from four Midwest US middle schools. The study's results were consistent with prior research on cultural relevance and literacy. The scores of the African American students showed a strong relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension. Essentially, their prior knowledge of African American culture allowed the participants to connect with the stories, and, as a result, they comprehended the stories better.

Based on these studies, it can be presumed that multicultural books have the capability of benefiting a culturally sustaining book club by adding the richness of culture while giving participants a feeling of inclusiveness during discussions that build on their prior knowledge. Therefore, teachers should choose book selections for the book club with an understanding of the cultures and communities of the participants.

Motivation

Within the last two decades, there has been an acknowledgment of the significance of motivation to read (International Reading Association, 2013). Motivation is a key component of pedagogy and instruction (Foley, 2011). As such, the will to complete a task rests on the belief in a successful outcome (Foley, 2011). Kumar and colleagues (2018) posited that the four principles of motivation (i.e., meaningfulness, competence, autonomy, and relatedness) converge with culturally responsive education.

Many educators teach students who struggle with reading motivation (Guthrie, 2008). Bandura (1993) defined motivation as the product of the perceived likelihood that a specific behavior will produce a satisfying outcome. Motivators can be positive or negative and encompass beliefs and values surrounding reading (Guthrie, 2015). Athey

(1982) postulated that motivation is arguably the most challenging thing to measure but also the most important educational tool. Prior research indicated that motivated children who spend more time reading are better readers (Anderson et al., 1988; Morrow, 1992; Taylor et al., 1990).

In contrast, students who experience reading failure during the early years of schooling lack reading motivation because of their negative self-concepts (Morgan et al., 2008). Morgan et al. (2008) evaluated whether reading failure decreased children's reading motivation among first-grade students. Morgan et al. (2008) found a relationship between lack of motivation, reading avoidance, and reading failure. A well-researched way of improving motivation is to give students choices and autonomy. Autonomy drives academic achievement. Furthermore, motivation is increased when students are provided with choices (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Orkin et al., 2018; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Self-efficacy, along with other factors, can activate motivation. Vroom's (1964) expectancy-value motivation theory has ties to self-efficacy. The expectancy-value theory explains that a task must be deemed valuable for it to be attempted or provided attention. There must be a perceived reward to be earned, and there must be value attached to the reward earned because of the behavior. For example, students need to value success in reading to choose, persist, and perform well on reading tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Self-set proximal goals and small group discussions about the importance of reading are likely to encourage reading engagement (Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004).

The following studies elucidated the merging of motivation and reading achievement. Melekoglu and Wilkerson (2013) studied the reading motivation of

29

elementary and secondary students with and without disabilities before and after

participating in an extended evidence-based reading program. The activities used in the

study included small group rotation, whole-group instruction, and technology-integrated

instruction. Using motivation surveys, specifically the Adolescent Motivation to Read

Survey and the Motivation to Read Survey, the researchers revealed correlations between

academic success, self-concepts in reading, and motivation. After implementing the

reading program, reading motivation increased for students without disabilities.

Stutz et al. (2015) investigated the relationships between reading motivation,

reading comprehension, and the amount of reading students did in second and third

grade. Motivation was measured using a motivation questionnaire specifically designed

for elementary students, the Reading Motivation Questionnaire for Elementary Students,

also known as the RMQ-E (Stutz et al., 2015). This questionnaire was developed to

delineate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Reading comprehension was measured using

a standardized reading test for grades 1-6, and the reading amount was measured using a

4-point rating scale focusing on the amount of reading. The study's results found that

students' interest and involvement in reading contributed to reading achievement. Orkin

and colleagues (2018) also investigated struggling readers' avoidance and whether

intrinsic motivation improves when students are given autonomy. Using a control

experimental group design, the researchers incorporated strategies that maximized

autonomy during summer reading instruction. The results highlighted the importance of

autonomy. The intervention group's reading skills improved. Finally, Wigfield and

Guthrie (1997) outlined the sustainability of intrinsic motivators compared to extrinsic

motivators. Examples of extrinsic motivators are receiving recognition or good grades,

while an example of intrinsic motivation is being able to choose an activity for one's sake. Winfield and Guthrie (1997) found that extrinsic motivators are effective but do not last long-term.

Quirk and Schwanenflugel (2004) examined various remedial reading programs to evaluate their potential to influence reading motivation. Each reading program was selected based on meeting the criteria of accelerating reading for students who are reading below grade level. Each reading program was evaluated for effectiveness. A comprehensive look at the programs suggested that some programs with individualistic and competitive styles, rather than cooperative ones, hindered intrinsic motivation but tended to encourage extrinsic motivation. While some of the programs examined in the study specifically addressed motivation, the study found that developing students to understand the value of becoming a better person was the most effective way to motivate readers and assure the sustainability of reading over time.

Research showed that student collaboration could also increase reading motivation (Chinn et al., 2001; Guthrie, 2015). Collaboration recognizes that each student brings a different perspective to the group, and their social contributions shape and affect their interpretations of the text (Chinn et al., 2001). Collaboration can include reading in small groups with the freedom to exchange ideas through student-led discussions and book talks (Guthrie, 2015). The shared space of the book club offers opportunities to appeal to the learning preferences of the participants as they observe their peers and engage in reading tasks to increase motivation. The studies mentioned above demonstrated that peers are a strong determinant of motivation and recognized the importance of social interaction in learning, which may be applied to book clubs.

In a mixed-method study during a summer reading program designed to allow students to develop interpersonal skills with other students, Ha and colleagues (2021) explored the effect of culturally relevant pedagogy on motivation in a mixed-method study. The summer program took place in a low-income area. Data were collected through motivation surveys and pre- and post-intervention interviews of highly motivated students. The Reading Motivation Inventory (RMI) was developed using other motivation surveys used in K-12 education. They used the Reading Motivation Scale (RMS), the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQA), and the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI). The study did not find statistically significant results, although most students made progress in reading motivation. Many students also reported decreases in reading avoidance. The study found that students' connections throughout the summer program fostered motivation.

A book club can emphasize choice, interest, discussion, and motivation. As a result, culturally sustaining book clubs can help participants place a high value on reading. Likewise, students become motivated to read when they have access to interesting materials. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) concluded that materials might be the most significant factor in students' motivation to read while in school.

Reading Comprehension

"Comprehension is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with the text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text" (Pardo, 2004, p. 272). The distinctions of comprehension have many interpretations. Comprehension is complex because it involves familiarity with content, culture,

vocabulary, and fluency (Abdelaal & Sase, 2014; Pardo, 2004). In some cases, early

reading programs solely focus on foundational skills and do not cover reading

comprehension, although reading comprehension has been widely acknowledged for its

importance in the early grades (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). Reading comprehension is

multifaceted. However, previous research on reading comprehension puts forward

background knowledge, or prior knowledge, as the strongest predictor of success in

reading comprehension (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Pardo, 2004; Tarchi, 2015). The current

study recognizes the power of background knowledge to aid reading comprehension, as

supported by considerable previous research (Fletcher, 1994; Schallart & Martin, 2003).

The following studies outlined the necessity of background knowledge related to reading

comprehension.

Kostons and van der Werf (2015) examined prior knowledge activation strategies

for primary students and their possible benefits to learning. The researchers focused on

topic knowledge and used a pretest and posttest design for the control and experimental

groups to test prior knowledge. The researchers concluded that effectively activating

prior metacognitive knowledge improved reading comprehension (Kostons & van der

Werf, 2015).

Abdelaal and Sase (2014) investigated the relationship between prior knowledge

and reading comprehension in 20 second-language-learning post-graduate students. The

students were given a questionnaire, which had two passages to read and questions to

answer. The participants had high prior knowledge of the first passage but low prior

knowledge of the second passage. The quantitative data showed a strong relationship

between prior knowledge and reading comprehension.

A study conducted by Terchi (2015) investigated reading comprehension through the activation of prior knowledge. The qualitative study sample consisted of 66 7th- and 8th-grade students. There was a control and an experimental group. The control group read expository texts with reciprocal teaching strategies or shared roles between the teacher and students. The experimental group read the same expository texts while instructed with a prior knowledge activation intervention. The results showed that both groups had improvements in reading comprehension. However, the group who received the prior knowledge intervention scored higher in reading comprehension measures.

In another study, Ozuru et al. (2009) examined different factors, such as prior knowledge, and their effects on reading comprehension of science texts among college students who attended two different universities. First, participants were assessed to determine their prior knowledge of biology. Then, after their knowledge level was revealed, they were put into two different groups: one group was made up of students enrolled in an introductory biology course, while the other group was made up of students enrolled in an introductory psychology course. The participants' reading abilities were assessed, and it was found that there was no significant difference in reading abilities among the participants in the two groups. The participants were then administered open-ended comprehension questions. The results from the experimental design showed that prior knowledge has a significant effect on reading comprehension.

In addition to the role of background knowledge, other researchers have shared other factors that were connected to students' comprehension development. Duke and Pearson (2002) set forth that reading comprehension should be balanced. Balanced comprehension involves explicit reading instruction with ample time to practice reading

various texts and apply comprehension strategies, coupled with high-quality discussions. Furthermore, practicing decoding skills and learning in vocabulary-rich environments contribute to comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Kirmizi (2010) conducted a study to determine the relationship between primary students' leisure reading strategies and reading comprehension. Reading comprehension strategies such as questioning the author (QTA) were effective. However, the study results showed it is not sufficient to only decode words. The reader must connect with the text, use critical thinking, and pose questions.

Teachers can promote reading comprehension beyond prior knowledge through teaching strategies that foster reading comprehension. For example, Käsper et al. (2018) considered teaching reading interest and vocabulary knowledge to improve students' reading comprehension. The researchers found that the strategy of teaching reading interest had the strongest relationship to reading comprehension improvement and that teaching vocabulary strategies led to better vocabulary scores.

Another study explored peer-tutoring as a reading comprehension strategy using e-books. Tsuei et al. (2020) selected three classes of middle-school Taiwanese students to participate in the 12-week study. Both the intervention and control groups shared the same content. However, the intervention group worked together as peers, and the control group was instructed as a whole group. The findings showed that students in the intervention group made significant growth in reading comprehension. This finding indicated the importance of peer-led interaction and its connection to reading comprehension.

In the same way, Rosenblatt (2005) asserted that transactions with text are guided by the stance readers take as they read. So, readers must focus on questions instead of answers. Further, the two main stances delineated by Rosenblatt (2005) are efferent and aesthetic. Efferent transactions are factual, truthful, and cognitive, while aesthetic transactions are emotional and affective. Readers take a stance based on how they believe the text should be read and the questions they ask as they read. Smith (2012) asserted that it is important for readers to question texts in order to make a conscious stance. The current study emphasized the aesthetic stance but did not ignore the efferent stance.

Many researchers focused on reading comprehension in previous studies (Abdelaal & Sase, 2014; Fletcher, 1994; Ozuru et al., 2009; Schallart & Martin, 2003; Terchi, 2009). The present study aimed to build upon previous literature and build connections between a culturally sustaining book club and reading comprehension by examining the intervention's impact on students' comprehension ability.

Vocabulary

An area closely connected to students' comprehension levels is their vocabulary knowledge (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Vocabulary is an important indicator of school success and, if not adequately acquired, can be a reason for reading deficiencies (Becker, 1977; Carlo et al., 2005; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Research has supported the hypothesis that vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading comprehension (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Therefore, all students need to make considerable gains in receptive and expressive vocabulary both at home and in school to grow literacy (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). Receptive language refers to interpreting the language we receive through

listening or reading, while expressive vocabulary is the language we produce in speech or writing (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011).

Vocabulary learning has also been characterized as having different levels (Beck et al., 2002). Tier 1 and Tier 2 words are common words heard in conversations. Tier 3 words are topic-specific and involve words that are often only found in written language, such as words about science or geography. Previous research shows that Tier 2 and Tier 3 words are learned through reading rich texts (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). However, it is known that some children from low-income households are less likely to get exposure to Tier 2 and Tier 3 words without book reading (Hart & Risley, 1995), which has been attributed to language interactions at home.

Per Hart and Risley (2003), there is a vocabulary gap between middle- and low-income students that persist throughout the school years. This gap has been attributed to the presence or absence of rich language in the home environment (Biemiller, 2003). Christ and Wang (2010) believed that the word gap is a big enough concern to strengthen purposeful vocabulary instruction, especially when teaching children from low-income households. Moreover, Wanzek (2014) purported that primary-grade students receive very little intentional vocabulary instruction. It is essential to know that young children learn new vocabulary through the environment by watching television and listening to books being read aloud (De Temple & Snow, 2003; Hart & Risley, 1995). Furthermore, vocabulary is acquired when words are interesting to the student (Stahl & Stahl, 2004).

Tivnan and Hemphill (2008) examined literacy achievement and focused on high-poverty first-grade students in 16 urban schools. This longitudinal study followed the participants from the first grade until the third grade in schools. At the beginning of the

study, the students were tested on vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and oral discourse. Participants were taught using literacy reform models the schools chose during the study. Participants were reassessed at the end of each school year to show a growth pattern. Results from the intervention showed that students' reading scores at the beginning of first grade contributed to their reading achievement by third grade. This confirms that intensive vocabulary instruction in the primary grades is paramount.

Elleman et al. (2017) verified the importance of strong vocabulary instruction. The study examined the vocabulary learning of struggling readers. The sample included 68 participants who were in grades three and five. Participants were put into small groups and randomly assigned to either the control or treatment group. The control group received traditional comprehension instruction, which included reading worksheets and answering comprehension questions, while the treatment group got specific vocabulary instruction along with fluency and decoding. The researchers found that the students who received the specific vocabulary instruction outperformed those who received traditional reading instruction. Specifically, the students who participated in the intervention could find the meaning of words in context and determine word structure compared to the students in the control group.

Another study examined the effects of systematic vocabulary instruction on 2nd grade African American elementary students. The systematic vocabulary instruction used for the study was robust vocabulary instruction, which involved learning words from storybooks. The participants were given the opportunity to make connections to prior knowledge for a total of eight sessions over four weeks. Vocabulary knowledge was assessed using weekly probes on days when vocabulary instruction was not in session.

Students were tested with instructional words, common words, and control words. The results of the study showed students learned the instructional words at higher rates than the control words, and word learning gains were maintained for two weeks after the intervention concluded. These findings showed that robust vocabulary instruction can be effective in promoting vocabulary acquisition, although the African American books used in the study were not found to be a key factor that helped students retain vocabulary words (Lovelace & Stewart, 2009).

Further, Coyne et al. (2019) explored the effects of a vocabulary intervention with kindergarten students. A vocabulary assessment was administered to students before and after the 22-week tier 2 intervention. The findings suggested that explicit vocabulary instruction and classroom vocabulary instruction boosted the target word learning scores of the participants.

Strong vocabulary instruction is essential (Elleman et al., 2017; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008), yet Sparapani and colleagues (2018) found that vocabulary lessons usually happen before reading the text and rarely have additional follow-up activities after reading stories. Therefore, vocabulary instruction is suggested to be a dominant part of teaching reading throughout lessons to strengthen vocabulary instruction.

Building on prior research, the current study will include vocabulary instruction in each book club session. This book club component is based on the importance of rich and purposeful vocabulary instruction. The goal was to build upon the words that participants have acquired at school and home by reading culturally relevant books that pique their interests.

Book Clubs

The book club was, and still is, one of the most popular strategies of the literature-based movement. A book club is defined as a student-centered activity that engages the social nature of the learning process and centers children's voices (Heller, 2006). Book clubs introduce students to reading for pleasure, which is especially important in early literacy (Webber & Shropshire, 2001). Book clubs also encourage student interaction with other students. Through discussions and writing, students discover themes from books (Raphael et al., 2004). The voluntary structure of book clubs produces greater student participation, motivation, and appreciation of reading (Israel, 2017). The social interactions that happen during book clubs have many benefits, including motivation and academic achievement, which are supported by several studies (Hill, 2012; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Lewis & Zesselberger, 2019; Montes, 2001; Smith, 2017). Furthermore, previous research has shown that reading through book clubs contributes to student meaning-making (Daniels, 2002). A key tenant in the book club is peer interaction (Raphael et al., 2004). Contrarily, the heavy focus on individual achievement goals found in many low-performing schools does not allow peer collaboration (Forman & Cazden, 1985).

Hill (2012) conducted a qualitative study to examine first-grade students' participation in a peer-led, supplemental book club at a high-poverty, high-achieving, urban elementary school. The book club curriculum in the study emerged from the teacher and researcher seeing the need to modify the curriculum by supplementing "irrelevant curriculum materials," such as themes like "keep trying" and "being afraid" derived from the prescribed curriculum (Hill, 2012 p. 91). The book club mainly

consisted of peer-led discussion groups. The findings of the study suggested the book club increased text comprehension and the students' ability to build personal connections with stories.

Similarly, Kong and Fitch (2002) found a connection between classroom discussions or guided participation and increased vocabulary and the ability to talk about their reading process. This study involved high-poverty, culturally and linguistically diverse fourth and fifth graders. The book club followed a book club framework developed by Raphael et al. (1997), which consisted of small group discussions, whole-class discussions (community share), reading, and individual writing. Students were scaffolded and provided with explicit instruction in participation strategies. The results showed that the book club was successful. Kong and Finch (2002) noted that educators' high expectations, the valuing of students' diverse backgrounds, and the funding of students' knowledge contributed to the students' academic success.

Another qualitative study conducted by Polleck (2010) examined the social interactions of 12 minority girls during book club to highlight the beneficial unity of cognitive and affective development. The participants in the study represented different races/ethnicities, including African Americans and Hispanics. The results from the study showed that the participants in the study used the story as a springboard for their own lives. Through book clubs, they had more robust social interactions. Social interactions have been linked to behavior and neural alignment for shared understanding (Hasson & Frith, 2016). The literature and conversations intersected in the space of the book club to address the social and emotional needs of the participants (Polleck, 2010).

41

Moreover, Broughton (2002) conducted a 6-month ethnographic study to examine how Hispanic adolescent girls talked about themselves in response to the literature they read in a book club. The girls read books that reflected their personal lives, and their conversations were analyzed. The girls were also interviewed and observed during book club and in their community. They discussed personal issues like immigration, divorce, religion, and abuse during the book club. The researcher noted social progress in the participants as a result of their participation in the book club. Researchers delineated social progress through their engagement and interactions, along with the student participants' construction of meaning through discussions.

The study by McGrail et al. (2020) explored the literacy experiences of elementary students with a comic book club. In this book club, students were reading, writing, and creating comics. There were seven participants between the ages of 5 and 10 who were predominantly African American in this qualitative study. Interview and observation data provided insight into students' co-construction of meaning through dialogue. The researchers found most students co-constructed meaning by helping each other through shared resources and strategies and by asking questions about the comic books they were creating.

A book club can also have effects that spread throughout other school subjects. Through action research, Petrich (2015) sought to empower young learners to be involved intellectually and socially in each other's learning. Petrich (2015) conducted a study using a book club with fifth-grade students from diverse backgrounds in a Midwest classroom. This book club met at different times depending on the students' schedules. The participants convened once a week for about 10 to 20 minutes. Through

observations, journal entries, and unstructured interviews, or "conferences," the researchers concluded that the book club effectively increased the students' love for reading and learning through various perspectives from participants. The themes that emerged from qualitative data were: diverse perspectives deepened understanding; building relationships provided safety; aesthetic and efferent responses were evident; and community accountability was necessary. Notable in this research is the implication drawn from the observations that learning from the book club spreads cross-culturally throughout other subjects.

Not all book clubs have resulted in beneficial changes in students' literacy behaviors. As an example, Lewis and Zisselsberger (2019) sought to show ways that the voices and viewpoints of diverse students, including emerging bilinguals (EBs), can be heard. Classroom book discussions took place in a Midwest US public school with a population of majority Latinx students, who consisted of both native and non-native English speakers. Through observations, the researchers determined that the structure of their book club was not beneficial to emerging bilinguals (EBs). These students often withdrew from discussions while native students and teacher voices prevailed. The researchers implicated their results as a cautionary tale and recognized that infusing culturally responsive pedagogy could have positively benefited the EBs if implemented differently, such as encouraging more discussions from participants. In addition, the participants in the study would have benefited from instruction discussions that were better aligned with their culture. The absence of culturally aligned instruction discussions caused the participants to withdraw.

Most of the previous work done on book clubs has a different population than the population in the current study. There is a gap in the literature on book clubs in a Title I school setting with 2nd and 3rd-grade students. The current study aimed to bridge the gap in the literature.

Conclusion

The literature review supports the idea that a culturally sustaining book club in a Title I school setting may provide literacy benefits for students. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, it can be said that there is a lack of representation of Black literature in the mainstream curriculum. Reading mirror books has been shown to increase reading interest and improve motivation. Therefore, addressing the issue of representation in the mainstream curriculum can improve the learning outcomes of African American students. Reading motivation can also increase when students are granted choice and autonomy to pick out books to read.

Furthermore, sociocultural theory explains the cultural relevance of peer collaboration and its importance to African American students. Children who are allowed to have peer-led discussions have the potential to grow socially while also increasing their reading comprehension skills. Consequently, reading comprehension and vocabulary improve when students are interested and have some background knowledge about what they are reading. Moreover, vocabulary should be taught explicitly, purposefully, and consistently to close the vocabulary gap and support comprehension. Although many studies detailed different aspects of book clubs, research work on culturally sustaining book clubs remains limited. The conflation of culturally relevant texts, peer-led discussions, book choices, and reading instruction has significant

44

implications for student success. A comprehensive look at the previous literature led me to develop the following research questions to explore the effectiveness of a culturally sustaining book club:

1. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the reading achievement of African American students as measured by i-Ready? If so, in what ways?

2. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the motivation of African American students as measured by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised? If so, how?

3. What are African American children's views of a culturally sustaining book club compared to their other literacy experiences?

4. What are teachers' views of students' learning for those who participated in a culturally-sustaining book club versus those that did not participate?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the applied methodology for the current study. The focus of this study was to examine the impact of participation in a culturally sustaining book club on second- and third-grade students' reading motivation and achievements in a Title I school setting. The start of the chapter provides a review of the research questions. Next, an explanation of the study's design is presented, including a description of the participants and the research setting. Data collection procedures are outlined in detail with an explanation of the intervention and instruments that were employed. Finally, data analysis procedures are discussed, as well as possible limitations of the study. I used a mixed-methods intervention study design to explore a culturally sustaining book club and the effects on motivation and reading achievement for African American students.

Many changes were made to the original study's design due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A breakdown of the changes made in the study methodology is presented in detail below. One of the major changes to the study was its move from in-person to virtual book club sessions. Students were together in person but socially distanced, and I was remotely guiding them through the Zoom platform. Each session was recorded from start to finish and was reviewed and transcribed.

Research Questions

1. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the reading achievement of African American students as measured by i-Ready? If so, in what ways?

2. Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the motivation of African American students as measured by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised? If so, how?

3. What are African American children's views of a culturally sustaining book club compared to their other literacy experiences?

4. What are teachers' views of students' learning for those who participated in a culturally-sustaining book club versus those that did not participate?

Research Design

This study explored a culturally sustaining book club as a supplemental reading strategy to promote reading motivation and reading achievement, specifically in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. The research employed an intervention mixed-methods design. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to strengthen the breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). A mixed-methods approach allowed for results to be looked at from different perspectives and provided a clear understanding (Harper, 2019). "Mixed methods research, thus, views both methodological goals as worth pursuing and that, when combined, each will ultimately advance one another" (Brent & Kraska, 2010, p. 418). The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) tool was used to collect quantitative data (Malloy et al., 2014). Also, the district's mandated i-Ready program scores provided

quantitative data for academic achievement in reading. The quantitative data were used to triangulate the qualitative data and themes that emerged. A more detailed explanation of data analysis will be provided at the end of the chapter. Additionally, qualitative data were collected from classroom teacher interviews, student focus groups, recorded book club sessions, and unit work artifacts to delineate reading motivation and general experiences with the book club.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to optimize the focus on the population of students chosen for the study (Patton, 2002). The participants were students who attended inner-city or Title I schools in a large urban area of the southeastern US. Title I is a status given to schools provided with extra funding because more than 40% of their enrollment is considered low-income students. The school's demographics consisted of 72% being African American and 40% of students scoring at or above reading proficiency based on standardized testing scores, as evidenced by the school improvement plan. Furthermore, the participants in the study were students who were enrolled in the Turn Up The Steam (TUTS) after-school program.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only one school was chosen for this study. At this school, students from two grade levels, specifically second and third grade, were given an opportunity to be a part of the study. The students in the selected grades had similar academic achievement levels. The participants in the sample were second- and third-grade students who were reading below grade level as determined by their i-Ready scores and based on the teacher's recommendations. When discussing students' i-Ready scores with the lead staff member of the after-school program, who was also a certified teacher

at the school, he was asked if he believed the consenting students would benefit from a culturally sustaining book club based on their professional analysis of the students' reading motivation and achievement. The teacher's assessments and recommendations about student motivation did not qualify or disqualify students from the study. The focus of the study was African American students. However, during recruitment, parents and students who may have identified as something other than African American also signed up to be a part of the study. They were informed that the texts were focused on African American books, but parents wanted their children to get extra reading practice. Thus, students attending the after-school program who were reading below grade level based on teacher recommendations and who returned their signed consent forms were included in the sample for participation and data analysis. Students outside of the purposeful sampling criteria, such as a different race, were not excluded from participation or data analysis.

The study had one intervention and one control group. Participants from both groups had similar achievement levels based on the i-Ready diagnostic test scores provided by the school. At the start of the book club, two students in the intervention group and one student in the control group were assessed to be reading at grade level (early or at level) based on i-Ready scores. The intervention group attended the book club after school, while the control group participated in their afterschool programs' activities as normal. The after-school program included reading and math practice activities through assisted technology and i-Ready time. Other activities in the program were STEM, robotics activities, and coding. Students also got homework help, cooking, and art

classes. Students in the after-school program attend different activities each day on an hour-by-hour schedule, rotating weekly.

Both the intervention and control groups had 15 students each, for a total of 30 students participating in the study. Each participant was randomly assigned to either the control or the intervention group. I personally facilitated the virtual book club. There was also a classroom facilitator who was on site as the book club was being carried out. She was also a certified teacher who is an employee of both the school and the afterschool program. I am a certified teacher who identifies as Black/African-American. In addition, I have taught second-grade literacy and have experience implementing book clubs in a classroom setting.

Procedure

The book club met twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 40 minutes per session. The data collection period for the study was six weeks (two meetings a week for a total of 12 book club sessions) during the months of January and February in the year 2021. The book club sessions were scheduled between the winter and spring breaks. The rationale for using a 6-week intervention period was that previous studies found positive results in early literacy with a 6-week intervention period among students of low-income populations (Wade, 2011; Whitehurst et al., 1994; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). The use of a control group and an intervention group was a way to give insight into the effectiveness of the book club on student motivation and reading achievement. Pre-test and post-test quantitative data from the MRP-R and i-Ready reading were collected and compared.

The MRP-R tool was administered digitally using Google forms in a whole group format on one day the week before book club commenced. The survey was administered by grade level, and the students from both the control and intervention groups were in one classroom together to complete the survey. This motivation survey was employed to answer research question # 2 to explore if the intervention group showed higher overall motivation scores in comparison to the control group as measured by the MRP-R. I read each question to the whole group and allowed time for the participants to select an answer choice on the computer. Some questions were read multiple times for clarity. At the end of the book club, the MRP-R tool was again administered to participants in the same format as the pre-test. An after-school teacher was present for both survey administrations. The administration of the MRP-R took approximately 25 minutes. The school provided the i-Ready reading scores. The i-Ready pre-test was taken in September of 2021, and the post-test was taken in May 2022. The i-Ready data were used to answer research question # 1 to explore if participating in the book club helped improve the overall reading, comprehension, and vocabulary scores of the intervention group compared to the control group based on i-Ready scores.

Two focus group sessions were held to collect qualitative data post-intervention. Participants from the intervention group were asked to take part in a focus group interview at the conclusion of the data collection period. The focus group sessions provided information about the participants' perceptions of the book club. Questions for the exploratory focus group went from general to specific to encourage participants to think deeply and freely about the topic and explore new ideas (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). The focus group also followed a semi-structured format. One focus group had

seven students; the other group had six students. Each focus group session lasted between 26 and 32 minutes. The focus group audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. During the focus group session, the students answered open-ended questions I designed to explore their experiences in the book club (see Appendix C).

Furthermore, artifacts and student work samples from unit work conducted during the book club sessions were collected each week. "Unit work" is the graphic organizer that accompanied the book club topic for the session. Each book club meeting was conducted digitally through the video conferencing platform, Zoom. Each Zoom session was recorded and later reviewed and transcribed. Table 3.1 outlines the time breakdown and flow of the book club and the chosen assortment of culturally responsive books the participants picked from. Further information about the book selection, distribution, and digital resources will be provided in detail.

Classroom teacher interviews took place at the end of the 12 sessions of the book club. Teachers were asked questions regarding the value of reading, motivation, and belief about reading skills pertaining to the participants of the study. Three classroom teachers and the on-site book club facilitator were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured in that preset questions were used as a guide, but additional questions were asked based on the participant's answers and reactions (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). The teacher interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim in their entirety. The purpose of the teacher interview was to gain further insight into participants' levels of reading motivation through the viewpoints of their reading teacher. Teacher interview questions were piloted with three classroom teachers to check for question clarity and answer quality. The teachers who helped pilot the questions were

elementary education literacy teachers not affiliated with this study. Their feedback was used to inform the questions for the interview. See Appendix C for a list of interview questions.

Instruments

The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) tool is widely used in educational research to measure the reading motivation of students from grades 2 through 6. The MRP-R assesses participants' self-concepts as readers and the value of reading to make determinations about reading motivation (Malloy et al., 2014). The MRP-R includes 20 multiple-choice items, with ten items measuring the value of reading and ten items measuring self-concepts as readers on a 4-point scale. Reliability and validity measures for the MRP-R have been approved for educational research and classroom use. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha revealed an a = .87 for the full scale, a = .85 for the value subscale, and a = .81 for the self-concept scale. For validity, an RMSEA estimate of .089 was revealed with a confidence interval of .08-09. The probability of RMSEA $\leq$ =.05 was .0. (Malloy et al., 2014, p. 275).

The creators of the tool provided guidelines for the proper administration and scoring of the tool, which I followed in this study. The MRP-R was given in a whole-group setting and took about 25 minutes to administer. The MRP-R tool was administered both pre- and post-intervention.

The school district where the research was conducted uses the i-Ready reading assessment program. The i-Ready program meets the expected rigor in each of the covered Common Core State Standards (CCSS) domains—phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, vocabulary, comprehension of informational text, and

comprehension of literature—thus providing real-time, actionable information for each domain (i-Ready, 2017). The 2017 rating from the Center on Response to Intervention (CRTI) indicates that the i-Ready Diagnostic has strong validity and reliability for use in classroom data and research. The CRTI (2017) reported validity at .72 and reliability at .84 for second-grade reading. The district's mandated i-Ready program identifies students' strengths and weaknesses and provides differentiated instruction as a teaching tool that is customized to the students' needs as a pedagogical tool. Specifically, students complete interactive lessons and receive feedback intended to foster understanding (Costa, 2018). Also, the i-Ready program provides performance diagnostics and progress reports (Hudson et al., 2020). Schools assign students a time frame they must commit to i-Ready lessons each week based on their reading levels. Students who are reading below grade level are required to spend more time on i-Ready than students who are on or above grade level.

Intervention

Book Selection. I preselected five culturally relevant book options that student participants could choose from. When selecting the books to include in the book club, I considered the demographics and varied reading abilities of the students who participated in the study. The book choices were mirror books that allowed the participants to see reflections in their own lives (Sims, 1990). I chose these mirror books because I believed the characters and story plots drew parallels from the participants' lives. The books related to the participants' lives because they were all about young African American children in America. Furthermore, the books were appropriate grade-level texts, meaning

54

they were written for 1st and 3rd-grade reading levels. The five book options that were presented to the student participants are listed below:

1. *Donovan's Word Jar* by Monalisa DeCross; Cheryl Hanna, illustrator

2. *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson; Eric Velazquez, illustrator

3. *Mirandy and Brother Wind* by Patricia McKissack; Jerry Pinkney, illustrator

4. *Clean Your Room*, *Harvey Moon!* by Pat Cummings

5. *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth; Christ Soentpiet, illustrator

Selecting books was an important part of this study. Miller (2013) found a positive correlation between students' self-selecting books and their motivation and self-identity. To facilitate book selection, I read a brief synopsis of each book and showed students the book covers. After all the books were shown, students voted on the books they found interesting. Each student participant was allowed to vote for two books, but some chose to only vote for one. Figure 3.1 shows the number of votes each book received.

Figure 3.1

Participant Votes for Books
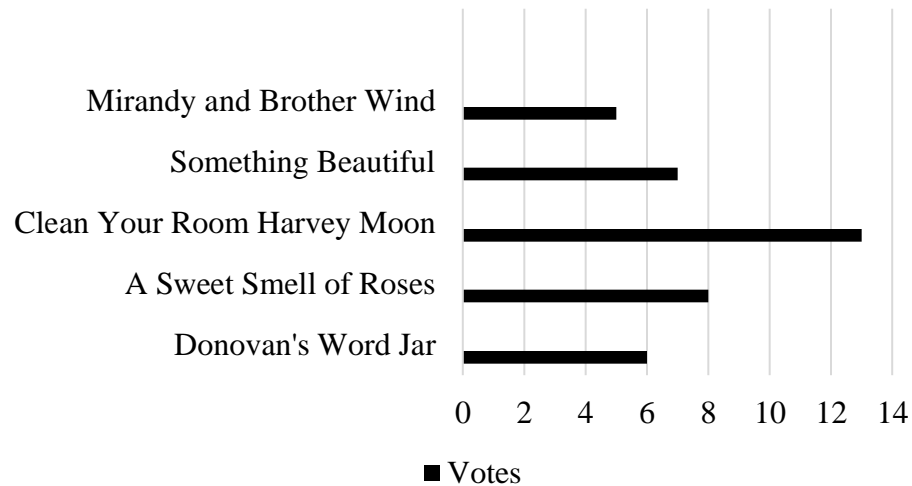
The three books with the highest number of votes were chosen to be the books used for the duration of the book club. *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon!* (Cummings, 1994) had the highest number of votes at 13. *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2007) had eight votes, and *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002) had seven votes. The 6-week duration of the book club allowed for a 2-week engagement per book. Over the course of the book club, the three chosen books were used in blocks of two weeks each (four sessions per book). At the end of the book club, students from both the intervention and control groups were able to take their books home.

COVID-19 Safeguards for the Book Club. Originally, the book club was intended to be held in person. Due to the severity of the pandemic, alternatives needed to be made to carry out the intervention in the safest way possible. By taking into consideration that all extracurricular personnel had limited access to campus at the time of the intervention, the study was instead conducted virtually. The video-conferencing

platform, Zoom, was used through my university account. The Zoom sessions were password-protected to ensure that only the book club participants were entering the virtual space. Keeping in mind that children needed to have the book in hand to be able to read, discuss, and complete their unit work, I went to campus each week on Monday to prepare "book bags" for the participants. The book bag was a Ziplock plastic bag that contained the book being read at the time, a pencil, and the two pieces of unit work per week. This process was to make sure that each student only had access to their own books and materials to minimize contact with one another. I also collected any unit work that was inside each "book bag" as part of the data collection while preparing the book bags. All book bags were kept in a plastic bin labeled "Book Club". Inside that bin was a voice recorder that was used for peer-led discussions. At the end of the book club sessions, I was allowed on campus to conduct the student focus groups with social distancing rules implemented.

Book Sharing Process. The following section explains the specifics of the book club session. Table 3.1 provides an overview of how the 40 minutes of the virtual book club session were used. The book club began with shared reading and progressed into the lesson of focus with open community sharing, allowing participants to collaborate through peer-led discussions and unit work. The book club finished with the closing community share. The book club schedule was adapted from Raphael et al. (2004).

Table 3.1

Book Club Protocol

Time	Book Club Activity
8 minutes	Shared Reading
10 minutes	Opening Community share
12 minutes	Peer-led discussions
8 minutes	Unit Work
2 minutes	Closing Community share

Shared Reading. Shared reading time was a chance for participants to review the book while hearing it read aloud to them fluently. I took on the responsibility of reading a section of the book as a group, with the participants following along (Raphael et al., 2004). I read the books aloud, and the students were encouraged to read along. During this time, the story was read in its entirety with minimal pauses. Occasionally I asked questions, but the time for shared reading was allotted primarily for model reading. This was an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the book and practice fluent reading. Since children's literature tends to contain high-level vocabulary (Hayes & Athens, 1988), shared reading was a great opportunity for the participants to be introduced to new vocabulary words. Hearing new vocabulary words fluently gives students a better chance of success when re-reading the story independently (Stahl, 2012). Shared reading is beneficial because the participants are reading below grade level and could benefit from a model of fluent reading by the teacher.

Community Share. Community share was a whole-group teacher-led activity that opened the dialogue for text talk in order to teach struggling readers the necessary skills and strategies. In this more structured activity, I was in control of the topics and turn-taking (Raphael et al., 2004). Students were encouraged to participate during community share. To keep the flow of the book club organized, I incorporated PowerPoint slides and visual aids to talk about vocabulary and the lesson. During the opening community share, vocabulary was highly emphasized through context clues and discussions. Unlike other reading topics, vocabulary was taught during each book club session. The vocabulary words presented were pulled from the stories. Vocabulary activities included introducing the word, finding the word in the story, using context clues to identify the word's meaning, and using the words in sentences. I also used pictures in the PowerPoint to illustrate more examples of the vocabulary words. The topics were decided based on the theme of the book, as shown in Table 3.2.

The opening community share encouraged participants to participate by sharing their ideas and thoughts. The in-person facilitator and I worked together to choose students who raised their hands to share. The closing community share time, on the other hand, was used to review the lesson, for students to ask questions about anything they were unclear about, and for me to introduce the new book. This brief portion of the book club was necessary to review previous reading and review the unit work.

Peer-led Discussions. Peer-led discussions were less structured than the community share. However, I modeled turn-taking and speaking into the recorder during the first session. I did this to demonstrate to students how to participate during the first session of book club. Through peer-led discussions, students learned to listen with

respect, agree, disagree, and comment on ideas. They could also assume leadership and follow the lead of their peers (Raphael et al., 2004). During the peer-led discussion, small groups (three or less) of students sat together to discuss ideas, themes, characters, plot changes, and questions that emerged as they read the story. Students were also encouraged to talk about personal experiences or funds of knowledge as related to the topic of discussion to build new connections and knowledge (Kong & Fitch, 2003). The funds of knowledge students discussed included personal connections to the stories through family and experiences. I provided sample questions for students, but they were encouraged to ask other questions. Peer-led discussions were the main link to culturally sustaining pedagogy for the current study. This component of the book club afforded the participants an opportunity to collaborate and appeal to their learning preferences (Boykin et al., 1997; Tyler et al., 2010).

When it was time for peer-led discussions, I randomly chose a student to use the audio recorder. This student would record the conversations between them and their small group partner(s). For each session, I picked a new student to use the recorder to gain a broader understanding and perspective. There were two students assigned to make sure the recorder was on and given to the right students. They were also in charge of turning it off and storing it in the plastic bin until the next session. This allowed me to retrieve, review, and transcribe the audio files.

Unit Work. Unit work is a graphic organizer or follow-up assignment given to each student to demonstrate their understanding of the book. Depending on the theme, some examples of unit work employed in the book club include character maps, story structure, problems, and solutions, etc. (see Table 3.2). Participants were encouraged to

collaborate during unit work. This activity immediately followed peer-led discussions, so participants were able to work with their same partners from the discussion to complete their unit work activity. I collected each piece of unit work from the students' book bags each Monday. The unit work was sorted by book and activity and reviewed.

The reading log was another part of the book club. The students were sent home with the reading log each week. I encouraged students to use them and return them (see Appendix B). The purpose of the reading log was to allow students to track the books they were reading, write down their thoughts and questions, and connect parents with the book club process.

Table 3.2

Unit Work Reading Activities per Book

Something Beautiful	A Sweet Smell of Roses	Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon!
• Main Idea	• Story Structure	• Rhyming
• Problem and Solution	• Historical Connections	• Character Map
• Story Structure	• Order of Events	• Step Inside Letter Writing
• Why am I Something Beautiful? (reflection)	• Favorite Part of the Story (reflection)	• Story Structure

Data Analysis

Quantitative. This study employed a mixed-methods design because using more than one data analysis leads to a better understanding of the findings and plausibility of data (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). Both quantitative and qualitative data in this study supported data triangulation. For the quantitative data analysis, the school reading coach

61

provided me with the participants' i-Ready reading scores before and after the book club intervention. These data were collected as pre-test and post-test scores and were the baseline diagnostic tests taken by each student for the quantitative measures. The students first took the i-Ready test in September 2020, four months prior to the intervention. Then, in May 2021, the students took another i-Ready test three months after the intervention concluded. All 30 participants took the pretest for i-Ready, but when post-test scores were collected, some students were no longer enrolled in the school, so their final test scores were unavailable. Therefore, there were missing data for the post-test data of the i-Ready scores.

SPSS was used to analyze all the quantitative data. Data from the pre- and post-test MRP-R were analyzed using an independent samples t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to see if there were statistical differences between pre- and post-test scores in both the intervention and control groups. The independent variable for the ANCOVA pre-test scores and the dependent variable was the post-test reading scores. Descriptive statistics and mean differences were also run. Next, quantitative data from the i-Ready diagnostic reading scores were analyzed for both the control and intervention groups. A paired sample *t*-test was run to determine if there was a statistical difference between pre-test and post-test scores for participants in both the intervention and control groups for reading achievement. A paired sample *t*-test was chosen to reduce the error variance between the two groups. An independent sample t-test was also performed to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the pre- and post-intervention groups. In addition, an ANCOVA was run to determine the difference in means between groups while controlling for the pretest data. Additionally, I looked at

mean differences for grade levels. I specifically reviewed the data from the domains the

book club focused on, specifically reading comprehension and vocabulary. In addition, I

explored the correlation between overall reading and motivation.

It was recognized that the i-Ready's validity might be limited due to the specific

cultural focus of this study. Specifically, i-Ready measures or benchmarks and state

standards may not be aligned with culturally sustaining pedagogy. However, the data

provided an overall picture of the participants' reading achievement before and after the

intervention was implemented. Moreover, i-Ready has been proven to be an effective tool

for overall instruction and assessment (Costa, 2018).

Qualitative. The transcripts of the audio recordings of the focus groups, book

club sessions, and teacher interviews were coded to analyze qualitative data. I also

rewatched and analyzed the book club sessions recorded through Zoom. The goal was to

determine how the data collected answered the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). To accomplish the goal, different cycles of coding were used to draw parallels

from what the participants said during the focus groups, what the teachers said during the

teacher interviews, the participants' words and actions during book club, and through

artifacts collected throughout the book club, such as unit work. Each piece of qualitative

data was reviewed and analyzed separately. Eventually, common words, phrases, and

sayings were merged across all qualitative data.

First, I reviewed the transcripts from teacher interviews and student focus groups,

recorded book club sessions, and peer-led discussions one at a time. Then, I highlighted

and noted repeated phrases in the margins of the transcript. I used open coding to

conceptualize the data line-by-line (Charmaz, 2006). Through the process of open coding,

direct quotes and phrases were plugged into a chart. This process was repeated multiple times for the focus group, peer-led discussions, and the recordings of the book club sessions. The next cycle of coding involved putting those examples into subcategories. During this process, direct quotes from all collected qualitative data were combined and placed in the most applicable subcategory.

The next step was to subsume the subcategories into preliminary codes or patterns. "Patterns can emerge from repeatedly observed behaviors, actions, norms, routines and relationships" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 88). This process involved reviewing the subcategories and examples multiple times to see if there was enough evidence to connect them. Finally, the preliminary codes/pattern codes were used to delineate themes. Themes were identified by breaking down data and searching for reoccurring entities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Four major themes emerged from the qualitative data.

After the themes were established and data were interpreted, the data underwent triangulation. As in the mixed-methods convergent parallel design, I used the triangulation method to compare findings from both quantitative and qualitative data, thus combining the findings. Triangulation allows for the cross-examination of multiple data points to bring better credibility, clarity, and understanding of research findings (Savin-Badin, 2013). Table 3.3 illustrates the procedure of the qualitative data analysis. The findings are reported in Chapter 4. Interestingly, I found that some of the results from the qualitative and quantitative data did not align.

Triangulation of Data

A convergent parallel design was used to answer the research questions in the study to corroborate the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data, which were

considered to have equal importance. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed

separately and then looked at together to examine convergence and contradictions

(Razali, 2019). Figure 3.2, as adapted from Creswell (2012), illustrates how data were

collected and analyzed separately and then merged together for the overall interpretation

of the data.

**Figure 3.2**

Convergent Parallel Design
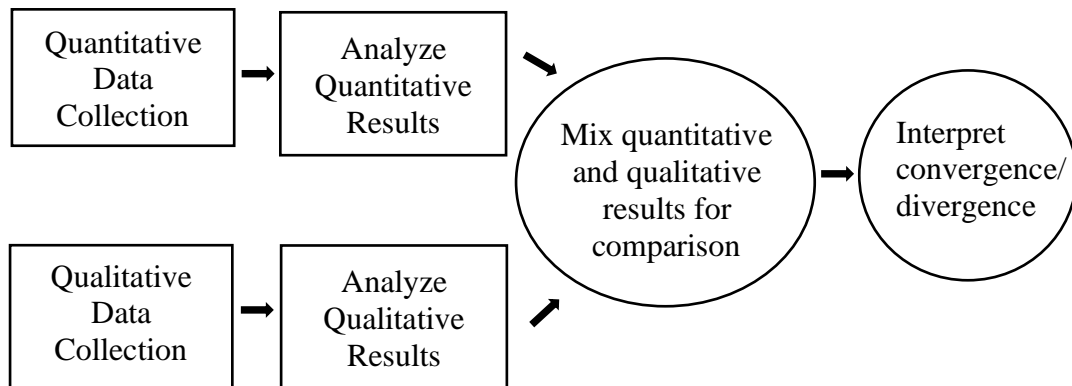
Table 3.3

Qualitative Analysis Procedure and Data Sources

Research Question	Data Source	Analysis Tools
1. **Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the reading achievement of African American students as measured by i-Ready? If so, in what ways?**	a. Teacher interview transcripts b. Student focus group transcripts c. recoded book club session observations and transcripts d. peer-led discussion transcripts	1. Open coding 2. Pattern coding 3. Generating themes from patterns
2. **Is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the motivation of African American students as measured by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised? If so, how?**	a. Teacher interview transcripts b. Student focus group transcripts c. Peer-led discussion transcripts d. Recorded book club sessions observations and transcripts	1. Open coding 2. Pattern coding 3. Generating themes from patterns
3. **What are African American children's views of a culturally sustaining book club compared to their other literacy experiences?**	a. Student focus groups b. Peer-led discussion transcripts c. Recorded book club session observations and transcripts	1. Open coding 2. Pattern coding 3. Generating themes from patterns
4. **What are teachers' views of students' learning for those who participated in a culturally-sustaining book club versus those that did not participate?**	a. Teacher interview transcripts	1. Open coding 2. Pattern coding 3. Generating themes from patterns

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter first presents the findings from the quantitative data, which include descriptive data and the results from the motivation survey and a district-mandated reading assessment. The qualitative portion of this chapter then presents themes from focus groups, interviews, peer-led discussion recordings, and observations from recorded book club sessions. Finally, a summary is shared at the end of the chapter.

Participants

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants in both the intervention and control groups. Both groups had 15 participants each. In both the intervention and control groups, 11 participants were Black/African American, and four participants may have identified as another ethnicity. The intervention group had more girls than boys (nine vs. six, respectively), while the control group had more boys than girls (also nine vs. six, respectively). There were eight second graders and seven third graders assigned to the intervention group, while there were seven second graders and eight third graders in the control group.

Table 4.1

Demographic/Informational Table Intervention Group

Sample Characteristics	n	%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	11	73%
Other	4	26%
Gender		
Boy	6	40%
Girl	9	60%
Grade		
2	8	53%
3	7	46%

Table 4.2

Demographic/Informational Table Control Group

Sample Characteristics	n	%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	11	73%
Other	4	26%
Gender		
Boy	9	60%
Girl	6	40%
Grade		
2	7	46%
3	8	53%

Quantitative Results

Motivation Survey: MRP-Revised

     The survey instrument used in this study was the *Motivation to Read Profile-Revised* (Malloy et al., 2013). The intervention group had a mean MRP-Revised pre-test score of 66.00 ($SD = 6.71$). The control group's mean MRP-Revised pre-test score was 63.73 ($SD = 9.55$). These two scores indicated that the groups had similar baseline scores before the book club sessions, with a slightly higher mean score for the intervention group. The intervention group had a mean MRP-Revised post-test average score of 64.00

(*SD* = 9.56), and the control group had a mean post-test score of 60.87 (*SD* = 9.43). Both

the control group and the intervention group's average motivation scores were between

60 and 66, indicating that students self-reported being somewhat motivated to read. These

scores showed no growth from pre-test to post-test for both intervention and control

groups. In fact, both groups had a decline in reading motivation (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Descriptive Mean Scores for the Motivation to Read-Profile- Revised

Condition	*n*	Pre-test motivation			Post-test motivation		
		M	*SD*	*Range*	*M*	*SD*	*Range*
Control	15	63.73	9.55	46-74	60.87	9.98	44-78
Intervention	15	66.00	6.71	49-76	64.00	9.43	46-75

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to compare the differences in MRP-

Revised pre-test and post-test scores from the control and intervention groups. The mean

pre-test and post-test scores for the intervention group (M =-2.00, SD = 9.43) and control

group (M =-2.53, SD = 5.18) conditions did not differ statistically; t(28) =.192, p =.849

(see Tables 4.4 & 4.5). Both the intervention and control groups' standard deviations

were high. The findings indicated a high variability between scores within the groups,

negatively affecting statistical significance. Both the control group and the intervention

group demonstrated a decline in motivation from pre-test to post-test. Self-concept score

ranges for the intervention group pre-test were between 27 and 37 and between 22 and 38

for the post-test. For value, the intervention scores ranged between 22 and 40 for the pre-

test and between 23 and 39 for the post-test. The self-concept score ranges for the control

group were from 21 to 38 for the pre-test and from 24 to 38 for the post-test. The value

score ranges for the control group pre-test were between 20 and 39 and between 16 and 40 for the post-test.

Table 4.4

Independent Samples t-test for MRP-Revised

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* Test for Equality of Means						
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**	
									Lower	Upper
Difference	Equal variances assumed	3.93	.057	.192	28	.849	.533	2.77	-5.15	6.22
	Equal variances not assumed			.192	21.74	.850	.533	2.77	-5.23	6.30

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for Differences of Means for the MRP-Revised

	Condition	*n*	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Difference	Control	15	-2.53	9.43	2.43
	Intervention	15	-2	5.18	1.33

Next, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare the effectiveness of the post-test on the MRP-R while controlling for pre-test scores. Levene's test and normality checks were carried out, and the assumptions were met. There was no significant difference in mean post-test scores between the intervention and control groups [F (1,27) =.250, *p* =.621]. Again, the results showed that there was not

enough evidence to conclude that the intervention significantly impacted the intervention

students' motivation compared to the control group (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

One-Way ANCOVA Scores for the MRP-Revised

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	593.38	10.25	<.001
Intercept	1	74.74	1.29	.266
Total Motivation Pre	1	1113.13	19.23	<.001
Group	1	14.47	.250	.621
Error	27	57.87		
Total	30			
Corrected Model	29			

Note. $R^2 = .43$, Adj. $R^2 = .39$

A closer look into the MRP-R results revealed that both groups had a decrease in

overall motivation. The decrease in overall motivation could be attributed to other factors

such as the self-reporting nature of the survey or the small sample size.

Reading Achievement: i-Ready

As shared in the methods, the intervention and control groups were comprised of

a mixture of 2nd and 3rd-grade students who, on average, scored below grade level in

reading. The mean i-Ready pre-test score for the intervention group was 436.40. This

assessment was taken at the beginning of the school year (September 2020), indicating

that the intervention group scored considerably below grade level (Florida Department of

Education [FLDOE], 2020). In contrast, the mean i-Ready pre-test score for the control

group was higher than the intervention group at 448.87, but this score was also assessed

to be below grade level. The average pre-test scores suggested that both groups were

reading considerably below the 50th percentile for 2nd grade (average score of 460) and 3rd

grade (average score of 502), according to the national norms for the 2020-2021 school

year (FLDOE, 2020). It should be noted that the previously mentioned mean scores were

calculated with both grade levels together as the groups had a mix of second- and third-

grade participants. Table 4.7 shows the pre-test and post-test mean scores separated by

grade level. This information was included to present the difference between the means

for each grade level for both the intervention and control groups. The information in this

table confirmed that each group and grade level was reading below the national average.

Table 4.7

Descriptive Statistics for Overall i-Ready Scores

Timepoint	Grade	*n*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Intervention Group			
Pre-test	2nd Grade	8	408.88	65.46	23.14
	3rd Grade	7	467.86	50.38	19.04
Post-test	2nd Grade	6	446.50	41.15	16.80
	3rd Grade	6	512.67	38.85	15.86
		Control Group			
Pre-test	2nd Grade	7	426.57	53.33	20.15
	3rd Grade	8	468.38	36.51	12.91
Post-test	2nd Grade	7	468.00	60.03	22.68
	3rd Grade	7	517.86	23.52	8.89

After the intervention, both groups were administered a post-test using the same

instrument in May of 2021. The post-test scores showed an average of 479.58 for the

intervention group and 492.93 for the control group. A paired samples t-test was

calculated to measure the pre-test and post-test differences and determine the intervention

group's growth ($M = 46.33$, $SD = 29.23$). Second graders in the intervention group had a

mean difference of 41.50 ($SD = 33.49$), and third graders in the intervention group had a

mean difference of 51.17 ($SD = 26.49$). The intervention group scores fell within the

range of the national average student scale score point growth for 30 weeks in 2nd grade

(34) and 3rd grade (24) (Curriculum Associates, 2016). The mean growth for the control group was 47.42 (SD = 28.02), which also fell within the range of the national average student scale growth. The second-grade students in the control group had a mean difference of 41.43 (SD = 29.08), while the third-grade students had a mean difference of 54.00 (SD = 28.43, see Table 4.8). These descriptive findings suggested that both groups made increases in overall reading achievement. However, no significant differences were observed when the intervention and control groups were compared.

Table 4.8

Difference in Overall Reading Mean Scores by Grade Level

Grade	*n*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Intervention		
2nd Grade	6	41.50	33.49	13.67
3rd Grade	6	51.17	26.49	10.81
		Control		
2nd Grade	7	41.43	29.08	10.99
3rd Grade	7	54.00	28.43	10.74

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the change in i-Ready scores from pre-test to post-test for the intervention group. There was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores for the intervention group. At *p <.05,* the paired differences in pre- and post-test scores ($t(11)$ =-5.49, *p* =<.001) were significant (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Paired Samples t-test Results for i-Ready Overall Reading (Intervention group)

					Paired Differences				
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**		**t**	**df**	*Sig.* **(2-tailed)**
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest-Posttest	-46.33	29.23	8.43	-64.90	-27.76	-5.49	11	<.001

A paired samples *t*-test was also conducted to compare the change in the control group's i-Ready scores from pre-test to post-test. A significant difference was observed between the pre-test and post-test scores for the control group. The results showed the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was $t(13) = -6.33$, $p < .001$, as shown in Table 4.10. These findings showed that the students in the control group also made significant gains from attending their reading class from the beginning of the school year. Therefore, both the intervention and the control group participants made significant gains between pre-test and post-test measures, suggesting that there is not enough evidence to conclusively determine if the book club was effective for reading achievement.

Table 4.10

Paired Samples t-test Results for i-Ready Overall Reading (Control Group)

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**		**t**	**df**	*Sig.* (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest-Posttest	-47.42	28.02	7.49	-63.60	-31.24	-6.33	13	<.001

Next, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean pre-test and post-test change in i-Ready scores between the intervention and control groups. There was no significant difference in scores between the intervention and control groups, t(24) =-.122, p =.452 (see Table 4.11). These results indicated there was not enough information to conclusively determine whether the book club impacted the reading scores of the participants. The standard deviation scores pre-test and post-test of both groups were high, which suggested high variability in overall scores. The score ranges for the pre-test intervention group were between 289 and 524, while the score ranges for the control group pre-test were between 327 and 519. The post-test score ranges for the intervention group were 395 and 531, and for the control group, between 381 and 543. Some students made significant gains, while others made small gains. It should be noted that the post-test measure also had missing data due to some participants no longer being enrolled in the same school at the time of assessment. A larger sample size could have yielded more conclusive results and allowed for possible generalization.

Table 4.11

Independent Samples t-test Results for i-Ready Overall Reading

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* Test for Equality of Means						
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	.034	.856	-.122	24	.452	.904	11.32	-24.72	21.98
Difference	Equal variances not assumed			-.122	23.16	.452	.904	11.34	-24.84	22.08

Finally, a one-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine if there was a

statistically significant difference between the intervention's and control group's post-test

i-Ready scores while controlling for pre-test scores. Levene's test and normality checks

were carried out, and the assumptions were met. There was no significant difference in

mean post-test scores between the intervention and control groups, $F(1, 23) = .153$, p

$= .699$ (see Table 4.12). Thus, outcomes on the i-Ready assessment were not different

between the two groups. However, the post-test scores did indicate improvements in

reading scores for both groups. The results may also have been affected by the high

variability of scores in both the control and intervention groups and the small sample

size.

Table 4.12

One-Way ANCOVA Scores for i-Ready Overall Reading

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	37799.37	2	1899.68	2.71	.087
Intercept	8202.05	1	8202.05	11.72	.002
Pre-test	3787.05	1	3787.05	5.41	.029
Group	107.02	1	107.02	.153	.699
Error	16088.46	23	699.49		
Total	777510.00	26			
Corrected Model	19887.84	25			

Note. $R^2 = .191$, Adj. $R^2 = .121$

i-Ready scores are comprised of the following six domains in reading: phonics, phonemic awareness, high-frequency words, vocabulary, reading comprehension-literature, and informational reading comprehension. The i-Ready scale score gives placements, or a range of grade-level scores, per domain. Given that the book club predominately focused on areas related to two domains (i.e., vocabulary and reading comprehension-literature), these domain scores were isolated to examine the impact of the book club intervention on reading achievement. The average grade level score for each domain (vocabulary and reading comprehension-literature) was isolated and analyzed (see Tables 4.13 and 4.14). The following were found when examined individually: based on the standard deviation, there was a high variability of score changes for both the intervention and control groups. The findings showed the control group demonstrated higher average scores for both vocabulary and reading comprehension. These findings could be attributed to the observed higher pre-test scores

for the control group, the small sample size, and the missing data in the post-test scores

(see Table 4.15).

Table 4.13

Score Ranges for Vocabulary for 2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ Grade

Placement	Score Range	Average
K	100-418	259
1	419-490	455
2	491-560	526
Early 2	491-515	503
Mid 2	516-536	526
Late 2	537-560	549

Placement	Score Range	Average
K	100-418	259
1	419-475	447
2	476-513	495
Early 3	514-547	531
Mid 3	548-560	554
Late 3	561-602	582

Table 4.14

Score Ranges for Reading Comprehension-Literature for 2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ Grade

Placement	Score Range	Average
K	100-418	259
1	419-490	455
2	491-560	526
Early 2	491-515	503
Mid 2	516-536	526
Late 2	537-560	549

Placement	Score Range	Average
K	100-418	259
1	419-475	447
2	476-513	495
Early 3	514-541	528
Mid 3	542-560	551
Late 3	561-602	582

Table 4.15

Differences in Reading Comprehension-Literature and Vocabulary Mean Scores

Condition	Difference Reading Comprehension- Literature			Difference Vocabulary		
	M	*n*	*SD*	*M*	*n*	*SD*
Control	67.77	13	97.56	57	13	87.00
Intervention	58.46	12	98.28	38.75	12	55.26

Table 4.16

Mean Scores for Vocabulary and Comprehension- Literature

Condition	Comprehension-Literature				Vocabulary			
	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	*n*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test								
Control	15	416.73	102.27	26.40	15	414.40	99.60	25.71
Intervention	15	418.30	120.07	31.00	15	395.20	102.41	26.44
Post-test								
Control	13	476.15	105.92	29.37	13	462.69	98.77	27.39
Intervention	12	476.58	86.37	24.93	12	432.00	107.71	31.09

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to measure the pre-test and post-test change, specifically for reading comprehension literature and vocabulary, between the control and intervention groups. The goal was to examine differences in pre-test and post-test scores for both groups in the combined vocabulary and reading comprehension-literature domains. The scores were calculated separately and then combined to gain insight into the two domains on which the book club focused.

The control group had a higher mean score when the two domains were combined compared to the intervention group. There was no significant difference in mean scores between the intervention and control groups, $t(23) = -.517$, $p = .610$ (see Table 4.17). There is not enough information to say that the intervention had a significant effect on the vocabulary and comprehension scores of the participants. These findings may be attributed to the small sample size and missing post-test scores from both groups.

Table 4.17

Independent Samples t-test i-Ready Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances								*t* Test for Equality of Means	
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**One-sided p**	**Two-sided p**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**	
										Lower	Upper
Difference	Equal variances assumed	1.05	.315	-.517	23	.305	.610	-27.56	53.28	-137.79	82.67
	Equal variances not assumed			-.521	22.83	.304	.607	-27.56	52.91	-137.06	81.94

Finally, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between overall reading scores and reading motivation. There was no significant association between the two variables (overall reading and motivation) for the entire sample size. Specifically, i-Ready reading post-test scores were not significantly correlated with motivation post-test scores, $r(24) = -.139$, $p = .499$. I combined both groups for a possible higher impact. Although there was no significant correlation between the two variables, there was a significant correlation between pre-test and post-test scores for

the motivation and overall reading measure separately. These findings suggest the trends in students' scores remained consistent from pre-test to post-test in overall reading and motivation and did not seem to correlate. This is possibly because, for both the intervention and control groups' overall reading, the scores increased. However, both groups' motivation scores decreased from pre-test to post-test for the motivation measure. Similarly, the post-test i-Ready scores for the intervention group were not significantly correlated with motivation post-test, $r(10) = -.121$ $p = .709$.

To summarize this quantitative section, no statistical significance was found between the mean pre-test and post-test scores. The findings suggested that students both in the book club and in the control group made significant gains from their in-school reading instruction and after-school activities. Thus, there is not enough evidence to conclusively say that the book club positively impacted motivation and reading achievement for the sample. Possible reasons will be discussed in chapter 5. Further research is required to see if the upward trend in overall reading is recurring in a larger sample. All things considered, the study's quantitative findings reveal that there is a window of opportunity to further explore this topic with a larger sample size and a more extended intervention period.

Qualitative Data: Themes

Qualitative data were collected through teacher interviews, student focus groups, student peer-led discussions, and observations. The goal was to gain further knowledge about the students' motivation and reading achievement, which were quantitatively examined earlier in this chapter. From examining all the qualitative data sources, four major themes emerged: increase in reported reading motivation; comprehending texts and

achievement: cultural and personal associations with literature; communal learning; and access to culturally relevant texts. The following sections present the evidence to support the themes that emerged from the data. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the participants' anonymity (see Appendix A for the list of pseudonyms).

Increase in Reported Reading Motivation

Overall, findings from the qualitative data identified students' motivation for reading in the classroom and in the book club itself. For example, all three teacher interviewees recalled that many students who participated in the book club intervention demonstrated improvements in their reading motivation and had positively changed attitudes towards reading. In addition, the classroom teachers reported an increase in students' willingness to participate in class discussions in general after the book club sessions. Teachers also reported that students were more open to talking about stories in class, showed increased initiative to volunteer regularly in class readings, and showed more interest in reading books from the classroom library. Students' comments also supported these findings, which are described below. In addition, my observational reports indicated student motivation during book club sessions.

Ms. Gillespie reported that one of the book club participants was "pulling out books he wanted to read." She noted that this student's involvement and motivation had changed since participating in the book club. Furthermore, Ms. Smith reported that students were "really interested in it" (book club) and motivated to be a part of it. For example, they would frequently ask her, "Do we have book club today?"

During the focus groups, student participants were asked how being a part of the book club made them feel, and some students commented on the enjoyment that the book

club brought them. Students also mentioned their positive learning experiences while participating in the book club. For example, Catherine reported: "I enjoyed book club; it's because we had a lot of fun and learned about books." Mandy also stated, "It feels good because you learn how to read." Furthermore, Shante reported not wanting to end book club, saying, "I'm gonna cry. I want to go back."

Two classroom teachers reported a change in students' willingness to talk about stories in class after participating in the book club. When Ms. Tucker was asked if she noticed a difference in her students after participating in the book club, she recalled, "They were more willing to participate and read aloud, and like discussing the stories that we read in class." Ms. Tucker also recalled that the students who participated in the book club also participated in her class's "reading portion." She commented that "going over the story" was the part they participated in the most. Mr. Dodd mentioned that his students were "shut in and didn't really want to open their mouths at the beginning of the school year. Now they volunteer to do everything." When asked if he believed this was due to book club, his answer explained that book club helped students socially. Mr. Dodd stated, "Specifically, because in book club they can have conversations and talk about stories, which had an impact on them socially." Mr. Dodd also talked about how the students were showing more interest in the class library. He states that students "rarely" used it but now show more interest in it.

Some of the planned components of the book club seemed to motivate students to read, as evidenced by the focus group transcripts, peer-led discussion transcripts, interview transcripts, and observations. Students reported that they frequently enjoyed shared reading, unit work, and peer-led discussions among the five different components

of book club. For example, three student participants, Shante, Mandy, and Catherine, talked about all three of these components as their favorite book club activities. Shante stated, "I like when we talk about it and when we write about it, and when we are reading." Mandy recalled, "When we read, when we talk about it and then when we write about it." In addition, Catherine said, "my favorite part of book club is reading the book, and doing writing, and the work." Furthermore, the after-school teacher (in-person facilitator) reported that these specific components supported students' motivation. Therefore, I addressed the shared reading component further here.

At the beginning of each book club session, shared reading occurred and was allotted eight minutes of the 40-minute session. During this activity, I took the responsibility of reading the entire story while encouraging student participants to read along. The goal was to model fluent reading (Raphael et al., 2004). I read each book in its entirety for a total of four sessions. On the following dates, I noticed students read aloud in tandem with me and were engaged in shared reading (i.e., fieldnotes: January 7, 2021; January 12, 2021; January 14, 2021; January 28, 2021; and February 9, 2021). Their engagement was further evidenced by students asking and answering questions in shared reading, which is depicted in the following example.

There were many engagement behaviors and follow-up comments to the book *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002). Some of the behaviors observed were following along with fingers and raising hands to answer questions. I stated, "We are going to pause right there before you turn the page. I want you to think about the main character. How do you think this main character is feeling right now, at the beginning of the story?" Tony shared, "She's looking for something beautiful." I followed up by saying, "Okay, she is

trying to find something beautiful, but how is she feeling right now?" Then Tee stated, "She look like she's upset," and Martin added, "She's sad." I further asked, "Do we know why she is sad and upset; that is correct, but why?" Keisha reported. "She saw the word 'die,' and she saw that lady sleeping on the ground" [Fieldnotes, January 7, 2021].

Four students reported that shared reading was their favorite part of book club. Kay shared, "I love the books you read to us, and I like to answer the questions." In addition, Kay referred to the repeated reading of culturally relevant texts during shared reading. Wendy reported, "My favorite part was when you was reading stuff to us, and I felt like that book was so good." At the time of focus groups, Kay recounted her experiences with the book club, "Well, I love books, and I read them, and it's like you read all the pages." Catherine commented, "It make me feel good and excited about reading … and learning more about it." Both students referred to the enjoyment and motivation of reading the stories while in shared reading. In addition, Mrs. Smith reported that the shared reading "worked" because the students were paying attention.

To summarize this section, participants reported increased student reading motivation in the classroom and engagement during the book club. The teachers, in particular, noted students' willingness to talk about stories in class, increased initiative to volunteer in class at reading time, and improved interest in the classroom library after participating in a culturally responsive book club compared to the students who did not participate in the study. In addition, student responses and observations seemed to suggest some of the activities in the book club (i.e., peer-led discussion, unit work, and shared reading) were effective for increasing reading motivation.

Comprehending Text and Achievement: Cultural and Personal Associations with Literature

A second theme focused on comprehending texts. One way the students comprehended the texts was through associations with book characters. Students seemed to make emotional and familial connections to the stories throughout the book club. Unit work, peer-led discussions, focus groups, and fieldnotes demonstrated that students' connections to the stories led to a deeper understanding of the characters and reading comprehension.

Students made associations and connections with the stories through unit work. Unit work took place directly after peer-led discussions and was allotted eight minutes from the total 40-minute session. Although students had to be socially distant, they could still collaborate with peers and discuss the stories from the book club. Four students identified unit work as their favorite part of book club. Catherine recalled, "My favorite part of book club is doing writing and the work." Keisha stated, "I love, the favorite part is writing." I followed up with, "You like writing, like doing the unit work?" and Keisha stated, "Yes!" Mrs. Smith reported that the worksheets kept them talking about the books. I observed that most of the students were engaged in the unit work activities and were willing and excited to share their work with me and their peers at the end of the activity [Fieldnotes, January 19, 2021; January 21, 2021; February 2, 2021; February 9, 2021]. Students enjoyed this part of the book club for different reasons, and they were also able to make associations and connections to the stories, as seen in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

The selected books had characters that seemed to foster connections with the students. For example, one of the books participants chose for the book club, *A Sweet*

Smell of Roses (Johnson, 2007), included the prominent historical figure Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a character. Students talked about how they felt about Dr. King and his impact on them and the world while having peer-led discussions. Some of the questions they explored in peer-led discussions were: *What do you know about MLK? If you had the opportunity to march with MLK, would you?;* and *Who else marched for freedom like MLK?* To the first question, Mandy and Rick responded that he was important. Mandy then stated, "I would want to march with him because he's important!" The following was a conversation between Jonny and Aiden during peer-led discussions: "Do you know anyone else who marched for freedom like MLK?" They responded, "Harriet Tubman" and "Obama" [Peer-led discussion, January 21, 2021]. The above examples of historical connections were a part of the discourse students had by themselves through speaking into a recorder.

At the time of open community share during one session, I asked the class what they remembered about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Darlene responded, "He was taking care of us, and keeping us safe and equal" [Fieldnotes, January 19, 2021]. After peer-led discussions, Ms. Smith asked the students a whole group question, "Okay, boys and girls, what do you know about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?" The responses were: "He's very good" (Laura), "He's important" (Tee), and "He's got a good personality" (Catherine) [Fieldnotes, January 19, 2021]. Next, I asked, "Is there anything anyone wants to share about the story during closing community share?" Tony replied, "I liked the story a lot." When Tony was asked why he liked the story, he replied, "I liked it because they were black people" [Fieldnotes, January 19, 2021]. During focus groups, Tony, Kay, and Martin named *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2007) their favorite

book from the book club. Tony reported that he liked the book and his favorite part of it was Dr. Martin Luther King. Martin said, "I like to march with Martin Luther King because he's changing people's lives." Kay also stated, "I love this one because it is about Martin Luther King."

Within peer-led discussions of *A Sweet Smell of Roses*, students were encouraged to include their favorite part of the story. Many of the students chose the parts where the children participated in the march, or when the girls made it home safely and their mom was there to greet them (Johnson, 2007) (see Figure 4.1). One student shared that her favorite part was when "everyone held hands" [Fieldnotes, January 28, 2021]. The evidence showed students made connections with the texts. In this case, they connected with the book *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2007) because of familiarity, historical significance, and race. In addition, they related to and admired the book's historical references and characters.

Figure 4.1

Unit Work- January 28, 2021

A picture of my favorite part of the story

My favorite part of the story is...
My favorite part is when they say freeDom Now and when they are marching too.
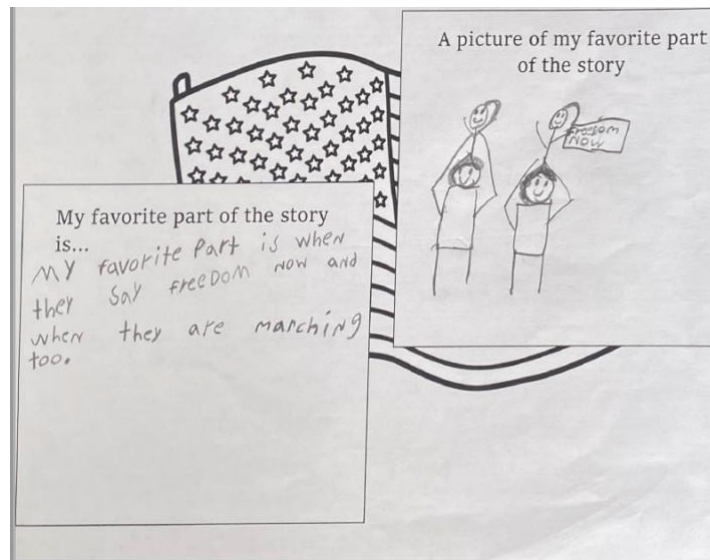
Students also seemed to connect with the books used in the program due to their everyday personal experiences. Many of the connections involved familial and emotional connections to the characters. Some students discussed seeing themselves in the characters from the stories read in the book club during the focus group sessions. A few students discussed their mothers, fathers, and grandmothers during focus group groups as a way to make those connections. For example, Aiden connected to the story *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon!* (Cummings, 1994) by saying, "I follow my dad wherever he goes." Tony stated, "I like to play with my dog. I don't like to clean my room, it really sucks," about the same story. Shante could relate to the same book when she stated, "I'm kind of like him because I like to clean up my room, but when I'm having fun and my family here, I don't like to clean my room." [Peed-led discussion, February 2, 2021].

Additionally, more students made connections with the literature during peer-led discussions. Darlene said, "Well, I always listen to my momma, do you? Well, he listens when he said he cleans his room." Ethan replied, "I don't listen to my mom all the time, and I always sneak outside." Then Darlene answered, "That's just me, I love to sleep in my room, I love my room, I love my house" [Peer-led discussion, February 2, 2021]. After unit work, I asked students if they wanted to share their work and talk about it with everyone. Laura volunteered, so I asked her: "Tell me about it, what's going on in this part?" Laura stated, "He told his mom that he was finished!" Aiden then replied, "His mom told him he had to clean his room." Mandy responded, "My favorite part was when the mom says clean up!" [Fieldnotes, February 2, 2021]. The preceding examples show that students comprehended the stories in a way that allowed them to make connections with the text.

Figure 4.2 is an example of a student participant, Laura, engaging and connecting with unit work following the discussion and vocabulary lesson of *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon!*. She wrote a letter to Harvey Moon's mom to explain why she did not want to clean her room. Students were encouraged to write their letters as if they were Harvey Moon. Some students wrote letters to their parents about how they felt about cleaning their rooms. At the end of unit work time, Laura and three other students shared their work with me. For example, Laura stated, "I don't want to clean my room because I want to watch TV and eat" [Fieldnotes, February 9, 2021] (See Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

Unit Work- February 9, 2021

February 9, 2021

Dear Mom,

~~[scribbled out]~~ I don't want to ~~be~~
Clean my Room Becase i ~~want~~
~~[crossed out]~~ to wach tv and eat

Love, mom
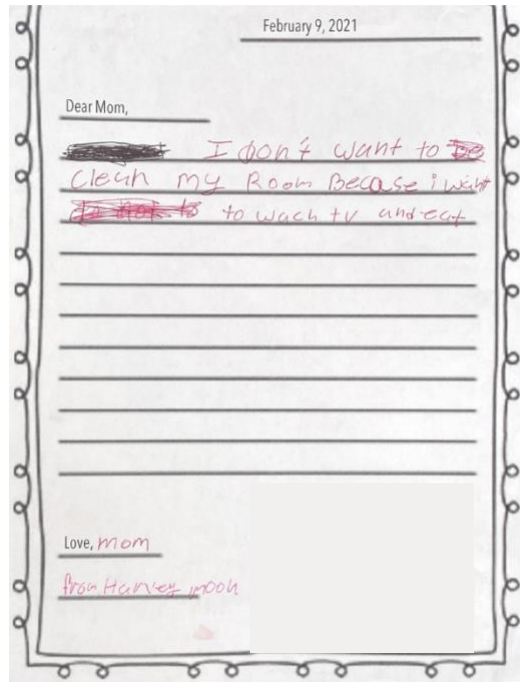
from Harvey moon

Figure 4.3 shows Shante's character map of Harvey Moon, which he completed

during unit work. Shante identified traits in Harvey Moon and talked about the

similarities and differences between Harvey Moon and herself. For example, she wrote,

"we both are kid" in the box that asked about similarities, and she wrote, "I clean my

room" in the space for differences (see Figure 4.3). Many other students made

connections and associations by writing about themselves as compared to Harvey. Shante

was eager to complete this unit work assignment and share it with me. She came to the

front with her partner to complete the assignment and interact with me without prompting

[Fieldnotes, February 4, 2021].

Figure 4.3

Unit Work- February 4, 2021
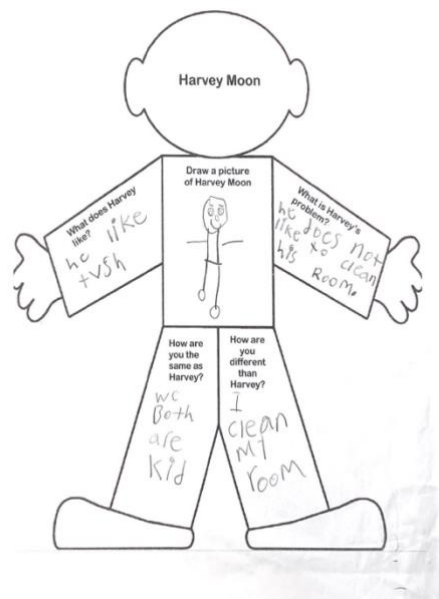
Students also made strong personal connections with another book, *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002). The personal connections mentioned in this particular text seemed to be less about race or culture and more about their personal lives and experiences. However, it cannot be ruled out that these connections may stem from associations with the appearance of the characters. In one focus group session, Keisha commented, "I like finding something that's beautiful like my grandma had a flower that looks beautiful." During the focus group, Keisha also recalled, "I love this part because when she scrub the doors and sweep all that stuff, she feels powerful." During peer-led discussions, students made further personal connections. Darlene, for example, asked the following: "But do you listen to your mom at home? That's the question." Ethan then stated, "Well, I listen to my mom all the time when she tells me to take out the trash. Do

you take out the trash for your mom?" [Peer-led discussion, February 2, 2021]. When talking about the book, Shante commented, "I want to be something beautiful like my mom" [Peer-led discussion, January 12, 2021].

When discussing a favorite part of *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002), Aiden asked Ethan, "What is your favorite part of the story?" Ethan stated, "My favorite part is the teacher 'cause he got good hair." Aiden followed up by stating, "Me too; I like this because he have a lot of patience and he's teaching the students" [Peer-led discussion, January 7, 2021]. Another peer-led discussion interaction made a connection to family. Shante stated, "What do you like that's beautiful?" and Catherine responded, "My family and friends." Aiden and Ethan also made connections with the characters by discussing a challenge that they needed to overcome because the main character in the book had to overcome a challenge. Aiden asked, "How did you respond to a challenge? Ooh-ooh, I was learning to do flips. How did I respond to them? Um, I trained every day to get flip, I trained every day to perfect my flips" [Peer-led discussions, January 7, 2021]. Overall, students seemed to comprehend the books by relating to the characters' actions and the characters themselves, which included cultural connections and the story's plot.

Communal Learning

During book club sessions and the focus group, many students discussed working with and helping others as an area they enjoyed. Sometimes students spoke about communal learning in terms of a book discussion on the topic, while other times, they practiced communal learning in the book club components (unit work and peer-led discussion). In both cases, students seemed to find this process relevant to their learning and a participation process they enjoyed. For example, *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson,

93

2007) sparked conversations about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s impact because he was helping others. During that discussion, Rick and Tony talked about helping others to make them powerful amid peer-led discussions. Rick asked the following: "What are some things you can do to feel powerful? Helping someone, what's yours?" Tony then answered, "Help my friends always that did their homework" [Peer-led discussion, January 12, 2021].

In focus groups, seven students discussed their ability to help someone as their favorite thing to do or evoked some excitement in them because they were helping. When asked what their favorite part of the book club was, Keisha stated, "I like when we share and when people help people." Martin also reported, "When you help and share with somebody." Martin discussed enjoying helping his peers understand stories: "It made me feel happy because I get to read the stories with them and help them understand." Kay stated, "It makes me feel excited because we get to grab a partner and ask what part they like about the story." When Rick and Martin were working together for peer-led discussions, Rick pointed to the book three times as he was talking to Martin. It appeared that Rick was teaching Martin about an item in the book. While they were talking, they were recognizably smiling and laughing [Fieldnotes, January 28, 2021].

Peer-led discussions took place after the opening community share, shared reading, and before unit work. The recorder was passed around to different students in each session to get multiple perspectives. Seven out of the fifteen children who participated identified peer-led discussions as their favorite part. A few students said the reason was about emotions. Rick stated he was "happy because I got to talk about the book with my partner." Tee commented that peer-led discussions were her favorite part

94

of book club: "Because we talked with each other about the book." Kay mentioned that speaking with peers without teacher input was enjoyable because "I got to do it on my own." Shante recalled, "I felt happy because I love talking about stories with my friends." These responses suggested that the communal style of peer-led discussion influenced student motivation in the book club.

The opening community share is when the lesson (e.g., main idea, key details, and story structure) was taught. This was also when the vocabulary instruction took place. During observations, it appeared that the students were less interested in the structured lessons in the book club. The students seemed less interested, possibly because I spoke during this component for most of the allotted time. Of the 10 minutes of opening community share, about 5-7 minutes were dedicated to me teaching the lesson. Vocabulary instruction took place for the remaining time.

Access to Culturally Relevant Texts

Teachers discussed that students in Title I settings might not have access to multicultural texts. Two out of four teachers discussed the effectiveness of exposing students to new texts that they may not have access to in their reading curriculum, particularly ones that are culturally relevant. Mrs. Smith shared, "I think you guys should continue doing it, especially for elementary students, so they can learn the value of reading, or just reading in general because they [students] tend to miss that a lot or they don't even get that at home." Ms. Smith continued, "Sometimes you don't have those opportunities, and you're getting books that you barely even find in the library or know about, so the exposure was definitely good for them." While being interviewed, Mr. Dodd discussed how exposure to new books in the book club would help them become

"brighter" and capitalize on what teachers do in the classroom, suggesting that exposure to culturally relevant texts could improve classroom lessons and outcomes.

When students were asked if there were any differences between the books they read in the book club and the books they read in school, they talked about the difference in pictures and the frequency of reading culturally responsive texts. Catherine, for example, reported that the stories were different because they had "different pictures and illustrations." Keisha reported, "It's like some of the books [in the book club] look different than those books." Aiden recounted, "We don't read that much stories in our class." During the focus group, some students commented that all the books in the book club were about kids and had Black characters. Four students commented that it "feels good" to read books with characters that look like them. (e.g., the young black girl on the cover of *Something Beautiful* [Wyeth, 2002], the black characters including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in *A Sweet Smell of* Roses [Johnson, 2007], and Harvey Moon and his mom in *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon!* [Cummings, 1994]).

Summary of Overall Findings

The following is a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings: there were no significant findings for the motivation measure. Furthermore, there were no significant findings from the i-Ready data. These findings were surprising because there was such a heavy focus on reading and vocabulary in the book club. Prior to the start of the study, I expected the quantitative findings to show growth in both motivation and reading achievement at higher rates for the intervention group after participating in the book club. There could be many reasons for this lack of significant quantitative findings. First, the post-test for i-Ready was taken four months after the book club concluded. This

96

may have affected the results because students were no longer in the book club and were no longer participating in the intervention. Furthermore, the book club lasted six weeks, which may have been too short of an intervention period. Corresponding research suggests that students who are reading below grade level benefit from more extended intervention periods (Vaughn et al., 2003).

The qualitative findings were different from the quantitative findings because the students who participated in the book club seemed to be motivated by the involvement. Student participants reported that activities in the book club motivated them overall. The student reports were linked to my observations of student behaviors of reading motivation throughout the book club sessions, as well as the classroom teachers' recounts of students' increased motivation in class after participating in the book club. Teachers talked about motivation, such as students' improved attitudes towards reading, willingness to participate in class discussions, improved capacity to talk about stories in class, and increased interest in the classroom library, while the students who did not participate were about the same.

Communal learning and cultural and personal connections with culturally relevant texts were also themes that emerged from the qualitative data. The communal nature of the book club encouraged students to work together to do activities such as peer-led discussions, unit work, and shared reading. Students detailed their enjoyment of working with each other to learn and discuss stories. They also made personal, racial, and cultural connections with the texts and saw themselves in the literature. Teachers reported the lack of access to culturally relevant texts in school libraries. In addition, students reported how different the book club texts were from the books they read in school. Considering

97

the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory and Critical Race Theory, the

implications of the study findings and conclusions were discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings. Following that, I discuss motivation and achievement and views on a culturally sustaining book club. Subsequently, I discuss the themes from the qualitative data, which were: increase in reported motivation; comprehending texts: cultural and personal associations with literature; communal learning; and access to culturally relevant texts. The conclusions are then presented, as are the implications of the study findings for educators, research, and policy. Lastly, I discuss the study limitations. Throughout the discussion, I drew from Ladson-Billings' (2014) and Paris's (2012) research that challenges the power systems of teaching practices by incorporating culturally sustaining practices and literature into an after-school book club. By doing so, I highlighted the voices of inner-city Black students about their learning.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine the efficacy of implementing a culturally sustaining book club in a low-income setting with second- and third-grade African American students. I designed the after-school book club research to address the reading achievement gap and to highlight Black students' capabilities in literacies by incorporating culturally responsive teaching (Kelley et al., 2015). One aim of the study was to explore whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in reading motivation and achievement following the book club intervention. I also examined students' and educators' feedback on the project. The

quantitative findings showed no significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores between the control and intervention groups. In addition, the motivation measures showed both intervention and control group scores decreased in overall motivation. These findings may be attributed to many different factors, such as the standardized assessments that were used to measure academic achievement and motivation (Hudson et al., 2020; Jones, 2020).

As part of the qualitative findings, teachers and students reported positive changes in student motivation and reading achievement after participating in the culturally sustaining book club. Students reported making connections to the characters in the culturally relevant texts and having discussions that showed strengths in reading comprehension, specifically from the aesthetic stance (Lohfink & Loya, 2010; Rosenblatt, 2005). In addition, teachers reported that students were more willing to talk about stories after participating in the book club and were more motivated to read than students who did not participate. Overall, teachers reported that students who participated in book club showed more motivation to participate in class, talked about stories, and showed interest in the classroom library.

The consensus from the students was that book club was "different" from their other in-class learning experiences. Students talked about how they have been reading more books through the book club aside from the class basal textbook, as well as the differences in work they needed to do as a follow-up activity to the book club reading. Students shared how the books were different. They recognized that all the characters in the stories they read were Black, making them "feel good" as one student explained (Johnny). Many students reported enjoying the book club activities, specifically the peer-

led discussions, the shared reading, and the unit work. The findings indicated that students enjoyed their book club experiences and believed that they were different from their in-class literacy experiences.

Discussion

Motivation and Literacy Achievement

Increase in Reported Reading Motivation. The MRP-R was used to collect reading motivation data before and after the book club. The book club did not show significant findings for the motivation measure. However, the qualitative findings showed positive changes in the reading attitudes of the participants.

Several studies used the same motivation survey as the one used in the current study while conducting a book club intervention and also did not find significant results. Smith (2017) conducted a 9-week after-school book club with third-grade boys. This mixed-methods study investigated the effects of an after-school book club on reading achievement and attitudes towards reading. During that study, male members of the community read to participants. The methods included incorporating the five components of internal reading motivation (e.g., perceived control, interest, self-efficacy, involvement, and social collaboration). As in the current study, the motivation scores in Smith's study also did not demonstrate any significant difference from pre- to post-test, but the qualitative portion of the study showed that the participants were motivated. Similar to Smith's (2017) findings, the current study found positive changes in reading attitudes as reported by classroom teachers. These findings may show some support for the body of research on peer collaboration and its effects on reading motivation (Wang, 2016), given that peer collaboration was a dominant aspect of the current study.

The current study's findings show that students preferred reading together through peer collaboration. In addition, students reported enjoying working together during focus groups and peer-led discussions. It was also observable that students enjoyed collaboration during the book club from their behaviors (e.g., sharing, talking, and laughing). Students could be seen laughing, talking, and what appeared to be sharing ideas as they worked together. Furthermore, during teacher interviews, Ms. Smith recalled that peer-led discussions, unit work, and shared reading were activities in which students were most engaged and interested. In the current study, there were six boys in the intervention group and seven boys in the control group. In comparison, Mason (2014) also conducted a book club intervention and used the MRP-R to test the motivation of African American and Hispanic boys from grades 2 to 4. She found no significant differences in motivation between African American and Hispanic boys for the value of reading and their self-concepts as readers. However, the qualitative results of that study revealed that students had book genre preferences based on race. Another noteworthy finding was that the African American boys in the study preferred to read aloud and together, while the Hispanic boys preferred to read independently.

In the current study, some students talked about their enjoyment of reading books in book club compared to their other literacy experiences because they had to do "lessons and stuff" during their reading block, as Rick recalled. Students reported enjoying the informality of the book club. However, the participants generally enjoyed the unit work component of the book club as a follow-up to the readings. As with the current study, Lattanzi (2014) also conducted a book club, but with middle school boys, to discover if it would lead to possible motivational practices that could inform instruction. Lattanzi

sought to understand how the participants' social interactions could influence their interests in reading. Lattanzi's qualitative study used focus groups and interviews to gain knowledge of the student participants' reading motivation. The study found that the informal book club format allowed the boys to have autonomy in book selections and that students reported enjoying reading by having conversations with peers. He also found that the boys were resistant to reading outside of book club because they felt pressured to do supplemental tasks, such as reading logs, writing summaries, doing character webs, etc. Like in the current study, the participants in Lantazzi's (2014) enjoyed the informal nature of the book club environment.

The current study used culturally relevant texts and peer-led discussions to encourage students in the book club to participate. Students in the current study were also encouraged to read aloud and share their work with other book club participants and me. The findings of the current study contrasted with Lewis and Zisselsberger's (2018) qualitative study with sixth-grade emerging bilinguals (EBs) as they analyzed the discourse across book club discussions. They found that EBs withdrew from discussions and did not participate as often as the native English-speaking students in book discussions. That study also found that the practices of the educators failed to honor student contributions to the discussions, even though the intention was to create an equitable space for them. As a result, the study's authors concluded that teachers should employ culturally responsive practices that acknowledge the students' culture in book clubs.

Culturally responsive practices have been shown to increase reading motivation (Colby & Lyon, 2004; Ginsberg, 2015; Siwatu, 2009). Children need a reason to learn, a

connection, and a purpose, especially when they are reading below grade level (Blanton et al., 1990; Rosenblatt, 2005; Rozendaal et al., 2005). The current study employed specific principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy, such as choosing culturally relevant texts, being accepting and inclusive of the participants' culture, and appealing to the learning preferences of the study participants. Previous research has shown that these principles positively affected African American students' motivation. For example, McCollin and O'Shea (2005) found that culturally relevant reading material fostered reading comprehension and supported reading motivation due to meaning-making. Furthermore, Fredricks (2012) used culturally relevant texts in critical literature circles with diverse EFL (English as a foreign language) participants. The participants in that qualitative study reported that culturally relevant literature allowed them to engage with the texts better. They appreciated learning life lessons and had emotional reactions to the culturally relevant texts.

Students in the current study were involved in selecting the stories used in the book club. Book choice plays an important role in motivation, especially for struggling readers, who have shown more interest and perform better academically when choosing books that appeal to their interests. Book selection has been proven to positively impact students' learning and motivation (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Orkin et al., 2018; Smith, 2017).

The current study found that students reported being motivated by the book club, which was supported by my observations and teacher reports, indicating positive improvements in participants' reading motivation. As observed and reported by teachers, students were more interested in the class library and more willing to discuss stories in

class. Although there were limited statistical results in the current study, some literature (e.g., Montes, 2001) showed increased motivation through attitudes toward reading. Montes (2001) found the participants were able to have meaningful discussions in ways they had not before from participating in the book club. Montes' (2001) most significant finding was the improvements in students' self-perceptions and attitudes towards reading based on students' reports of their self-perceptions as readers because of participating in their book club.

Measuring motivation is a widespread practice in educational research. However, standardized motivation surveys may be limited when used with diverse populations. The current study examined the reading motivations of 2nd- and 3rd-grade African American students from a Title I school. The findings did not demonstrate a significant difference in reading motivation scores between pre-test and post-test. The findings may reflect the limitations of the motivation measure or the limited data collection period (Vaughn et al., 2003). However, some book club intervention findings seem to show increased motivation, such as reported increased attitudes toward reading (Montes, 2001; Smith, 2017). Furthermore, I observed that when I was reading the questions and answer choices while administering the MRP-R, some students asked for the meanings of words like "often" or "sort of," which could mean that the students did not fully understand the questions in the measure, which may have affected the results. Jones (2020), in her research, discusses the potential dangers of quantifying student motivation. She examined some motivation tools and questioned whether they might perpetuate dominant ideologies such as competition or recognition (Jones, 2020). Jones' findings suggested that

researchers should use more qualitative means for measuring the motivation of students of color, which the current study included.

The research question developed to address reading achievement was: is a culturally sustaining book club effective in promoting the reading achievement of African American students? If so, in what ways? Although there were no significant quantitative findings, the qualitative findings provided insight into students' comprehension and self-reported reading growth as a result of the book club intervention (e.g., observations and focus groups).

Comprehending Text and Achievement: Cultural and Personal Associations with Literature. The findings in the current study, specifically about comprehension and making connections with texts, are somewhat consistent with prior research on comprehending texts from engaging in a culturally relevant book club. For example, Kong and Fitch (2002) found that book clubs effectively engaged students from diverse backgrounds. Their mixed methods study employed some of the same book club activities as the current study. For example, a community share, group discussion, and a lesson with a writing activity were included in their study. In addition, their book club is like the one in the current study because those students had ample opportunity to use their prior knowledge as they were having book club discussions collaboratively. However, Kong and Fitch (2002) assessed student comprehension by conducting the book club, collecting student work, and observing the participants for a year in comparison to the shorter time frame in the current study. They also used two quantitative measures: an oral reading text and a comprehension exam before and after the book club with 19 of the 25 participants. Their findings suggested a considerable improvement in student vocabulary

as measured by comprehension scores. Furthermore, student participants became more aware of and comfortable using reading comprehension strategies after the book club intervention. In the current study, both the intervention and control groups experienced a large growth in mean scores. Kong and Fitch (2002) did not have a control group. There were also similarities in the qualitative findings of Kong and Fitch (2002) and the current study because both sets of participants talked about becoming better readers as a result of participating in the book club. Another study by Montes (2001), who conducted a mixed-methods study using a book club intervention for 4th-grade students, found that participants in the book club made higher academic gains than the control group in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading for the SAT-9 at the end of the research period, although the differences in scores were not statistically significant. The current study differs from Montes' (2001) findings because academic gains in reading were found in both the intervention and control groups.

In the current study, aesthetic prompts for peer-led discussions were suggested, and an aesthetic stance seemed to also transfer into other parts of the book club, such as unit work. Stevens (2017) explored a book club through the aesthetic reading of a multicultural novel for elementary students. She collected data through recordings of conversations, collected the reader's notebook from each student, and categorized student responses to determine the type of aesthetic response used (Rosenblatt, 2005). Results suggested that the multicultural nature of that book club contributed to the aesthetic responses from students in that they answered questions through connections with the characters, including with sympathy or criticism (Stevens, 2017). In another study, Petrich (2015) explored book clubs to empower fifth-grade diverse students to have

collaborative conversations. Petrich's study found that students made connections with the community and their peers and that students seemed motivated by the diverse perspectives in the discussions. The findings from these two studies strongly suggest that the culturally relevant texts used in a book club with aesthetic stances can contribute to increased interest in reading.

The texts chosen for the book club in this study were culturally specific, meaning Black authors wrote them, had Black characters, and told relatable Black stories (Gray, 2009). Using culturally relevant texts allow teachers to support the students' culture, infuse the students' history and culture into the curriculum daily, and create a classroom environment that is encouraging and stimulating for students (Hollie, 2001). The goal of the current study was to show students' lived experiences as assets by centering their lives and communities through literature and learning preferences (Flint & Jaggers, 2021; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Alim & Paris, 2017). It is known that African American students have improved motivation and reading comprehension when reading culturally relevant literature (Gangi, 2008; Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). The current study demonstrated that, although no statistically significant differences were found between pre-test and post-test measures, the motivation scores of the participants decreased, and the reading comprehension scores increased. However, the qualitative findings of the current study showed that the students in the book club intervention had improved motivation and believed they improved in reading ability after participating in the book club.

The current study showed students shared their personal experiences as they related to their culture and family in peer-led discussions. I found similarities in the

results with Wang's (2016) study, wherein an after-school book club intervention was implemented with culturally and linguistically diverse students. That qualitative study investigated what social practices fostered participation in the book club with culturally and linguistically diverse girls. The book club was conducted for 12 months. The findings suggest that students in the book club shared personal experiences related to their culture through discussions and learned from their peers. Discussions were analyzed using the concept of discourse analysis (Wang, 2016).

To summarize, the findings from the current study are corroborated by prior research on the implications of using culturally relevant texts for possible reading comprehension improvement. Students related their culture to the books' characters and, as a result, were able to share personal experiences. Student participants also talked about seeing themselves in the books' characters and frequently related their real-life experiences to the characters in the book.

Indeed, students in the current study constructed meaning and interacted with texts through an aesthetic stance. Rosenblatt (2005) posited that the aesthetic stance in transactional theory involves comprehending the text in an affective and emotive way. In other words, aesthetic reading encourages comprehension by allowing the readers to bring in their life experiences, leading to creativity and high-order thinking (Nguyen & Henderson, 2020). Culturally relevant texts can lead to aesthetic reading, thus promoting increased motivation and reading comprehension (Lohfink & Loya, 2010; Stevens, 2017). The efferent stance pertains more to the information acquired and learned from the text. Any text can be read efferently or aesthetically (Rosenblatt, 2005). The current study encouraged an aesthetic stance towards reading and emphasized the aesthetic stance

while incorporating the efferent stance, which is predominant in classrooms (Rosenblatt, 2005). Students could connect with the stories through their own life experiences and take away information about the stories, such as the main idea, supporting details, and story structure. The encouragement of both the aesthetic and the efferent seemed to encourage student connections with the texts.

Views of a Culturally Sustaining Book Club

To explore what students and teachers thought about the culturally sustaining book club, I developed the following research questions: What are African American children's views of a culturally sustaining book club compared to their other literacy experiences? Also, what are teachers' views of students' learning for those who participated in a culturally sustaining book club versus those that did not participate? In addition to the findings on motivation and reading achievement, other aspects of the book club, such as communal learning and access to culturally relevant texts, emerged from the findings, particularly from the qualitative data. These two aspects of the book club are discussed in the following sections.

Communal Learning. Although culturally sustaining practices, such as communal learning, have been proven effective for some cultural groups (e.g., Au & Kaomea, 2009), they are not widely used compared to individualistic teaching practices (Boykin et al., 2004; Boykin et al., 2006; Coleman et al., 2017). These dominant teaching styles favor and promote the White middle-class ideal, thus excluding many other students who do not fit the mold (Emdin, 2016). Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, this research sought to challenge the current reading practices that focus on individualistic learning and that do not honor the diverse populations of students in

classrooms (Tatum, 2008; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). Collaborative learning provides African American learners with the most familiar interactions within their families (Dill & Boykin, 2000; Franklin, 1992).

Many of the student participants in the current study talked about helping each other and learning together in favorable terms, such as "powerful." Furthermore, most participants enjoyed the book club activities that were more communal, such as peer-led discussions and unit work. Not surprisingly, research supports that when students are taught using strategies that engage their learning preferences, there is a strong likelihood of positive outcomes (Strickland, 1994; Young, 2005). Personal interaction is a foundation within the Black community (Boykin et al., 2005; Heath, 1983). Allowing African American students to engage in communal learning can build a sense of community in the classroom (Hoyte & Smith, 2020; Strickland, 1994). The findings of the current study suggested that the communal learning nature of the culturally sustaining book club contributed to the participants' positive experiences and motivation, which may have implications for their academic achievement. Boykin et al. (2004) explored communal learning with low-income African American primary students and found that students who used communal learning academically outperformed students who learned with individualistic practices.

Access to Culturally Relevant Texts. From the reports of participants in the current study, there was a lack of student access to culturally relevant texts in school. Teachers in this study discussed the importance of exposure to culturally relevant texts. Ms. Smith talked about the books included in the book club compared to stories students are usually exposed to or cannot find in the school library. This point is particularly

relevant because African American students have very few mirrors in stories that validate their experiences in textbooks or picture books, despite the increasing diversity in America (Bishop, 1990; Hughes-Hassel & Cox, 2010). Bishop's (1990) groundbreaking work on "windows and mirrors" emphasized the importance of students seeing themselves in literature and seeing other cultures represented authentically and positively. She puts forward that literature can transform the human experience by giving us reflection and suggests that teachers and librarians are posed with the challenge of finding mirror books (Bishop, 1990).

There is an apparent deficit in published African American and Black texts. Yet, authentic texts that affirm the experiences of marginalized populations foster self-acceptance and diversity and provide positive images and stories (Banfield, 1998; Cai, 2002). Several factors contribute to the limited access to culturally relevant texts. According to data on books by and about Black, Indigenous, and People of Color published for children and teens compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC, 2022), authors published approximately 3,299 children's books in 2020. Only 12% of those books were about Black and African American characters, and Black authors wrote 63% of those books. Arguably, a small fraction of books are in circulation (Walker & Walker, 2018). Historically, access to authentic African American literature has been sparse. Using Critical Race Theory as a lens, an evident power dynamic limits the access and production of authentic Black literature (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2009). Black students have fewer opportunities to see themselves in stories and connect with characters. The lack of opportunity to see mirrors indirectly sends the message that they are less important. This can diminish the opportunities for students of color to have

reading proficiency by making fewer text-to-self and text-to-world connections (Gangi, 2008; Hughes-Hassell et al., 2009).

Access to texts seemed to be more of a concern for teachers in the current study than how to select these texts for students. In fact, selecting culturally relevant texts has been an issue in past research. Teachers do not feel proficient in selecting authentic, culturally sustaining texts for their classroom libraries (Scullin, 2020). Furthermore, Christ and Sharma (2018) discovered that teachers were resistant to incorporating culturally relevant texts into their lessons because they did not see the value of incorporating the texts. Pertaining to this finding, Sleeter (2017) postulated that teacher candidates are vastly White and have benefited from the Whiteness in teacher education. Teachers also reported not being privy to their students' cultures. In addition to teachers, school librarians carry biases such as culture, class, gender, etc., which present obstacles when curating school libraries (Foster, 2018; Montgomery, 2001).

In the current study, the participants discussed the difference between the culturally relevant texts used in the book club and their books in class, as well as the lack of access to similar books used in the book club during the school day. In focus groups, the participants were asked how the stories in the book club differed from the books they read in class. Most thought the books in the book club were different from the books they read in class, but two students talked about how they thought they were different. Keisha and Catherine talked about the books in terms of pictures and illustrations. Tony commented that he liked reading a book in the book club because the story had Black characters. Furthermore, Johnny talked about how he liked that he resembled the character Harvey Moon. These comments implied that students enjoyed seeing characters

that looked like them in stories and that they may not get many opportunities to interact with such literature outside of book clubs. As Kay and Wendy shared during the peer-led discussion, they do not read books like those read in the book club. Hefflan and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) interviewed third-grade African Americans. Students in that study reported that they liked seeing Black characters in stories because they do not see themselves represented often or feel misrepresented. The current study intended to give a mirror to the students (Bishop, 1990). Evidently, culturally relevant texts, according to teachers and students, are not readily available.

Conclusion

The current study attempted to support African American students' learning and achievement by providing a culturally relevant book club for these students that included culturally sustaining practices (Muniz, 2019; Sleeter, 2011; Wood & Jocius, 2013). To accomplish this, asset-based pedagogies were used to enhance the funds of knowledge that students come into class with (Flint & Jaggers, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Kong & Finch, 2002). Specifically, cultural texts were chosen, and communal learning took place. Also, there were conversations about race in the lessons. For example, one lesson involved comparing the civil rights movement in the 1950s with the protests in 2020.

As of late, Critical Race Theory and culturally sustaining pedagogy have been under significant scrutiny (Olivia, 2021; Ononye & Walker, 2021), yet there is extensive research on culturally sustaining practices positively influencing students' academic achievement and motivation (Au & Kaomea, 2009; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Gay, 2010; Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Kelley et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Leonard & Hill, 2008; Muniz, 2019; Siwatu, 2009; Siwatu, 2011). Further, Kumashiro (2015) wrote

114

about the disjuncture between educational reform that is effective for students and measuring growth with standards. He postulated that children in America need leaders to find viable alternatives beyond the dominant frames of the current educational system (e.g., standardized testing and prescribed curriculum). Additionally, Ladson-Billings (2009) argued that the preoccupation with test scores in America covers up some systemic problems with the public school system. I adopted the lens of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009, 2014) to challenge the status quo of skill and drill accountability measures, which closely watch and prescribe educational practices specifically at Title I urban schools (Heise, 2017).

I also aimed to explore the intersectionality of culturally sustaining practices and reading outcomes (i.e., vocabulary and reading comprehension). However, the current study found a disjuncture between the two. The quantitative findings did not show significant differences between the control and intervention groups but the qualitative findings somewhat corroborate the positive outcomes reported by other researchers when implementing culturally sustaining teaching practices (Bui & Fagon, 2013; Cartledge et al., 2016). Specifically, the findings show that students made cultural connections with the texts and appreciated the communal style of the book club, including the opportunity to assist their peers. Also, this study contributed to the understanding of sociocultural theory by showing that cultural practices can shape social experiences through book clubs, which can then support learning. Moreover, in sociocultural theory, learning happens through interaction, collaboration, and negotiation, with an emphasis on talking and cooperative learning (Scott, 2013). Previous work on motivation and achievement showed positive outcomes after social interactions with peers (Guthrie et al., 2012;

115

Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). In the current study, there were no significant findings for motivation and reading achievement. However, the qualitative data provided more insight into the motivation and achievement of the students who participated in the book club.

This research contributed to more culturally relevant discussions and practices in Title I elementary schools, which seemed to further support students' general motivation for reading based on the qualitative data gathered from teacher interviews and student focus group transcripts, although no significant findings were found from the quantitative data. More critical conversations are needed in the future on the implementation of culturally sustaining book clubs and on African American books, in general, in the classroom. The results revealed that teachers in this study saw a need to increase student exposure to culturally relevant texts and that students want to experience more of such texts and related discussions.

Implications

Educators

Educators who wish to incorporate culturally sustaining practices into their teaching and challenge the top-down curriculum may benefit from incorporating culturally relevant texts or books that highlight the students' experiences based on the study findings. Teachers should also become aware of dominant and deficit ideologies and create a culturally sensitive and safe space for students in their classrooms (Khalifa, 2013, Ladson-Billings, 2014). A culturally responsive checklist ("Culturally responsive teaching checklist," 2022) adapted from Banks (1989) was developed so educators could identify the students in their classrooms and consider if they are incorporating culturally

responsive teaching into their classrooms. This could be used as a resource by teachers if they wish to consider the cultures of their students in their classrooms.

In the current study, the classroom teachers spoke about how beneficial the book club was. However, when asked if they had a book club in their literacy block, they mentioned that there was no time for supplemental activities, and they had to stick to the pacing guides provided for them. Policy changes, such as increased opportunities to deviate from pacing guides and more educator autonomy, would assist educators in creating a more relevant curriculum for students. However, "policy alone cannot address the exclusionary practice of educators" (Khalifa, 2018, p. 86).

For the current study, I intentionally centered on the voices of the student participants by using voice recorders during peer-led discussions and focus groups. In doing so, I learned how students felt about the stories they were reading, their strong abilities to comprehend stories, and their appreciation of working with and helping one another. Other studies also centered on the voices of the participants. For example, Lee et al. (2022) conducted focus groups and interviews with Black high school students to get their perspectives on their lived experiences. That study found a lack of representation from teachers and teacher discrimination that discouraged student engagement. Students in that study expressed getting differential treatment because of their race. Critical Race theorists believe that using counterstories, or giving voices to the marginalized, is a powerful tool to challenge single stories and stereotypes (McNair, 2008). Therefore, such opportunities to listen to student voices are promoted by previous research and in this study.

Why is culturally sustaining education not being practiced more widely and with more fidelity, especially with statistics showing growing numbers of diverse students in US schools? Serafini (2011) postulated that the National Reading Panel and the prescribed curricula adopted by most school districts contributed to the lack of authentic literature in the classroom. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers build their classroom libraries with culturally relevant literature (Fisher & Frey, 2018; McCullough, 2008). The study's findings revealed that teachers might not have access to such texts through the school library, so it is recommended for teachers to advocate for more culturally relevant literature in their school library. There is a myriad of research dedicated to culturally sustaining practices in teacher education, preservice teachers, and the perspectives of current educators (e.g., Bennett, 2013; Nash, 2018; Phillippo, 2012). However, fewer studies explored the intersectionality between culturally sustaining practices and the use of book clubs to foster student engagement and development. This study intended to bridge this gap in the literature.

Teachers should be aware that culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogies are not a curricular add-on. Instead, teachers should cultivate a culturally safe space in the classroom that can encourage further learning (Hollie, 2001; Khalifa, 2013; Wood & Jocius, 2013). One of the ways teachers can do this is by getting to know students' cultural backgrounds in their classroom (Kozleski, 2010). In addition, for culturally sustaining practices to be successful, teachers must be aware of and willing to forgo dominant ideologies. These ideologies can limit access and opportunities for students (Delpit, 1996; Ford et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2022; Walker, 2011). Teachers can also

choose culturally relevant texts for their classroom libraries and advocate for more culturally relevant texts to be added to the school library.

Future Research

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is not always aligned with state standards, as measured by i-Ready (Muniz, 2019; Sleeter, 2011a). Although I was aware of this before the study, I still decided to use the i-Ready because it is a standardized assessment and provides baseline data for students' reading abilities. Consequently, the current study results may reveal a gap between culturally sustaining teaching and standardized assessments. Considering this, diversifying assessments by developing standardized measures that examine reading achievement and motivation in culturally sustaining ways, such as a qualitative observation tool, would be a reasonable next step in research. Furthermore, multiple measurements can be used (Almeida, 2016; Jones, 2020).

Given the relatively short nature of the project and the limited studies conducted on culturally relevant book clubs (Hill, 2012; Wang, 2016), it is recommended that similar research studies be replicated in the future with some modifications. First, increasing the sample size is suggested. It is possible that including more schools will increase the chances of a statistically significant result and improve the generalizability of the results (Tipton et al., 2017). Next, for general interventions to be effective, research has shown that struggling readers benefit from an intervention period of between 10 and 30 weeks (Vaughn et al., 2003). The current study did not find statistically significant pre-test and post-test results for reading achievement or motivation between the intervention and control groups. In contrast, Neuman and colleagues (2021) conducted a 21-week reading intervention in vocabulary instruction with early childhood diverse

students in a low-income area. The study collected data from two elementary schools. They found statistically significant differences in vocabulary and language for the pre-K students between the treatment and control groups. The results of that study demonstrated the benefits of having a larger sample size and a longer intervention duration. Increasing the intervention period would also increase the exposure to culturally relevant texts. Lastly, developing a tool that is closely related to measuring the effects of culturally sustaining practices could potentially increase the reliability of the results.

Kumashiro (2015) asserted the current state of educational reform relies on common sense, yet common sense is not always supported by research. The current study's qualitative findings suggested the possible influence of a culturally sustaining book club on reported motivation and comprehension through connections with texts. Kumashiro also stated that relying on test scores as the only way to determine educational improvement fails to challenge educational assumptions that center on standardization and assessments. The current study's results showed that while quantitative measures may not capture the effectiveness of instruction, relying on qualitative accounts may provide more insight into the effectiveness of a culturally sustaining intervention.

The culturally sustaining book club intervention in this study was conducted virtually for the safety of the students and the researcher during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in-person facilitation of the book club is recommended for optimal interactions between book club participants and the researcher/facilitator. Atiles et al. (2021) reported on the challenges of connecting with students and parents through digital platforms. The current study did not find statistically significant pre-test and post-test results for reading achievement or motivation between the intervention and control groups. The current body

of research on this topic addresses emergency remote learning and teacher preparedness during the height of the pandemic (Atiles et al., 2021; Timmons et al., 2021).

Finally, one of the key tenets of culturally sustaining teaching is the infusion of family and community (Jennerjohn, 2020). As previously stated in chapter 3, reading logs were distributed to participants. The reading logs had a place for parents/guardians to sign. This was a measure put into place to connect families to the intervention. Unfortunately, none of the student participants returned their reading logs at any point in the book club. Perhaps the reason for not returning the logs was the virtual modality of the book club or a miscommunication between parents and the researcher. Nevertheless, this may have limited parental involvement. Therefore, it is recommended to include families and communities in the culturally sustaining book club and any other culturally sustaining initiatives for future studies. Ladson-Billings (2014) described the importance of families in her culturally relevant pedagogy framework. Parent-school partnerships can recognize the assets that their cultures and languages bring to the school and emphasize them rather than diminish them (Goodman & Hooks, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Such engagement may impact the outcome of the intervention.

Policy

Many states, including the state where the study took place, are implementing educational policies to ban Critical Race Theory and culturally sustaining practices in schools (Olivia, 2021; Ononye & Walker, 2021). These sanctions and bans have significant implications for future practice and future research. For example, regardless of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) giving more freedom to school districts than No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the "one-size-fits-all" curriculum persists in low-income and

Title I schools as a way to address the achievement gap (Coles, 2002; El Moussaoui, 2017). In addition, schools that educate students in poverty are more likely to have a prescribed curriculum that can take away from meaningful engagement opportunities with peers (Rouland et al., 2014; Sterponi, 2007). Therefore, based on the study's findings and past research on the benefits of culturally sustaining pedagogy, it is recommended that policy and practice limitations be challenged. Challenging policies and practices may require more than changing tests. According to Kumashiro (2015), it may necessitate a shift in how we think about testing. For example, Berlak (2001) posited that standardized testing might have adverse effects that contribute to the achievement gap. As a result, there needs to be a broader conversation about equity and the curriculum. Particularly reframing what educational improvement means, including asking questions about who is considered when curriculum and policies are developed? Who wins, who loses? Furthermore, are the current practices of prescribed curricula and testing equitable to all students? Educational policies that uphold testing and standardization are framed to be equal and fair. However, previous research has shown that standardized testing can diminish the equal opportunity of African American students (Couch et al., 2021; Ford & Helm, 2012). The policy changes in public education have implications for teachers at grade school and collegiate levels. For example, a bill that recently passed in the state of Florida (HB7) deems CRT as an unlawful educational practice, banning educators from teaching about race, which will have serious implications for the curriculum as well as teaching practices. With many new and existing policies that limit support for culturally sustaining practices and initiatives, teachers need to be aware of the implications and serious impacts of the law.

From the beginning of the study, there was a focus on closing the achievement gap between Black students and their White counterparts by introducing culturally sustaining practices through the book club. The achievement gap may be caused and sustained for many reasons, including policies and the prescribed curriculum (Couch et al., 2021; Ford & Helm, 2012; Greenlee & Bruner, 2001). A prescribed curriculum is typically utilized to close the achievement gap and standardize instruction for teachers (Duncan Owens, 2009). It is widely known that schools that adopt prescribed curricula can see academic improvements, especially with teacher fidelity (Duncan Owens, 2009; Heilig & Jez, 2010; Ryder et al., 2003). However, not all students succeed with the prescribed curriculum. Greenlee and Bruner (2001) found that students who learned from more teacher-autonomous approaches outperformed students who learned from a prescribed curriculum based on mean differences on a standardized measure. Further, Green-Gibson and Collett (2014) showed a positive relationship between culturally sustaining pedagogy and academic achievement, and the qualitative findings of the current study seem to support a trend in that direction. This leads us to consider the further incorporation of culturally sustaining practices in Title I schools and schools in general. I argue that policymakers should consider the positive effects of culturally sustaining practices on achievement and motivation when creating laws and curricula that boldly disregard the experiences and values of students outside of White interests (Bernal, 2002).

Limitations

Although certain parallels can be drawn from low-income populations, it is essential to understand that low-income students are not a monolith (Weissman, 2020).

123

The results from this study may not be generalizable to all Black students or all students from low-income backgrounds. Different factors can influence populations, such as culture, race, and geography. I acknowledged that even when holding up a mirror, the mirror may not be perfect. As educators, we are responsible for exploring the nuances of culture and incorporating literature that appeals to our students.

Another limitation of this study would be the use of a virtual platform. Choosing the virtual platform instead of the preferred in-person book club set-up meant fewer personal connections with students and families (Atiles et al., 2021), which may have impacted outcomes. Future research may examine the effects of both methods of interaction on student reading motivation and achievement. The small sample size of this study limits its generalizability (Polit & Beck, 2010). Furthermore, the duration of the intervention period was only six weeks. Because students reading below grade level may benefit from a longer literacy intervention (Vaughn et al., 2003), this is a limitation for reading achievement and possibly motivation.

The qualitative data provided greater insight into the culturally sustaining book club benefits in this study due to the aforementioned limitations. One of the chosen methods for qualitative data collection was focus groups. Focus groups are a beneficial way to collect qualitative data through interactions (Race et al., 1994). However, focus groups can have limitations, such as participants finding it difficult to speak up and the potential of veering off-topic with many participants and one moderator (Morgan, 1988). I did not observe such behavior in the current study; however, I acknowledge that there are limitations with focus groups.

A more comprehensive view of the findings was achieved through interviews, focus groups, peer-led discussions, and observations. The data gleaned from the qualitative measures can push the field forward by highlighting the views of African American children in Title I schools regarding their learning. Further research with Black students from different cultures might extend our understanding of the effects of culturally sustaining book clubs.

Final Remarks

As an educator and a Black doctoral candidate who has experience teaching in a Title I school, I acknowledge that this study is special. It was empowering to be able to give voice to the marginalized. I remained as objective as possible throughout data collection and analysis, and I learned from and challenged my own inherent biases. I am humbled that I had the opportunity to conduct research that is so personal to me and my culture. I plan to continue my work on culturally sustaining practices with African American students. My mother, an educator, strongly encouraged reading and storytelling growing up. As a result, I was drawn to picture books that mirrored me. My favorite book was *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991). A Black author did not write *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991). Still, the image of a tenacious Black girl who had a huge imagination and would stop at nothing to be a star was such a powerful one for an impressionable elementary student. It is my intent that this research will add to the research on culturally sustaining educational practices and serve as a template for implementing a culturally sustaining book club in literacy classrooms and after-school programs.

REFERENCES

Abdelaal, N. M., & Sase, A. S. (2014). Relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 5*(6), 125–131. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.5n.6p.125

Adichie, C. N. (2009, July). *The danger of a single story* [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/up-next

Aikenhead, G. (2001). Integrating western and aboriginal sciences: Cross-cultural science teaching. *Research in Science Education, 31*(3), 337–355. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013151709605

Akbar, N. (1978). *Cultural expressions of the African American child.* ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED179633.pdf

Alim, H. S., & Paris, D. (2017). What is culturally sustaining pedagogy and why does it matter? In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 1–25). Teachers College Press.

Almeida, D. J. (2016). Understanding grit in the context of higher education. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 559–609). Springer International.

Anderson, R. C., Wilson, P. T., & Fielding, L. G. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly, 23*(3), 285-303.

Athey, I. (1982). Reading: The affective domain reconceptualized. *Advances in Reading/Language Research, 1,* 203-217.

Atiles, J. T., Almodóvar, M., Vargas, A. C., Dias, M. J. A., & Zúñiga León, I. M. (2021). International responses to COVID-19: Challenges faced by early childhood professionals. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 29*(1), 66-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2021.1872674

Au, K., & Kaomea, J. (2009). Reading comprehension and diversity in historical perspective: Literacy, power, and Native Hawaiians. In S. Israel & G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 1197-1230). Routledge.

August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. E. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities: Research and Practice, 20*, 50–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2005.00120.x

Bailey F., & Pransky, K. (2005). Are "other people's children" constructivist learners too? *Theory into Practice, 44*(1), 19-26. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4401_4

Baker, L., & Wigfield, A. (1999). Dimensions of children's motivation for reading and their relations to reading activity and reading achievement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *34*(4), 452-477. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.34.4.4

Bandura, A. (1986). The explanatory and predictive scope of self-efficacy theory. *Journal of Clinical and Social Psychology, 4,* 359-373. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1986.4.3.359

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist, 28*(2), 117–148. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3

Banfield, B. (1998). Commitment to change: The Council on Interracial Books for Children and the world of children's books. *African American Review, 32*(1), 17-22. https://doi.org/10.2307/3042264

Banks, J. A. (1989). Integrating the curriculum with ethnic content: Approaches and guidelines. In J. A. Banks, & C. A. McGee (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 189-206). Allyn and Bacon.

Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2009). *Parsing the achievement gap II.* Educational Testing Services.

Beck, I., McKeown, M., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.* Guilford Press.

Becker, W. C. (1977). Teaching reading and language to the disadvantaged: What we have learned from field research. *Harvard Educational Review, 47*, 518-543. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.47.4.51431w6022u51015

Bell, Y. R., & Clark, T. R. (1998). Culturally relevant reading material as related to comprehension and recall in African American children. *Journal of Black Psychology, 24*(4), 455-475. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/00957984980244004

Bennett, S. (2013). Effective facets of a field experience that contributed to eight preservice teachers' developing understandings about culturally responsive teaching. *Urban Education*, *48*(3), 380–419. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912452155

Berlak, H. (2001). Race and the achievement gap. Rethinking Schools Online, Summer 15 (4), 10-11. Retrieved on September 6, 2017, from www.rethinkingschools.org

Bernal, D.D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*, 105 - 126. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107

Biemiller, A. (2003). Vocabulary: Needed if more children are to read well. *Reading Psychology, 24*(3/4), 323. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702710390227297

Biemiller, A., & Boote, C. (2006). An effective method for building meaning vocabulary in primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 44–62. https://content.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.44

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Walk tall in the world: African American literature for today's children. *The Journal of Negro Education, 59*(4), 556-565. https://doi.org/10.2307/2295312

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., & Wearmouth, J. (2014). *Te Kotahitanga: Towards effective education reform for Indigenous and other minoritised students*. NZCER Press.

Blachowicz, C. L. Z., Fisher, P. J., & Watts-Taffe, S. (2005). *Integrated vocabulary instruction: meeting the needs of diverse learners in grades K–5 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED489512).* ERIC: North Central Regional Educational Lab. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489512.pdf

Boykin W., Jagers R., Ellison C., & Albury, A. (1997). Communalism: Conceptualization and measurement of an Afrocultural social orientation. *Journal of Black Studies, 27*(3), 409. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002193479702700308

Boykin, A. W., & Bailey, C. T. (2000). *The role of cultural factors in school relevant cognitive functioning: Synthesis of findings on cultural contexts, cultural orientation, and individual differences. Report no. 42.* Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Howard University. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED441880.pdf

Boykin, A. W., Coleman, S. T., Lilja, A. J., & Tyler, K. M. (2004). *Building on children'
s cultural assets in simulated classroom performance environments. Research
vistas in the communal learning paradigm*. *Report no. 68.* Center for Research on
the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Howard University.
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED484523.pdf

Boykin, A. W., & Ellison, C. M. (1995). The multiple ecologies of black youth
socialization: An afrographic analysis. In R. L. Taylor (Ed.), African-American
youth: Their social and economic status in the United States (pp. 93-128).
Westport, CT: Praeger

Boykin, A. W., Tyler, K. M., & Miller, O. (2005). In Search of Cultural Themes and
Their Expressions in the Dynamics of Classroom Life. Urban Education, 40(5),
521–549. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085905278179

Boykin, A. W., Tyler, K. M., Watkins-Lewis, K., & Kizzie, K. (2006). Culture in the
sanctioned classroom practices of elementary school teachers serving low-income
African American students. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk,
11*(2), 161–173. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327671espr1102_3

Brent, J. J., & Kraska, P. B. (2010). Moving beyond our methodological default: A case
for mixed methods. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 21*(4), 412-430.
https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2010.516562

Brinson, S. A. (2012). Knowledge of multicultural literature among early childhood
educators. *Multicultural Education, 19*(2), 30-33.

Broughton, M. A. (2002). The performance and construction of subjectivities of early
adolescent girls in book club discussion groups. *Journal of Literacy Research,
34*(1), 1–38. https://doi.org/10.1207%2Fs15548430jlr3401_1

Brown, A. L., & Brown, K. D. (2010). Strange fruit indeed: Interrogating contemporary
textbook representations of racial violence toward African Americans. *Teachers
College Record, 112*(1), 31-67. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F016146811011200108

Buchanan, L. B., & Fox, S. G. (2019). On windows and mirrors in teacher education
program materials: A content analysis of human demographics in one picture
book collection. *Multicultural Perspectives, 21*(4), 189-201.
https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2019.1686385

Bui, Y. N., & Fagan, Y. M. (2013). The effects of an integrated reading comprehension
strategy: A culturally responsive teaching approach for fifth-grade students'
reading comprehension. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for
Children and Youth, 57*(2), 59-69.
https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2012.664581

Burnham, K. (2021, March 9). A culturally responsive teaching: 5 strategies for educators. *Northeastern University Graduate Programs.* https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching-strategies/

Busso, D. S., & Pollack, C. (2015). No brain left behind: Consequences of neuroscience discourse for education. *Null, 40*(2), 168-186. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2014.908908

Cai, M. (2002). *Multicultural literature for children and young adults: Reflections on critical issues*. Greenwood Press.

Cambourne, B. (1995). Towards an educationally relevant theory of literacy learning: Twenty years of inquiry. *The Reading Teacher*, *49*(3), 182–192.

Cambourne, B. (2001). Conditions for literacy learning. *The Reading Teacher*, *54*(8), 784-786.

Cartledge, G., Keesey, S., Bennett, J. G., Ramnath, R., & Council M. R., III. (2016). Culturally relevant literature: What matters most to primary-age urban learners. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *32*(5), 399-426. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2014.955225

Chall, J. S., & Jacobs, V. A. (2003). The classic study on poor children's fourth-grade slump. American educator, 27(1), 14-15.

Chang, W. H., Huang, T. H., & Liu, Y. C. (2019). Influence of an interactive e-book on the reading comprehension of different ethnic groups using indigenous culture as content. International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction, 35(4-5), 323-332.

Chapman, J. W., & Tunmer, W. E. (2003). Reading difficulties, reading-related self-perceptions, and strategies for overcoming negative self-beliefs. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 19*(1)*,* 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560308205

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide though qualitative analysis.* SAGE.

Chinn, C. A., Anderson, R. C., & Waggoner, M. A. (2001). Patterns of discourse in two kinds of literature discussion. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *36*(4), 378-411. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.36.4.3

Christ, T., & Sharma, S. A. (2018). Searching for mirrors: Preservice teachers' journey toward more culturally relevant pedagogy. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, *57*(1), 5.

Christ, T. & Wang, C. X. (2010). Bridging the vocabulary gap: What the research tells us about vocabulary instruction in early childhood. *Young Children, 65*(4), 84-91.

Colby, S.A., & Lyon, A. (2004). Heightening awareness about the importance of using multicultural literature. *Multicultural Education, 11*, 24-28.

Coleman, S. T., Bruce, A. W., White, L. J., Boykin, A. W., & Tyler, K. (2017). Communal and individual learning contexts as they relate to mathematics achievement under simulated classroom conditions. *Journal of Black Psychology, 43*(6), 543–564. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798416665966

Coleman, S. T., Hurley, E. A., & Boykin, A. W. (2021). Teacher implemented communal learning in math: Boosting learning with African American elementary students. *Urban Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085921998745

Coles, G. (2002). *Learning to read scientifically.* Rethinking Schools Online. https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/learning-to-read-scientifically/

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2022, March 18). *Books by and/or about Black, Indigenous and people of color (All years).* School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-about-poc-fnn/

Costa, J. (2018). *The effects of using iReady reading as a reading intervention program on reading achievement for second grade students* (Master's thesis, California State University, Stanislaus). The California State University ScholarWorks. https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/concern/theses/rv042t88g

Couch II, M., Frost, M., Santiago, J., & Hilton, A. (2021). Rethinking Standardized Testing From An Access, Equity And Achievement Perspective: Has Anything Changed For African American Students?. Journal of Research Initiatives, 5(3), 6.

Coyne, M. D., McCoach, D. B., Ware, S., Austin, C. R., Loftus-Rattan, S. M., & Baker, D. L. (2019). Racing against the vocabulary gap: Matthew effects in early vocabulary instruction and intervention. *Exceptional Children, 85*(2), 163-179.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Culturally responsive teaching checklist. (2022). Re-imagining Migration. https://reimaginingmigration.org/culturally-responsive-teaching-checklist/

Cummings, P. (1994). *Clean your room, Harvey Moon!* (Reprint ed.) (P. Cummings, Illus.). Aladdin.

Curriculum Associates. (2016). *Using i-Ready® Diagnostic as a Student Growth Measure*. https://blogs.svvsd.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2017/03/iReady-Using-iReady-as-a-Student-Growth-Measure.pdf

De Temple, J., & Snow, C. E. (2003). Learning words from books. In A. van Kleeck, S. A. Stahl, & E. B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Teachers and parents* (pp. 16–36). Erlbaum.

Delpit, L. (1996). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* The New Press.

Dill, E. M., & Boykin, A. W. (2000). The comparative influence of individual, peer tutoring, and communal learning contexts on the text recall of African American children. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*(1), 65–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798400026001004

Dougherty Stahl, K. A. (2012). Complex text or frustration-level text: Using shared reading to bridge the difference. *The Reading Teacher, 66(1)*, 47-51. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01102

Duke, N. K., & Pearson, D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 205–242). International Reading Association.

Duncan, J. (2013, December 5). *Making motivational reading choices.* International Reading Association. https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog%2Fliteracy-now%2F2013%2F12%2F05%2Fmaking-motivational-reading-choices

Duncan Owens, D. (2009, February). *Using curriculum-based measurement to improve achievement - NAESP. scripted reading programs: Fishing for success.* https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/resources/2/Principal/2009/J-F_p30.pdf

El Moussaoui, S. (2017). The Every Student Succeeds Act and its impact on vulnerable children. *Journal of Law & Education, 46*(3), 407–413.

Elleman, A. M., Steacy, L. M., Olinghouse, N. G., & Compton, D. L. (2017). Examining child and word characteristics in vocabulary learning of struggling readers. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 21,* 133–145. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2016.1265970

Ellison, C. M., Boykin, A. W., Tyler, K. M., & Dillihunt, M. L. (2005). Examining classroom learning preferences among elementary school students. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal, 33*(7), 699–708. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2005.33.7.699

Emdin, C. (2012). Yes, Black males are different, but different is not deficient. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(5), 13-16. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F003172171209300504

Emdin, C. (2016). *For White folks who teach in the hood... and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education.* Beacon Press.

Ervin. (2022). Critically Reading the Canon: Culturally Sustaining Approaches to a Prescribed Literature Curriculum. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy : a Journal from the International Reading Association., 65(4), 321–329. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1208

Fisher, & Frey, N. (2018). Raise reading volume through access, choice, discussion, and book talks. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(1), 89–97. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1691

Flint, A. S., & Jaggers, W. (2021). You matter here: The impact of asset-based pedagogies on learning. *Theory into Practice, 60*(3), 254-264. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2021.1911483

Florida Department of Education. (2019). *PK-12 public school data publications and reports.* http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/students.stml

Foley, L. S. (2011). Exploring K-3 teachers' implementation of comprehension strategy instruction (CSI) using Expectancy- Value theory. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 50*(3), 195-215. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2010.505680

Fang, Z., Fu, D., & Lamme, L. L. (2004). From scripted instruction to teacher empowerment: Supporting literacy teachers to make pedagogical transitions. *Literacy, 38*(1), 58-64. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0034-0472.2004.03801010.x

Ford, D. Y., Harris, J. J., III, Tyson, C. A., Trotman, M. F. (2001). Beyond deficit thinking: Providing access for gifted African American students. *Roeper Review, 24*(2), 52-58. https://doi.org/10.1080/02783190209554129

Ford, D. Y., & Helms, J. E. (2012). Overview and introduction: Testing and assessing African Americans: "Unbiased" tests are still unfair. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 81(3), 186-189.

Ford, D. Y., & Moore, J. L. (2013). Understanding and reversing underachievement, low achievement, and achievement gaps among high-ability African American males in urban school contexts. The Urban Review, 45, 399-415. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-013-0256-3

Ford, D. Y., Walters, N. M., Byrd, J. A., & Harris, B. N. (2019). I want to read about me: Engaging and empowering gifted Black girls using multicultural literature and bibliotherapy. *Gifted Child Today, 42*(1), 53–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217518804851

Forman, E. A., & Cazden, C. B. (1985). Exploring Vygotskian perspectives in education: The cognitive value of peer interaction. In J. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication, and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives* (pp. 323-347). Cambridge University Press.

Foster, E. (2018). Cultural competency in library instruction: A reflective practice approach. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy, 18*(3), 575-593. https://doi.org/10/1353/pla.2018.0034

Foster, M., Lewis, J., & Onafowora, L. (2003). Anthropology, culture, and research on teaching and learning: Applying what we have learned to improve practice. *Teacher College Record, 105*(2), 261-277. https://www.tcrecord.org/books/Content.asp?ContentID=11121

Franklin, A. J. (1992). Therapy with African American men. *Families in Society*, *73*(6), 350-355. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F104438949207300603

Fredricks, L. (2012). The benefits and challenges of culturally responsive EFL critical literature circles. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *55*(6), 494-504. https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.00059

Gallagher, M. A., & Anderson, B. E. (2016). Get all "jazzed up" for vocabulary instruction: Strategies that engage. *The Reading Teacher, 70*(3), 273-282. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1498

Gambrell, L. B., & Morrow, L. M. (2015). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (5th ed.). Guilford Publications.

Gangi, J. M. (2008). The unbearable Whiteness of literacy instruction: Realizing the implications of the proficient reader research. *Multicultural Review*, *17*(1), 30–35.

Gavelek, J., & Raphael, T. (1996) Changing talk about text: New roles for teachers and students. *Language Arts, 73*(3), 182–192.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching* (2nd ed). Teachers College Press.

Ginsberg, M. B. (2015). *Excited to learn: Motivation and culturally responsive teaching.* Corwin Press.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households and classrooms*. Erlbaum.

Gray, E. S. (2009). The importance of visibility: Students' and teachers' criteria for selecting African American literature. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(6), 472-481. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.62.6.2

Green-Gibson, A., & Collett, A. (2014). A comparison of African & mainstream culture on African-American students in public elementary schools. *Multicultural Education, 21*(2), 33–37.

Greenlee, B. J., & Bruner, D. Y. (2001). Effects of success for all reading programs on reading achievement in title I schools. *Education, 122*(1), 177-188.

Gurlitt, J., & Renkl, A. (2010). Prior knowledge activation: How different concept mapping tasks lead to substantial differences in cognitive processes, learning outcomes, and perceived self-efficacy. *Instructional Science, 38*(4), 417–433. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-008-9090-5

Guthrie, J. T. (2008). Reading motivation and engagement in middle and high school: Appraisal and intervention. In J. T. Guthrie (Ed.), *Engaging adolescents in reading* (pp. 1–16). Corwin Press.

Guthrie, J. T. (2015). Best practices for motivating students to read. In L. Gambrell & L. M. Morrow (Eds.), *Best practices in literacy instruction* (5th ed., pp. 61-82). Guilford Press.

Guthrie, J. T., & Humenick, N. M. (2004). Motivating students to read: Evidence for classroom practices that increase reading motivation and achievement. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 329–354). Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & VonSecker, C. (2000). Effects of integrated instruction on motivation and strategy use in reading. Journal of educational psychology, 92(2), 331.

Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 601-634). Springer.

Ha, C., Durtschi, S., Roehrig, A., Turner, J., Craig, M., Mesa, M. P., & Funari, C. (2021). Promoting children's reading motivation with culturally relevant reading education. *Florida Journal of Educational Research.* https://purl.lib.fsu.edu/diginole/FSU_libsubv1_scholarship_submission_1627067 029_324dc390

Hackshaw, A. (2008). Small studies: Strengths and limitations. *The European Respiratory Journal, 32*(5), 1141–1143. https://doi.org/10.1183/09031936.00136408

Harper, G. D. J. (2019). *Mixed methods research.* Salem Press Encyclopedia.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Paul Brookes.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. *American Educator, 27*(1), 4–9. https://laulima.hawaii.edu/access/content/user/cawdery/ED_282/EARLY_CATA STROPHE_ED_297.pdf

Hasson, U., & Frith, C. D. (2016). Mirroring and beyond: Coupled dynamics as a generalized framework for modelling social interactions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, *371*(1693), 20150366. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2015.0366

Hayes, D., & Ahrens, M. (1988) Vocabulary simplification for children: A special case of "motherese"? *Journal of Child Language, 2*(15), 395-410. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900012411

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge University Press.

Hefflin, B. R., & Barksdale-Ladd, M. A. (2001). African American children's literature that helps students find themselves: Selection guidelines for grades K–3. *The Reading Teacher, 54*(8), 810–819. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20204996

Heilig, J. V., & Jez, S. J. (2010). *Teach for America: A review of the evidence.* The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice.

Heise, M. (2017). From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: Back to a future for education federalism. *Columbia Law Review, 117*, 1859-1896. https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2722&context=fac pub

Heller, M. F. (2006). Telling stories and talking facts: First graders' engagements in a nonfiction book club: Increase students' exposure to expository prose in the primary grades by creating a student-centered environment where they can share and respond to nonfiction. *The Reading Teacher*, *60*(4), 358-369.

Hemphill, L., & Tivnan, T. (2008). The importance of early vocabulary for literacy achievement in high-poverty schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 13,* 426–451. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824660802427710

Hilaski, D. (2020). Addressing the mismatch through culturally responsive literacy instruction. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 20*(2), 356- 384. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798418765304

Hill, K. D. (2012). Primary students' book club participation. *Language & Literacy: A Canadian Educational E-Journal, 14*(1), 91–109. https://doi.org/10.20360/G2F30J

Hodgkinson, C. (1991). *Educational leadership: The moral art.* SUNY Press.

Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing grace* (C. Binch, Illus.). Dial Books.

Hollie, S. (2001). Acknowledging the language of African American students: Instructional strategies. *The English Journal*, *90*(4), 54-59. https://doi.org/10.2307/821903

Hudson, T. R., Reeves, L., Giles, R. M., & Brannan, L. R. (2020). A Comparative Study of the Effects of Computer-Assisted Instruction on the Reading Achievement of First Graders. *Georgia Journal of Literacy*, 43(1), 9.

Hughes-Hassell, S., & Cox, E. (2010). Inside board books: Representations of people of color. *The Library Quarterly, 80*(3), 211-230. https://dx.doi.org/10.1086/652873

I-Ready. (2017). https://www.rti4success.org/i-ready-diagnostic-readingenglish-language-arts/

Israel, S. E., & Duffy, G. G. (2017). *Handbook of research on reading comprehension.* The Guilford Press.

Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. (2001). "Just plain reading": A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*(4), 350-377. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.36.4.2

Jackson, Y. (2005). Unlocking the potential of African American students: Keys to reversing underachievement. *Theory into Practice, 44*(3), 203-210. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_4

Jagers, R. J. (1988). *Communalism and cooperative learning among Afro-American college students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Howard University.

Jalongo, M. R., & Sobolak, M. J. (2011). Supporting young children's vocabulary growth: The challenges, the benefits, and evidence-based strategies. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*, 421-429. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0433-x

Jeffries, R., & Jeffries, D. (2013). Cultural signification through reader's theatre: An analysis of African American girls and their hair. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching, 9*(2), 203-218. https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2012-0047

Jenkins, E., & Austin, M. (1987). *Literature for children about Asian and Asian Americans.* Greenwood Press.

Jennerjohn, A. (2020). School–family partnerships for culturally sustaining texts. *The Reading Teacher*, *73*(5), 657-661. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1891

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Johnson, A. (2007). *A sweet smell of roses* (E. Velazquez, Illus.). Simon & Schuster.

Johnson, S. J. (2015). *The social and cognitive worlds of young children reading together* [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/76be9d1998c9a3eadb047aa7da96331a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Jones. S. (2020). Measuring reading motivation: A cautionary tale. *The Reading Teacher, 74*(1), 79–89. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1912

Käsper, M., Uibu, K., & Mikk, J. (2018). Language teaching strategies' impact on third-grade students' reading outcomes and reading interest. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 10*(5), 601–610. https://www.iejee.com/index.php/IEJEE/article/view/509

Kelley, H. M., Siwatu, K. O., Tost, J. R., & Martinez, J. (2015). Culturally familiar tasks on reading performance and self-efficacy of culturally and linguistically diverse students. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 31*(3), 293–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2015.1033616

Khalifa, M. (2013). Creating spaces for urban youth: The emergence of culturally responsive (hip-hop) school leadership and pedagogy. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching, 8*(2), 63-93. https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2013-0010

Khalifa, M. (2018). *Culturally responsive school leadership*. Harvard Education Press.

Kirmizi, F. S. (2010). Relationship between reading comprehension strategy use and daily free reading time. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2), 4752–4756. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.763

Kohler, F. W., & Strain, P. S. (1999). Maximizing peer-mediated resources in integrated preschool classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 19*(2), 92–102. https://doi.org/10.1177/027112149901900203

Kong A., & Fitch E. (2002). Using book club to engage culturally and linguistically diverse learners in reading, writing, and talking about books. *The Reading Teacher, 56*(4), 352-362. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20205209

Kostons, D., & van der Werf, G. (2015). The effects of activating prior topic and metacognitive knowledge on text comprehension scores. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 85*(3), 264–275. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12069

Kumar, R., Zusho, A., & Bondie, R. (2018). Weaving cultural relevance and achievement motivation into inclusive classroom cultures. *Educational Psychologist, 53*(2), 78-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2018.1432361

Kumashiro, K. K. (2015). Bad teacher! How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture: How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture. Teachers College Press.resesrch

Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Culturally relevant teaching: The key to making multicultural education work. In C. A. Grant (Ed.), *Research and multicultural education* (pp. 106-121). Falmer Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in the field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African-American students. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 206-214. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022487100051003008

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*, 74–84. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F016146819509700104

Lattanzi, J. A. (2014). *"Just don't call it a book club": Boys' reading experiences and motivation in school and in an after school book club* [Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University]. Rutgers University Core. https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/42347/PDF/1/play/

Lee, C. D., & Ball, A. (2005). All that glitters ain't gold: CHAT as a design and analytical tool in literacy research. In R. Beach, J. Green, M. Kamil, & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary perspectives on literacy research* (2nd ed., pp. 101-132). Hampton Press.

Lee, A., Henderson, D. X., Corneille, M., Morton, T., Prince, K., Burnett, S., & Roberson, T. (2022). Lifting Black student voices to identify teaching practices that discourage and encourage STEM engagement: Why #Black teachers matter. *Urban Education*. Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/00420859211073898

Leonard, J., & Guha, S. (2002). Creating cultural relevance in teaching and learning mathematics. *Teaching Children Mathematics, 9*(2), 114–118. https://doi.org/10.5951/TCM.9.2.0114

Leonard, J., & Hill, M. L. (2008). Using multimedia to engage African American children in classroom discourse. *Journal of Black Studies, 39*(1), 22–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934706292296

Lewis, M. A., & Zisselsberger, M. G. (2019). Scaffolding and inequitable participation in linguistically diverse book clubs. *Reading Research Quarterly, 54*(2), 167-186. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.234

Lohfink, & Loya, J. (2010). The nature of Mexican American third graders' engagement with culturally relevant picture books. *Bilingual Research Journal, 33*(3), 346–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2010.529346

Love, A., & Kruger, A. C. (2005). Teacher beliefs and student achievement in urban schools serving African American students. *Null, 99*(2), 87-98. https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.99.2.87-98

Lovelace, S., & Stewart, S. R. (2009). Effects of robust vocabulary instruction and multicultural text on the development of word knowledge among African American children. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *18*(2), 168–179. https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360(2008/08-0023)

Malloy, J. A., Marinak, B. A., Gambrell, L. B., & Mazzoni, S. A. (2013). Assessing motivation to read: The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised. *Reading Teacher, 67*(4), 273–282. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1215

Mansilla, V., Rivard, M., & the ID Global Group at Project Zero. (2014). *The many stories library project: Sharing untold stories to understand who we are.* http://www.pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/The%20Many%20Stories%20Library%20Project.pdf

Marshall, J. G. (2011). *Enhancing reading interest, motivation, and achievement through a culturally relevant text* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/enhancing-reading-interest-motivation-achievement/docview/893779308/se-2?accountid=10901

Mason, P. K. (2014). *Declarations and differences: Describing elementary african american and hispanic boys' motivation to read* [Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University- Commerce]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1540788150

Matthews, E. N. (2015). Analysis of an early intervention reading program for first grade students [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Walden University ScholarWorks. https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/396

Meier, T. (2015). "The brown face of hope": Reading engagement and African American boys. *The Reading Teacher, 68*(5), 335-343. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1310

McClain, J. (2018). *Culturally relevant pedagogy and student motivation: An applied study of their relationship in fourth grade English learners* [Master's thesis, Hamline University]. School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations, Digital Commons@Hamline. https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/4439

McCollin, M. J., & O'Shea, D. (2005). Increasing reading achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 50*, 41-44. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.50.1.41-44

McCullough, R. (2008). Untapped cultural support: The influence of culturally bound prior knowledge on comprehension performance. *Reading Horizons, 49*(1), 1–30. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol49/iss1/3

McCullough, R. (2013). The relationship between reader response and prior knowledge on African American students' reading comprehension performance using multicultural literature. *Reading Psychology, 34*(5), 397–435. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2011.643531

McGrail, E., Tinker Sachs, G. M., & Lewis, M. (2020). Comic book conversations as pedagogies of possibilities in urban spaces. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts, 59*(3). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol59/iss3/5

McMahon, S. I., & Hauschildt, P. (1993, April 12-16). *What do we do now? Student struggles with talking about books* [Conference presentation]. American Educational Research Association, Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, United States.

McMahon, S. I., & Raphael, T. E. (Eds.). (1997). *The book club connection: Literacy learning and classroom talk.* Teachers College.

McNair, J. C. (2008). The representation of authors and illustrators of color in school-based book clubs. *Language Arts, 65*(3), 193–201.

Melekoglu, M. A., & Wilkerson, K. L. (2013). Motivation to read: How does it change for struggling readers with and without disabilities? *International Journal of Instruction, 6*(1), 77–88. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1085380.pdf

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (*4th ed.*)*. Jossey-Bass.

Miles, B. M., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Miller, L. A. (2013). *Developing reading identities: Understanding issues of motivation within the reading workshop* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/88381ffcebc9526832511bb45918a6e3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Mills, H., & Calkins, L. (2014). *Learning for real: Teaching content and literacy across the curriculum.* Heinemann.

Montes, T. H. (2001). *Book club in a fourth grade classroom: Issues of ownership and response* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/04aedea264f8fd750d59fe6245d7cec7/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

Montgomery, W. (2001). Creating culturally responsive, inclusive classrooms. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 33*(4), 4-9. https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990103300401

Morgan D.L. (1988) Focus groups as qualitative research. London: Sage.

Morgan, P. L., Fuchs, D., Compton, D. L., Cordray, D. S., & Fuchs, L. S. (2008). Does early reading failure decrease children's reading motivation? *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 41*(5), 387–404. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022219408321112

Morrow, L. M. (1992). The impact of a literature-based program on literacy achievement, use of literature, and attitudes of children from minority backgrounds. *Reading Research Quarterly, 27*, 250–275. https://doi.org/10.2307/747794

Muñiz, J. (2019, March 28). *Culturally responsive teaching: A 50-state survey of teaching standards.* New America. https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/culturally-responsive-teaching/

Nash, K. (2018). They have verve: Preservice teachers' perceptions about culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy. *The New Educator, 14*(2), 153–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2018.1426325

Nelson, K. M. (2017). African-American academic nurse leader's role in persistence of African-American baccalaureate nursing students [Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/189fee4c61115f3f9aaeba3c848abac3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Neuman, S. B., Samudra, P., & Danielson, K. (2021). Effectiveness of scaling up a vocabulary intervention for low-income children, pre-K through first grade. *The Elementary School Journal, 121*(3), 385-409. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/712492

Nguyen, H., & Henderson, A. (2020). Can the reading load be engaging? Connecting the instrumental, critical and aesthetic in academic reading for student learning. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 17*(2). https://doi.org/10.53761/1.17.2.6

Olivia, J. (2021, June 9). *Addendum to mathematics instructional materials bid specifications* [Memorandum]. Florida Department of Education. https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5574/urlt/AddendMath.pdf

Ononye, A., & Walker, J. (2021, June 9). *The states taking steps to ban Critical Race Theory*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/557571-the-states-taking-steps-to-ban-critical-race-theory

Orkin, M., Pott, M., Wolf, M., May, S., & Brand, E. (2018). Beyond gold stars: Improving the skills and engagement of struggling readers through intrinsic motivation. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 34*(3), 203–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2017.1387834

Ozuru, Y., Dempsey, K., & McNamara, D. S. (2009). Prior knowledge, reading skill, and text cohesion in the comprehension of science texts. *Learning and Instruction, 19*, 228–242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2008.04.003

Pai, Y., & Adler, S. A. (1997). *Cultural foundations of education.* Merrill.

Pajkos, D., & Klein-Collins, J. (2001). Improving upper grade math achievement via the integration of a culturally responsive curriculum. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234744342_Improving_Upper_Grade_Math_Achievement_via_the_Integration_of_a_Culturally_Responsive_Curriculum

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Payne, R. (1998). *A framework for understanding poverty.* RFT Publishing.

Perry, K. H. (2012). What is literacy? A critical overview of sociocultural perspectives. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education, 8*(1), 50-71.

Petrich, N. R. (2015). Book clubs: Conversations inspiring community. *I.E.: Inquiry in Education, 7*(1). 4.

Petrie, C. (2021). *Implementing culturally relevent pedagogy (CRP) to increase reading motivation and interests among 6th grade students* [Master's thesis, William Patterson University of New Jersey]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/implementing-culturally-relevent-pedagogy-crp/docview/2545629858/se-2?accountid=10901

Phillippo, K. (2012). "You're trying to know me": Students from nondominant groups respond to teacher personalism. *The Urban Review, 44*(4), 441–467. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-011-0195-9

Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgement of the child.* Hartcourt Brace.

Polleck, J. (2010). Creating transformational spaces: High school book clubs with inner-city adolescent females. *The Highschool Journal, 93*(2), 50-68. http://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.0.0042

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*(11), 1451-1458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004

Purcell-Gates, V., Jacobson, E., & Degener, S. (2004). *Print literacy development: Uniting the cognitive and social practice theories.* Harvard University Press.

Quirk, M. P., & Schwanenflugel, P. J. (2004). Do supplemental remedial reading programs address the motivational issues of struggling readers? An analysis of five popular programs. *Reading Research & Instruction, 43*(3), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388070509558408

Race K. E., Hotch D. F., Parker T. (1994) 'Rehabilitation program evaluation: use of focus groups to empower clients', Evaluation Review *18*(6), 730-40.

Raphael, T., Florio-Ruane, S. & George, M. (2004). *Book club plus! A literacy framework for the primary grades*. Small Planet Communications, Inc.

Razali, F. M., Aziz, N. A. A., Rasli, M. R., Zulkefly, N. F., & Salim, S. A. (2019). Using convergent parallel design mixed method to assess the usage of multi-touch hand gestures towards fine motor skills among pre-school children. *International Journal of Academic in Business & Social Sciences, 9,* 153-166.

Rios-Aguilar, C., Kiyama, J. M., Gravitt, M., & Moll, L. C. (2011). Funds of knowledge for the poor and forms of capital for the rich? A capital approach to examining funds of knowledge. *Theory and Research in Education*, *9*(2), 163–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878511409776

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1969). Towards a transactional theory of reading. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, *1*(1), 31-49.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1981). On the aesthetic as the basic model of the reading process. *The Buckness Review, 26*(1), 17-32.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1986). The aesthetic transaction. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 20*(4), 122-128.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1998). Readers, texts, authors. *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society, 34*(4), 885-921.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (2005). *Making meaning with texts: Selected essays.* Heinemann.

Rouland, K. K., Matthews, J. S., Byrd, C. M., Meyer, R. M., & Rowley, S. J. (2014). Culture clash: Interactions between Afrocultural and mainstream cultural styles in classrooms serving African American students. *The Journal of Teaching and Learning, 4,* 186-202. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065901.pdf

Rozendaal, J. S., Minnaert, A., & Boekaerts, M. (2005). The influence of teacher perceived administration of self-regulated learning on students' motivation and information-pro- cessing. Learning and Instruction, 15, 141–160. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2005.04.011

Rudasill, K. M., Niehaus, K., Buhs, E., & White, J. M. (2013). Temperament in early childhood and peer interactions in third grade: The role of teacher–child relationships in early elementary grades. *Journal of School Psychology, 51,* 701–716. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2013.08.002

Rushton, S. P., Eitelgeorge, J., & Zickafoose, R. (2003). Connecting Brian Cambourne's Conditions of Learning Theory to brain/mind principles: Implications for early childhood educators. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 31*(1), 11–21. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025128600850

Ryder, R. J., Sekulski, J., & Silberg, A. (2003). Results of direct instruction reading program evaluation first through second grade, 2000-2002. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Sampson, D., & Garrison-Wade, D. F. (2011). Cultural vibrancy: Exploring the preferences of African American children toward culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons. *The Urban Review, 43*(2), 279-309. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-010-0170-x

Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. H. (2013). Q*ualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice.* Routledge.

Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, R. B. (2017). How to construct a mixed methods research design. *Koelner Zeitschrift Fur Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie, 69*(2),107-131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1

Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and social cognitive theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *60*, 101832. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101832

Scott, S., & Palincsar, A. (2013). *Sociocultural theory.* http://www.education.com/reference/article/sociocultural-theory/

Scullin, B. (2020). "I can't find no Black books": Helping African American males find books they want to read. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*, *8*(1), 82-111. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1261581.pdf

Serafini, F. (2011). Creating space for children's literature. *The Reading Teacher*, *65*(1), 30–34. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.65.1.4

Shockley, K., (2007). Literature and definitions: Toward understanding Africentric education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 76*(2), 103-117. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40034550

Siwatu, K. O. (2009). Designing self-efficacy building interventions in the preparation of culturally responsive teachers. In R. Milner (Ed.), *Diversity and education: Teachers, teaching, and teacher education* (pp.119-131). Charles C. Thomas Publishers.

Siwatu, K.O. (2011). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy-forming experiences: A mixed methods study. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104*(5), 360-369. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2010.487081

Sleeter, C. E. (2011a). An agenda to strengthen culturally responsive pedagogy. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *10*(2), 7-23. http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files/2011v10n2art1.pdf

Sleeter, C. E. (2011b). *The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A research review*. National Education Association. http://hdl.handle.net/10919/84024

Sleeter, C. E. (2012). Confronting the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy. *Urban Education, 47*(3), 562–584. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085911431472

Sleeter. (2017). Critical Race Theory and the Whiteness of teacher education. *Urban Education, 52*(2), 155–169. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916668957

Smith, C. H. (2012). Interrogating texts: From deferent to efferent and aesthetic reading practices. *Journal of Basic Writing, 31*(1), 59–79. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43741086

Smith, F. (1977). Making sense of reading—and of reading instruction. *Harvard Educational Review*, *47*(3), 386-395. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.47.3.3508w0540gug23q5

Smith, L. M. (2017). *"Book club rules, and tutoring drools": An intervention mixed methods study of the effects of an after-school book club on third-grade boys' reading achievement, attitudes, and preferences* [Doctoral dissertation, Sam Houston State University]. Sam Houston State University ScholarWorks. https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/handle/20.500.11875/2317

Smoldt, A. (2001). Book club: Motivating young readers. *Reading Today, 19*(3), 10.

Sparapani, N., Carlisle, J. F., & Connor, C. M. (2018). Observations of vocabulary activities during second- and third-grade reading lessons. *Education Sciences, 8*(4), 198. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8040198

Spira, E. G., Bracken S. S. & Fischel, J. E. (2005). Predicting improvement after first-grade reading difficulties: the effects of oral language, emergent literacy, and behavior skills. *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 934-947. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.41.1.225

Stahl, S. A., & Stahl, K. A. (2004). Word wizards all! In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kameenui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 59–78). Guilford Press.

Steele, C. S. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do.* Norton & Company.

Sterponi, L. (2007). Clandestine interactional reading: Intertextuality and double-voicing under the desk. *Linguistics and Education, 18*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2007.04.001

Stevens, K. (2017). *An exploratory research on aesthetic reading of a multicultural novel in a book club setting amongst fifth grade students*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2015148156).

Stover, K., Yearta, L., & Harris, C. (2016). Experiential Learning for Preservice Teachers: Digital Book Clubs With Third Graders. *Null*, 32(1), 5-12.

Strickland, D. S. (1994). Educating African American learners at risk: Finding a better way. *Language Arts, 71*(5), 328-336. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41961974

Stutz, F., Schaffner, E., & Schiefele, U. (2016). Relations among reading motivation, reading amount, and reading comprehension in the early elementary grades. *Learning and Individual Differences, 45,* 101–113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2015.11.022

Stutz, F., Schaffner, E., & Schiefele, U. (2017). Measurement invariance and validity of a brief questionnaire on reading motivation in elementary students. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *40*(4), 439-461. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12085

Tarchi, C. (2015). Fostering reading comprehension of expository texts through the activation of readers' prior knowledge and inference-making skills. *International Journal of Educational Research, 72,* 80–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.04.013

Tatum, A. W. (2008). Toward a more anatomically complete model of literacy instruction: A focus on African American male adolescents and texts. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*(1), 155–180. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.78.1.6852t5065w30h449

Taylor, B. M., Frye, B. J., & Maruyama, G. M. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. *American Educational Research Journal, 27,* 351–362. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312027002351

Teel, K. M., Debruin-Parecki, A., & Covington, M. V. (1998). Teaching strategies that honor and motivate inner-city African-American students: A school/university collaboration. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*(5), 479–495. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(98)00001-8

Temple, C., Martinez, M., & Yokota, J. (2019). *Children's books in children's hands: A brief introduction to their literature* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Timmons, Cooper, A., Bozek, E., & Braund, H. (2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on early childhood education: Capturing the unique challenges associated with remote teaching and learning in K-2. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 49*(5), 887–901. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01207-z

Tipton, E. C., Hedges, L. V., Hallberg, K., & Chang, W. (2016). Implications of small samples for generalization: Adjustments and rules of thumb. *Evaluation Review*, *40*, 472-505. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193841X16655665

Tsuei, M., Cheng, S. F., & Huang, H. W. (2020). The effects of a peer-tutoring strategy on children's e-book reading comprehension. *South African Journal of Education, 40*(2), 1-12. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1de1c6c063

Tyler, K., Love, K., Brown, C., Roan-Belle, C., Thomas, D., & Garriott, P. O. (2010). Linking communalism to achievement correlates for black and white undergraduates. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 22*(1), 23–31. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ913526.pdf

Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice.* Routledge.

Vansteenkiste, M., Lens, W., & Deci, E. L. (2006). Intrinsic versus extrinsic goal contents in self-determination theory: Another look at the quality of academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 41*(1), 19–31. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4101_4

Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Kouzekanani, K., Pedrotty Bryant, D., Dickson, S., & Blozis, S. A. (2003). Reading instruction grouping for students with reading difficulties. *Remedial and Special Education, 24*(5), 301-315. https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325030240050501

Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation.* Wiley.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language.* MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press

Walker, & Walker, N. M. (2018). "My family makes this!": Including cookbooks in the classroom library. *The Reading Teacher*, *71*(6), 749–752. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1685

Walker, K. L. (Haynes). (2011). Deficit thinking and the effective teacher. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(5), 576–597. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124510380721

Wang, Y. (2016). *Exploring culturally and linguistically diverse students' identities in an afterschool book club* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/10fbf509dcdd071b5d24a36ef50a0b59/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Wanzek, J. (2014). Building word knowledge: Opportunities for direct vocabulary instruction in general education for students with reading difficulties. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 30*(2), 139-164. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2013.789786

Webber, D. & Shropshire, S. (2001). *The kids' book club: Lively reading and activities for grades 1-3.* Libraries Unlimited.

Whitehurst, G. J., Arnold, D. S., Epstein, J. N., Angell, A. L., Smith, M., & Fischel, J. E. (1994). A picture book reading intervention in day care and home for children from low-income families. *Developmental Psychology, 30*(5), 679.

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1015

Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T. (1997). Relations of children's motivation for reading to the amount and breadth or their reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *89*(3), 420-432. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.89.3.420

Wood, S., & Jocius, R. (2013). Combating "I hate this stupid book!": Black males and critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, *66*(8), 661-669. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1177

Wyeth, S. (2002). *Something beautiful* (C. Soenpiet, Illus.). Dragonfly Books.

Wynter-Hoyte, & Smith, M. (2020). "Hey, Black child. Do you know who you are?" Using African diaspora literacy to humanize Blackness in early childhood education. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *52*(4), 406–431. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X20967393

Yenika-Agbaw, V. (2014). Black Cinderella: Multicultural literature and school curriculum. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 22*(2), 233–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2013.819027

Young, M. R. (2005). The motivational effects of the classroom environment in facilitating self-regulated learning. *Journal of Marketing Education, 27*(1), 25–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475304273346

Zevenbergen, A. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2003). Dialogic reading: A shared picture book reading intervention for preschoolers. In A. van Kleek, S. A. Stahl, & E. B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 177-200). Routledge.

APPENDIX A

Pseudonym Lists

Student Pseudonym List

Pseudonym	Grade
Rick	3
Johnny	3
Laura	3
Keisha	2
Darlene	2
Shante	2
Kay	3
Aiden	3
Tee	3
Mandy	2
Catherine	2
Wendy	2
Martin	3
Tony	2
Ethan	2

Teacher Pseudonym List

Pseudonym	Description
Mr. Dodd	Veteran second grade reading/language arts teacher.
Ms. Smith	After schoolteacher/ facilitator who is also a certified teacher at the school.
Ms. Tucker	Veteran third grade reading/ language arts teacher.
Ms. Gillespie	First year 3rd grade reading/language arts teacher.

APPENDIX B

Book Club Reading Log

Date	Title of Book/ Author	Parent Initials	Questions/ Notes for discussion

APPENDIX C

Focus Group & Interview Questions

Focus Group Questions for student participants:

(Semi-Structured)

1. How do you feel about the afterschool book club?
2. Did you have a favorite part of the book club? What was it if you did?
3. Who was your favorite character from the books in the book club?
4. How are the books in the book club different than the books you read during class time?
5. How does reading in school make you feel?
6. How did the community-shared discussions make you feel? Where there parts of the book club than you enjoyed/less enjoyed?
7. What are your favorite types of books?

Interview Questions for classroom teachers:

(Semi-Structured)

1. Do you conduct book clubs in your classroom? If so, how frequently?
2. Are there any changes you noticed in the students who attended the book club after school versus those that did not? If so, can you tell be me about those changes?
3. Have you noticed a change in the reading behaviors, including how students' approach reading, after participating in the book club? If so, can you tell me about the changes in behavior?
4. Were there any changes in students' reading confidence level after they participated in the book club? If so, please explain further.

Interview Questions for After-School Teacher/ In person facilitator:

(Semi-Structured)

1. What are your overall thoughts of book club in terms of organization, activities, flow, and book selection?
2. What do you think worked? What didn't work?
3. Did you see a change in motivation for the students who participated in book club?
4. If this book club was done again, is there anything you would suggest?

APPENDIX D

List of Codes Used in Data Analysis

1. Book club design/ structure

    1.1 organization

    1.2 book choices

    1.3 preparation

2. Effectiveness/ what worked

    2.1 great program/ no time during the school day

    2.2 test score improvement

    2.3 exposure to new books

    2.4 learning to read

    2.5 unit work

    2.6 peer-led discussions

    2.7 shared reading

3. Interest and Motivation

    3.1 motivation improvement

    3.2 more vocal/social

    3.3 using the classroom library more

    3.4 more willing to talk about stories in class

    3.5 enthusiasm for reading

4. Community/helping others

    4.1 cultural ties

    4.2 communal learning

5. Reading Comprehension

    5.1 text-to-self connections

    5.2 historical connections

6. Lack of culturally relevant texts

    6.1 lack of culturally relevant texts in libraries

    6.2 not seeing similar books

7. Literacy experiences in and out of the classroom

    7.1 frequency of reading stories

    7.2 supplemental activities in class vs. book club

VITA

BRITTNEY C. JONES

1989	Born, Gelnhausen, Germany
2007	Gates Millennium Scholar
2011	B.S., Early Childhood Education Florida State University Tallahassee, Florida
2013	M.A., Reading Education University of South Florida Tampa, Florida
2017-2022	Graduate Teaching Assistant Florida International University Miami, Florida
2019	Doctoral Candidate Florida International University Miami, Florida

PRESENTATIONS

Jones, B. (2018, December). *Peer Interaction for Culturally Inclusive Instruction in Urban School.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Reading Forum, Sanibel, FL.

Lynch, J., & Jones, B. (2019, December). *Examining teachers' perspectives of parental communication and involvement in a high-poverty elementary school.* Paper presented at Literacy Research Association, Tampa, FL.

Jones, B. & Lynch, J. (2021, December) *A Culturally Responsive Book Club: Perspectives on African American Students' Learning*. Paper presented at Literacy Research Association, Atlanta, GA.